

Amir Taheri

Amir Taheri (born 9 June 1942) is an Iranian-born conservative author based in Europe. His writings focus on the Middle East affairs and topics related to Islamist terrorism, and have been the subject of many controversies involving fabrications in his writings.

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- Almost all Muslims, including the most enlightened, feel offended by Rushdie's novel or, rather, by reports they have read or heard about it. Very few people have actually read the dense and tortuous book, but they do not have to. The very idea of using the prophet Muhammad as a character in a novel is painful to many Muslims. The entire Islamic system consists of the so-called *Hodud*, or limits beyond which one should simply not venture. Islam does not recognize unlimited freedom of expression. Call them taboos, if you like, but Islam considers a wide variety of topics as permanently closed. Most Muslims are prepared to be broad-minded about most things but never anything that even remotely touches their faith... To Muslims religion is not just a part of life. It is, in fact, life that is a part of religion. Muslims cannot understand a concept that has no rules, no limits. The Western belief in human rights, which seems to lack limits, is alien to Islamic traditions... The fact that Rushdie propagated his heresy in a book is of especial significance to Muslims. Islam is the religion of the book *par excellence*. Few cultures hold the written and printed word in so much awe as Muslims, even though the vast majority are illiterate. When a Muslim wants to clinch an argument he says, 'It is written.'

 - "Khomeini's Scapegoat", *Times*, London, (February 13, 1989).



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- De Bellaigue is at pains to portray Mossadegh as — in the words of the jacket copy — “one of the first liberals of the Middle East, a man whose conception of liberty was as sophisticated as any in Europe or America.” But the trouble is, there is nothing in Mossadegh’s career — spanning half a century, as provincial governor, cabinet minister, and finally prime minister — to portray him as even remotely a lover of liberty. De Bellaigue quotes Mossadegh as saying that a trusted leader is “that person whose every word is accepted and followed by the people.” To which de Bellaigue adds: “His understanding of democracy would always be coloured by traditional ideas of Muslim leadership, whereby the community chooses a man of outstanding virtue and follows him wherever he takes them.” Word for word, that could have been the late Ayatollah Khomeini’s definition of a true leader. Mossadegh also made a habit of appearing in his street meetings with a copy of the Koran in hand. According to de Bellaigue, Mossadegh liked to say that “anyone forgetting Islam is base and dishonourable, and should be killed.” During his premiership, Mossadegh demonstrated his dictatorial tendency to the full: Not once did he hold a full meeting of the council of ministers, ignoring the constitutional rule of collective responsibility. He dissolved the senate, the second chamber of the Iranian parliament, and shut down the Majlis, the lower house. He suspended a general election before all the seats had been decided and chose to rule with absolute power. He disbanded the high council of national currency and dismissed the supreme court. During much of his tenure, Tehran lived under a curfew while hundreds of his opponents were imprisoned. Toward the end of his premiership, almost all of his friends and allies had broken with him. Some even wrote to the secretary general of the United Nations to intervene to end Mossadegh’s dictatorship. But was Mossadegh a man of the people, as de Bellaigue portrays him? Again, the author’s own account provides a different picture. A landowning prince and the great-great-grandson of a Qajar king, Mossadegh belonged to the so-called thousand families who owned Iran. He and all his children were able to undertake expensive studies in Switzerland and France. The children had French nannies and, when they fell sick, were sent to Paris or Geneva for treatment. (De Bellaigue even insinuates that Mossadegh might have had a French sweetheart, although that is improbable.) On the one occasion when Mossadegh was sent to internal exile, he took with him a whole retinue, including his cook... As a model of patriotism, too, Mossadegh is unconvincing. According to his own memoirs, at the end of his law studies in Switzerland, he had decided to stay there and acquire Swiss citizenship. He changed his mind when he was told that he would have to wait ten years for that privilege. At the same time, Farmanfarma secured a “good post” for him in Iran, tempting him back home.

- "Myths of Mossadegh" (<https://www.nationalreview.com/nrd/articles/302213/myths-mossadegh/page/0/1>), *National Review* (June 25, 2012).



The history of contemporary Islamist terrorism is full of instances of cold-blooded murder ordered by those who could not compete in literary, political, social or even theological fields against those better than them.



Without the early Persian poets, Iranians might have ended up like so many other nations in the Middle East who lost their native languages and became Arabic speakers.

- If we regard Iran as a nation, there is no reason it shouldn't have correct relations with the United States or any other country. Decades of opinion polls show that a majority of Iranians have a good opinion of America. But Iran today suffers from a split personality: It is both a nation and, as the Islamic Republic, also a messianic cause. And the Islamic Republic of Iran, far from being part of the solution, is at the root of the conflict tearing the Middle East apart. It has built Shiite militias in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, not to mention Afghanistan, with the aim of "exporting" its Khomeinist ideology. The mullahs' quest for an empire has provoked violent reaction from Sunni Arabs and enabled terrorist outfits such as al Qaeda in its many versions, including ISIS, to find a new audience and a narrative of victimhood. As long as Iran remains a "cause," it can't normalize relations with anybody, let alone America. Coexistence among nations is not the same as that among causes.

- "Have the Mullah's Abandoned their Dreams of Empire?", *Elaph.com*, (November 16, 2014).

- What normal country has three former presidents, Hashemi Rafsanjani, Muhammad Khatami and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who can't obtain passports to travel abroad? And dozens of former high officials in jail, plus an ex-prime minister, Mir-Hussein Mussavi, and a former speaker of parliament, Mehdi Karrubi, under house arrest without charge?

- "Have the Mullah's Abandoned their Dreams of Empire?", *Elaph.com*, (November 16, 2014).

- The terrorist kills because he cannot compete with his adversaries. Instead of responding to Salman Rushdie's ill-structured and unreadable novel with a novel that is well-plotted and properly written, the terrorist calls for his murder. The terrorist cannot challenge Theo van Gogh's controversial documentary with a better one and thus decides to stab him to death. The history of contemporary Islamist terrorism is full of instances of cold-blooded murder ordered by those who could not compete in literary, political, social or even theological fields against those better than them. With the advent of globalisation, Islamist terrorism is now able to strike beyond the frontiers of the Muslim world. But the same lazy mentality is at work. The terrorist knows that he is incapable of building an alternative civilisation capable of competing with the one he despises. So he tries to destroy what becomes the cause of his humiliation.

- "Terrorism Cannot Win: This is Why", *Elaph.com*, (January 16, 2014).

- In Iran, no-one can ignore the tragic record of the revolution. Over the past three decades some six million Iranians have fled their homeland. The Iran-Iraq war claimed almost a million lives on both sides. During the first four years of the Khomeinist regime alone 22,000 people were executed, according to Amnesty International. Since then, the number of executions has topped 80,000. More than five million people have spent



Khamenei's shedding of tears for "the sufferings of Palestinian Muslims" are also unconvincing. To start with, not all Palestinians are Muslims. And, if it were only Muslim sufferers who deserved sympathy, why doesn't the "Supreme Guide" beat his chest about the Burmese Rohingya and the Chechens massacred and enchained by Vladimir Putin, not to mention Muslims daily killed by fellow-Muslims across the globe?



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some time in prison, often on trumped-up charges. In terms of purchasing power parity, the average Iranian today is poorer than he was before the revolution. De-Khomeinization does not mean holding the late ayatollah solely responsible for all that Iran has suffered just as Robespierre, Stalin, Mao, and Fidel Castro shared the blame with others in their respective countries. However, there is ample evidence that Khomeini was the principal source of the key decisions that led to tragedy... Memoirs and interviews and articles by dozens of Khomeini's former associates—including former Presidents Abol-Hassan Banisadr and Hashemi Rafsanjani and former Premier Mehdi Bazargan—make it clear that he was personally responsible for some of the new regime's worst excesses. These include the disbanding of the national army, the repression of the traditional Shi'ite clergy, and the creation of an atmosphere of terror, with targeted assassinations at home and abroad. Khomeini has become a symbol of what went wrong with Iran's wayward revolution. De-Khomeinization might not spell the end of Iran's miseries just as de-Stalinization and de-Maoization initially produced only minimal results. However, no nation can plan its future without coming to terms with its past.

