

STRATEGIKA

CONFLICTS OF THE PAST AS LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT



After the end of sanctions by the West, will Iran succeed in its efforts to find state legitimacy with Europe and the United States?

IN THIS ISSUE

Kori Schake • Angelo M. Codevilla

Max Boot



Contents

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Editorial Board

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Gil-li Vardi
Bing West
Miles Maochun Yu
Amy Zegart

BACKGROUND ESSAY

Legitimacy Rests in Iranian Hands
by Kori Schake

FEATURED COMMENTARY

America Entered into a Raw Deal with Iran
by Angelo M. Codevilla

US Elections and the Future of the Iran Nuclear Deal
by Max Boot

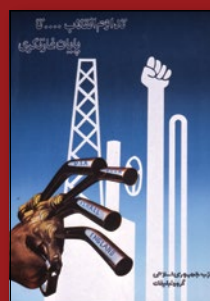
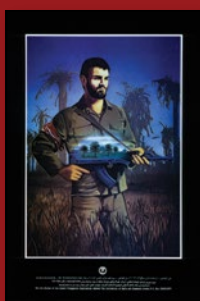
EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

Discussion Questions

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

ABOUT THE POSTERS IN THIS ISSUE

Documenting the wartime viewpoints and diverse political sentiments of the twentieth century, the Hoover Institution Library & Archives Poster Collection has more than one hundred thousand posters from around the world and continues to grow. Thirty-three thousand are available online. Posters from the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Russia/Soviet Union, and France predominate, though posters from more than eighty countries are included.



Legitimacy Rests in Iranian Hands

Kori Schake

Whether Iran succeeds in gaining legitimacy with Europe and the United States after the end of sanctions by the West may have less to do with choices by the Western countries and more to do with internal Iranian politics. All of the parties to the Iranian nuclear deal want to provide that legitimacy; but Iran's opaque internecine politics may get in the way.

European companies are already frothing to take up opportunities in Iran. Sanctions on Russia for its invasion of Ukraine and retaliatory sanctions by Russia on European countries have pinched European businesses, especially those of Germany, Italy, and Greece. Russia provided export markets and imports of energy, both of which are in short supply in a Europe still wracked by the near default of Greece. So Iran will be a welcome outlet for entrepreneurs and a fresh supply of oil and gas.

American companies are much less likely to be interested in investments or business relationships in Iran than are our European counterparts. Partly because Europeans have not had as fraught a history with Iran as has the United States, and partly because Congress could well act to frustrate the President's intention by legislative means. American companies are much more concerned about being netted dealing with Iran, or Treasury concerns requiring an expensive disentanglement. President Obama may seek to encourage economic links as a legacy issue or to accelerate western investment past Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps companies and reach a wider pool of Iranian beneficiaries.

But neither European commercial lust nor American aspirations for diplomatic thaw with Iran are likely to be adequate to pull Iran toward state legitimacy. Iran's continuing support for terrorist organizations like Hezbollah, efforts to destabilize Sunni governments in Bahrain, Yemen, and Lebanon, alliance with Bashar al-Assad's murderous government in Syria, predatory behavior in Iraq, threats to Israel, and aggressive ballistic missile tests (the most recent was just after the nuclear agreement came into force last October) (<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-nuclear-congress-idUSKBN0Uo2CH20151217>) all provide continuing reasons for skepticism that Iran will shed being a revolutionary movement in order to be a state viewed as legitimate in the eyes of the West.

Perhaps even more significant is the internal friction over Iran's direction. There appears to be an ongoing power struggle between the political establishment (which includes the religious leadership and a heavy component of Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps veterans) that would sustain Iran's current policies, and a widespread desire among

urban Iranians for more permissive social policies, less political repression, and more economic opportunity.

