Beat: Politics

Maybe Karma? France, Khomeini, and the Price of Political Choices

Maybe Karma? History Never Forgets

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USPA NEWS - History moves forward, but it never forgets.

On October 12, 1978, Ruhollah Khomeini arrived in France after leaving Iraq. He settled in Neauphle-le-Château, outside Paris, where he continued his political activities and communicated with supporters and international media.

On January 31, 1979, Khomeini departed France aboard an Air France flight. He arrived in Tehran on February 1, marking a decisive moment in the Iranian Revolution.

The Islamic Republic was subsequently established under his leadership.

France did not create the Iranian Revolution alone, nor does its decision to host Khomeini prove that it intended to establish the political system that followed. Nevertheless, the historical record raises a legitimate question about the consequences of decisions made by foreign governments during periods of political upheaval.

For many Iranians, the events of 1978 and 1979 remain central to understanding the country's subsequent political trajectory.

History cannot be rewritten, but the responsibility to examine its consequences remains.

Source: Encyclopaedia Iranica, "Khomeini i. Life."

January 8–9, 2026: The Human Cost of Demanding Freedom

The struggle for political freedom in Iran has come at an extraordinary human cost.

On January 8, 2026, nationwide protests escalated, followed by a deadly crackdown by Iranian security forces on January 8–10. Human Rights Watch reported on January 16 that thousands of protesters and bystanders were believed to have been killed, while restrictions on communications made it difficult to establish the full death toll.

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International documented the unlawful use of firearms, including rifles and shotguns, against protesters. Their investigations described shootings that killed and seriously injured demonstrators, including children.

Reports and eyewitness accounts also described heavily armed security forces and the use of automatic weapons.

These events demand international scrutiny, independent investigations, and accountability for unlawful killings.

For Iranians who took to the streets demanding freedom and fundamental rights, the events of January 8 and 9 became a devastating reminder of the risks of challenging the authorities.

Their deaths should not be reduced to a diplomatic talking point or a statistic in an international political dispute.

The Right to Freedom Without Fear of Death

The central issue is the right of people to demand freedom without being met with unlawful lethal force.

Sources: Human Rights Watch, January 16, 2026; Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, January 2026\.

February 28, 2026: War and the Divisions Within the West

On February 28, 2026, the United States and Israel launched military strikes against Iran, opening a new and dangerous phase in the confrontation.

The war placed European governments under pressure to balance their relationships with Washington, their security commitments, international law, and the risk of further regional escalation.

France did not fully align itself with the offensive military campaign.
Its position reflected a distinction between defending allies and participating in offensive operations against Iran.

This distinction matters.
A government can oppose the Iranian authorities' repression while also questioning the legality, objectives, or consequences of military action against Iran.
Equally, diplomatic engagement with Tehran does not automatically demonstrate support for the Islamic Republic's domestic policies.

The question for European governments is whether their decisions advance the interests and security of their citizens while respecting the rights and aspirations of the Iranian people.

The war exposed significant disagreements among Western allies over how those competing responsibilities should be balanced\.

Source: Reuters, reporting on the US-Israeli military campaign and European responses, March 2026.

March 31, 2026: France Refuses Certain Military Overflights

A significant diplomatic dispute emerged on March 31, 2026, when Reuters reported that France had refused permission for certain Israeli aircraft carrying US military weapons destined for Israel to cross French airspace.

The decision concerned specific flights and military supplies associated with the war against Iran. It did not amount to a blanket closure of French airspace to all American military aircraft.

President Donald Trump publicly criticised France over the decision, accusing Paris of being unhelpful to the US-led effort.

The episode highlighted the growing divide between Washington and several European governments over military support for the campaign.

France's decision can be interpreted as an attempt to limit its direct involvement in offensive operations. Critics, however, may argue that restricting military assistance undermines the campaign's objectives.

The distinction is important: the available reporting establishes a dispute over specific military overflights, not proof that France prevented every American fighter jet from reaching Iran.

Nevertheless, the episode raises a broader question about France's role in the conflict and its approach to the future of the Iranian political system.

Was Paris prioritising diplomatic de- escalation, limiting its military involvement, or pursuing a broader strategic interest?

The decision alone does not establish a single motive\.

