

Is Iran\222s Islamic Revolution Melting?
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The Economist had a feature article (Nov. 1) that the steam has gone out of the Ayatollah Khomeini\222s Islamic Revolution of 1979. I knew this would happen, but I have been consistently wrong in my optimistic predictions that it would have happened years ago. These new predictions from sources far and wide are giving us all new hope.

It is not exactly easy to get real information out of a buttoned-up country like Iran, but some changes have become obvious. Mosque attendance has dropped to a trickle, even in rural villages. Mothers are enrolling their little ones in private schools rather than state schools because the state schools devote unseemly time to repressing and brainwashing children with sour Shiite doctrine. Parents instead want their children to learn English and be able to paint pictures, and dance and sing as children should.

Another bit of underground defiance: there has been a spate of conversions to Christianity by young people fed up with Islamism. It is happening in Iran (clandestinely) as well as among Syrian refugees. It also happened in Algeria in the 1990s in response to Islamic terrorism. ISIS brings it all into focus. The more oppressive the radical jihad, the more people flee Islam altogether. [Mark Durie, Feb. 13, 2014.]

More serious problems beset the Islamic Republic of Iran as well. Drug addiction has become a real problem, so real that the Iranians themselves say that 93 percent of their criminal executions is for drug trafficking. When the European Union protested these draconian punishments, a senior official snapped that perhaps they would prefer that Iran send these druggies directly to Europe.

The UN report of October 23 noted that at least 852 people were reportedly executed between July 2013 and June 2014, evidently an increase over previous years.

One more surprise made it into the international press: Reuters has done a six-month investigation concluding that Iran\222s Ayatollah Khamenei controls a business empire worth \$95 billion, an income larger than the value of Iran\222s annual petroleum exports. Funds controlled by a shadowy organization called Setad holds stakes in nearly every sector of Iranian industry. This is a lot of money in a country strangled by western sanctions. How much of this news is getting into public rumor mills and how do Iranians feel about that?

CNN\222s rambling foodie Anthony Bourdain visited Iran a couple of months ago and was "blown away" by how friendly all the Iranians he met were ---even total strangers in the street who seemed to know that he was there to do a food program. It is a given in Iran that the enemy of their enemy must be their friend. The enemy is their own government and the friend is the US.

Bourdain discovered what I have understood for a long time: that Iran is much more emotionally connected to their Imperial past of great, civilized empires than to their Islamic identity, which has always been an uncomfortable fit. Their food is elegant, sophisticated, and has enormously influenced Ottoman Turkish, Moroccan, Spanish, and North Indian foods.

One constantly simmering issue in Iran today is that of women, who were well on the way toward joining modern European standards when the Revolution put everything into reverse. Being forced back into Muslim coverup has long been resented by women and has been defied, even at the cost of a jailhouse beating and fines. Head and body covers are growing smaller and less is covered. Pictures in the streets of Tehran and other big cities will testify to this.

Cosmetics, once banned, now bloom, as do nose bandages proudly worn by beauties (male and female) who want "nice" noses. Apparently this springtime of Persian vanity has its opponents, thugs who have emulated the Pakistanis by throwing acid in the faces of women who offend them. But in Iran, this has been met by public outrage and even the clerics are angry.

Iran\222s stranglehold by revolutionary Islam is in meltdown. The radicals won\222t go down without a fight, but they will lose.

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