

Tehran on My Mind

by Phyllis Chesler



Monday marked [Kate Millett](#), introduced me to [Going to Iran](#). She was also arrested and swiftly, mercifully, deported.

Reza was still in Iran the next year and invited *me* to come address Iranian women on International Woman's Day in 1980. He said: "You understand the Muslim soul; it will be different." I only laughed and kept repeating that I'd [speech](#) on June 3, 1963, against Jews, Israel, and the Shah at the Fayziya Madrasa in Qom. When I was enjoying my puddings, I had no knowledge of how obsessed Khomeini was with an Islamic-Nazi-Communist version of a "vast Jewish global conspiracy."

Psychologically and politically, like honor-killers, jihad-terrorists always believe they are acting in self-defense. Khomeini slickly appropriated features of Marxism (anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, the liberation of an oppressed

class) in order to lure left-wing supporters (like my friend Reza Baraheni), and to proclaim Muslims as an oppressed “class” both to themselves and to Westerners.

Another Iranian dissident with whom I recently spoke, and who also prefers to remain anonymous, told me that he “does not believe that enough people are aware of the intense Jew hatred that penetrated the Ayatollah Khomeini’s psyche, and that of his co-revolutionaries such as [Mostafa Chamran](#) and [negotiations](#) with Iran – Iran continues its secret program of enriching [ballistic missiles](#), as well as its long [operationalizing Argentina](#) – killing scores and injuring hundreds – and getting away with it?

Is such behavior sheer madness, demonic perseverance – or is it applied Islam, Shi’a style? If so, it might be important to revisit Khomeini’s [Ashura](#), the holiday which memorializes the day Husayn Ibn Ali, Mohammed’s grandson, was martyred in the battle of Karbala. Khomeini delivered a speech, really a sermon, which he titled, *The Shah and Israel; the root of people’s suffering in Iran*.

“Israel does not wish there to be any learned men in this country,” he said. “Israel does not wish the Qur’an to exist in this country. Israel does not wish the ‘ulama to exist in this country. Israel does not wish to see Islamic precepts in this country. It was Israel that assaulted the madrasa by means of its sinister agents. It is assaulting us too and you, the nation; it wishes to seize your economy, to destroy your trade and agriculture and to appropriate your wealth leaving this country without.”

Khomeini viewed Israel as the relentless aggressor.

Khomeini condemned the Shah’s doctrine of equal rights for men and women.

Khomeini wondered what the “real relationship between the Shah and Israel” can be. “Can it be that the Shah is an Israeli?

Does the (Israeli) secret service believe him to be Jewish?" Khomeini advised the Shah that he is "under constant (Israeli) surveillance" and that Khomeini's words may not get to the Shah.

An Unyielding Vison

Paranoia and megalomania do not begin to describe this cleric's mind—and yet, he prevailed and returned in triumph from his [Robert Wistrich](#) noted that, by the mid-1970s, Khomeini had expanded his enemy list to include the United States, Great Britain, and Russia. He writes:

"After the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the Koranic motifs sharply increased in importance, along with virulent anti-Americanism. In the Islamic demonology, both America and Israel are firmly bonded together as 'Satanic forces' that threaten core identity, values, and existence of Islam... Uncle Sam has coalesced with Shylock into a terrifying specter of globalization ('Americanization') threatening to swamp the world of Islam."

I suggest that all the well-meaning diplomats who sincerely do not want Iran to become a nuclear power must also understand with whom, what kind of regime, they are dealing. As independent Middle East analyst, Nevet Basker has said: "A comprehensive problem should be addressed with a comprehensive solution, not a piecemeal one (e.g. only the nuclear piece). Iran is an immediate threat to its neighbors and to the broader Middle East."

This is 2021, not 2015. Things have changed on the ground, e.g., the [military action](#)" will be seen as "anti-American." This strongly suggests that the new American administration expects the Saudis and Israel to accept Iranian and Palestinian aggression.

Iran's vision remains that of a Shi'a caliphate, ruling over as much land as it can conquer. This is primarily a religious

holy war, not part of a rational political plan. Think of it as a theological cult which is religiously forbidden to compromise, but which can deceive as necessary. Perhaps western counter-terrorism experts already know this; perhaps not. But what about government leaders who believe they can appease Iran, pay them off, trust them, believe them, invest in their country—negotiate with them in good faith?

Please know with whom you are dealing and act accordingly.

First published in