Sources: Reuters, March 31, 2026; Le Monde, April 1, 2026.

The Price at the Pump: What French Motorists Are Paying

The economic consequences of geopolitical instability are also felt far beyond the battlefield.

Fuel prices provide one visible measure of the pressure facing households, although they are influenced by several factors, including crude oil prices, refining costs, taxation, distribution expenses, and market conditions.

For a consistent comparison, the following figures concern SP95-E10 petrol in France:

January 7, 2026, before the war: approximately €1.680 per litre.
March 20, 2026, during the conflict: approximately €1.936 per litre.
October 18, 2026, latest daily estimate used here: approximately €2.16 per litre.
The January 7 and March 20 figures were reported by Roole Data. The October figure is an indicative daily estimate, not an official monthly average published by INSEE.

On this comparison, the price rose by roughly 48 cents per litre between January 7 and October 18, an increase of approximately 29%.

For a motorist filling a 50-litre tank, that difference represents roughly €24 more per fill.

However, the comparison does not prove that the war alone caused the increase.

Establishing the precise contribution of the conflict would require a detailed analysis of oil markets, taxes, refining, distribution, and other economic factors.

The figures nevertheless illustrate the financial pressure that higher fuel costs can place on ordinary households.

Sources: Roole Data, January 7 and March 20, 2026; INSEE's official monthly fuel\-price series; daily fuel-price estimates for October 2026.

Mr. Macron, Whose Interests Are Being Served?

France's historical relationship with Khomeini, the killings of Iranian protesters in January, the war that began in February, and the dispute over military overflights in March are distinct events. They should not be treated as proof of a single hidden policy or a direct causal chain.

Yet together, they raise important questions about political responsibility.

France gave Khomeini a place from which to continue his political activities before his return to Iran in 1979.
Decades later, France sought to limit certain forms of military cooperation during a war involving the Islamic Republic.

Those positions emerged in very different historical circumstances.
But they invite scrutiny of the choices governments make when strategic interests, diplomatic negotiations, human rights, and public opinion come into conflict.

The Iranian people who demanded freedom deserve independent investigations into the killings, accountability for unlawful violence, and the opportunity to determine their own political future.

French citizens, meanwhile, deserve transparency about their government's decisions and a serious response to their economic and social concerns.

The price of petrol cannot, by itself, establish the consequences of France's foreign policy. Nor can the country's current domestic difficulties be attributed to its historical relationship with Khomeini without evidence.

But democratic accountability requires governments to explain their decisions and confront their consequences.

Mr. Macron, why were the voices of a people with an ancient civilization, a rich history, and a deep love of peace not heard when their freedom was at stake?

And today, as French households confront the rising cost of living, one final question remains:

Mr. Macron, how much does a litre of petrol cost in France today, and what responsibility should governments accept when their political decisions affect ordinary people?

THE PRICE OF LOOKING AWAY: HORMUZ, EUROPE AND THE FUTURE OF IRAN

The consequences of political decisions do not stop at national borders. And when a government uses repression at home and threatens a vital international shipping route abroad, the consequences can reach families thousands of kilometres away.

This is not a hypothetical concern.

The Strait of Hormuz, between Iran and Oman, is one of the world's most important energy chokepoints. According to the US Energy Information Administration, approximately 20.9 million barrels of oil per day passed through the strait during the first half of 2025, equivalent to around one-fifth of global petroleum liquids consumption. Alternative routes cannot replace all those supplies.

When shipping through this narrow passage is threatened or disrupted, the consequences can spread through global energy markets. Oil and transport costs can rise. Businesses face higher expenses. Electricity, heating, food distribution and everyday goods can become more expensive. The final bill does not arrive in Tehran alone. It reaches households in Berlin, Paris, Hamburg, London and cities across the United States.

For a German family already struggling with rent, heating bills and the cost of groceries, this is not an abstract geopolitical calculation. It can mean less money left at the end of the month. For a small business, it can mean higher delivery costs and lower margins. For a worker who depends on a car to reach a job, another increase at the pump can become a real financial burden.

The Iranian authorities' ability to threaten this international waterway is therefore not simply a regional issue. It is a matter of international economic security.

