

The United states and Iran: Ready for Rapprochement?

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Since the victory of the moderate Mohammed Khatami in the May 1997 Iranian presidential elections, there has been increased optimism that Iranian-American relations will improve. Khatami further fueled these hopes when he made conciliatory statements about the United States at the Islamic summit held in Teheran in December 1997 and in a CNN broadcast to the American people in January 1998. - His interview with CNN was especially dramatic since, unlike previous Iranian revolutionary leaders who tirelessly described the United States as "the Great Satan" or "the Global Arrogance," Khatami expressed respect for the American people and regret for the 1979 hostage crisis.

Shortly after the CNN interview, the Clinton Administration let it be known that it had proposed to Khatami direct U.S.-Iranian talks aimed at improving bilateral relations just after his inauguration in August 1997. ² President Clinton also issued a statement endorsing Khatami's proposal for U.S.-Iranian cultural exchanges. ³ In addition, and after complaints made by prominent American businessmen to President Clinton, it was announced that the State Department would conduct a review of the efficacy of U.S. economic sanctions, including those imposed on Iran. ⁴

With such strong momentum having built up on both sides for improved ties, it would appear that U.S.-Iranian relations might soon become normalized - perhaps even reasonably friendly. Nor [End Page 169] would such a development be unprecedented. There have been several previous examples of U.S. relations with revolutionary regimes undergoing dramatic improvement. Such a transformation occurred in the United States' relations with the Soviet Union and China during the presidency of Richard Nixon. More recently, relatively friendly ties have been established with Vietnam, while U.S.-North Korean relations have also undergone a remarkable thaw.

Yet despite the momentum that has already built up and the precedents for dramatically improved American relations with other revolutionary regimes, there continue to be important obstacles to better ties between Washington and Tehran. There are powerful political forces in both countries which appear to be unalterably opposed to even a mild thaw between the two countries.

This article will examine the bilateral context of U.S.-Iranian relations as well as the broader international context affecting those relations. I will argue here that despite the hope for improved ties which has recently built up, the dynamics of U.S.-Iranian bilateral relations are likely to prevent any significant rapprochement in the near future. But if changes occur in the broader international context similar to those which preceded rapprochements between the United States and other revolutionary regimes, then the prospects for improved U.S.-Iranian relations are quite good.

The Bilateral Context

On the American side, the proponents of improved U.S.-Iranian relations see President Khatami as the best hope for bringing about internal liberalization and foreign policy moderation. But he will only be able to accomplish these aims, they argue, if America adopts a friendlier policy toward Iran. The continuation of the present hostile policy, they fear, will undermine his reform efforts.⁵

They also point out that American economic sanctions against Iran have not succeeded in altering Iranian behavior in the three areas which most concern Washington: Iranian support for terrorism, its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and its opposition to the American-sponsored Middle East peace process. More importantly, the attempt to force other countries to abide by American sanctions against Iran through the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA) of 1996 has only served to irritate American relations with its major Western allies.⁶ And to the extent that West European and Japanese corporations are doing business in Iran, unilateral U.S. sanctions prevent their American counterparts from **[End Page 170]** operating in this lucrative arena.

Furthermore, even before the election of Khatami, the proponents of improved U.S.-Iranian relations have argued that America would concretely benefit from allowing oil and gas pipelines to be built from Azerbaijan and Central Asia to Iran for shipment to the world market. Following the breakup of the USSR, vast petroleum reserves have been discovered in Azerbaijan, Kazakstan, and Turkmenistan. The shortest, and most likely cheapest, route for these countries to export their petroleum products would be south through Iran. In addition, as a result both of its belligerence toward these countries as well as its own chaotic economic conditions, Russia has severely limited petroleum exports from these countries via its territory or across the Caucasus to the Black Sea.⁷ Thus, it is argued, not only would pipelines across Iran be the cheapest route for exporting petroleum from the Caspian Basin, but also the most secure one.

On the Iranian side, the proponents of improved relations with the United States can also point out how this would benefit Iran. Although virtually all countries besides the United States do business with Iran, the Iranian economy is suffering from very high unemployment, low growth, and chronic inflation.⁸ Improving relations with Washington, at least to the point where American economic sanctions against the Islamic Republic were relaxed, could lead to large-scale trade with and investment from the United States. In addition, the relaxation of U.S. economic sanctions could stimulate additional trade with and investment from other Western countries which have held back in these spheres as a result of ILSA. More normal relations would also allow Iran access to IMF and World Bank assistance, as well as other funding sources.

Tehran also has a keen interest in the possibility of pipeline routes from Azerbaijan and Central Asia running through Iran. If petroleum from these countries could be exported through Iran, Tehran would reap enormous transit fees for decades. This revenue could go a long way toward alleviating some of Iran's economic problems. Pipelines, however, are extremely expensive, and Iran will need Western financing to build them. Without the relaxation of U.S. sanctions, American funding will not be forthcoming. And so long as ILSA is in effect, funding from sources in other countries is unlikely due to their unwillingness to sacrifice their business interests in the United States.⁹ If these constraints were removed by improved U.S.-Iranian relations, Western - including American - funding for pipeline routes across Iran would probably become readily available. **[End Page 171]**

In addition, President Khatami himself has a strong interest in improved U.S.-Iranian relations. Khatami is a reformer whose main priority is the further democratization and liberalization of Iran. — In approaching this task, however, Khatami finds himself in a dilemma similar to that faced by Mikhail Gorbachev a decade ago: the opponents of domestic reform point to hostility from the United States as justification for preserving the authoritarian order - and their privileged position within it. Just as with Gorbachev, improving relations with the United States could help Khatami undermine his opponents and enhance his ability to undertake domestic reform.

