
The Iranian dilemma.

By Brian Appleton
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When I read articles like the one in the Wall Street Journal interviewing Reza Pahlavi by Nancy Dewolf Smith, I find it bewildering how a man of his experience could naively suggest that if the people of Iran voted for him to be King that he would accept and that only during his father's rule was there stability in the Middle East.

I was not away at school in the U.S. during the revolution of '79 like him but rather I was in Tehran listening to the chorus of a million voices shouting from their roof tops night after night: 'Death to the king!' I was there to witness a six-mile long protest march on what was then Shah Reza Street. I was there to see thousands of people dancing in the streets the day Shah Reza left. I was there watching the political prisoners being liberated, I was there watching houses of torture being taken down brick by brick. I was there to witness Chinese, Korean, Indian and other foreign restaurants being taken over to serve Persian food instead.

Iranians wanted their identity back.

There may have been a stability of sorts based on repression, based on Savak, based on fear, based on no freedoms of speech or the right to assemble or to have diverse political parties. If there was so much stability why was there a revolution? Was it not because the top 2% had all the wealth and were flamboyant in their decadent lifestyle, was it not because the Pahlavi regime was a U.S. puppet regime in which the US had the upper hand which even the Shah bitterly attested to in his book: Answer to History.

What I witnessed after the revolution was a brief moment called the 'Iranian Spring' in which political parties were recreated, newspapers and other long suppressed media flourished and people were hopeful for the first time that they could control their own destiny in a democratic fashion. Had any major foreign power endorsed the revolutionaries at that time perhaps a secular pluralistic democracy would have emerged in which an Islamic party might have been only one of many parties instead of in charge.

What happened next we all know, a largely uneducated and illiterate populous long kept in a state of feudalism saw Khomeini's face in the moon. They turned to a religious messianic movement destroying the window of opportunity that Iran had for democracy at that time.

The monarchists who were beneficiaries of that system blame Carter for destabilizing the Shah. It is also a fair assumption, which I have heard from many Iranians that the CIA backed Khomeini. At the time they were also creating El Qaeda and the Taliban to fight the spread of communisms and the expansion of the USSR in Afghanistan and so it was indeed a policy to use Islamic fundamentalism to fight the USSR during the Cold War.

No wonder the Iranians have xenophobia, they have been invaded and conquered for centuries: by the Macedonians, by the Arabs, by the Mongols, and by Timur and their modern history shows them always under the sphere of influence of a foreign power whether the British

or the Americans. Ironically even Khomeini from what I have read was not of Iranian origin but rather of half British, half Kashmiri roots and not Iranian until Senator Moussavi gave him and his sons citizenship in what was to become a fatal error for Moussavi himself and for the rest of Iran.

I would never be an apologist for the IRI with its totalitarian self serving 'religious' regime of repression and torture and imprisonment and state sanctioned rapes and assassinations which maintains itself in power by the use of the Basij and make a mockery of Islam.

Reza Pahlavi wonders why no foreign powers have given any serious support to democrats and dissidents within Iran for the past 27 years when so many people within Iran are not content. I think that the answer lies in the fact that too many trading partners like Japan, Italy, other EU countries, Russia and China are benefiting from the status quo and have too much at stake to want a regime change. That is also why I think, that as admirable and correct a notion, as Reza Pahlavi's position is that Iranians must change their own regime and by non-violent means; I do not believe they will ever be left alone to do so... not until the day they have no more oil or the world economy becomes fueled by hydrogen.

The U.S. is not the great bastion of democracy it reports itself to be. It is bedfellow with any regime with oil like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE, which are not democracies. Women for example in Saudi Arabia are not allowed to work or drive and how is that different from the repression of woman by the IRI? And for many decades Saddam was their boy in Iraq and a CIA appointee to start with.

Why should any Iranian trust America, which backed Saddam in his 'Silent War' on Iran in which a million youths died and then they turned on him just like they put in Shah Reza and kept him in for nearly 50 years and then turned on him too. Why should anyone trust the USA? They despise communism and socialism and yet their biggest trading partner is China, the China of political imprisonment and Tienamin Square.

The U.S. is not interested in democracy for Iranians either but having been kicked out of Iran and losing all its economic benefits and assets in Iran, it is out for blood. I think that Mr. Bush has bullied the EU3 and the IAEA into reporting Iran to the UN Security Council for consideration for sanctioning because he is mad that a program started by the Ford administration is serving the benefit of Russia now, which is building the reactor in Bushehr. It also is an economic blow to the U.S. that the IRI switched their bourse to Euros. When the U.S. gets kicked out of a country by nationalists, it never gets over it. Look at Cuba. Nationalism is a dangerous precedent for Capitalism.