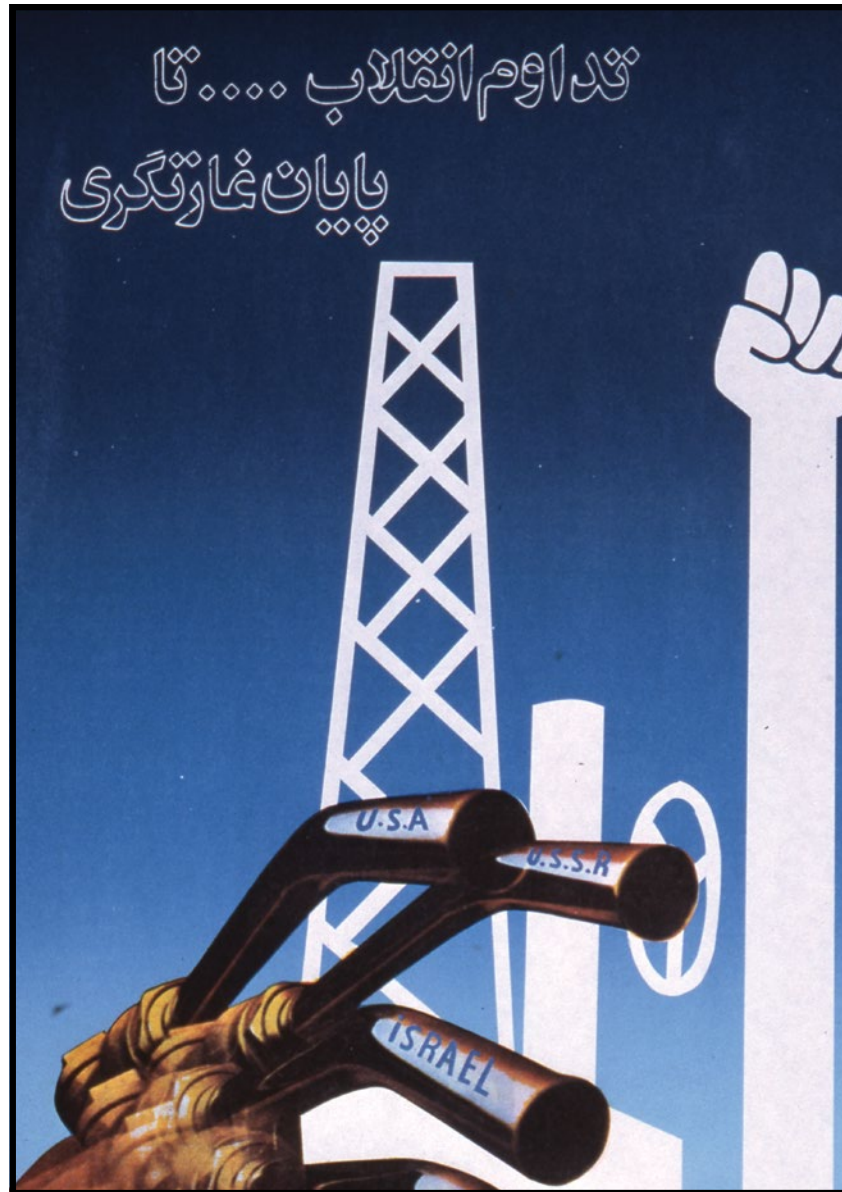
Iran is a difficult country for America to gauge. We have not had diplomatic representation in Tehran or commercial relations with any Iranian entity since the 1979 revolution. Both governments' attitudes are colored by the hostility of the American-backed coup against Iranian Prime Minister Mossadegh in 1953 and the Iranian seizure of American hostages in 1979. The Iranian government is opaque, power unconstrained by either institutions or the transparency of a free press. Much of what we do know is filtered through the eyes and experiences of Iranian émigrés in America: The second largest Iranian city is not Isfahan or Shiraz—it is Los Angeles. So the starting point for determining Iranian government behavior is a recognition that we know very little about what is actually occurring within the leadership.

