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Lessons from the Iranian Revolution

Any mature understanding of the history of other peoples, and in particular the former colonies, has to dispense with the absurd fiction of western 'altruism' and refocus on both imperial history and its most important anti-thesis, the right of peoples to self-determination, as embodied in all genuine liberation and anti-colonial movements.

Some western thinkers understand this. Davidson says the 'myth of [western] altruism' is based on ideas that: 'the west dispensed modernity and that ... makes the world better'. This notion is based on great ignorance and on the 'propaganda that has filled the void of public ignorance' (Davidson 2009: 705). That ignorance is, most simply stated, based on a mentality which regards as unimportant the histories and ideas of other peoples. Despite this ignorance, the western mind, being both modernist and imperial, often imagines it can rapidly assess and even proscribe solutions for other peoples. Rapid judgement, of course, closes the mind. Nevertheless, I suggest attempts to understand a phenomenon as profound as the Iranian Revolution must begin with less impatience, some modesty and a preparedness to read, listen and learn.

There are three strategic questions that seem to me important for western students of the Iranian Revolution.

The first is: what was the context and Iranian origins of the revolution? The second has to do with how outsiders might best understand Iran's 'political Islam', especially as compared to other forms of political Islam, notably those influenced by Salafism. The third question must be about the important role the Islamic Republic has come to play in the region and the world, particularly with respect to the big powers.

I confess that I share a common prejudice against theocracy. Even though cultures draw many of their central values from religion, I see good reason not to embed religious doctrine and hierarchies in political systems. At the same time, I recognise that cross-cultural understandings and relations must draw on core ethical principles, including respect for the self-determination of peoples and an openness and preparedness to learn from other cultures. There are important lessons for western peoples from the experience of the Iranian Revolution, especially those to do with the mobilisation of indigenous cultural values and peoples against foreign domination. However western debate often buries these lessons under intemperate and ill-informed attack. I suggest any outside assessment of contemporary Iran which simply focuses on specific critiques (e.g. particular human rights complaints), missing those broader strategic questions and core ethical principles, is bound to be deficient.

1. The Context and Origins of the Revolution

The Iranian Revolution, and its Islamic character, exploded onto a world stage already filled with dramatic revolt against the big powers. The Vietnamese people, after enormous and terrible sacrifice, had just humiliated and expelled a huge occupation army. In the little Central

American country of Nicaragua a popular movement was staging its own revolution against a US-backed military dictator. A number of African and Pacific countries were still emerging from colonial rule, while elsewhere there were 'second independence' struggles, where nominally independent countries fought against neo-colonial regimes, set in place by the United States of America and the European powers.

The North Americans ran a different empire to those of the Europeans, having developed particular skills with language and ideology. This empire of freedom, founded by slave owners, apparently never colonised another country. It certainly invaded, annexed, threatened, suborned, and installed puppet regimes; but only occasionally did it assume direct administrative control. Yet when rebellious peoples actually overthrew their colonial-like systems, Washington was slow to forgive. Revolutionary Cuba was sanctioned, terrorised and ostracised. Salvador Allende's government in Chile was wiped out by a brutal military coup. Sanctions were imposed on brave Vietnam, for many years, and the Reagan administration waged a brutal dirty war against independent Nicaragua (Sklar 1988). Similarly, after the Iranian revolution the US, along with Britain, France and Germany, would back Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in a bloody war against the new Islamic Republic (Salt 2008: 283-288).

In the Middle East, Arab nationalism had flourished after Egypt's President Nasser defeated the British and the French in the Suez crisis of the 1950s. However, after Nasser, Egypt betrayed the Arab cause by signing a unilateral peace with Israel. This left Palestine abandoned and Syria, under Hafez al Assad, fighting sectarian insurrection, fuelled by US proxies Saudi Arabia, Jordan

and even Ba'athist Iraq. It was at this time that the Iranian Revolution came about and, as Panah (2007) has pointed out, the legacy of US and Britain involvement helped shape the new Republic.

