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Iran to replace 40 ambassadors

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3 November, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Iran to replace 40 ambassadors

Iran's hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has announced a purging of 40 ambassadors he regards as being too liberal. It is Iran's most significant overhaul of diplomatic staff since the country's Islamic Revolution in 1979. The diplomatic realignment will take place by the end of March 2006. Most of the ambassadors to be replaced are those holding more liberal views toward relations with the West. Some to lose their posts have been involved in months of delicate negotiations with the EU over the sticky issue of Iran's nuclear capabilities. The purge is seen as a hardening of Mr. Ahmadinejad's increasingly abrasive foreign policy towards the West. It seems likely that much of the progress made in the past decade in warming Iranian-Western relations has gone up in smoke.

President Ahmadinejad has upped the ante in recent weeks by defiantly challenging the West. He recently courted controversy and provoked an international outcry when he called for Israel's eradication, saying it should be "wiped off the map". Reacting to this, British Prime Minister Tony Blair told his government that "the international community simply will not put up with [Iran's] continued breach of the proper and normal standards of behavior we expect from a member of the United Nations." He said Mr. Ahmadinejad's comments about Israel were morally repugnant and reprehensible, and likened them to those of Hitler's calls to exterminate Jews in World War II. Meanwhile, the biggest anti-American and anti-Israeli protests seen for many years continue in Tehran.

WARM-UPS

1. IRANIAN CITIZEN: You are a citizen of Iran. Walk around the classroom and talk with the other “Iranians” about your president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Do you agree with his foreign policy? Talk also about relations with the West. Is Iran misunderstood?

2. THE WEST: Is the West always right? Is the West guilty of any wrongdoing? In pairs / groups, talk about whether the West has double standards. The following may help your conversation:

- The nuclear issue
- Democracy
- Free and fair trade
- Oil
- Religion
- Human rights
- The war on terror
- Weapons of mass destruction (WMD)
- Pollution controls
- Other

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Iran / Mahmoud Ahmadinejad / ambassadors / Islamic Revolution / March 2006 / liberal views / nuclear capabilities / smoke / Israel / Hitler / anti-American protests

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. DIPLOMAT: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word “diplomat”. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: In pairs/groups, compare the differences in relations between the following countries over the past decades. How will these relations be ten years from now?

- Iran / USA
- North Korea / South Korea
- Israel / Palestine
- India / Pakistan
- France / Great Britain
- China / Japan

6. IRAN OPINIONS: How far do you agree or disagree with these opinions? Talk about them with your partner(s).

- a. Iran is a truly democratic country.
- b. There is no reason why Iran should not develop nuclear weapons.
- c. Mr. Ahmadinejad should apologize to Israel in words and deeds.
- d. Iran has much to offer the world.
- e. President Ahmadinejad has every right to follow his own foreign policy.
- f. President George W. Bush should invite Mr. Ahmadinejad to his Texas ranch.
- g. The West doesn’t like anyone who has a different agenda from its own.
- h. The world is a more uncertain place with Mr. Ahmadinejad as Iran’s president.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. Iran's president has announced a shake-up in his diplomatic staff. | T / F |
| b. The diplomats have held the same positions since a 1979 revolution. | T / F |
| c. Some ambassadors had been in talks on nuclear issues with the EU. | T / F |
| d. The change in diplomats is set to improve Iranian-Western relations. | T / F |
| e. Mr. Ahmadinejad has upped the ante in a game of cards. | T / F |
| f. Mr. Ahmadinejad recently called for Israel to be wiped off the map. | T / F |
| g. Tony Blair likened Mr. Ahmadinejad's words to those of Hitler's. | T / F |
| h. Peace protests are taking place in Iran's capital Tehran. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| a. hardline | thorny |
| b. purging | abhorrent |
| c. realignment | uproar |
| d. sticky | extermination |
| e. abrasive | removal |
| f. upped the ante | unpleasant |
| g. outcry | shift |
| h. eradication | shameful |
| i. repugnant | tough |
| j. reprehensible | raised the stakes |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| a. ambassadors he regards | Iran's nuclear capabilities |
| b. Iran's most significant overhaul | Hitler's calls to exterminate Jews |
| c. the sticky issue of | controversy |
| d. Ahmadinejad's increasingly abrasive | normal standards of behavior |
| e. gone up | as being too liberal |
| f. He recently courted | foreign policy towards the West |
| g. provoked an | repugnant and reprehensible |
| h. breach of the proper and | in smoke |
| i. morally | international outcry |
| j. likened them to those of | of diplomatic staff |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Iran to replace 40 ambassadors