We do know a few things, however. Since the 1979 revolution, Iran has been governed by a fusion of political and religious power (a system known as *Vilayat-e Faqih*). The Supreme Leader is just as described: supreme. Real decision-making power resides not in the elected legislature, but in a Guardian Council of the Supreme Leader's choosing with the power to overrule the legislature, interpret the Constitution, and approve candidates for public office.

It is a conceptual mistake to talk of Iranian "moderates" in the leadership. Those Iranians entrusted with power are beholden to the Supreme Leader and have been carefully vetted. The actual reformists are in jail or under house arrest since the 2009 election (<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/22/world/middleeast/irans-thwarted-reformers-set-careful-goals-for-coming-vote.html>). It is illegal to even display a photograph of an earlier reformist president, Mohammad Khatami—which is both an indicator of how repressive Iran's government is and how frightened it is about the public's desire not to continue being suffocated by that repression.

It is Iranian practice to hold frequent elections to create a patina of legitimacy, yet prevent real democracy by tightly controlling who can run for office. In the most recent Parliamentary elections, the Guardian Council refused more than 6,000 prospective candidates (<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2016/02/24-iran-elections-candidates-rejected-borden-maloney>). Of reformist candidates, only 30 of 3,000 were permitted on the ballot (<http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21693277-choose-any-candidate-you-likeafter-mullahs-have-excluded-reformers-great>).

Iranians are dissatisfied with their government. Protests that erupted after 2009's disputed election were put down by force, thousands of activists were arrested, and Iran's religious leadership seemed to vacillate about whether to support the Supreme Leader



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acting so obviously in opposition to popular will. The favored establishment candidate in 2013 elections was trounced. Current President Hassan Rouhani campaigned on releasing political prisoners and moderating government intrusion into civil society; no such policies have been enacted.

But many Iranians also believe the system can change—otherwise they would not seek to run for office. Remnants of the reform movement also shifted strategy this election, knowing the vast majority of reform-minded candidates would be stricken off the ballot. They recruited young candidates who are not necessarily reformists to

displace known hard-liners. (http://www.theguardian.com/world/iran-blog/2016/feb/26/iran-zibakalam-grand-reformists-coalition-includes-intelligence-ministers?CMP=share_btn_tw). Iranian voters, as they had in 2009 and 2014, voted for the most moderate candidates on the ballot.

Iran is on the brink of an epochal transfer of power. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei is old and ailing. An Assembly of Experts selected to determine Khamenei's successor are decidedly less strident than the electors they are replacing. But whether Iran's political and economic elite permit themselves to be eased out is an open question.

Iran's economy desperately needs infusions of investment and technology—in 1978 Iran's oilfields pumped 5.4 million barrels of oil per day; now they can produce only 2.8 million. Sanctions over Iran's nuclear program and the plummeting price of oil both aggravate (and to some extent mask) the Iranian government's economic mismanagement. But the political and economic openness on which that investment depends is anathema to many in Iran's ruling elite ideologically and also a threat to their preferential economic opportunities.

The Rouhani government seems to be emulating China's approach of attempting to forestall political change with prosperity. Nearly all his policy efforts have focused on ending Western sanctions and encouraging foreign investment. The Iran nuclear deal has unfrozen \$10 billion of Iranian assets and allowed oil exports to resume. Whether Iran's government is fleet enough to outrun its citizens' aspirations will likely determine whether Iran remains a revolutionary power or gains the state legitimacy on offer from the West.



