

**"A treasure trove of information that Americans should know, but scarcely do."**

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# THE PLOT TO ATTACK IRAN

**How the CIA and the Deep State  
Have Conspired to Vilify Iran**

A photograph showing a missile being launched from a ship's deck. The missile is angled upwards and to the left, with a bright orange and white flame trail. The ship's deck and other launchers are visible in the foreground, and the ocean extends to the horizon under a cloudy sky.

**DAN KOVALIK**

# INTRODUCTION

*If you're not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing.*

—Malcolm X

I VISITED IRAN FOR THE FIRST time in July of 2017. Indeed, quite ironically, I was in Iran for the Fourth of July. And, while there were no fireworks on that day to commemorate US Independence Day, I assure the reader that I felt absolutely no antipathy from the Iranian people, despite my being a citizen of the nation which has been referred to by some Iranians as the Great Satan. Rather, as I'm sure nearly every American tourist in Iran can tell you, the Iranians have a special affection for Americans, and when strangers on the street found out I was from the United States, they would invariably smile, welcome me to their country, show off their English if they were able to speak it, and enthusiastically pose for a photo-op.

Like most people in the world, the people of Iran quite readily, and maturely, distinguish individual Americans from their government—a government which many Iranians do have a problem with, and for very good reason.

Iran is actually a quite modern country with many Western influences. Many people I met spoke some English, some quite fluently,

and most signs were in both Farsi and English. And, while nearly every woman wore some type of head covering—a legal requirement in Iran, though enforcement of the requirement has been relaxed by the police in Tehran as of late—very few wear a burka which covers their face.

Instead, most women (some of the most beautiful I have seen anywhere) wear light, colorful silk scarves around their heads, while wearing very modern clothes otherwise, including, for example, blue jeans and high heels. Actually, I found it quite amusing that nearly no women wore head coverings at all on the flight from Frankfurt, Germany, but when the pilot announced our initial descent into Tehran, nearly all the women put on their scarves in unison.

I think it is quite fair to say that women indeed fare better in Iran than in nearly any other country in the Middle East, and in many ways better than before the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Thus, literacy for women is now over 80 percent while it was around 25 percent in 1970; 90 percent of women are enrolled in school, which is free for all even through university; while about one-third of university students were women before 1979, now women make up a strong majority (65 to 70 percent) of university students; and women participate in every field of economic and social life, including sports, film, police, medicine, science, business, and entertainment.<sup>1</sup>

Women actually do better in Iran than in the United States in a few key ways—for example, they are legally entitled to ninety days maternity leave at two-thirds pay,<sup>2</sup> whereas in the United States they have no entitlement to maternity leave at all. Iran has an equal pay for equal work requirement,<sup>3</sup> a measure which the United States does not have and indeed has opposed vigorously, most notably by refusing to ratify international human rights instruments which require this, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It must be noted that the United States and Iran share the distinction of being among the few countries which are not parties to CEDAW, the others being Palau, The Holy See, Somalia, Sudan, and Tonga.

Iranian women have an entitlement to employer-provided child care centers whereas, again, they have no such right in the United States.<sup>4</sup>

Some other fun facts are that Iran is one of the only countries in the world that requires couples to take a class on modern contraception before being issued a marriage license. Iran also has the only state-sponsored condom factory in the Middle East—the Keyhan Bod plant—which produces seventy million condoms a year in various colors and flavors.<sup>5</sup> In addition, there are more sex change operations in Iran than any country in the world besides Thailand.<sup>6</sup> Since 2005, when the much-maligned Ahmadinejad was president, the government has been providing grants of up to \$4,500 for the operation, plus further funding for hormone therapy.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, the one big downside for me, a guy who enjoys a glass or two of red wine in the evening, is that alcohol is illegal in Iran. And so, while the airport and hotel we stayed at (the former Tehran Hyatt) had bars, they did not serve alcohol; only juice, coffee, and tea.

