

The Iranian complex

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Reflexive, knee-jerk, and programmed. These words describe the reactions of some to the idea of monarchy in Iran. I am still dumbfounded by the almost religious nature of such people, one that is oblivious to facts and events. Why do these people so passionately object to their imperially expedient heritage?

Why do these people have so much hate and self loathing inside of them that they are willing to be associated with anyone or anything that opposes the Iranian institution of Shahanshahi, irrespective of whether they prolong the terrorist regime in Iran or not; irrespective of whether the masses of ordinary Iranians, including the Pahlavi haters themselves, suffer under cultural persecution, poverty or torture.

These people are so against the millennia-long institution of monarchy in Iran that they are willing to stand with anyone and anything that opposes it. They have acted as loudspeakers of western media and western political motives against the Shahanshah and our sovereignty vis-à-vis our own natural resources. They have even adopted foreign oil interests explanations as to why, today, Iran's treasury receives less revenue, in real terms, from its hydrocarbon resources than it did from the British concession days of 50 years ago.

Iranian opposition to Imperial Iran is reflexive, knee-jerk, and programmed. It's emotive, not cognitive. Thus we must look deeper at their solution to the perceived ills of Iran, namely the Islamic Republic. Let us take a look at the people behind each of its components, the Islamic revolutionaries and the Republican revolutionaries.

Is anti-monarchism ultimately the violent expression of those who have failed in finding meaning/happiness in life; a collective reaction to the rapid economic and educational development of the Pahlavi era? Is it a collective angst, a national jealousy that is a group amplification of what drives privately an Imam Khomeini or Seyed Khalkhali / Khatami / Khamenei or Peoples Leader Rajavi?

For the Islamic revolutionaries, to criticize their own countries success under Pahlavi stewardship disguises, yet also secretly satisfies, this impulse for collective belonging and superiority.

Without the pretext of some truly awful act of murderous oppression on the part of the Shahanshah, there would be no justification for their moral crusade and no cause for them to feel superior, since Imperial Iran was not in fact enormously oppressive; it was even distinctly liberal compared to Iraq and Turkish occupied Kurdistan to the West, Soviet Union to the North, military dictatorships in Afghanistan and

Pakistan to the east, and the caliphates to the south. Thus we have the Pahlavi regime's offenses being continually exaggerated or simply fabricated whole cloth. So much so that looking back at the accusations thrown at the Pahlavis today we see how absurd and comical they were a quarter of a century ago at the time of the "popular revolution".

Samuel Huntington, in his book *Clash of Civilizations*, has adeptly pinpointed the impetus behind much of the hatred for the West that exists in the Islamic world. He writes that the followers of Islam "are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power." Naturally, this causes them to lash out at the "inferior" culture that possesses the power that is rightfully theirs. Iranian "erfan" culture with its own books (by Hafiz, Khayam, Rumi, Ferdowsi, Saadi, Nezami) who have defined the role of Shahanshahi in Iranian culture was seen as the inferior culture for these revolutionaries along with the rational and scientific modernity promoted by the Pahlavi state which was viewed as simply "westoxified."

For the Republican revolutionaries, anti-Monarchism seems to be a religion; a secular faith for people who hate religion. It comes complete with a devil (the Pahlavis); sacred texts (The Communist Manifesto, Shariati's "Westoxification" etc.); saints (Khatami, Mossadeq or even Khomeini); zeal (marg bar shah, allah-o akbar and Khomeini is rahbar); and many of the other characteristics that we find in various faiths.

However, these anti-Shahanshahi Republican revolutionaries provide none of the social good that most religions provide. One should not call this type of anti-monarchism a faith -- it is too negative for that, in fact it is nothing but negativity, rejection and hostility. (FYI: Nietzsche calls this sentiment "resentment"; for Sartre it is "living in bad-faith.") They have nurtured a radical individualism that undermines traditional religion and gives birth to the ideal of a collective crusade for individual rights as a substitute for the mechanisms of the old society. The Left no longer has its city on a hill (the Soviet Union), but it still has its Sodom and Gomorrah (Reza Pahlavi). Many saw the fall of Communism as the death of the Left. It wasn't. No longer having to defend the indefensible -- it's safe from criticism because it has no positive program and holds up no country as its ideal; it merely focuses its jaundiced eye upon the sins (both real and imagined) of the Pahlavi family and our relationship with the West.

There is also the arrogance within the Republican camp in worshipping the god Reason as if it were an unforgiving Aztec totem that allows little tolerance for human imperfection. A self-righteousness (similar to that visible within the pious Mohammedans) implying that a Republic is

the only form of government acceptable in the world, and anything else is but a delusional manifestation of an ignorant populace. For both Islamic and Republican revolutionaries the Pahlavis are hated because their existence contradicts the mistaken theories so passionately held by a significant portion of these so called "intellectuals".

The Communist propaganda in Iran was focused on equality and fraternity. Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi implemented a system of liberal socialism focused on work creation for the poor in every domain of economic development, sometimes at the expense of the very wealthy landowners and other centuries old vested interests who had a portion of their properties nationalized. Their ultimate ideals became a reality under HIM Shahanshah Aryamehr.

With regard to the position and authority of religious leaders, His Imperial Majesty supported the dignity and the freedom of religion and the renovation of shrines. The Shia faith and general respect for the clergy dwarfed what it had been in the whole history of Iran. Our laws of trade, marriage, family relations, heritage etc. were all based on Islamic law. Their ultimate ideals became a reality under HIM Shahanshah Aryamehr.

