

Howard “Dizzy” Dean and “The Farthest Thing From an Islamic Republic”

Howard Dean, he of [the shriek](#) heard round the world, [claims to know](#) that present-day Iran has nothing to do with Islam. Of course, he could only conclude that if he knew a lot about Islam (and Iran). Well, so many people seem to know all about Islam these days – Barack Obama, Jeh Johnson, John Kerry, Theresa May, the Pope – so why not Howard Dean? Let’s see what he has to say.

Howard Dean insists that the Islamic Republic of Iran is “the farthest thing from an Islamic Republic.” Strange, then, that Iran should call itself that. Stranger still – given that Howard Dean adds that he “doesn’t consider Iran a Muslim country” – that Iran’s leaders are Shia clerics who have instituted a parliamentary theocracy, with an ayatollah as Supreme Leader and a Council of Guardians who make sure that no law passed by the Majlis, the Iranian parliament, violates the Sharia. But still, let’s hear Howard Dean out. Perhaps he understands something about the hard-to-detect inner essential non-Islamness of Iran that has escaped the rest of us.

Let’s start with his claim that Iran is “a republic that’s been hijacked by thugs and murderers.” It’s not the “thugs and murderers” part that is troublesome – that’s unarguable – but the part about hijacking, for that implies an illegal seizure of power. All of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s past presidents – Ali Khamenei, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Mohammad Khatami and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad – each served for two terms, and Hassan Rouhani is the current President. And all of them, just like all the members of Iran’s unicameral *majlis*, were duly elected by direct election and universal suffrage. Howard Dean may not like those “thugs and murderers,” but a

majority of people in the Islamic Republic of Iran apparently approve of them. There was no illegitimate seizure of power by “thugs” and “murderers.” There was no “hijacking.”

What about the role of Islam in the Iranian government? Can we find a hint of Islam in this country which is, according to Dean, not “a Muslim country” and “the farthest thing from an Islamic Republic”?

The founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran was the Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, the highest ranking cleric in Shia Islam. He was given the title of Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution (“Supreme Leader” for short). His successor, Ayatollah Khamenei, is still in office and, like Khomeini, making sure that Iran is kept safe for Shia Islam. Then there are the twelve members of the Council of Guardians, whose main responsibility is to decide which new laws are compatible with, and which may possibly contradict, the Sharia. And if any law is held to violate the Sharia, it is sent back to the Parliament for revision.

But let’s look a little more into the workings of this country which is the “farthest thing from an Islamic Republic.”

When the Ayatollah Khomeini came to power, within months of the founding of the [Islamic Republic of Iran](#), the 1967 Family Protection Law was repealed; female government workers were forced to observe Islamic dress code; women were barred from becoming judges; beaches and sports were sex-segregated; the legal age of marriage for girls was reduced to 9. Anything here sound as if it might have something to do with Islam? Why did he reduce the marriageable age of girls to 9? Do you think Howard Dean knows the reason? What about that Islamic dress code – might those hijabs and chadors and soorooshes now required of female government workers have something to do with Islam? And why were beaches sex-segregated when Khomeini came to power? Anything to do with Islam, in this polity which is the “farthest thing from an Islamic Republic”?

Just a few more questions before the bell sounds for recess.

What happens to adulterers in the Islamic Republic of Iran?

They are stoned to death.

What happens to those convicted of blasphemy in the Islamic Republic of Iran?

They are subject to long imprisonment or capital punishment.

What happens to those convicted of homosexuality in Iran?

They are executed, usually by hanging.

What can happen to apostates in the Islamic Republic of Iran?

They can be executed.

What happens to those who consume alcohol, or violate the rules for hijab?

They can be flogged.

Where do all these punishments come from? They come from the Sharia, that is, the Holy Law of Islam, on which both the civil and criminal laws of the Islamic Republic of Iran are based, though the Sharia is not followed precisely in every case. For example, long-term imprisonment is sometimes imposed for crimes which, under Sharia, would always be punishable by death. But those rare examples of leniency hardly support Dean's assertion that the Islamic Republic of Iran is "the farthest thing from an Islamic Republic," by which he meant, in any case, not that Iran was more lenient, but rather more savage in its punishments than a "real" (good, kind) Islamic Republic would be.