- "Opinion: Iran must confront its past to move forwards" (<http://www.aawsat.net/2015/02/article55341173>), *Ashraq Al-Awsat* (February 6, 2015).
- When I asked Bhutto what he thought of Assad, he described the Syrian leader as “The Levanter.” Knowing that, like himself, I was a keen reader of thrillers, the Pakistani Prime Minister knew that I would get the message. However, it was only months later when, having read Eric Ambler's 1972 novel *The Levanter* that I understood Bhutto's one-word pen portrayal of Hafez Al-Assad. In *The Levanter* the hero, or anti-hero if you prefer, is a British businessman who, having lived in Syria for years, has almost “gone native” and become a man of uncertain identity. He is a bit of this and a bit of that, and a bit of everything else, in a region that is a mosaic of minorities. He doesn't believe in anything and is loyal to no one. He could be your friend in the morning but betray you in the evening. He has only two goals in life: to survive and to make money... Today, Bashar Al-Assad is playing the role of the son of the Levanter, offering his services to any would-be buyer through interviews with whoever passes through the corner of Damascus where he is hiding. At first glance, the Levanter may appear attractive to those engaged in sordid games. In the end, however, the Levanter must betray his existing paymaster in order to begin serving a new one. Four years ago, Bashar switched to the Tehran-Moscow axis and is now trying to switch back to the Tel-Aviv-Washington one that he and his father served for decades. However, if the story has one lesson to teach, it is that the Levanter is always the source of the problem, rather than part of the solution. ISIS is there because almost half a century of repression by the Assads produced the conditions for its emergence. What is needed is a policy based on the truth of the situation in which both Assad and ISIS are parts of the same problem.
 - Opinion: Like Father, Like Son (<http://www.aawsat.net/2015/02/article55341622/opinion-like-father-like-son>), *Ashraq Al-Awsat* (February 20, 2015).
- Some poets still write about the hair and eyes and body of a beloved and depict scenes of joy when lovers meet to drink and dance and be merry. But that is not the kind of poetry that the Islamic movement, grown on the concept of jihad and martyrdom, wants.
 - When the Ayatollah Dictates Poetry (<http://www.aawsat.net/2015/07/article55344336/when-the-ayatollah-dictates-poetry>), *Ashraq Al-Awsat* (Jul 11, 2015).
- Khamenei is not the first ruler of Iran with whom poets have run into trouble. For some 12 centuries poetry has been the Iranian people's principal medium of expression. Iran may be the only country where not a single home is found without at least one book of poems. Initially, Persian poets had a hard time to define their place in society. The newly converted Islamic rulers suspected the poets of trying to revive the Zoroastrian faith to undermine the new religion. Clerics saw poets as people who wished to keep the

Persian language alive and thus sabotage the ascent of Arabic as the new *lingua franca*. Without the early Persian poets, Iranians might have ended up like so many other nations in the Middle East who lost their native languages and became Arabic speakers. Early on, Persian poets developed a strategy to check the ardor of the rulers and the mullahs. They started every *qasida* with praise to God and Prophet followed by panegyric for the ruler of the day. Once those “obligations” were out of the way they would move on to the real themes of the poems they wished to compose. Everyone knew that there was some trick involved but everyone accepted the result because it was good. Despite that *modus vivendi* some poets did end up in prison or in exile while many others spent their lives in hardship if not poverty. However, poets were never put to the sword. The Khomeinist regime is the first in Iran’s history to have executed so many poets. Implicitly or explicitly, some rulers made it clear what the poet couldn’t write. But none ever dreamt of telling the poet what he should write. Khamenei is the first to try to dictate to poets, accusing them of “crime” and “betrayal” if they ignored his injunctions.

- When the Ayatollah Dictates Poetry (<http://www.aawsat.net/2015/07/article55344336/when-the-ayatollah-dictates-poetry>), *Ashraq Al-Awsat* (Jul 11, 2015).
- Four decades after the mullahs created the Khomeinist republic their revolution has not produced a single poet worth the name. Khomeini and Khamenei, both amateur poets, have produced nothing but frankly embarrassing imitations of classical *ghazal* without its charm. The last remaining great poets of the pre-revolution era are all in exile, among them Hushang Ebtehaj, Manuchehr Yektai, Yadollah Roya’i, Esmail Khoi, Muhammad Jalali, and Hadi Khorsandi. Inside Iran, some promising younger poets such as Sa’id Sultanpour, Heydar Mehregan, and, more recently, Hashem Shaabani were executed by the regime but gained posthumous popularity greater than any officially endorsed poet. At the same time, almost all of Iran’s poets, from the 9th century to this day, are either censored or, in rare cases, totally banned by the mullahs. Most poets of the past 100 years are on various blacklists established by the oxymoronically named Ministry of Islamic Guidance and Culture. And, yet, Khamenei calls on the government to prepare a plan, and allocate resources, to increase the production of poetry as if it were the same as centrifuges churning out enriched uranium.
 - When the Ayatollah Dictates Poetry (<http://www.aawsat.net/2015/07/article55344336/when-the-ayatollah-dictates-poetry>), *Ashraq Al-Awsat* (Jul 11, 2015).
- Poetry interprets the chaos of human life and tries to bestow meaning on it. Without imagination there could be no poetry; and imagination chained by ideology produces only propaganda.
 - When the Ayatollah Dictates Poetry (<http://www.aawsat.net/2015/07/article55344336/when-the-ayatollah-dictates-poetry>), *Ashraq Al-Awsat* (Jul 11, 2015).
- Before Khamenei, many failed poets who achieved political power tried to dictate to poets, among them the Qajar Nassereddin Shah and the Chinese despot Mao Zedong. They failed because poetry has a magic genius that defies attempts at definition let alone dictation. Poetry is like love, Rilke wrote to his imaginary young poet, everyone knows what it is but no one can agree on a definition. Khamenei, aged 77, no longer fits the image of Rilke’s young poet. Nevertheless, maybe for his next birthday someone could give him a copy of Rilke’s magical essay. (Two excellent Persian translations are available.)
 - When the Ayatollah Dictates Poetry (<http://www.aawsat.net/2015/07/article55344336/when-the-ayatollah-dictates-poetry>), *Ashraq Al-Awsat* (Jul 11, 2015).
- Despite efforts to disguise his hatred of Israel in Islamic terms... Khamenei is more influenced by Western-style anti-Semitism than by classical Islam's checkered relations

with Jews. His argument about territories becoming "irrevocably Islamic" does not wash, if only because of its inconsistency. He has nothing to say about vast chunks of former Islamic territory, including some that belonged to Iran for millennia, now under Russian rule. Nor is he ready to embark on Jihad to drive the Chinese out of Xinjiang, a Muslim *khanate* until the late 1940s. Israel, which in terms of territory accounts for one per cent of Saudi Arabia, is a very small fry. Khamenei's shedding of tears for "the sufferings of Palestinian Muslims" are also unconvincing. To start with, not all Palestinians are Muslims. And, if it were only Muslim sufferers who deserved sympathy, why doesn't the "Supreme Guide" beat his chest about the Burmese Rohingya and the Chechens massacred and enchained by Vladimir Putin, not to mention Muslims daily killed by fellow-Muslims across the globe?

- The Ayatollah's Plan for Israel and Palestine (<http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/6263/khamenei-israel-palestine>), *Gatestone Institute* (July 31, 2015)
- Khamenei is certainly better educated than the late Khomeini. At least he can speak and write correct Persian and Arabic, something the late Ayatollah never managed. From available evidence Khamenei also has a better knowledge of Islam and its history than Khomeini did. Nevertheless, Khamenei has never been accepted as a theologian or Islamic scholar, but as a political leader, bestowing on him a degree of dangerous ambiguity. That ambiguity enables him to hit much higher than his weight by using his political position as long as the going is good. However, the slightest sign that his political power may be on the wane or seriously challenged could expose him as a prophet without armor. And that, in the context of Iran's violent politics, created of the same substance as angels or not, is a dicey situation to be in, to say the least.
 - The Supreme Guide and the Substance of the Angels (<http://english.aawsat.com/2015/08/article55344963/the-supreme-guide-and-the-substance-of-the-angels>), *Ashraq Al-Awsat* (31 Aug, 2015).
- Syria these days reminds me of an orphan surrounded by real enemies and false friends, forming a club of cynics, and trying to seize control of its destiny.
 - Opinion: The Syrian Orphan and a Club of Cynics (<http://english.aawsat.com/2015/09/article55345155/opinion-the-syrian-orphan-and-a-club-of-cynics>), *Ashraq Al-Awsat* (18 Sep, 2015).
- The core of the Syrian tragedy consists of the fact that Assad and ISIS represent the two faces of the same coin. Both want the Syrian people, or what is left of them inside the country, scripted out of the equation. Both have enough of a popular base to hang on for some more time even if they did not receive succor from the outside which they regularly do. At the same time neither is strong enough or is ever likely to have the popular base to impose its agenda on Syria.
 - Opinion: The Syrian Orphan and a Club of Cynics (<http://english.aawsat.com/2015/09/article55345155/opinion-the-syrian-orphan-and-a-club-of-cynics>), *Ashraq Al-Awsat* (18 Sep, 2015).
- Those who urge an alliance with Assad cite the example of Joseph Stalin, the Soviet despot who became an ally of Western democracies against Nazi Germany. I never liked historical comparisons and like this one even less. To start with, the Western democracies did not choose Stalin as an ally; he was thrust upon them by the turn of events. When the Second World War started Stalin was an ally of Hitler thanks to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The Soviet Union actively participated in the opening phase of the war by invading Poland from the east as the Germans came in from the West. Before that, Stalin had rendered Hitler a big service by eliminating thousands of Polish army officers in The Katyn massacre. Between September 1939 and June 1941, when Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, Stalin was an objective ally of Hitler. Stalin switched

