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Iranian Education
The Continuous Revolution

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Executive Summary

For some, a reading of the Iranian curriculum might leave them with mixed feelings. From the perspective of nation-building, one cannot deny that Iran is attempting to create an alternative to the Western way of life. And the authors of the curriculum have provided Iranian students with a wide array of tools for their future lives. These include much of what is good in education everywhere in terms of encouraging students to develop various skills, good habits, self-confidence and cleanliness, along with a level of creative and analytical thinking. Of particular interest are efforts to develop a unique way of thinking, predicated upon the heritage of Persian culture and Shiite Islam, with much emphasis on poetry and mysticism.

There is also the understanding that societies change their identities over time because "culture is learned." Of course, the hope is that the West will Islamize. We also found in a new fifth grade textbook, a clearer delineation of Iran's immediate neighbors (excluding Israel) as independent countries. Increasing recognition of women has led to their partial inclusion among historical martyrs.

The Iranian education curriculum includes numerous troubling aspects: from a Manichean division of the world into good versus evil; the ambition to impose Iranian hegemony on the world; a culture of militarism and *jihad*; blind obedience and martyrdom; and hostility and paranoia toward foreigners.[1] Iranian youth—at once seemingly well-cared-for—are at the same time being raised to follow in the footsteps of hundreds of thousands of children already martyred or made invalid during Iran's recent tumultuous history. *Jihad* war is unending. Creativity and critical thinking are given limited focus; for the rest, obedience and sacrifice are a requirement. The instilled trust in mystical (read, in this context, *irrational*) thinking and decision-making may be useful in some areas of private life, but the assumption that the Supreme Leader and other religious personalities have paranormal powers and thus can make decisions because of their open channels to the angels, the Prophet, the Mahdi or the Divine—is troubling. Of even more concern, is the frenzied rush toward the end-of-time's "horrifying battle," through the instrument of continuous *jihad*. All this reflects "a characteristic ambivalence toward human agency" by the revolution's founding fathers.[2]

For those who may be interested, some footnotes contain additional transliterated Persian, beyond what is found in the text.

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1 On the sources of this dichotomy: Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran*. New York: New York University Press, 1993. Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996.

2 Farzin Vahdat "Post-Revolutionary Islamic Discourses on Modernity in Iran: Expansion and Contraction

Jihad War and Child Martyrdom: Defense?

The curriculum portrays Iran as committed to a total struggle for the creation of a just world order; it envisages constant aggression from all the "arrogant forces," led by the United States. Put another way, Iran is committed to meddling in the affairs of other countries so it must always be ready to defend itself against (predictable) reactions. Such a condition will remain until the coming of the Mahdi, the Shiite Messiah and the establishment of the "Just World Government." "By supporting the oppressed and downtrodden of the world, the enmity of the oppressors is expected to be unleashed, but this also leads to the strengthening of the "front of truth" in the world as it brings us closer to the Just World Government."[3]

While the curriculum differentiates between "*jihad* wars" as *defensive, internal* (against opposition at home) and *elementary* (attacking other countries), students learn that all three should be considered "defensive." The need for *jihad*, child martyrdom and inevitable sacrifice are intensively and vividly inculcated into young minds in a myriad of ways, throughout the curriculum.

Led by their "infallible and trustworthy Leader," Iranian students are expected to propagate the message worldwide and defend themselves from foreign cultural invasions. They know now that a *jihad* war—requiring their possible martyrdom on a massive scale and for which they practice from the first grade—could be launched as part of an Iranian "attack on countries ruled by oppressive governments." Any such attack should, nevertheless, be considered a "defensive *jihad*" because any "defense of the oppressed and innocent is just like defending oneself." They are taught that the world is experiencing a major struggle between the powers of good and the powers of evil. And, they are being prepared.

The Mahdi and the Apocalyptic Battle

The curriculum goes a long way toward clarifying whether the Iranian regime has or does not have millenarian-apocalyptic tendencies; it undoubtedly has. Waiting and preparing for the Mahdi-savior, means constant training and participation in conflicts and wars between Iran and the "arrogant ones" (i.e. the West); so when the Mahdi arrives, all is in readiness, including weapons. According to the Shiite interpretation of Islam, as explained in the revolutionary curriculum, "waiting" [*entezar*] for the Mahdi includes fighting other regimes that are not Islamist-Khomeinist: "The 'waiting society' does not accept un-Godly, idolatrous governments but stands against them and creates 'resistance' against them." Yet this very "resistance" [fighting, really] also serves as an admission test to join the Mahdi savior. As "people of *jihad* and combat," only a few of the very best boys and girls will be chosen. "The waiting [student] treats the Occultation period as a [military] operational alert period for helping the Imam [Mahdi]. Each and every moment [the believer] is waiting for the resounding call of the Imam

of Human Subjectivity," *International Journal of Middle East Studies.* 35 (2003), pp. 599–631.

3 *Religion and Life*, Grade 12, 2016–17 (Iranian Calendar, 1395), p. 140.

throughout the world, inviting people to join the truth." A frenzy of preparations, training and military actions is already under way. Everything is being prepared for the arrival of the Mahdi and the apocalyptic "horrifying battle of the Imam's army against the oppressors of the world."

Clearly, the apocalyptic future "horrifying battle" between Iran and the "world oppressors" has permeated backwards to the present. While the Mahdi has yet to show up, the battle already rages and will never stop. Thus, as the curriculum teaches, we are already there.

Mysticism and Blind Obedience

According to the school textbooks, the Mahdi, or hidden Imam, is strolling in the streets, listening to people and helping the sick and helpless. He provides solutions to problems inside the minds of believers through inspiration—especially religious scholars. Most importantly, he protects Shiite followers from conspiracies against them.[4] Mahdi birthday parties are celebrated in classes.[5] The intensive presence of the hidden Mahdi and the frenzied military preparations for his reappearance to lead the war should be taken seriously in the context of the mystical education in all grades (which includes communication with celestial figures).

Since ancient times, "divine" legitimacy for kings and leaders has been a fixture in Iranian political tradition.[6] The 1979 Revolution—changing much as it did by replacing a kingship with an Islamic republic—did little to rectify this. Iran's children are educated to blindly obey their divine-instructed Leader.[7] "All are submissive and obedient to the Guardian-Jurist [Supreme Leader]."

Mystical education begins in the first grade, emphasizing communication with God, and continuing through the upper grades by learning to sense the presence of the Mahdi. There is philosophical and gnostic education aimed at presenting the superiority of Islam's thinking, but no less to instill full trust in the Leader's mental powers. Thus, they learn that the leader of such a perfect Islamic polity should reach the spiritual degree that allows: "the very connection with the angel of revelation [*Farabi*]." Such a leader "is the Caliph and deputy of God . . . receives matters and truth directly from the source of Glory

4 *Religion and Life*, Grade 12, 2016–17 (1395), pp. 111–112.
5 *Heaven's Presents*, Grade 2, 2016–17 (1395), pp. 88–91.
6 Divine Splendor, Muhammad's Light (*farr*, *khwarena* and *nur-e mohammadi*).
7 Mehdi Khalaji, "Tightening the Reins: How Khamenei Makes Decisions." Washington DC: *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 2014. Nevertheless, within a joint Hebrew University-Goettingen University GIF project, I showed, together with Navid Toobian, that Khamenei's discourse is more racist that of the 2004 Iranian textbooks. Andreas Grünschloss, Emmanuel Sivan, and Ronen Feldman, *Opinion Mining in Religious Studies: GIF Final Scientific Report*, 2012, pp. 5, 15, 21–28. See also: Wilfried Buchta, "Who Rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic." Washington, DC: *The Washington Institute for Near Eastern Policy* and the *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*, 2000.

(*Sohravardi*)."

The Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei himself, writes to the children describing the founding father of the Safavid royal-mystic dynasty as, "religious scholar, mystic, exegete and seer [*mohaddas*]." The latter term typically relates to the Imams and denotes an ability to speak to the angels (such as *Jibreel* who communicated with the Prophet Mohammad). The assumption is clear: the Supreme Leader, elsewhere described as infallible (like the Prophet and the Holy Imams), insists that he is privy to celestial instructions and should be blindly obeyed. Religious scholars in power—who are experts in Islamic law, but also with paranormal abilities—have full authority in every field to innovate, including the "procurement and use of new weapons." This description *rules out the possibility of an all-encompassing binding fatwa* (religious edict) *in matters of weapons.* (Essentially, this means that depending on how the day went with any present or future leader's particular discussion with an angel, they might—or might not—put nuclear options on the table.)

In short, every graduate of the curriculum is supposed to be able to communicate with the spiritual world, either through prayer or mystical practices. They are taught that this ability is much stronger in those having the most merit, particularly the religious leaders who can easily communicate with the Prophet, angels, the Mahdi or the Divine. Such leaders should, therefore, be blindly obeyed. The Mahdi is alive and present; everyone prepares for helping him in the final war for the establishment of the world government.

Dissimulation (taqiyeh)

Understanding the intentions of the Iranian leadership is further complicated by another trait featured in the curriculum. Iranian students study about "dissimulation" [*taqiyeh*] and "misleading the enemy." They learn that in times of need, dissimulation and temporary pacts—even with "un-Godly, idolatrous governments"—are *proper* (but only until such time as the balance of power should change).[8] We know from Khamenei's own words, that recent nuclear negotiations followed the pattern of a historical treaty with an "illegitimate" government (concluded in 661 CE between *Imam Hassan* and *Mu'awiyah* and leading to the fateful battle of Karbala two decades later).[9]

8 *Religion and Life*, Grade 12, 2016–17 (1395), pp. 103–4. Shiite scholars had various views on the practice of *taqiyeh* through the ages and the practice, "while widespread and well known, by no means excluded other, often contrasting, forms of behavior." Etan Kohlberg, "Some Imami-Shii Views on Taqiyya," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 95. No. 3 (1975), pp. 395–402, quotation: p. 402. *Defense Readiness*, Grade 11, 2014–15 (1393), p. 54

9 "Heroic Flexibility: Subtle Hint by the Leader to the 'Peace of Imam Hassan,'" *Asr-Iran*, August 30, 2013, www.asriran.com/fa/news/296106/نحس-مام-حلص-هب-ی-ربه-ر-فی-رظ-هراش-ه-نان-امره-ق-ش-مرن. Eldad J. Pardo, "Is Fundamental Change Possible in Iran"? *The Jerusalem Report*, October 21, 2013.

One-Sided World View

Further complicating any communication with the regime, are its one-sided historical narratives. Historical facts and processes are carelessly manipulated in order to present a lopsided, imagined reality, in which the clergy and Iranian people are always victimized; regardless of circumstances, the "other side" is always the "wrong side." Opposition is all too often considered sedition.[10]

Regarding the role of foreigners, the lack of introspection about Iranian history tends to reinforce a warped perception of the Other—seen principally as the Western powers—and a constant evil force. Iran's culpability for its own plight over the centuries, most recently in the Iran-Iraq War, is a case in point. Another example is its obsessive hatred toward the Jewish state and the avoidance of embarrassing facts such as amicable, historical Jewish-Persian relations; the flight of harassed and persecuted Jewish communities from Muslim countries; and the Holocaust. All of these remain non-existent in Iranian textbooks.

Imperial Dreams and the Aryan Identity

Troubling, too, is the Aryan-Shiite basis of Iranian identity, which includes a fascination with imperialism—despite its hatred for foreign "colonialists." Iranian students look to the past and see the Aryan "Kingdom of Iran extending from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean." They are taught to be proud because the Iranian-Achaemenid government was "the first ever global empire." They learn that empires are exciting and, as they look to the present, they see fellow Iranians supporting "the oppressed peoples of Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon and Afghanistan." Looking toward the future, they learn about Iran's "New Islamic Civilization (NIC)" and its "Full Life Program," which "humanity at large is now ready to receive."

In recent years this Shiite/pan-Islamic vision has been married to a renewed fascination with powerful Persian empires, created in the past by Aryan tribes. The primordial identity of Iran as Aryan in the textbooks is not especially associated with a racist worldview, but nonetheless has a supremacist coloring that goes beyond culture.[11] With Iran's historic connection to powerful Persian empires, amid the suggestion that Azeri-Turkish Iranians remain Aryans, such identity can be seen to have an essentialist dimension to it. (Similarly, the Kurds come from the Aryan race.)

10 *Religious Rulings*, Grade 11, 2012–13 (1391), p. 12. Aya's English rendering from: http://quran.com/2/216. *History*, Grade 9, 2013–14 (1392), p. 43. (An almost identical version in *History*, Grade 8, 2004, p. 37).

11 The Aryan myth is an import from Europe and had its roots in Europe's discovery of India in the eighteenth century along with the discovery of Sanskrit. Ali M. Ansari, *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 9–13.

The perception of shared Aryan roots likewise suggests a simpatico relationship with Germany.[12] In 1935, following pressure from Iranian diplomats in Berlin, the name Persia was abandoned in favor of Iran.[13] In the curriculum, this includes a historical narrative minimizing the responsibility of Germany for starting WWII, by shifting fault to "colonialist competitions and fascist and racist thinking entertained by European politicians."[14] Furthermore, the US is seen as culpable for its use of nuclear bombs, while the Holocaust is avoided altogether within the curriculum. German, as a foreign language, has a prominent role in the curriculum, alongside Arabic, English and French (but not Azeri-Turkish or Kurdish).

Imperial and Modular

While retaining its Aryan-Shiite framework, the new global civilization appears to be modular—embracing Sunni Muslims, monotheists, Third Worldists and any oppressed people (barring some notable exceptions). The allure of empires—Aryan-Persian, Muslim and others—is accompanied by much learning of Persian poetry and heroic mythological stories from the past, strengthening the Iranian identity (*iraniyyat*). Such an imperial modular religious ideology that accommodates Sunnis and all the "downtrodden," allows Iranian governments to garner support for a globalist pan-Islamic vision of world government, in which the Aryan-Persian-Shiite-Iranians will serve as future leaders.

Discrimination

Despite hatred against all manner of enemies, this inventive Islamist model may accommodate more groups than previously assumed, allowing for a more rapid expansion of the Iranian Supreme Leader-centered sphere of influence. Yet, the curriculum describes an environment that inherently favors males who are Shiite-Persians and discriminates against all others to various degrees including: women; Sunni, Muslims who are un-submissive to the Supreme Leader; non-Muslims; Baha'is; LGBTs; Jews; Azerbaijanis; Kurds; Arabs; Christians; liberals; atheists; and freedom seekers of all types.[15]

12 According to Küntzel, the economic factor is marginal in explaining Germany's policy toward Iran and *vice versa*. Resentment for being defeated in WWII, Iran not seeing Germany as criminal, but as fellow Aryans, and a search for a multipolar world are also part of the explanation. Matthias Küntzel, *Germany and Iran: From the Aryan Axis to the Nuclear Threshold*. Candor, NY: Telos, 2014.

13 Houchang E. Chehabi, "Staging the Emperor's New Clothes: Dress Codes and Nation-Building under Reza Shah," *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 3/4 (Summer-Autumn, 1993), pp. 209–229, p. 226.

14 *History of Iran and the World* (2), Grade 12, 2012–13 (1391), p. 88

15 See also: Saeed Paivandi, *Discrimination and Intolerance in Iran's Textbooks*. Washington D.C.: Freedom House, 2008.

***

The Iranian education curriculum includes a long list of troubling features. It speaks defense, but often means aggression and hate. It teaches love and intimate relations with God, but manipulates students' deepest emotions—toward martyrdom, self-sacrifice, *jihad* war and blind obedience to the all-powerful Supreme Leader. While it boasts of an ancient tradition and refined culture, it nurtures imperial dreams based on a radical religious ideology and an essentialist-racial worldview predicated on Aryan-Persian superiority.

The extremism of this ideology is not only religious and political, but also incorporates a belief in paranormal powers granted to the leadership. The Iranian curriculum justifies all manner of discrimination—from gender segregation to religious and ethnic classes—but confidently teaches a modular political culture that can transform *all* into an ever-expanding Islamic empire. It fans the flames of eternal victimhood among young Iranians, with its one-sided self-righteous historical narrative, but blocks the development of genuine historical understanding. While proclaiming to lead the camp of "truth seekers against the arrogant ones," the curriculum teaches students to dissimulate.

This is a curriculum that calls students to experiment in the laboratory, but warns that human life is too short for experimenting. It encourages creativity, but insists on an attitude of militarism. It fuses a totalitarian mentality with unsettling mystical paradigms that assume communication with celestial beings. A *jihad* war lingers perpetually, culminating in a Mahdi-led apocalyptic battle. And while *jihad* "resistance" wars and frenzied preparations continue incessantly, the hidden Mahdi is understood to be everywhere—preparing followers before his reappearance to establish a utopian/dystopian world government led by Iranians.

While it is unlikely that every Iranian student will take every element of what they learn in school seriously—and some certainly don't—the curriculum will no doubt raise enough radical leaders, dedicated military commanders, scientists, technicians and other elite groups who are committed to this problematic perception of reality and blindly loyal to the rulers of Iran.

Introduction

The end of the world is a serious matter—especially for those who are busy preparing for it.[16]
–Jean Pierre Filiu

In 2006, IMPACT-se conducted a major research project on Iran's 2004 school textbooks.[17] An important finding was that Iran had created a war curriculum to prepare an entire generation for global war, based on Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's vision of collective martyrdom.

However, Iran's uncompromising commitment to the original fervor and goals set by the Revolutionary Republic's founder was surprising to our researchers. After all, 2004 was the last of an eight-year term for reformist and perceived moderate, Iranian President Mohammad Khatami. Where we expected moderation and the long-awaited *Thermidor,* we found none. Thus, the research opened a window into radical political currents emerging within Iran today. Indeed, with the election of populist candidate Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as president in 2005, Iran catapulted into an open conflict with the West.

The IMPACT-se research once again demonstrated the great potential offered in the study of school textbooks for strategic assessment. Unlike political and diplomatic declarations that are often propagated for diverse audiences and interests, education provides a clearer indicator as to where a country is heading. **Schoolbooks are measures of a society—one educates children in one's own language and shares with them a worldview and cultural and moral values.**[18]

During 2014–6, IMPACT-se revisited Iranian school textbooks, covering the four academic years from 2012–16 and prepared this special report reflecting new developments in Iranian education. This report, an updated edition of our original May 15, 2015 review, also consulted dozens of textbooks published so far in preparation for the academic year 2016–17, although more research will undoubtedly be necessary.

16 Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Apocalypse in Islam*, translated by M. B. DeBevoise. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2011, p. xxi.
17 Arnon Groiss and Nethanel (Navid) Toobian, *The War Curriculum in Iranian Schoolbooks*, Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace and the American Jewish Committee, 2007.
18 In Iran, Persian or *Farsi*, Iran's national language and the mother tongue of about half its population.

1. The New Civilization and its Enemies: Iran's Cultural War

The Islamic Republic considers itself to be the perfect political system—based on what it believes to be the one true plan for humanity. Their program is essentially an Iranian-style Islam called the New Islamic Civilization (NIC), offered as the answer to all of the mistakes, shortcomings and evils of Western society. As such, the battle of the two civilizations is seen as one between good and evil and is being waged on a global scale.

Defending against Foreign Invasion

This "battle" is the responsibility of each Iranian citizen: It begins with defense. Students are indoctrinated to fear the Internet, new media and the "Soft War," as tools used by their enemies to assault Iranian culture.[19] According to Nima Adelkhah, the soft war paradigm and "the institutionalization of various *Basij* (volunteer militia) centers in elementary schools," is reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution following the 1978 upheaval that overthrew the previous (Shah) government.[20] The following quotation is taken from an eighth grade Persian literature book:

> *Today the enemies of this people have launched, without fanfare, a soft war using these tools to create havoc [in Iran]. If Internet and new-technology users will not adopt scientific ethics and human virtues, and will not abide by law and religion and comply with ethical values and cultural norms, the Internet will turn into a destructive bomb in every family. Therefore, computer or technological ethics*
>
> *represent our commitment to personal morality, social values and respect for the rights of others.*[21]

19 "Soft War" [*jang-e narm*] is an Iranian expression, perhaps inspired by Joseph Nye's "Soft Power," but having a larger meaning beyond the politically useful attraction of country. It denotes a planned attack on a targeted country using a variety of elements such as propaganda war, undermining the regime and cultural inspiration. The following definition is provided in a *Defense Readiness* textbook: "The soft war seeks to change the identity and personality of the 'targeted society.' In this war, fundamental beliefs, convictions and values of a given society are being attacked." The book quotes the Supreme Leader as saying that, "Soft War means to sow doubt in the hearts and minds of the people." This original term has been used by the Iranian regime to suppress a variety of dissenting voices within Iran, either politically or culturally. *Defense Readiness,* Grade 11, 2014–15 (Iranian Calendar, 1393), pp. 41–42. See also *Defense Readiness*, Grade 10, 2016–17 (1395), pp. 42–49.

20 Nima Adelkhah, "Iran Integrates the Concept of the 'Soft War' into its Strategic Planning." *Terrorism Monitor,* 8. 23 (2010): pp. 7–9. According to Price, "Iran seeks, through the use of law, force, technology, and subsidy, to maintain a cartel of acceptable purveyors in its markets for allegiances." Monroe Price, "Iran and the Soft War," *International Journal of Communication* 6 (2012), Feature: pp. 2397–2415.

21 *Persian*, Grade 8, 2012–13 (1391), p. 95.

Iranians should be careful not to be dependent on foreigners. In Khomeini's words: "Dear ones, you should try to come out of this dependence . . . avoid relying on foreigners."[22] A 2013–14 ninth grade *Defense Readiness* book warns against the "deception and conspiracies of various global political and military powers."[23] The textbook explains that chief among these global powers is the United States.

> *We have already mentioned the dangers that can possibly destroy our security. These dangers are called threats. So, threats are meant to be intimidating and frightening. For example, America threatens some countries for doing or not doing certain activities. For instance, the American government threatens us with military strikes, sanctions etc., so that Iran will discontinue its peaceful nuclear activities.*[24]

Students are taught that the purpose of the Islamic Revolution is to "liberate Iran from the claws of God's enemies" and to gain "freedom from the bondage of American arrogance and economic dependence on the Western countries led by America."