"There is no organized religion which is a legitimate religion which condones this kind of behavior." *Also sprach* Howard Dean. Read over that sentence a few times to see if you can make it make sense. I think what Dean may be trying to say is

something like this: Islam is an “organized religion” – and not merely a “cult” – because it’s been around a long time, and the sheer number of its adherents commands, for many, respect. And there are two kinds of “organized” religion. The “illegitimate” kind is the one that condones behavior of which Howard Dean disapproves. The “legitimate” kind is the one does not condone behavior of which Howard Dean disapproves. And because Iran has “some of the highest rates of execution in the world, torturing political prisoners, one of the worst human rights records in the world”–all things of which Howard Dean disapproves – then Iran, the Islamic Republic of Iran, run by ayatollahs and other clerics, cannot be “a Muslim country.”

Come again? Oh, if you have to ask, you cannot afford Howard Dean. He doesn’t have to read the Qur’an or Hadith or Sira to know what the real Islam, the legitimate Islam, is like. He doesn’t have to know, doesn’t appear even to want to know, how Muslims have treated non-Muslims over the past 1400 years. He only has to consult with his own interior conscience to decide what is the real Islam, which has nothing to do with today’s Iran, and what is the false Islam, which does. He doesn’t consider Iran to be a Muslim country because he “doesn’t know Muslims who behave like that who I respect.” The kind of Muslims he knows and respects – the “real Muslims” – are ones who would not “behave like that.” Or the kind of Muslims he knows and doesn’t respect because they would “behave like that” cannot be real Muslims. Once they do bad things, “Muslims” cease to be real Muslims, because real Muslims don’t do bad things. If you are feeling dizzy, thank Howard Dean, who is not only incoherent but a cause of incoherence in other men. Round and round his “argument” goes, and where it will stop, nobody knows. Not even Howard Dean.

Howard Dean lives in a dream-world where the bad therefore not-Muslim-at-all Shia Muslims who run the non-Muslim Islamic Republic of Iran are “thugs, murderers,” and those other

nothing-to-do-with-Islam Sunni Muslims of the Islamic State are to be dismissed on mental health grounds – according to Dean, “they’re crazy, I think they’re lunatics, pathetic lunatics.” No adducing of facts, no application of logic, no reference to Islamic texts or history, no awareness of how the Islamic State justifies its every move and act of terror by reference to the Qur’an and Hadith. None of that for Howard Dean. These ISIS members whom he dismisses as “pathetic lunatics” seem to have done quite well. They have held off for several years all attempts in Syria by the Syrian Army, and the Russian Air Force, and in Iraq by the Iraqi Army and the American Air Force, to destroy them.

These “pathetic lunatics” have managed to establish operational branches in 18 countries, have carried out or inspired major attacks in Paris, Brussels, Nice, Wurzburg, San Bernardino, and elsewhere, and have killed more than 2,200 victims in two dozen countries. Most importantly, these “pathetic lunatics” have great appeal for many Muslims all over the world, including doctors, lawyers, engineers, academics who have joined or attempted to join them, or have pledged allegiance to help their cause from within the West. Like Obama, Howard Dean doesn’t want “to give them any legitimacy” – as if the legitimacy of any group of Muslims (e.g., Islamic State, Hamas, Hizballah) in the eyes of more than a billion Muslims depended on the likes of Howard Dean.

How many Christians wait to see what some Muslim cleric in Cairo says before making up their minds about whether Mormons, or Seventh Day Adventists, or some other group, are “real Christians”? Neither in Iran, nor in the Islamic State, do Muslims, Shia or Sunni, care what Howard Dean thinks about them; they know who they are, and they will cheerfully quote ayat and surah in justification of their every deed of atrocious derring-do. Howard Dean insists – let’s hold that bewildering sentence up for inspection one final time – “there is no organized religion which is a legitimate religion which

condones this kind of behavior.” Otherwise expressed, also one final excruciating time: if any religion condones the kind of behavior – executions, torture, that sort of thing – that these self-described Muslims engage in in Iran and the Islamic State, then it can’t be a “legitimate” religion. But we know – don’t we? – that Islam is a “legitimate” religion. That’s what everyone says. And therefore, these people in Iran who condone these atrocities, or commit these atrocities themselves, can’t be real Muslims, even if they happen to be grand ayatollahs. Dean knows. *Ipse dixit*, and *dixit*, and *dixit*, and you can rub your eyes all you want in disbelief, till the cows come home from somewhere in upstate Vermont, but Howard Dean will remain dizzily steadfast in his stupidity.

First published in