sides when he had no choice if he wanted to save his skin. The situation in Syria today is different. There is no alliance of democracies which, thanks to Obama's enigmatic behavior, lack any strategy in the Middle East. Unlike Stalin, Assad has not switched sides if only because there is no side to switch to. Assad regards ISIS as a tactical ally against other armed opposition groups. This is why Russia is now focusing its air strikes against non-ISIS armed groups opposed to Assad. More importantly, Assad has none of the things that Stalin had to offer the Allies. To start with Stalin could offer the vast expanse of territory controlled by the Soviet Union and capable of swallowing countless German divisions without belching. Field Marshal von Paulus' one-million man invasion force was but a drop in the ocean of the Soviet landmass. In contrast, Assad has no territorial depth to offer. According to the Iranian General Hossein Hamadani, who was killed in Aleppo, Assad is in nominal control of around 20 percent of the country. Stalin also had an endless supply of cannon fodder, able to ship in millions from the depths of the Urals, Central Asia and Siberia. In contrast, Assad has publicly declared he is running out of soldiers, relying on Hezbollah cannon fodder sent to him by Tehran. If Assad has managed to hang on to part of Syria, it is partly because he has an air force while his opponents do not. But even that advantage has been subject to the law of diminishing returns. Four years of bombing defenseless villages and towns has not changed the balance of power in Assad's favor. This may be why his Russian backers decided to come and do the bombing themselves. Before, the planes were Russian, the pilots Syrian. Now both planes and pilots are Russian, underlining Assad's increasing irrelevance. Stalin's other card, which Assad lacks, consisted of the USSR's immense natural resources, especially the Azerbaijan oilfields which made sure the Soviet tanks could continue to roll without running out of petrol. Assad in contrast has lost control of Syria's oilfields and is forced to buy supplies from ISIS or smugglers operating from Turkey. There are other differences between Stalin then and Assad now. Adulated as "the Father of the Nation" Stalin had the last word on all issues. Assad is not in that position. In fact, again according to the late Hamadani in his last interview published by Iranian media, what is left of the Syrian Ba'athist regime is run by a star chamber of shadowy characters who regard Assad as nothing but a figurehead.

- Opinion: No, Bashar Al-Assad is no Joseph Stalin (<http://english.aawsat.com/2015/10/article55345413/opinion-no-bashar-al-assad-is-no-joseph-stalin>), *Ashraq Al-Awsat* (16 Oct, 2015).
- Since the abortive coup, Erdogan has been acting like a wounded giant, moving in every direction, hitting everyone in sight and groping for ghosts in the dark. To impose his image as a man of action he has ordered thousands of arrests, massive purges and favor-distribution on a gargantuan scale. He has also put into circulation a dime-a-dozen ideas for constitutional and judicial reform. In the process he has ignored another lesson of Mazrban Nameh: to think as a man of action but to act as a man of thought.
 - Opinion: Turkey – Towards a “One and a Half Party” System (<http://english.aawsat.com/2016/08/article55355819/opinion-turkey-towards-one-half-party-system>), *Ashraq Al-Awsat* (5 Aug, 2016).
- Erdogan really needs to get a grip on himself, if only because, sadly, Turkey needs him right now as the least bad option in a confused situation. He may be every Turk's first choice but he sure is the second choice of many. The first thing he needs to do is to take a deep breath since breathing is not one of those things that the ruler had better not do. Next, he needs to restore a measure of discipline within his camp, at least as far as the narrative of the events is concerned.
 - Opinion: Turkey – Towards a “One and a Half Party” System (<http://english.aawsat.com/2016/08/article55355819/opinion-turkey-towards-one-half-party-system>), *Ashraq Al-Awsat* (5 Aug, 2016).
- Erdogan may have dreamt of a one-party system with himself at the helm far into the

future. That, however, is not on the cards. Going in such a direction could deal the coup de grace to Turkey's already sick economy by drying up foreign direct investment and fast developing trade links with Europe and North America. What Erdogan can do is to build a "one-and-a-half party" system in which the AKP will set the agenda for the remainder of the decade while opposition parties provide the "half" needed to maintain the appearance of parliamentary democracy. A "one-and-a-half party" system isn't unprecedented. Mexico tried it for half a century. Japan has lived with it since the end of the Second World War. It is also the model that Vladimir Putin has imposed in Russia. The failed coup has set Turkish democracy back by at least a decade. However, had it succeeded it might have caused an even longer and deeper setback.

- Opinion: Turkey – Towards a "One and a Half Party" System (<http://english.aawsat.com/2016/08/article55355819/opinion-turkey-towards-one-half-party-system>), *Ashraq Al-Awsat* (5 Aug, 2016).
- Though it would be unfair to blame all on him, there is no escaping the fact that President Barack Obama has been an exceptionally divisive figure. Failing to find formulae for working with a hostile Congress he has tried to circumvent the legislature whenever possible, adding fuel to the fire of division. He leaves behind a deeply divided government. By turning his power base into a coalition of racial, ethnic and religious minorities, Obama has pushed the majority towards radical messages they had shunned for generations. He leaves behind a divided society. Today, even the two main parties, Democrat and Republican, are split with surprising reversals of alliances within each. He leaves behind a divided establishment.
 - Opinion: Clinton or Trump – Better or Less Bad? (<http://english.aawsat.com/2016/11/article55361471/opinion-clinton-trump-better-less-bad>), *Ashraq Al-Awsat* (November 4, 2016)
- If we go by verbal measures, Donald Trump is certainly the more divisive of the two if only because of his tongue-lashing of Latinos, Muslims and even Republican Party grandees. But if action is the measure, Hillary Clinton might be the more divisive. The reason is that, rightly or wrongly, she is seen as the continuator of Obama's tenure; many Americans see her presidency as a third term for the incumbent. Another President Clinton might mean another four years of internecine feuds in the United States. And that would be bad for America and bad for the world, including the Middle East.
 - Opinion: Clinton or Trump – Better or Less Bad? (<http://english.aawsat.com/2016/11/article55361471/opinion-clinton-trump-better-less-bad>), *Ashraq Al-Awsat* (November 4, 2016)
- When it comes to the Middle East, Trump again has the advantage of being an unknown quantity. Although he has talked a lot of nonsense about foreign policy, he has also insisted on a valid point: the current US policy simply doesn't work. That, in turn, might persuade him to look for something different, creating at least an opportunity for repairing some of the damage done by Obama's wayward policies to peace and stability in the Middle East. Clinton, in contrast, already has a record. She backed the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt before Obama decided to ditch them. She was co-pilot in Obama's disastrous policy in Libya. On the perennial Arab-Israeli conflict, she did the hoola dance choreographed by Obama, going round and round and getting nowhere. Clinton was also in the driving seat when the US launched secret talks in Oman with Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a textbook example of diplomatic chicanery that led to the great swindle known as "the Iran Nuclear deal."
 - Opinion: Clinton or Trump – Better or Less Bad? (<http://english.aawsat.com/2016/11/article55361471/opinion-clinton-trump-better-less-bad>), *Ashraq Al-Awsat* (November 4, 2016)

- Putting one's chips on Trump is a gamble with a real possibility of losing. Betting on Clinton, however, is no gamble because we already know that her personal qualities aside, she is likely to reproduce the losses that the Obama administration has inflicted on the US and its allies. Having said that, American voters should have one concern above all: Which candidate might heal the rift that is damaging to the very fabric of their nation?
 - Opinion: Clinton or Trump – Better or Less Bad? (<http://english.aawsat.com/2016/11/article55361471/opinion-clinton-trump-better-less-bad>), *Ashraq Al-Awsat* (November 4, 2016)
- Khomeini was one of some 200 Ayatollahs and never considered by others as "supreme" in anything. His limited knowledge of theology and history and his inability to master Persian and Arabic at a high level meant he would never attain the summit within the Shi'ite clerical hierarchy. Khomeini was a politician and owed his place in the Iranian panorama to the success of his political movement against various rivals and adversaries. Khamenei's knowledge of theology and history is certainly superior to that of Khomeini. He also has a better command of both Persian and Arabic. Had Khamenei built a career within the Shi'ite clerical hierarchy he would have had a good chance of reaching higher rungs of the ladder than Khomeini.
 - Iran after Khamenei: the Debate Starts (<http://english.aawsat.com/2017/03/article55369052/iran-khamenei-debate-starts>), *Ashraq Al-Awsat* (March 10, 2017)

Holy Terror: The inside story of Islamic terrorism (1987)

