Iran within the Political Dynamics of the Middle East

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Abstract

Developments in the Middle East in the past decades, and especially in the past few years, have drawn the world's attention to this region. Never since the break-up of the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 20th century has the region been so volatile and explosive. While the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to have a deciding effect on the Middle East, other issues have appeared, further complicating the politics of the region. The stunning socio-political developments in the Arab world during the past year, which started in Tunisia and spread to Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Bahrain are still unfolding and will permanently change the Arab World. Where does Iran fit into the political dynamics of the Middle East in these turbulent times? This paper attempts to answer that question. After a review of the recent developments in the Arab world, it examines the Islamic Republic's position in the region in the light of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, the breakup of the Soviet Union and subsequent developments in Central Asia, the U.S.-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq as well as the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. The paper suggests that the changing geopolitics of the region has positioned Iran in a relatively stronger position vis-à-vis the Sunni-Shi'a debate. It further suggests that three decades after its Islamic Revolution, Iran has matured. This is especially true in the wake of the rising extremist tendencies and groups such as al-Qa'ida in the region. Once the shorter term issues are resolved, Iran can have a moderating influence on the dynamics of the region.

Keywords: Islamic Republic of Iran, al-Qa'ida, Hezbollah, Middle East, US Middle East policy, Arab Uprisings

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Introduction

Developments in the Middle East in the past decades, and especially in the past year, have drawn the world's attention to this region. Never since the break-up of the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 20th century has the region been so volatile and explosive. While the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to have a deciding effect on the Middle East, other issues have appeared, further complicating the politics of the region. The stunning socio-political developments in the Arab world during the past year, which that started in Tunisia and spread to Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Bahrain are still unfolding and will permanently change the Arab World. In Tunisia and Egypt, decades-old dictatorships surrendered power and left the peoples of these countries with hopes of a freer, more democratic future. In the other countries, present governments are fighting for their lives, hoping to cling to power and to reestablish their rule over their people. Already, there has been bloodshed with human casualties estimated at thousands.

I- Historical Context

As dramatic events are unfolding in the Middle East, there is a great deal of concern in the West over the increased role of Islam in the region. Often, Iran is mentioned as an example of what these countries will be like if Islamists manage to come to power as a result of the current uprisings. Indeed, there are many similarities between the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran and the upheavals in the Arab World today; massive street demonstrations, calls for an end to

dictatorship and demand for freedom were also the hallmark of the 1979 Revolution in Iran. Yet, there are differences. Unlike the Iranian Revolution, which had a distinct Islamic/Shi'a ideology, political organization, and an effective and charismatic leadership, the present movements in the Arab World seem to lack all of that.

Whatever the differences between the uprisings in the Arab world, they are all directed against military regimes that have suppressed democracy and political participation by the people in the past half century. Why is it that all of the countries of the Arab Middle East and Turkey that came into being after the First World War were military regimes? How was it that even the ostensibly "civilian" regimes in the region were in fact run by military men in the past sixty years? In order to make some sense of the current developments in the Arab World and to be able to predict where things are heading, one needs to look at the causes of these events.[1] What today is called the Middle East was mostly ruled by the Ottoman Empire until the First World War. The way the political elite emerged in the latter decades of the Ottoman Empire and the way the imperial powers of Europe dismantled that empire had a deciding effect on the nature of politics and government in the Arab Middle East.

The Ottoman Empire had been a centralized regime with a formidable army and an extensive bureaucracy, governed by the Sultan who was served by professional military elite, the *Janissaries* and an army of educated men. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the decline of the Ottoman Empire. The army suffered repeated defeats at the hands of the Russians and other European forces. Corruption in the administration led to low morale among the army and the elite, and to widespread dissatisfaction. The decline in agriculture and changing international economic conditions further weakened the empire, necessitating urgent reform.

Between 1792-1793, Sultan Selim III (r. 1785-1808) established a new military unit (*nizam-i cedid*), modeled after European armies. It

set off a chain of events that culminated in far-reaching reforms by Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808-1839) in the first half of the nineteenth century.[2] In 1827, a large group of students were sent to Paris, and in the years that followed numerous European-style institutions of higher education and technical schools were founded (Lewis, 1964:39). The gradual sending of the students continued, and in the following years a total of 150 students were studying in Europe. The students were selected from among the graduates of the newly established European-style schools.