> ***3- Economic Dependence on Foreigners:***
> *The Western countries, led by America's control of oil and other valuable resources of Iran through long-term contracts, export their own products and culture in return. This practice made our country heavily dependent on oil exports and led to stagnation, with respect to the domestic production of goods.*[25]
> ***2- Establishment of Independence and Freedom:***
> *The celebration of Bahman 22, 1357 [The Victory of the Iranian Revolution, February 9, 1979], represented the liberation from the claws of God's enemies and freedom from the bondage of American arrogance. The people stood on their own feet. But the enemies of our independence and freedom, who lost great interests, did not stand by idly. Using various conspiracies and other methods, they intended to destroy the Islamic Revolution or to divert it from its course, but so far they have not attained anything other than defeat and contempt.*[26] *[numbers and bold as they appear in text]*

The struggle is seen to be ongoing and the text goes on to explain the dangers coming from abroad, which include threats encompassing every facet of life—political, economic, military, cultural, social and environmental.[27] These threats are described as never-ending, because they are "gradual, long-term and limitless [*na-mahdud*]."

22 *Geography*, Grade 12, Human Sciences, 2016–17 (1395), p. iii.
23 *Defense Readiness*, Grade 9, 2013–14 (1392), p. v.
24 Ibid., p. 4.
25 Ibid., p. 15.
26 Ibid., p. 16.
27 Ibid., p. 5.

As the following translated table demonstrates, any kind of freedom of speech, political debate or appreciation of Iranian culture or values other than those espoused by the regime are described in the 2013–14 textbook as intolerable, since they amount to a "cultural invasion," and "conquest of thought and brain." The outward appearance of this incursion seems charming and attractive; feigns friendship and love but leads to moral corruption and family breakdown—supported by malicious attacks through the media.[28]

The school text then sums up the table by pointing to the four goals of the purported Cultural Invasion: "(1) Islam-hatred and averting Islamism; (2) unleashing moral crises and destroying the moral security of society, particularly among the youth; (3) destroying society's religious and national values; and (4) unleashing a spirit of despair and hopelessness among the people, especially among the future builders of the homeland."[29]

Description	Military Invasion	Cultural Invasion
Target	Conquest of territory and land	Conquest of thought and brain
Attack Duration	Typically short and limited	Gradual, long-term and limitless
Outward Appearance	Hateful and tumultuous	Charming and attractive
Self-Presentation	Declaring enmity and hate	Showing friendship and love
Invasion Instruments	Canons, tanks, missiles	Satellite waves, movies and other media
Invasion Results	Human loss, economic damage, etc.	Moral corruption, spread of drugs, family breakdown
Invasion Sites	Economic and military centers, etc.	Schools, universities, cultural centers etc.

The 2013–14 *Defense Readiness* text tried to deal with widespread doubts among Iranian youth who aspire toward a democratic or post-Islamist Iran, as manifested in the 2009 Green Movement protest.[30] What Iranian authorities portrayed as defense—"enemies of this (Iranian) people have launched . . . a Soft War"—in truth veiled an effort by Iran's leadership to indoctrinate students to accept "the rules of the game," as dictated by the Iranian regime. Rather, it represented an offensive against large segments of Iranian society. And as we will see, it extends far beyond Iranian society to the region.

The above table and analysis upon which it is based does not appear in the revised *Defense Readiness* books for ninth grade (2015–16) and tenth grade (2016-17); there was

28 *Defense Readiness*, Grade 9, 2013–14 (1392), p. 7.
29 Ibid.
30 Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007.

no change to the *Defense Readiness* grade 11 textbook.[31] (These two textbooks are very similar to the original one, but require more study). In any event, the new books, similar to other books in the curriculum, attack America, using the expression: "World Arrogance."[32]

Expanding the Cultural Revolution to the World

While textbooks teach Iranian youth to protect themselves from a foreign cultural invasion, efforts are also being made to mobilize them for Iran's cultural invasion of the world.

> *With the globalization of the media and transformation of the world into one village, an opportunity has arisen for various ideas and beliefs to compete in the global arena. Which worldview ['aqideh] and which lifestyle have merit and will naturally be adopted by the various nations? Thus, a worldview having the following features can become globalized:*
>
> *A. It is compatible with human nature and its innate qualities*
> *B. Based on reason (can be defended accordingly)*
> *C. Has the power to meet the essential needs of the today's world, such as social justice*
> *D.Benefits from divine help and support*
> *E. Its missionary [moballegh] is an infallible and trustworthy Leader [rahbar-e ma'sum va mored-e e'tamad]*[33]

Exporting the Iranian system is, of course, not considered an invasion but rather a "competition of ideas and beliefs." Yet, troubling is the attitude toward the Other as both a cultural invader to be blocked and as one whose culture should be replaced through competition by an Iranian worldview. Even more disquieting is the expression "Infallible Leader" [*rahbar-e ma'sum*]. The use of "*ma'sum,*" is laden with meaning, because in Islam only the Prophets and Holy Imams are considered to be infallible. We will return to the significance of this expression in the last section of this report. Noteworthy at this point is that Iran's global ambition is being systematically inculcated into the minds of its youth, while being presented as a purely defensive measure (against those who object to this hegemonic undertaking). Iran's posture is always presented as defending itself, never as the aggressor.[34] The "defense" paradigm is the heritage of Ruhollah Khomeini, the founding father of the Islamic Republic, as stated in the opening motto of a *Defense Readiness* textbook.

> *We do not want war with any country, be it Islamic or non-Islamic; we seek peace and good will [solh va safa] for all. Until now, we have only risen in '**Defense**,' [bold in text] which con-*

31 *Defense Readiness,* Grade 11, 2014–5 (1393). *Defense Readiness,* Grade 9, 2015–16 (1394). *Defense Readiness,* Grade 10, 2016–17 (1395).
32 *Defense Readiness*, Grade 10, 2016–17 (1395), p. 32.
33 *Qur'an and Life: Qur'an and Religious Education,* Grade 12, 2016–17 (1395), pp. 128–29
34 Ruhollah Khomeini, *Jang va Difa dar Andisha-ye Imam Khomeini* [War and Defense from Imam Khomeini's Perspective] (Tehran: Mu'asseseh-ye Tanzim va Nashr-e Asar-e Imam Khomeini, 2008), Vol.24, p. ii, Cited in Taremi, Kamran. "Iranian Strategic Culture: The Impact of Ayatollah Khomeini's Interpretation of Shiite Islam." *Contemporary Security Policy* 35.1 (2014), p. 13.

> *sists for each individual a religious obligation [farizah], a divine one, and a [human] right [haqq]; we never have the intention to attack other countries.*[35]

This quotation refers to the Iran-Iraq war, often described within the text as the "Holy Defense" or the "Imposed War." In a sixth grade textbook, child martyrdom is revered, against the background of Iraq's supposed plan to reach Tehran within three days with the help of "[Western] bullying and oppressive governments."[36] While Iraq, initially planning a limited campaign, invaded Iran in September 1980, the entire war cannot be seen as "defensive" by any objective measure. At best, it could be described as a "costly exercise in futility,"[37] or transformation of a "victim into an aggressor."[38] It began with Iranian threats, interference in Iraqi affairs and Iran's commitment to topple the Iraqi Ba'th regime. Following the Iraqi attack, Iran rejected all proposals for cease fire—continuing the war for six to eight more years despite the return of all lost territories. Iran's role in initiating and perpetuating the bloodbath is a matter of historical fact. Yet, Iranian students are taught a one-sided narrative—that *they* were the victims and martyrs. Likewise, a Persian book features a poem on Muhammad al-Dura, "Palestinian child martyr,"[39] supposedly killed by Israel, an event that turned out to be false. What matters, though, is the veneration for child martyrdom.

Similarly, when it comes to the Iranian regime's obsession with the so-called, "Soft War" and American aggression, the message is self-contradictory and one-sided. America is depicted as a country ruled by the rich and a dangerous cultural aggressor. But the curriculum's intent is also to educate children to ultimately use the same tools as the West to aggressively spread Iranian ideology across the world.[40] Students are taught that the world must implement Iran's "'Full Life Program,' which humanity at large is now ready to receive."[41] The curriculum presents the world as a threatening place in which foreigners—arrogant, oppressive and infidels—are constantly plotting against Iran. It is Iran's constant duty to help topple these evil regimes around the world by supporting the uprisings of the downtrodden while preparing for world government under the Mahdi.[42]

35 *Defense Readiness*, Grade 11, 2014–15 (1393), p. iii.
36 "The Little Leader," *Heaven's Presents*, Grade 6, 2012–13 (1391), pp. 58–64.
37 Efraim Karsh, *The Iran-Iraq War*, New York, Rosen, 2009, p. 82. F. Gregory Gause, III, "Iraq's Decisions to Go to War, 1980 and 1990," *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Winter 2002), pp. 47–70.
38 Ray Takeyh, "The Iran-Iraq War: A Reassessment," *The Middle East Journal*, Volume 64, Number 3, Summer 2010, pp. 365–383, p.373.
39 *Persian*, Grade 8, 2016–17 (1395), pp. 112–113.
40 *Qur'an and Life*, Grade 12, 2016–17 (1395), p. 128, 149 note 1.
41 Ibid., p. 31 (and the entire book). Persian for the quotation: *amadegi-ye jame'eh-ye bashari bara-ye daryaft-e barnameh-ye kamel-e zendegi.*
42 Ibid., pp. 54–55, 120, F140. Persian: foreigners (*biganegan*); arrogant (*mostakberan*); oppressive (*setamgaran*); and infidels (*koffar*).

In other words, the term, "defense," in the context of the Iranian curriculum is a paradox. Iran's undermining of others is a welcome revolutionary and religious duty, while the predictable reactions of those in their sights are considered aggression—from which conscientious Iranians have the duty to "defend." The students—from a very young age—are raised within this paradox; on the one hand they are encouraged to aggressively spread the revolution against the West's vital interests, while on the other they are taught to play the harassed victims of foreign conspiracies.

> *With the fall of the Shah's regime, the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran was formed to support the oppressed [people] and Muslims and to stand against such tyrannical powers. Those powers that used our country as its regional representative before the victory of the Islamic Revolution, could not tolerate an Islamic Iran that worked against their unjust interests. Therefore, immediately after the Revolution, anti-revolutionary groups—sponsored and instigated by the foreigners and employing alluring titles and slogans—operated according to the wishes and interests of the enemies.*[43]

Keeping its revolution alive, Iran is committed to providing "complete protection and aid to the oppressed people of the world" as well as training revolutionaries and awakening peoples to overthrow their "dictators and pharaohs."[44] Consequently, leaders not appointed by God are the "idolatrous devil" [*taghut*].

> ***5- Protection and Help to the Oppressed People of the World:***
> *Considering the anti-arrogance position [against the US], expressed by the Islamic Revolution, the dispossessed and downtrodden of the world benefit from the moral support offered by the leadership and people of Iran. This support has helped the oppressed peoples of Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan, etc., to feel less lonely in the struggle against the occupiers of their countries and, with trust in God, fight the oppressors. Iran has declared time and again that it wishes for peace, friendship and fraternity with all countries, except the 'Regime Occupying Palestine,' because it considers supporting the dispossessed and the oppressed to be its human and religious mission.*
> ***6- Awakening of Oppressed Peoples:***
> *Nowadays, the Islamic Republic of Iran serves as a role model for revolutionary and right-seeking [haqq-talab] people all over the world. All those who wish to overthrow their dictator or 'pharaoh-of-the-time,' can learn from Iran and its experiences. The awakening of the Islamic peoples in the Middle East region, in the countries of North Africa and other places can serve as examples for the reception of the influence and role-modeling provided by*

43 *Defense Readiness*, Grade 9, 2012–13, p. 24.
44 Ibid., p. 17. Persian: complete protection and aid to the oppressed people of the world (*hemayat va komakha-ye hamehjanebeh az mazluman dar sarasar-e jahan*); dictators and pharaohs (of the age, *diktator va fer'own-e zaman*). The expression "Pharaoh-of-the-Age," typically attributed to the United States. For example, General Mohammad Reza Naqadi, commander of the Basij paramilitary force, declared that, "the spell of the Pharaoh-of-the-Time, namely America, is in its media. With the help of its media, America has launched a big war of deception. They launched large waves of war and murder." "The Spell of the Pharaoh- of-the-Time, namely America, is the Media" [*sehr-e fer'own-e zaman ya'ni amrika resaneh ast*], *Jahan News*, November 24, 2013, http://jahannews.com/vdca-60nei49nuy1.k5k4.html

> *the Islamic Revolution of Iran to the oppressed peoples of the world.*[45] *[numbers and bold as they appear in text]*

In his recent book, published in Tehran in 2013, Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, confirms this unique situation of Iran, having to struggle everywhere all the time. Iran is not Malaysia, he explains:

> *We have a fundamental problem with the West and especially with America . . . This is because we are claimants of a mission, with a global dimension . . . How come Malaysia doesn't have similar problems? Because Malaysia is not trying to change the international order. It may seek independence and strength, but its definition of strength is the advancement of national welfare.*[46]

Iranian textbooks reflect, indeed, the revisionist policies and worldview of the Iranian regime as expressed in the constitution, which requires Iranians to struggle against the arrogant, "in every corner of the globe."[47]

In sum, the school textbooks prepare the entire Iranian population for a constant state of emergency, requiring Iranians to foment revolutions throughout the world, particularly across the Middle East, while evil arrogant enemies—who hate Iran and Islam—scheme against them.

***Defense Readiness*, Grade 9, 2012–13 (Iranian Calendar,1391), p. 3.**

45 Ibid.
46 Mohammad Mehdi Raji, (*aqa-ye safir: goftogu ba mohammad-javad-e zarif safir-e pishin-e iran dar sazman-e melal-e mottahed*), Tehran, *Nashr-e Nay*, 2013, p. 235, quoted in *Ali Alfoneh and Reuel Marc Gerecht, Persian Truths and American Self-Deception: Hassan Rouhani, Muhammad-Javad Zarif, and Ali Khamenei in their own Words*. Washington D.C.: FDD Press, April 2015, p. 24.
47 Ibid., p. 24, quoted from the Iranian Constitution, Article 154.

2. Never-Ending *Jihad*

To understand the Iranian curriculum is to realize that *jihad* means warfare.[48] A schoolbook focusing on Islamic edicts devotes a chapter to *jihad*, under the title, "Defense and *Jihad*." The chapter begins with the relevant Qur'anic verse on fighting (*qital*): "Fighting has been enjoined upon you while it is hateful to you. But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah Knows, while you know not." (*Al-Baqarah*, 2:216)[49] The grammatical root of *qital* (q.t.l.) covers a range of meanings including killing, massacring, murdering and fighting. In the curriculum, justifications for a *jihad* war are numerous and could be applied to a wide array of scenarios throughout the world.

> *Jihad means effort and combat in God's way and defense of Muslims and the oppressed in order to maintain the right and the true, unity and justice, to eliminate transgression and plunder, torture and intimidation, occupation and colonialism and in general, sedition and corruption in the world.*[50]

The liberal definition given here to justify a *jihad* war, permits its use against anyone, anywhere. Expressions such as "the just and true," "the oppressed," "transgression," "sedition and corruption," and "in the world" suggest that Iran's next generation is being educated for continuous war against the rest of the world until the establishment of the "just rule," as determined by Iran's Supreme Leader.

48 *History of Islam* 1, Islamic Education and Science, Grade 11, 2012–13 (1391), pp. 53, 61, 70, 88, 91. *Religion and Life*, Grade 12, 2016–17 (1395), pp. 54, 101. 104. *History of Islam 2*, Islamic Education and Science, Grade 12, 2012–13 (1391), pp. 50, 88, 145. *History of Islam 2*, Islamic Education and Science, Grade 12, 2016–17 (1395), pp. 100, 145. *Defense Readiness*, Grade 9, 2013–14 (1392), pp. 23, 28, 31. *Defense Readiness*, Grade 9, 2015–16 (1394), pp. 33, 39, 42–3. *Defense Readiness*, Grade 10, 2016–17 (1395), pp. 11–12, 15, 24, 29 (also mentions spiritual *jihad*), 53, 68–71. *Heaven's Messages: Islamic Education*, Grade 9, 2012–13 (1391), pp. 13, 57. *Defense Readiness,* Grade 11, 2014–15 (1393), pp. 12, 15, 24, 28–32, 53, 68, 70–71. The latter explains (within the study of warfare and martyrdom) that alongside the fighting *jihad*, there is a spiritual "greater *jihad*" [*jehad-e akbar*] performed by the fighter-martyrs. Yet the context remains that of *jihad* war. (Students make pilgrimages to the battlefields and martyrs' shrines.) Roy Mottahedeh argues that "a majority of learned Muslim thinkers, drawing on impeccable scholarship, insist that *jihad* must be understood as a struggle without arms." ("Islam and the Opposition to Terrorism," *The New York Times*, Sept. 30, 2001). For authoritative articles on *jihad*, see Emile Tyan in the *Encyclopedia of Islam* and Ella Landau-Tasseron in the *Encyclopedia of the Quran*. See also: Landau's "Is *Jihad* Comparable to Just War? A Review Article," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* (2008) 38: 535–50; Rudolph Peters, *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam: A Reader*, Princeton Series on the Middle East, Markus Wiener Publishers, 2005; Michael Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic history: Doctrines and Practice*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006. On the post-9/11 debate over *jihad*, see: Martin Kramer, "*Jihad* 101," *Middle East Quarterly*, Spring 2002, pp. 87–95. The seminal article on *jihad* in Shiism is, Etan Kohlberg, "The Development of the Imami Shi'i Doctrine of *Jihad*," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (ZDMG), 126 (1976): 64–86. See also: Assaf Moghadam, "Mayhem, Myths, and Martyrdom: The Shi'a Conception of *Jihad*," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, (2007) 19:1, 125–143.

49 *Religious Rulings,* Grade 11, 2012–13 (1391), p. 12. Aya's English rendering from: http://quran.com/2/216.

50 Ibid., p.12. Persian: effort and combat (*talash va mobarezeh*); the oppressed (*mazluman*); the right and the true (*haqq va haqiqat*); transgression and plunder (*tajavoz va chapavol*).

The text differentiates among the following types of *jihad*:

> ***1. Defensive*** *Jihad [jehad-e defa'i] constitutes defense against an enemy transgressing the border or city of the Muslims, or defense of one's own or other's life, honor and property.*
> ***2. Internal*** *Jihad [jehad-e dakheli] represents a war with outlawed people who implement rebellion and disobedience as well as armed uprisings.*
> ***3. Elementary*** *Jihad [jehad-e ebteda'i] defined as an attack on countries ruled by oppressive governments that do not allow free religious activities or freedom to listen to the call of religion. The goal of this type of jihad is not to conquer a country but to remove obstacles to the propagation of religion. This includes allowing people the right to guidance from—and familiarity with—the rules of religion, while enjoying the rights of freedom and justice.*[51]

The goal of such education is to prepare students to fight in any war that is justified by the Iranian regime. This includes any perceived encroachment on any Muslim city or border in the world; any opposition movement within Iran that may express "disobedience"; as well as any "oppressive" country that does not provide its citizens with the "rights of freedom and justice" or allow the free propagation of religion.

Yet *jihad* laws do not imply that anything goes. One cannot just conquer countries. Analyzing the situation with Hezbollah, Iran's Lebanese proxy, since the 1980s and 1990s, Martin Kramer explains:

> *On the one hand, submission to Islamic law freed Hezbollah from non-Islamic moral constraints. Hezbollah felt no need to justify its acts by other codes. Its struggle was a jihad, a form of sacred warfare regulated solely by Islamic law . . . On the other hand, jihad had its own constraints. The Islamic law of war is the codification of a moral sensibility. While it is open to interpretation, it is not infinitely elastic. Some of its provisions compel violence—acts of punishment or resistance. But other provisions forbid violence against persons afforded protection by law. The believing public had to be persuaded that Hezbollah's actions were not criminal but 'in the nature of a jihad, launched by the oppressed against the oppressors.'*[52]

Going back to the Iranian schoolbook, the text provides some limits on violence in "Defensive *Jihad*," such as the need for warfare to be gradual (*reayat-e marateb elzami ast*) in order to contain the threat with minimum violence, unless time does not allow for such a

51 Ibid., pp.12–13.
52 Martin Kramer, "Hizbullah: The Calculus of Jihad," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 47, No. 8 (May 1994), pp. 20–43; also see pp. 36–37.

policy.[53] Similarly, students are taught to avoid chasing an enemy once he escapes. Nevertheless, the authors clearly put much effort into the explanation of "defense," which unequivocally justifies *jihad* war, as seen in the following statements: "Explain the following sentence: Elementary *Jihad* is also a kind of Defensive *Jihad*"[54] and "An attack is sometimes military and sometimes cultural; it sometimes aims at conquering a land or part of it and sometimes aims at political-economic control."[55] Similarly: "Defense of the oppressed and innocent people is just like defending oneself; the religious laws are the same for both cases."[56]

In other words, every *jihad* war is "Defensive *Jihad*" since it is also considered "Elementary *Jihad*" (i.e., an attack on countries ruled by oppressive governments). Thus, *jihad* can be a war launched in the case of cultural invasion (which is constant in our information age); or it may be a war launched to support any pro-Iranian insurgency regime (or whomever Iran decides is oppressed). While Kramer notes with Hezbollah in the 1980s and 1990s, that one had to *convince* Lebanese clerics about certain *jihadist* practices, the current Iranian textbooks tell another story.