Iran had endured its own emperor, installed by the US after a CIA-backed coup in 1953. Democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh was overthrown as a result of his attempts to nationalise British Petroleum. The Prime Minister tried to assert some national claim over the country's natural resources, however 'Operation Ajax', run by the US and backed by Britain, arrested and jailed Mossadegh, installing Shah Reza Pahlavi as absolute monarch (Ruehsen 1993). Under Pahlavi a US-led consortium, which excluded Iranian partners, assumed control of the country's oil resources. Political repression under Savak, the Shah's brutal secret police, was severe. Many thousands were killed, to protect the restored monarchy (Halliday 1979).

An important consequence of the repression was that the secular political opposition was crushed and dismantled. The coup not only destroyed the Mossadegh-led government, it dismantled 'trade unions, professional associations and all independent political parties'. The Pahlavi regime stressed modernisation and advances for women (Halliday 1979), but this showcased a tiny elite. It was a regime of mass exclusion. The one remaining power base left to mobilise against this dictatorship was a well organised clergy of over 90,000 (Abrahamian 1990: 22, 24). Structural explanations of the Iranian Revolution have stressed the tension between a rigid, elitist state and strong social solidarity networks, notably urban migrants, a large small merchant class and the strong religious class (Parsa 1989).

It was clear that Pahlavi, for all his imperial pretensions, was a US puppet, and that opposition to this puppet king meant opposition to US control of Iran. The *New York Times* recognised that cries for 'liberty' and 'independence', while aimed at the Shah, 'could only' have meant independence 'from the US and its western allies', as they had propped up the Shah for decades (Cohen 2014). Huge mobilisations, holding up the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini as their moral leader, eventually drove the Shah into exile. The collapse of this US-backed dictatorship was notable for the failure of royalists to mount any real counter-offensive. A regime with the fifth largest army on earth, well-armed and well-funded, went down without much of a fight (Abrahamian 1990: 21), exposing the near absence of domestic support.

For these historical reasons, the leadership of the revolution became Islamic and the character of the new system was also Islamic. A quite original version of political Islam was developed by Imam Khomeini, quite distinct from the western dependent Islamist movements, the sectarian Muslim Brotherhood and the salafi Saudi monarchy. This was a political difference, more than a sectarian or Shia versus Sunni divide. Khomeini's vision has been termed 'a coalition based on nationalism, anti-imperialism and Islamism' (Panah 2008: ch.3).

In North America there was an entirely different discussion about the Iranian revolution. This had to do with supposed 'anti-americanism', the fate of US embassy staff held prisoner by revolutionary students, generalised attacks on theocracy and a new doctrine that claimed a US 'national interest' in the Persian Gulf (Wolf 2006; Klare 2006). This mostly self-referential debate has little to do with Iran or the current discussion.

US retaliation against newly-independent Iran made use of economic sanctions but also a military assault through Saddam Hussein of Iraq, a key collaborator in the region. Iraq had its own territorial grievances with Iran and Saddam was encouraged to strike while the Islamic Republic was new (Hersh 1992). The US rapidly 'de-designated' Iraq as a 'terrorist state' (applied because of Iraq's support for the Palestinian resistance) and then sold it 'dual use' war materials. Despite this support, by June 1982 Iran was effectively winning the war. In response US President Reagan issued a National Security directive saying the US would do 'whatever necessary and legal' to prevent Iraq from losing this war. This included finding Russian parts and ammunition, to match Iraq's Soviet hardware (Salt 2008: 283-288).

In summary, the character of the Revolution and the new Iranian government was conditioned by a generation of North American domination and humiliation, Savak's destruction of secular nationalist opposition and a clerical leadership which crafted a distinct, popular and unique vision of political Islam. The anti-imperial and Islamic features of the Iranian Revolution thus have strong historical foundations, underlining the general point that resistance is shaped by repression and that resistance, in turn, conditions the particular form of self-determination.