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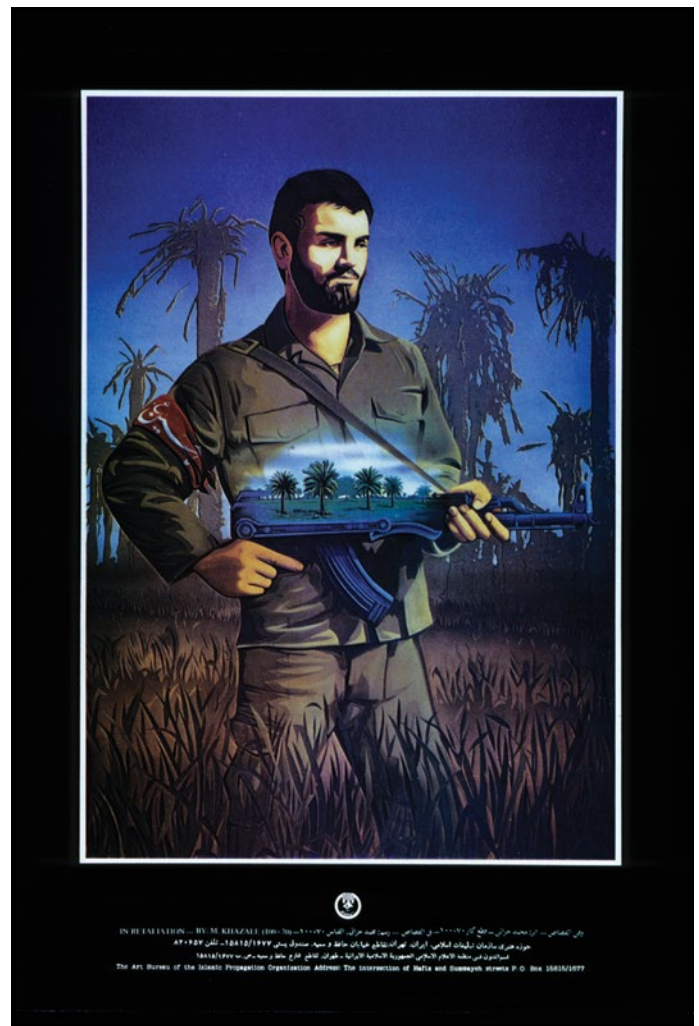
Defense Strategy and Requirements on the National Security Council. Projects Schake contributed to include conceptualizing and budgeting for continued transformation of defense practices; the most significant realignment of US military forces and bases around the world since 1950; creating NATO's Allied Command Transformation and the NATO Response Force; and recruiting and retaining coalition partners for operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

America Entered into a Raw Deal with Iran

Angelo M. Codevilla

On January 16, 2016, governments in Europe and America ended the sanctions they had imposed on Iran (the United States since 1979, Europe since 2007 and increasingly since 2012) for reasons internal to themselves. Iran had not changed the behavior that had led to the imposition of sanctions—neither its nuclear program nor its leadership of the Shia side in the current round of the Sunni-Shia war. Americans and Europeans hoped that the end of sanctions would make the Islamic Republic's international behavior more acceptable. But limits on Iran's nuclear program consist of promises, qualified by reiteration that the program's objective would not change, yet that no one need worry because it had never been military. Iran did not discuss its role in regional affairs. "Death to America" remained its officious position regards the United States.

Changes in the relationship between Iran on one side and Europe and America on the other are unilateral. Governments in Europe and America neither conditioned the end of sanctions on any changes in what the Islamic Republic is or does, nor really expected such changes. They were eager to gather Iran into the international community "as is," and announced the removal of sanctions as the opening of a new and better relationship with Iran. Hence, questions about Iran's efforts to achieve legitimacy vis-à-vis the governments of Europe and the United States neglect the fact that *these governments*



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have already given Iran all the privileges and immunities that it needs from them, and have done so in a way that well-nigh prevents them from taking them back.

Iran got what it wanted. The \$100–\$150 Billion US release of frozen funds pays for shopping until benefits from renewed, unhindered access to the world economy flow. Companies from throughout Europe have rushed to provide life-giving transfusions into Iran's energy and petrochemical industries, aircraft, and infrastructure battered by sanctions. They vie for investments and markets. Oil revenues are coming in. The economy is forecast to grow by 5%.