Iran, for its part, has a Supreme Leader who holds complete authority over every decision. Indeed, the school textbook states: "The fate of those captured in battle will be decided by the infallible Imam or the Guardian Jurist [*Vali-ye Faqih*, Iran's Supreme Leader]."[57] Moreover, the textbook does not refer to issues involving civilians, or situations like hostage-taking, which raised questions among Lebanese clerics at the time. (Nothing is said about nuclear weapons either, in the context of *jihad.*) Iranian students are educated to obey the Supreme Leader in all matters—no questions asked. We also know that *jihad*'s supposed limitations did not prevent Iran-Hezbollah terrorist attacks such as the 1994 Jewish Community Center (AMIA) bombing in Buenos Aires or the 1996 Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia, in which current Iranian President Hassan Rouhani was allegedly involved.[58]

It will be useful to understand how the continuous *jihad* war is connected to Twelver Shiism's vision of an apocalyptic battle in the end of the days, (as the Mahdi-savior reappears to lead the army of the just).[59] According to the Shiite interpretation of Islam—as explained in the revolutionary curriculum—"waiting" [*entezar*] for the Mahdi does not connote sitting idle and doing nothing. The "waiting human" and the "waiting society" that comprise the nation of Iran, are supposed to be active in the world, to advance the millenarian agenda. This means perfecting one's society so it becomes a model, and also fighting other regimes that are not Islamist-Khomeinist: "The 'waiting society' does not accept un-Godly, idolatrous governments but stands against them and creates 'resistance' against them."[60]

53 *Religious Rulings*, Grade 11, 2012–13 (1391), pp. 15–16.
54 Ibid., p. 15.
55 Ibid., p. 14.
56 Ibid., p. 15.
57 Ibid. Notice the ambiguity of the wording in "the infallible Imam or the Guardian Jurist," hinting that both are one and the same, or equal. See discussion in chapter 8 below.
58 Alfoneh and Gerecht, *Persian Truths,* p. 14.
59 Abbas Amanat, *Apocalyptic Islam and Iranian Shi'ism*. London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2009, p. 242.
60 *Qur'an and Life,* Grade 12, 2016–17 (1395), p. 122. Persian: the waiting human (*ensan-e montazer*); the waiting

"Resistance" [*moqavemat*, *muqawamah*], a term often used also by Hezbollah and Palestinian radicals, does not mean defense, but rather incessant offensive operations aimed at the destruction of one's rival through continuous struggle.[61] The curriculum goes on to explain that the "dynamics of the Shiite society throughout history, has been connected to two elements."

> ***A- 'Red Past,'*** *i.e., the belief in the [martyrdom of Imam Hossein in Karbala' on October, 10, 680, on the day of] 'Ashura' and readiness for self-sacrifice and martyrdom in the way of justice, idealism and truth.*
> ***B- 'Green Future,'*** *i.e., the belief in Mahdism [mahdaviyyat], the rejection of idolatrous governments and the effort to spread justice and humanism in the entire world.*[62]

"Green Future" here denotes a struggle to spread the Iranian system (the Shiite "waiting society") to the entire world.

Waiting for the Mahdi really means activity to prepare for his coming.[63] Often, a strong belief in the return of the Mahdi leads to peaceful expectation, but in the case of the Iranian curriculum, students are instructed to join a millenarian frenzy of training and preparation, constant emergency, blind obedience and actual participation in conflicts, at home and abroad.

Students are taught that they should personally strive to join the Mahdi savior, as "people of *jihad* and combat" for which only a few of the very best will be chosen (313 persons, mostly youth, including fifty women).[64] "The waiting [student] treats the Occultation period as a [military] operational alert period for helping the Imam. Each and every moment he is waiting for the resounding call of the Imam that will be heard in the world inviting people

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society (*jame'eh-ye montazer*), un-Godly, idolatrous governments (*hokumatha-ye gheyr-e elahi va taghuti*).

61 Ehud Yaari, "The *Muqawama* Doctrine," *Jerusalem Report*, November 13, 2006.

62 *Religion and Life,* Grade 12, 2016–17 (1395), p. 122.

63 Iran's Shiism maintains the Mahdi, Islam's savior, is the Twelver Imam who went into Occultation in 873 CE. He disappeared, yet continues ever since to have a "hidden" presence in the world, until his much awaited reappearance in the end of times. Shiis, often an oppressed minority, had to struggle with the question of what to do until the return of the Mahdi, typically choosing a classic quietist "sitting" [Arabic, *qu'ud*]or passive waiting, over "'exiting' with a sword" [Arabic, *al-khuruj bi l-saif*] to fight tyranny and establish legitimate Shii rule. Note that oscillation between "sitting" and "exiting" preceded the Occultation, reflecting the weakness of the Shiites and the early Imams. After the disappearance of the Imam, "sitting" and "exiting" often merge with the debate over passive vs. active waiting for his return. Meir M. Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imami Shiism*. Leiden and Jerusalem: Brill and Magnes Press, 1999, p. 48. Amatzia Baram, "The Iraqi Shi'i Community: Between Sistani, Muqtada, the IGC, and the CPA: Congressional Testimony," USIP, April 21, 2004, http://www.usip.org/publications/the-iraqi-shii-community-between-sistani-muqtada-the-igc-and-the-cpa.

64 *Religion and Life*, Grade 12, 2016–17 (1395), pp. 124–125. See, Filiu, *Apocalypse in Islam*, p. 27. Persian: people of *jihad* and combat (*ahl-e jehad va peykar*).

to join the truth." Those "whom, during their lives, did not fight against the wrong, and did not confront the arrogant ones," will not join the battle for lack of preparedness, just as the Israelites in the Qur'an (*Al-Ma'idah*, 5:24).[65] Note that training and preparing mean that one should actually participate in "the constant battle between good and evil, have an active presence in the [battle] front of truth and withstand and resist the inner and outer Satans." Those who avoid "the battlefield of the truth seekers against the arrogant ones," remain unprepared and will not be eligible to serve in the close circle of the "Mahdi's friends" as part of the "Army of the Imam" in the apocalyptic final battle against the "oppressors of the world."[66]

This goes a long way in clarifying whether the Iranian regime has millenarian-apocalyptic tendencies, or not.[67] It undoubtedly has. Waiting and preparing for the Mahdi means constant training and participation in conflicts and wars between Iran and the "arrogant ones" [i.e., the West]; so when the Mahdi arrives, all is in readiness, including weapons.

A comparative study of millennial movements has concluded that in all instances, there is a sense of urgency, with divine judgment, salvation, and millennial bliss as the ultimate goals.[68] And while it is true that the Iranian curriculum also warns against those who predict the time of the appearance of the Mahdi, as well as against possible imposters,[69] yet a frenzy of preparations, training and military actions is already under way at breakneck speed. Everything is being prepared for the arrival of the Mahdi (Qa'im, Imam] and the apocalyptic "horrifying battle of the Imam's army against the oppressors of the world." [70] Those bravely fighting today will form the elite unit of the Imam's army, the "Imam's friends."

In Khomeini's words on applying the Qur'an, quoted in the textbook for grade 12 students: "We have to prepare ourselves to be the soldiers of the Imam-of-the-Time [that is, the Mahdi] . . . the great savior that will fight with all the international power and corruption centers."[71]

65 Ibid., p. 124. Qur'an: "They said, 'O Moses, indeed we will not enter it, ever, as long as they are within it; so go, you and your Lord, and fight. Indeed, we are remaining right here.'" (http://quran.com/5). Persian: Occultation period (*asr-e ghaybat*); [military] operational alert (*amadeh-bash*).

66 Ibid., p. 125. Persian: Mahdi's friends (*yaran-e emam*); Army of the Imam (*sepah-e emam*); oppressors of the world (*setamkaran-e jahan*).

67 For cases made arguing that Khomeinism is not millenarian: Juan R. I. Cole, "Millennialism in Modern Iranian," in Abbas Amanat and Magnus Bernhardsson (eds.), *Imagining the End: Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America.* London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2002, pp. 282–311. Ze'ev Maghen, "Occultation in 'Perpetuum': Shi'ite Messianism and the Policies of the Islamic Republic," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (Spring 2008): pp. 232–257. A middle-of-the-road position in Moshe-Hay Hagigat, *Mahmud Ahmadinejad's Theological-Political-Socioeconomic Doctrine*, PhD Dissertation, Bar-Ilan, 2012.

68 Amanat, *Apocalyptic Islam*, p. 24.

69 *Qur'an and Life*, Grade 12, 2016–17 (1395), pp. 114, 121.

70 Ibid., p. 125. Persian: the horrifying battle of the Imam's army against the oppressors of the world (*nabard-e sahmgin-e sepah-e emam aleyh-e setamgaran-e jahan*).

71 Ibid., p. 126. Persian: fight with all the international power and corruption centers (*ba tamam-e marakez-e qodrat va fesad-e beynolmelali mobarezeh konad*).

Clearly, the apocalyptic future "horrifying battle" between Iran and the world oppressors has permeated backwards to the present. While the Mahdi has yet to show up, the battle already rages and will never stop. We are there, already.

As we will see later on, every Iranian student is taught to blindly follow orders of the religious authorities and the Supreme Leader; only they, the text teaches, are endowed with paranormal powers to connect with the (present-but-hidden) Imam and directly with the Divine. Notice that the apocalyptic terminology is current: Imam (*emam*) is also a title given the Supreme Leader; *sepah* is a name given Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC); those participating in the "horrifying battle" are people of *jihad* and combat; the arrogant and oppressors of the world are typically the US and the West—and so it goes. In short, the continuous *jihad* war acknowledged by the curriculum forms a part of the live apocalyptic vision "seen" by the Iranian leadership.

Defending the Empire: Ancient Iranians Defeating Greek Invaders.
Persian, Grade 5, 2016–17 (1395), p. 59.

3. The Paradox of Iranian Education: Openness and Curiosity vs. Hatred and Submission

While centralized and indoctrinating, Iranian textbooks, particularly those aimed at elementary school, also reveal a heightened attempt to educate students who are God-fearing, loyal to Iran's Supreme Leader and yet, happy, imparting them with the skills to face the many technological challenges and unpredictable environment of the twenty-first century. Regimented thought and sexuality is part of this utopian/dystopian upbringing but so also is the creation of students with self-confidence and enhanced personal attachment to the Divine—alongside exposure to Western approaches to self-improvement. Women are shown to be separate—less than equal—yet happy and contributing to society.

With respect to gender, there is awareness regarding women's issues but gender roles are strictly enforced. Girls sit in separate classes and wear distinct clothing—Islamic dress (often pink in the earlier grades). They may be seen going to the mosque, but most activities, such as Qur'an study, take place in the men's section. At home, girls often perform household chores with their mothers and sisters, but while in school they study and are active in the laboratory.[72] A new supplementary girls-only textbook has been introduced for the upcoming year on life-skills.[73]

The martyrdom of girls has recently been introduced into the curriculum, changing a long-standing revolutionary tradition. Two revered martyred girls are a sixteen-year-old Kurdish girl: Nahid Fathi Karju and a twelve-year-old Arab child, Siham Khayyam.[74] As we have seen, fifty women will serve in the apocalyptic "horrifying battle" in the Mahdi savior's elite force. Still, the male remains the quintessential martyr, while women mostly continue to be devout and veiled.[75] Romance is mostly prohibited, with the exception of supervised short meetings allowed only in family settings as part of a matching process. Students

72 Examples are widespread, particularly in the elementary school books we checked. See also: Golnar Mehran, "The Paradox of Tradition and Modernity in Female Education in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (August 2003) pp. 269–286. Mahdi Dahmardeh, "Communicative Textbooks: English Language Textbooks in Iranian Secondary School," *Linguistik-Online*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (2009) pp. 1–26 (See illustration on p. 20) http://www.linguistik-online.de/40_09/dahmardeh.html. Karen Kow, Yip Cheng, Amir Biglar Beigi, "Education and Religion in Iran: The inclusiveness of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) Textbooks," *International Journal of Educational Development*, Vol. 32 (2012) pp. 310–315.

73 *Life's Style and Thinking, for Boys and Girls, 2016–17* (1395). *Life's Style and Thinking for Girls* (Supplement), 2016–17 (1395).

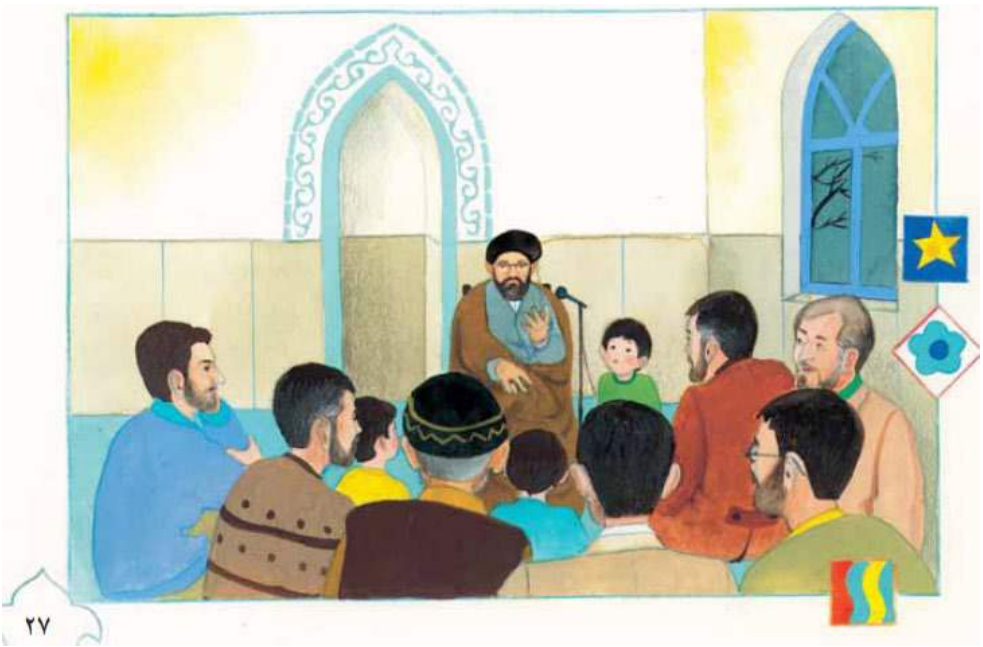
74 *Defense Readiness*, Grade 10, 2016–17 (1395), pp. 59–63.

75 *Defense Readiness*, Grade 11, 2013–14 (1392), pp. 61–62. See discussion in Minoo Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother and Veiled Sister: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Politics of Patriarchy in Iran*. Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005, pp. 107–108.

are instructed not to waste their lives in search of their own spiritual directions since the true path has already been discovered and must be followed.

When it comes to science, technology and the arts, the textbooks are careful to encourage critical thinking, cultural appreciation and a spirit of problem-solving. In contrast, the curriculum also tries to instill blind obedience to a regime which teaches hatred toward the "forces of arrogance" in the West as well as an irrational hatred of Israel. The negative aspect of this ambiguous teaching is bolstered by a one-sided historical narrative dividing the world into good and evil, often including wrong facts and with little or no interest in understanding historical processes, let alone critical thinking.

Women Included *and* Excluded: *Reading*, Grade 1, 2014–15 (1393), p. 21.



For instance, the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine (UN General Assembly Resolution 181) is described in an Iranian history book as follows:

> *After World War II, in the year 1947 AD, the UN Security Council [sic] voted to divide the land of Palestine between the Muslims and the Jews [sic], and this is how the usurper government of Israel was formed.*[76]

The actual text of UNGA 181 refers to "Independent Arab and Jewish States and the Special International Regime for the City of Jerusalem."[77] It is significant that the Iranian textbook refers to the "Security Council," instead of the General Assembly, and to "Muslims," instead of "Arabs." At least for the authors of the curriculum, this "fact" apparently makes Israel a legitimate target for an Iranian *jihad* war, and as described above, a project of "occupation and colonialism," approved by the hated Security Council and, "transgressing the border or city of the Muslims."[78]

Relations with Israel are part of the evil character of the previous Shah's regime. Note that the text speaks about embassy, although the Iran of the Shah never recognized Israel *de jure*, so there was never an Israeli embassy, but rather a mission (*namyandegi*).

> ***4- Friendship with the Regime Occupying Palestine*** *[Israel].*
> *The Iranian government during the Shah's era did not give any support to the oppressed people of Palestine but maintained very close political relations with the Regime Occupying Palestine [Israel]. These political relations led to the activation of the embassy of that regime in Tehran and to its influence on the policies of the officials of our country.*[79] *[number and bold as in text]*

The last paragraph does not feature in the new *Defense Readiness* book, but there are abundant other similar examples.[80]

76 *History of Iran and the World* (2), Grade 12, 2016–17 (1395), p. 97.
77 http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/0/7F0AF2BD897689B785256C330061D253.
78 *Religious Rulings*, Grade 11, 2012–13 (1391), pp.12–13.
79 *Defense Readiness,* Grade 9, 2012–13 (1391), p. 15.
80 *Defense Readiness*, Grade 10, 2016–17 (1395), pp. 2, 5, 12, 27, 64

تصویر ۱ــ۱ــ تهاجم تانک‌های رژیم اشغالگر سرزمین فلسطین به مردم در غزه

Tanks of the Regime Occupying Palestine Attack the People in Gaza.[81]

Thus, while Iranian students learn that America is hated for being an arrogant and exploitative enemy, Israel is seen as an inherently illegal entity—an illegitimate, occupying regime. An Arabic-language textbook features a short story about a sheikh subjected to interrogation in an Israeli prison. The sheikh describes Israelis as aggressive and tyrannical "killers of prophets and the innocent and destroyers of the (holy) places and: 'devils.'" He declares that if released he "will return to *jihad* in the way of Allah." The Israeli judges in the story conclude: "It is easy for us to sentence him to death, but Muslims only sanctify the blood and it would make their martyrs demi-gods . . . prison is a cemetery for the living, so we will bury him there alive."[82] Below is the poem, "On Man," by Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish:

They gagged his mouth,
Bound his hands to the rock of the dead
And said: Murderer!
They took his food, clothes and banners,
Cast him into the condemned cell
And said: Thief!
They drove him away from every port,
Took his young sweetheart,
Then said: Refugee!

81 Ibid., p. 2.
82 *Arabic*, Pre-University, 2016–17 (1395), pp. 50–52.

O you with bloodshot eyes and bloody hands,
Night is short-lived,
The detention room lasts not forever,
Nor the links of chains.
Nero died, Rome did not:
With her very eyes she fights.
And seeds from a withered ear
With wheat shall fill the valley.[83]

While the poem may be legitimate in its own right, such a context in a child's schoolbook adds to the virulent anti-Israel atmosphere of the curriculum, obviously intended to demonstrate Iran's active worldwide revolutionary role. The textbook's short introduction to the poem makes this point all too clear: (Israel-born) Darwish was born in one of the villages of "occupied Palestine," where he became a refugee at age six because of attacks by the "Israeli occupiers." The poem represents his time in the "prisons of the Zionist regime." But this portrays a markedly different attitude from that of Darwish himself, who was much more nuanced, referring to Hebrew as: "not the language of the conqueror, because I spoke it as *a language of love*."[84] By comparison, the authors of the Tunisian curriculum—also educating their children to be pro-Palestinian and anti-Zionist—manifest a more balanced attitude toward Israel by choosing another poem by Darwish, "Rita and the Rifle," in which he explains why his love for an Israeli girl could not materialize.[85]

But the Iranian curriculum sees the world through the Manichean-like prism of good versus evil, so Israel must be represented as totally evil, and should be eradicated. Another example is an (untrue) story about Israeli soldiers murdering a Palestinian three-year-old. An earlier IMPACT-se report demonstrated how the Iranian curriculum took a page from the Palestinian curriculum and media, to turn a peaceful event into a "murder case."[86] While the curriculum ostensibly respects religious minorities to the degree tolerated by the regime's brand of Islam, the demonization of Israel is a step down the slippery slope

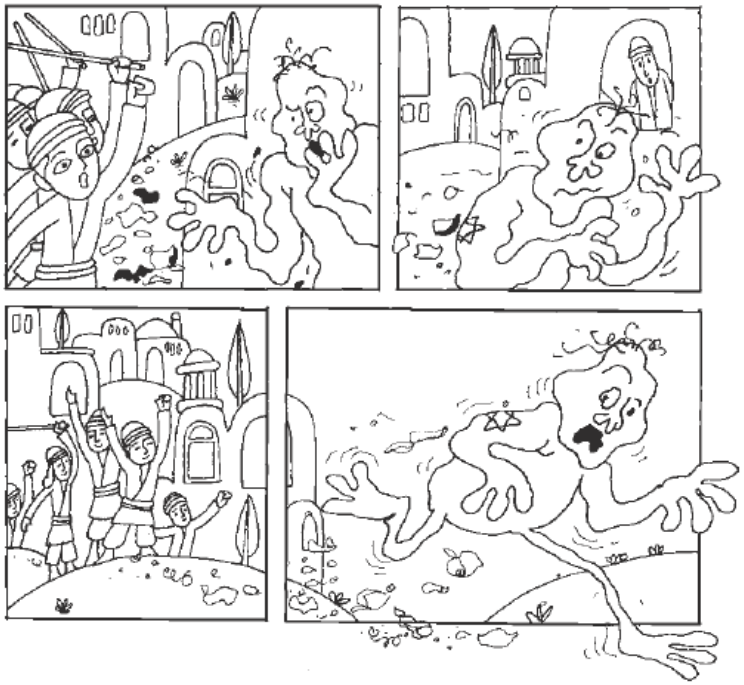
83 Ibid., p. 76, English translation, reflecting the Persian in the textbook, from: *PoemHunter.com* [http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/on-man/].

84 David J. Wasserstein, "Prince of Poets," *The American Scholar*, Autumn 2012 [http://theamericanscholar.org/prince-of-poets/#.U9c_-PmSxz4.[Italics added. Darwish was a member of the Israeli Communist party and believed in peace and mutual cultural immersion and integration between Jews and Arabs. Diaa Hadid, "Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish dead at 67," *Seattle Times*, August 9, 2008, [http://seattletimes.com/html/nationworld/2008102528_apobitdarwish.html?syndication=rss].

85 Arnon Groiss, *Peace and the "Other" in Tunisian Schoolbooks*, The Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education (IMPACT-se), November 2009, p. 28 [http://www.impact-se.org/docs/reports/Tunisia/Tunisia_Final2009.pdf]. IMPACT-se Press Release: "A Comparative Analysis of Egypt's, Tunisia's and Iran's Schoolbooks," February 2012 [http://www.impact-se.org/docs/press_releases/2011–12_Egypt-Tunisia-Iran-Press-Release-En.pdf].