2. Political Islam in the Region

The Iranian revolution was in many respects unique, but it affected other Islamic revival movements (Esposito 1990) and was admired by Arab nationalists 'as a national revolution against foreign dominance and a despotic government' (Tibi 1986: 41). We should recognise that the Arab nationalisms of Egypt and Syria, though called

'secular', always retained important elements of Islamic values and culture. This overlap between Arabism and non-sectarian Islamism has much to do with shared histories, in particular with the great powers, including the former colonial powers. The last century has seen constant engagement by these powers, in efforts to dominate oil and gas resources. Big power support for the Jewish state of Israel is another conditioning factor. Such things have influenced both Arabism and Islamism (Ayoub 2005: 960-961).

Yet the actual relationship with the foreign powers, and not just simple anti-western rhetoric, marks an important distinction between the region's varieties of political Islam. The Salafism (or Wahhabism) of Saudi Arabia and the Muslim Brotherhood (in Egypt and Syria) is notable for collaborationist politics. The Iranian current was far more independent. The other important distinction is sectarianism. Salafi movements are extremely sectarian, at times promoting genocidal 'takfir' ideas, that unbelievers or apostates can be expelled or killed. At times of political conflict they stress tribal divisions, such as between Sunni and Shia, a narrative often adopted by their western sponsors. This leads to the popular misconception that Middle Eastern conflicts are essentially tribal, rather than political power struggles which engage outside powers and seek to inflame and exploit community divisions.

British administrators, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, looked for divisive collaborators in the Arab world. In this regard they drew on their experience in India and their study of the Roman Empire. First in their sights was the Saud family. British Empire politician Winston Churchill had expressed horror at the atrocities of King Ibn Saud's Wahhabis, saying 'they hold it as an article of duty,

as well as of faith, to kill all those who do not share their opinions and to make slaves of their wives and children' (Churchill 1921). Despite this, Churchill would later declare that his 'admiration for [the Saudi King] was deep, because of his unflinching loyalty to us' (Churchill 1953). A British Government memo from the mid-1940s pointed out that 'Ibn Saud's influence in the Middle East is very great, and it has been used consistently for a number of years in support of our policy' (Wikeley 1945; also Sheikh 2007: 47). The British handed this relationship on to Washington. When Egyptian President Nasser emerged as the hero of Arab nationalism the USA began to take a stronger interest in the Saudi monarchy. US President Eisenhower was looking for 'a high class Machiavellian plan to split the Arabs and defeat the aims of our enemies [the Soviet Union] ... building up King Saud as a counterweight to Nasser'. Eisenhower added: 'The King could be built up, possibly as a spiritual leader. Once this was accomplished, we might begin to urge his right to political leadership' (in Curtis 2012, 62, 68). The close US-Saudi relationship, therefore, represents not simply commercial partners in oil but rather an important political relationship between a great global power and a key regional collaborator.

The other regional Islamist collaborator was less reliable but had a wider, popular network. The Muslim Brotherhood, formed in the 1920s by Hassan al Banna of Egypt, at first opposed British influence. The Brotherhood wanted independence, but its narrow Salafist view drew it into competition with Arab nationalism, which was more inclusive and far more popular. Followers of Banna, instead of attacking 'non-Muslim or Western imperial powers', began to 'denounce the Muslim rulers' (Butterworth 1992: 35). The British initially tried to suppress the Brotherhood, but pro-British monarch King Farouk began to fund it in

1940. Farouk was said to have seen the Brotherhood as 'a useful counter' to the secular nationalists (Curtis 2012: 24). While British intelligence regarded the Brotherhood, in 1941, as 'the most serious danger to public security' in Egypt (in Lia 1998: 181), by 1942 Britain 'had definitely begun to finance the Brotherhood' (Curtis 2012: 24). The British also sought to divide the group. They agreed that 'an effort would be made to create a schism in the party by exploiting any differences which might occur between Hassan al Banna and Ahmed al-Sulkari (another Brotherhood leader)' (British Embassy Cairo, 1942).