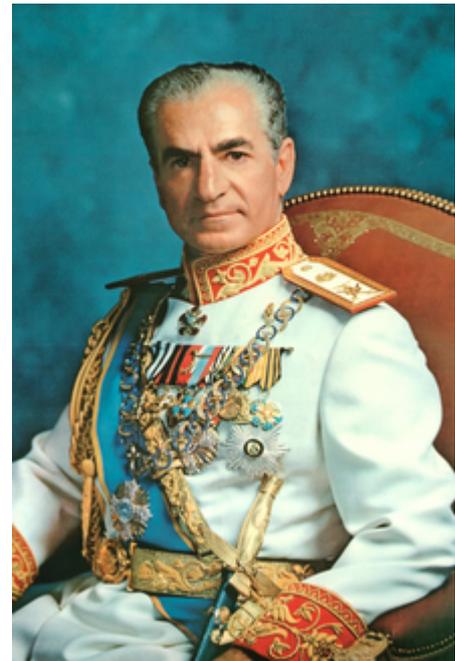
- [Islamic terrorism] is different from all other forms of terrorism in at least three important respects. First, it rejects all the contemporary ideologies in their various forms; it sees itself as the total outsider with no option but to take control or to fall, gun in hand. It cannot even enter into talks with other terrorist movements which may, in some specific cases at least, share its tactical objectives. Considering itself as an expression of Islamic revival - which must, by definition, lead to the conquest of the entire globe by the True Faith - it bases all its actions on the dictum that the end justifies the means... The second characteristic that distinguishes the Islamic version from other forms of terrorism is that it is clearly conceived and conducted as a form of Holy War which can only end when total victory has been achieved. The term 'low-intensity warfare' has often been used to describe terrorism, but it applies more specifically to the Islamic kind, which does not seek negotiations, give-and-take, the securing of specific concessions or even the mere seizure of political power within a certain number of countries... The third specific characteristic of Islamic terrorism is that it forms the basis of a whole theory of both individual conduct and of state policy. To kill the enemies of Allah and to offer the infidels the choice between converting to Islam or being put to death is the duty of every individual believer as well as the supreme - if not the sole - task of the Islamic state.
- The division of the world into two mutually exclusive camps - the City of War and the City of Faith - lies at the heart of Islam's traditional view of existence. Places where Islam rules supreme and its laws are strictly obeyed are known as Dar al-Iman or the City of Faith. The rest of the world is signified under the title of Dar al-Harb or the City of War.
- Since Islam cannot abdicate from its mission to bring the whole of humanity to its own path - the 'Right Path' - relations between the City of Faith and the City of War cannot but be hostile. As long as Islam is not strong enough to impose its will on the inhabitants of the City of War by force, it may observe a period of truce. But there can never be peace between the two. A state of truce could be tolerated as long as the two warring camps touched one another only at their physical frontiers. The real danger came when

the City of War started to conquer the land of Islam from within.

- Islam says: Whatever good there is exists thanks to the sword and in the shadow of the sword! People cannot be made obedient except with the sword! The sword is the key to Paradise, which can be opened only for the Holy Warriors! There are hundreds of other [Qur'anic] psalms and Hadiths [sayings of the Prophet] urging Muslims to value war and to fight. Does all this mean that Islam is a religion that prevents men from waging war? I spit upon those foolish souls who make such a claim.

The Unknown Life of the Shah (1991)

- The Shah described the modernisation of Iran as the principal goal of his life, and yet he adamantly refused to see that there could be no veritable modernisation without democracy. He often referred to his Swiss education as part of his credentials as a profoundly committed democrat, but was, at the same time, convinced that Iran was not yet ripe for democracy, and that it was his duty as 'the father of the nation' to save the Iranians from a slothful life of prayer, pilgrimage, small commerce, backward farming and cottage industry. He also wanted to turn Iran into a second Japan, make her one of the five or six major world powers by the end of the century. He regarded himself as the custodian of Iran's grandeur and freedom and in later years he extended his self-proclaimed mission of saving Iran to include the entire world.
- More than a decade after the Shah's death it is no longer necessary to be for or against him on all matters. How could one be for or against everything that happened during a reign of nearly thirty-eight years? How could Iranians not be for him when he fought over Azerbaijan or when he gave the royal assent to the bill that nationalised Iran's oil? How could one be against the principle of land reform or the enhancement of women's status? And did he not deserve support when he fought for a more just system of production and pricing for oil, which he called 'a noble substance'? But how could anyone be for him when he closed all doors on discussion and debate and effectively drove many intelligent and patriotic Iranians into the arms of reactionary mullahs? And how could one approve of the unchecked intervention of the SAVAK secret police in virtually all aspects of life, especially in the 1970s? Last but not least, it would be difficult to understand, much less to justify, his almost pathological belief that only the major powers were capable of either protecting or destabilising his regime.
- Since the Persian monarchy began some 2550 years ago, Iran has had more than 350 kings. No fewer than half of them were either assassinated or killed in battle. Many went into exile



The Shah described the modernisation of Iran as the principal goal of his life, and yet he adamantly refused to see that there could be no veritable modernisation without democracy.



Reza Shah had been a born leader; the new Shah had to learn to become one.

to escape death. Iran's long history is full of fallen crowns and shattered imperial dreams. Of Mohammad-Reza Shah's five immediate predecessors, one was assassinated and three were forced into exile. What makes Mohammad-Reza Shah's tragedy special is that he was, perhaps, the first Iranian king in more than a century to have a real possibility of ending his reign peacefully and dying in his own country. That this was not the case was, to a large extent, the result of Iran's chronic political underdevelopment. But the Shah's own failure to operate within the realities of Iranian society - unpleasant as they undoubtedly were - contributed to his downfall and its dramatic consequences for the nation as a whole. The fall of the Shah was, in a sense, the prelude to more than a decade of instability in the region, culminating in the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent massacre of Kurds and Shi'ites in Mesopotamia. It may take Iran and her region many more years before the shockwaves unleashed by the fall of the Shah are fully absorbed.

- Reza Shah was not an atheist and could best be described as an agnostic. He was, for a while, fascinated by the teachings of Zoroaster, Iran's pre-Islamic prophet, but his fascination should be understood in the context of his old soldier's dream of restoring Iran to its ancient grandeur. Mohammad-Reza, on the other hand, was deeply religious, even to the point of rejecting all free will.
- Reza Shah had been a powerful leader only partly because of his position, and Mohammad-Reza was fully conscious of the fact that he had few of his father's natural assets. The new Shah had received a democratic training which meant that he knew that there were different views on every issue and that reality could be contemplated from many different angles: this made him hesitant and indecisive where his father had been determined and resolute. Mohammad-Reza wanted to be loved for his person: Reza Shah never knew what love was, asking only to be obeyed. The new Shah was polite and shy and anxious not to offend: the old Shah deliberately terrorised members of his entourage in order to keep them constantly on their guard. Reza Shah had been a born leader; the new Shah had to learn to become one.
- Mossadeq made the crowds laugh and cry. He confirmed their prejudices and superstitions and flattered their vanities - they were, in most cases, all they had left. They loved him, but did he love them? No one could know for sure.
- As queen, Farah achieved almost immediate popularity. She had several features that pleased the Iranians: she was 'fully Iranian' and also worthy of honour because she descended from the family of the Prophet. She was a brunette with deep black eyes of the kind most Persians cherish. (The Shah's outlandish taste for blondes was not shared by his compatriots.) Farah appeared to be slightly taller than the Shah, but this could not be held against her. The new queen's athletic physique and her well-publicised love of sports disconcerted some religious circles, but even the more conservative Iranians now understood that times were changing.
- The Shah's vision of the ideal form of government was not so far removed from that of Mossadeq. In that ideal model one man, the king, prime minister or Pishva [Führer] would act as the guardian of the nation's highest interests. The Pishva, because he loves his people, could never do anything that might not be good for the people and the country. He might sacrifice the interests of the few for the benefit of the many. But he would never harm 'the people' or 'the nation' as a whole. Mossadeq's version of the same model envisaged a role for crowds, political groups - though not for political parties - and religious associations whose task was to support the Pishva by fighting his opponents and making him feel loved and cherished. In the Shah's model, the Pishva's decisions were to be carried out exclusively through the bureaucracy with the armed forces always ready to crush any opposition. All that was left for 'the nation' to do was applaud the Pishva and make him feel good. Mossadeq and the Shah advanced exactly the same argument in defence of their respective models: Iran, being constantly prey to the devilish appetite of the rapacious foreign powers, the influence of the ajnabi

(foreigners), multiplying the centres of political power would allow the ajnabi to infiltrate the nation's structures. Neither man could envisage a situation in which different sections of the Iranian society might, for reasons of their own, oppose the Leader. They could conceive of no circumstances in which an opposition movement could emerge without foreign backing and intrigue.

New York Post

- It's unfair to blame Pakistan for keeping the Taliban alive – it also gets support from the mullahs in Tehran and Islamists throughout the world – but there's no doubt that Musharraf has done less than his share in fighting them.
 - "Why Pakistan needs Musharraf" (<http://nypost.com/2007/08/10/why-pakistan-needs-musharraf/>), *New York Post* (August 10, 2007).
- Once a paratrooper, always a paratrooper. That's how Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf could be described in the wake of his decision over the weekend to suspend the Constitution and impose a state of emergency. He has always managed to shoot his way out of tight corners in the past. But will the tactic work this time?... In 1999, Musharraf came to power through a coup and didn't impose martial law. Eight years later, he has opted for a second coup, this time with the iron fist – a biting comment on his own performance in office.
 - "Musharraf's coup: What to do" (<http://nypost.com/2007/11/07/musharrafs-coup-what-to-do/>), *New York Post* (November 7, 2007).
- Despite the undoubted attachment of most of its people to some form of electoral politics, Pakistan remains a nation built around an army. Paradoxically, even the citizens who most talk of democracy often look to the army as potential savior – a kind of deus ex machina that, at crucial moments, can intervene to bring the nation out of an impasse. In just over half a century as a state, Pakistan has experienced four military coups – each initially welcomed by a majority of the people.
 - "Citizen Musharraf" (<http://nypost.com/2007/11/29/citizen-musharraf/>), *New York Post* (November 29, 2007).
- The Islamists killed Benazir Bhutto as they killed her father. But they shouldn't be allowed to kill Pakistan's hopes for democracy.
 - "The Bhutto assassination: Democracy must go on" (<http://nypost.com/2007/12/28/the-bhutto-assassination-democracy-must-go-on/>), *New York Post* (December 28, 2007).