86 *Persian Reading*, Grade 3, 2004–5 (1383), pp. 112–113. *Persian Reading*, Grade 3, 2012–13 (1391), pp. 133–135. Arnon Groiss and Nethanel (Navid) Toobian, *The Attitude to 'The Other' and to Peace in Iranian School Books and Teacher's Guides Research*, CMIP, Jerusalem, 2006, p. 190.

to classical anti-Semitism.[87] As seen in the illustration, (part of the text's instruction on cleanliness), the filthy and germ-like image carries the Star of David. Shiism's anti-Jewish sentiment, imbued with the notion of impurity, is clearly apparent.[88] Most pointedly, the demonization of Israel derives from an attempt to erase any relevant context within Jewish history, including those within religious education books for minorities.[89] Moreover, hatred against Israel is featured within minority students' assigned religious textbooks.[90]



Chasing Away the Filthy Jew.
***Heaven's Presents: Work Book,* Grade 3, 2012–13, p. 14.**

While much information is provided on the ancient empires, particularly (and not surprisingly) the Iranian ones, there is no mention of the Israelite kingdoms. Israelite prophets such as Moses or Jesus, are associated with Egypt and the Roman Empires and only within the context of the general fascination of the curriculum with empires. Abraham is presented only as a Mesopotamian.[91] Cyrus' famous declaration to the Babylonians is described,[92] but not the Bible's rendering of his declaration to the

87 Meir Litvak, "The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Holocaust: Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism," *The Journal of Israeli History*, Vol. 25, No. 1, March 2006, pp. 267–284.
88 Daniel Tsadik, "The Legal Status of Religious Minorities: Imāmī Shīʿī Law and Iran's Constitutional Revolution," *Islamic Law and Society*, Vol. 10, No. 3, The Interaction Between Islamic Law and Non-Muslims: Lakum Dīnukum wa-lī Dīni (2003), pp. 376–408.
89 *Divine Religions Studies and Morals for Religious Minorities (Jewish, Zoroastrian and Christian)*, Vol. 1, Grade 2013–14 (1392). *Divine Religions Studies and Morals for Religious Minorities (Jewish, Zoroastrian and Christian)*, Vol. 2, Grade 11, 2014–15 (1393). *Divine Religions Studies and Morals for Religious Minorities (Jewish, Zoroastrian and Christian)*, Vol. 3, Grade 12, 2013–14 (1392).
90 *Heaven's Presents: Special for Religious Minorities*, Grade 3, 2012–13 (1391), pp. 13, 17.
91 *Social Studies (Civil, Geography, History)*, Grade 7, 2016–17 (1395), pp. 112–13.
92 Ibid., p. 172

Jews and the restoration of their Temple in Jerusalem.[93] The history of the Jews of Iran, and the twentieth century destruction or decline of Jewish communities in the Islamic world, is not mentioned. Nor is there any mention of the Holocaust in the curriculum. And the extreme reduction within Iran in numbers of non-Muslims as a result of the policies of the Islamic Republic, represents only another glaring omission.[94] Yet, hate propaganda is found throughout the texts, ranging from global conspiracies to anti-Semitism and attacking Israel.

Evil Conspiracies: Freemasons, Rupert Murdoch, Israelis Kill Toddler.[95]

93 Cyrus is described in the Hebrew Bible as the patron and deliverer of the Jews. He is mentioned twenty-three times by name and alluded to several times more. Interestingly, in a visit to the Shiraz Jewish community, Ali Younesi, an advisor to President Rouhani, openly said that Cyrus had allowed the Children of Israel, which he freed in Babylon, either to go to Iran, stay in Babylon or return to Jerusalem using the term *Beit-e Moqaddas*, which is parallel to the Hebrew Beit Ha-Miqdash (The Abode of the Temple, or The Temple in Jerusalem), although not the one typically used by Iranian Jews, *Urshalim*. "Younesi's Attendance in the synagogue of the Jews of Shiraz [*hozur-e yunesi dar kanise-ye yahudiyan-e shiraz*]," *Sadayiran*, May 3, 2014 [sedayiran.com/fa/news/6866/حضور-یونسی-در-کنیسه-یهودیان-شیراز].

94 Eliz Sanasarian and Avi Davidi, "Domestic Tribulations and International Repercussions: The State and the Transformation of Non-Muslims in Iran," *Journal of International Affairs*, Spring/Summer 2007, vol. 60, No. 2, pp.55–69.

95 Killing a Toddler, *Persian*, Grade 3, 2012–13 (1391), p. 135. *Social Studies*, Pre-Academic, 2014–15 (1393), pp. 56, 69.

In another example of the curriculum's worldview of history, the causes for World War II are shown to have originated in "colonialist competition as well as Fascist and racist thinking and ideas entertained by European politicians."[96] In other words, WWII was a Western colonial, racist, internal war between equally evil sides. This is indicative of the general framework of the curriculum: to divide the world between the evil West and its oppressed victims. And while Iranian textbooks do teach students to appreciate certain technological and cultural values from the West, the central theme presented to students is that the West morally failed and the world should adopt (Iranian) pan-Islam as the only true program reflecting the wishes of God and the needs of humanity. Rather than offering various legitimate ways by which cultures and civilizations can coexist, students are instead presented with one choice: a battle between good and evil or truth (*haqq*) and falsehood (*batel*); or more specifically, between Islam and the West. While the curriculum purports to appreciate differences in various cultures, it insists that conflict is inevitable and Iran must be strong for the coming battle(s).

In the upcoming year (2016–17) there is a direct call within the texts for little children to destroy Israel. The following picture includes a quotation from Imam Khomeini, the Republic's founder, reading: "Israel must be wiped out"! The students are asked to connect the picture showing Israeli soldiers attacked by Palestinian children and the reading. That Khomeini's edict is delivered in the conclusion to a chapter entitled: "[Khomeini] The Greatest Man in History," should be mind-boggling for any Islamic country.[97] Besides the already genocidal message, the picture also repeats the tragic veneration of child martyrdom.

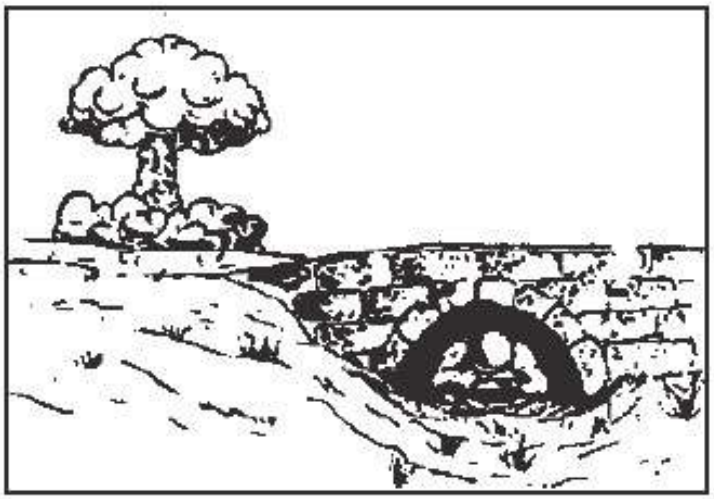
Khomeini: Israel Must be Wiped Out!

96 *History of Iran and the World* (2), Grade 12, 2012–13 (1391), p. 88
97 *Heaven's Presents*, Grade 5, 2016–17 (1395), pp. 94–6; see also picture on page 94.

4. Militarism and Child Martyrdom

War curriculum and education for child martyrdom continues, beginning with the first grade, all the way to grade 12.[98] Until the 2012–13 academic year, this program included preparation for a nuclear war alongside biological and chemical warfare and the use of firearms.[99] Preparation for nuclear war (see below) was replaced in the current academic year with battle and martyrdom stories, with new emphasis on female child martyrs.[100] Iranian girls and boys are educated to go to war at any moment; they are taught to see the world as overflowing with enemies of the Revolution who resist the "true program of God" around the world. Regardless of how one might view the current Iranian curriculum, education for death and militarism of young children is disturbing.

۴ــ جهت مقابله با تشعشعات هسته‌ای، پل‌ها و لوله‌های آب پناه‌گاه‌های مناسبی هستند.



۴۵

Teenagers Preparing for Nuclear War:
"To counter nuclear radiation, bridges and water pipes are suitable shelters."
***Defense Readiness*, Grade 11, 2012–13 (1391), p. 45.**

Militarism, defense and *jihad*, are widespread in the curriculum from grade 1 all the way to pre-university. Martyrdom is venerated in Iran—so much so, that it includes youth and children. Examples of martyrdom abound, featuring episodes ranging from Iran's mythological past; Shiite martyrs in the context of the Battle of Karbala (680 CE); national martyrs (particularly children) dying in the "Holy Defense" of the Iran-Iraq War (1980–88); Palestinian martyrs; and incidents of civil self-sacrifice.

98 *Persian Reading*, Grade 1, 2016–17 (1395), p. 45; see also image on p. 46. On teenage martyrs: *Defense Readiness*, Grade 11, 2014–15 (1393), pp. 35, 62.
99 *Defense Readiness*, Grade 11, 2012–13 (1391), pp. 22–47.
100 *Sociology 1*, Grade 11, 2012–13 (1391), pp. 112, 114.

Considering that Iran's historical connection to mythology serves as an important context for sacrifice, the story of Arash the Archer provides a useful example. The tale most likely derives from the *Avesta*, the holy book of the Zoroastrians, (updated from 1288 CE).[101] Arash's "heroic" martyrdom is described in the current textbook.

> *Quietly and with wide steps, Arash climbed up the mountain, all the way to the top. At that point, he engaged in prayer and whispered to his God: 'Oh God of the skies, oh creator of mountains and seas, oh, the power who gave us power, help me so I can save the Land of Iran [sarzamin-e Iran] from its enemies . . . Arash kept God's name on his lips and pulled the bow with all his might. The arrow, just like a sharp-winged bird, began to fly. From the morning until midday it flew; over mountains, valleys, and plains it traveled, until it landed on the river bank of the Jayhun [Amu Daria], on the stem of a walnut tree—no other tree in the entire world was larger or taller than that one. That place became the border between Iran and Turan. The people, old and young, climbed up to the top of the mountain. Arash, lifeless, was found lying on a stone slab. Yes, yes, Arash puts his life in the arrow.*[102]

The following story, from a book intended for eleven-year-old children, focuses on the death of a boy their age, Abdullah Ibn Hassan in Karbala:

> *For God's sake, let me go. I want to fight the enemies like my brother Qassem. I want to defend the religion of God. Auntie! I hear the voice of Uncle Hossein calling for help. I want to run and help.*
>
> *Abdollah's begging proved useful and he came close to Imam Hossein. The Imam was wounded, but his face shone like the sun. As the enemies were coming close, Abdollah shouted: 'Oh you, cruel people! Oh you, enemies of God's faith! You want to kill my uncle? No, no, I will never allow that!'*
>
> *One of the enemies raised his sword up ready to bring it down upon the body of Imam Hossein. Abdollah shielded the Imam with his hand. The sword cut his hand off. He then threw himself on Imam Hossein's body, so that the strikes of the enemies would not hit the Imam's body.*
>
> *Abdollah, this self-sacrificing boy, defended the Imam until the last moment, and eventually, was martyred across the chest of Imam Hossein. He is the last child martyr of Karbala.*
>
> *Karbala had many self-sacrificing, brave and daring pre-teens and teenagers. On the day of*

101 Jean Kellens, "Avesta, the Holy Book of the Zoroastrians," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, August 17, 2011. The story is widely believed to form part of Ferdowsi' *Shahnameh* (Book of the Kings), but is probably not originally part of this national epic.

102 *Persian Reading*, Grade 4, 2012–13 (1391), pp.123–124 (Quotation 124).

Ashura, seventy-two brave, self-sacrificing believers became martyrs together with Abdollah to teach us a lesson about freedom, protecting the religion of God and fighting the oppressors. After Karbala, Imam Sajjad and Zeinab [Imam Hossein's son and sister] and all the prisoners disgraced the enemies of God, with their patience, steadfastness and fiery speeches.

Every year in the month of Muharram, we retell the events of Karbala and try to better know Imam Hossein. We try to walk in this way, in order to achieve pride, freedom and salvation.[103]

Hussein Fahmideh: Martyr Child of the Iran-Iraq War.[104]

The curriculum also presents cases of martyrdom and self-sacrifice in the civil domain. Students are encouraged to think about and discuss the topic of sacrifice, which is constantly instilled in them.[105] For example, students fill out forms to provide feedback, answering questions such as: "In what way did I enjoy the lesson on the self-sacrificing ones [*fedakaran*]?"[106]

The students receive much instruction about martyrs from the Iran-Iraq War (1980–88), presented as the "Holy Defense." One famous such martyr is Hossein Fahmideh, the boy who allegedly exploded himself under an Iraqi tank. Some of the most graphic depictions of this martyrdom have been removed from grade 3 (eight-year-olds) Persian textbooks,

103 Ibid., pp.103–105
104 *Persian*, Grade 3, 2016–17 (1395), p. 50.
105 *Teacher's Guide for Persian*, Grade 3, 2013–14 (1392), p. 124.
106 Ibid., p. 129.

but the picture and story remains. And a lesson on "Sacrifice and Altruism,"[107] relating the history of the *Basij*,[108] displays a postage stamp featuring the martyrdom of Hossein Fahmideh. The caption reads: "The Eighth of Aban [October 30], the martyrdom anniversary of the *Basij* school student Hossein Fahmideh, has been declared the School Student *Basij* Day." Then, a question for students: "Why is martyrdom [*shahadat*] the highest form of sacrifice and altruism"?[109]

Of particular significance is the following data seen in a *Defense Readiness* textbook, used by the *Basij* branch of the Revolutionary Guards to train students to fight:

> *During the eight years of Holy Defense [that is, the war with Iraq], more than five hundred thousand school students were sent to the fronts: thirty-six thousand Martyrs, thousands of those missing-in-action, invalids and liberated [prisoners-of-war] of this sacrificing section were offered to the Islamic Revolution.*[110]

According to journalist and foreign policy analyst, Robin Wright, the numbers of dead children are not known, but her eye-witness testimony, from an Iranian offensive aimed at conquering Iraq, confirms the story.

> *During the Fateh offensive [in February 1987], I toured the southwest front on the Iranian side and saw scores of boys, aged anywhere from nine to sixteen, who said with staggering and seemingly genuine enthusiasm that they had volunteered to become martyrs. Regular army troops, the paramilitary Revolutionary Guards and mullahs all lauded these youths, known as basiji, for having played the most dangerous role in breaking through Iraqi lines. They had led the way, running over minefields to clear the ground for the Iranian ground assault. Wearing white headbands to signify the embracing of death and shouting: "Shaheed, shaheed" [Martyr, martyr] they literally blew their way into heaven. Their numbers were never disclosed. But a walk through the residential suburbs of Iranian cities provided a clue. Window after window, block after block, displayed black-bordered photographs of teenage or pre-teen youths.*[111]

Perhaps it is too much to expect, to discern even the slightest inkling of regret for the bloodbath which claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands in such futile offensives. That the curriculum has failed to acknowledge the futility of such pointless human-wave assaults, including so many-sacrificed school children, is clear evidence that there is little introspection from those involved in the creation of the educational program. On the contrary, the curriculum continues to encourage enthusiasm for military participation from the first grade (six-year-olds).

107 Lesson 9: "Sacrifice and Altruism" [*isar va fedakari*], *Social Education*, Grade 5, 2014–15 (1393), pp. 162–164.
108 The *Basij*, The Organization for Mobilization of the Oppressed (*sazman-e basij-e mostaz'afin*) is a paramilitary volunteer militia affiliated with Iran's Revolutionary Guards.
109 Ibid., p. 164.
110 *Defense Readiness*, Grade 11, 2012–13 (1391), p. 11.
111 Robin Wright, Sacred Rage: *The Wrath of Militant Islam*. Berkley and Los Angeles: Simon & Schuster, 2001, p. 37.

Moreover, children are instructed not to obey their parents in matters regarding martyrdom. A seventh grade (age 12) short story follows a teenage volunteer who comes home for military leave. Worried that his mother might not let him return to the battlefield, he pretends that he had returned home for good. But when the time arrives to return to the front, his mother tries to stop him, locks the front yard's gate and insists that six months in the war are enough and others could take over. The boy disobeys his mother and leaves home by jumping over the wall. The story ends with an emotional farewell at the railway station in which the entire family (including his mother) participates and the boy, happily, travels to the battlefront in Ahvaz with his friends.[112]

This heart-wrenching story speaks volumes about the single-minded willingness of Iran's leadership to sacrifice its own children. A more direct call to ignore the parents in *jihad* matters is featured in the Islam textbook for thirteen-year-olds: "Defense of Islam and Muslims is a duty, and does not require parents' approval, even though it is commendable to obtain their consent as well."[113]

Note that the Iraq-Iran War was an intra-Muslim war (though not from the perspective of the "Holy Regime" [*nezam-e moqaddas*] in Tehran).

As mentioned before, the curriculum also features cases of Palestinian martyrdom. In the invented story of Israeli soldiers killing a Palestinian toddler, one now sees the depiction of a slightly less-horrific murder. The 2004 edition reads: "Then the Israeli officer pounded Muhammad's head with his rifle's stock and his warm blood was sprinkled upon Khaled's hands."[114] The newest version relates the following: "At that moment, the Israeli officer martyred him, shooting a bullet from his rifle."[115] Both versions are untrue, but perhaps the shooting is meant to seem less appalling than pounding the toddler's head to death. Thankfully, in examining the new curriculum for 2016–17, we did not find these pictures.

Against this background of child martyrdom, a comparatively new Persian reading book within the curriculum implausibly features elements from The United Nations Convention protecting the "Rights of the Child."[116] "In times of war or during a flood, earthquake or other natural disaster, children are clearly the most vulnerable—they are not equipped to cope with such suffering and difficulties."[117] So, in place of seeing children as canon-fodder, are we perhaps starting to see *some* interest in their well-being?

112 Mohammad Reza-Kateb, "A Leave," *Persian*, Grade 7, 2016–17 (1395), pp. 126–131.
113 *Religious Rulings*, Grade 11, 2012–13 (1391), p.14.
114 *Persian Let's Read*, Grade 3 (2004), pp. 112–113. Translation, of the above quotation, from Groiss and Toobian, *The Attitude*, pp. 190–192.
115 *Persian Reading*, Grade 3, 2012-13 (1391), pp. 133–135.
116 Lesson 4: "Children have the Right to . . ." [*kudakan haq darand keh*], *Persian Reading*, Grade 4, 2012–13 (1391), pp. 22–26.
117 Ibid., pp. 22–23.

Beyond these hoped-for changes, there are underlying signs that most policies remain in place. While Iran enthusiastically supports organizations such as the Palestinian Hamas, support for their strategy of sustained civilian casualties (as a means of deterrence and soliciting sympathy) was not apparent in the examined Iranian curriculum. In a lesson on passive defense, one finds this: "Avoid establishing high-risk installations in population centers and remove such installations outside the cities."[118] Yet, when it comes to Iran's nuclear installations, such prohibitions are evidently not applied. Experts identify Tehran, Isfahan, Natanz, Bushehr, and Arak as sites exposing local populations to significant dangers.[119] Indeed, as discussed earlier, until recently, Iranian students were being prepared for a nuclear war (along with biological and chemical warfare)[120]. The reason behind the recent removal of nuclear warfare preparedness from the text is not clear. The fact remains that this subject had been taught for many years—reflecting the assumption that a nuclear war or disaster was imminent.

Finally, despite an apparent (though minor) toning-down of references to death and hate, sadly, this philosophy still forms a central motif in the curriculum. Education for militarism begins in the first grade and children are still taught to be ready to sacrifice their lives against evil enemies lurking and scheming against Iran. And one-sided anti-Semitic and anti-Western education continues, unabated.

118 *Defense Readiness*, Grade 11, 1393 (2014–15), p. 54.
119 "Potential Hazards of Iranian Nuclear Facilities," in *An Overview of Nuclear Facilities In Iran, Israel and Turkey: A Greenpeace Briefing*. Amsterdam: February 2007, pp. 8–12. Khosrow B. Semnani, *The Ayatollah's Nuclear Gamble: The Human Cost of Military Strikes Against Iran's Nuclear Facilities*, Hinckley Institute of Politics, Univ. of Utah, 2012.
120 *Defense Readiness*, Grade 11, 2012–13 (1391), pp. 22–47.

"Student *Basij*": Iranian Children Preparing for Martyrdom, Social Studies, Grade 5, 2014–15 (1393), p. 143.

War Education from First Grade: Allah Akbar on Flags, Hezbollah Colors and Military Details. *Persian*, Grade 1, 2016-17, p. 45.

Children as Soldiers: "Look at the pictures and present them in a show." *Persian Reading*, Grade 6, 2012–13 (1391), p. 53.

5. Sources of Imperial Fascination: Aryan Roots, Global Islam and Third-Worldism

Where are all these mental war preparations heading? Who are the Iranians and what is their role in the world? Is Iran Shiite, Islamic or Iranian-nationalist? The collective identity reflected in the textbooks is manifold and its various elements are expressed across the curriculum. Hence, nationalist and political thinking finds its way into religious books alongside technology, methods of organization and the encouragement of many aspects of rationalist modern thought. Mystical and religious identity can also be found in Persian literature books, which are often excerpted or referenced in the texts. Maps of Iran typically include the waters of the Caspian Sea, the Gulf and the Indian Ocean; they are often ornamented with red tulips representing the martyrs who died defending the homeland.[121] Additionally, the Iranian homeland has a long history as an empire or as part of large empires in which Iranians were the dominant ethnic group. Memory of (and fascination with) past empires, is cherished within Iranian culture.