Both the Brotherhood and the Saudis have aimed to create a political community based on sectarian religion. Through their often covert relations with the foreign powers, the Saudi-Wahhabis and the Muslim Brotherhood set the terms for collaborations across the region. Amongst themselves they both collaborated and fought. The Saudi monarchy liked the Brotherhood's 'ultra-conservative politics and its virulent hatred of Arab communists' (Draiser 2012); but in later years the 'King of the Sands' grew jealous of the more independent power base the Brotherhood enjoyed. This was not so much doctrinal difference as political rivalry (Wagner and Caffero 2013; Draiser 2013).

For its sectarianism, assassinations and attempted coups the Brotherhood has been banned under almost all Middle Eastern Governments, including Saudi Arabia. In the late 1970s, when Muslim Brotherhood linked militants assassinated Egypt's President Anwar al-Sadat, there was further repression of the group and a public debate ensued over the legitimacy of attacks on 'apostates'. A justification of the assassination was written by Abd al-Salam Faraj, arguing that Muslims had neglected 'at their peril' the imperative of the holy struggle (jihad), and the battle against

apostasy. In the Salafi-Takfiri tradition he argued that the violent overthrow of apostate regimes was 'the only path to guarantee the establishment of a truly Islamic state' (Akhavi 1992: 95). In a subsequent denunciation and fatwa against this tract, Egypt's leading cleric, Mufi Ali Jadd al-Haq, acknowledged the Quranic references relied on by Faraj but drew attention to 124 other verses 'that counsel patience or abjuring armed conflict with the non-Muslims in a spirit of peaceful persuasion' (Akhavi 1992: 95-97). None of this influenced the tactics of the Brotherhood.

The Muslim Brotherhood claims to represent Sunni Muslims, but it certainly does not. By the 1980s in Sunni-dominated Palestine, for example, the Brotherhood's political strategy modelled that of the group in Egypt. First, there was to be a phase of transforming occupied Palestine into an Islamic society, then a second stage of waging a holy struggle against Israel. This meant that nationalist Palestinians were targeted before the occupying power. Yet polls showed this strategy had less than 10% support amongst the Palestinian population, which broadly backed the PLO's unified nationalist agenda. Meanwhile, other Sunni Islamist groups, such as Islamic Jihad, stayed within the PLO and maintained strong relations across Sunni-Shia lines, including with Iran (Shadid 1988: 677-680). Israel, for its part, was well aware of the Brotherhood strategy and regarded the internal divisions as assets. Israel saw that 'any success by the Brotherhood would be at the expense of the nationalists [PLO]; consequently the latter will be weakened'. One result was that the Brotherhood was 'treated less harshly [by the Israelis] than the nationalists' (Shadid 1988: 674-675).

Opinion polls do show strong support for Islamic law in the region, but this does not mean support for sectarian

Salafism. Strong majorities in many countries (e.g. 74% in Egypt, 89% in the Palestinian territories) support sharia to be 'the official law of the land'. However those same polls show similarly strong majorities supporting freedom of religion for people of other faiths. This effective anti-Salafism is said to be due to several factors: the idea that sharia only applies to Muslims, the widely varying views of what sharia law means and differences over what role religious leaders should play in politics (Pew Research Centre 2013: 9). Strong majorities of Muslims in most countries (e.g. 67% in Egypt, 67% in Tunisia, 68% in Iraq) are also concerned about extremist groups, and particularly about Islamic extremists (Pew Research Centre 2013: 11). This is hardly surprising, since Muslims have been the first victims of sectarian terrorism. All this suggests that 'takfiri' attacks on unbelievers or apostates have little support amongst Muslims. The regional is not essentially sectarian. Further, there is not simply one form of political Islam.

