

Are Iran's Nine Lives Nearing an End?



by Victor Davis Hanson

The theocracy of Iran has been the world's arch-embassy attacker over the last half century.

So it has zero credibility in crying foul over Israel's April 1 attacks on its "consulate" in Damascus and the killing of Iran's kingpin terrorists of the Revolutionary Guard Corps there.

Remember, the world was first introduced to the Iranian ayatollahs by their violent takeover of the U.S. embassy in Tehran in 1980.

Iranian surrogates next bombed the American embassy in Beirut and the Marine barracks in 1983.

In fact, Iran has attacked US and Israeli diplomatic posts off-and-on for decades, most recently in 2023, when Iran helped plan an attack on the US embassy in Baghdad.

For this reason and several others, Iran's justification for sending 170 drones, 30 cruise missiles, and 120 ballistic missiles into Israel on the grounds that Israel had bombed an Iranian diplomatic post is completely ridiculous.

One, Iran has never honored diplomatic immunity. Instead, it habitually attacks and kills embassy personnel and blows up diplomatic facilities across the world.

Two, on April 1, the Israelis attacked a pseudo-"consulate" in Damascus which was hosting grandees of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as they planned terrorist attacks on

Israel.

Without Iran, the Middle East might have had a chance to use its enormous oil and natural gas wealth to lift its 500 million people out of poverty rather than to be mired in constant tribal and religious anti-Israeli, anti-American, and anti-Western terrorism.

During the Iraq War, Iran's Shiite terrorists and its massive supplies of deadly shaped-charge explosive devices killed hundreds of Americans. It routinely hijacks container ships in the Straits of Hormuz and stages near collisions with American ships and planes.

How does Iran get away with nonstop anti-Western terrorism, its constant harassment of Persian Gulf maritime traffic, its efforts to subvert Sunni moderate regimes, and its serial hostage-taking?

The theocrats operate on three general principles.

One, Iran is careful never to attack a major power directly.

Until this week, it had never sent missiles and drones into Israel. Its economy is one-dimensionally dependent on oil exports. And its paranoid government distrusts its own people, who have no access to free elections.

So Iranian strategy over the last few decades has relied on surrogates—especially expendable Arab Shia terrorists in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen, along with the Sunni Arabs of Hamas—to do its dirty work of killing Israelis and Americans.

It loudly egged all of them on and then cowardly denied responsibility once it feared Israeli or American retaliation.

Two, it has fooled Western governments and especially left-wing American administrations by posing as a persecuted victim. Iran claims it is the champion of aggrieved Shiite Arab and Persian minorities, unfairly exploited by Israel,

moderate Arab regimes, and rich Sunni Gulf monarchies.

Three, Iran hopes its pseudo-diplomatic outreach to left-wing Western governments, coupled with its lunatic existential threats and unleashing terrorist attacks on its enemies, can coax or bully the West into granting it concessions—especially time to acquire a dozen or so nuclear weapons.

Yet for all its loud, creepy threats, Iran is incredibly weak and vulnerable.

Israel and its allies shot down almost all its recent nocturnal missile and drone barrages. Lots of other missiles reportedly blew up on liftoff in Iran or crashed in transit.

Before the Biden appeasement of Iran, the Trump administration had isolated and nearly bankrupted Tehran and its proxies. Its Revolutionary Guard terrorist planners proved to be easy targets once they operated outside Iran.

Iran's only hope is to get a bomb and, with it, nuclear deterrence to prevent retaliation when it increases its terrorist surrogate attacks on Israel, the West, and international commerce.

Yet now Iran may have jumped the shark by attacking the Israeli homeland for the first time. It is learning that it has almost no sympathetic allies.

Does even the Lebanese Hezbollah really want to take revenge against Israel on behalf of Persian Iran, only to see its Shia neighborhoods in Lebanon reduced to rubble?

Do all the pro-Hamas protestors on American campuses and in the streets really want to show Americans they celebrate Iranian attacks and a potential Iranian war against the United States?

Does Iran really believe 99 percent of any future Israel barrage against Iranian targets would fail to hit targets in

the fashion that its own recent launches failed?

Does Iran really believe that its sheer incompetence in attacking Israel warrants them a pardon—as if they should be excused for trying, but not succeeding, to kill thousands of Jews?

In sum, by unleashing a terrorist war in the Middle East and targeting the Israeli homeland, Iran may wake up soon and learn Israel, or America, or both might retaliate for a half-century of its terrorist aggression—and mostly to the indifference or even the delight of most of the world.

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