Reuters reported on October 18, 2026, that Tehran was still offering to reopen the Strait of Hormuz under conditions tied to negotiations with Washington. Earlier reporting described escalating threats to commercial shipping and Iranian efforts to restrict passage. These developments demonstrate how access to a critical international route can become leverage in a political and military confrontation.

The lesson should be unmistakable: when a government can threaten a major energy artery, the consequences of its decisions extend far beyond the people living under its rule.

This is why European governments, including Germany and France, and the United States must distinguish between diplomacy that genuinely reduces danger and political accommodation that merely postpones it. Dialogue can be necessary. Negotiations can prevent bloodshed. But engagement must not become an excuse to overlook executions, mass repression, arbitrary detention or threats to international shipping.

Nor should the Iranian people be confused with the government that rules them.

Millions of Iranians have their own aspirations, fears, families and hopes for a different future. Those who protested for freedom did not ask to become instruments in a struggle between foreign powers. They demanded dignity, rights and the opportunity to determine their own country's future. The killings documented by human rights organisations make it impossible to treat their demands as a minor detail in diplomatic negotiations.

Supporting the survival of the Islamic Republic without confronting its conduct carries a serious risk: it can strengthen the position of authorities who have shown a willingness to use lethal force against their own citizens and who can use regional instability as a source

of leverage. That does not mean every diplomatic contact amounts to support for repression. It means that governments must judge engagement by its results, not by the mere fact that talks are taking place.

Does diplomacy protect civilians? Does it reduce threats to international shipping? Does it produce verifiable limits on dangerous behaviour? Does it improve the prospects for human rights and accountability? Or does it simply buy time for the same problems to return, potentially at a higher cost?

These are questions European and American leaders should answer openly to their own citizens.

For the United States, the risks include military escalation, threats to commercial shipping and further instability in global energy markets. For Europe, the consequences can include more expensive energy, renewed inflationary pressure and greater economic uncertainty.

For Germany, whose households and industries are sensitive to energy prices, disruptions to international supply routes are a direct economic concern.

None of this means that military action is automatically the answer. War can kill civilians, destabilise entire regions and create consequences that no government can fully control. But neither is indefinite accommodation a strategy simply because it avoids an immediate confrontation. A policy that fails to address the underlying threats can leave future governments and ordinary citizens paying for the same unresolved crisis.

The real choice is not between war and pretending that nothing is wrong. It is between a policy that combines diplomacy with clear conditions, enforceable commitments and accountability, and one that allows dangerous behaviour to continue without meaningful consequences.

The international community must also avoid abandoning the Iranian people to a false choice between domestic repression and foreign military intervention.

Their rights do not depend on whether their government is useful to a foreign capital, and their future should not be decided by either the Islamic Republic's leadership or outside powers acting solely in their own interests.

History offers a warning, not a guarantee. France's decision to host Khomeini in 1978 did not, by itself, determine the future of Iran. Nor can today's decisions be reduced to a simple replay of that moment. But history repeatedly demonstrates the danger of underestimating political movements, overlooking the consequences of short-term calculations and assuming that distant crises will remain distant.

To Europeans, Americans and Germans, the question is no longer whether developments in Iran concern them. The risks to human rights, international shipping, energy security and economic stability show that they do.

The question is whether their governments will act before the next crisis makes the price of inaction even higher.

Mr. Macron. German leaders. American leaders.

A government that shoots people demanding freedom must be held accountable for those actions. A government that threatens a vital international shipping route must be confronted with credible diplomatic and economic consequences. And any government that engages with Tehran must explain what that engagement achieves for human rights, regional stability and the security of its own citizens.

The people of Iran deserve the freedom to choose their future. The people of Europe and America deserve governments that protect their security without sacrificing their principles.

Because when political leaders choose short-term convenience over long-term responsibility, ordinary people are often the ones who pay the price: at the petrol station, in their heating bills, in their businesses, and sometimes with their lives.

History does not punish governments through fate or karma. It exposes the consequences of their choices.

And when those consequences arrive, it is rarely the decision-makers who pay first.

Sources: US Energy Information Administration, World Oil Transit Chokepoints; Reuters, October 14 and October 18, 2026, reporting on threats to shipping in the Strait of Hormuz and negotiations over its reopening; Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, January 2026, reporting on the crackdown against protesters in Iran.

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