In addition, the airport, hotel, and nearly every building we visited were adorned with giant framed photos of both the infamous Ayatollah Khomeini, who I was taught to hate and fear as a child, and the current Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, who certainly has a softer, kinder look than his predecessor. I desperately wanted to take a selfie in front of these pictures, but, for fear of offending someone, I never did.

I have read that, notwithstanding Iran's dry law, many Iranians have a private stock of liquor, and that Iranians indeed compete very well with other nations, Russia included, for alcohol consumption. I sat next to a German petro-engineer on the plane to Tehran. He told me that he often comes to Iran for work, and that he has gotten to know some Iranians very well. He explained how he was at an Iranian family's home one evening for dinner, and they asked him how he liked their food. He responded, "It is wonderful, but I am from Germany; it would go down much better with a glass of beer." And then, from seemingly out of nowhere, bottles of Heineken and other spirits

appeared on the table. Apparently, this is a typical happening, but not knowing anyone very well in Iran, I did not have such an experience.

Even stone cold sober, however, I loved Iran. The people are friendly and famously hospitable. Indeed, I was almost embarrassed by the hospitality. My hosts, from the University of Tehran which had invited several of us from the States to speak there, were constantly making sure that we had enough to eat and drink, and that we always had a place to rest, even in the middle of the day. The Iranians that accompanied us would often disappear themselves in the early afternoon, and we later learned that they were going to the nearest prayer room—not to pray, however, but to sleep on the floor.

Iranians would consider it an act of barbarity to make us take a cab to or from the airport, as opposed to being personally driven. In contrast, I can't remember the last time someone personally took me or picked me up at the airport back home in Pittsburgh.

At the mosques, moreover, it was quite common for people to give visitors, such as myself, offerings of food, such as homemade candies. At the first mosque we visited in Tehran—the Imamzadeh-Saleh Mosque—our guide pointed out the burial places of four of the nuclear scientists assassinated by Israel, quite possibly with the help of the terrorist group known as the MEK. These scientists are considered martyrs, a very big honor in the Shia religious tradition.

Of course, there are many dazzling and breathtaking antiquities to gaze at in Iran. I was very fortunate because the University of Tehran generously offered to fly a couple of us to the ancient city of Esfahan (also spelled “Isfahan”) which is a one-hour flight south of Tehran.

In Esfahan, we spent a day walking through the Imam Square (also known as Meidan Emam or Naghsh-e Jahan), truly a sight to behold. Imam Square is one of over twenty UNESCO-designated world heritage sites in Iran. This is UNESCO's description of the Square:

The Meidan Emam is a public urban square in the centre of Esfahan, a city located on the main north-south and east-west routes crossing

central Iran. It is one of the largest city squares in the world and an outstanding example of Iranian and Islamic architecture. Built by the Safavid shah Abbas I in the early 17th century, the square is bordered by two-storey arcades and anchored on each side by four magnificent buildings: to the east, the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque; to the west, the pavilion of Ali Qapu; to the north, the portico of Qeyssariyeh; and to the south, the celebrated Royal Mosque. A homogenous urban ensemble built according to a unique, coherent, and harmonious plan, the Meidan Emam was the heart of the Safavid capital and is an exceptional urban realization.

Also known as Naghsh-e Jahan (“Image of the World”), and formerly as Meidan-e Shah, Meidan Emam is not typical of urban ensembles in Iran, where cities are usually tightly laid out without sizeable open spaces. Esfahan's public square, by contrast, is immense: 560 m long by 160 m wide, it covers almost 9 ha [i.e., 24.3 acres]. All of the architectural elements that delineate the square, including its arcades of shops, are aesthetically remarkable, adorned with a profusion of enameled ceramic tiles and paintings.<sup>8</sup>

Sadly, as UNESCO laments, the Imam Square is being threatened by the most relentless of forces—time—and Iran's inability to keep up maintenance of the ancient structures. The Western sanctions against Iran only curtail Iran's ability to maintain such treasures. However, I did notice while in Esfahan that at least some of the buildings were covered with scaffolding and under repair.