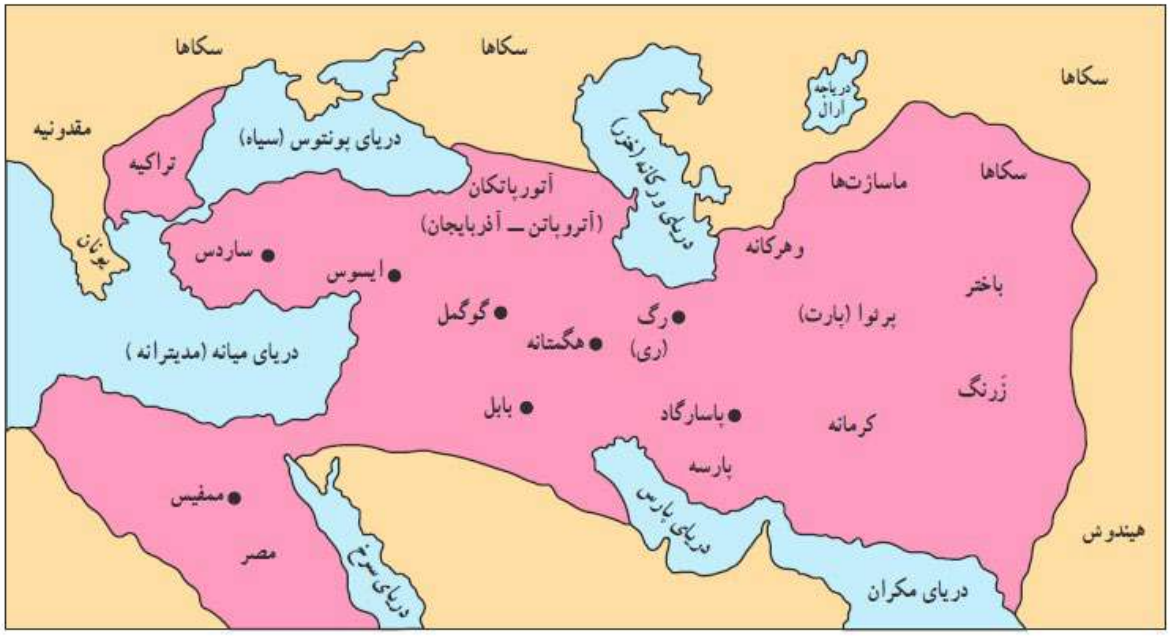
An important section of a new social studies book is dedicated to the "Formation of the Great Empires in Ancient Iran."[122] The title of the first lesson in this section reads: "The Aryans Created Powerful Governments in Iran."[123] The text also points out that various peoples lived in parts of Iran "thousands of years ago," but the story in the text begins four thousand years ago, according to some historians, when nomadic tribes known as Aryans gradually migrated into "the land of Iran" [*sarzamin-e iran*] from an area north of the Caspian Sea. "The three great Aryan peoples were the Medians, Parthians and Persians."[124] Students learn that the Aryans not only created powerful governments and developed an advanced civilization, but also built an empire containing most of the important countries of that time: "For this reason, one can remember the Achaemenid government as the first-ever global empire."[125] While these empires existed in the past, connections are made to current geography: "He [Cyrus the Great] attacked Babylon [today's Iraq] and Lydia [today's Turkey] and the Kingdom of Iran extended from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean."[126] These empires were big and powerful, much more so than the Islamic Republic. With a hint to Iran's Revolutionary Guards, the text speaks about Darius' "Army of Immortals," serving in what was "the greatest wish of Persian youth [*javanan-e parsi*]."[127]

121 *Persian Reading*, Grade 2, 2012 (2013–14), p. 85. Maps became a national symbol in the nineteenth century: Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, "Picturing the Homeland: Geography and National Identity in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Iran," Journal of Historical Geography, 24, 4 (1998), pp. 413–43
122 *Social Studies (Civil, Geography, History)*, Grade 7, 2016–17 (1395), p. 115.
123 Ibid., p. 116.
124 Ibid. Persian: three great Aryan peoples (*seh qom-e bozorg-e arya'i*); Medians, Parthians and Persians (*madha, partha va parsha*).
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
127 Ibid., p. 126.

Fifth graders thus learn that Iran was once the strongest country on earth.

> *Two-hundred years elapsed since Cyrus had founded the Achaemenid Dynasty. Two-hundred years since our country had been considered the mightiest country in the world. Persepolis, with its stunning grandeur and glory, was the ruling center of this wide territory.*[128]

Let us fast-forward to the Safavid Dynasty (1501–1722). The Safavids, led by "mystic" warriors, formed "the last Iranian Empire, about 1.5 times larger than present-day Iran."[129] (Interestingly, this sentence does not show in the 2016–17 edition of the Ardabil Province textbook: see discussion on Azerbaijan at the end of section 5). In the next section, we will see how Azeri-Turkish-speaking Azerbaijan—serving as the Safavid center throughout the sixteenth century—is also considered Aryan.



قلمرو حکومت هخامنشی در دوره‌ی داریوش اوّل

The Realm of the Achaemenids during the Reign of Darius I[130]

128 *Persian Reading*, Grade 5, 2014–15 (1393), p. 130.
129 *Province Studies: Ardabil* (Experimental Edition), 2012–13 (1391), p. 74.
130 *History of Iran and the World*, Vol. 2, Grade 11, 2012–13 (1391), p. 55.

Queen of Sheba
(Royal/Imperial imagery can be found interspersed with religious symbolism.)[131]

Imperial Imagination: Double-page Trade Map.[132]

131 *Qu'ran Learning*, Grade 1, 2010–11 (1389), pp. 32–33. Image of Iranian emperors: *Social Studies*, Grade 4, 2016–17, pp. 55, 77

132 *Social Studies*, Grade 7, 2015–16 (1395), pp. 136–7.

راستی چه پیشنهاد دشواری اگر یک تیر چه قدر پرتاب می شود؟ کدام تیرانداز این کار
بزرگ را انجام خواهد داد؟
آرش کمان گیر، تیرانداز ماهر ایرانی،
خود را برای پرتاب این
تیر آماده کرد. همه نگران و
منتظر، پای کوه بلند دماوند
ایستاده بودند. مادران دعا
می کردند؛ پیرمردها اشک
می ریختند؛ کودکان، با بی تابی،
آرش کمان گیر را که با قامتی رشید و
استوار پای کوه ایستاده بود، نگاه
می کردند.
آرش با قدم های محکم از کوه بالا رفت.
بالای تخته سنگ بزرگی ایستاد؛
بازوان و تن نیرومند خود

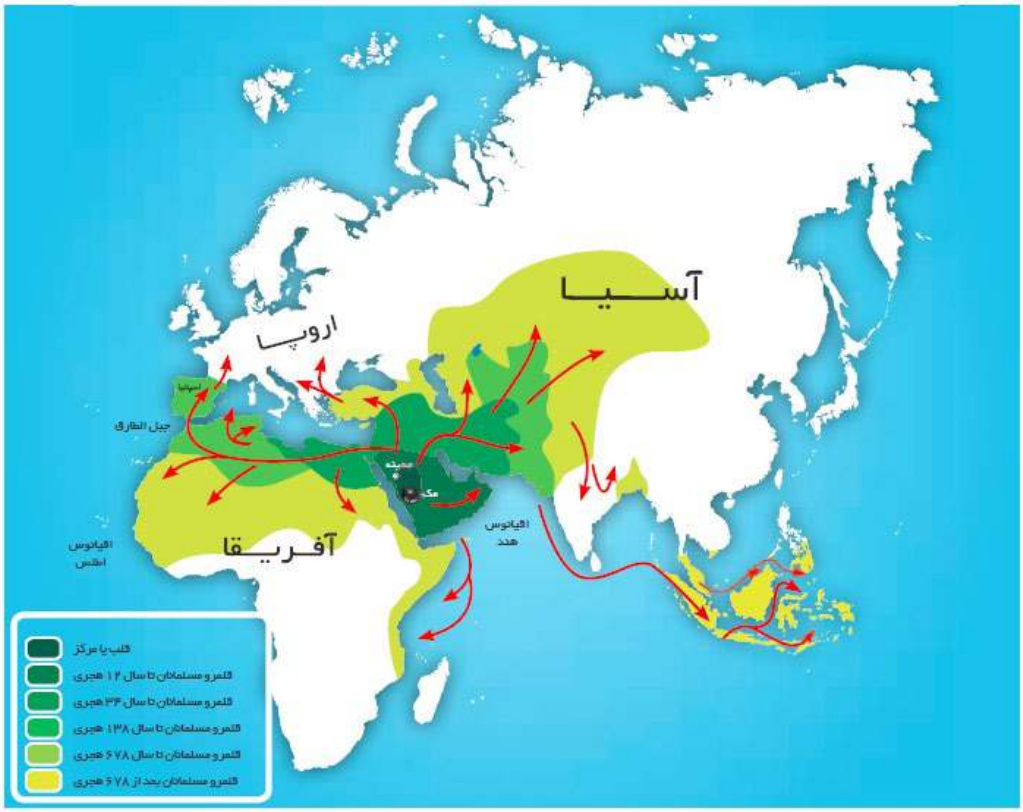
Mythological Martyrdom: Arash the Archer.[133]

Military Training
(The curriculum includes disassembly, reassembly and firing of assault rifles.)[134]

133 *Persian Reading*, Grade 4, 2012–13 (1391), pp. 123–124. [The 2016–17 edition has a less dramatic picture so we preferred to show this one.]
134 *Defense Readiness*, Grade 11, 2014–15 (1393), p. 90.

Ancient Roots: Making Offerings for Nowruz (New Year) in Persepolis. Ancient Zoroastrian Fire Temples. Historical and imperial Influences before Islam.[135]

135 *Social Studies*, Grade 7, 2016–17 (1395), p. 146.



نقشه‌ی قلمرو و متصرفات اسلامی در دوره‌های مختلف

"Realm and Possessions of Islam in Various Periods."[136] (Note the dynamism of the graphic, expressed by the red colors of the arrows and the nationalistic dimension expressed through the tricolor red-green-white of the Iranian flag on shown throughout the continental areas. Green is also considered to be a symbolic color of Islam.)

Existing more than two thousand years ago, the Parthian Dynasty (247 BCE–224 CE) is also described in the curriculum as an Aryan tribe that succeeded in vanquishing the Seleucid-Hellenists, who had established themselves in Iran and other areas of the region, following Alexander's conquests and subsequent death. The Sassanian Dynasty attacked and was later destroyed by "the Arab-Muslims," but it did not carry the Aryan "pedigree."

Consider that the association with the primordial-essentialist Iranian identity (*iraniyyat*) was never fully removed from the curriculum, even during Iran's "Cultural Revolution" and the height of Islamist fervor in the 1980s.[137] Nevertheless, the emergence of Aryan-Persian imperialist reveries in Iranian schools is significant and goes hand in hand with an intensifying public discourse dating back at least to the rise of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in

136 *Social Studies*, Grade 6, 2016–17 (1395), p. 47.
137 Haggay Ram, "The Immemorial Iranian nation? School Textbooks and Historical Memory in Post-Revolutionary Iran," *Nations and Nationalism*, 6 (I), 2000, pp. 67–90 (particularly 71–72). Nevertheless, the current research demonstrates that recent years brought an intensification of this identity indicator.

2005 and continuing to the present time.[138] The issue of Iran's imperial past often rises in the context of territorial disputes. Here is a historical claim expressed by Iran in the context of a territorial dispute with the United Arab Emirates as the "Islands of Great Iran":

> *From the time Cyrus the Great created a world empire twenty-five hundred years ago, the Iranians continuously governed a sizeable part of the world, until the advent of Islam in Iran. Only during the last two hundred years or so, has Iran lost its imperial glow.*[139]

The following excerpts from an article by the secretary-general of the Hezbollah-Iran organization, Ayatollah Mohammad Baqer Kharrazi, constitute a fine example of the tight connection between the nationalist-imperial education and Iran's Islamist-imperial strategy.

> *Whether you are Arab, Azeri, Kurd, Baluchi, Luri, Turkmen, Persian, Tajik, Caucasian, Afghan, or anything else [is of no significance]. None of these [in themselves] are considered Iranian, because Iran is the sum total of the above-mentioned peoples. The [nation-]states of the above peoples, which today border Iran, are actually territory that was severed from the state [that is, from Greater Iran]—a separation that was the result of a scheme by the other religions or by the historical plunderers due to the weakness of Iran's rulers at that time . . .*

> *[The Iranian nation] must defray the costs of the wars being fought by the Iranian nation of Lebanon and by the Iranian nation of Palestine—[since these nations] lived under Iranian rule centuries ago . . . Of course [these peoples in Lebanon and Palestine], must know that they are not considered [fully] Iranian, but that their peoples' identification with Iran [is based on their once having been] part of Greater Iran. Thus they were once defined, and thus they must [continue] to be defined.*[140]

Thus, the Lebanese and Palestinian Arabs are Iranians in the sense that they are part of the past and future "Greater Iran." Kharrazi, having close family ties with Iran's Supreme Leader, also stresses the superiority of Persians over Arabs—making the former more deserving to lead the Islamic empire as it paves the way for the coming of the Mahdi.

138 "Iran's Presidential Advisor: 'All of the Middle East is Iranian,'" *The Iran Project*, March 10, 2015, http://theiranproject.com/blog/2015/03/10/irans-presidential-advisor-all-of-the-middle-east-is-iranian/. "Ali Younesi: Our Borders are Artificial and Iran's Cultural Influence is Larger than the Borders" [*marzha-ye ma masnu'i ast va nufuz-e farhangi-ye iran bozorgtar as in narzha*], Mehr News, March 9, 2015, www.mehrnews.com/news/2514391/مرزهای-ما-مصنوعی-است-و-نفوذ-فرهنگی-ایران-بزرگتر-از-این-مرزهاست "His Eminence the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution: Persepolis is a Source of National Iranian Pride" [*rahbar-e mo'azzam-e enqelab-e eslami: takht-e jamshid mayeh-ye eftekhar-e mellat-e iran ast*], *Aftab News*, May 7, 2010, http://aftabnews.ir/vdcaown0.49nmw15kk4.html. Ebrahim Fayyaz, "Historiography of the Iranian Superpower" [*tarikhshneasi-ye abrqodrati-ye iran*], May 9, 2009, *Ebrahim Fayyaz Blog*, ebrahimfayyaz.parsiblog.com/Posts/49/تاریخ+شناسی+ابرقدرتی+ایران/.

139 Gheysar Kalali, "The Islands of Greater Iran and UAE's Claim" [*jazayer-e iran-e bozorg va edde'a-ye emarat*], *E'tamad*, May 31, 2008, p. 2, http://www.magiran.com/npview.asp?ID=1631649

140 "The Iranian Supremacy Manifesto of 'Greater Iran': Hezbollah-Iran Secretary-General Lays out Plan, Strategy for Reestablishing 'Greater Iran' as Prelude to Establishment of Global Government Led by the Mahdi," *MEMRI*, Special Dispatch No. 3021, June 10, 2010, http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/0/4358.htm.

Iranian textbooks demonstrate indeed that Iran's collective identity is both pan-Islamic and "imperial," which accommodates the notion that Shiites in general and Iranians particularly, are manifestly destined to lead this multi-national Islamic collective toward implementing the one true program, under the leadership of the One Supreme Leader. Students are educated to be responsible for the Islamic Nation, A 2013–14 social studies text reads: "In addition to my country, I am responsible toward the Muslims of the World, 'The Islamic Nation' [*ommat-e eslami*]."[141] The new edition of the textbook, however, does not include this sentence, but rather dozens of pages about the Islamic civilization and the role of Islam in Iran.[142] It is hard to assess the significance of this change. Across the curriculum one sees a special emphasis on accomplishments made throughout the Islamic civilization, typically shedding light on the contributions of Iranian scholars through the ages. Terms such as the land of Islam (*sarzamin-e eslam*), the flag of Islam and Islamic Awakening are also common.

An Arabic language book offers the following description: ". . . while the Muslim civilization was shining in Al-Andalus (Spain), during the third and fourth centuries of the *Hijra* [816–909 CE], Europe was still immersed in barbarism." The Europeans went to the Muslims to learn as they could find no other "lamp to light their way."[143] Thus, the introduction to a pre-university geography textbook includes: "in the formation of the science of geography, one should not forget the role and place of the Muslim geographer."[144] The text goes on to mention the contributions of various Persian and Arab individuals to Islamic civilization. The ethnic origin of each scholar does not show in the school textbook. Yet the joint Islamic, Persian-Arab—and (one dare also say) Shiite-Sunnite—heritage is evident.[145] The book also gives credit, however, to Babylonian and Ancient Egyptian maps as well as to the Greek cartographer, Ptolemy. Also mentioned are legendary/mythological figures such as the Iranian pre-Islamic King Kaykavus who traveled in the sky carried by four eagles, seeking a clearer view of the earth and Icarus, the Greek who flew too close to the sun in his wings made of feathers and wax.[146]

The Iranian curriculum depicts Arab-Sunnis and religious minorities as part of Iran's global-Islamic mission—not as enemies. Indeed, a major finding of this report (first published

141 *Social Studies*, Grade 7, 2013–14 (1392), p. 8.
142 *Social Studies*, Grade 7, 2016–17 (1395), passim.
143 *Arabic 1 and 2*, Pre-University, 2012–13 (1391), p. 34.
144 *Geography*, Pre-University, 2012–13 (1391), p. 1.
145 Ibid. Al-Khwarizmi (Persian); the translations from the Greek of Al-Kindi (Arab); and the Dictionary of Countries (*mu'jam al buldan*) by Yaqut Hamawi (Greek-Arab). Among the other Iranian and Arab geographers one should mention Ibn Hauqal (Arab), Ibn Balkhi (Persian), Estakhari (Persian), Maqdisi (Arab), Abu Rihan Al-Biruni (Persian), Al-Idrisi (Arab), Hamd-Allah Mostawfi (Persian, from Arab origin), and Al-Ma'sudi (Arab).
146 Ibid., pp. 33–34, 78–79.

in May 2015) is that traditional Shiite antipathy of Sunnism has softened by shifting hostility toward the West and Israel. The Sunnis are considered to be fully legitimate Muslims—significant elements of the "true program"—even as anti-Shiite historical Sunni figures are criticized in those historical contexts.[147] So we have the "Islamic Revolution" and "Islamic Republic," but not "Shiite," "Imami," "Ja'fari," "Husseini" or "Alawi" revolutions. In contrast to this, Shiite concepts and famous characters remain at the center of the ideology.

> *The teacher of our Ashura uprising, Holy Imam Hossein the father of Abdollah, is the one, who, with the sacrifice of his soul and the souls of his friends and relatives, have created an eternal epic, an epic that gives hope to the free souls and hearts of this world, enduring and alive, even those having limited power and facilities.*[148]

The message here is ostensibly universal and directed to the "free of the world," but the paradigm is Shiite, expressing the martyrdom of Karbala. From an elementary age onward, Iranian Shiites are taught to love the family of the Prophet—along with Arab dress, customs and the environment of the "Holy Family"—celebrating the birthday of the Prophet with stories about the "Compassionate Family" and the "Prophet's Family," "The Best Friend" [Hassan bin Ali]—all are part of the religious framework.[149] Obviously, learning to pray is conducted according to the Shiite way.[150] Actually the term "Shiite" is rarely used. So, in the sentence, "Our first Imam was born Rajab 13," there is no Shiite reference.[151] In higher grades, we found, "the authentic thought of the true Islam—i.e., Shiism" together with criticism of the Umayyads and Abbasids—without mentioning directly that these dynasties had been Sunnite.[152]

147 This finding is supported by a 2009 poll showing that 71 percent of Iranians view Sunni Muslims favorably, while only 8 percent see them unfavorably (note that 5–10 percent of Iranians are Sunnis). New America Foundation and Terror Free Tomorrow (TFT), *Results of a New Nationwide Public Opinion Survey of Iran before the June 12, 2009 Presidential Elections*, May 2009, p. 19. For a similar conclusion: Shervin Malekzadeh, "What Iran's Textbooks can Teach us about Sectarianism and Ancient Hatreds," *The Washington Post*, January 25, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/01/25/how-irans-view-of-sectarianism-has-evolved-since-its-revolution/. For other opinions: Wilfried Buchta, *Die iranische Schia und die islamische Einheit*, 1979–1996. Hamburg: Deutsches Orient-Institut, 1997. Emmanuel Sivan, "Sunni Radicalism in the Middle East and the Iranian Revolution," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 21, No. 1 (1989), pp. 1–30. Gil Aloni, *Revolutionary Messages in Elementary School Textbooks in Iran.* Jerusalem: The Hebrew University/The Truman Institute (Gitelson Peace Publication #21), May 2002.

148 *Defense Readiness*: Teacher's Guide, Grade 9, 2013–4 (1392), p. v. On the Karbalah paradigm see: Marry Hegland, "Two Images of Husain: Accommodation and Politics in Iran," *in Religion and Politics in Iran: Sh'ism from Quietism to Revolution*, edited by Nikki R. Keddie. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983, pp. 218–235. Kamran Scot Aghaie, *The Martyrs of Karbala: Shi'i Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004. On usages of that paradigm during the Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War, see: Peter J. Chelkowski and Hamid Dabashi, *Staging A Revolution: The Art of Persuasion in the Islamic Republic of Iran*. London: Booth-Clibborn Editions, 1999. On the use of the paradigm in reverse, but freedom seekers in Iran, following the bloody crush of the 2009 post-election protests: Reza Deghati, *Neda of Ashura*, December 2009, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mv9e-hsW6PN8]. See also: martyrdom story of Abdullah Ibn Hassan above.

149 *Heaven's Presents*, Grade 2, 2012–13 (1391), P. 46–7, 50, 64–67.

150 Ibid., 28-33, 54–57, 59.

151 Ibid., p. 60.

152 *Religion and Life, Grade* 12, 2016–17 (1395), pp. 103. Persian: the authentic thought of the true Islam (*tafakkor-e asil-e eslam-e rastin*).

While the curriculum avoids attacking Sunni Muslims directly and criticizes only specific Sunni individuals without describing them as Sunnis, when it comes to Christians, Jews and other considered infidels such as Baha'is—the criticism is direct and unequivocal. Shia-Sunni unity is considered to be a first priority, despite the belief by Iranian clerics that Shiism is "right."

> *Recognizing the role of Shiism in Islamic history and explaining its rightfulness [or truth, haqqaniyyat], historically and theoretically, should not keep us unaware of an important and critical issue: preserving Islamic unity and striving for the pride, dignity, independence and protection of its interests. Myriad common beliefs—such as the belief in God, the Messenger, the Qur'an and Resurrection—constitute the underlying unity among us, as Muslims. Therefore, keeping and strengthening Shiite-Sunni unity and the struggle against their divisive causes and designs, forms one of the pillars of the strategy of the Islamic Revolution that requires wisdom and vigilance of us all.*[153]

The passage is followed by a quotation in a similar vein from Khomeini calling for struggle against the West and "Westoxication" [*gharbzadegi*].[154] The textbook then blames converted Jews and Christians—particularly the Jewish convert Ka'b al-Ahbar—for marginalizing the role of the Imams by spreading wrong interpretations while altering traditions in the service of the Umayyads and Abbasids.[155] While the Sunni Muslim world is naturally suspicious of Iran's ecumenical position, the fact that Iranians teach their children the value of uniting Islam against the West, suggests to the observer that this call is genuine. And though the internal goals of Iran's leaders continue to include an Aryan-Iranian-Shiite hegemony over the Sunni Arabs, it does not include enmity toward them. As has been shown, methods for tempering animosity toward Sunnis currently include blaming the West for any anti-Shiite sentiments from the Sunni population.