Egypt was part of the Ottoman Empire and had been ruled by the Ottoman army core, the *Ujaqlis*. By the 18th century, Ottoman officials had lost much of their control over the country to the Mamluks. In 1799, Napoleon began a three-year occupation of Egypt. France's occupation weakened the Mamluks even further, and its evacuation left a void in the political administration of Egypt. Muhammad Ali (r. 1805-1848), a third-generation Albanian military officer, stepped into the void, skillfully forging an alliance of important forces on the scene, and securing the sanction of the Ottoman Porte for his rule of Egypt.

During his forty-three-year reign over Egypt, Muhammad 'Ali introduced major reforms that transformed the country. He successfully eliminated the traditional nobles in Egypt, eliminated the Mamluk chiefs, and embarked on the Egyptianization of the army. In order to realize his ambitious military plans, and in his bid to create an independent Egypt, he, too, needed a new class of civil servants, bureaucrats, and a modern army. Whereas the Porte went down the path of acquiring European higher education and military know-how to save the empire from external threats, Muhammad 'Ali had to follow the same route in his attempt to create an independent Egypt.

The graduates of modern schools and the students sent to Europe provided the Ottoman Empire and Egypt with a new class of intelligentsia, who had acquired new administrative and technical skills, and who had new aspirations and hopes for their country. It

was this intelligentsia, educated in European military schools, that became the political elite in the modern Middle East. Furthermore, as many of the states in the Middle East went through a "war of independence", the military elite that won these wars automatically assumed political power and held on to it.

II- Modern Middle East

The Middle East, as we know it today, came into being as a result of the deals made between the two imperial powers Britain and France after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire following the First World War (Cleveland, 2004:113-139, 140-160). Arbitrarily, new countries were curved out of the fallen empire and artificial nations were created according to the imperial interests of those powers (Fromkin, 2001: 15-22, 146-199, 558-568). The arbitrary nature of the new political map of the Middle East provided the necessary causes for decades of war, instability and corruption in the Arab World. Western powers' planting of the Zionist regime in the heart of the region in the new scheme turned the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into the major cause of instability and dissatisfaction among Muslims in the Middle East (Smith, 2004: 89-93, 151-156, 207-214, 252-257, 294-298, 336-341, 387-392, 435-441, 479-485, 532-541). The way the Middle East was "created" by the Western powers, along with the West's interest in the region's energy resources had a great bearing on decades of military dictatorships, corruption, and oppression in the Arab World.[3] The military regimes in the Arab world that held power for over half a century effectively blocked any move towards democratization and political participation by the people. Large portions of national budgets were spent on arms, reducing the amount that needed to go to education, health, and welfare.

By the 1990's, the rest of the world had moved forward. In Asia, China - as the most populous country in the world - had started its march on the path of economic development and was fast becoming a major economic superpower. Meanwhile, south-east Asian countries

had undergone economic miracles and in addition to economic development, were moving towards democracy. Latin American countries, too, had been transformed and despite exceptions, were moving in the right direction. Even in the Middle East, Iran had done away with its oppressive dictatorship and Turkey was fast becoming a regional power that took serious steps towards democratization.

The Arab world was lagging behind most of the regions of the world in spite of its huge energy resources. A number of reports by international organizations, such as the World Bank and the United Nations widely criticized the Arab governments for the poor status of political, economic, demographic and human rights in their countries. The *Employment Report*, published by the World Bank and commissioned by the United Nations, underscored the need to act on those issues (World Bank, 2003). There was also the United Nations Development Program's Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development's 2003 *Arab Human Development Report* (UNDP, 2003). The reports evaluated political participation, economic development, employment and governance in the Arab world as unsatisfactory. They also assessed the status of women and minorities in the region as unacceptable.

In the wake of the September 11 attacks, the administration of George W Bush found such reports a convenient tool to justify and pursue its own objectives in the Middle East. At the 20002 World Economic Forum in Davos, U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney, one of the main proponents of the "preemptive war" doctrine, called for wide-ranging reform within the framework of the Greater Middle East Initiative (GMI) in the region (Afrasiabi, 2005: 255-257). The Bush Administration took the GMI initiative to the G8 summit on Sea Island in Georgia in 2004 and won the participants' approval of the implementation of the plan. In order not to be confused with the *Greater Middle East* Plan, put forth by former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres in 1996, its name was changed to *Cooperation for Progress and a Common Future with the Greater Middle East and North Africa*

(Afrasiabi, 2005:261).