The intangible benefits that Iran sought and received are even more important. Because these flow from the European and American governments' reticence to question their decision to gather Iran into the international community—and hence possibly thereby to impeach their own judgment—these benefits may

well be understood in terms of open-ended grants of legitimacy to almost anything that Iran may do.

Fred Iklé, in "After Detection—What?" (*Foreign Affairs* January 1961), described the straightforward political mechanism by which this sort of thing happens. Although the mechanism is especially evident in arms control agreements, it pertains generally to whatever international controversial commitments that governments make on matters the outcome of which depends on the other party to the deal. Iklé shows that party A, having bet its competence and good judgment on its forecast on how party B would behave, then finds it in its own interest to give its own domestic constituency the impression that it had made a good decision. To do that, it tends to neglect or excuse any behavior on the part of B that contradicts that impression. The term "Stockholm syndrome" had not been invented in 1961. But it encapsulates the fact that controversial deals by democratic governments with dictatorships, and on which these governments bet their reputation, tend to make them the dictatorships' obsequious political captives.

The US government's behavior in the aftermath of the "Iran deal" confirms this analysis, and leads us to ask how Iran might further exploit the presumption of legitimacy that the US and European governments have granted to whatever international actions Iran might take.

As Europe, the United States, and Iran finalized "the deal" in July 2015, the UN Security Council passed a resolution that defined limitations on Iran's missile programs by which the United State and Europe expected Iran to be bound, although Iran had not agreed to be so bound. Iran then proceeded to test two versions of a new intermediate range missile, and to declare itself free of any commitments regarding missiles that it had made as part of "the deal." The US

POLL: AFTER THE END OF SANCTIONS BY THE WEST, WILL IRAN SUCCEED IN ITS EFFORTS TO FIND STATE LEGITIMACY WITH EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES?

- ☐ Iran will still be ostracized as a terrorist theocratic state.
- ☐ Iranian oil will ensure extensive private commerce even as its government remains alienated from the West.
- ☐ Iran will have normal diplomatic relationships, but be suspect given its radical past and support for terrorism.
- ☐ Iran will now be a full member of the family of nations and accepted without qualification.
- ☐ Iran is becoming a de facto US ally and partner, and seen as a valuable buffer to Sunni fundamentalism.

reaction was to worry loudly that Iran might “blow up the whole deal” and to sanction eleven Iranian companies involved in the missile program (no European government joined it), while preparing to implement its part of the deal. In January, as implementation came closer, the Iranian navy fired rockets within 1,500 yards of the carrier USS *Harry S. Truman* in the Persian Gulf. Then, it captured eleven US sailors on armed craft transiting the Gulf and held them for twenty-four hours. With cameras rolling, it forced them to their knees, forced a female sailor to wear Islamic clothing, and a male to weep. The US government thanked Iran for having returned them and refused to tell Congress who ordered the boats’ crews to surrender.

The US government also turned over the \$100–\$150 billion, plus some \$1.7B more in

conjunction with the return of three Americans who were supposed to have been part of the deal’s prisoner exchange provision.

As we try to imagine what behavior by Iran the US government might bring itself to treat as illegitimate, we might recall an incident from 387 BC Rome being occupied by an army of Gauls, its citizens struck a deal for the Gauls’ departure. As the agreed amount of gold was being weighed, they complained that the scales were rigged. The Gauls’ chief, Brennus, then showed how thoroughly Rome had given up the prerogative to decide what is and is not legitimate by throwing his sword onto the scales and crying “vae victis!” (woe to the vanquished!)



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and served on the Senate Intelligence Committee as well as on presidential transition teams. For a decade he was a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution. He is the author of thirteen books, including *War Ends and Means*, *The Character of Nations*, and *Advice to War Presidents*. He is a student of the classics as well as of European literature; he is also a commercial grape grower.