Iran's hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has announced a _____ of 40 ambassadors he regards as being too liberal. It is Iran's most significant _____ of diplomatic staff since the country's Islamic Revolution in 1979. The diplomatic realignment will take _____ by the end of March 2006. Most of the ambassadors to be replaced are those _____ more liberal views toward relations with the West. Some to lose their posts have been involved in months of _____ negotiations with the EU over the sticky issue of Iran's nuclear _____. The purge is seen as a hardening of Mr. Ahmadinejad's increasingly _____ foreign policy towards the West. It seems likely that much of the progress made in the past decade in warming Iranian-Western relations has gone up in _____.

place
abrasive
purging
delicate
smoke
holding
overhaul
capabilities

President Ahmadinejad has upped the ante in recent weeks by _____ challenging the West. He recently _____ controversy and provoked an international outcry when he called for Israel's eradication, saying it should be "wiped off the map". _____ to this, British Prime Minister Tony Blair told his government that "the international community _____ will not put up with [Iran's] _____ breach of the proper and normal standards of behavior we _____ from a member of the United Nations." He said Mr. Ahmadinejad's comments about Israel were _____ repugnant and reprehensible, and likened them to those of Hitler's calls to exterminate Jews in World War II. Meanwhile, the biggest anti-American and anti-Israeli _____ seen for many years continue in Tehran.

continued
morally
courted
simply
protests
defiantly
expect
reacting

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Iran to replace 40 ambassadors

Iran's hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has announced a _____ 40 ambassadors he regards as being too liberal. It is Iran's most significant _____ diplomatic staff since the country's Islamic Revolution in 1979. The diplomatic _____ will take place by the end of March 2006. Most of the ambassadors to be replaced are those _____ more liberal views toward relations with the West. Some to lose their posts have been involved in months of _____ negotiations with the EU over the _____ issue of Iran's nuclear capabilities. The purge is seen as a hardening of Mr. Ahmadinejad's increasingly _____ foreign policy towards the West. It seems likely that much of the progress made in the past decade in warming Iranian-Western relations has _____ smoke.

President Ahmadinejad has _____ in recent weeks by defiantly challenging the West. He recently courted controversy and _____ an international outcry when he called for Israel's eradication, saying it should be "_____ off the map". Reacting to this, British Prime Minister Tony Blair told his government that "the international community simply will not put up with [Iran's] continued _____ of the proper and normal standards of behavior we expect from a member of the United Nations." He said Mr. Ahmadinejad's comments about Israel were morally _____ and reprehensible, and likened them to those of Hitler's calls to _____ Jews in World War II. Meanwhile, the biggest anti-American and anti-Israeli protests seen for many years continue in Tehran.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words '**liberal**' and '**view**'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "IRAN" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about Iran and its president.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- hardline
- significant
- holding
- delicate
- hardening
- abrasive
- upped
- courted
- wiped
- breach
- morally
- protests

