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## Wait 20 Years. Erupt.

*What the New York Times leaves out of its history of Iran.*

By **JAMES TARANTO**

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The [New York Times](#) reports from exile in Cairo on the continuing power struggle in Iran, and the paper offers a history lesson of sorts:

To understand the nature of the conflict, it is essential to look back to the founding of the republic. Ayatollah Khomeini built on two different and often contradictory principles, one of public accountability and one of religious authority. To tie it all together, Ayatollah Khomeini imported a centuries-old religious idea, called velayat-e faqih, or governance of the Islamic jurist. Shiite Muslims believe that they are awaiting the return of the 12th Imam, and under this religious concept the faqih, or supreme leader, serves in his place as a sort of divine deputy. From the start, there were intense disagreements over how this idea should work. Those conflicts, though, were muted partly by Ayatollah Khomeini's exalted status, and by a unity forged by an eight-year war with Iraq. When the war ended and Ayatollah Khomeini died, the conflicts erupted.

The Times makes it sound as if the cease-fire with Iraq and the death of Khomeini were the proximate causes of the Iranian "eruption." But they weren't proximate at all: The former event occurred in August 1988; the latter, in June 1989. The conflicts might have begun to brew back then, but they did not erupt until more than 20 years later.

What happened in the interim? Iranian expat columnist [Amir Taheri](#) reports that the mad mullahs have one theory:

Tehran's bizarre narrative goes something like this: During the Bush administration, "the neocons" persuaded the president to "green light" efforts to topple the regime. Somehow, Washington enlisted the support of "world Freemasonry," which, acting through the so-called Bilderburg Group, managed to persuade Iran's then-President Muhammad Khatami to join secret efforts to "turn Iran into a secular state."

Then, the tale goes, [George] Soros and several US think tanks started sending their agents to Iran to recruit and train operatives for regime change. And the Bush administration created a special Iran center in Dubai, modeled on the Riga Center that

Washington set up to subvert the Soviet Union in the 1930s. With Liz Cheney as the supposed coordinator, the plot supposedly soon won the support of several European countries.

But [Christopher Hitchens](#) of Slate offers a more plausible hypothesis:

Did the overthrow of the Saddam Hussein regime, and the subsequent holding of competitive elections in which many rival Iraqi Shiite parties took part, have any germinal influence on the astonishing events in Iran? Certainly when I interviewed Sayeed Khomeini [the ayatollah's grandson and a regime foe] in Qum some years ago, where he spoke openly about "the liberation of Iraq," he seemed to hope and believe that the example would spread. One swallow does not make a summer. But consider this: Many Iranians go as religious pilgrims to the holy sites of Najaf and Kerbala in southern Iraq. They have seen the way in which national and local elections have been held, more or less fairly and openly, with different Iraqi Shiite parties having to bid for votes (and with those parties aligned with Iran's regime doing less and less well). They have seen an often turbulent Iraqi Parliament holding genuine debates that are reported with reasonable fairness in the Iraqi media. Meanwhile, an Iranian mullah caste that classifies its own people as children who are mere wards of the state puts on a "let's pretend" election and even then tries to fix the outcome. Iranians by no means like to take their tune from Arabs—perhaps least of all from Iraqis—but watching something like the real thing next door may well have increased the appetite for the genuine article in Iran itself.

Of course, if Hitchens is right, there is a grain of truth to the mullahs' theory. The neocons, after all, did play a supporting role in the liberation of Iraq.

[The Wall Street Journal](#) reports from Beirut that "the three top leaders of Iran's opposition joined forces on Tuesday and their supporters began a three-day national strike, signaling a resurrection of protests even as Iran's president announced to the nation that the postelection turmoil was over." But the regime does not seem altogether confident of that pronouncement:

Simultaneously, Iran's government on Tuesday announced an unexpected public holiday for 48 hours due to [an] emergency level of pollution and a dust storm covering the capital. Some speculated that it could be an attempt to mask the impact of the public strikes.

Here's an idea for the opposition: Why not encourage Iranians to show their support for regime change by driving with their headlights on at night? As longtime readers of this column are aware, [it worked for Iraq](#).

### **The Patriot**

Before they held the White House and Congress, Democrats were constantly complaining that Republicans were "questioning" their "patriotism." As we [documented in 2004](#), these charges hardly ever stood up. It was Democrats who called their own patriotism into question by defensively denying that they lacked it and demanding that certain aspects of their own public records be off-limits from criticism.

But now that Democrats are in power, they are doing what they falsely accused Republicans of doing back then. Politico reports on the latest example:

Henry Waxman, who has had an eventful couple of weeks to say the least, is slamming the House GOP--saying their opposition to climate change legislation and the stimulus indicates they're cheering against the good 'ol U S of A. . . .

"It appears that the Republican party leadership in the Congress has made a decision that they want to deny President Obama success--which means, in my mind, they are rooting against the country as well," the powerful House Energy and Commerce chairman told WAMU-NPR host Diane Rehm this morning in an hourlong appearance promoting his new book, "The Waxman Report."