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- Turkmens claim that they have the lowest life expectancy in Iran and that they are denied fair access to higher education. Those who manage to apply for university places are often turned away because they fail religious tests based on Shiism; their inadequate mastery of Persian reduces their chances further. Tehran authorities blame the Turkmen revolt on “secessionists” and “counterrevolutionaries,” allegedly supported by the United States. In fact, the revolt highlights the failure of a narrowly based ideological regime to understand the pluralist nature of Iranian society and the legitimate aspirations of its diverse component parts for dignity, equal opportunity and a fair share in decision-making.

- "Iran's latest ethnic revolt" (<http://nypost.com/2008/01/14/irans-latest-ethnic-revolt/>), *New York Post* (January 14, 2008).

- As some of us noted before Saddam Hussein's 2003 fall, banning the Ba'ath as such was a mistake – for, in a sense, the Ba'ath had also been a victim of Saddam's savage rule. The Ba'ath, modeled on European fascist parties, was never a democratic movement. Yet, before Saddam turned it into an empty shell to be filled with his personality cult, it had been a genuine political movement, representing a significant segment of Iraqi opinion. It had started as a predominantly Shiite party seeking to downplay sectarianism by promoting pan-Arab ideas. Saddam turned it into a sectarian party, first dominated by the Arab Sunni minority and eventually by his Tikriti clan. The wisest course would've been to let those Ba'athists who had been purged, imprisoned and exiled under Saddam to reclaim their party and rebuild it with full respect for Iraq's new democratic and pluralist political system. Those Ba'athists who committed crimes were known to all and could've been blacklisted and tried as individuals. The blanket ban suddenly transformed some 1.4 million civil servants, including tens of thousands of teachers and medical doctors and some half a million military personnel, into pariahs simply because they'd been nominal Ba'ath members. Yet most had joined simply to protect their careers under a brutal regime.

- "Iraq: Reconciling with the Ba'ath" (<http://nypost.com/2008/01/16/iraq-reconciling-with-the-baath/>), *New York Post* (January 16, 2008).

- Yes, Afghanistan is composed of 18 different communities marked by ethnic, linguistic and religious differences. But ask any Afghan who he is, and he won't hesitate to reply: an Afghan! The national identity has taken shape over 300 years — after all, as a state, Afghanistan is older than America, Germany and Italy. It is also one of the oldest Muslim nation-states.



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File:First Sting (2008), by Stuart Brown.jpg

The claim that a handful of Pushtun, on their own, defeated the Red Army is laughable.



For years, whenever I saw Mubarak, he reminded me of a mummy.

- "Myths of our Afghanistan debate" (<http://nypost.com/2009/10/15/myths-of-our-afghanistan-debate/>), *New York Post* (October 15, 2009).
- From 1860 to 1977, a string of Afghan monarchs imposed effective rule throughout their realm. But the monarchy was never absolute, if only because the loya jirah, a high assembly of tribal and religious leaders, would restrain a despotic king or help a weak one.
 - "Myths of our Afghanistan debate" (<http://nypost.com/2009/10/15/myths-of-our-afghanistan-debate/>), *New York Post* (October 15, 2009).
- Until the "time of troubles" starting in the late '70s, Afghans were proverbial in their hospitality and readiness to welcome foreigners. Over two decades, an estimated 1.2 million young Westerners traveled there in search of the mythical east — without facing any hostility. As for misogyny, Afghanistan was among the first Muslim countries to declare education compulsory for both boys and girls. From the '60s, it had women doctors, professors, parliamentarians and even Cabinet ministers.
 - "Myths of our Afghanistan debate" (<http://nypost.com/2009/10/15/myths-of-our-afghanistan-debate/>), *New York Post* (October 15, 2009).
- The Pakistani military created the Taliban in 1995 — six years after the Red Army left Afghanistan. Al Qaeda funneled money to some mujahedeen, but never played a role in the fighting. Even the mujahedeen couldn't claim to have driven out the Red Army — which left as part of Mikhail Gorbachev's strategic retreat. And the Communist regime remained for three years after the Soviets left, collapsing only when its Uzbek militia switched sides and, forging an alliance with Tajik fighters under Ahmad Shah Massoud, captured Kabul. The massive aid for the mujahedeen from America and allies proved a crucial factor in forcing the Soviet withdrawal. The claim that a handful of Pushtun, on their own, defeated the Red Army is laughable.
 - "Myths of our Afghanistan debate" (<http://nypost.com/2009/10/15/myths-of-our-afghanistan-debate/>), *New York Post* (October 15, 2009).
- Modern ideas have had a home in Afghanistan since the 19th century. Several Islamist reformist movements started in Afghanistan before spreading to Central Asia and beyond. Afghanistan's social- democratic, liberal, nationalist, Marxist, Maoist and Islamist parties provided a rich tapestry of ideologies until the '70s.
 - "Myths of our Afghanistan debate" (<http://nypost.com/2009/10/15/myths-of-our-afghanistan-debate/>), *New York Post* (October 15, 2009).
- Eight years ago, no Afghan girls could go to school. Now, a third attend school. Although corruption is rife in the new ruling elite, hundreds of construction projects have finished, with hundreds more under way. More important, perhaps, the vast majority of Afghans



The Arab League was a British colonial creation to perpetuate despotic regimes in the context of the Cold War.



In the highly politicized version of Islam promoted by Da'esh, al Qaeda, the Khomeinists in Iran, the Taliban in Afghanistan and Boko Haram in Nigeria, God plays a cameo role at best.

think that they're better off under President Hamid Karzai's administration — inefficient, arrogant and possibly corrupt as it may be — than under the murderous rule of Mullah Muhammad Omar.

- "Myths of our Afghanistan debate" (<http://nypost.com/2009/10/15/myths-of-our-afghanistan-debate/>), *New York Post* (October 15, 2009).
- For years, whenever I saw Mubarak, he reminded me of a mummy. He spent a considerable time each day to "prepare" himself. That meant dying his hair and eyebrows jet black, and applying rouge to his cheeks to make them look rosy, in more or less the same way Egyptian mummy makers did with dead pharaohs. He also wore heels to look taller and used a corset to keep his belly in. Despite declining eyesight, he shunned glasses in public. Even in his 80s, he wanted to appear alive and young, just as pharaohs had done. Mubarak's attempts at securing eternal youth were faintly comical and ultimately harmless. What was not comical and certainly harmless was the mummification of his regime.
 - "Curse of the mummy" (<http://nypost.com/2011/02/13/curse-of-the-mummy/>), *New York Post* (February 13, 2011).
- The Arab League was a British colonial creation to perpetuate despotic regimes in the context of the Cold War. The world has changed since then, and new Iraq could become a symbol of that change. Apart from a few thousand bureaucrats, nobody wants the Arab League.
 - "A league of despots" (<http://nypost.com/2011/04/19/a-league-of-despots/>), *New York Post* (April 19, 2011).
- In Arab countries today, bin Ladenism looks like a nightmare from a bygone era. Many Arabs have discovered that the alternative to despotism is democracy, not al Qaeda. In fact, the Arab Spring became possible partly because the new urban middle classes were convinced that, by rising against despots, they wouldn't be jumping into the fire from the frying pan. There was a time when bin Laden's slightest utterance made the headlines in most Arab countries. Gradually, however, he came to provoke only a yawn in most places. Even the Qatari satellite-TV network al-Jazeera, which made its reputation as "bin Laden's home TV," stopped giving him star treatment. Left behind by developments in Arab countries, al Qaeda has gradually shed its ideological pretensions and mutated into a purely terrorist franchise. Its motto: One man, one bomb. Shut out of Arab countries, al Qaeda has been recruiting among Muslims in Europe and North America. Hundreds of European, American and Canadian Muslims have been to al Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The group also has sleeper cells in some Asian countries — notably India, Thailand and the Philippines. It will also keep Pakistan high on its target list, and continue to help the



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The Islamic State's most noteworthy embrace of the works of the "Infidel," however, is surely its use of the satanic Internet. Its personnel, including converts from Europe and North America, regularly display across the Web what seems to be the main, if not the only, thing they've learned from Islam: cutting the throats of defenseless captives.

Taliban in its forlorn attempt at regaining power. Yet al Qaeda is bound to fade away, as have all terrorist organizations in history — though this will take some time. Meanwhile, the major democracies should throw their support behind the Arab Spring and help it find its way to a future free of both despotism and Islamic terrorism.