Finally, the proponents of U.S.-Iranian detente in both countries can point out that Washington and Tehran share security concerns with regard to Saddam Hussein in Iraq and the Taliban in Afghanistan. As is well known, Iraq attacked Iran in 1980 and then America's ally, Kuwait, in 1990. Despite the strict sanctions and weapons inspection program imposed on Iraq by the UN Security Council, Iraq has reportedly developed a biological weapons capability that obviously threatens both American and Iranian interests. Some have suggested that Washington and Tehran collaborate against the common Iraqi threat. II The Iranian government kept its distance from Iraq in the crisis with the U.S. that occurred in early 1998. —

Less well known is how the Taliban, which seized most of Afghanistan in 1996, concerns both the United States and Iran. Washington fears that the Taliban will foster the spread of Islamic revolution into Central Asia. Tehran is even more concerned about the Taliban, which is rabidly anti-Iranian and represents an Islamic revolutionary ideology that competes with Tehran's. Indeed, the Taliban is so anti-Iranian that Ayatollah Khamenei publicly accused it of being linked to Washington. — The United States and Iran, though, have reportedly begun to collaborate in an effort to contain it.¹¹⁴

Those opposed to improving U.S.-Iranian relations also advance several arguments to buttress their position. On the American side, they argue there has been no diminution in Iranian hostility toward the United States, and that the only reason why Iran has not met with more success in pursuing its anti-American aims is because U.S. sanctions against Iran have limited the resources available to the ayatollahs. Lifting these sanctions, they insist, would not alter Tehran's hostility toward American interests, but would simply allow it greater resources to pursue these aims. They also argue that, even if Khatami's call for improved U.S.-Iranian relations is sincere, Khatami is subordinate to the spiritual leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, who continues to express **[End Page 172]** undiminished hostility toward the United States. And to the extent that Khatami's election and policies do represent a real moderating trend in Iran, they see this as evidence that American sanctions are working, and that they should not be weakened until a much greater degree of moderation occurs. —

On the Iranian side, the opponents of improved Iranian-American relations similarly argue that there has been no reduction in American hostility toward Iran. They point to the Clinton Administration's strenuous efforts to prevent Caspian Basin petroleum from being exported via Iran even if this means shipping it out through more costly and less secure routes. They also point to the tightening of American economic sanctions with the passage of ILSA by the Republican-controlled Congress, as well as the overt calls of House Speaker Newt Gingrich for the overthrow of the Islamic Republic.¹⁶

Shortly after Khatami's CNN interview, the Iranian spiritual leader Ayatollah Khamenei (who, under the Iranian constitution, exercises greater power than the elected president) signaled his opposition to any Iranian-American rapprochement when he declared, "Talks with the United States have no benefit for us and are harmful to us....The regime of the United States is the enemy of the Islamic Republic." —

Given what they see as permanent American hostility toward the Islamic Republic, Iranian hardliners regard the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction - especially nuclear weapons - as a necessary defensive measure to deter an American attack. Nor do they see Iranian support for groups such as Hizballah in Lebanon and other Islamic revolutionary groups as "terrorism," but as support for "freedom fighters" defending themselves against an illegal occupation

by Israel which America supports. Khatami himself, during his CNN interview, stated that "supporting peoples who fight for the liberation of their land is not, in my opinion, supporting terrorism." — Finally, Iranian hardliners do not feel obliged to support the American-sponsored Arab-Israeli peace process which they see as biased in favor of Israel and against the Palestinians.¹¹⁹

Weighing the balance

Will it be the proponents or the opponents of improved U.S.-Iranian relations who prevail? A key factor in addressing this question is an assessment of the relative political strength of these groups in each country. **[End Page 173]**

In the United States, those in favor of improved ties with Iran include many prominent members of the foreign policy-making community and, it increasingly appears, many foreign policy-makers within the Clinton Administration. In addition, the American business community as a whole has long favored a relaxation of economic sanctions against Iran. Those most opposed to improved ties with Iran are pro-Israeli groups who see the Islamic Republic as the enemy of the Jewish State, and foreign policy conservatives (including several prominent members of the foreign policy-making community) who see Tehran as the enemy of American interests in the Middle East as a whole. The most important stronghold of these groups, of course, is Congress. Indeed, since the Iranian revolution of 1979, Congress has displayed virtually no interest in attempting to improve relations with Iran. Underlying this Congressional attitude is the American public's longstanding negative image of Iran stemming from the 1979-81 hostage crisis.

