



Iran: Khamenei Speaks on America

OE Watch Commentary: Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader for over 30 years, delivers numerous speeches each year. There are weekly Friday sermons, for example, sometimes delivered by Khamenei himself and other times by a substitute prayer leader in his name. When it comes to relations with the United States, the most important speech is often on or around the anniversary of the 4 November 1979 seizure of the US Embassy in Tehran. This year, Khamenei used the occasion to address both high school and university students, a symbolic audience given the primary role of students in seizing the embassy four decades ago.

Khamenei's overview of US-Iran relations is as uncompromising as it is at times inaccurate. The leader glosses over the World War II-era US occupation of a supply route through Iran—a largely uneventful affair—by suggesting that the friendliness of US forces toward Iranian ones at the time



Students greeting Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, 3 November 2019.
Source: Khamenei.ir, http://idc0-cdn0.khamenei.ir/ndata/news/43880/C/13980812_2143880.jpg

was purposeful deception. He is at his most inaccurate when describing the 1953 coup against Iranian premier Mohammad Mosaddegh: Firstly, that event did not install the shah's regime. The alleged Nazi sympathies of the shah's father and predecessor Reza Pahlavi led to his 1941 exile to South Africa and the installation of the young Mohammed Reza Shah, who was ultimately overthrown in 1979. Growing street violence instigated by Mosaddegh who had refused to step down upon his government's dismissal, had led the shah to leave temporarily, though he returned upon what at the time was described as a "countercoup" (this was also the title of Kermit Roosevelt's book on the episode). At the time of the 1953 coup, the clergy—including those or the teachers of those who now dominate the Islamic Republic—largely supported the ouster of Mosaddegh whom they saw as too close to the Soviet Union and anti-religious. At the time, this was described as 'the red versus the black,' with the former being the pro-Soviet Mosaddegh backers and the latter referring to the clergy, whose turbans were often black. Khamenei therefore downplays and revises the role of the clergy in the 1953 coup in order to exaggerate grievance against the United States.

That Khamenei emphasizes the 1964 exile of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini—who 15 years later would lead the Islamic Revolution—shows the exile's importance in the mindset of Iran's revolutionary leaders. Its context is also important, as it came against the context of the shah's largely progressive 'White Revolution,' a series of reforms which included granting religious minorities equality under the law and women's enfranchisement. Khomeini rallied against such reforms, calling them an assault on religion. For Khamenei, then, to suggest the exile of Khomeini is as great a grievance as the 1953 coup, which regardless of accuracy has become original sin in popular imagination, is to condemn fundamentally much of the reformist or liberal platform within the Islamic Republic.

More broadly speaking, however, at the beginning of the Islamic Republic's fifth decade, Khamenei asserts that reconciliation with the United States is as impossible today as it was at the time of the embassy seizure. This, too, is a message for any Iranians or Iranian diplomats engaged in Track II dialogue with Americans or advocating renewed negotiations not only the nuclear file but also on Iran's ballistic missile work and regional activities. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“Negotiations with the United States [are] 100 percent wrong.”



Continued: Iran: Khamenei Speaks on America

Source: “Biyanat dar Didar Daneshamuzan va Daneshjuyan (A Statement for High School and University Students),” *Khamenei.ir*, 3 November 2019. <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=43896>

Khamenei Speaks on U.S.-Iran Relations

Today, I will raise a point about America – because the occasion of our gathering and our meeting is related to America – and if there is time God willing, I will raise another point about our domestic issues and the issues of the country. As for America, I will tell you that America has not changed in any way since November 1964 – during which time, the regime installed by America, drove our dear Imam [Khomeini] into exile - until November 2019 which is the present time. America is the same America. The same wolfish qualities, which existed in those days, exist in the America in the present time as well. The same global and international dictatorship exists in the United States today as well. That day, America was an international dictator who had certain gendarmes in different parts of the world. Its regional gendarme and mercenary was Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. In other parts of the world, there were other individuals. Today, the same dictatorship exists, but with newer methods and tools. There is the same wolfish quality, the same international dictatorship, the same malevolence and the same desire for having no limits – it has no limits and borders. America is the same America. Of course, it has weakened today. The United States has become weaker compared to the year 1964, but it has also become wilder and more brazen. This is what America is.

America showed enmity towards Iran. Throughout the history of U.S.-Iran relations, the United States has always shown enmity towards Iran. This even happened during the time of the heathen regime. Its enmity towards Iran before the Revolution involved overthrowing the national government in the year 1953. An American agent came to Tehran with a suitcase full of dollars and he went and hid in the British Embassy. From there, he began spreading money and distributing dollars in order to employ certain individuals, launch a coup and overthrow the national government.

Of course, that administration was to blame too. Its mistake was that it placed too much trust in America, but the Americans did that anyway and they installed a corrupt administration which was dependent on them. There is no worse form of enmity. They dominated our armed forces, our oil, the policies of our country and our culture: it was a complete domination. This continued from 1953 – when the coup d'état of 19 August took place – to the victory of the Revolution in the year 1979. Such was its enmity towards the Iranian nation and our country at that time.

And after the Revolution, it is clear how it has shown enmity. Until today, it either issues threats and imposes sanctions or utters hostile words, creates problems and tries to infiltrate the country. They have always been on bad terms towards Iran and the Iranians....

Some people think that negotiating with America solves the problems of the country. This is a grave mistake. They are one hundred percent wrong! The other side considers Iran's accepting and sitting at the negotiating table as bringing the Islamic Republic to its knees. It wants to say that they have finally managed to bring Iran to its knees with severe sanctions until it agreed to sit at the negotiating table with them. It wants to say this to the whole world. It wants to prove that the “maximum pressure” policy is a correct policy that has worked because it has succeeded in bringing the Islamic Republic to the negotiating table.

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