As I witnessed, this Square is teeming with activity, with people picnicking, playing music, shopping, or sitting to enjoy some ice cream on what is almost invariably a hot, sunny day. I myself spent the day in the Square taking numerous photos, particularly of the people there, and they seemed excited about how much I appreciated them and their country.

When one is in Esfahan, one must visit the amazing bazaars which help to form Imam Square, and we of course did just that. While I was

at one of the bazaars, I was invited to drink espresso in a Persian carpet dealer's store while the ring I was buying as a souvenir (a silver ring with a black opal and with the word "Ali" in Farsi carved beautifully into both sides) was being fitted for me by the vendor's son.

The vendor, known as a bazaar, immediately started taking out rugs, unrolling them, and telling us of the history of each one. Some of the rugs, though they looked brand new, were a hundred years old or more. The craftsmanship put into these, probably the most famous type of rug in the world, is awe-inspiring. In the end, the bazaar's hospitality paid off, as my American companion bought a rug from him, and I purchased an incredible backpack which looked like it was made from a Persian rug.

This bazaar, I must note, was the only one I met in Iran who could process a credit card. Somehow, he managed to have cards processed through Dubai. Because of the Western sanctions against Iran, US credit and ATM cards do not otherwise work in Iran, making a tourist trip to that country quite challenging for an American.

Another interesting consequence of the Western isolation of Iran is that international copyright and trademark laws are not honored there. And so, for example, there were a number of knock-off businesses which passed themselves off as American chains, such as Starbucks and Kentucky Fried Chicken, though they usually were named just slightly differently. The KFC I saw, complete with a picture of Colonel Sanders, was named ZFC, though no one could tell me what the "Z" stands for.

While in Esfahan, we also visited the famous Monar Jonban, literally, "Shaking Minarets," a monument built in the 1300s to cover the grave of Amu Abdollah Soqla, a Muslim hermit. The monument's two tall minarets are spring-loaded and built to shake so that they can withstand an earthquake. Several times a day, the minarets are shaken manually to the sound of music as bystanders look on and applaud.

Iran, and Esfahan in particular, while known primarily for their spectacular Islamic architecture, also have amazing architecture from

other religions and cultures. For example, there are a number of beautiful Armenian Christian churches—one that I visited in Esfahan is still a functioning place of worship and has an exhibit memorializing the Armenian genocide. I was also able to visit the ancient Zoroastrian Fire Temple, Atashgah, which looks like a giant sand castle on a hill.

And, one might be surprised to hear that I also visited a functioning synagogue in Esfahan (once called "Dar-Al-Yahud," or, "House of the Jews"). I went looking for the synagogue after seeing a shopkeeper in a bazaar wearing a yarmulke. Iran is actually home to twenty-five thousand Jews—the second largest Jewish population in the Middle East outside of Israel. And, in addition to synagogues, Esfahan is also home to a two-thousand-year-old Jewish cemetery as well as Jewish mausoleums.

Iranians are indeed proud of the fact that the famous Persian Emperor in Persepolis, Cyrus the Great, upon conquering Babylon, "freed the Jews who had been held there in slavery, returned them to Jerusalem and gave them resources to rebuild their temple."<sup>9</sup>

The director of Tehran's Jewish Committee, Siamak Morsadegh, recently gave an interview in which he described the experience of Jews in modern Iran, and dispelled a number of myths about Iran in the process:<sup>10</sup>

It's a lot better than many people think. Jews are a recognized minority here, so we can practice our religion freely. We have more than 20 working synagogues in Tehran and at least five kosher butcheries. In some European countries that is not allowed because of animal rights. In Iran, it is.

Generally speaking, the Jews' condition in Iran has always been better than in Europe. In our country's history, there was never a time when all Iranians had the same religion, race or language, so there is a high degree of tolerance. Jews and Muslims respect each other, but at the same time, we know there are differences.

