



Benny Morris  
“A Second Holocaust?”  
The Implications of a Nuclear Iran”  
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Marx of course was wrong about most things. He was also wrong when he said: History tends to repeat itself, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce. Perhaps a rephrasing should read: The first time is tragedy; the second is still greater tragedy.

In some ways, the West – the liberal, democratic, multi-cultural West – is facing a repeat of the 1930s.

In the 1930s, the West was confronted by three rapacious, bellicose powers with grievances, some of them, incidentally, just – Italy, Japan and, above all, a renascent Germany. All complained that they had been denied or divested of their rights and assets; all were aggrieved. And, separately and together, they challenged the West (as well as the Soviet Union) for hegemony around the globe.

Had each been confronted and contained or beaten at the start of their march towards power and hegemony – Hitler when he assumed power or when he announced the rebirth of a conscript army and the Luftwaffe, or when he marched into the Rhineland; the Japanese when they invaded Manchuria or attacked Shanghai; the Italians when they invaded Abyssinia, present-day Ethiopia – it is possible that the world would have saved itself World War II and its 70 million dead. Certainly, the cost to the civilized world would have been far less than what was eventually required, in life and treasure, during 1939-45.

It appears that the West now faces a similar existential challenge, again by peoples and a religion with grievances and a different set of civilizational values. And while many in the West may not see in what is happening across the globe – in Afghanistan and the southern Philippines and southern Thailand and Somalia and Sudan and Israel/Palestine – a ‘clash of

civilisations' it is, to be sure, regarded by most Muslims, and not just so-called radical Muslims, as a civilizational conflict.

And today, at the cutting edge of this challenge to the West and its values, looms Iran, a country of 70 million set on building atomic bombs. Today, its offenses are minor and cagey: It surreptitiously feeds the Anti-American insurgency in Iraq; it takes hostage 15 British sailors; it arms and trains terrorist organisations around the Middle East, who do its work as proxies.

But once Iran acquires the Bomb – and anyone who believes the Iranian protestations about peaceful purposes is living in a dreamworld - Iran's challenges will be far more formidable and difficult to counter. And, as likely as not, the first item on the agenda of the fanatics from Teheran will be Israel, the reviled Jewish state.

They hate Israel both as an offshoot of the West in what they regard as their private, Islamic back yard, and for its own sake – as a Jewish state.

There is a striking consistency in Islamist Iranian thinking and expression in this regard. Khomeini spoke of 'Satanic' Israel and its destruction; Rafsanjani, one of Ahmedinejad's predecessors as president, spoke quite plainly about destroying Israel in connection with Iran's nuclear project.

And when Ahmedinejad speaks of the need to wipe Israel off the map, make no mistake, he is reflecting the consensus among the mullahs. No mullah stepped forward and criticized Ahmedinejad – either in relation to Israel or his Holocaust diatribes. When the mullah's speak of Israel's destruction, they mean it. For Ahmedinejad, clearly, it is a passion, an obsession - to judge by the amount of energy he expends on the subject. For Islamists, the campaign against Israel is a litmus test of the seriousness of their Islamism.

Ahmedinejad is not merely an anti-Zionist; he is an anti-Semite. And his hatred of the West, its politics, its values, its prosperity, its liberalism, its freedoms, is bound up with his anti-Semitism - he believes, like most Islamist anti-Semites, that these Western values are in no small measure a fruit of Judaism or Jews. The Jews, at least in part, are what make the West the West. (Perhaps one should recall that Jesus Christ, Freud, Marx, Einstein were frequently vilified by name by Hitler – for much the same reason.)

We are not talking here about a personal quirk of the Iranian president. Ahmedinejad's anti-Semitism rests on solid Muslim historical and theological foundations. Both are anchored in the Koran – which describes Muhammad's struggle against the Jewish tribes in Hijaz, the tribes that rejected his teachings and his assumption of the prophethood. In

consequence he and his immediate successors oppressed, murdered, enslaved, forcibly converted to Islam, and exiled these tribes, eventually clearing them altogether out of Arabia (save for the its southwestern corner, Yemen).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, with the penetration of the West into the Middle East, a thick layer of European Christian anti-Semitism, was added as a topping to the soil of Islamist anti-Semitism and today one finds in Islamist writing a hodgepodge of quotes from the Koran as well as arguments and quotes from modern Christian anti-Semitic tracts, such as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a major bestseller in Arab countries