In general, the plan was concerned with issues related to modernization - political and economic development, political participation, free market economies, civil society, as well as women's and minority rights. In a way, the Greater Middle East Initiative introduced by the Bush Administration died in its infancy and turned into a foreign policy embarrassment for the United States. The underlying problems that were used as an excuse to interfere in the Middle East, however, remained. Continuous repression and blocking of political development and emergence of civil society, along with the West's support for the repressive regimes of the Arab World, culminated in mass dissatisfaction and popular uprisings in the region. Each of these countries is different in terms of social structure, political culture, development, economic status and level of integration into the globalized world of the 21st century. Yet, the following could be said about all of the abovementioned movements in the Arab World: They lack any political organization that can effectively mobilize and lead the masses against the repressive regimes they face; they lack leadership. There is no charismatic or effective leader that inspires the people; while no particular ideology can be claimed as dominant in these movements, they seem to favor political freedom, and are generally secular; in countries where there is a sizable Shi'a population, the current uprisings have widened the Sunni-Shi'a divide. This has led to claims of Iranian incitement of these uprisings; promotion of democracy, civil liberties, and individual freedom is of secondary importance to the West in the present situation.

The United States and most European powers seek their own economic and strategic interests in the region and have been shown to apply double standard policies towards various countries of the Arab world where there has been an uprising in the past months. They would support the people in countries like Egypt and Libya, while backing the regimes in Bahrain and Yemen. They have also

shown that they would not hesitate to use their military power as they see fit in preserving and promoting their interests; in the globalized world of today, it is no longer possible to isolate people from the rest of the world, and political developments in one country will inevitably have an effect on neighboring countries. Furthermore, social media will play an increasing role in such movements.

III- Iran and the New Developments

Where is Iran within the political dynamics of the Middle East in these turbulent times and how will they effect the Islamic Republic's position in the region? First, a few basic facts about Iran: it borders three major regions; the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus, and South Asia. Yet, it is not part of any of them. It is not a member of any strategic alliance in any of these regions. It is a Middle Eastern country, yet, it does not share the same history, language, or aspiration as its Arab neighbors. Along with Turkey and Israel, it stands out as one of the three non-Arab powers in the Middle East; it borders Central Asia and the Caucasus. It shares a long history with that region. Yet, it is not in the same predicament as the newly independent states that share the seventy-year experience of Soviet rule[4]; it borders the Indian subcontinent. Yet it is not involved in the conflicts and crises that have afflicted that region[5]; it is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural country with sizable populations from the above mentioned three regions.[6]; it bridges the two energy-rich regions of the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea, and is the shortest route connecting the land-locked Central Asian states to the outside world and the open seas[7]; it has the longest Persian Gulf shore - the entire northern shores of the body of water, where nearly 70% of the world's energy reserves are situated; it has a large and primarily young population of over 75 million and a vast territory of 1'648'000 sq. km; it is a predominantly Shi'a country, where the Sunnis inhabit most of its border provinces; Iran is the first Middle Eastern and indeed Third World country to have undergone a constitutional revolution and to

have a written constitution as early as 1906; while not isolated, Iran is, nevertheless, a lonely state. Ever since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, there have been varying degrees of misunderstanding and mistrust between the revolutionary government in Tehran and its neighbors (Atai, 2009: 117).

Before the Islamic Revolution of 1979, Iran was a close ally, and along with Saudi Arabia, a strategic partner of the United States in the Persian Gulf. In the Middle East, Iran belonged to the pro-Western countries of the region, as opposed to Egypt, Syria and Iraq which maintained an anti-colonial, anti-Western stance. Relatively unaffected by the politics of the Cold War, the Middle East system was nevertheless deeply influenced by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the 1970s, the Shah's regime developed close political, economic, and security ties with Israel, albeit covert and unofficial.[8] The Islamic Revolution changed all that and set in motion a chain of actions and reactions that, along with other developments in the region, transformed the Middle East. In that bipolar world, every country was either in the Western capitalist camp or was part of the socialist world. For a dissident in the communist world, the alternative was capitalism, and a dissident in the West could only think of communism as a solution. The Islamic Revolution in Iran offered the one billion Muslims in the third world a new "alternative".[9] It presented an "Islamic worldview" and a political system based on Islam to the world of the 20th century. It showed that an Islamic movement in the 20th century could bring down a Western-oriented military dictatorship heavily supported by the most powerful superpower and establish an Islamic nation-state in its place. Within the Middle East, the Islamic Revolution became a new "focal point" alongside the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Indeed, throughout the 1980s, it overshadowed the latter, with the Iran-Iraq war and the concerns over "export of the revolution" to the neighboring countries drawing the most attention from media and scholars of the Middle East.

