



Iran's Foreign Policy: From Khatami to Ahmadinejad

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This timely collection of papers by leading academics and prominent government officials sheds new light on the foreign policy of Iran under President Khatami and on into the period of President Ahmadinejad. Iran's foreign policy during this period was based on four fundamental principles: the rejection of all forms of foreign domination, the preservation of the independence of the country and its territorial integrity, the defense of the rights of all Muslims, and the maintenance of mutually peaceful relations with all non-belligerent states. Now available in paperback, Iran's Foreign Policy examines the implications of these principles, and provides an analysis of Iran's diplomacy with regard to ongoing developments, such as the war on terror, the continuing conflict in Iraq, American-Iranian relations, British-Iranian relations, European-Iranian relations, and Arab-Iranian relations.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Revising an edited book is a challenging task. The editors have basically two choices. First they could ask their contributors to update their chapters, as David Lesch and Mark Haas have done in producing five editions of *The Middle East And The United States* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2012). The other alternative is to keep the original chapters as they are, and include a final, updated chapter. The latter choice was made by Ehteshami and Zweiri, with mixed results. While the final chapter, by the editors, is very solid, and captures the essence of Ahmadinejad's policies, the book would have been improved had a number of chapters, especially the ones on the relations between the European states and Iran, been updated. That having been said, several of the chapters stand the test of time. R.K. Ramazani, perhaps the Dean of Iranian scholars living in the United States, has produced an excellent introductory chapter, comparing pre-Islamic, Islamic, and Revolutionary Iran and noting some major communalities. Another very solid contribution is Judith Yaphe's chapter, "The United States and Iran in Iraq: Risks and Opportunities" which outlines the key issues, especially since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. This is a chapter that should have been updated, given the U.S.-Iran struggle over influence in Iraq in the Maliki era. The same could be said for Zweiri's chapter on Arab-Iranian relations which also goes into depth on Iranian-Iraqi relations. In addition, Zweiri goes into great detail on the Sunni-Shia conflict as well as on the impact of Iran's nuclear program on the Arab World; additionally, the book would have been improved had this chapter been updated to cover the critical years 2006-2010. Two chapters are devoted to relations between Iran and the United Kingdom. Both are written by diplomatic practitioners with experience in Iran - Christopher Rundle and Michael Axworthy - and both give the reader a good feel for the dynamics as well as the frustrations of Western diplomats who deal with Iran. The two chapters on European-Iranian relations are the weakest in the volume, as they simply do not stand the test of time. Thus in his chapter, "Iranian-European Relations: A strategic Partnership?" , Shahriar Sabet-Saeidi, asserts "Even with a conservative president in Iran (Ahmadinejad) and closer ties between the United States and European countries, especially Germany and France, Europeans are still trying to avoid imposing unilateral sanctions against Iran - " (p. 68). Clearly this situation has changed as the EU is now taking a very aggressive position on anti-Iran sanctions. Similarly, in her chapter "Iran: Caught between EU-US Rivalry?" Anastasia Th. Drenou , writing from a perspective unsympathetic to the United States, sees Iranian issues "as safe ground for Europe to contest American hegemony" (p. 78), and "the European Union has chosen Iran as its 'test subject' to stand up to U.S. interventionism" (p. 84). Here too, the chapter needs, if not a change in perspective, then an unbiased update detailing how U.S.-EU cooperation on Iran has greatly improved. In sum, while the book has some useful material, it would definitely have been strengthened by the contributors updating their chapters. Hopefully, the editors will consider a third edition of the book, this time updating all the chapters to include the entire period of the Ahmadinejad presidency."

Review by Dr. Robert O. Freedman, Johns Hopkins University

About the Author

Professor Anoushiravan Ehteshami is Head of the School of Government and International Affairs and Professor of International Relations at the University of Durham. Dr Mahjoob Zweiri is the former Director of the Centre for Iranian Studies at the University of Durham and a Senior Researcher in Middle East Politics and Iran at the Centre for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan.

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