US Elections and the Future of the Iran Nuclear Deal

Max Boot

January 16, 2016, was a milestone in the history of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It was the day that the nuclear deal with the United States was implemented and most sanctions on Iran were lifted. Iran immediately received access to more than \$100 billion in frozen oil funds, and that's only the beginning of the bonanza. Iran is once again shipping oil to Europe, and European companies are once again flocking to Iran to conclude

deals. German auto manufacturer Daimler has already announced a joint venture with two Iranian firms to produce Mercedes-Benz trucks and Airbus is about to sell 114 civilian aircraft to Iran Air.

US firms are not quite as eager to rush in because some US sanctions (tied to Iran's support of terrorism and its ballistic missile development) remain in effect. But one wonders how long that will last.

Already one reads headlines such as (over a Reuters article) "Reformist gains in Iran election clear way for business boom." Mind you, those supposed "reformists" who gained ground in Iran's Feb. 26 election generally favor the nuclear program and the destruction of Israel—they are only "moderate" on some domestic issues and only in comparison to the most extreme Shiite extremists. The real moderates were disqualified from running. And those who are winning seats are being elected to Iran's powerless, rubber-stamp parliament. The real decisions are made by the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, in collaboration with the generals of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). But the illusion of elections is achieving what Tehran wants—which is to break its international isolation and to give Europeans and American an excuse to do business there.

This is occurring, of course, while Iran continues to test long-range ballistic missiles in violation of United Nations sanctions and to support militant Shi'ite groups in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, among



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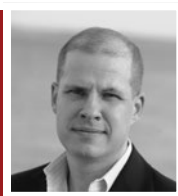
other places. Particularly odious is Iran's support for the Bashar al-Assad regime which has been responsible for the vast majority of deaths in Syria's civil war, a conflict estimated to have already cost 470,000 lives and turned millions of other people into refugees. While President Obama assured us that Iran's windfall profits from the nuclear deal would be spent at home, it is certain that the IRGC, which is charged with exporting the Iranian revolution abroad, is spending this money to finance war crimes in Syria and beyond.

The next president could change this parlous state of affairs. The United States is not bound by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, as the Iran deal is formally known. It is an executive agreement, not a treaty. Obama signed this piece of paper with the support of perhaps one-third of Congress and one-third of the country at large. The next president could announce that he (or she!) is reimposing sanctions on Iran until such time as the mullahs agree to terminate, rather than simply to temporarily suspend, their nuclear-weapons program.

Such sanctions would, of course, need the support of our European and Asian allies to be effective, and there will be a strong lobby in both Europe and Asia to maintain lucrative business ties. But it should be possible for a determined president to recreate the anti-Iran coalition that Obama sundered. The United States could even, once again, threaten "secondary sanctions" on any foreign firms that do business with Iran. Forced to choose between the Iranian and American markets, international conglomerates will once again decide that it is not in their interest to do business with the world's most active state supporters of terrorism.

Unfortunately neither of the Democratic candidates, Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, has given the slightest indication of any willingness to tear up

the deal. Sanders even promises to go further by opening diplomatic relations with Iran. On the Republican side, both Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio have vowed to end the Iran deal but Donald Trump hasn't. The GOP frontrunner criticizes the accord in one breath and, in the next, promises to stick with it, because he doesn't like to tear up "contracts"—As if a deal with a country sworn to America's and Israel's destruction is the same thing as a deal to build a golf course. If Cruz or Rubio were to win the presidency, the odds of once again isolating and containing Iran would be good. But if any of the other major candidates prevail, it appears likely that Iran's campaign to rehabilitate its image, even as it continues an unprecedented power grab in the Middle East, will continue to succeed.



MAX BOOT is a leading military historian and foreign policy analyst. Boot holds a bachelor's degree in history, with high honors, from the University of California, Berkeley (1991), and a master's degree in history from Yale University (1992). He was born in Russia, grew up in Los Angeles, and now lives in the New York area. The Jeane J. Kirkpatrick Senior Fellow in National Security Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, he is the author of critically acclaimed *New York Times* best seller *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present*.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

AFTER THE END OF SANCTIONS BY THE WEST, WILL IRAN SUCCEED IN ITS EFFORTS TO FIND STATE LEGITIMACY WITH EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES?