3. The Political Islam of Iran

The vision of Imam Khomeini shared the common idea of a great Islamic community (Ummah), a supra-national Muslim Society. However, unlike the Salafi version, it included all sects and thus necessarily rejected 'takfiri' doctrine. One could say this was a consequence of the historical minority status of Shia Muslims (except in Iran) but, in any case, this Great Community was officially non-sectarian. Further, Khomeini's idea contrasted a 'Pure Muhammadan Islam' of the downtrodden and humble with 'American Islam', a religion of the arrogant, luxurious and opportunists. He described 'American Islam' as 'the Islam of comfort and luxury ... of compromise and ignominy, the Islam of the indolent'. By contrast, 'pure Mohammedan Islam' was seen as 'the Islam of the barefooted ... the

scourge of the despised ones of the bitter and disgraceful history of deprivation, the annihilator of modern capitalism and bloodthirsty communism' (TTF 2014). This was a vision based on Islamic principle linked to ideas of popular emancipation from the humiliation of the recent neo-colonial period.

A litmus test of the compatibility of these different views came in 1980 when Syria's Muslim Brotherhood, said to have been inspired by the Iranian Revolution, sought support from the new Republic. The Brotherhood wrote to the Iranian leader, seeking his support for their insurrection against the secular Syrian system led by Hafez al Assad. They received no response (Batatu 1982: 13). Imam Khomeini showed no interest in encouraging these sectarian Islamists against a friendly, pluralist Syria. Shortly after this rebuff from Iran, Sa'id Hawwa, the Syrian Brotherhood's chief ideologist, re-stated the sectarian position, stressing 'that the people of the Sunna are the real Muslim community' (Talhany 2009: 570; Batatu 1982:13). This anti-Shia and anti-Iran stance was consistent with the Saudi sectarian theory of a broader Shia 'threat', a Wahhabi theory which attempted incite fears of 'a possible Shiite takeover ... [of] Sunni states' (Talhany 2009: 579). Salafis sometimes refer to this as a threatened 'restoration' of a Persian Empire.

While its key values have been strong, Iran's political culture seems more fluid and adaptive. The Republic developed democratic structures, albeit under religious guidance, and an evolving policy and practice under a strong state. With an overwhelming majority (around 90%) of Shia Muslims, chauvinism was always a possibility. Yet there has been particular protection of Iran's Jewish community, not least because of a decree by Imam

Khomeini (Demick 2014). Whatever disadvantage they might still face, it has been pointed out that Iranian Jews are much better off than Palestinians in the territories occupied by Israel (Cook 2007). The Bahai' minority, on the other hand, was branded a political 'fifth column' for Israel and has indeed suffered discrimination (MacEoin 1987; Astani 2010). This has recently been subject to internal criticism, with a senior Iranian cleric criticising 'violations against the rights of these children of God' (Masoumi-Tehrani 2014).

Iran maintains sensitivity to the position of Shia minorities in regional countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Syria and Egypt. Yet most of its strategic relationships are with non-Muslim countries. In practice this means engagement of Islamic ideas with secular principle. Political opponents often say that Iran has a sectarian Shia project. However the strong alliances with pluralist Syria and occupied Palestine are more to do with a shared anti-imperialism. There are very few Shia Muslims in either Syria or Palestine. Iran does have close relations with Hezbollah, the Shia movement in Lebanon; but Hezbollah has given up the idea of an Islamic state and cooperates with other communities in Lebanon, defining its wider community as an anti-Zionist and anti-imperial 'Resistance' (El Husseini 2010). This means other communities in South Lebanon are included.

War, economic sanctions and regular threats from Israel and the US (especially over its arming the Palestinian resistance) have helped built self-reliance in Iran. The close relationships formed with Russia and Venezuela are clearly to do with anti-imperialism, unencumbered by sectarian concerns. Links to the late Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, a Christian socialist, are a case in point. Chávez made a large number of trips to Iran, as did former President

Ahmadinejad to Venezuela. Political figures in the US made ludicrous claims that those links were to do with terrorism and nuclear weapons (Golinger 2012), missing the point that this was the foundation of an important anti-imperial network. Over several years the two countries developed literally hundreds of agreements, ranging from energy to telecommunications, biotechnology and housing (Primera 2009). President Chávez defended the Islamic Republic, stressing the solidarity developed between nations under attack from the great power. 'They will never be able to restrict the Islamic revolution in whatever way ... we will always stand together', he said. For his part President Ahmadinejad said that Iran and Venezuela were part of a wider revolutionary front stretching through East Asia to Latin America (Miller Lana 2010). The relationship survived the death of Chávez and a change of Presidents in Iran. In August 2014 Venezuelan Foreign Minister Elias Jaua met President Hasan Rohani in Tehran, where they discussed regional conflicts and the maintenance of their various economic agreements (AVVN 2014).