- "Evil reign collapsed years before he fell" (<http://nypost.com/2011/05/03/evil-reign-collapsed-years-before-he-fell/>), *New York Post* (May 3, 2011).
- Since the 1970s, thanks to a North Korean-style cult of personality, the [Syrian] presidency has been a kind of supranational institution, above anything as vulgar as the competition for power. But now it has lost its mystique: The president is a lonely man who dares not venture beyond his palace in the outskirts of a besieged capital. Syria's history since independence in 1947 shows that whenever a ruler calls in the army to crush the street, he ends up the loser. It happened three times in 1949 alone, when the army staged three coups, each time after being ordered to crush the street.
 - "The loneliest man in Syria" (<http://nypost.com/2011/05/10/the-loneliest-man-in-syria/>), *New York Post* (May 10, 2011).
- The way things turned out in Misrata was not what Khadafy had hoped for. Right to the very bitter end, he remained a prisoner of his illusions. For four decades, he had heard people, men and women, shouting themselves hoarse with promises of dying for him. For four decades, he had distributed vast sums of money, generated by Libya's huge oil exports, among a few hundred thousand "Fedaees" or "self-sacrificers," individuals who were supposed to fight for him to the end. When high on hubris and the "stimulant" drugs he took, the colonel claimed to have "an army of Omar Mukhtars" under his command, named after a bandit who became a local hero by fighting Italian colonialists in 1912. Yet the first city to rise against Khadafy was Tobruk — Omar Mukhtar's birthplace. Then Benghazi rose, followed by Braiga. As each town and city rose against him, the colonel promised to fight back from another. His last stands were in Bani-Walid and Sirte. Tens of thousands of Omar Mukhtars did enter the battlefield. But they were fighting not for but *against* him.
 - "Khadafy, kha-put" (<http://nypost.com/2011/10/21/khadafy-kha-put/>), *New York Post* (October 21, 2011).
- Assad appears to have decided to purge his government of anyone remotely suspected of sympathizing with the pro-democracy uprising — with his first priority being to reassert control of the armed forces. To hammer that home, he's appearing on state TV in military uniforms in his role as commander-in-chief — his chest often covered with



Even when Muslims do something intolerable, Europeans have to tolerate it in atonement of past colonial and imperialist misdeeds. Victimhood is an inexhaustible capital that Muslims in Europe could dig into for generations.



Millions of French are expected to take part in marches across the country today to pay respect to the 17 people, including 10 journalists, who were killed in the attacks. There is going to be just one slogan: "We are all Charlie." Do they believe it? The French would do well to remember that, once all is said and done, they still live in one of the few countries in the world where they can think and say what they like, a state of bliss a majority of Muslims across the globe could only dream of. And, the prophets of decline notwithstanding, that is something worth living and fighting for.

Syria's highest military decorations for bravery, although he's never done military service.

- "The lonely dictator" (<http://nypost.com/2011/08/12/the-lonely-dictator/>), *New York Post* (August 12, 2011).
- The Syrian Ba'ath Party claims to have 2.3 million members — but most of that consists of people who need membership to get a job or be promoted. Leaving aside a few thousand top cadre (mostly from the Alawite minority to which Assad belongs), the Ba'ath Party is no more than an empty shell.
 - "Assad must (still) go" (<http://nypost.com/2012/12/06/assad-must-still-go/>), *New York Post* (December 6, 2012).
- Liberated, Iraq is the only Arab country, so far, to have changed governments three times through elections and also the only one where all political parties operate freely. Iraqis didn't achieve what they hoped; they achieved what they could. The invasion was not about the United States setting up bases or stealing Iraq's oil or using Iraq for an invasion of Iran, as Saddam's apologists claimed. Nor was it about imposing democracy by force. It was about two things: stopping a time bomb that was ticking in the heart of the region and removing the impediment to democratization that was Saddam's regime. More than a million Americans fought and worked in Iraq. They share part of the credit for the fact that Iraqis today are able to run their own lives without fear. They can be proud that, once again, American power was used to free a nation from tyranny.
 - "What Saddam's ouster achieved" (<http://nypost.com/2013/03/19/what-saddams-ouster-achieved/>), *New York Post* (March 19, 2013).
- For centuries, Ottoman sultans dreamed of conquest in the name of Islam. When they failed on the battlefield they sought glory in building mosques. Eighty years after the Caliphate was abolished to make way for a Western-style republic, the tradition is being revived by Turkey's current leaders. Led by the ebullient Recep Tayyip Erdogan and inspired by an ideological hodgepodge labeled "neo-Ottomanism," they are using urban architecture to kill the European dream of secular Turks. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the republic, adopted the Latin alphabet, purged Turkish of Arabic words and brought mosques and religious endowments under state control. He also enlisted a team of French ethnologists to invent the myth of a Turkish nation related to Hungarians and Finns and stretching from Central Europe to Central Asia. For decades, Turkey's Islamists tried to undo as much of Ataturk's "reforms" as possible but failed because a majority of Turks would not vote for a party with an Islamist agenda. Erdogan solved that problem by uniting some 20 different Islamist groups into a new party that made no mention of Islam.
 - "Farewell Ataturk" (<http://nypost.com/2013/06/27/farewell-ataturk/>), *New York Post* (June 27, 2013).
- Iran's new president, Hassan Rouhani, has declared the lifting of sanctions on the country as his top priority — even as he also insists that he won't budge an inch from the Islamic Republic's positions on key issues, including the controversial nuclear program.
 - "How to con the West" (<http://nypost.com/2013/08/12/how-to-con-the-west/>), *New York Post* (August 13, 2013).



The Khomeinist regime makes no secret of its intense hatred for Iranian culture, which it claims has roots in "the age of ignorance" (*jahiliyyah*).

- It might come as a surprise to many, but the truth is that Islam today no longer has a living and evolving theology. In fact, with few exceptions, Islam's last genuine theologians belong to the early part of the 19th century. Go to any mosque anywhere, whether it is in New York or Mecca, and you are more likely to hear a political sermon rather than a theological reflection. In the highly politicized version of Islam promoted by Da'esh, al Qaeda, the Khomeinists in Iran, the Taliban in Afghanistan and Boko Haram in Nigeria, God plays a cameo role at best. Deprived of its theological moorings, today's Islam is a wayward vessel under the captaincy of ambitious adventurers leading it into sectarian feuds, wars and terrorism. Many, especially Muslims in Europe and North America, use it as a shibboleth defining identity and even ethnicity. A glance at Islam's history in the past 200 years highlights the rapid fading of theologians. Today, Western scholars speak of Wahhabism as if that meant a theological school. In truth, Muhammad Abdul-Wahhabi was a political figure. His supposedly theological writings consist of nine pages denouncing worship at shrines of saints. Nineteenth-century "reformers" such as Jamaledin Assadabadi and Rashid Rada were also more interested in politics than theology. The late Ayatollah Khomeini, sometimes regarded as a theologian, was in fact a politician wearing clerical costume. His grandson has collected more than 100,000 pages of his writings and speeches and poetry. Of these, only 11 pages, commenting on the first and shortest verse of the Koran, could be regarded as dabbling in theology, albeit not with great success.

- "The mad dream of a dead empire that unites Islamic rebels" (<http://nypost.com/2014/06/14/the-mad-dream-of-a-dead-empire-that-unites-islamic-rebels/>), *New York Post* (June 14, 2014).

- As far as fanatical Muslims are concerned, Yazidis must be classified among the heathen because they do not belong to any of the three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Under Islamic rules, Jews and Christians are regarded as "people of the book" and thus could live among Muslims provided they pay a protection fee known as "dhimma." Even if they wanted to, Yazidis cannot make use of that provision because they regard themselves as followers of Zoroaster, a prophet of ancient Iranian peoples who preached around 700 BC... A peaceful people opposed to violence and bloodshed, Yazidis believe that no cause is worth killing people for, something that scandalizes fanatical Muslims who regard the spread of "The Only True Faith" by sword as a duty and the man who does it as the "Ghazi" (Holy Warrior) who is assured a place in paradise. The



The Putin treatment is reserved for countries in Russia's "near neighborhood" that try to break out of Moscow's orbit and deprive it of strategic assets held for decades. In such cases, unable to restore its past position, Russia tries to create a new situation in which it keeps a sword dangling above the head of the recalcitrant nation. Russia's military intervenes directly and indirectly, always with help from a segment of the local population concerned. Russia starts by casting itself as protector of an ethnic, linguistic or religious minority that demands its military intervention against a central power vilified with labels such as "fascist" and "terrorist."



Unless stopped, the Putin treatment will not end in Syria. The two next candidates could be Moldova and Latvia, both of which have large Russian-speaking minorities.

Yazidis tradition of equality between men and women, including the rejection of polygamy, also scandalizes their fanatical Muslim neighbors.