Ideologically, theologically, the Koran is ambivalent about the Jews, who are acknowledged as the first people honored with God's revelation, who gave birth to the prophets, including Jesus Christ. They, along with the Christians, are referred to as 'the peoples of the Book' – that is, the testaments that preceded the Koran. But the Koran also designates the Jews a 'base' people, 'sons of apes and pigs', and 'the slayers of the prophets', and it is this anti-Semitic Koranic strain that characterizes Muslims as diverse as Ahmedinejad, Bin Laden and the leaders of the Hamas, the fundamentalist Islamic organisation that was elected in 2006 by the Palestinians to rule over them.

Anti-Semitism is present at the root of the Iranian Islamic revolution. Its prophet and leader, the Ayatollah Khomeini, whose portraits look down on the squares of Teheran, was a devout believer in The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, an unflagging proponent of the world Jewish conspiracy. He really believed in the picture that emblazons the cover of the Protocols, of a Jewish octopus, with the head of a bearded, hook-nosed, skull-capped rabbi, with tentacles surrounding the whole of the earth.

The Protocols was published in Persian by Khomeini's party in 1978 and has been re-issued periodically by Teheran since the ayatollahs took power.

The Islamists, looking back to 7<sup>th</sup> century Hijaz, continue to see in the Jew – not Israel, the Jew – the mortal, foundational enemy of Islam and Allah. As Muhammad Hassan Rahimian, the representative of Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, put it on 16 November 2006: "The Jew is the most obstinate enemy of the devout. And the main war [against him] will determine the destiny of mankind." We are talking here about the apocalypse, about messianism, about an end of days scenario – when the final battle against Israel, as the embodiment of Jewry, is the venue.

In April 1963, Khomeini himself told a crowd: "I know that you do not want Iran to lie under the boot of the Jews". In his principal book, Islamic Government, Khomeini wrote: "The Jews ... wish to establish Jewish

domination throughout the world. Since they are a cunning and resourceful group of people, I fear that ... they may one day achieve their goal.” In September 1977 he declared: “The Jews have grasped the world with both hands and are devouring it with an insatiable appetite, they are devouring America and have now turned their attention to Iran ...”

Recent European history serves as a touchstone for both Ahmedinejad and the Hamas. Ahmedinejad speaks often, and monotonously about the Holocaust – it never happened. The Holocaust is a Jewish legend, a Jewish lie – one of the many lies the Jews have unleashed upon the world, so that the world will do the Jews’ bidding. He clearly regards the Holocaust as the basis for the Jewish state – and of the world’s support for Israel’s establishment and existence. By knocking out the strut of the Holocaust, he is de-legitimizing Israel’s existence. And, at the same time, denying the Holocaust is a means of preparing the world for the moment the sword of Islam will fall on Israel’s neck, a preparation, as it were, for the second Holocaust.

If the peoples of the world can be persuaded that the Holocaust did not happen then the rug will have been pulled out from under the Jewish state’s feet. Once rendered friendless, Israel’s enemies can proceed to destroy the Jewish state: No one will come to its aid.

( Interestingly, the Hamas, too, often looks, in its anti-Semitic diatribes, to modern European history. In its founding Charter, from August 1988, the Hamas asserts that the Jews ‘were behind the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution ... World War I ... [and] World War II, through which they made huge financial gains.’)

The destruction of Israel, according to Ahmedinejad, will ‘liberate’ humanity, as he put it in his speech at the Holocaust denial conference in Teheran in December 2006 –echoing Hitler, who often spoke of ‘liberating’ mankind from the Jews.

During the Spanish Civil War, of 1936-39, which pitted Spain’s liberals, socialists, communists and anarchists against the Fascists, monarchists and clericalists, one of the Fascist generals, Jose Millan Astray, popularized the phrase “Viva la Muerte”. He often ended his radio broadcasts with this cry.

This too is the cry of the Muslim fundamentalists in Teheran and, incidentally, Gaza. They place no value on human life.

The West is wedded to rationality and assumes that human beings, and states, are guided by rational considerations, of which self-preservation is cardinal. Hence the Cold War did not end in mutual nuclear destruction.

