

Why the World Needs a Free and Civic Iran

Prof.dr Darko Trifunovic,
(Senior Research Fellow of RIEAS)

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The future of Iran is not merely an Iranian domestic issue, nor is it a question limited to regional geopolitics. It is a matter of global strategic importance. The international community does not



benefit from a weakened, isolated, or perpetually sanctioned Iran, nor from an Iran defined by fear, repression, and ideological export. What the world genuinely needs is a **free, civic, and modern Iran**—a state grounded in citizenship rather than theology, cooperation rather than confrontation, and innovation rather than coercion. This is not an argument against faith, tradition,

or identity. It is an argument for governance, dignity, and civilization. **Iran is one of the oldest continuous civilizations in human history. Long before the emergence of modern nation-states, Persian civilization developed sophisticated systems of administration, law, infrastructure, and cultural coexistence. Ancient Persia contributed decisively to the evolution of governance, tolerance toward diversity, and the organization of complex societies. These contributions were not confined to a single region; they shaped the broader foundations of global civilization.**

To understand Iran solely through the lens of the last four decades is therefore historically inaccurate and intellectually shallow. The current political-theocratic structure represents a rupture with Iran's deeper civilizational trajectory rather than its natural continuation.

Iranians are an Indo-European people, linguistically and culturally connected to a broader civilizational family that includes Europe and large parts of Asia. Persian language, literature, philosophy, science, and art form part of humanity's shared heritage. Iran's natural place is not at the margins of the international system, nor in ideological isolation, but among open societies that value knowledge, creativity, and lawful governance. Reintegrating Iran into this space is not an act of charity; ***it is a restoration of historical balance.***

A civic Iran would profoundly transform the global security environment. Today, the country's immense human capital is constrained, misdirected, or forced into exile. Instead of exporting instability through proxy networks, ideological militancy, and coercive influence, a free Iran could export intelligence, innovation, and technological sophistication. Iranian society has repeatedly demonstrated extraordinary potential in science, engineering, medicine, mathematics, and emerging technologies. Where Iranians have been allowed to operate freely—often outside their own country—they have excelled. A state that empowers this potential rather than suppresses it would become a net contributor to global stability, economic growth, and scientific progress.

The transformation required is not theological but political. Modern governance demands a clear separation between religious authority and state power. Religion, in any society, belongs to the sphere of personal belief, community life, and spiritual guidance. When religious leaders dominate political institutions, security structures, and executive power, accountability collapses, dissent becomes heresy, and governance turns into coercion justified by divine claims. No modern parliamentary democracy can function under such conditions. This is not hostility toward religion; it is respect for it. Faith loses moral authority when the state enforces it, and the state loses legitimacy when it claims sacred infallibility.

In a civic Iran, religious leaders would fulfill their essential role within religious institutions, while political authority would rest with elected representatives accountable to citizens. A modern parliamentary democracy would allow pluralism, compromise, and peaceful competition for power, ensuring that the state serves all citizens regardless of belief, gender, or background. Such a system would immediately reduce internal repression and external aggression, because legitimacy would derive from consent rather than fear.

Within this framework, the restoration of a constitutional monarchy could serve as a stabilizing and unifying element during transition. A monarch without absolute executive power, acting as a symbolic head of state, could connect Iran to the global family of constitutional monarchies and long-established diplomatic traditions. This would not represent a return to authoritarianism, but rather a bridge between Iran's historical continuity and its democratic future. Symbolically and diplomatically, such a model could rapidly normalize Iran's international relations, signaling predictability, continuity, and commitment to peaceful governance.

Crucially, Iran needs peace and transition, not chaos and bloodshed. History demonstrates that regimes that rely on violence against their own citizens ultimately lose both legitimacy and control. Repression does not preserve the state; it accelerates its collapse. Any political-theocratic elite that believes it can indefinitely rule through fear is misreading both Iranian society and global history. The spilling of citizens' blood creates wounds that no ideology can heal. It radicalizes society, destroys institutions, and closes the door to negotiated solutions.

A peaceful transition is not a sign of weakness. It is the final expression of responsibility. Dialogue, restraint, and compromise are the only paths that preserve the state while transforming the system. The alternative—escalating violence and repression—leads inevitably to isolation, fragmentation, and historical condemnation.

For the world, the emergence of a free and civic Iran would have immediate and far-reaching benefits. It would reduce regional tensions, weaken transnational extremist networks, stabilize critical energy corridors, and open one of the most educated and dynamic societies in the Middle East to genuine cooperation. Iran would cease to be perceived as a permanent security threat and

instead become a strategic partner in addressing global challenges ranging from energy transition to technological development.

The choice facing Iran is therefore not between tradition and modernity, nor between identity and openness. It is a choice between isolation and participation, fear and dignity, coercion and competence. Iran belongs in the world, not against it. A free, civic, and peaceful Iran would not only restore justice and prosperity to its own people but also reconnect one of humanity's great civilizations to its rightful role in shaping a stable and cooperative international order.

This is why the future of Iran matters not only to Iranians but to global security, global development, and the shared civilizational heritage that think-tank such as RIEAS seek to analyze, protect, and advance.