It is a stretch, to say the least, to equate the president's success in enacting his domestic agenda with "the country." It's a lot less persuasive to charge Republicans with lacking patriotism now than it would have been, say, to make the same charge against Democrats who were openly rooting for American military defeat in Iraq.

One benefit of Obama's election is that you seldom hear that refrain anymore, leading to the suspicion that most of the Iraq defeatists were motivated by partisanship rather than a sincere desire to see America lose.

True, the elevation of partisanship over principle is a sin of which both parties are frequently guilty. (Sorry to shatter your innocence like that, reader.) Republicans were far less apt to oppose expansions of government when their party was the one expanding it.

Still, there's something especially twisted about a party that regards rooting against the other side's domestic policies as more unpatriotic than rooting against one's country in a war.

#### **Bushism of the Day--I**

"The status quo simply is not where America is."--Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, July 7

#### **Bushism of the Day--II**

"I am aware of not only the extraordinary work you have done on behalf of the Russian people in your previous role as prime minister--as president--but in your current role as prime minister."--President Obama addressing Vladimir Putin in Moscow, July 7

#### **Somebody Loves Me, I Wonder Who**

President Bush was supposed to have alienated the entire world, but Reuters reports Vladimir Putin didn't get the memo:

Russia's Prime Minister Vladimir Putin praised the hospitality and openness of U.S. former President George W. Bush in a telegramme sent hours before meeting his successor Barack Obama.

"During the last years we have been working on strengthening Russia-U.S. cooperation. Although there were differences between our countries, I always valued your openness and sincerity," Putin said, congratulating Bush on his 63rd birthday on July 6.

"With special warmth I recall your hospitality in the Crawford ranch and your family estate in Kennebunkport," Putin wrote, referring to their 2007 meeting at the Bush family vacation home when the two leaders went fishing and ate lobster.

Did you even know Bush's birthday was July 6? [Surely it cannot be all chance.](#)

Which reminds us of a joke. Why is 8 afraid of 7? Because 7 sics 5 on 4.

#### **Maybe They'll Cancel Their L.A. Times Subscriptions, Too**

"A majority of young people still approve of Obama's job performance, but a majority of seniors over 64 now don't (54%). Maybe they'll die before the next election."--Andrew Malcolm, Los Angeles Times Web site, July 8

#### **Greek Drama**

A strange political scandal is unfolding in--where else?--Illinois, where the Chicago Tribune reported last week on charges of political influence in state university admissions:

When a politically connected Greek Orthodox priest wanted help getting the daughter of a family friend into the University of Illinois, he reached out to a campaign adviser to state Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias.

Giannoulias' political director came through, getting the applicant into the university's secret admissions system for students with clout, and she was plucked from her spot on the university's waiting list and admitted.

Four months later, the Greek Orthodox priest aided Giannoulias with a fundraiser that netted at least \$120,000, the Tribune has learned.

Internal campus documents released this week show Giannoulias' adviser Endy Zemenides sent information about the student to U. of I. Provost Linda Katehi in February 2008. He e-mailed from his law office, but copied his "Alexi for Illinois" campaign address on the exchange.

Giannoulias is exploring a campaign for the U.S. Senate--that would be President Obama's former seat, the filling of which was at the center of the scandal that toppled Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

The [Sacramento Bee](#) reports that Katehi, who is to start a new job next month as chancellor of the University of California, Davis, denies wrongdoing. But not everyone buys it:

California state Sen. Leland Yee, D-San Francisco, said--also in an e-mailed statement--that UC President Mark Yudof should put on hold Katehi's offer to become chancellor. Yee, a critic of the UC administration, previously asked Yudof to investigate Katehi's connection to the school probe in Illinois, but Yudof declined.

"This is not the type of leadership we need at the helm of UC Davis," Yee said.

There is an ethnic angle to this kerfuffle: The priest is Greek Orthodox, Giannoulias and the student are both Greek-American, and Katehi is a native of Greece. [Greek News](#), a New York-based weekly, accuses the Tribune of waging a "dirty war":

Although people close to Alexi Giannoulias see in the story of the "Chicago Tribune" "just a case of bad journalism," prominent Greek Americans in Washington raise the possibility of the involvement of Rahm Emmanuel, White House Chief of Staff, was behind an effort to clean up the field of the Democratic nominees for the U.S. Senate seat, in favor of the Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan. According to a prominent Greek American, Emmanuel's subversive tactics against Giannoulias and in favor of Madigan, started immediately after he became Obama's chief of staff. His efforts were

reported to prominent Greek Americans by a member of Congress. Ten days ago, while Greek American leaders were attending a White House event, they pointed out to Rahm Emmanuel their interest on Giannoulas and they made an issue (along with Cyprus) to President Obama. . . .

Greek Americans around the country have shown their support to Alexi Giannoulas and discard the "cheap tricks" used against him. "As a former member of Congress and a Jewish American, Rahm Emmanuel should know better how many similar letters has signed himself for his constituents," a prominent member of the Greek Lobby said, adding that "there is nothing wrong in trying to help our own people." . . .