But this is not the spirit that animates the contemporary Islamist universe. At the core of this universe is the idea of martyrdom and self-sacrifice as the highest, Allah-willed good.

Thus the idea that retaliation might stay Iran's hand, when contemplating launching nuclear weapons to destroy the Jewish state, is at best doubtful; at worst, it is delusional. For people who believe that destroying God's enemies is Allah's supreme command, being destroyed in consequence hardly plays a role. On the contrary, self-sacrifice in the cause of jihad – holy war - only assures salvation and immortality in that higher world. Only Islam's victory counts.

In 1980, Khomeini the father of the Iranian revolution, said: 'We do not worship Iran, we worship Allah. ... I say let this land go up in smoke, provided Islam emerges triumphant in the rest of the world.' In other words, Iran too, can willingly be sacrificed if this serves the Shi'ite Allah's purpose.

The idea of self-sacrifice, indeed of a death-wish bound up with salvation, is central to the thinking of the Iranian ayatollahs and the Ahmedinejad regime and its supporters. Indeed, since its inception the regime has evinced an obsession with martyrdom, a belief that martyrdom during jihad is a divine command and will land the martyr in a paradise populated by 72 willing virgins, cool streams and the Prophet himself. (As an aside, it is worth noting that not only professed Islamists are party to this discourse: Most would-be suicide bombers from the supposedly secular Palestinian Fatah movement, under interrogation, told their Israeli captors that they were sacrificing themselves in order to reach heaven, the 72 virgins, etc.)

Robert Fisk, the anti-Israeli, anti-American British journalist, in his book "The Great War for Civilization", (p.203) quotes one of Teheran's would be martyrs: 'It is impossible for you in the West to understand. Martyrdom brings us closer to God. We do not seek death – but we regard death as a journey from one form of life to another, and to be martyred while opposing God's enemies brings us closer to God.'

Ahmedinejad, who attained adulthood against the backdrop of the bloody war with Iraq in 1980-88, is clearly obsessed with the idea of martyrdom. He rarely ends a speech without referring to the hundreds of thousands of Iranians sacrificed as martyrs, in human wave attacks along the Shatt al Arab. Many of the martyrs were brainwashed 14 and 15 year olds.

And if Iran lauds these masses of youngsters – a whole generation, indeed - willing, indeed eager, to die in fending off the Sunni Muslim devils from Iraq, it is hardly surprising that at least some in the regime – including Ahmedinejad - would be willing to sacrifice Iran itself to destroy Israel.

Especially when they may calculate that once Israel is destroyed, it would be unlikely that anyone would nuke Iran itself. (This would not bring Israel back – and would lastingly alienate the whole Muslim world, certainly intensifying and deepening the ‘clash of civilizations’.)

The consideration that nuking Israel will result in collateral damage, meaning the deaths also of hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of fellow (Palestinian) Muslims will also not necessarily serve as a deterrent. The Iranians have nothing but contempt for the Palestinians, who, due to an unwillingness to stand and fight and die, lost Palestine to the Jewish heathens. And besides, their deaths, as part of the annihilation of Israel, will be regarded as martyrdom - so killing them will result in their eternal salvation. Surely Iran will be doing these dead Palestinians a favor?

(The Iranian cult of death, not surprisingly, is echoed, quite bluntly, in the Hamas charter of 1988, which states, regarding the movement: ‘Allah is its target, the Prophet is its model, the Koran its constitution; Jihad is its path and death for the sake of Allah is the loftiest of its wishes’.)

Let me make one final point: Iranian policy and Islamist theology do not end with the destruction of Israel: They seek to overcome the West and to impose Sharia, Islamic law, and the Koran – the only truth, as they see it - on all of humankind. They believe that this is what Allah wants and this is what shall come to pass. As Ahmedinejad wrote somewhat guardedly to George Bush in his famous letter a year or so ago, his aim is to topple the ‘ideology and thoughts of the liberal democratic system,’ indeed, to topple the West itself, with its tolerance of minorities, of homosexuals, its tenet of equality for women, its idolization of reason and pragmatism and compromise, its relativism, its belief in the supremacy and sanctity of human life, its openness and softness, as Ahmedinejad sees it. Israel may be Khomeini’s and Ahmedinejad’s ‘Little Satan’ – but the United States, meaning the West, remains the ‘Big Satan’, and their ultimate target. And they mean it.