With the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Iran was instantly turned into the most radical political factor within the Middle East and arguably the Islamic world. The victory of the Revolution provided a boost to the political activities of all Muslims. However, the actual effect of the Revolution on the politicization of Sunnis was less than that of Shi'as. There already had been a tradition of political activism amongst Sunnis in the form of the *Ikhwan al-Muslimun,* the Muslim Brotherhood and the *Salafist* movement.[10] It did, however, give Shi'as reason and motivation for political activity.[11] The initiative in Lebanon, where Hezbollah was created, was a shining success, affording Tehran the power to influence events in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, in Lebanon itself, and in the wider Middle East.

The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the signing of the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel both took place in the same year (1979). The Islamic Revolution in Iran influenced the course of events following both of the above mentioned developments. In their effort to build and organize the Jihadi Resistance against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan helped create the radical Sunni movement that led to the emergence of the Taliban and al-Qa'ida (Barfield, 2010:171). At the same time, many saw this as a suitable counter-balance to the Shi'a radicalism of the Islamic Revolution. The Arab reaction to the Camp David Accords removed Egypt – the traditional political leader of the Arab World - from its position and gave it to Saudi Arabia. The Saudi leadership, encouraged by its sizable oil revenues in the 1970s, moved the Arab World and the Palestinian movement vis-à-vis the United States and Israel towards relative conservatism and compromise. This further alienated an increasing portion of the Arab World and the Palestinian community and pushed them towards the more radical groups of Hamas and Hezbollah.

Throughout the 1980s and the 1990s, Hezbollah created an

extensive social, health and education network in the poor neighborhoods of Beirut and South Lebanon. It further trained an effective militia to oppose the Israeli occupation of Lebanon.[12] Hezbollah's success in pushing the Israeli army out of the country and ending its twenty-year occupation turned Hezbollah into a national liberating force.

The sequence of events that started with the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the Camp David Accords, the emergence and subsequent toppling of the Taliban, the emergence of al-Qa'ida, the creation of Hezbollah in Lebanon, the toppling of Saddam's regime by the United States as well as the failure of the American campaign in Iraq all brought about a major geopolitical shift in the Middle East. Israel's war on Lebanon in 2006, which lasted for 34 days, may be considered as a turning point in the process that was set in motion more than three decades ago at the time of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

One of the implications of the 33-day war between Hezbollah and Israel was the shattering of the myth of the Israeli military's invincibility. It undoubtedly had an enormous effect on the dynamics of the region by changing the underlying political assumptions created by the myth of Israeli military might. For example, the key assumption of the regional balance of power had been the perception of everlasting Israeli power. Since 1948, this core assumption came to define considerations of both war and peace, serving to seduce both Egypt and Jordan and to intimidate Syria and all other Arab states. The second implication affected the leadership of the Islamic world. Since Hezbollah fought more effectively and endured longer than any other Arab army against Israel and, most importantly, survived the full force of a concentrated Israeli military offensive, it gained a much greater standing in the Arab and Islamic world, shifting power and initiative away from Sunni Hamas and secular Fatah to Shi'a Hezbollah. For traditional Sunni allies of the United States, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan, the geopolitical changes emanating from Lebanon were

dangerous and seen as weakening their power as much of their populations firmly supported Hezbollah (Giragosian, 2008).

There was also a broader shift in the balance of power in the region, away from Sunnis to Shi'as as the new Islamist power in the Middle East. The emergence of greater Shi'a power and influence only served to bolster Iran's position. In the eyes of Western governments, it also expanded the Islamist war against the West to a new multi-front battleground and weakened the Sunni states of the region, which feared the formation of a "Shi'a Crescent" extending from Iran to Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. In Iraq, the majority of the population is Shi'a and the post-Saddam government there is controlled by Shi'as sympathetic to Tehran. The policies of Damascus have also been in line with Tehran, rather than the Sunni Arab countries of the Persian Gulf.