Generally speaking, the spirit of protest that so characterizes Shiism, combines easily with Iranian traditions of populism;[156] this allows the curriculum to embrace the non-Western world as dispossessed and oppressed peoples. Thus, the global program is not intended for Muslims alone but aims to protect what it defines as "all" the oppressed,

153 Ibid., p. 81.

154 "Westoxication" [*gharbzadegi*], translated also as "Weststruckedness," or the "Plague from the West, Occidentosis," is a term that became popularized in Iran by Jalal Al-e Ahmad since the early 1960s, suggesting that Iranians had been unduly overwhelmed by Western culture and should look for an authentic alternative in which could also include elements from the West. Popular with Khomeini and others, the term became a battle cry for an anti-Western either-or approach, labelled as Nativism, or Orientalism in Reverse by Boroujerdi Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Gharbzadegi* (*Weststruckness*), translated by John Green and Ahmad Alizadeh. Lexington, KY: Mazda, 1982. Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996.

155 *Religion and Life*, Grade 12, 2014-15 (1393), p. 90

156 Manochehr Dorraj, *From Zarathustra to Khomeini: Populism and Dissent in Iran*. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990.

including "recognized" religious minorities—but excluding those considered to be secular-democratic, atheists and members of animist or new religions like the Baha'i, who are seen as an artificial creation of world colonialism.[157] Interestingly, the disavowal of Baha'ism is not supported by the classic Islamic argument that Mohammad is the "Seal of the Prophets," but rather from a Third-Worldist, anti-colonialist perspective. There can be little doubt that Iranian Khomeinism clearly has a pronounced Third-Worldist agenda.[158] As mentioned elsewhere in this paper, the description of Khomeini in a new fifth grade religious textbook as the "greatest man in history" should be understood against this background.[159]

Following this line, the introduction to a teacher's guide for the text, *Defense Readiness*, explains that the Islamic Revolution has been a turning point in the history of the country but also serves as "a model for all free loving and believing nations in the world."[160] In a Persian literature book covering "Resistance Literature" [*adabiyyat-e paydari*], one can find an abridged version of the 1952 short story *Gileh Mard* (The Man from Gilan), by the late Iranian communist author Bozorg Alavi (1904–1997).[161] It also includes an excerpt from American writer Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 *Uncle Tom's Cabin*;[162] Chilean communist poet Pablo Neruda's 1973 poem "To You I Call";[163] poems by Palestinian writer and scholar Jabra Ibrahim Jabra; and communist-nationalist poet Mahmoud Darwish.[164]

Iran's Third Wordlist identity—as reflected in the textbooks—remains an innate part of the country's character and policies, as evidenced in the following declaration by President Hassan Rouhani: "The government and Foreign Ministry of Iran, as a revolutionary country and head of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), will support the defenseless [Palestinian] people with all its might."[165]

The significance of accepting Sunnis and Third-Worldists as partners in the new global Islam cannot be underestimated. Alliances and collaborations initiated by Iran should be understood as embodying true and deep ideological commitment, not just pragmatic considerations, as some observers wrongly believe. As such, Iranian collaboration with radical Sunni groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas and elements of Al-Qaeda—as well as populist-secular regimes in Venezuela and Syria—are natural ideological fits. And beyond such partnerships, Iran also promotes alliances based on a calcu-

157 *History*, Grade 9, 2013–14 (1392), p. 43.
158 The first scholar to observe the Third Worldist dimension of the Iranian Revolution was probably Nikki R. Keddie: "Islamic Revival as Third Worldism," in *Le Cuisinier et le Philosophe: Hommage a Maxime Rodinson*, ed. J. P. Digard, Maisonneuve et Larose. Paris: 1982, pp. 275–281. This chapter also features in her *Iran and the Middle East: Resistance and Revolution*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995.
159 *Heaven's Presents*, Grade 5, 2016–17 (1395), p. 94.
160 *Defense Readiness*: Teacher's Guide, Grade 9, 2013–14 (1392), p. v.
161 *Persian Literature*, Grade 11, Vol. 2, 2012–13 (1391), pp. 43–53.
162 Ibid., pp. 65–71.
163 Ibid., p. 72. The poem "To You I Call" [Spanish: *A ti te llamo*, Persian: *to ra mi khanam*]was picked from Neruda's last collection *Incitación al nixonicidio y alabanza de la revolución chilena* [1972–1973], (Incitement to Nixonicide and Praise for the Chilean Revolution) translated to the Persian by American Iranians Faramarz Soleimani and Ahmad Karimi Hakkak.
164 Ibid., pp. 74–77
165 *Press TV,* July 22, 2014 [http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2014/07/20/372114/iran-will-back-palestinians-with-all-might/].

lation of interests that do not reflect natural affinities.[166]

What makes things complicated and elusive for students is the element of dissimulation that the curriculum tries to implant in them. Young students are taught that it is right to deceive one's enemies. A *Defense Readiness* text teaches students: "to keep the principles and rules of passive defense, such as: choosing safe places, spreading out, retrofitting and fortification, camouflage, concealment or misleading the enemy [*farib-e doshman*] . . ."[167] Another example is: "The Preparations of the Prophet in the Migration [*Hijrah*] from Mecca to Medina." The text explains the four steps taken by the Prophet Muhammad in order to mislead his opponents in the city of Mecca. These included sending his followers away before him; Imam Ali sleeping in the place of the Prophet in order to "mislead the enemies" [*farib dadan-e doshmanan*]; the Prophet exiting the city southbound, instead of northbound towards Medina and hiding in a cave; and finally, his taking a detour to Medina through rugged terrain.[168]

Dissimulation and concealment (*taqiyeh*) are prevalent in Shiite Islam, as taught in the curriculum. A religion textbook explains that the great Imams used two methods to fight against illegitimate rulers. The first was that the Imams would lead uprisings against the usurper rulers. If uprisings were not possible, they chose one or more of the following: "(1) No support for the rulers; (2) announcing oneself as the rightful Imam; (3) spreading awareness among the people; and (4) choosing the right way to fight."[169] The latter is explained as follows:

> *The Imams chose the ways of fighting with the rulers according to the conditions of the time in such a manner that will allow both the preservation of the authentic thought of true Islam—i.e., Shiism—and also, gradually, to weaken the structure of oppression and injustice created by the Umayyads and the Abbasids. At the same time, to pass on to the next generations the way of life of the Imams, as the true Islam.*
>
> *They tried to advance those parts of their actions and fighting to which the enemy was sensitive, in the framework of 'taqiyeh.' This means to keep their actions hidden, so that while they hit the enemy, they would sustain less impact from the enemy's attack. Amid these situations, there was communication between the Imams and their friends in various places across the Land of Islam [sarzamin-e eslam]. By keeping communications secret, our Imams stopped the rulers of the*

166 One such example is the Iranian-Russian collaboration that is often shrouded with suspicion and mistrust, but has nevertheless yielded substantial achievements for Iranian policymakers over the years (such as with nuclear negotiations and saving Syria's Assad regime).
167 *Defense Readiness*, Grade 11, 2014–15 (1393), p. 54.
168 Ibid, p. 52.
169 Persian: *shiveh-haye dorost-e mobarezeh*.

> *Umayyads and the Abbasids from identifying these close, reliable and self-sacrificing [fedakar] friends and rendering them martyrs.*[170]

Iranian students also learn about the treaty of the Shiite Imam Hassan with his enemy, Mu'awiyyah, intending only to gain time, build power and gradually undermine rival dynasties—but never genuinely reconciling.[171]

> *Imam Hassan too, just like his grandfather [Prophet Muhammad] issued the order of jihad against Mu'awiyyah. Spending large sums of money, Mu'awiyyah succeeded in dissuading most of the commanders in the Imam's army from fighting against him; using various kinds of tricks and ruses, he managed to convince the people to support him. The Imam, after weighing the situation—against his own inclination—finally deemed it advisable to abandon the war and sign a peace treaty with Mu'awiyyah.*[172]

This instrumental peace lasted until the uprising and martyrdom of Imam Hussein, Hassan's brother and has served as the Islamic Republic's model since its inception.

> *But when Yazid reached the throne, the Imam changed his methods to adapt to the new conditions, while deciding not to give his vow of allegiance [bay'ah] to Yazid, and revolted against him.*[173]

Worth noting, is that the Hassan pattern of instrumental peace with the enemy was also used by Iran's Supreme Leader Khamenei, as justification for his country's engagement in nuclear negotiations with the American "enemy." Quoting a book he translated, based on Imam Hassan's tactics, Khamenei defined this as, "Heroic Flexibility" [*narmesh-e qahramananeh*].[174] Thereafter, Khamenei's type of *taqiyeh*, while referring to ancient Shiite-Sunni clashes, resembles the general Islamic (Sunni and Shiite) version of *taqiyeh* to be directed against non-Muslims in the eternal war to spread Islam.[175]

It is also true that issues with Christianity and Judaism are another focus in the curriculum—among them allegations that they falsified their holy texts. Animosity toward the largely Western, Christian colonialism is underscored, as is loathing toward a Jewish Israel. As previously stated, there is a general denial of the Holocaust while blaming European colonial competition and racism for the horrors of

170 *Religion and Life*, Grade 12, 2016–17 (1395), pp. 103–4. Shiite scholars had various views on the practice of *taqiyeh* through the ages and the practice, "while widespread and well known, by no means excluded other, often contrasting, forms of behavior." Etan Kohlberg, "Some Imami-Shii Views on Taqiyya," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 95. No. 3 (1975), pp. 395–402, quotation: p. 402.
171 *Religion and Life*, Grade 12, 2016–17 (1395), p. 104.
172 Ibid., pp. 103–4.
173 Ibid.
174 "Heroic Flexibility: Subtle Hint by the Leader to the 'Peace of Imam Hassan,'" *Asr-Iran*, August 30, 2013, www.asriran.com/fa/news/296106/شرمن-قرارداد-امام-حسن-صلح-با-معاویه-ظریف-انعطاف-قهرمانانه. Eldad J. Pardo, "Is Fundamental Change Possible in Iran"? *The Jerusalem Report*, October 21, 2013.
175 Raymond Ibrahim, "How Taqiyya Alters Islam's Rules of War: Defeating Jihadist Terrorism," *Middle East Quarterly,* Winter 2010, pp. 3–13.

WWII—in particular the unleashing of nuclear bombs.[176] And while criticism of some Sunni individuals and dynasties from the past continues to be taught, with Shiism presented as the purest form of Islam, this must be seen as part of a whole. Students are educated to love the Sunnis as fellow Muslims—albeit not as fully equal—and even to include traditional minority religions as part of the divine camp.[177] Special schoolbooks for minorities ascertain that all share the fundamentals of the Khomeinist religious outlook.[178]

A consequence of such "openness" is that, despite the narrowness of its focus, the ideology being implanted in Iran's young minds is flexible and modular. There is the belief that Iran, representing all that is good, pure and divine, can bring into the fold almost every group on earth. It is true that the textbooks argue that Islam is the only true "program for life;" that Iranians have an outstanding Persian culture with Aryan roots;[179] that they hold on to Shiism over other forms of Islam because it is the right way; that they blame Jews and Christians over falsifying their own holy texts and rejecting the Prophet Mohammad; that they believe Israel is beyond repair; and that they are conducting a cataclysmic struggle against the Western democratic and colonialist-permissive culture.

In an equally narrow sense, Iranian ideology, as reflected in the textbooks, is ready-made for empire-building. While by no means egalitarian, it has the appearance of being inclusive. Though Persian (Aryan)-Shiite males will always remain the hegemons, many others are permitted to form part of the system. As will be elaborated, a Baha'i, a gay person, an atheist or an Israeli would likely never be accepted in any current or future empire; but a Zoroastrian, a Shiite woman, a Sunni man or a Christian Lebanese could theoretically become a part of the future Iranian world order. The Iranian ideology appears to be rather flexible in this way, incorporating multi-ethnic and multi-religious aspects, while casting—at least in theory—a wide net to include "oppressed and innocent people" everywhere.[180]

In sum, Iranian students look to the past and see the (Aryan) "Kingdom of Iran extending from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean." They are proud because the Iranian-Achaemenid Empire is considered to have been "the first global empire." They believe, as students everywhere do, that empires are exciting (just look to the plethora of empire-based video games); as they look to the present, they see fellow Iranians supporting "the oppressed peoples of Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon and Afghanistan." Regarding the future, they learn about Iran's "New Islamic Civilization (NIC)" and its "Full Life Program," which as the curriculum proclaims: "humanity is now ready to receive." While keeping its Aryan-Shiite

176 *Iran and World History*, Vol. 2, Grade 9, 2012–13 (1391), pp. 88–89.
177 *Religion and Life*, Grade 12, 2014–15 (1393), p. 81.
178 *Divine Religions Studies and Morals for Religious Minorities (Jewish, Zoroastrian and Christian)*, Vol. 1, Grade 10, 2012.
179 *Province Studies: Ardabil* (Experimental Edition), 2012–13 (1391), p. 88.
180 *Religion and Life*, Grade 12, 2014–15 (1393), p. 120, 140.

framework, the new global civilization is modular—inviting into the fold Sunni Muslims, monotheists, Third Worldists and other so-called oppressed peoples (with some notable exceptions). Equipped with their "infallible and trustworthy Leader," Iranian students are expected to propagate the message worldwide and defend themselves from cultural invasions from abroad. They know now that a *jihad* war—requiring martyrdom on a mass scale and for which they have been trained from the first grade—could be launched as part of "an attack on countries ruled by oppressive governments." The attack should, nevertheless, be considered a defensive *jihad* because any "defense of oppressed and innocent people is just like defending oneself." Meanwhile, Iranian students are trained in the art and tradition of "dissimulation" [*taqiyeh*] and of "misleading the enemy." They know that the world is experiencing a major struggle between the powers of good and the powers of evil. And they are being prepared.

A *touch* of improvement: Until last year, Iran's fifth grade students were taught that the Republic of Azerbaijan had historically been part of Iran. For the coming year, 2016–17, the map more clearly shows Iran's neighbors as sovereign nations and not part of Iran. Still, Israel continues to be represented as "Occupied Palestine."[181]

برای مطالعه

جمهوری آذربایجان حدود ۸ میلیون نفر جمعیت دارد. مساحت این کشور ۸۶ ،۰۰۰ کیلومتر مربع است.

آب و هوای این کشور در سواحل دریای خزر، معتدل و مرطوب و در بقیه‌ی نواحی، معتدل مایل به سرد است.

حکومت آذربایجان، جمهوری است. در گذشته، این کشور از ولایت های ایران بود اما فتحعلی‌شاه قاجار در جنگ با روسیه‌ی تزاری، پس از امضای قراردادهای گلستان و ترکمان‌چای، سراسر نواحی شمالی رود ارس و از جمله آذربایجان را به روسیه واگذار کرد.

Iran remembers: "The government of Azerbaijan is republican. In the past, this country was one of Iran's provinces, but Shah Fath-Ali Qajar, during the wars with Russia under the Tsars conceded all the territories to the north of the Aras River, including Azerbaijan, to Russia."[182]

181 *Social Education*, Grade 5, 2016–17 (1395), pp. 56–65.
182 *Social Education*, Grade 5, 2014–15 (1393), p. 37.

6. Minority Discrimination

As we have seen, the role of Iranian nationalism, with its emphasis on Aryan origins, Persian language and imperial glory, is intensifying, together with Iran's revolutionary, pan-Islamic and global intentions.[183] This Persianite view of Iran and the fascination with empires have critical implications for the curriculum and the entire student population. While only about half of Iran's citizens grew up in Persian-speaking homes,[184] the entire curriculum is taught only in Persian, defined as Iran's "cultural identity" [*hoviyyat-e farhangi*] and "the spirit of the nation" [*ruh-e mellat*].[185] There is minimal and lopsided education about the cultural roots of the non-Persian provinces; overall, this cultural discrimination against ethnic minorities is glaring.[186]

A series of experimental upper high school geography textbooks entitled: "*Province Knowledge*" [*ostan-shenasi*] tries to address the "problems" of local patriotism and potential separatist tendencies. Some of these books even include a few lines in the mother-tongue of minority students.[187] According to the constitution, "the use of regional and tribal languages in the press and mass media, as well as for teaching of their literature in schools, is allowed, in addition to Persian [Article 15]."[188] Still, there is no Azeri-Turkish language curriculum or any other minority language, (besides Arabic) taught in Iran's educational system.

183 Even though it never disappeared: Ram, "The Immemorial Iranian nation?"

184 According to the CIA World Factbook (updated June 22, 2014), 53 percent of Iran's population are Persian speakers. Still, the same source argues that 63 percent are ethnic Persians. This discrepancy probably reflects an assumption that speakers of Gilaki and Mazandarani regard themselves as Persian. According to this data, Azerbaijanis—as an ethnic group—form only 16 percent of the population, but the percentage of the Azeri-Turkic speakers is 18 percent. In a *New America Foundation* opinion poll from May 2009, 50.5 percent of the 1001 respondents across Iran identified themselves ethnically as Persians, while 21.6 percent as ethnically Azeris (Others include Gilaki & Mazanderani 6.9 percent, Kurd 7.6 percent, Lur 5.9 percent, Arab 2.7 percent, Baluchi 1.4 percent, Turkmen 0.9 percent, Bakhtiari 0.2 percent, Khalaji 0.1 percent, Janubi Arab 0.1 percent, Turk Qashqa'i 0.1 percent, Lac 0.2 percent). New America Foundation and Terror Free Tomorrow (TFT), *Results of a New Nationwide Public Opinion Survey of Iran before the June 12, 2009 Presidential Elections*, May 2009, [http://www.terrorfreetomorrow.org/upimagestft/TFT%20Iran%20Survey%20Report%200609.pdf].

185 Persian, *Grade 6*, 2012–13 (1391), p. 7. In fact, the curriculum authors are probably right in their assessment regarding the role of the Persian language, yet the question of whether Iran is already an empire rather than a nation-state remains open until genuine political freedom is established. Hamid Ahmadi, "Unity within Diversity: Foundations and Dynamics of National Identity in Iran," *Critique: Critical Middle East Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1, (Spring 2005), pp. 127–147. Brenda Shaffer, "The Formation of the Azerbaijani Collective Identity in Iran," *Nationalities Papers* 28, No. 3 (2000): pp. 449–477.

186 More on this subject: Saeed Paivandi, *Discrimination and Intolerance in Iran's Textbooks*. Washington D.C: Freedom House, 2008.

187 *Province Studies: East Azerbaijan* (Experimental Edition), 2012–13 (1391), pp. 64–65, 68 ,70.

188 Emil Souleimanov, Kamil Pikal, Josef Kraus, "The Rise of Nationalism among Iranian Azerbaijanis: A Step toward Iran's Disintegration?" *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring 2013), pp. 71–91, 72, 77. Gilles Riaux, "The formative years of Azerbaijani nationalism in post-revolutionary Iran," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 27, No. 1, March 2008, pp. 45–58.

The central government's fear of possible state disintegration and ethnic conflicts often seem to dictate the way reality is presented in the curriculum. Some examples include an emphasis on Persian poems by Azeri poets,[189] or the loyalty of the population and their roles in national Iranian revolutions.[190] Other examples speak to the supposed Aryan roots and original-Pahlavi language of the Turkish-Azeri citizenship[191] (the region being the birthplace of Iran).[192] Also, the role of the local Safavids (1501–1722) in uniting Iran is fully explained.[193] The historical drive for autonomy and self-rule is either not mentioned or downplayed and blamed on Russian foreign occupation.[194] The "racial origin" of the Kurds, is also considered to be Aryan: "The Kurds come from the Aryan-race and were made up from the Medes communities."[195] The textbook stresses the great variety of Kurdish dialects, the solidarity brought about by the Islamic Republic (the Kurds being one of the Iranian tribes/ethnic groups [*aqvam-e irani*]). Yet, our research showed nothing in the Kurdish language and the text presents a one-sided narrative of the problematic history of the province.[196] Inherent within the texts are veiled threats to various minorities, including the Kurds and Baluchis, among others. In his introduction, to the textbook for the peoples of Sistan and Baluchistan Province, the Supreme Leader warns: ". . . be aware that the enemies of Islam will not destroy this coexistence and brotherhood between Shiites and Sunnis."[197] Similar cultural discrimination is evident throughout the curriculum.

"Is it a sin that I do not speak Farsi?" (A girl holding a Persian fourth grade textbook in her right hand and a protest sign in her left.)[198]

189 Mohammad Hossein Behjat-Tabrizi (Shahriyar), "The Lion of God [shir-e khoda]," *Persian Reading*, Grade 6, 2012–13 (1391), p. 46.
190 *Province Studies: East Azerbaijan* (Experimental Edition), 2012–13 (1391), p. vii, 87.
191 Ibid., pp. 61–62.
192 Ibid., p. 77
193 *Province Stu¬dies: Ardabil* (Experimental Edition), 2012–13 (1391), p. vii. *History,* Grade 9, 2012–13 (1391), p. 3. The latter text mentions, however, that most of the followers of the Safavids, while a Sufi order, formed parts of seven Turkish tribes.
194 *Province Studies: East Azerbaijan* (Experimental Edition), 2012–13 (1391), pp. 89, 98.
195 *Province Studies: Kurdistan* (Experimental Edition), 2012–13 (1391), p. 72. Persian: *kordha, mardomani arya'i-nezhad keh az tayefehha-ye madi tarkib shodeh.*
196 Ibid., pp. 88–96.
197 *Province Studies: Sistan and Baluchistan* (Experimental Edition), 2012–13 (1391), p. vii.
198 *Mother Tongue (zaban-e madari)* Facebook page, provided in Raz Zimmt, "The Debate on Teaching Ethnic Languages in Iran: Change on the Horizon?" *Iran Pulse*, No. 69, May 23, 2014.

