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Anoush Ehteshami & Mahjoob Zweiri. eds. Iran's Foreign Policy from Khatami to Ahmadinejad. Reading, Berkshire, United Kingdom: Ithaca Press, 2008.

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Anoush Ehteshami & Mahjoob Zweiri. eds. *Iran's Foreign Policy from Khatami to Ahmadinejad*. Reading, Berkshire, United Kingdom: Ithaca Press, 2008.

This edited work enables the reader to better understand the international aspects of Iranian politics during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The book demonstrates that Iran's foreign policy is largely determined by global and regional developments and how these policy decisions have impacted international security. By focusing on the years from Khatami to Ahmadinejad, the text illustrates the tension that exists between the classics, conservatives, reformists, and neoconservatives in the Iranian government and how these contrasting worldviews have affected the formation of Iranian foreign policy.

The first of nine chapters is authored by R.K. Ramazani, who goes back to pre-Islamic Persia to locate the origins of the two most enduring characteristics of Iranian governance: the link between independence and freedom and the divine right of Persian rulers. Ramazani argues that independence has often taken precedent over freedom, resulting in a 'freedom deficit.' He explains that historically, the relationship between "sovereignty and tyranny [have gone] together and this [partnership has become] one of the most enduring features of Iranian governance" (3). He concludes that due to Iran's geostrategic position and its energy resources, the protection of Iran's independence has taken precedence over the freedom of its people.

While Ramazani provides a good historical background, Ali Akbar Rezaei acquaints the reader with the major theoretical debates surrounding Iran's foreign policy. Rezaei concludes that Iranian foreign policy does not fit into any particular theory, so he proposes a hybrid model "from Wendtian constructivism and the English school of international relations" (33). Quoting Fred Chernoff, Rezaei posits that "one never rejects a theory, regardless of the falsifiable evidence, unless there is an alternative theory available to take its place" (32). In addition to theoretical analysis, Rezaei discusses U.S.-Iranian relations and contends that Iran's foreign policy dilemma is the result of tension between a status quo policy and a nation with regional and global ambitions. Like Rezaei, Ramazani, too, touches on U.S.-Iranian relations and posits that the two nations remain at a turning point in 2009 but suggests that "if Iran and the United States each wait for the other to behave itself, relations between the two countries will remain frozen, as they have been between Cuba and the United States" (10). He suggests that a 'mutual satanization' prevents both nations from realizing that they have common interests.

Judith Yaphe shows that the American occupation of Iraq has galvanized Iran's desire to replace American hegemony in the region with its own governance. (Incidentally, however, she claims that as a result of U.S. involvement in the region and the removal of Saddam Hussein from power, "from Iran's perspective, it has finally won its war with Iraq") (41). She emphasizes that the competition between Iran and the United States for influence in Iraq is crucial to the future of the Middle East and U.S.-Iranian relations. Anoushiravan Ehteshami refers to relations between Iran, Iraq, and the United States as the 'Decisive Triangle.' While Yaphe argues that Iran's real dilemma is how to avoid regime change similar to what happened in Iraq, Ehteshami argues that the handling of the American *cultural* invasion of the region is equally important, stating "the place of the United States in Iran's agenda with respect to the Persian Gulf and Iraq is defined more by ideology than policy" (138).

This American cultural invasion of the Middle East is much different than the cultural exchange that has begun to occur between the United Kingdom and Iran. Four chapters in this work address Iranian relations with Europe, and two specifically deal with the United Kingdom. Christopher Rundle is the only author to note that "parallel with the improvement in Iran-UK

political relations, there has been a remarkable increase in cultural ties” (101). For example, the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art displayed British artwork in 2004 for the first time since the revolution. There have also been academic conferences that were attended by British and Iranian scholars, including Rundle (see pp. 98-102).

