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Iran, the US and the World

By Robert Fantina
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Maintaining a straight face, United States Secretary of ‘Defense’ James Mattis calls Iran “the primary state sponsor of terrorism”. This from the man whose country is bombing at least six nations.

A week ago, I had the opportunity of travelling to Iran, to present at the conference ‘United States, Human Rights and Discourse of Domination’ held on July 2 in Tehran. Although only in Iran for four days, and only visiting two cities (Tehran and Mashhad), that is more time than most of the people who listen to Mr. Mattis’s bizarre ramblings have spent there. So perhaps my impressions may be of some value.

Tehran is a bustling city: the business area is noisy, crowded and exciting, not all that different from any major city in the U.S. or Europe which I have visited. I observed women in various modes of dress; yes, all wore headscarves, as is required, but beyond that, they wore jeans,

slacks, sneakers, high-heeled shoes, and any other fashion observed anywhere else. As I rode through both cities, I observed women driving, sometimes alone, sometimes with other women in the car, and sometimes with men in the car. Additionally, women with Ph.D.s presented at the conference, and I met a young woman studying for her Ph.D. in at the University of Tehran. It should be noted that none of these situations would be observed in Saudi Arabia, with which the U.S. has full diplomatic relations.

The hotels at which I stayed in Tehran and Mashhad were both modern, with the one in Mashhad being exceptional in style and amenities. Lights in the hallways turned on when there was motion, so it was available when needed, reducing waste of electricity. It was beautifully appointed throughout.

During my time in Iran, I saw one police officer, who was directing traffic; I could not tell if the officer was armed. I saw one armed soldier on duty at the airport in Mashhad, both when arriving and when leaving. I saw two other soldiers, apparently off-duty, awaiting a flight in Mashhad. Other than that, there was no military presence observed in either city.

I found the people helpful. Although I had guides through all my activities, these guides didn't accompany me on my flight from Mashhad. Prior to boarding, my guide asked a group of people if anyone would be interested in assisting me on my way back to Tehran, to assure that I found my contact there. As he was making this request, I, of course, didn't know what he was saying. A gentleman who spoke some English volunteered, my guide explained what was happening, and we proceeded.

Although I could certainly have located my Tehran guide back at the airport (I had previously met him), I appreciated this gesture. There is something a bit intimidating about looking at the 'Arrivals' and 'Departures' board in the airport, and not understanding a single word that is written.

Additionally, arriving back in Tehran, I realized that I had left my wallet and cell phone at airport security in Mashhad. The gentleman who had volunteered to assist me called my guide in Mashhad, who returned to the airport, retrieved my missing belongings, and is sending them back to me. The gracious volunteer remained with me until my guide and I found each other.

It may be a wonder to some people, but I walked wherever I wanted to in both cities. Restaurants abounded, and the group I was with enjoyed meals and sightseeing, with no restrictions.

What, one might ask, did I not experience in Iran that I might have expected to experience in the U.S. For one, no unarmed people were shot by the police while I was there. There were no mass shootings in schools or places of business. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani did not embarrass himself or his country on the international stage; he did not threaten 'regime change' against any country. There was no news about the country's officials attempting to deprive its citizens of health care.

Returning for a moment to the puzzling statement of Mr. Mattis, let us be reminded that Iran has not invaded another nation in over 200 years. The U.S. has been at war for at least 220 of its 241 year history.

Let us now ask: What country is the primary state sponsor of terrorism? Is it the one who is being threatened with 'regime change' by the country which is now bombing six other countries, and that has not invaded another country in over 200 years? Or is it the one doing the bombing?

Since logic and common sense tell us that it must be the one doing the bombing (the U.S.), we need to ask another question: why does the U.S. want to convince the world that Iran is exporting terrorism, when it itself is doing so?

The answer has been stated before, but I will not hesitate to state it again: the U.S. does not want any country in the Middle East to be powerful except apartheid Israel. Iran is a power broker in that part of the world, so the U.S. must reduce it to ruins, if it possibly can, as it did with Iraq. However, Iran is not Iraq: it is far bigger, more heavily populated, and more powerful than Iraq ever was. An invasion of Iran would be a disaster for the U.S., the Middle East and quite possibly, the entire world.

Will any of that matter to U.S. President Donald Trump? Probably not. He only cares about his popularity (his poll numbers are dismal, but he thinks they are just part of media lies; he seems to believe he is beloved around the world), and has only a minimal grasp, if any at all, of history, politics or current events. He is surrounded by the likes of Mr. Mattis, who also seems more than amenable to walking wide-eyed into certain disaster. Will Secretary of State Rex Tillerson be the voice of reason? When pigs fly. Mr. Tillerson has said that U.S. policy is "to work toward support of those elements inside of Iran that would lead to a peaceful transition of that government," possibly, one might think, in the way the U.S. is supporting elements inside of Syria that are working, at U.S. behest, to overthrow that government. The fact that Iranian president Rouhani was elected in a democratic process is not sufficient for Mr. Tillerson.

Perhaps we can look to the U.S. senate for some restraint: hardly. It recently voted 98 – 2 to increase sanctions on Iran.

The only real hope is that the U.S. will react to pressure from Russia, which will not look kindly on an attack on its ally. Perhaps, just perhaps, Messrs. Trump, Mattis, Tillerson, et. Al will be sufficiently cognizant of the risks of a nuclear world war to prevent it. It is beyond frightening to consider that that is the slim hope upon which civilization relies.