Yet this also challenged the Iranian role as the main source of Shi'a power in the region. While it is true that Hezbollah was created by and receives political support from the Islamic Republic of Iran, it has shown to have become an independent entity and not a mere stooge of Tehran. The same can be argued regarding the Shi'a–dominated government in Baghdad. Despite the long and close relationship between current Iraqi officials and Tehran during Saddam's rule, the present US-backed government in Baghdad does not take orders from Tehran. The Bush Administration's policies under the "War on Terror" rid Iran of two of its most dangerous enemies; Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq and the Taliban in neighboring Afghanistan. In spite of the cease-fire after the eight-year war with Iran, all indications were that Saddam had not given up on his wish to eliminate his rivals in Iran. The radical Sunni Taliban was also a source of threat and instability on Iran's eastern borders. Both the Taliban and Saddam Hussein are gone thanks to the Bush Administration's so-called "War on Terror." America's actions in Iraq and unconditional support for Israel, however, more than ever angered the Muslim world and pushed it towards radicalism.

More than three decades after the Islamic Revolution, the Iranian people and their government have mellowed quite a bit. One can no longer consider Iran a radical element within the Middle East politics. This is especially true if one considers the policies and activities of violent, radical groups such as al-Qa'ida. The radical trend among the Muslims those so worries the West does not originate from Iran today. The general trend after the initial phase of the Islamic Revolution of 1979 has been towards moderation and one may assume that it will continue to be so.

Conclusion

More than three decades ago, an unprecedented Islamic Revolution toppled a repressive dictatorship in Iran that was heavily supported by the world's most powerful superpower. The Islamic Revolution put in motion a chain of events that brought political Islam to the center of world politics. The revolutionary Islamic Republic of Iran was born with a mission to fight the oppressors of the world, to change the fate of the more than one billion Muslims in the world, and to present a model of Islamic rule to the world. Thirty-three years later, the Islamic Republic of Iran is a lot more moderate and mature, yet the long-term effects of the Islamic Revolution will be felt across the region and in the Islamic world for years to come. Other developments in the region, as described above, have contributed to the emergence of a new Middle East. The coming to power of a Shi'a government in neighboring Iraq and the emergence of Hezbollah in Lebanon have brought about a geopolitical shift in the region in favor of the Islamic government in Tehran. This has turned into a major cause of concern among the Sunni regimes of region, especially Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf states.

The recent developments in the Arab World have their own dynamics and Tehran seems to have little leverage on them. As far as Tehran is concerned, the changes in the Arab regimes could be both beneficial and harmful to Iran's interests in the region; Egypt after

Mubarak has shown interest in improving its relations with the Islamic Republic. The developments in Bahrain, where the Shi'a majority is ruled by an unelected Sunni minority could also be seen as a positive development from Tehran's point of view. Yet, any change in the status of the government in Damascus would be harmful to Iran's interests in the region and to its influence in Lebanon. There is little Tehran can do to influence the course of events currently unfolding in the Arab World. For the moment, Iran, as most of the rest of the world, remains a spectator, watching the developments with concern and enthusiasm.

Notes

1. For a detailed history of the region, see Albert Hourani, Philip S. Khoury, Mary C. Wilson eds., (1993) *The Modern Middle East*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press; William Cleveland (2004) *A History of the Modern Middle East*.

2. When Mahmud ascended to power some reforms had been attempted. Western-style military education had been introduced, translation bureaus *(tercume odalari)* had been created to translate scientific and technical books from Europe, and permanent diplomatic missions had been established in major European capitals. Coping with the European encroachment on the Ottoman borders, and with the deteriorating social and economic conditions, required efficient management of the state and a modern military force. Neither the *Janissaries* nor the graduates of the traditional *madrasas* were fit to perform their functions under the new conditions. Mahmud needed a new generation of soldiers and civil servants and technocrats to exercise efficient control over his empire. In 1826, in a sudden move, Mahmud eliminated the chiefs of the *Janissaries*.

3. The creation of the "modern Middle East" was a very complicated process that started in the 19th century and continued to 1971. In addition to the colonial powers, other powerful factors – Arab and Turkish nationalisms, Zionism, Ba'athism, and oil reseves in the region – contributed to the shaping of the present day Middle East. See Roger Owen (2000) *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the modern middle East*, New York, Routledge. On The Middle East in the Interwar Period: Rise of Nationalist Movements and Independent States see William Cleveland, pages 161-221; James Gelvin, 175-205; Rashid Khalidi "Arab Nationalism: Historical Problems in the Literature" in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 96, No.5 (1991) 1363-1373. On Zionism and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, see Charles D. Smith (2004), *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents,* 89-93, 151-156, 207-214, 252-257, 294-298, 336-341, 387-392, 435-441, 479-485, 532-541. On The Socialist Republics and Baathism, Egypt, Syria and Iraq, see Cleveland, 257-323; Hanna Batatu, *The Egyptian, Syrian and Iraqi Revolutions: Some Observations on Their Underlying Causes and Social Character*, 1-27. On the Middle East Oil Boom, see David Yergin (1992) *The Prize: the Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power,* 11-55. On American involvement in the Middle East, see Rashid Khalidi, (2005) "The Middle East, Geostrategy and Oil", *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East,* 74-117.

