

## Iran's young have been raised to aspire to international terrorism

Douglas Burton

June 28, 2015



For clues to Iran's long-range strategy, study what the regime consistently teaches its students about war, peace, jihad and the goals of revolution, say scholars at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In the "game of thrones" in the Middle East, a thorough study of what is taught in the K-12 curriculum of Iran may tell us more than whispers heard in the ayatollah's court.

Iran's children are being groomed for war and martyrdom from the earliest grades, according to Eldad Pardo, a research specialist at the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education in Jerusalem. His scholarly review of 80 textbooks and 20 teachers' guides deployed in Iran's public schools during the period from 2012 to 2015 confirms what earlier studies discovered, namely that the curriculum hammers the message that students should ready themselves for war at all times. Students are taught that Iran is leading a world Islamic revolution that will climax in an apocalyptic battle with the forces of "evil," such as the United States and its coalition states. The curriculum obscures the divide between majority Shia and the much smaller minority of Sunni Muslims, possibly to justify Iran's global leadership role.

"War curriculum and education for child martyrdom continues, beginning with the first grade all the way to grade 12. Until last year, the program included preparation for a nuclear war alongside biological and chemical warfare and the use of firearms," Mr. Pardo reports in "Imperial Dreams, the Paradox of Iranian Education."

With every passing day, Tehran gets closer to a nuclear accord with a Western coalition that seeks to roll back its nuclear arms buildup in exchange for a relaxation of trade sanctions that have crippled Iran's economy for 35 years. Iran's president announced on April 2 that a framework for a nuclear deal was just the first step toward a new opening to the world, after which Iranians greeted the announcement with celebrations in the streets. National security columnists, including former Virginia Gov. James Gilmore III, have argued that the agreement President Obama is negotiating is a bad deal for security in the Middle East and is, in fact, a modification of the Nonproliferation Treaty ratified by the Senate in 1970.

Meanwhile, the regime is training its youth for jihad and martyrdom as it has done consistently since the takeover of the apparatus of state power in 1979. "Iranian youth — at once seemingly so 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 is unending" the report states.

Another concern of the authors is the blind obedience demanded by the curriculum of ruling clerics, all of whom are believed to have extraordinary communications with angels and divine entities.

"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. (This essentially 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.”

Interestingly, the curriculum has taken a new turn in the last year. “Preparation for nuclear war was replaced in the current academic year with battle and martyrdom stories, with new emphasis on girl martyrs.” And one may wonder, what could be the need for girl martyrs 30 years after the end of Iran’s tragic war with Iraq? To some, the new reference is ominous.

True, a pedagogic study doesn’t reveal the production plan for nuclear bomb components, but it may show something as significant. One may argue that Iran’s grand strategy emphasizes the indoctrination of a small but decisive percentage of its large population of youth and young adults, some of whom later may be recruited as terrorists.

The Islamic State in neighboring Iraq has demonstrated to the world in just two years that having tens of thousands of fanatic, brutal, brainwashed young men in a war theater can almost neutralize 21st century airpower. And Iran has a big youth sector: More than 60 percent of the population is under 30.

The West is worried about Tehran having nukes when the more potent threat may be hundreds of thousands of radicalized youth in the classroom. Even if a small percentage of these commit themselves to violent jihad, there could be devastating consequences.

That is the conclusion of Michael Waller, political warfare analyst at the Center for Security Policy in Washington, D.C., who made the following observation about the report: “This [Iranian curriculum] could represent the first case in modern history of a state raising entire generations of children to aspire to become international terrorists. If allowed to continue, Iran’s mass brainwashing program could become more of a danger to the world than its nuclear weapons program.”

---

Douglas Burton is a former opinion editor for Insight on the News and served with a U.S. State Department official in Iraq from 2005 to 2007. Marios Eftymiopoulos is assistant professor of international security and strategy at the American University in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and CEO of Strategy International.