According to the Chicago Tribune article, "more than 800 U. of I. undergraduate applicants received special consideration because of their ties to powerful patrons during the last five years." But, they decided just to pinpoint on the case that involved Greek Americans. In fairness to the Trib, it also involved a statewide elected official who is seeking higher office. Anyway, this is all Greek to us, but it does seem that an element of paranoia is a common trait of ethnic politics, perhaps a universal one.

#### Defining Dauntlessness Down

"British Prime Minister Gordon Brown says he has won Kevin Rudd's backing for a bold proposal to create a \$122 billion-a-year [about US\$96 billion] climate change fund for poorer countries, in the hope of breaking the deadlock threatening a new global agreement to fight climate change," the Australian reports.

Rudd, a member of the Australian Labor Party, is his country's prime minister. We're sure you know who Brown is. So what we have here is two left-wing politicians agreeing on a big tax-and-spend program. That's bold?

#### Life Imitates the Onion

- "Hey, Isn't That the Pot That's on TV?"--headline, [Onion](#), June 16, 2004
- "Pro-Marijuana Ad Pushes Pot as Calif. Budget Fix"--headline, [Associated Press](#), July 8, 2009

#### Never Have So Many Been Owed So Much by a Faux Sioux

"CU Will Bill Churchill for Legal Expenses"--headline, [PirateBallerina.com](#), July 8

#### If He Does Say So Himself

"UN Chief Says He's a Man of Results Not Rhetoric"--headline, [Associated Press](#), July 8

#### A Little Prune Juice Might Make It Easier to Pass

"Bathroom Bill Moves Through Knesset"--headline, [Arutz Sheva \(Israel\)](#), July 8

#### The Nude Bomb

"Wary of Naked Force, Israelis Eye Cyberwar on Iran"--headline, [Reuters](#), July 7

#### The Good News Is, They Finally Have Indoor Plumbing

"National Geographic to Film Rednecks in Bath"--headline, [Peoria \(Ill.\) Journal Star](#), July 8

#### Opening This Week: Sushi Baron Cohen in 'Tuna'

- "Breeding Breakthrough Helps Sushi Baron Create Sustainable Tuna"--headline, [Bloomberg](#), July 7
- "Borough Park, N.Y.--Orthodox Community Going Sushi Meshuga"--headline, [VoslzNeias.com](#), July 7

#### It's Always in the Last Place You Look

"New Monkey Discovered in Brazilian Amazon"--headline, [Reuters](#), July 7

#### Someone Set Up Us the Bomb

"Breathtakingly Sad Teacher Union Boss Priorities"--headline, [National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation](#) press release, July 6

#### News of the Tautological

- "Fannin County Sheriff Looks for Lost Evidence"--headline, [Paris \(Texas\) Daily News](#), July 7
- "Study: Race Gap in African-American Cancer Deaths May Be Partly Biological"--headline, [Chicago Tribune](#), July 8

#### Breaking News From Stardate 2151

"Enterprise Leaving Space at Airport"--headline, [Jackson \(Mich.\) Citizen Patriot](#), July 8

#### News You Can Use

- "In Space No One Can Hear You Blog"--headline, [Popular Science](#) Web site, July 6
- "Why the Imp in Your Brain Gets Out"--headline, [New York Times](#), July 7
- "Kill Polar Bears, Drink Coke to Save the Planet!"--headline, [Big Hollywood](#), July 7

#### Bottom Stories of the Day

- "Local Poker Player Has Bad Luck in Vegas"--headline, [Free Lance-Star](#) (Fredericksburg, Va.), July 8
- "Latvia Won't Need Bigger Bailout, EU Document Shows"--headline, [Bloomberg](#), July 7
- "Over 99 Laws and Resolutions Adopted at Azerbaijani Parliamentary Spring Session"--headline, [Trend News](#) (Azerbaijan), July 7
- "Sanford Issues Schedule--No Public Events"--headline, [State](#) (Columbia, S.C.), July 8
- "Incoming Alaska Governor to Tweet Less Than Palin"--headline, [Associated Press](#), July 8
- "Collapse in Debit-Card System in Canada While Growth in Brazil?"--headline, [Ecommerce Journal](#), July 6

#### But Don't Stand Beside Her

The New York Post reports on someone who sued and got relief--literally:

Yankee fans are now at liberty to go to the bathroom during the playing of "God Bless America" during the seventh-inning stretch, thanks to a settlement reached yesterday in Manhattan federal court.

Signing off on the deal were the Yankees, the New York Civil Liberties Union and Queens resident Bradford Campeau-Laurion, who was thrown out of Yankee Stadium last year after trying to hit the head midtune.

Campeau-Laurion, a Red Sox fan, will also get \$10,001 in a separate deal reached with the city because he got the boot from two uniformed cops--one of whom allegedly told him, "Get out of my country."

This reminds us of another joke. We're in a hurry, so we'll just get to the punch line: "In Soviet Union, we also have freedom. We can pee during 'God Bless America' too."

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