The current Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, reinforces the independent and anti-imperial themes of Iran's political Islam, in a thinly veiled attack on collaborative Salafism. He is talking about the Brotherhood and the Islam of the gulf monarchies when he says that 'American Islam ... despite its Islamic appearance and label, is in compliance with despotism and Zionism, yields to the supremacy of arrogant powers and entirely serves the goals of despotism and the US' (ABNA 2014). 'American Islam' is thus seen as an imperial collaborator, seeking to divide the region and standing in the way of a genuine Islamic enlightenment. Khamenei says 'the enemy is investing in civil wars in the region and pins hope on a Shia-Sunni war to relieve itself of the concern of Islamic

Awakening'. He pointed to the 'evil hand of the enemy's intelligence services' in staging upheavals in some Islamic communities, including Iraq (ABNA 2014).

When we factor in the anti-imperial element, claims of a natural 'Sunni-Shia' divide in the Middle East look quite different. The Iran-Syria-Hezbollah-Palestine 'Axis of Resistance' is quite explicitly anti-sectarian. On the other hand, the Gulf monarchy backed sectarianism (often misnamed 'Sunni'), supported by big non-Muslim powers, seeks to accentuate divisions. This should not be surprising. Most claims of natural community or religious divides obscure power politics. Once again, history is important and formative. The political Islam of Iran developed as a popular anti-imperial force (see Ayoub 1979: 543), unlike the Muslim Brotherhood which for most of its history has drawn on foreign assistance in attempts to depose secular nationalism.

4. Iran in the world

The anti-imperial character of Iran clearly conditions its strategic role in the region, and the world. Further, because its political Islam is not definitive of all forms of contemporary practice and because Iran is quite unique, we should not ignore the role of ongoing secular development within the Islamic Republic. It has been observed that there is a long-standing 'secular tradition of government' in the region going back many centuries, including within the old 'Islamic' states (Salt 2008: 29). Iran is now engaged with a wider group of international partners, none of which really share its religious tradition but many of whom coincide in a number of social values. On this basis there is collaborative policy and practice. Most of Iran's strategic partners (Russia, China, Syria and Venezuela) are secular and non-

religious states. The strategic relationship with Russia is strong (Tarock 1997; Khajepour 2014), Iran enthusiastically engages in industrial, infrastructure, and financial collaboration with socialist Venezuela and is strongly committed to defence of the secular, Pan-Arab Socialist Republic of Syria (Goodarzi 2009: 2-3). Iran's was certainly 'a very different sort of militant Islam', from that of the Muslim Brotherhood (Seale 1985: 352). Such partnerships are built on common concerns, in the case of Syria to counter aggression and strengthen regional autonomy (Goodarzi 2009: 294). Historically, there were no 'Sunni-Shia' illusions from the Syrian side. While dealing with the insurrection and massacres of the sectarian Muslim Brotherhood, Hafez al Assad watched and cheered on Iran's Islamic Revolution. He then backed the Islamic Republic against Arabist Iraq, in the long Iran-Iraq war.