The hospital I work in is a Jewish hospital, for example, but more than 95 percent of both our personnel and patients is Muslim. It's

strictly forbidden to ask about religion there because the most important verse of Torah, which is written on top of the hospital, says: “Treat other people like yourself.” It does not say “other Jews,” it says “other people.” It shows that we have a practical relationship with each other and cooperate to make the world a better place.

But I am Iranian—I pray in Hebrew and I can speak in English, but I can only think in Persian. In my opinion there is a big difference between nationality and religion; they are not in opposition to each other. Going abroad—and especially going to Israel—is not an option for me, because I think the idea that Jews have to live in one special place in the world is rooted in the idea that we are different from other people. But I think we are equal.

In the same interview, Siamak Morsadegh addressed head-on some of the inflammatory statements made by Iranian President Ahmadinejad about the Holocaust and Israel:

We did not agree with President Ahmadinejad, and we told him so. He did not directly deny the Holocaust, he questioned it—but I do not even accept questioning it. It doesn’t make sense to question things that are completely clear and accepted all around the world.

But that did not disturb our day-to-day life. The financial help for our Jewish hospital by the government, for example, started during Ahmadinejad’s presidency. He was anti-Israel, not anti-Semitic. Iran’s general policy is not changed by its presidents anyway. The main policymaker is Supreme Leader [Ayatollah Ali Khamenei], and the main framework is the constitution.

These are not mere idle words, either, for the proof is in the pudding. As journalist Jonathan Cook explains, the relative success of Jews in Iran “and their repeated refusal to leave, despite financial incentives offered by Israel and American Jewish groups for them to emigrate,

have proved an enduring embarrassment to those claiming that the Iranian regime is driven by genocidal anti-Semitism.”<sup>11</sup>

In truth, Iran is proud of the pluralistic nature of its society and its tolerance of many faiths. Indeed, as the United States has itself recognized for a long time, as evidenced in a December 27, 1978, Confidential Country Team Report drafted by the US Embassy in Tehran: “The Shi’a sect of Islam predominates in Iran but the country has had a long history of religious toleration which has allowed such religious minorities as Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians and members of the Baha’i sect to practice their beliefs openly and to participate fully in public life.”<sup>12</sup>

One might be surprised to learn that, to this very day, the biggest holiday in Iran is not in fact Islamic but is indeed the three-thousand-year-old Zoroastrian New Year’s Day celebration known as Nowruz (New Day).<sup>13</sup> Iran as a nation existed, in fact, for over two millennia before Islam ever came into being.<sup>14</sup> And, Iran’s language, Farsi, is more like French and Swedish than Arabic, the Iranian people being distinctly and proudly non-Arabs.<sup>15</sup>

I often thought to myself during my stay in Iran that, despite Iran being invaded multiple times over its long history, including by the Mongols who actually left much of the architecture intact, the ancient buildings I gazed at were still there because the United States had yet to invade it. The other countries in the region that have been “graced” by the US military in recent years, such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya, now lay in ruins, possibly never to be rebuilt again.

As one example, just this morning, I heard an NPR story about Mosul, Iraq, where the United States finished a very brutal operation over seven months ago. They interviewed an Iraqi who complained that he still cannot return to his home because it still contains the bones of the ISIS fighters killed in the battle, that the roads have yet to be cleared, and the 150,000 homes or so destroyed in the battle have yet to be rebuilt.<sup>16</sup>

NPR quoted former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who just shrugged it off by saying that the United States—which had opened up Pandora’s Box in Iraq to begin with by its 2003 invasion—does not engage in nation-building anymore (if it ever really did), and that the Gulf countries should help with the rebuilding.<sup>17</sup> Commenting on this, Jeffrey St. Claire of *CounterPunch* quipped, “So much for the Pottery Barn Rule. It’s back to the Tacitus Rule: ‘We made wasteland and called it peace.’”<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile, many Iranians mistook me for being Persian before I opened my mouth and spoke English, and they seemed overjoyed to meet an American who looked like them. My new friend Ali (it seemed to me that nearly every man in Iran is named either Ali or Mohammad), a young man who served as our interpreter, was quite amused by this. Ali is both a die-hard supporter of the Islamic Republic as well as one of the sweetest people I’ve ever met. He turned to me once, cupping my face in his hands, and said, “You have such a kind face; you look like the men who volunteered to fight against Saddam Hussein.”

