



Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Iranian Revolution: Its Global Impact* by John L. Esposito

Review by: Maziar Behrooz

Source: *Iranian Studies*, 1991, Vol. 24, No. 1/4 (1991), pp. 79-81

Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd. on behalf of International Society of Iranian Studies

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/4310761>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Taylor & Francis, Ltd. and are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Iranian Studies*

JSTOR

chant for structural analysis for her to state simply that General Riahi “decided not to use the army” in support of Musaddiq.

The author has made use of Harvard Oral History interviews and has spoken to many liberal nationalist leaders, but has unfortunately not identified them in her footnotes, and has often represented the views of the younger generation of National Front activists to the detriment of its older protagonists. She has, moreover, overlooked the significant point that what the bulk of the National Front leaders lacked in organizational aptitude, ideological or intellectual vigor, and political foresight, they compensated for by a conscious effort to adhere to and promote a strong sense of personal and political probity. This amounted to a distinct civic tradition which characterized the Iranian liberal nationalist movement: it often constrained its leaders’ room for maneuver, but ensured them public trust and support.

As for prospects, the author contends that the ground in Iran is more or less favorable for the growth of “substantive secularism” and nationalism, but not for liberalism. If by liberalism is meant some form of political pluralism, greater scope for civil society, and the emergence of representative and accountable government, few societies facing the overwhelming challenge of modernity can avoid paying lip service to such notions or, in the long run, resist succumbing to them. As Nietzsche maintained, priests are inadvertent agents of secularization, and secularization in the wake of disenchantment with the ideologies of the left can only lead to the search for a more rational and liberal society. No state in the modern world can indefinitely strive to substitute credible popular sovereignty for any other form of legitimation. Survival and viability in the modern world depend on rationality, and few polities can in the long term operate successfully without allowing increasing scope for meritocratic norms and administrative rationality; they cannot prevent subjects becoming citizens conscious of their specific rights and entitlements, and adamant in their expectations of equal respect and concern. Although Siavoshi in her otherwise useful survey does not appear to have explored such issues, she may nevertheless have contributed to provoking a more informed discussion of them.

Fakhreddin Azimi
University of Connecticut, Storrs

The Iranian Revolution: Its Global Impact, ed. John L. Esposito, Miami: Florida International University Press, 1990, viii + 346 pp.

Since the overthrow of the last shah of Iran and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) in February 1979, volumes of research have been devoted to explaining the reasons behind the revolutionary tide in Iran, its internal dynamics, the revolutionary potential of Islam in general and twelver Shi'a in par-

ticular. Similar to revolutions that preceded it, the impact of the Iranian revolution and its ideology, Islam, in other parts of the globe has come under the focus of Middle East specialists and experts. The questions asked in the Iranian case are not dissimilar to those asked about the French, Russian or Chinese revolutions. What impact has the Iranian revolution had on other Muslim countries? Has the Iranian case been the exception when compared to the other revolutions and thus has it been able to directly influence other similar upheavals?

Since the victory of the revolution in Iran, there have also been a number of research efforts on Iranian foreign policy and the effects of the Iranian revolution on other areas with Muslim populations. But the book under review is perhaps the first single collection of essays devoted totally to examining the global impact of the Iranian revolution ten years after its victory. The book's editor, John Esposito, puts the book's thesis in the form of the following question: "Has the Iranian revolution influenced Islamic revivalism elsewhere, or is the Islamic resurgence in other countries due to indigenous factors?" (p. vii). The authors of the book have intended to develop, through case studies, a balance between the often overstated and exaggerated direct impact of the Iranian revolution on other countries and the role played by the internal dynamics of each society in influencing the indigenous movements. The authors correctly come to the conclusion that many Muslim movements around the globe preceded the Iranian revolution and others have been affected by it but not in any decisive manner.

