

A decolonial analysis of the Second Sacred Defense: the Twelve Day War

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Liberation of the mind: the fear of war has gone

In my book *Decolonizing The Mind - A Guide to Decolonial Theory and Practice* (Amrit Publishers, The Hague 2023) I give an analysis of an episode in the history of slavery in the USA about mental slavery. Frederick Douglass (1818-1895), a US icon in the struggle against enslavement gives an account of how he was freed from mental slavery through violence. His analysis of mental slavery is contained in the description of a physical confrontation with his enslaver, Mr. Covey. Covey wanted to beat Douglas as a form of punishment. Douglass: *"Mr. Covey entered the stable with a long rope; and just as I was half out of the loft, he caught hold of my legs, and was about tying me. As soon as I found what he was up to, I gave a sudden spring, and as I did so, he holding to my legs, I was brought sprawling on the stable floor. Mr. Covey seemed now to think he had me, and could do what he pleased; but at this moment—from whence came the spirit I don't know—I resolved to fight; and, suiting my action to the resolution, I seized Covey hard by the throat."* In the confrontation Douglass was successful in beating up his enslaver. He concluded: *"This battle with Mr. Covey was the turning-point in my career as a slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood. It recalled the departed self-confidence, and inspired me again with a determination to be free. The gratification afforded by the triumph was a full compensation for whatever else might follow, even death itself. He only can understand the deep satisfaction which I experienced, who has himself repelled by force the bloody arm of enslavement. I felt as I never felt before. It was a glorious resurrection, from the tomb of enslavement, to the heaven of freedom. My long-crushed spirit rose, cowardice departed, bold defiance took its place; and I now resolved that, however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact. I did not hesitate to let it be known of me, that the white man who expected to succeed in whipping me, must also succeed in killing me."*

There are four important conclusions to be drawn from Douglass' analysis of mental slavery. First, mental slavery is about the submission of the mind, a spirit that has been crushed, a form of weakness, a lack of self-confidence, it is about the mechanisms that have led to this state of mind. Second, liberation from mental slavery can come through self-realization, the awakening of a consciousness. Douglass recounts that his self-confidence rose during the fight when he realized that mental freedom could come from fighting back. It is not the result of study or something that someone tells you to do. It is the outcome of a process that takes places in your mind. Third, that process of change in the mind is the result of confrontation. The confrontation starts the process of awakening the spirit of liberation. Fourth, in a situation of brutal oppression violence can become a tool of liberation from mental slavery. It brings about a new knowledge about the hidden courage and strength of the enslaved and the weakness of the enslaver.

More than a century later Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) came up with a similar analysis in his discussion on the role of violence in the liberation struggle in Algeria: *"The violence which has ruled over the ordering of the colonial world, which has ceaselessly drummed the rhythm for the destruction of native social forms and broken up without reserve the systems of reference of the economy, the customs of dress and external life, that same violence will be claimed and taken over by the native at the moment when, deciding to embody history in his own person, he surges into the forbidden quarters."* On an individual level violence changes the colonized person: *"At the level of individuals,*

violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect."

The First Sacred Defence of the Islamic Republic

The Twelve Day War is the second Sacred Defense in the modern history of Iran. The first happened shortly after the Islamic Revolution. On February 1, 1979, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returned from exile, marking the final victory of the Islamic Revolution. One year later, on September 22, 1980, Iraq, under the leadership of Saddam Hussein, invaded Iran. Iraqi aircraft bombarded ten Iranian airfields, and the following day, Iraqi troops crossed the border, advancing into Iran to occupy the oil-rich region of Khuzestan. Saddam Hussein's ultimate goal was to topple the new Islamic government. However, he and his allies had miscalculated the strength of the Islamic Revolution. Within three months, the Iraqi invasion had stalled as the Iranian population mobilized to defend their revolution. Iran's counteroffensive eventually regained lost territory.

The war lasted eight years, from 1980 to 1988. During this time, Saddam Hussein employed chemical weapons against both civilians and military personnel in Iran, a violation of the Geneva Convention. Iraq received assistance from the United States, West Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and France in developing chemical weapons. These countries supplied Iraq with the raw materials needed for its chemical weapons factories. Around 200,000 Iranians died during the war. The Revolution won and became stronger than ever.

The Second Sacred Defence

This war that lasted for twelve days hung in the air for decades. In Iran the fear of an all out war against the USA and Israel determined the relationship of forces within Iran. Pro-Western did everything to avoid a war and kept insisting on dialogue with the West although the West continuously showed that it was not interested in dialogue but in submission by all means necessary, be it peaceful or violent. Anti-imperialist forces led by the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei were focussing on preparing for this battle. There were many instances in which they could have initiated a war: the assassination of General Suleimani, the bombing of the Iranian embassy in Syria, the assassination of Hamas leader Haniye in Tehran. They choose not to do so and exercised strategic patience. Some people interpreted this was weakness. When was Iran going to strike back? Is it because of fear?

As it no turns out, it was because of a long term vision on strategy. War is politics by other means. The strategy of Khamenei was based on building a broad unity in Iran, the region and the world to support Iran in an armed confrontation. The unity in Iran is of strategic importance, because disunity is the basis for military defeat. Enemy forces can penetrate defence and intelligence units with more ease.