Ali was referring, of course, to the brutal war between Iran and Iraq in which thousands of Iranian volunteers (the Baseeji, or Popular Mobilization Army) went to the front lines to supplement the fledgling revolutionary military and to confront the Iraqi invaders with “human wave” attacks.<sup>19</sup> These “human wave” attacks were quite successful until Iraq came up with the brilliant plan to counter them with chemical weapons, of course bought from Germany and the United States.

Saddam Hussein preemptively launched this war, with great encouragement from the United States and the rest of the West, to try to overturn the Islamic government which had just come to power and to annex land from Iran given up in the 1975 Algiers Agreement. The war, known then as the Gulf War until the United States appropriated that name for its 1991 invasion of Iraq,<sup>20</sup> lasted from 1980 to 1988, with the United States at times, and quite cynically, supporting both sides of the armed conflict.

On the first evening of our visit to Esfahan, Ali accompanied us across one of the eleven spectacular stone bridges that, at that moment, crossed the completely dry Zayandeh River. Five of the eleven bridges, including the one we crossed, are over four hundred years old. When there is a big rain, the bank then fills up with the Zayandeh. Sadly, Iran these days is frequently battling drought, so we never witnessed this. However, we did hear the frogs, at least a reminder of the river, croaking at the moonlight.

These bridges are truly a sight to behold. The one we crossed is called the Si-o-Seh Bridge, built in 1602, and is known as the “Bridge of 33 Arches.” These arches are lit up yellowish orange at night. The glow from the arches is quite magical. People of all ages, including babies being pushed in strollers, traverse these bridges into the wee hours. As Ali noted, “It is safe here. Even women can go out alone at night without worry.”

Ali was so proud to show me his country, including the Revolutionary Guard who manned the security at the airport. A devotee of American cinema, Ali said, as we approached security, “You will see the Revolutionary Guard with their green uniforms and thick beards just as the ones depicted in the movie *Argo*” (the film about the American hostage-taking which won Best Picture at the Academy Awards), “but you will see that they are very nice.”

I asked Ali how he liked the movie *Argo*, which obviously depicts the Americans as the good guys. He said, with a smile on his face, “I hated it, of course; I am Iranian.”

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While at age eleven I was not aware of the February 1979 Islamic Revolution which overthrew the Shah of Iran, I was quite aware, as anyone my age and older, of the taking of the American hostages in the US Embassy in Tehran which followed soon thereafter and which lasted

for 444 days. I remember the rage we as Americans collectively felt as we saw the tally of the days these hostages were held tick upwards every evening on the nightly news. And, our rage was focused on the personification of the revolutionary government of Iran at that time—the Ayatollah Khomeini—who was also portrayed as the personification of evil itself.

I also recall vividly the failed attempt by Jimmy Carter to rescue the hostages, and then the joy I felt when the hostages were finally released within mere minutes of Ronald Reagan's inauguration as President. Growing up in a firmly Republican household, I believed that this series of events demonstrated the incompetence and weakness of Carter on the one hand, and the omnipotence of Reagan on the other, as the mere swearing-in of the tough-talking and resolute Reagan appeared to have frightened the Iranians into releasing the hostages.

The vilification of Khomeini and Iran was, and continues to be, made easy by the omission of many salient facts in the prevailing, and quite one-sided, narrative of the US-Iranian saga. And, the story of the apparent incompetence of Carter versus the apparent superhero quality of Reagan also unravels upon close inspection of facts which are rarely discussed in polite company, if known at all.