The book is divided into five parts, part one covering features of Iranian foreign policy goals and the rest covering the impact of the Iranian revolution on important Islamic regions (i.e., the Middle East, Southwest and Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa). While each case study proves the thesis of the book, one can see surprising errors and misconceptions in some of the articles. Esposito's essay, "The Iranian Revolution: A Ten-Year Perspective," while an acceptable general overview of the Iranian revolution since its victory, contains minor errors and major generalizations. It is highly unlikely that Reza Shah would have dared to establish Zoroastrianism alongside Islam as the state religion; it would have been so obviously unconstitutional, besides causing other major problems. Also, the lion and the sun were used as symbols by the Qajar court, and their use dates back to, at least, the post-Mongol period. In any case, there is no evidence that these symbols were pre-Islamic, and they were chosen by the constitutional revolutionaries to be the symbols of the imperial Iranian court and on the tricolor flag (p. 20). I think Professor Esposito will find a number of Iran specialists in disagreement with his suggestion that the Shi'i ulama, as a whole, were involved in the tobacco protest or in demanding constitutional reforms (p. 19). While a number of known ulama were active in these two movements, the stratum as a whole was not involved. It must also be noted that while Ayatollah Khameneh'i has replaced Grand Ayatollah Khomeini as the *faqih*, he is not in a position to issue *fatvās* (religious decrees). Ayatollah Khameneh'i's religious rank as *hojjat al-Islām* was elevated to that of ayatollah (a higher rank in the Shi'i religious establishment) only after Khomeini's death. This means that while Khameneh'i is the *vali-ye faqih* (supreme leader), he is not a *marja'-e taqlid* (source of emulation). Therefore, Ayatollah Khomeini's

position as “religiopolitical leader of the state” (p. 27) was not suitable for Khameneh’i’s lower rank. Hence, following Ayatollah Khameneh’i’s selection to the post of *faqīh*, some top ulama of Qom asked Ayatollah Khomeini’s followers to emulate Grand Ayatollah Araki, a hundred-year-old theology teacher in Qom. While this arrangement had the convenience of allowing Khameneh’i to become the new *faqīh*, it was unconstitutional and has impaired Khameneh’i’s authority because he is not in a position to issue *fatvās*.

Professor Rajae’i’s paper, “Iranian Ideology and Worldview: The Cultural Export of Revolution,” is a good survey of what the dominant faction of the IRI leadership perceives as the meaning of exporting the revolution. But his suggestion that “Politically, Iran is striving to establish its own democratic processes (during the past ten years the Islamic Republic of Iran has held at least one election each year) . . .” (p. 64) needs to be examined carefully. Does holding an election, by itself, mean that a “democratic process” is being carried out? If so, then has not Iran been holding elections, one way or another, since the Constitutional Revolution of 1906? Could we not, using the same reasoning, suggest that the East European “democratic” republics had been developing their own “democratic processes” before their demise in 1989? The answer to both questions is negative. Even the Iranian leadership does not like to associate the republic with anything close to concepts such as “democratic processes” or “democracy.” Time and again it has declared that Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran are incompatible with such “Western” concepts.

The Iranian Revolution, Its Global Impact is the study of a subject that is both vast and complex. It is the first study of its kind, done by some of the best specialists in the field, and is a welcome addition to the field of Iranian studies.

Maziar Behrooz
University of California, Los Angeles.

Iran and the World: Continuity in a Revolutionary Decade,
Shireen T. Hunter, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press,
1990, pp. 254, \$35.00 cloth, \$14.95 paper.

As the Islamic Republic of Iran struggles to rejoin the international community of nations, analysts remain bogged down in the hyperbole and rhetoric that have long marked the headline-grabbing pronouncements of a small school of revolutionary extremists. Indeed, among the casualties of the revolution was cool, dispassionate, informed analysis of the complex and turbulent events that marked Iran’s internal situation and Iran’s relations with the world. Shireen Hunter has been a visible and perceptive figure among the group of scholars and close observers of Iranian events who managed to maintain their intellectual balance