In recent years the confrontation with an aggressive and expansionist Israel, with its associated ethnic cleansing and seizure of territory, has been aggravated by Washington's pursuit of a 'New Middle East'. This was to be facilitated not by more direct invasions but by what Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice called 'constructive chaos'. This could generate conditions of conflict, upheaval and transformation throughout the region, allowing the United States, Britain, and Israel to redraw the map in accordance with their geo-strategic needs and objectives (Hersh 2007; Nazemroaya 2014). Retired US General Wesley Clarke published a memoir which revealed that, back in late 2001, there was a Pentagon plan to topple seven Middle Eastern governments in five years, 'starting with Iraq and Syria and ending with Iran' (Conason 2007). Consistent with these ambitions, Israel mounted an abortive attack in 2006 on South Lebanon, in an attempt to weaken the resistance group, Hezbollah. The invasion failed in its objectives.

Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia, claiming the threat of a 'Shia Crescent', which might link Iran, Iraq, Syria and South Lebanon (see e.g. Khashoggi 2013), funded Salafi groups to attack both Shia and Christian civilians in post-Saddam Iraq. This was to destabilise the Shia dominated and Iran friendly government in Baghdad (IRIN 2007). This destabilisation was followed by several years of Washington-led brinkmanship, attempts to cripple Iran's nuclear energy program, in the name of unilateral disarmament (Kibaroglu 2006). Most recently have been the attempts, under cover of an 'Arab Spring' to dismantle or destroy the more independent regional states, with Libya crushed and Syria subject to years of terrorist war by NATO-backed proxy armies, almost entirely sectarian Islamists (Anderson 2014). The vicious al Qaeda style group called ISIS (or ISIL, IS or Daesh), sponsored by Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey (Blair 2014; Narwini 2014; Vittek 2014), is just the most recent of these proxy armies.

Through all this the role of Iran has been pivotal, as the most powerful member of the regional Axis of Resistance. At the time of writing Iran is not under attack only because of the obsession over 'regime change' in Syria and ongoing destabilisation in Iraq. Yet the Islamic Republic has continued to support Palestine, the Lebanese Resistance, the Iraqi government and Syria. In the world it has engaged with wider anti-imperial forces to help build counter-hegemonic ideas and media, a new financial architecture and a multi-polar world (YVKE Mundial 2009; Hiro 2014).

In summary, there are important lessons for outside observers from the Iranian Revolution. First, the Republic and its Islamic character must be seen as the genuine expression of legitimate, historical self-determination processes in that country. Second, the political Islam of

Iran, being independent, popular, anti-sectarian and anti-imperial, differs markedly from the collaborationist and sectarian political Islam of the Saudis and other Salafis, including the Muslim Brotherhood. Third, the most important strategic partners of Iran are non-Islamic states, and this has meant consistent political engagement on secular principle. Finally, the Islamic republic plays a key, counter-weight role in the region, and in the world, in counter-hegemonic and counter-imperial strategies, including the construction of a multipolar world.

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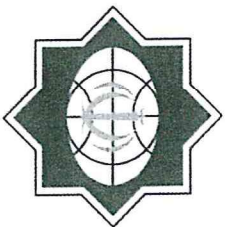
Imam Khomeini – Through the eyes of a revert

What is Revolution? It is defined that a revolution is a fight, a war to change the political status of a country and it is usually a quick event. Not the revolution of Iran for the emergence of the Islamic State. In this discussion I am defining Revolution, the history of the mind of a Revolutionist, the revolution within a family and society and then the message of the most inspiring revolutionist of all time, Imam Hussein (as), through the eyes and understanding of a revert living in Australia.

A political revolution – by definition, is usually the result of poor or oppressive government, and many times end in a worse situation than before. However, some political revolutions can be seen in a positive way, with the government becoming more responsive to their people's needs. Whatever the case, political revolutions are major turning points in a country's history. This is such the case in Iran, it was the most major turning point, not just for Iran but for the whole Islamic World at the time. It slowly built up over many years and when Imam Khomeini returned in

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سازمان فرهنگ و ارتباطات اسلامی

Cultural Section of the Embassy of the
Islamic Republic of Iran
Canberra - February 2015



The Islamic Revolution of Iran

From the viewpoint of Australian Scholars

*On The Occasion Of 36th Anniversary of the Islamic Revolution of Iran
February 2015*

Cultural Section of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran - Australia