This form of discrimination points to the bias found within the curriculum—and generally throughout Iran—against all non-male, non-Shiite, non-Persian citizens. Consequently, various degrees of prejudice and segregation are experienced by numerous minorities and groups, including, but not limited to: women, religious minorities, (particularly Baha'is, but also Sunnis, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians; Muslim-Sufis); people who are secular; LGBTs; boyfriends/girlfriends living together; rock, pop and heavy metal fans; lovers of wine; internet surfers; atheists; or anyone with pro-democracy inclinations.

A new social science schoolbook teaches students about their rights and responsibilities. While the model being presented obviously is meant to help create a safe environment that encourages human interaction and a productive life, it is nevertheless far from being democratic and egalitarian. The text teaches that natural rights emanate from God, who created humanity: "With the creation of human beings, God has given them rights. The meaning of a right is something that a human being merits because of his human status and dignity [*maqam*]. Human beings have natural rights from the beginning of creation and birth."[199] The textbook then provides some details about rights, which include certain freedoms—but not political rights.

> *For example, all human beings have the right to live, which is their most important right. They have the right to benefit from divine blessings, to work and endeavor to secure their needs, marry, raise a family, study and choose their way of life. Human beings have the right to be free: this means that they should not be slaves or dependent on other people because God has created them to be free.*[200]

Note that property rights are not clearly expressed, a perennial challenge in Iran.[201] Students are entitled to express their views, as long as they are respectful: "Every student has the right to express his or her opinion regarding school problems or teaching methods at the school, in a polite and respectful manner."[202] However, when it comes to sensitive political issues, such as choosing (Shiia) Islam (or at least a tolerated religion) or displaying complete loyalty to the Supreme Leader—there is no wiggle-room. There is only one path to choose since, "human life is too short for experimenting."[203]

While Sunni Muslims are considered coreligionists with whom unity is imperative, the attitude toward other religious minorities is less clear; as long as they are loyal, however, they

199 *Social Studies* (Civil, Geography, History), Grade 7, 2015–16 (1395), p. 2.
200 Ibid.
201 Homa Katouzian, "Arbitrary Rule: A Comparative Theory of State, Politics and Society in Iran," *British Journal of Middle Studies* (1997), 24(1), pp. 49–73.
202 *Social Studies*, Grade 7, 2013–14 (1392), p. 4.
203 *Religion and Life*, Grade 12, 2014–15 (1393), p. 13.

are welcome to remain.[204] A huge exception to this involves the Baha'is. "During the post-2000 era, the Baha'is continued to experience the worst treatment of any other minority or group."[205] As Baha'i persecution continues in Iran, the schoolbooks—through 2014—continue to present the Baha'i faith as a colonialist invention aimed at sowing discord among Muslims.

> **Colonialism's Cult Fabrication**
> *The English and Russian governments greatly feared the unity of the Muslims in Iran. Therefore, they tried to divide the people and destroy their unity. One of their actions in sowing discord was through sedition and turmoil created by the founders of false cults and religions. Among these false religions were Babism and Baha'ism. Initially, the founder of the Babi sect, Sayyed-Ali Mohammad, claimed to have been the Bab [In the terminology of this sect, Bab or 'gate' in Arabic, is used to denote a person who connected people with the Hidden Imam]. A little later he openly called himself the Promised Mahdi and finally claimed to be a prophet. The Babi cult was supported by Russia and England. Following the turmoil unleashed by the Babis in a number of cities, [their leader] Seyyed Ali Mohammad Bab was executed by orders of the Prime Minister of Iran, Amir Kabir. Mirza Hossein-Ali Nuri, a student of the Bab, who had given himself the title Baha' ['splendor' in Arabic], for a while, called himself a new prophet and then, after claiming Divinity, created the Baha'i cult. This cult too was supported by England.*[206]

At the end of the preceding paragraph, entitled "Colonialism's Cult Fabrication," there is a footnote saying: "Currently the center of Baha'ism is in Israel." The combination of false statements: that colonialism created cults aimed at destabilizing "true" Islamic teachings; that there was/is a conspiratorial association between Israel and the Baha'is; and the omission of any information regarding massacres of Baha'is by the government, is clearly meant to mislead students by demonizing both the Baha'is and Israel. The Tehran-born founder of the Baha'is, Bahaullah, was banished to the city of Acre during the nineteenth century, in what was then the Ottoman Province of Syria. That the city became part of modern Israel only eighty years later is not mentioned in the textbook.

While accepting Christians into the fold (provided they fulfill part of the Islamist-Khomeinist agenda), the Iranian curriculum sows the seeds of suspicion against Christians and Jews, having a policy of "trust but verify."

> *The dear Prophet of Islam, as well, presented himself, in the time of his appearance [zuhur], as continuing and completing all the prophets, and asked the Jews and the Christians to believe in him. This time too, however, some of the Christian and Jewish leaders, regardless of the fact that the coming of the Prophet of Islam had been promised in the Torah and the*

204 Eliz Sanasarian, *Religious Minorities in Iran* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
205 Sanasarian and Davidi, "Domestic Tribulations," p.58.
206 *History,* Grade 9, 2013–14 (1392), p. 43.
(An almost identical version in *History*, Grade 8, 2004, p. 37.)

> *Gospel, rejected his prophethood and rose up to fight. Had this clique [dasteh] of Jewish and Christian leaders accepted the prophethood of the Holy Messenger in that day, this difference would not have arisen.*
>
> *The Holy Quran explains that the source of this discord and difference of religions is that clique of religious leaders who wanted to keep their own position, status and interests. [They] withstood against the preaching [da'vat] of the new Prophet, rejected his prophethood and caused the difference and division of the disciples of the prophets into a number of groups.*[207]

Put otherwise, Christianity and Judaism are considered to be false religions. No wonder that school textbooks directed at these "respected" minorities (including Zoroastrianism), do not include actual religious teaching, but rather ideological, philosophical and mystical material.[208]

207 *Religion and Life*, Grade 12, 2014, p. 27.

208 *Divine Religions Studies and Morals for Religious Minorities (Jewish, Zoroastrian and Christian)*, Vol. 1, Grade 10, 2012–13 (1391), pp. iii, v-vii, 3–4, 8-10, 15–16. *Religious Insight for Religious Minorities,* Pre-University, 2012–13 (1391), pp. iii, 2–3, 3, 37–53. Topics include: respect for minorities, religion as ideology, why religiosity is essential, creationism, arguments against dualism and polytheism and the necessity of God as the primal cause.

7. Modernity, Technology, Power

S.N. Eisenstadt explains that Islamic fundamentalism—now widely known as *Islamism*—is typologically a modern phenomenon falling within the category of utopian-revolutionary-violent movements he equates with the Jacobins of the French Revolutionary period.[209] Iranian Islamism is not (yet) infatuated with beheadings as were the French revolutionists or the current Islamic State (ISIS) militants in Iraq and Syria; but mass executions and public hangings from cranes and other horrors, remain a hallmark of the Islamic Republic.[210] The pursuit of technology and science in the curriculum supports Eisenstadt's reasoning. Certainly, a major force behind modernization in the Middle East since the eighteenth century has been the drive to acquire military power capable of both confronting the West as well as managing local competitors. The Islamic Republic continues a tradition that follows the Safavid, Qajar, Pahlavi and other Iranian dynasties; all imported military and scientific know-how. Each of these regimes tried to keep Iran independent with distinct policies. For the Islamic Republic, however, the notion of self-sufficiency (*khod–kefa'i*), particularly in military and nuclear technology, has become an issue of paramount discourse.

The *Defense Readiness* curriculum prepares Iranian students for the most sophisticated military challenges Iran may be facing. We have mentioned the preparation for a nuclear war as well as mastering the use of assault rifles and other weapons such as mortars and landmines. To that, one should add such areas as cyber and electronic warfare. Special attention is given to teaching about the Stuxnet worm[211]—used to attack Iran's nuclear facilities—but the education goes far beyond that. Indeed, this high-school curriculum will probably help to create a generation of Iranian "cyber-fighters." Just as the nuclear war readiness education reflected Iran's nuclear project, school cyber education has indicated Iran's focus on cyberwar. As with nuclear capabilities, cyber warfare "optimally fits in with Iran's asymmetric warfare strategy."[212]

Iranian adherence to a policy of self-sufficiency does not suggest a disinterest with what occurs in the rest of the world. The following admonition directed at Persian language teachers at the elementary school level, displays surprising sincerity in that regard.

> *The test results of the **Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)** show that Iranian students display extremely low performance in text comprehension. Fourth Grade students have participated in three rounds of literacy tests: in 2001, 2006 and 2011.*

209 S.N. Eisenstadt, *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism, and Revolution: The Jacobin Dimension of Modernity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
210 The number of officially acknowledged executions in Iran was at least 369 in 2013, but Amnesty International said "credible sources" reported 335 more. Cara Anna, "Report: Global Executions Up 15 Percent in 2013," *Associated Press*, Mar. 26, 2014.
211 *Defense Readiness*, Grade 11, 2014–15 (1393), pp. 55–57.
212 Gabi Siboni and Sami Kronenfeld, "Developments in Iranian Cyber Warfare 2013–2014," *Military and Strategic Affairs*, Vol. 6, No. 2, August (83–104) 2014, p. 98.

> *The position of Iran in the 2001 PIRLS was thirty-second among the thirty-five countries tested. In the 2006 PIRLS, Iran achieved fortieth place out of forty-five participating countries, and in 2011 Iran's position was thirty-nine out of forty-six participating world educational systems. As noted, the performance of Iranian students in the PIRLS tests is unacceptable and inadequate.*[213] *[bold as in text]*

This candid admonition is accompanied by state-of-the-art exercises and didactic measures to be implemented in the classroom, in order to improve levels of language comprehension. To this, one should add second language textbooks for English, French and German.[214]

On attitudes toward modernity, one can learn from a pre-university mathematics text focused on probability and calculus.[215] The book's bibliography includes items published in Iran before the revolution (1966) as well as in the US. Some space is dedicated to anecdotes covering the history of calculus. Ancient Greek mathematicians, particularly Archimedes, receive praise for devising a way to calculate the areas of polygons, a method also applied to calculate the area of a circle.[216] Even more interestingly, in a concluding page, praise is showered on Sir Isaac Newton and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz and again, on Archimedes.[217] No Persian or other Muslim mathematicians are mentioned, in contrast with many other school books in which Iranian and Islamic cultural achievements are stressed.[218] This particular math book includes some gender-discriminatory preferences. Probability problems explore the chances of having baby boys, rather than girls; more boys than girls; or boys first and girls later.[219] In *beads and mice* probability questions, one calculates chances for receiving white beads rather than black ones first or in greater quantity.[220] These practices may have been imported from old Western textbooks, but currently represent the contemporary environment in Iran.

As for innovation in the social sciences, in this domain Iran insists on "original thinking," as part of its cultural war. The Iranian curriculum includes much discussion about the social sciences and sociology, which typically leads to the endorsement of the various institutions of the Islamic Republic, particularly the total power of the Supreme Leader. The discussion itself, however, opens channels of thinking that could in the long run prove to

213 *Teacher's Guide for Persian, Grade 3*, 2013–14 (1392), pp. 22–3.
214 *English 1*, Grade 10, 2012–13 (1391). *French 1*, Grade 10, 2012–13 (1391). *German 1*, Grade 10, 2012–13 (1391). See also English vocabulary in *Physics 1 and Laboratory,* Grade 10, 2012–13 (1391), pp. 170–73.
215 *General Mathematics, Science Program (1) and (2)*, Pre-University, 2012–13 (1391).
216 Ibid., pp. 150–151.
217 Ibid., p. 174.
218 Ibid. See "Muslim-Iranian" Ibn Sina in *Mathematics*, Grade 9, 2012–13 (1391), p. 65.
219 Ibid., pp. 2–4, examples 1–4, p. 8. Page 13, shows women comprise an educated majority (52 percent) for the first time.
220 Ibid., pp. 8–9.

be subversive, when accompanied with reading and understanding how other, more open and liberal countries function. A new book on sociology seems to add another dimension to this trend. Let us look at a number of examples.

In discussing the meaning of culture, the text ends with the following paragraph:

> *Various societies have different ways of life, and the reason for this difference is that culture is a learned phenomenon, which passes from generation to generation through education and training. That is why culture is also called common awareness and cognition [agahi va shenakht].*[221]

This paragraph is followed by a question asking the students how they would recognize that a particular society is Muslim or non-Muslim. While the text and question help students to strengthen their commitment to Islam, it also exposes a world in which there is more than one way to live, and indeed everything within a culture (including Islam) is just a "learned phenomenon." The illustration that follows shows three scenes of the central Shiite festival of Ashura Mourning, as performed in various countries: America, Lebanon and Pakistan.[222]

مراسم عزاداری عاشورا در کشورهای مختلف/آمریکا، لبنان، پاکستان

The choice of these examples to illustrate different cultures in various societies is somewhat surprising, because all three pictures portray the culture of Shia-Islam, considered in Iran to be the authentic Islam. In all three of the portrayed countries, Shiites form a minority: The US is secular, Lebanon is a sectarian country in which Shiites form a large minority, and Pakistan has a Sunni majority. So, while the pictures may reinforce students' Shiite identity, they are also a reminder that outside Iran, Shiites are at best a minority (and where US adherents to this "learned culture" actually seem to benefit from freedom of religion).

In discussing realistic culture versus the ideal culture, the text tries to demonstrate that Iranian culture is committed to sacrifice and martyrdom, while others are not. There is a contrast portrayed in American culture between the idealistic Superman figure and the participants of Abu Ghraib. Here, the text follows the typical Iranian pattern of exhibiting crimes among other nations, (particularly involving Western imperialism, colonialism and slavery), while maintaining an immaculate image of the revolutionary Iran. The text further explains that societies are divided between those that believe in right and wrong values. As an example of wrong values, various faiths from India are depicted, while the "right ones" are shown to be Islamic revolutionaries supporting basic human rights, while defending justice and the oppressed.[223] The book further praises the values of martyrdom, particularly among

221 *Sociology 2*, Grade 12, 2016–17, p. 16.
222 Ibid.
223 Ibid., p. 25.

the youth. The caption for this picture reads: “The martyr, Said Toughani, born 1969, won the national championship in the *Ancient Sport* [known also as Zurkhane and Pahlevani] when he was seven years old. He participated several times in the battle fronts and at the age of fifteen, during the Badr operation, followed in the footsteps of his martyr brother and was martyred in the way of God.”[224]

A long and thought-provoking part of this textbook deals with changes in cultural identity during various occasions in human history. The narrative tells the story of how Iran adopted Western values when confronted with a strong Western civilization and describes the various changes that led to the Islamic Revolution and the return to a new form of Islam. The text then describes how the Western world went through a similar identity crisis as a result of its encounter with the Islamic civilization during the Crusades and throughout the medieval period. In time, this crisis led to the adoption of “worldly, secular values” in Europe.[225] At this point the textbook adds two pictures showing translated English books of famous Muslim mystics: Ibn Arabi and Ibn Sina.[226]

جامعه‌شناسی ۶۴ **A Sample of Ibn Arabi’s Books Published in the West**

The following text, alongside a picture of “The First Conference of World Islamic Awakening” summarizes the textbook’s hope for adoption of Islam by the West.

> *With Iranian society’s return to its Islamic identity, it became the beating heart of the Islamic Awakening. Now, the Islamic world, inspired by the Islamic Revolution of Iran, extricated its identity from the images projected upon it by the Western world, and thus tries to make Islam into a new cultural pole.*

224 Ibid., p. 45.
225 Ibid., p. 64.
226 Ibid.

> *Islam's spiritual life opened new horizons for the Western world's thinkers. It called upon Western theorists, who had considered secularism and secularization, as the common and sealed fate of humanity, to reflect and review their former ideas.*[227]

While the discussion concludes that the Western world should change its identity and adopt Islam, a secondary message might also be drawn. After all, the text provides a detailed analysis of changes in the collective identities of nations along with the statement that culture is a "learned phenomenon." If Iran can Islamize the world, the world can democratize Iran. This may in fact be reading too much into the text, but it is hard not to see that a regime so obsessed with the need to change the identity of everybody else, may inevitably expose itself to the very intellectual dangers (read freedoms) it seeks to discard.

227 Ibid., p. 71.

8. Mysticism and Blind Obedience

An important finding of the report is the weight given to the mystic dimension of decision-making and thinking in Iran. This type of thinking is depicted as superior to the West's rational-empirical paradigm, which, with all its strengths, covers only part of reality. Encouragement of intimate relations with the Divine begins in elementary school, perhaps even before. Here is an example from grade 4:

> *I said: 'Father, where is the closest place where I could find God'? He pointed at my heart. Suddenly I felt somebody was knocking in my heart. Now, whenever I want to seek God, or talk with Him, I know well where I can find Him.*[228]

A piece intended for thirteen-year-olds explains that: "cleanliness and purity, refinement and chastity escort us in the beauties of the world's divine glory . . . The creator of all blossoms and beauties, He is the one who is always with us. Thus in every deed and action, in every time and place, we should remember Him."[229] Thus, nature and mysticism are commonplace. Following is a description of a mystical experience by Ali Shariati, a leading ideologue of the Islamic Revolution:[230]

> *I looked at the grand lesson of nature, with eyes full of curiosity and thirst. I listened, I looked, I opened my heart. And my soul was so drowned in understanding that it was shaking with excitement. I felt that the springs of mystical knowledge [cheshmehha-ye ma'refat] would open up from deep inside me and the clear, cold and sweet waters of realization and wisdom would bubble through my being.*[231]

Arguably, there is likely no harm in developing imaginative and such *mystical* thinking in the school setting. For the current Iranian polity, however, this outlook is tightly connected to a demand for sacrifice and blind obedience to the divinely sanctified Supreme Leader. Hence, the *Basij*, the Revolutionary Guard paramilitary volunteer force, is described as the School of Love (*madraseh-ye 'eshq*), using the religious-mystic term typically associated with Sufi mysticism, but in the discourse of Imam Khomeini and the Iranian regime, it is related to martyrdom.

> ***Lesson 4, Basij: The School of Love***
> *The word basij [mobilization] conveys an unbreakable bond with the Islamic*

228 *Persian Reading*, Grade 4, 2012–13 (1391), p. 3.
229 *Persian,* Grade 7, 2014–15 (1393), pp. 42–43
230 Ali Rahnema, A*n Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shari'ati.* London: I.B.Tauris, 2000.
231 *Persian*, Grade 7, 2014–15 (1393), p. 19.

> *Revolution, Imam Khomeini, velayat [obedience to God's friend], Holy Defense [Iran-Iraq War, 1980–88], self-sacrifice and martyrdom. This bond made the Basij the eternal keeper and guardian of the values and achievements of the Islamic Revolution. 'Basij is the School of Love, the primary school [maktab] of the anonymous witnesses and martyrs [shahedan-os-hahidan], whose followers chant the call for martyrdom and heroism on their towering minarets.' [number and bold as in text]*

Children are Taught to Talk to God and that Their Leaders Communicate with Angels.[232]

Before continuing our discussion of mysticism and blind obedience as presented in the textbooks, a few words of background will be helpful regarding the Supreme Leader's source of legitimacy. The guiding principle of the Iranian system is *velayat-e faqih*, the Guardianship of the Jurist. *Velayat* denotes the total authority, the "guardianship," of the *vali-ye faqih*, the Guardian Jurist. But *Velayat* (or *wilayah*), within Shiism, originally denotes the Holy Imams' close friendship with God, a special channel imparting to them the same supernatural powers and infallibility of the prophets. In the mystical context, the *vali* corresponds to the "perfect man" [*al-insan al-kamil*], which denotes a saint or God's

232 *Persian*, Grade 5, 2014–15 (1393), p. 2.

close friend (*amicus dei*) as: "one who has progressed so far on the mystic path that he has achieved a station in which he has a special bond with God, an intimacy with God, with the result that he is protected by God."[233] Khomeini ascribed this status to himself, and it was later attributed also to his successor, Ali Khamenei. The necessity of total obedience to the leader derives from this.[234]

Accordingly, students are taught that the leadership of Islamic society is in the hands of a person worthy to represent the Mahdi (*emam-e zaman*).[235] According to Iranian Twelver-Ja'fari Shiite Islam, the Mahdi or *Wali al-Asr* is the twelfth Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi who went into Occultation (referring to his disappearance and continued "hidden" presence) in 873 CE. Until the Mahdi returns, near the end of times, Iran's Supreme Leader is in charge of the Ummah (Muslim Nation) according to Article 5 of the Iranian Constitution.

> *During the Occultation of the Wali al-Asr (may God hasten his reappearance), the wilayah [=velayet] and leadership of the Ummah devolve upon the just and faqih [jurist], who is fully aware of the circumstances of his age; courageous, resourceful, and possessed of administrative ability, he will assume the responsibilities of this office in accordance with Article 107.*[236]

Khomeini openly argued that power, guardianship and leadership may be given to a certain jurist based on reasonable requirements, like resourcefulness and knowledge of Shiite law. Implicitly, he wanted power given to a spiritually "perfect man" [*al-insan al-kamel*]. Indeed, the school textbooks more than hint that the Leader entertains exceptional mystical powers in the original sense of *velayat*, such as having close "friendship" or "proximity" with God, "saintliness," and grasping the "hidden meaning of the prophecy" [*al-walayah batin al-nubuwwah*].[237]

As the founder of the Islamic Republic, Khomeini's picture and one of his quotations is found at the beginning of every book. Pictures, speeches and letters of the current Supreme Leader are also widespread. Offering the example of the youth who fought to liberate Khorramshahr in the Iran-Iraq war, current Supreme Leader Khamenei stresses confronting Iran's enemies and having obedience.

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233 J. ter Haar, "Heiligheid en politiek gezag. Het begrip wilāyat in de optiek van Khumaynī," in: *Mystiek: het andere gezicht van de islam*, ed. M. Buitelaar & J. ter Haar. Bussum: Coutinho, 1999, p. 94, quoted in Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, "Khomeini the Poet Mystic," *Die Welt des Islams* 51 (2011), pp. 438–458, p. 441

234 Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, "Khomeini the Poet Mystic," *Die Welt des Islams* 51 (2011), pp. 438–458. p. 441.