The rapid development of the country, from educational institutions to military strength, to healthcare and leisure and the push for a real and meaningful benefit from the sale of Iran's hydrocarbon resources that manifested itself in the 1974 oil price rise was the real nationalization of Iran's oil industry. The ultimate ideals of the nationalist became a reality under HIM Shahanshah Aryamehr.

What the revolutionaries tout in theory, the Pahlavi era experience refuted in practice. What the Islamic reformist, like Khatami, dreams to achieve in a future Iran, was already achieved in the Monarchical Iran a quarter of a century ago.

The Pahlavi regimes critics compare Imperial Iran with utopia and find Imperial Iran lacking. This method of analysis guarantees the results that those who employ it desire. Compare anything to an ideal and it's going to fall short. Compare Imperial Iran to places that actually existed and we look rather spectacular.

Once one goes down the road of utopianism then human progress is always measured by its failings rather than its successes. Without souls and a God, we must be judged by secular perfectionism in the here and now. Thus, these grim judges love humanity and the people of Iran in the abstract, but hate us, the Iranian people, who so disappoint them, in the concrete. "How could Iranians possibly want the Pahlavi's back again, they sulk."

What is weird about these anti-monarchist groups is their utter incoherence. The pretext used to be national liberation and the need

for democracy. But now? How do you hate a young heir to the throne that tries to put consensual government in his place? How can you argue against a National Referendum under international Observation that honours the will of the majority, for whoever should have the social credibility to win the confidence of the majority?

Jealousy, and in some cases a criminally pathological envy of the wealthy, without doubt, explains the hatred of intellectuals toward the Sovereign and the more affluent moguls and professionals of Iran, who are not so subtle like our university "intellectuals", but far wealthier for it. Also it is worth considering, is anti-monarchism imported from abroad; or is it indigenous to Iran. And what institutions within Iranian society are responsible for fostering anti-monarchism?

Other nations suppress their vices and exaggerate their virtues. Opponents of the Pahlavi regime inflate their nation's sins and downplay their nation's positive achievements. Why is it that the best articulated opposition to the existence of monarchy in Iran comes from the media of the United Kingdom, a monarchy itself with a historic rivalry with Iran for the political leadership of Middle East and Central Asian space? Why do Iranians so accurately repeat the original arguments and politics of Communist Russia, another country that has historically rivaled Iran for dominance in the Persian Cultural space? The paradox of extremist political movements is that although they are notoriously intolerant of even minor deviations in adherence to doctrine among followers, they are otherwise indiscriminate in who they accept into their movement. This is why such movements provide a haven for so many misfits. One who finds a hard time fitting-in into the mainstream society finds ready-made friends, a social life, and meaning upon joining "The Cause". This characterization applies to a great many followers of extremist groups on the Left, as well as the Right.

Anti-monarchists and those who are actually frightened of the Pahlavis are not Empirical thinkers; but this is very often only a symptom, a manifestation of a deeper pathology. Remember that one's senses of frustration need not have any factual basis; it is a matter of perceived rather than real grievance. Another thought: accommodation or the failure to challenge such animus against the supporters of the continuation of Shahanshahi in Iran is an enabling and emboldening act. Most of the anti-monarchists thrive because the rest of us do not challenge their lunatic views. And so in some ways their ranting brings them real material and psychic rewards.

Finally, to end on a positive note, it is important to re-iterate why am I not against our tradition of Shahanshahi? I am not anti-Imperial Iran because I consider most of these people irrational, with groundless disposition or set of beliefs; because I credit the Pahlavi Dynasty with

many great accomplishments, because I am not anti-capitalist and anti-Western - important component parts of being against the ancien regime; because I do not believe that there is a utopian blueprint ahead that can be realized, because as a social group monarchist can agree to disagree without fear of retribution. Also because many of the flaws of the Pahlavi Dynasty are not peculiar to it....

Despite its brief tenure, the modern Monarchy's accomplishments are unsurpassed within the context of Iranian history. It managed to create a modern state, secularize the judiciary and the educational system, preserve Iran's territorial integrity in two World Wars, saved Iran from British colonialism and Russian communism, transform Iran's near dead economy to the most vibrant in the middle east etc. etc. etc. etc.

The modern 'Constitutional' Monarchy's most enduring legacy was to incorporate elements of economic and social progress within the ancient fabric of a lethargic and underdeveloped society through the creation of a new entity: The professional middle class. Education and particularly specialized knowledge, professional accomplishment and a disdain for religious fanaticism became the new paradigm.

Individualism and competitive spirit superseded the intense concern with piety or family status and paved the way for the middle class's social and economic advancement. As a result, the men who rose to the pinnacle of power under the Pahlavi state were neither aristocrats nor influential Mullahs but the educated sons of the middle class.

If anything, the success of the Pahlavi state in modernizing Iran's economy and infrastructure is actually proof that Cyrus the Great's model of governance was capable of meeting the challenge of Western Modernity and is thus proof that the system of Shahanshahi is by no measure obsolete.

Finally, examine the laws and culture of the Imperial Iran and then consider the contemporary alternatives. Review the 1906 Constitution and the history of the modern constitutional monarchy of Iran and learn how the aspiration to be moral was central to our experience. Take a look at our people and see the different religions, customs, races, and languages in Imperial Iran, and ask whether such a mix without factional violence is possible anywhere else in our region, and why not?

All the above explains the baffling phenomenon why most anti-monarchist, having completed their studies abroad on Pahlavi Foundation scholarships, in fact preferred to live nowhere else but precisely in Imperial Iran! and many departed for the "westoxified" West soon after having helped destroy the Pahlavi regime and replaced it with Khomeini's Islamic Republic.

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