Numerous authors debate whether or not Iranian-European relations can have any major impact on the international arena without the cooperation of the United States. Shahriar Sabet-Saeidi argues that direct relations between the European Union and Iran are severely weakened because of Europe's willingness to align with American foreign policy. Contrary to Sabet-Saeidi, Anastasia Drenou argues that the United States and Europe “have used Iran in a prolonged rivalry on the international stage” (73). Although Europeans and Americans have “similar civilizational identities and shared values,” Drenou asserts, they have vastly different historical experiences, which have led the United States and the European nations to “diverge notably in identifying and prioritizing the threats to their interests and the means of dealing with them” (74). American foreign policy with Iran has been marked by confrontation and isolation, while European policies are described as engaging and conciliatory. Drenou argues this is not due to some European moral high ground, “but because of a neo-Orientalist conviction that they must repossess their former colonies under the modern pretext of trade, cultural, economic and political cooperation agreements” (75).

Christopher Rundle argues that significant improvement has taken place between Iran and the United Kingdom since the revolution, and while “one cannot talk about relations now actually being good, they are at least stable, and there is more understanding than before on both sides” (90). However, *rapprochement* has not been an easy process. There have been contrasting views within the Iranian government, and as a British diplomat, Michael Axworthy writes, “through this period, we felt as though we had been invited to dinner by a warring couple. As we tried to enter the door, one of them was trying to open it and welcome us in, while the other was trying to jam it shut again” (109).

While human rights, terrorism, Iran's nuclear program, and the Rushdie fatwa were major problems for British policymakers, both Axworthy and Rundle aptly demonstrate the positive impact that the election of Khatami in May 1997 had upon British-Iranian relations. A ‘diplomatic resolution’ of the Rushdie problem was reached in September 1998, and Khatami's ‘dialogue among civilizations’ helped lead to the exchange of ambassadors in 1999. Rundle falls somewhat in between Sabet-Saeidi and Drenou by arguing that as British diplomats continue to improve relations with Iran, they “may feel caught in the middle between an Iran that is cynical about the international system and a United States that seeks to control the system” (102).

Mahjoob Zweiri discusses how Iranian relations with the Arab world have changed since Khatami's presidency but is primarily focused on the subsequent rise to power of Iranian neoconservatives. Zweiri does a good job at distinguishing the differing opinions regarding Iran throughout the Arab world. For example, while nations such as Syria have had good relations with Iran, he says, nations such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan view Iran in a negative light. Although there was a relaxation of tensions among Iran's neighboring nations following the election of Khatami, many problems still exist. “Iran's desire to export its revolution, its interference in neighbouring countries' internal affairs, and its support of Shia groups within Iraq and the GCC states” continue to “make it difficult to build bridges between Arab capitals and Tehran” (116, 127). Zweiri argues that the election of Ahmadinejad, specifically, has “created a new wave of concern in the Arab world” (121).

For the most part, the authors accomplish their goals. While some chapters have a much broader scope than the title of the book suggests, much of the information presented is relevant to understanding the foreign policies of Khatami and Ahmadinejad. Nearly half of the book deals with European-Iranian relations, but the work would be more well-rounded if it were longer and included a wider variety of topics. In the introduction, the editors state that because there has been much tension between the Islamic Republic and the West, “it is not too difficult to understand why Iranians have tried to shift their partnerships towards the east” (xiv) and that “Iran has been moving rapidly towards Latin America and Africa, succeeding in building strong relations with a number of Latin American and African countries, including Cuba and Venezuela” (xiv). The introduction also claims that China and Russia also figure prominently into Iranian foreign policy. Why name these countries in the introduction if there are no chapters dealing with these nations? Instead, the book is dominated by chapters that focus on Iranian relations with the West, with some mention of the Arab world.

It would also be illuminating to have a chapter on Iranian relations with the outside world, removed from the context of the nation-state. Numerous subjects, such as the Rushdie fatwa, the assassination of Shapour Bakhtiar in Paris in 1991, the assassination of Kurdish opposition leaders in Berlin in 1992 (the Mykonos Incident), and the activities of the Mojahedin-e Khalq in Iraq and the U.K. need better explanation within a transnational context. These subjects are all mentioned more than once throughout the book but do not receive adequate attention. Despite these limitations, the book is insightful and would be useful to a researcher seeking detailed information on a particular aspect of Iranian foreign policy. This work is highly recommended for undergraduate and graduate courses as a supplement to larger works that are broader in scope.

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