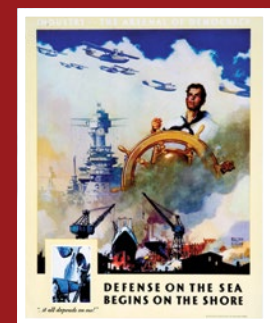
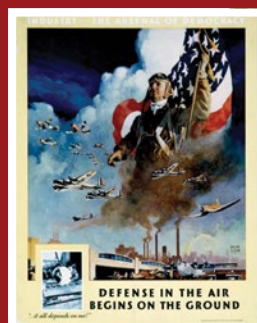
1. How do frosty relations with Israel facilitate US rapprochement with Iran?
2. In what ways will Sunni states deter Iran, if and when it becomes nuclear?
3. What are the chances of an evolution from theocracy to constitutional government?
4. Will Iran cease support for anti-Western terrorism if it resumes full relations with the West?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- Christopher de Bellaigue, *In the Rose Garden of the Martyrs: A Memoir of Iran* (Harper, 2004).
- Suzanne Maloney, *Iran's Political Economy Since the Revolution* (Cambridge, 2015).
- Azar Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir of Books* (Random House, 2003).
- Kenneth Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America* (Random House, 2005).
- Kori Schake and Judith Yaphe, *The Strategic Implications of a Nuclear-Armed Iran* (National Defense University Press, 2001).

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

HOW CAN US MILITARY READINESS MEET AMERICA'S PRESENT STRATEGIC RESPONSIBILITIES AT A TIME OF BUDGETARY SHRINKAGE AND GROWING ISOLATIONISM?



Military History in Contemporary Conflict

As the very name of Hoover Institution attests, military history lies at the very core of our dedication to the study of “War, Revolution, and Peace.” Indeed, the precise mission statement of the Hoover Institution includes the following promise: “The overall mission of this Institution is, from its records, to recall the voice of experience against the making of war, and by the study of these records and their publication, to recall man’s endeavors to make and preserve peace, and to sustain for America the safeguards of the American way of life.” From its origins as a library and archive, the Hoover Institution has evolved into one of the foremost research centers in the world for policy formation and pragmatic analysis. It is with this tradition in mind, that the “Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict” has set its agenda—reaffirming the Hoover Institution’s dedication to historical research in light of contemporary challenges, and in particular, reinvigorating the national study of military history as an asset to foster and enhance our national security. By bringing together a diverse group of distinguished military historians, security analysts, and military veterans and practitioners, the working group seeks to examine the conflicts of the past as critical lessons for the present.

Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict

The Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict examines how knowledge of past military operations can influence contemporary public policy decisions concerning current conflicts. The careful study of military history offers a way of analyzing modern war and peace that is often underappreciated in this age of technological determinism. Yet the result leads to a more in-depth and dispassionate understanding of contemporary wars, one that explains how particular military successes and failures of the past can be often germane, sometimes misunderstood, or occasionally irrelevant in the context of the present.

Strategika

Strategika is a journal that analyzes ongoing issues of national security in light of conflicts of the past—the efforts of the Military History Working Group of historians, analysts, and military personnel focusing on military history and contemporary conflict. Our board of scholars shares no ideological consensus other than a general acknowledgment that human nature is largely unchanging. Consequently, the study of past wars can offer us tragic guidance about present conflicts—a preferable approach to the more popular therapeutic assumption that contemporary efforts to ensure the perfectibility of mankind eventually will lead to eternal peace. New technologies, methodologies, and protocols come and go; the larger tactical and strategic assumptions that guide them remain mostly the same—a fact discernable only through the study of history.



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