Such things are never taught in high school, and certainly not mine, a Catholic school in Cincinnati whose powerhouse football team (on which I played) was dubbed "The Holy Crusaders," after the Christian knights sent to invade, conquer, and pillage the Muslim world in the name of Jesus Christ.

I only became aware of such facts in college, and even then, not in any classroom. Rather, I learned of such things, which I discuss in this book, when my college friends and I began delving into the crimes of the CIA and US imperialism. I then became aware that Iran has been more of the victim of unjust US policies than the other way around, and that the fear and rage some Iranians expressed in the

hostage-taking was rooted in very real grievances growing out of the US-backed coup against their democratically-elected prime minister in 1953, the United States' installing of the murderous Shah (or king) in his stead, and the United States' support for the Shah and his torture state until the bitter end which only came about in 1979 with the Islamic Revolution.

And, the twisted nature of the US-Iranian relationship did not end there. Indeed, what none of the US public knew at the time the hostages were being held, and which few even know today, is that Reagan, far from playing the hero in this story, acted the part of a conniving villain. Indeed, Reagan, with the help of the CIA and Israel's Mossad, went behind Jimmy Carter's back and derailed his efforts to free the hostages in order to greatly improve his chances of becoming president. And, the seemingly miraculous timing of the freeing of the hostages within five minutes of Reagan's inauguration turned out to be the product, not of Reagan's greatness, but of his dirty deal with the hostage-takers to hold the hostages until after he was safely in office. In a very real way, then, Reagan himself became the captor of these hostages in their final months of captivity.

Reagan would then go on to encourage Saddam Hussein, then the United States' close friend, to lead Iraq into invading Iran in 1980 in order to try to overturn the Iranian Revolution. This deadly war, which lasted until 1988, resulted in the deaths of around one million people, and included Saddam's gassing of Iranians, and Kurds as well, with US knowledge and acquiescence. To make matters even worse, Reagan at one point helped arm Iran during the war, even as he was aiding Iraq, in order to obtain needed cash to fund the Nicaraguan Contras—a terrorist group which Congress had stopped funding because of their abysmal human rights record—and in order to weaken both Iran and Iraq as powers in the Middle East.

Once I learned this tragic history, I lost all of the antipathy I felt towards Iran as a child. Instead, I felt only love and empathy for the

people of Iran who I came to understand have suffered much more at our hands than we at theirs. And, watching the United States go from one destructive war to the next, invariably justifying each war on the basis of claims which quickly turned out to be lies, I decided that I could not stand silently by as the United States stumbled into another war with a beautiful country which not only deserves our respect, but which deserves a long-awaited apology for what our nation has done to it and its people.

## 1

# TARGET: IRAN

*We're going to take out seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq, and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and, finishing off, Iran.*

—US General Wesley Clark, former Supreme Commander of NATO<sup>1</sup>

THE DRUMS OF WAR ARE BEATING yet again. As they often have for the past thirty-plus years, they are beating in this country for a war with Iran. I have written this book in an attempt to stop such a war—a war which I believe would not only be unjust, illegal, and immoral, but which would be truly devastating for both Iran and the United States, and, indeed, for the entire world.

By many accounts, the United States, and its close ally Israel, have been preparing for a war with Iran for well over a decade now. As veteran journalists such as Seymour Hersh and Jonathan Cook have documented, the Bush Administration was keen on a military attack against Iran in 2005.<sup>2</sup> It appears that Bush began concrete preparations for such an attack in 2006. According to Seymour Hersh, by the spring of 2006, the White House had increased clandestine activities inside Iran and intensified planning for a possible major air attack. Current and former American military and intelligence officials said that Air Force planning groups are drawing up lists of targets, and teams of American combat troops have been ordered into Iran, under

cover, to collect targeting data and to establish contact with anti-government ethnic-minority groups.<sup>3</sup>

Plans were even being made for tactical nuclear weapons strikes against various targets in Iran.