Now that Israel and the USA decided to attack Iran, it has become much easier to rally forces in Iran, the region and the world for an armed attack by Iran on Israel. And the results are there: Iran won the armed confrontation. Israel is forced into asking for a ceasefire after they took a heavy beating.

If Iran would have refused to stop the bombing, it would loose the broad support it has gained. Supporters of Iran who are impatient and want to see the bombing go on until all of Israel is destroyed are short sighted. They argue for a dangerous strategy that could lead to the defeat of Iran in the long term.

The Zionists strategy was based on a knock out attack that would result in regime change. They lost.

The war everybody was afraid of, because it might end in a nuclear war, has taken place. The nuclear war did not occur, not because the Zionist did not want it, but because the Americans were not prepared for it. Iran as a nation lost its fear for a war with the USA. Its collective mind was liberated and that is thanks to the vision of Khamenei who led the Islamic Nation in the liberation of the mind. President Putin of Russia had to take a similar decision regarding Ukraine.

The Pandora Box

Iran's victory has opened a Pandora Box. Many issues that were entangled in complicated ways will now be playing out in the coming years.

The nuclear issue

Iran had a 'nuclear' weapon, but it did not use it. Israel has a nuclear reactor located at the Shimon Peres Negev Nuclear Research Center (commonly known as the Dimona reactor) that is situated in the Negev Desert, approximately 13 kilometers southeast of the city of Dimona. It is the core of Israel's nuclear weapons program. The reactor is producing plutonium for nuclear weapons. Iran could have bombed this reactor with conventional bombs, but then occupied Palestine would have been contaminated for generations to come.

A defense strategy of Iran is not based on having a nuclear weapon. Iran won the first open war with Israel without nuclear weapons. Israel forced the USA into a nuclear confrontation and Trump backed down. The fatwa of Ali Khamenei was a wise fatwa. As Iran does not need a nuclear weapon it can use the fear of the West of its nuclear weapon to put on the agenda: a nuclear free West Asia. Israel should dismantle its nuclear weapon and a new international body should supervised this. In more general term, the whole question of nuclear disarmament of the world will be part of the discussion of the nuclear issue.

A new world order

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN and other international institutions has proved to be worthless in ensuring that the world can live in peace. Now, more than ever, the discussion would go into what kind of international institutions humanity needs to ensure its survival and prevent a nuclear war. And this process will move on thanks to Iran's victory in the war.

The liberation of Palestine

Mohammad Marandi, who is writing a book with me on understanding the Iranian Revolution, has repeatedly said that the war is not about nuclear weapons of Iran. It is about Iran's support for Palestine. The genocide in Gaza will end soon, because it was the stepping stone for the final attack on Iran by Israel. Israel lost, and the call for releasing the Israeli prisoners will become stronger. The ceasefire will extent to Palestine, and this is because of Iran's victory.

Iranofobia

Decades of Iranofobia has prevented pro-Palestine activists in the West to appreciate the anti-imperialism of the Islamic Revolution of Iran. Many succumbed to Iranofobia. Iran's victory in the war has changed this in a dramatic way. Now these activists would like Iran to continue the war and not agree to a ceasefire. Ramon Grosfoguel, the president of the Decolonial International Network Foundation, of which I am the secretary, calls for an anti-imperialism of the 21st century. The anti-imperialism of the 20th century was secular. The anti-imperialism of the 21st century is an alliance of religious and secular forces. We have to build this alliance in the coming years.

Israel is loosing its support in the West

The political elite in the USA was dominated by the Zionist lobby. The war brought new anti-Zionist forces into play in the political elite that want to end the unrestricted dominance of Zionism in American politics. They call for an end to the US support for Israel. That was unimaginable before the war. The war has changed this. Now the support for Israel can not be taken for granted.

The relationship of forces in Western Asia

Many Muslim countries in Western Asia accepted the superiority of Israel military power as a fact and based their policies on this acceptance. Now it turned out that Israel can be

defeated in an all out war, elements in their political establishment will reconsider their support for Israel and will be more open to working with Iran in changing the fate of Western Asia.

The next confrontation

There will be a next confrontation. Iran's diplomacy will change from an instrument to avoid war to an instrument of war when the time is there. Iran can now put demands on the table and can mobilize Muslim countries and the BRICS to support these demands. They will include demands to disarm nuclear Israel and a final solution for Palestine. Israel will have to decide when to take the foolish decision for a new war. Now everybody knows how that war might end. Before this war the uncertainty determined the position of key players in the region and the world.

A decolonial analysis

This is a decolonial analysis because it regards this war not as just another war. It is a war that can potentially changed the course of history. It is based on the concept of the transition from a colonial world civilization to a new world civilization. The foundation of a civilization is knowledge production. That foundation provides the ideas for setting up economic, social, political and cultural institutions. The colonial world civilization was based on the European Enlightenment that provided the justification for colonialism. It claims to be universal and secular. A new world civilization will be pluriversal and include spirituality as the foundation of new institutions. It requires a process of decolonizing the mind.

The Second Sacred Defense has put Decolonizing The Mind on the global agenda.

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