- "Why some Muslims want to kill the Yazidis by genocide" (<http://nypost.com/2014/08/17/why-so-me-muslims-want-to-destroy-the-yazidis-by-genocide/>), *New York Post* (August 17, 2014).
- So, is “Caliph Ibrahim” of the Islamic State an extremist, a militant, a terrorist or an Islamic fighter? None of the above. All those labels imply behavior that makes some sort of sense in terms of human reality and normal ideologies. Yet the Islamic State and its kindred have broken out of the entire conceivable range of political activity, even its extreme forms. A “militant” spends much of his time promoting an idea or a political program within acceptable rules of behavior. The neo-Islamists, by contrast, recognize no rules apart from those they themselves set; they have no desire to win an argument through hard canvassing. They don’t even seek to impose a point of view; they seek naked and brutal domination. A “terrorist,” meanwhile, tries to instill fear in an adversary from whom he demands specific concessions. Yet the Islamic State et al. use mass murder to such ends. They don’t want to persuade or cajole anyone to do anything in particular; they want everything. “Islamic fighter” is equally inapt. An Islamic fighter is a Muslim who fights a hostile infidel who is trying to prevent Muslims from practicing their faith. That was not the situation in Mosul. No one was preventing the city’s Muslim majority from practicing their faith, let alone forcing them to covert to another religion. Yet the Islamic State came, conquered and began to slaughter. The Islamic State kills people because it can. And in both Syria and Iraq it has killed more Muslims than members of any other religious community. How, then, can we define a phenomenon that has made even al Qaeda, the Taliban and the Khomeinist gangs appear “moderate” in comparison? The international community faced a similar question in the 18th century when pirates acted as a law unto themselves, ignoring the most basic norms of human interaction. The issue was discussed in long negotiations that led to the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) and the Treaty of Rastadt (1714) and developed a new judicial concept: the crime against humanity. Those who committed that crime would qualify as “enemies of mankind” — in Latin, *hostis generis humanis*. Individuals and groups convicted of such a crime were no longer covered by penal codes or even the laws of war. They’d set themselves outside humanity by behaving like wild beasts... Neo-Islamist groups represent a cocktail of nihilism and crimes against humanity. Like the pirates of yesteryear, they’ve attracted criminals from many different nationalities... Having embarked on genocide, the neo-Islamists do not represent an Iraqi or Syrian or Nigerian problem, but a problem for humanity as a whole. They are not enemies of any particular religion, sect or government but enemies of mankind. They deserve to be treated as such (as do the various governments and semi-governmental “charities” that help them). To deal with these enemies of mankind, we need much more than frozen bank accounts and visa restrictions.
 - "Beyond terrorism: ISIS and other enemies of humanity" (<http://nypost.com/2014/08/20/beyond-terrorism-isis-and-other-enemies-of-humanity/>), *New York Post* (August 20, 2014).
- “Pure Mohammadan Islam”: This is what ISIS, *Daesh* in Arabic, promises to deliver once the caliphate has defeated “Infidel” enemies and secured its position. The promise is at the core of its propaganda, including in cyberspace. Its recent blitzkrieg victories and high-profile beheadings are not the only reason ISIS has attracted universal attention. Perhaps more interesting is Daesh’s ability to seduce large numbers of



Paris was attacked not because of what the French do, as some Blame-The-West intellectuals claim, but because of what the French are: infidels who refuse to see the light of Islam.

Muslims across the globe, including in Europe and the United States. It does so with an ideological “product” designed to replace other brands of Islamism marketed by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Khomeinists in Iran. Daeshism, to coin a phrase, also aimed to transcend the ideological hodgepodge marketed by al Qaeda franchises.

- "The ugly attractions of ISIS' ideology" (<http://nypost.com/2014/11/02/the-ugly-attractions-of-isis-ideology/>), *New York Post* (November 2, 2014).
- The promised “Pure Mohammadan Islam” is based on three rejections... The first rejection is of traditional Islamic tolerance for Christians and Jews — who, labeled “People of the Book,” could live in a caliphate by paying protection money (*jizyeh*). The idea is that the “protection” offered by Mohammad belonged to the early phase of Islam when the “Last Prophet” wasn’t strong enough. Once Mohammad had established his rule, the Daeshites note, he ordered the massacre of Jews and the expulsion of Christians from the Arabian Peninsula... The second rejection is aimed against “Infidel ideologies,” especially democracy — government of men by men rather than by Allah... Daesh’s third rejection is aimed against what is labeled “diluted” (*iltiqati*) forms of Islam — for example, insisting that Islam is a religion of peace. In Daesh’s view, Islam will be a religion of peace only after it has seized control of the entire world. Until then, the world will be divided between the House of Islam (*Dar al-Islam*) and the House of War (*Dar al-Harb*). There can never be peace between Islam and whatever that is not Islam. At best, Muslims can make truce (*solh*) with non-Muslims while continuing to prepare for the next war. Daesh also rejects the “aping of Infidel institutions” such as a presidential system, a parliament and the use of such terms as “republic.” The only form of government in “Pure Mohammadan Islam” is the caliphate; the only law is sharia.
 - "The ugly attractions of ISIS' ideology" (<http://nypost.com/2014/11/02/the-ugly-attractions-of-isis-ideology/>), *New York Post* (November 2, 2014).
- Ever since its emergence a few months ago, the declared ambition of the startup caliphate of the Islamic State has been to “wipe out every trace of Infidel influence” in areas under its control. Yet, with each passing day, it becomes more clear that, its deadly fantasies notwithstanding, the IS can’t escape from a world created and dominated by the Infidel. Start with the name that the IS, or Daesh in Arabic, has chosen for itself: ad-dawlat al-Islamiyah, or “Islamic Government.” The concepts of “state” and “government” are entirely Western, not adopted by Muslim peoples until the 19th century. The very words “state” and “government” are never mentioned in the Quran. Daesh’s “caliph” has also appointed a number of vizirs. This, too, is un-Islamic. Of Persian origin, the word vizir designated high officials of the pre-Islamic Sasanian Empire overthrown by Arab Muslim warriors in the 7th century. Mohammad had no vizirs, nor did any of his four immediate successors, the so-called “Well Guided caliphs...” The Islamic State’s most noteworthy embrace of the works of the “Infidel,” however, is surely its use of the satanic Internet. Its personnel, including converts from Europe and North America, regularly display across the Web what seems to be the main, if not the only, thing they’ve learned from Islam: cutting the throats of defenseless captives.
 - "The not-so-Islamic State: ISIS' huge debt to the infidel" (<http://nypost.com/2014/11/20/the-not-so-islamic-state-isis-huge-debt-to-the-infidel/>), *New York Post* (November 20, 2014).
- Neither a community, nor a race, nor yet a culture, an ethnicity or social class, Islam can and must be regarded as what it claims to be: a religion. Yet, as such, it should behave as a religion. That is to say: develop a theology, some sense of transcendence and a moral structure to advocate and defend a set of beliefs. However, this is precisely what modern Islam is not, perhaps does not want to be. Unable to perform as a religion, modern Islam (in most of its varieties) acts like a political movement. It is obsessed with

advantage: It has a clear strategy of making areas beyond its control unsafe. No one thinks Daesh can seize Baghdad, but few Baghdadis feel they're living anything close to a normal life. Daesh's message is clear: No one is safe anywhere, including in non-Muslim lands, until the whole world is brought under "proper Islamic rule."

- How ISIS is winning: The long reach of terror (<http://nypost.com/2015/02/05/how-isis-is-winning-the-long-reach-of-terror/>), *New York Post* (February 5, 2015).
- Islam has no mechanism for excommunication. Individuals can leave the ummah and be regarded as apostates (murtad). But no one who swears he is a Muslim can be excluded. Even very bad Muslims are still Muslims as long as they haven't thrice publicly rejected the two testimonies. (The two testimonies are accepting the oneness of God and that Mohammed is His Prophet.) Thus, neither Obama nor anyone else is qualified to decide who is a Muslim — or what is "true Islam."
 - Obama's elementary errors on Islam (<http://nypost.com/2015/02/20/obamas-elementary-errors-on-islam/>), *New York Post* (February 20, 2015).
- The Iranian regime knows it lacks the military power and the political support needed to seize direct control in any Arab state, least of all Iraq. This is why it plans to create a state-within-a-state situation — where the formal government in Baghdad, like the formal governments in Beirut or Damascus, will be an empty shell, with real power exercised by heavily armed and well-funded groups linked to Tehran. These Iranian-controlled groups would command chunks of territory while letting Sunni jihadists set up shop in their own neck of the woods. In other words, Iran is not aiming to defeat IS, let alone destroy it. All Tehran wants is to create a safe corridor through Iraqi territory to Syria and thence to Lebanon.
 - We're letting Iran and ISIS carve up Iraq (<http://nypost.com/2015/03/15/were-letting-iran-and-isis-carve-up-iraq/>), *New York Post* (March 15, 2015).
- There is no evidence that a majority of Israelis want a two-state formula. In fact, if we add up votes won by all parties implicitly or explicitly opposed to the two-state formula, we will have a whopping 75 per cent of Israelis. Thus what Netanyahu mastered enough courage to say aloud is what most Israelis think in silence. The picture is hardly different on the Palestinian side. To start with, the Palestinians are divided in at least three camps. In one camp we have Fatah and its allies who have never formally committed to a two-state formula but have dropped hints that they might accept such a solution as a first step toward liberating the rest of historic Palestine, that is to say, what is now Israel, later. The second camp is dominated by Hamas, which is committed to the destruction of Israel in no uncertain terms. However, Hamas does not want a Palestinian state either. As the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas is a pan-Islamist group dedicated to fighting for the creation of a global caliphate. In the third camp, there are more radical Palestinian groups, including the Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine, now the favored protégé of the Islamic Republic in Tehran. The IJLP leadership has repeatedly declared its support for a one-state formula sponsored by Iranian "Supreme Guide" Ali Khamenei.
 - Who wants a two-state solution, anyway? (<http://nypost.com/2015/03/20/who-wants-a-two-state-solution-anyway/>), *New York Post* (March 20, 2015).
- Many Iraqis believe that without Iranian intervention in Iraq, both directly and indirectly through former Premier Nouri al-Maliki, there would've been no IS to start with. Iraq had never been torn by sectarian feuds, although it suffered from ethnic conflicts between Arabs and Kurds. It was Khomeinism, a particularly obscurantist form of Shi'ism, that injected a high dose of sectarianism into Iraqi politics.
 - Battle of Tikrit's lessons for Obama (<http://nypost.com/2015/03/29/battle-of-tikrits-lessons-for-obama/>), *New York Post* (March 29, 2015).