According to such accounts, Israel's 2006 assault upon Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon was the opening salvo against Iran (Hezbollah being a critical ally of Iran in striking distance of Israel).

However, the strong resistance which Hezbollah put up against Israel's four-week assault, combined with the equally strong resistance of the Iraqi people after the 2003 invasion—an invasion which Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld promised would end quickly with a modest military force—necessitated a delay in an attack upon Iran. However, the goal for such an attack has never been removed from the table.

Indeed, while many viewed President Obama's 2015 "nuclear deal" with Iran as a move towards peace with that country, there are good arguments for the proposition that this deal (formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA) was always a Trojan Horse. And so, when President Trump stated that this deal was the "worst ever," he was right, though not in the way he meant—in reality, it was the "worst ever" for Iran, and was always intended to be so.

The general outline of the nuclear deal was that, in return for the lifting of UN sanctions which were ostensibly imposed in response to Iran's nuclear enrichment program, Iran would give up this program. Iran was desperate for the lifting of these sanctions, which severely undermined its economy, and which made further investment in much-needed social programs impossible. For its part, the United States claimed it wanted the deal to end any attempt by Iran to build nuclear weapons, though the United States' own National Intelligence Estimate concluded that Iran did not have such intention, and in any case was years away from having nuclear weapons capability.

At the same time, as learned the hard way by Libya, which had given up its nuclear ambitions to placate the West only to be invaded

shortly thereafter, and as proven by North Korea whose nukes brought Trump to the bargaining table, the only way a weaker state can protect itself against the United States is to have a nuclear deterrent. Indeed, as Israel's leading military historian, Martin Van Creveld, has opined, Iran would be insane if it were not trying to develop nuclear weapons. Thus, according to Creveld:

Even if the Iranians are working on a bomb, Israel may not be their real concern. Iran is now surrounded by American forces on all sides—in the Central Asian republics to the north, Afghanistan to the east, the Gulf to the south and Iraq to the West . . . Wherever U.S. forces go, nuclear weapons go with them or can be made to follow in short order. The world has witnessed how the United States attacked Iraq for, as it turned out, no reason at all. Had the Iranians not tried to build nuclear weapons, they would be crazy.<sup>4</sup>

Iran, not so much crazy, but desperate for the end of sanctions, agreed to give up its nuclear ambitions, even those related to pressing energy concerns.

The United States, however, was motivated to end Iran's nuclear ambitions for the precise purpose of leaving Iran vulnerable to attack, just as Creveld explained it would be without a nuclear deterrent. But there was another way in which the nuclear deal would set Iran up for invasion, one which is not so apparent.

As geopolitical researcher Tony Cartalucci explains, the bad faith of the United States in signing the nuclear deal is evidenced by its actions in engaging in proxy wars against Iran—in Syria, Lebanon, and in Iran itself through terrorist groups—even as it was signing on the dotted line.<sup>5</sup> Cartalucci writes that, "[a]ccording to years of US policy papers, dismantling Iran's allies in Syria and Lebanon were crucial prerequisites toward eventually undermining and overthrowing the government and political order in Iran itself."

But there is even further proof of the United States' duplicity beyond this—the words of a key policy paper written years before the United States entered into the nuclear deal. As Cartalucci relates,

Beyond US policymakers openly conspiring to weaken or altogether dismantle Iran's regional allies before setting upon Iran directly, years before the JCPOA was signed, US policymakers pledged to propose then intentionally betray a "superb offer" to help portray Iran rather than the United States as both an irrational threat to global security and a nation bent on acquiring nuclear weapons for the "wrong reasons."

