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* The surnames are listed in alphabetical order.

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The Journal of Conflict Transformation and Security (JCTS) provides a platform to analyse conflict transformation and security as processes for managing change in non-violent ways to produce equitable outcomes for all parties that are sustainable. A wide range of human security concerns can be tackled by both hard and soft measures, therefore the Journal's scope not only covers such security sector reform issues as restructuring security apparatus, reintegration of ex-combatants, clearance of explosive remnants of war and cross-border management, but also the protection of human rights, justice, rule of law and governance. JCTS explores the view that by addressing conflict transformation and security holistically it is possible to achieve a high level of stability and human security, requiring interventions at both policy and practitioner level. These would include conflict management, negotiated peace agreements, peacekeeping, physical reconstruction, economic recovery, psycho-social support, rebuilding of primary services such as education and health, and enabling social cohesion. Other macro-level governance issues from constitution writing to state accountability and human resource management also need to be considered as part of this process of change.

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How Theoretical Kleptocracy of Iran Threatens Global Security and What the West Must Do

Sadiq Amini*

Afghanistan Impact Network

ABSTRACT

Abstract: This paper argues that Iran's post-1979 regime has evolved into a theocratic kleptocracy that poses a systemic threat to global security. Originally misjudged by the West as a potential stabilizing force, the regime has instead aligned with anti-Western powers while exporting terrorism and regional instability through proxy networks. Its governance structure centralizes power under the supreme leader and sustains itself through entrenched corruption and using brute forces against Iranians. Beyond the Middle East, Iran's nuclear and missile programs and deepening ties with Russia, China, and Taliban elevate the threat to a global scale. The paper contends that containment has failed and calls for a strategic shift toward supporting Iran's internal democratic opposition. Backing a potential "second real revolution," it argues, represents the most viable path to long-term regional stability and global security.

Keywords: *Theocratic Kleptocracy, Iran Regime, Global Security, Proxy Warfare, Democratic Opposition*

Biographical Note: *Sadiq Amini is the Founder of Afghanistan Impact Network. He's an expert in Public Diplomacy and International Security with over a decade of experience in American Foreign Policy and Security.*

In 1979, the West made a profound strategic miscalculation, hoping Iran's new Islamic regime would serve as a bulwark against communism. Forty-five years later, the lessons are clear: the regime quickly sided with communism, and ever since has allied with all of the anti-Western powers, as it has evolved into a violent, absolutist religious dictatorship that has also become a leading state sponsor of terrorism and a primary source of global instability.

Today, Iran's regime is not merely a regional threat; it is a global threat, actively destabilizing the Middle East, challenging U.S. and European interests, and forging a dangerous alliance with Russia, China and Taliban terrorists. To counter this, a strategic shift is required. The key question for policymakers is no longer how to contain the regime, but why a new, decisive strategy in support of a second Iranian revolution is a vital national security policy.

A Kleptocratic Dictatorship Masked as a Republic

The Iranian regime brands itself an "Islamic Republic," but in reality, it is a theocratic kleptocracy. The principle of Velayat-e Faqih, or the Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist, enshrined in the constitution, concentrates all power in the hands of one person: the supreme leader. The president, parliament, and judiciary are all subordinate to this single figure.

This authoritarian control is fueled by a system of structural corruption. Iran's vast natural resources and national revenues are not used for public good but are instead controlled and misused by regime officials and their cronies. While the majority of Iranians grapple with poverty and inflation, the families of the ruling elite live lavishly inside and abroad on stolen national wealth. This deep-seated corruption is not just an internal issue; it is a direct driver of the popular uprisings that have shaken the regime from within, while it funds its destructive activities abroad.

The Export of Instability and Terror

The regime's foreign policy is built on the systematic export of violence and instability. While the regime claims to be a protector of Islamic values, it actively supports extremist groups to sow division and enmity among Muslims. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard

Corps (IRGC) and its elite Quds Force operate as the regime's primary instrument for this campaign, using proxies to wage wars and advance Regime's interests.

This strategy of regional interference is evident in key hotspots:

- **Lebanon:** All-out support for Hezbollah, a designated terrorist organization.
- **Yemen:** Equipping and funding the Houthi militia, enabling attacks on international shipping lanes.
- **Iraq:** Supporting Shia paramilitary groups to weaken the national government and maintain a client state.
- **Afghanistan:** Providing direct intelligence and strategic support to the Taliban terrorists.

The Escalating Global Threat

The regime's ambitions are not limited to the region. Its nuclear and ballistic missile programs remain a significant global security threat. The diplomatic negotiations have so far failed to permanently curb these ambitions, and the regime continues to enrich uranium while advancing its missile technology. In the recent 12-day war, regime's nuclear and military capabilities were significantly damaged, but its ability to pose a global threat remains. A nuclear-armed regime would fundamentally undermine global security.

Even more concerning is regime's expanding strategic alignment with Russia, China and Taliban terrorists. The regime is now a key partner for Moscow, providing military support in the war in Ukraine and cooperating on global anti-Western initiatives. At the same time, regime is rapidly deepening its economic and security ties with Beijing. Together with Russians, they are working with Kandahar on managing terror networks and improving accessibility and deployment of Taliban's suicide brigades. This emerging alliance is not merely a partnership of convenience; it is the formation of a cohesive anti-Western axis that aims to challenge the U.S. and its allies on a global scale.

The Window of Opportunity: A Second Revolution

Despite the regime's strength, a powerful and growing domestic resistance offers a unique opportunity. The "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement has demonstrated that the Iranian people, particularly its youth and women, are determined to overthrow this regime. These protests are not just expressions of discontent; they are the early stages of a second revolution. The Iranian people are no longer willing to live under this oppressive and corrupt system. Their struggle is not merely a domestic issue; it is the most critical and effective means to neutralize the regime's threat.

Policy Recommendations: A Path Forward

The West must shift its strategy from reactive containment to proactive support for this democratic movement. The time for half-measures has passed.

- **Acknowledge and Empower the Opposition:** Western leaders must recognize and actively engage with the democratic opposition in exile. Unity among opposition figures, such as Prince Reza Pahlavi, Maryam Rajavi, and Victoria Azad, must be encouraged and supported to build a strong, credible alternative to the current regime.
- **Sever Diplomatic Ties:** Following Australia's lead few days ago, all Western nations should expel Iranian ambassadors and diplomats. This would not only send a clear signal but also prevent the regime from using its diplomatic presence to suppress dissent and fund terrorism. In consultation with the democratic opposition leaders in exile, the Iranian Embassies and consulates should be handed over to the representatives of the Iranian people in exile to amplify their voices.
- **Pressure and Sanction:** The IRGC must be fully designated as a foreign terrorist organization by all Western nations. Comprehensive sanctions should be imposed on all entities and individuals linked to the regime's corruption and its funding of foreign proxies.

The fall of the current Iranian regime would be a transformative event, not only for Iran but also

for Afghanistan, the Middle East, and for the entire world. A democratic Iran would recognize Israel, align with the West, and help stabilize the region by ending proxy wars. They will also stop forced deportation of Afghan refugees, and instead will provide them with the necessary protections, and facilities that they need to free Afghanistan from the Taliban terrorists. For the first time in over four decades, it would be an ally in the fight against terrorism rather than its primary sponsor.

The choice is clear. The West must end their failed policy of containment that allows a dangerous axis to form, and instead speak with one voice in support of the "second revolution" of the Iranian people, and stand with them to seize this historic opportunity, and secure its long-term strategic interests.

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