- Palestinians living in the Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria have been massacred both by Bashar al-Assad's troops and throat-cutting mujahideen from ISIS. The massacre of Christians, Yazidis and Druze minorities by Islamist groups in Syria and Iraq contrasts with the safety those groups enjoy in Israel.
 - Forget the Palestinians: Arab states have too much else to worry about (<http://nypost.com/2015/07/12/forget-the-palestinians-arab-states-have-too-much-else-to-worry-about/>), *New York Post* (July 12, 2015).
- As a nation-state, Iran has no problems with anybody. As a vehicle for the Khomeinist ideology it has problems with everybody, starting with the Iranian people. The Khomeinist regime makes no secret of its intense hatred for Iranian culture, which it claims has roots in "the age of ignorance" (*jahiliyyah*). To admire this regime because of Iranian culture is like admiring Hitler for Goethe and Beethoven and praising Stalin for Pushkin and Tchaikovsky. This regime has executed tens of thousands of Iranians, driven almost 6 million into exile, and deprived the nation of its basic freedoms. It has also killed more Americans, often through surrogates, than al Qaeda did on 9/11. Not a single day has passed without this regime holding some American hostages. Iran as a nation is a solid friend of America. Iran as a vehicle for the Khomeinist revolution is an eternal enemy of "The Great Satan." The only realistic strategy for the United States would be to help it stop being the Islamic Republic and become Iran again. President Obama's policy, however, points in the opposite direction. He has made it harder for the Iranian people to regain their human rights.
 - What US leaders have never understood about Iran (<http://nypost.com/2015/07/19/what-us-leaders-have-never-understood-about-iran/>), *New York Post* (July 19, 2015).
- After weeks of dancing around the issue, the Obama administration has expressed concern about "heightened military activity" by Russia in Syria. But what if we are facing something more than "heightened military activity?" What if Moscow is preparing to give Syria the full Putin treatment? For years, Russia has been helping Syrian despot Bashar al-Assad cling to a diminishing power structure in a shrinking territorial base without trying to impose an overall strategy. Now, however, there are signs that Russia isn't content to just support Assad. It wants to control Syria. The Putin treatment is reserved for countries in Russia's "near neighborhood" that try to break out of Moscow's orbit and deprive it of strategic assets held for decades. In such cases, unable to restore its past position, Russia tries to create a new situation in which it keeps a sword dangling above the head of the recalcitrant nation. Russia's military intervenes directly and indirectly, always with help from a segment of the local population concerned. Russia starts by casting itself as protector of an ethnic, linguistic or religious minority that demands its military intervention against a central power vilified with labels such as "fascist" and "terrorist."
 - Putin is turning the Syrian coast into another Crimea (<http://nypost.com/2015/09/19/putin-is-turning-the-syrian-coast-into-another-crimea/>), *New York Post* (September 19, 2015).
- Get ready for Russia to cast itself as the protector, not only of the Alawites but also of other minorities such as Turcoman, Armenians and, more interestingly for Moscow, Orthodox Christians who have fled Islamist terror groups such as ISIS. Russia has always seen itself as the "Third Rome" and the last standard-bearer of Christianity against both Catholic "deviation" and Islamist menace. By controlling a new mini-state, as a "safe haven for minorities," Russia could insist that if Syria returns to some normality it be reconstituted as a highly decentralized state. This is what Putin is also demanding in Georgia and Ukraine. The Syrian coast will become another Crimea, if not completely annexed, at least occupied. Unless stopped, the Putin treatment will not end in Syria. The two next candidates could be Moldova and Latvia, both of which have large Russian-speaking minorities.

- Putin is turning the Syrian coast into another Crimea (<http://nypost.com/2015/09/19/putin-is-turning-the-syrian-coast-into-another-crimea/>), *New York Post* (September 19, 2015).
- Paris was attacked not because of what the French do, as some Blame-The-West intellectuals claim, but because of what the French are: infidels who refuse to see the light of Islam. The hope is that just as the Prophet forced the Arab tribes to accept Islam in exchange for protection, the “infidel” nations will also decide that it is in their best interest to submit. Today, however, I see no sign the French tend toward submission. As always, the terrorists may end up like the man who, having won a great many tokens at the roulette table, is surprised when the casino tells him his winnings cannot be cashed.
 - "The jihadis' master plan to break us" (<http://nypost.com/2015/11/15/the-jihadis-master-plan-to-break-us/>) *New York Post* (November 15, 2015).
- If Islam is no longer a religion but a political ideology, why shouldn't it be subjected to the same treatment, including criticism, as any other political ideology, and, if it poses a present and clear danger, face outright suppression?
 - "Brussels is what happens when liberals don't push immigrants to integrate" (<http://nypost.com/2016/03/27/brussels-is-what-happens-when-liberals-dont-push-immigrants-to-integrate/>) *New York Post* (March 27, 2016).
- What happened in Brussels was a co-production by adepts of two sick ideologies. The first one is Islamism in its many versions, including Khomeinism in Iran, Talibanism in Afghanistan, Salafism in Arab countries, Boko Haram in Nigeria, and ISIS and its offshoots across the globe. It will remain firmly in place until it implodes under the weight of its savage contradictions, as did the old Soviet Union, or is defeated in a war, as was the case with Nazi Germany and imperialist Japan. The other co-producer, the mushy and politically correct “liberal” ideology that has seduced segments of opinion in Western democracies, can and must be combated by all those who wish to protect the democratic system in an increasingly dangerous world.
 - "Brussels is what happens when liberals don't push immigrants to integrate" (<http://nypost.com/2016/03/27/brussels-is-what-happens-when-liberals-dont-push-immigrants-to-integrate/>) *New York Post* (March 27, 2016).
- America's strength comes from its multiculturalism, but that's only true when all its people, all its races and religions, believe in the same values. Liberals fetishize separation, arguing that immigrants don't need to learn English, don't need to stop subjugating women with hijabs and arranged marriages, don't need to become citizens. They encourage otherness rather than integration. They want immigrants to change the country, rather than the other way around. They say Islam is not the enemy — but that's only true if Islam is a religion and not a political ideology bent on undermining democracy. Brussels is the result of this thinking. It's what happens when immigrants are allowed to construct their own state within a state, not pushed to become part of a nation.
 - "Brussels is what happens when liberals don't push immigrants to integrate" (<http://nypost.com/2016/03/27/brussels-is-what-happens-when-liberals-dont-push-immigrants-to-integrate/>) *New York Post* (March 27, 2016).
- Islam in its most violent form is already part of Europe just as much as a cancer belongs to the body it attacks.
 - "Brussels is what happens when liberals don't push immigrants to integrate" (<http://nypost.com/2016/03/27/brussels-is-what-happens-when-liberals-dont-push-immigrants-to-integrate/>) *New York Post* (March 27, 2016).

- The French Riviera is the one spot in Europe that comes closest to the image of an earthly paradise. At its heart is the Franco-Italian city of Nice, now France's No. 2 tourist attraction after Paris... To a committed Islamist, Nice was the very symbol of a sinful "deviation from the Right Path."
 - "A cry from France: After Nice, can we finally face the truth about this war?" (<http://ny.post.com/2016/07/15/a-cry-from-france-after-nice-can-we-finally-face-the-truth-about-this-war/>) *New York Post* (July 15, 2016)
- The chief weakness in France's anti-terrorism strategy is the inability of its leadership elite to agree on a workable definition of the threat the nation faces. Many still cling to the notion that Bouhelel and other terrorists are trying to take revenge against France for its colonial past. Yet Tunisia, where Bouhelel's family came from in the 1960s, has been independent for more than 60 years, double the life of the terrorist — who had not been there, even as a tourist. Some, like the Islamologist Gilles Kepel, blame French society for "the sense of exclusion" inflicted on immigrants of Muslim origin. However, leaving aside self-exclusion, there are few barriers that French citizens of Muslim faith can't cross. Today, the Cabinet of Prime Minister Manuel Valls includes at least two Muslim ministers. Others still claim that France is being hit because of Muslim grievances over Palestine, although successive French governments have gone out of their way to sympathize with the "Arab cause." France was the first nation to impose an arms embargo on Israel in 1967 and the first in the West to recognize the PLO. The blame-the-victim school also claims that France is attacked because of the "mess in the Middle East," although the French took no part in toppling Saddam Hussein and have stayed largely on the sidelines in the conflict in Syria. Isn't it possible that this new kind of terrorism, practiced by neo-Islam, is not related to any particular issue? Isn't it possible that Bouhelel didn't want anything specific because he wanted everything, starting with the right to kill people not because of what they did but because of who they were?
 - "A cry from France: After Nice, can we finally face the truth about this war?" (<http://ny.post.com/2016/07/15/a-cry-from-france-after-nice-can-we-finally-face-the-truth-about-this-war/>) *New York Post* (July 15, 2016)

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