The 2009 Brookings Institution report "Which Path to Persia?" explicitly described this ploy, stating:

... any military operation against Iran will likely be very unpopular around the world and require the proper international context—both to ensure the logistical support the operation would require and to minimize the blowback from it. The best way to minimize international opprobrium and maximize support (however grudging or covert) is to strike only when there is a widespread conviction that the Iranians were given but then rejected a superb offer—one so good that only a regime determined to acquire nuclear weapons and acquire them for the wrong reasons would turn it down. Under those circumstances, the United States (or Israel) could portray its operations as taken in sorrow, not anger, and at least some in the international community would conclude that the Iranians "brought it on themselves" by refusing a very good deal.<sup>6</sup> (emphasis in original)

Cartalucci further relates that "shortly before US President Barack Obama ended his second term in office, preparations were already

underway to backtrack on the Iran deal. With US President Donald Trump now presiding over US foreign policy, the US is preparing to either entirely withdraw from the deal or rewrite its conditions in such a fashion that Iran will be unable to accept it."

In other words, Trump's current threats to undo the nuclear deal—threats which many properly view as a prelude to war—can be seen as a continuation of Obama's plans against Iran, just as Obama's plans were a continuation of Bush's. Indeed, while few in this country are willing to admit it, there is an undeniable continuity in the foreign policy practices of US presidents, whether they be Republicans or Democrats.

Quite possibly, this is because there are greater forces at work than our elected officials, such as the military industrial complex that President Eisenhower warned us of back in the 1950s, which defines our nation's international trajectory. And, as we shall see, the United States' treachery against Iran can indeed be traced as far back as the Eisenhower Administration.

As I learned while in Iran, the current Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was always against negotiating with Obama over the nuclear deal, believing that the United States is not a reliable bargaining partner. Of course, the Ayatollah had good reason to doubt the United States' sincerity in bargaining, given that its track record has been pretty bad, even hearkening back in colonial times when European settlers in the New World made deals with the Native Americans which they then turned around and reneged on even before the ink on the deal was dry.

And, in the classic US tradition of projecting our own worst characteristics upon others, the settlers added insult to injury by referring to those who do not keep their word as "Indian givers,"<sup>7</sup> when in fact they should be called "Settler givers" or "White givers." This type of projection is also seen in the United States' current accusations against others, such as Iran itself, as being state sponsors of terrorism when, as we shall shortly see, it is the United States which is the greatest sponsor of terror in the world.

Of course, a more apt example of such “Settler giving” was Obama’s dealings with Libya’s Muammar Gaddafi, prevailing upon Gaddafi to give up Libya’s nuclear ambitions and seemingly welcoming Gaddafi back into the community of nations, only to invade his country, topple his government, and aid and abet Gaddafi’s brutal murder a short time thereafter.

In any case, because the Iranian president, Hassan Rouhani, wanted the deal so badly to be able to make good on massive social spending he had promised Iranians, Khamenei told him to go ahead with talks. In the end, Khamenei, in his substantial wisdom, was correct in his misgivings. But given the potential tragic consequences of being proven right, there is little for Khamenei to gloat about.

## 2

## THE WEST’S NOT-SO-CREATIVE DESTRUCTION OF THE MIDDLE EAST

*Creative destruction is our middle name, both within our society and abroad. We tear down the old order every day, from business to science, literature, art, architecture, and cinema to politics and the law. Our enemies have always hated this whirlwind of energy and creativity, which menaces their traditions (whatever they may be) and shames them for the inability to keep pace. Seeing America undo traditional societies, they fear us, for they do not wish to be undone. . . .*

*We must destroy them to advance our historic mission.*

—Michael Ledeen, US Neo-Con<sup>1</sup>

UNLIKE MANY IN THIS COUNTRY, I simply do not view Iran as a menace—neither to its neighbors, nor as a threat to us in any way. To the contrary, I see Iran as a country which is itself under existential threat and with much to fear, and Iran surely sees itself as a country under attack from all sides. One need only look at a map to see why this is so.

Iran, known as Persia until WWII, is a country about the size of Alaska, and with about eighty million people. It borders many nations,