I had lunch with Prof. Abbas Edalat, the director of CASMII (Campaign Against Sanctions and Military Invasion of Iran) a few months back and he also wants Iranian regime change to come from within. He clarified for me several points about this nuclear issue. Iran is a member of the NPT and as such has the right to enrich uranium for use in generating electricity. By what authority does the USA have the right to demand that Iran cease enrichment of uranium? Iran has participated for three years in a voluntary additional protocol required of no other member of the NPT to allow anytime anywhere snap inspections by IAEA agents of Iranian nuclear sites and to this date no proof has ever been found that Iran has a nuclear weapons program.

The USA on the other hand has the largest nuclear arsenal in the world and rather than dismantling it as required by the NPT, it is augmenting it. Mr. Bush has shown a consistent pattern of contempt for treaties and international laws. He ended the U.S. participation in the Intercontinental ballistic Missile Treaty; he ended U.S. participation in the Kyoto Protocol. Mr. Bush has gone all around Iran's neighbors who are not members of the NPT offering them nuclear concessions as in Azerbaijan, Armenia and India, which in fact is a violation of the non-proliferation aspect of the NPT.

How can the U.S. government demand that Iran cease uranium enrichment because it has stopped participating in a voluntary protocol when the US government is in violation of the NPT itself?

One thing I would like to share which I gleaned from a recent issue of the National Geographic is that despite the Bush administration scoffing at the theory of global warming, the north pole is indeed melting to the point that commercial shipping lanes are taking shorter routes through areas which were once ice year round which now have none.

In 50 years at the present rate of warming there will be no ice cap. There are an estimated 375 billion barrels of oil reserves below the North Pole, which could be accessed once the ice is gone which the 9 nations bordering the pole would be only too happy to drill. Even so Mr. Bush is not content to wait for the ice to melt and his administration has tried to ram oil drilling in the Alaska ANWAR through Congress about 60 times so far.

This brings me to another point and that is about the quality of life in industrial consumer society, which it seems with the global economy everyone is hell bent on rushing into. It is getting to the point where air quality and traffic congestion are so bad in every major urban area around the planet that the automobile is almost becoming non-functional.

I think that the rise of religious fundamentalism not only in Islam but in Christendom, is a leap of blind faith by ignorant masses who are facing future shock. They want to impose a simpler order based on strict religious rules because they cannot face the complexity of technology and modern life. The trouble with orthodox religions is that they are bureaucracies based on dogma with the aim of keeping a few old white haired men in charge.

But I saw something else going on during and after the revolution of 1979, which was a desire to resist foreign cultural invasion, a desire to maintain Iranian culture and traditions and a desire to have self determination and nationalism. It was the same desire that Mossadegh had for Iran to be the main beneficiary of its own petroleum. I saw a similar trend in the USA during the '70's when the 2nd and 3rd generations of immigrants tried to rediscover their ethnic and cultural roots and identities.

Why? Because the quality of life in the post-industrial age is highly dissatisfying to the individual. People are asked to give up their customs, their traditions, their home towns and villages, their clans, extended families and communities and life long friendships in return for what? 'A higher standard of living.' The corporations who own everything and produce everything, want humanity to be reduced to a vast indiscriminating consumer that shops till it drops and goes

into debt and works non stop for all the stuff that our media tells us we must have to be cool.

Meanwhile the family is so broken that single parenthood is becoming the norm and everyone who can afford it is in therapy or failing that on drugs and alcohol. Afghanistan has been returned to an opium economy by design and popular demand. You see Karl Marx was wrong. It is not religion that is the opiate of the people but opium. As long as people are drugged out or busy killing each other in violent crimes they cannot focus or organize a revolution. It is a strategy that works in Iran and it works in the USA.

Unfortunately the moral decadence of the consumer society in which cultural icons are those who have become so wealthy either by legitimate or illegitimate means as to be able to act free of or above the law, give plenty of ammunition to the religious zealots.

And this 'War on Terrorism' is a war on dissidents. One person's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter. Americans have forgotten their revolution of 1776 in which they threw off the mercantile yoke of the British Crown. I think that Americans have to get back in touch with their own ideals and their own constitution and bill of rights and stop supporting a President and an administration that refers to the constitution as 'just a damn piece of paper.'

This administration has made spying on its own civilians and wire tapping without a warrant an accepted norm. It is time to stop the incursions against our civil liberties by an administration, which has used the fear factor of 911 to reinstate the military industrial complex. Americans need to believe in the rights of other nations to have democracy and the US needs to develop foreign policies that treat all nations equally and measure them by the same yard-stick.

No more real politique.

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