235 *Social Education*, Grade 9, 2012–13 (1391), pp. 51–55.

236 http://www.iranchamber.com/government/laws/constitution_ch01.php.

237 Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Spirituality of Shi'i Islam: Belief and Practices*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011, pp. 52, 256.

> *All that is evident as a central point in the calculations of this nation's and country's enemies is that in different ways they would make this young, passionate, future-building generation, powerless to create a prosperous, free, believing and pure Iran for the future . . . The youth must be proud of their country, their revolution, their Islamic regime and of the hoisted flag of Islam and [from such pride] create the future.*[238]

Obedience and loyalty to the Leader and the regime are required in the face of ever-plotting enemies. Students are taught that Iran is in a perpetual "state of emergency," justifying a continual dictatorship, as is apparent in the Mahdi context and elsewhere. This is a step beyond Carl Schmitt's argument that emergency represents a "state of exception" [*ausnahmezustand*], which allows "commissarial" dictators (such as Hitler), to have complete, albeit temporary powers to exert violence; since, "the leader defends justice."[239] So while Iranians are meant to speak freely, listen patiently and love each other, they are also expected to always follow the directions of the Supreme Leader. "All are submissive and obedient to the Guardian-Jurist [the world's Supreme Leader]."[240] Moreover, the Leader is supposed to be infallible (*rahbar-e ma'sum*).[241] Both Khomeini and Khamenei are thus elevated to a level of holiness, just like the infallible Prophets and Imams, who are never wrong and deliver the word of God.[242]

What we see then, is an effort to spread a version of Islam across the world, led by Iran's Supreme Leader, here portrayed as a faultless Prophet, endowed with mystical powers and incidentally, one who requires absolute, blind obedience. Paradoxically, the Sufis—Islam's religious mystic dervishes—are persecuted in Iran;[243] yet in the curriculum, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei heaps praise on mystic warriors and ayatollahs. He also praises the Safavid mystic-kings as warrior-mystics ('*orafa-ye mojahed*). The Safavid royal dynasty was originally a Sufi order, but Khamenei describes the

238 *Persian*, Grade 7, 2014-15 (1393), pp. 34–5.

239 Detlev Vagts, "Carl Schmitt's Ultimate Emergency: The Night of the Long Knives," *The Germanic Review*, 87: pp. 203–209, 2012. Sanford Levinson and Jack Balkin, "Constitutional Dictatorship: Its Dangers and its Design," *Minnesota Law Review* 94 (2010): pp. 1789–1840. German: the leader defends justice (*der Führer schützt das Recht*).

240 *Social Education*, Grade 9, 2012–13 (1391), p. 73. Persian: All are submissive and obedient to the Guardian-Jurist (*hamegi moti' va farmanbordar-e vali-ye faqih hastand*).

241 *Religion and Life,* Grade 12, 2014–15 (1393), p. 129.

242 The concept of *rahbar-e ma'sum*, infallible leader, is theologically troubling to many Iranians. One solution to this theological dilemma is the one ascribed to the martyr Dr. Mostafa Chamaran: "I am not saying that *vali-ye faqih* [jurist guardian] is *ma'sum* [infallible]. But when a nation, abiding by God's decree, put their trust in the *vali-ye amr* [Leader of the Muslims, often *vali-ye amr-e mosalmanan*], God does not allow this Leader [*rahbar*] to err, and thus imparts infallibility upon him." *Boraq Payamak*, Sharivar 5, 1393 (Aug 27, 2014) [http://boraqsms.com/sms_view.php?id=1348#.VN_GkPmUdz4]. Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi argues that the Supreme Leader cannot be corrupted: "Otherwise, God would not have chosen him." He stresses that the Leader is not elected by the Council of Experts, but is rather discovered (*kashf*) by a message sent to them by God. Katajun Amirpur, "A Doctrine in the Making: Velayat-e faqih in Post-Revolutionary Iran," in eds. Gudrun Krämer and Sabine Schmidtke, *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies*. Leiden: Brill, 2006, pp. 228, 231–232.

243 Raz Zimmt, "Islam in the Islamic Republic: The Regime's Struggle to Maintain its Monopoly over Religious Life," *ACIS Iran Pulse*, No. 13, July 19, 2007. "vebsait-e daravish: bazdasht va zarb va shetam-e daravish dar atraf-e dadestani-ye tehran," *Radio Farda*, September 21, 2019, [http://www.radiofarda.com/content/f2-iran-tehran-protest-dervish-beaten-arrested-police/26596839.html]. Parasto Taffazoli, *Khomeini and Sufism: Ayatollah Khomeini's Influence on the Oppression against Sufi Orders in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, Independent research paper, Department of Political Science, Stockholm University, 2014.

founder of that order, Sheikh Safi a-Din Ardabili (1252–1334), as one of those "religious scholars who was both a legal expert and great mystic."[244] Moreover, the Supreme Leader denies that he was a Sufi, while nevertheless remaining a mystic.

> *Contrary to what some people believe, Sheikh Safi a-Din Ardabili was not a Sufi. He was a religious scholar, a mystic, an exegete and a seer [mohaddas].*[245]

The origin of the latter term, *mohaddas*, relates to the Shiite Imams, in the sense of "one who speaks to angels."[246] In fact, the school textbooks teach students that it is not uncommon for the great religious scholars to receive direct answers from other-worldly sources such as the Prophet Mohammad, while they are sleeping or awake. Here is one example:

> *This spiritual guidance has various forms and shapes and is proportional to the merit and talent of people. It often happened that pure-natured scholars, despite all the effort they had invested, could not solve a certain problem and the Messenger of God provided them with the correct answer by way of inspiration/revelation [elham] either while asleep or awake.*[247]

All this should not be surprising. Ayatollah Khomeini, Khamenei's mentor for decades, was considered a fully trained mystic who published a great deal in this field; decisions he apparently reached through the practice of divination are believed by many to have prolonged the Iran-Iraq war for years, killing Muslims by the hundreds of thousands for no apparent reason.[248]

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244 *Province Stu¬dies: Ardabil* (Experimental Edition), 2012–13 (1391), p. vii. Persian: religious scholars who were both legal experts and great mystics (*'olama-e faqih va dar ein hal 'aref*).
245 Ibid.
246 Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, "Shiite Doctrine," *Enclopaedia Iranica*. Etan Kohlberg, "The Term 'Muḥaddath' in Twelver Shi'ism," *Studia Orientalia memoriae D.H.Baneth dedicata*. Jerusalem: 1979, pp. 39–47.
247 *Religion and Life,* Grade 12, 2014–15 (1393), p. 57.
248 Eldad J. Pardo, "Existence Free of Matter: Iran's Nuclear Project and the Cost-Benefit Postulate," *ACIS Iran Spotlight*, No.2, March 2008. *Stefano Salzani*, "Imam Khomeini and Ibn 'Arabi: The Enigma of Walaya," conference paper in *Islamic Fundamentalism and Sufism*: Continuities and Confrontations through Modernity and Globalization, University of Haifa, 2007. Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future*. New York: Norton, 2006, pp. 119–20. Vanessa Martin, *Creating an Islamic State: Khomeini and the Making of a New Iran*. London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2000, pp. 31–47. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, "Notes à propos de la walaya imamite," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, No. 122, 2002, pp. 722–41. Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism: the Sources of Esotericism in Islam*, translated by David Streight. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994, pp. 56–-9. Yahya Christian Bonaud, *L'Imam Khomeyni, un gnostique méconnu du XXe siècle: Métaphysique et théologie dans les œuvres philosophiques et spirituelles de l'Imam Khomeyni*. Beirut: Al-Bouraq, 1997. Alexander Knysh, "Irfan Revisited: Khomeini and the Legacy of Islamic Mystical Philosophy," *Middle East Journal* 46, 1992, pp. 631–53. Khomeini's letter to Fatemeh Tabataba'i, 12 Ramadan 1404 (June 12, 1984), http://www.eznehashtom.com/component/content/article/493---------2-.html.

8. Mysticism and Blind Obedience

A few excerpts from a school book on Islamic philosophy for grade 12[249] can shed light on the seriousness given mystical thinking and divination by the curriculum. What begins in elementary school as sensing God through spiritual experiences and in nature, culminates with mystical decision-making processes for young adults.

This particular book opens with the first paragraph of Khomeini's much read "historical letter" to Mikhail Gorbachev in 1989, inviting him to study Islam—with an emphasis on controversial Muslim philosophers and mystics.[250] The mystical nature of that letter came as a surprise to both Iranian clergy and outside observers of Iran. After all, the political system of the Islamic Republic was believed to be based—according to Khomeini's own interpretation in his 1971 *Islamic Government*—on the principle that the clergy alone should wield the executive powers of the Prophets and the Imams. This was on the basis of legal competence, though they were by no means considered equal to the Imams in the sense of sainthood or mystical powers (*velayat/walayah*).[251]

For a variety of reasons Khomeini seemingly blurred his mystical proficiency, which arguably had been the reason behind his insistence on wielding absolute worldly power. Rather, he opted for *taqiyeh* (dissimulation), to avoid unnecessary controversy.[252] He needed the clerics on his side, and the concept of only one "perfect man" in a generation could possibly contradict the theology of the "Hidden" Mahdi.[253]

Surprisingly, the philosophy text, as with the rest of the curriculum, is not shy about the mystical understructure of the regime but rather encourages students to develop their own mystical powers. Hence, the main philosophers and mystics discussed in the book are precisely the same five featured as "recommended reading" for Gorbachev in Khomeini's letter: Al-Farabi (872–950) and Ibn Sina (Avicenna, 980–1037) for peripatetic philosophy (*hekmat-e masha'*); Sohravardi (1155–1191) for illuminationism (*hekmat-e eshraq*); Mulla Sadra (1571–1640) for understanding the science of non-matter;

249 *Philosophy: Acquaintance with Islamic Philosophy*, Pre-University, Human Sciences, Islamic Sciences, Education, 2014–15 (1393). A new edition with a somewhat different layout and perhaps other minor changes was just published (*Philosophy: Acquaintance with Islamic Philosophy*, 2016–17 (1395). We will continue to use the old volume as well for reference purposes.

250 Ibid., p. ii. Reuters, "Study Islam, Khomeini Suggests to Gorbachev," *New York Times*, January 5, 1989. [http://www.nytimes.com/1989/01/05/world/study-islam-khomeini-suggests-to-gorbachev.html]. *Matn-e kamel-e nameh-ye tarikhi-ye emam khomeini beh gorbachef* (The full text of the Historical Letter of Imam Khomeini to Gorbachev), *Washington Islamic Education Center*, (no date). http://www.iec-md.org/monasebatha/digar/nameh_emam_gorbachev.html].

251 Ruhollah Khomeini, *Islamic Government (Al-Hukumah Al-Islamiyyah)*. Dublin: Manor Books, 1979. Ruhollah Khomeini, *Velayat-e Faqih: Hokumat-e Islami*. Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1978/1357. On angry reactions to the letter by clerics, see Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, "Khomeini the Poet Mystic," *Die Welt des Islams* 51 (2011), p. 439.

252 Ruhollah Khomeini, *Misbah al-hidaya ila al-khilafa wa al-wilaya* (The Lamp of Guidance for *Khilafah and Walayah*). Beirut: Mu'assasat al-wafa', 1983. Also, Tehran: Mu'assaseh-ye tanzim-e nashr-e athar-e emam Khomeini, 1993.

253 Other, less convincing theories, suggest that from a theological perspective, an individual endowed with *wilayah* and *khilafah* (vice-regency) should remain modest about his powers, that Khomeini may have had some self-doubts or certain regrets—or even that he secretly believed that he was an amateur. Lloyd Ridgeon, "Hidden Khomeini: Mysticism and Poetry," in Arshin Adib-Moghaddam ed. *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 193–210.

and Ibn Arabi (1165–1240) as the most important source on mysticism. The book explains that a leader of Farabi's "Virtuous City" should have open channels with the Divine.

> *The Prophet was during his time, the teacher, governor and guide of the virtuous city and this status was delegated to the Imams and his heirs. According to Farabi, the head of the virtuous city who is the leader of the people on the way toward happiness, must, by himself, reach the highest level of human happiness, which is the very connection with the angel of revelation or the active intellect. The revelations of the Prophets and the inspirations of the saints—all emanate from this connection.*[254]

In other words, the leader of a virtuous country such as Iran *must by himself,* reach the level of direct connection with the angel of revelations (i.e., Jibreel, who was the source of Prophet Muhammad). The textbooks often include pictures of Khamenei leading the prayer or with a religious aura.[255] A similar idea is conveyed to Iranian students through direct quotations from Sohravardi, the illuminationist, who also speaks about chains of angels performing various assignments with which the expert can connect.[256] In his words:

> *Whenever a sage has become immersed in theosophy and has become a master in the field, he has full authority, and is the Caliph and deputy of God . . . Because the owner of the status of Caliphate must receive matters and truths directly from the source of Glory.*[257]

The segment on Mulla Sadra also provides guidelines on tuning into the "divine information superhighway." Sadra describes how he climbs from light to light discovering more and more secrets. "What I learned earlier through logic [*beh borhan*], I could also see, and in much more abundance, by way of the 'seeing heart' [*rah-e shohud-e qalbi*]."[258] Understanding can be achieved then through three main ways: Islamic revelation, logical thinking and "heart-seeing."

The combination of this presumed paranormal power, "proportional to the merit and talent of people," with dictatorial authority granted by the constitution to the Supreme Leader of Iran, has repercussions for civil rights as well as the nuclear issue. The texts explain that while security needs are constant, the decision about which weapons are allowed to

254 *Philosophy*, Pre-University, 2014–15 (1393), p. 50. Source reference not provided. Persian: guide (*rahnama*); the virtuous city (*madineh-ye fazeleh*), status (*maqam*), the angel of revelation (*malak-e vahi*), the active intellect (*'aql-e fa"al*); the saints (*avliya*' plural of vali, the friends of God or saints having *walayah*).
255 *Heaven's Presents*, Grade 5, 2016–17 (1395), p. 49.
256 Ibid., p. 80.
257 Ibid., p. 57. Persian: theosophy (*ta'alloh*); full authority (*riyasat tammah*); Caliph and deputy of God (*khalifah va janeshin-e khoda*).
258 Ibid., p. 96. The quotation is taken from *The Four Journeys: Asfar*, Vol. 1, Introduction. (No other details provided.)

be used is an ever-changing mission—relegated to religious experts on an on-going basis.

> *The need for security is constant. However, the ways to guarantee security with the equipment and weapons that are to be used to this end, as compared to previous periods, are very different. Islamic learning [ma'aref-e eslam] is such that religious experts can extract from it new laws concerning banking, banknotes, procurement and use of new weapons, in accordance with the new needs of society . . .* [259]

To reiterate, this description *rules out the possibility of an all-encompassing binding fatwa* (religious edict) *in matters of weapons*; students are taught that decisions are made as needed by Islamic scholars, and ultimately, the Supreme Leader.[260] This paradigm is married to a strategy aimed at implementing the vision of the Islamic Republic's founding father to spread the revolution, slowly but surely, until it covers the entire world and prepares it for the coming of the Mahdi.

> *The crusade [nahzat] for Islam cannot be confined to one country and cannot even be confined to the Islamic countries. The crusade for Islam should follow in the footsteps of the Prophet's crusade. The Prophet's crusade was not intended for one place; though the Prophet of Islam belonged to the people of Arabia, his call [Da'wah] did not belong to Arabia, was not confined to Arabia—his call belongs to the entire world.*
> **Imam Khomeini**[261]

Blurring the Lines between Imagination and Reality: **Left**: A Boy Appears to be Rising to Heaven. **Right**: A Mysterious Girl Seen through a Poem Dedicated to God.

259 *Religion and Life*, Grade 12, 2014–15 (1393), p. 32.
260 Glenn Kessler, "Fact Checker: Did Iran's Supreme Leader Issue a *Fatwa* against the Development of Nuclear Weapons?" *The Washington Post*, November 27, 2013, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/wp/2013/11/27/did-irans-supreme-leader-issue-a-fatwa-against-the-development-of-nuclear-weapons/].
261 *Province Studies:* Ardabil (Experimental Edition), 2012–13 (1391), p. iii.

Conclusion

The worldview expressed within the current Iranian curriculum clearly teaches that scientific, rational thinking and creativity are encouraged—but not less so than mystical thinking, blind obedience to the Leader, militarism and child-martyrdom. And while readiness training for nuclear, biological and chemical war does not appear in the latest textbook editions, a new emphasis on the martyrdom of women, as well as cyber warfare now exists. The line separating life and death, heaven and earth, paranormal intervention and natural science is blurry and often indiscernible. In contrast, the line separating *good* (Iran) and *evil* (the West), is clear and unbridgeable within the curriculum.

Iranian youth are taught that Iran is committed to the mission of implementing its New Islamic Civilization around the world. They are taught to support "freedom fighters" everywhere and protect the homeland from ever-conspiring enemies. In other words, Iran is committed to *constantly* undermine other regimes and anticipate their ensuing hostility.

Students learn that no checks are needed on the Supreme Leader's authority, including his *right to sanctify new weapons*. They are taught to subscribe to an Iranian policy that is largely *irrational*—with the creation of a global utopia depicted as the only "right" program for humankind. More disturbingly, the schoolbooks advocate blind obedience (to the Supreme Leader), mystical communication with celestial beings, and a *jihad* war culminating in an apocalyptic battle. On the way to establishing the just world government of the future, students are encouraged to prepare the ground for the re-appearance of the hidden Mahdi, the Shiite Messiah, whose presence is with us like the sun behind the clouds.[262]

From the perspective of education and nation-building, Iran is attempting to create an alternative to the Western way of life. And for this, the authors of the curriculum have provided Iranian students with a wide array of tools for their future lives.

Unquestionably one can find within Iran's educational curriculum an emphasis on strong family values, morality, and commitment to one's friends, the Islamic Nation and the meek and oppressed. Alongside an emotional and mystical grasp of reality, and an uncompromising religious worldview, this might indeed appear to be a worthwhile experiment—combining the best of modernity with a serious link to the wisdom of the ages.

But this must be viewed within the harsh paradox that is simultaneously present in the selfsame curriculum that teaches Iranian children to hate and weaken their enemies—especially in the West—while extolling the virtue of suicidal martyrdom. Not a little discern-

262 *Religion and Life,* Grade 12, 2014–15 (1393), p. 108.

ment is required to understand such a dichotomy.

An evident split divides the rational, inclusive dimension of the curriculum from that of the mystical-totalitarian exclusive one. Some scholars believe that despite these "circles of inclusion and exclusion," aimed at identifying "outsiders" and their Iranian "Westoxicated" allies, the impact of the Iranian curriculum is limited: ". . . the sharp contrast between preaching and practice in the larger society has led Iranian youth to question the 'truth' of what is conveyed in the classroom."[263]

Indeed, the violent oppression in Iran itself—amid Iran-induced turmoil in places such as Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and Gaza—point to limitations of this worldview's convincing power. But the curriculum does not need to convince each and every individual—just *enough* radical leaders, committed military commanders, soldiers, scientists, technicians, legal experts, and a range of other key elements of Iranian society and the region—all led by an absolute Supreme Leader. Imperial dreams aside, the phantasmagoric character of this educational system must be factored into any assessment of Iran's intentions and plans for the future.

263 Golnar Mehran, "Iran: A Shi'ite Curriculum to Serve the Islamic State," in eds. Eleanor Abdella Doumato and Gregory Starrett, *Teaching Islam: Textbooks and Religion in the Middle East*. Boulder and London: Rienner, 2007, p. 69.

IMPACT-se Methodology

The following is an updated, condensed version of the IMPACT-se, UNESCO-derived standards for peace and tolerance in school education.[264]

(1) RESPECT: The curriculum should promote tolerance, understanding and respect toward the Other, his or her culture, achievements, values and way of life.[265]

(2) INDIVIDUAL OTHER: The curriculum should foster personal attachment toward the Other as an individual and his or her desire to be familiar, loved and appreciated.[266]

(3) NO HATE: The curriculum should be free of wording, imagery and ideologies likely to create prejudices, misconceptions, stereotypes, misunderstandings, mistrust, racial hatred, religious bigotry and national hatred, as well as any other form of hatred or contempt for other groups or peoples.[267]

(4) PEACE MAKING: The curriculum should develop capabilities for non-violent conflict resolution and promote peace.[268]

(5) UNBIASED INFORMATION: Educational materials (textbooks, workbooks, teachers' guides, maps, illustrations, aids) should be up-to-date, accurate, complete, balanced and unprejudiced, and use the same standard to promote mutual knowledge and understanding between different peoples.[269]

264 The methodology was initiated by Yohanan Manor and Jean-Claude Nidam. This is an updated version of the standards, prepared by Eldad J. Pardo, Jean-Claude Nidam and Shimon Shetreet (May 2014).

265 As defined in the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Articles 1, 4.2. See also the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding Between Peoples (1965), Principles I, III. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

266 The goal of education for peace is the development of universally recognized values in an individual regardless of different socio-cultural contexts. See ibid., Article 6. See also, on exchanges between youth, the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965), Principles IV, V.

267 Based on Ibid., Articles III.6, IV.7 and VII. 39; and on the Integrated Framework for Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, approved by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-eighth session, Paris, November 1995, Article 18. 2.

268 Based on the Integrated Framework for Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, approved by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-eighth session, Paris, November 1995, Article 9; and on the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Article 5.

269 Based on UNESCO recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, adopted by the General Conference at its eighteenth session, Paris, November 19, 1974, Article V.14.

(6) GENDER: The curriculum should foster equality and mutual respect between women and men. It should refrain from stereotyped gender roles.[270]

(7) SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY and COOPERATION: The curriculum should educate for sound and sustainable economic conduct and preservation of the environment for future generations. It should encourage regional and local cooperation to that effect.[271]

270 The preamble to the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, notes the Convention on the Elimination of Any Form of Discrimination against Women and emphasizes respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to gender.

271 Based on UNESCO recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, adopted by the General Conference at its eighteenth session, Paris, November 19, 1974, Articles III.6, and IV.7. On the imperative for developing "systematic and rational tolerance teaching methods that will address the cultural, social, economic, political and religious sources of intolerance," see the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Article 4.2. On education for international cooperation, see also the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965), Principle II.

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