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What do you think of Iran?
- c. Do you think Iran and the West are headed for a major confrontation?
- d. What do you think of the replacing of 40 ambassadors?
- e. Why do you think Mr. Ahmadinejad is hardening his stance towards the West?
- f. Should Iran face economic sanctions for its recent actions?
- g. Does the West think and worry too much about Iran?
- h. What do you think of Tony Blair likening Mr. Ahmadinejad's comments to Hitler's?
- i. What will it take to repair Iranian-Western relations?
- j. Do you think Iran will ever have diplomatic ties with Israel?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think Iran is moving forward or backward?
- d. How will ambassadors with views closer to Mr. Ahmadinejad's change Iran's relations with the world?
- e. Should Iran be allowed to develop its own nuclear energy?
- f. What should Mr. Ahmadinejad do or say to apologize to Israel?
- g. Do you think Iran should be expelled from the United Nations?
- h. Wouldn't it be better for the West to accept and work with Iran rather than constantly mistrusting it?
- i. What do you think are the main things about the USA and Israel that Iranians are protesting against?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

I'M AN AMBASSADOR: You are an ambassador of your country. It is your job to improve diplomatic relations with the countries in the table below. In pairs / groups, discuss diplomatic relations as they presently exist. Write down some current problems or areas that need improving on. Decide on some solutions or measures that will reduce these problems and improve diplomatic relations.

COUNTRY	CURRENT RELATIONS	PROBLEMS	SOLUTIONS
The U.S.A.			
China			
Russia			
Japan			
The U.K.			
Other _____			
Other _____			
Other _____			

Change partners and tell each other what you discussed with your earlier partner.

Give each other feedback on your solutions.

Return to your original partners and discuss the feedback you received. Revise any of your initial solutions you think need to be changed.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. THE FUTURE: Make a poster outlining the events that you think will take place concerning Iran over the next ten years. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things? Discuss the likelihood of the events you outlined in the poster happening.

4. LETTER: Write a letter to Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Tell him what you think of his recent actions. Give him advice on how to conduct his foreign policy over the coming years. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things or give similar advice?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. T b. F c. T d. F e. F f. T g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. hardline	tough
b. purging	removal
c. realignment	shift
d. sticky	thorny
e. abrasive	unpleasant
f. upped the ante	raised the stakes
g. outcry	uproar
h. eradication	extermination
i. repugnant	abhorrent
j. reprehensible	shameful

PHRASE MATCH:

a. ambassadors he regards	as being too liberal
b. Iran's most significant overhaul	of diplomatic staff
c. the sticky issue of	Iran's nuclear capabilities
d. Ahmadinejad's increasingly abrasive	foreign policy towards the West
e. gone up	in smoke
f. He recently courted	controversy
g. provoked an	international outcry
h. breach of the proper and	normal standards of behavior
i. morally	repugnant and reprehensible
j. likened them to those of	Hitler's calls to exterminate Jews

GAP FILL:

Iran to replace 40 ambassadors

Iran's hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has announced a **purging** of 40 ambassadors he regards as being too liberal. It is Iran's most significant **overhaul** of diplomatic staff since the country's Islamic Revolution in 1979. The diplomatic realignment will take **place** by the end of March 2006. Most of the ambassadors to be replaced are those **holding** more liberal views toward relations with the West. Some to lose their posts have been involved in months of **delicate** negotiations with the EU over the sticky issue of Iran's nuclear **capabilities**. The purge is seen as a hardening of Mr. Ahmadinejad's increasingly **abrasive** foreign policy towards the West. It seems likely that much of the progress made in the past decade in warming Iranian-Western relations has gone up in **smoke**.

President Ahmadinejad has upped the ante in recent weeks by **defiantly** challenging the West. He recently **courted** controversy and provoked an international outcry when he called for Israel's eradication, saying it should be "wiped off the map". **Reacting** to this, British Prime Minister Tony Blair told his government that "the international community **simply** will not put up with [Iran's] **continued** breach of the proper and normal standards of behavior we **expect** from a member of the United Nations." He said Mr. Ahmadinejad's comments about Israel were **morally** repugnant and reprehensible, and likened them to those of Hitler's calls to exterminate Jews in World War II. Meanwhile, the biggest anti-American and anti-Israeli **protests** seen for many years continue in Tehran.