4. Both present-day Iran and the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus that gained their independence from the Soviet Union in the early 1990s were part of the Persian Empire. Yet, Tsarist Russia's conquest of central Asia and the Caucasus and their eventual assimilation into the Soviet Union in the early twentieth century changed the fate of the peoples of the region. Twenty years after independence from the Soviet Union, the peoples of these countries are searching for their national identity. Some that have been blessed with natural and energy resources are moving along the road to economic growth and development. Others like Tajikistan, however, are struggling with unemployment, poverty, and isolation. See Farhad Atai (2008) "National Identity in Central Asia", *Journal of Law and Politics* Tehran.

5. Afghanistan has been unstable since the Soviet invasion of that country in 1979. The emergence of al-Qaida in Afghanistan in the following years, the Taliban regime and George W Bush's invasion of that country has led to the creation of a failed state in which daily bombings and killings have become commonplace. This has now spilled over to Pakistan. Al-Qaida and its supporters in western Pakistan have destabilized that region and are becoming a real threat to the stability of the whole country. See Irm Haleem (2003) "Ethnic and Sectarian Violence and Propensity towards Praetorianism in Pakistan," *Third World Quarterly,* Vol. 23, No. 3; Ian Talbot (2007) "Religion and Violence: The Historical Context for Conflict in Pakistan," in John R. Hinnells and Richard King (Ed.), *Religion and Violence in South Asia: Theory and Practice*. New York.

6. Assyrians, Armenians, Georgians, Arabs, Lors, Baluchis, Kurds, Turkmen, and Azeris are but a few of the ethnicities that are found in Iran.

7. Following the Soviet collapse, Western countries rushed to exploit the oil and gas resources of the Caspian region. The immediate concern was finding economical routes to transfer the energy of these land-locked countries to the world market. Alternative routes were considered; the Caspian Petoleum Consortium (CPC) pipeline would transfer Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan's oil via Russian territory to the Black Sea; the western route that was backed by the United States, would transport Azerbaijan's oil through the proposed Baku-Tiblisi-Ceyhan pipeline (BTC) to the Turkish port of Ceyhan on the Mediterranean Sea. Baku-Tiblisi- Cehyan was 2700 kilometers, whereas the pipeline through Iran would be less than 1000 kilometers. Iran was the shortest route to get the energy to its customers. BTC was chosen over Iran, primarily because of United States political pressure.

8. On Iran's foreign policy in that period, see A. H. Mahdavi (2001) *Siyasat-e Kharej-ye Iran dar Dowran-e Pahlavi*, Tehran. Also see Hoseyn Seyfzadeh (2005) *Siyasat-e Khareji-ye Iran*, Tehran.

9. See Kazemi, Farhad and Hart, Jo-Anne (1998) "The Shi'i Praxis: Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy in Iran", *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World,* David Menashri ed.; Esposito, J. (1990) *Islamic Revolution and Its Global Impacts,* Miami: Florida International University, chapters 3, 4; *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World,* Boulder, Westview Press.

10. See Hamid Enayat (1982) Modern Islamic Political Thought, Austin; Albert Hourani (1983) Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, Cambridge, New York, Melbourne; Fred Halliday (1995) Islam and the Myth of Confrontation; Religion and Politics in the Middle East, London, New York

11. On the effects of the Islamic Revolution of Iran on Pakistan as an example, see Muhammad Qasim Zaman (1998) "Sectarianism in Pakistan: The Radicalization of Shi`i and Sunni Identities," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3, , p. 692; Farhat Haq (2010) "Jamaat-e Islami," in *The Islamization of Pakistan, 1979-2009*. Washington, D.C: The Middle East Institute; Zahid Hussain (2007) *Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam,* London; New York.

12. The Iranian peoples' connections with Lebanese Shi'as go back centuries. For an interesting review of Iran's relations with Lebanon in the past see H. E. Chehabi, (ed.) *Distant Relations; Iran and Lebanon in the Past 500 Years*, Center for Lebanese Studies and I. B. Tauris, London 2006.

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