In Iran, the public at large appears to be ambivalent about improving relations with the United States.²⁰ Those most strongly in favor of improved ties with it include President Khatami and his political allies. Those most strongly opposed are the revolutionary clerical establishment, the hardliners who control the *Majles*, and the leadership of revolutionary institutions such as the Revolutionary Guard. It must be emphasized, however, that these groups are not monolithic. A highly influential cleric, Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, has criticized Ayatollah Khamenei for being unqualified for the office of supreme religious leader (*velayat-e faqih*) and for "living like a king." — Another important cleric, Abdol Karim Soroush, has called for the democratization of the Islamic Republic.²² In addition, many clerics have called for the withdrawal of the clergy from politics.²³ This questioning of the authority of Ayatollah Khamenei, as well as the lack of unity within the ranks of the clergy, may have contributed to President Khatami's willingness to make his historic overture to the American public despite Khamenei's opposition to it.

Yet even though the proponents of an U.S.-Iranian rapprochement have powerful supporters in both countries, it will be much more difficult for them to prevail over the opponents of such a rapprochement than for its opponents to prevail over its

proponents. For in order to prevail, the proponents of improved relations must be able to convince a substantial number of their opponents that the other country is capable of cooperating with their country, and that this cooperation would enhance their own **[End Page 174]** national interests. This will only occur, however, if the proponents of rapprochement appear likely to prevail on both sides. If they only gain strength in one country, the proponents of rapprochement are likely to be discredited and its opponents vindicated if there is no corresponding increase in strength for the proponents of rapprochement in the other country.

By contrast, the opponents of Iranian-American rapprochement in both countries need to expend far less effort to prevail over its proponents. Each country already pursues a foreign policy that the other considers to be hostile. Each side's opponents of improved relations, then, need only maintain those aspects of their foreign policy which the other side objects to. This will further persuade the opponents of rapprochement on the other side that they must retain their hardline policy "in response" to the first side's continued hostility. To the extent that this occurs, of course, it will only reconfirm the suspicions of the opponents of rapprochement on the first side about the other side, thus perpetuating the vicious cycle of mutual mistrust that has long plagued U.S.-Iranian relations.

If this is an accurate depiction of the dynamics at work, then the proponents of U.S.-Iranian rapprochement in both countries will encounter far greater difficulty in changing their government's hostile foreign policy toward the other than the opponents of rapprochement will face in maintaining it. Thus, despite whatever merit exists in the arguments of those favoring improved U.S.-Iranian relations, it is doubtful that each country's proponents of rapprochement will be able to convince their domestic opponents to change course under present circumstances.

The Broader International Context

In international relations, however, "present circumstances" are constantly subject to change. How they might change with respect to U.S.-Iranian relations can be explored through examining first, the conditions under which U.S. ties have dramatically improved with other revolutionary regimes and second, the evolution of revolutionary regimes over time.

The conditions for rapprochement

There have been several instances when there was dramatic improvement in American ties with other revolutionary regimes. Can such a dramatic improvement occur in U.S.-Iranian relations? The history of **[End Page 175]** U.S. relations with revolutionary regimes in Cuba, Libya, and - up to now - Iran indicates that this is not destined to occur. Obviously, conditions have to be right. But just what are those conditions?

A review of U.S. relations with revolutionary regimes since the end of World War II indicates that once U.S. relations with them have become hostile, Washington has not been willing to improve relations except when one of three conditions is present.

First, and highly ironically, Washington has shown a willingness to improve relations with revolutionary regimes which pose an increasing threat to our security interests. The classic case of this occurred during the 1970s when Washington pursued detente with a Soviet Union that it believed had acquired superior nuclear and conventional military forces, and which was doing more to support Marxist revolutionaries in the Third World than it ever had before.²⁴ A more recent example is how the United States responded to the development of nuclear weapons by North Korea by offering Pyongyang a generous aid package in exchange for halting its weapons program.²⁵

Second, the United States has been willing to drastically improve relations with revolutionary regimes it used to revile if a common threat emerges. The classic case of this occurring was with China in the early 1970s. Although Washington had (with considerable justification) viewed China as more rabidly revolutionary than the USSR during the 1960s, increasing Chinese and American fear of Moscow led to close cooperation between Washington and Beijing by the early 1970s.²⁶ Similarly, U.S.-Iraqi relations improved dramatically in the mid-1980s, when Washington feared that Tehran might prevail in the Iran-Iraq war.²⁷ More recently, the growing sense that China is becoming a threat to its neighbors appears to have provided the basis for the emerging rapprochement between Washington and Hanoi.²⁸

Third, the United States has been willing to embrace any revolutionary regime that denounces its past and swears allegiance to democracy and capitalism - even if basically the same people remain in power who limit democratization and see capitalism as the process by which they can turn state enterprises into their own personal property, as has been occurring in so many former Marxist regimes.
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When none of these conditions has been present, the United States has not been willing to improve relations with revolutionary regimes. This explains why there has been no serious effort toward better relations with states such as Cuba and Libya. For if a **[End Page 176]** revolutionary regime does not really threaten the United States, or there is no common threat, then the United States has no strong national security incentive to improve relations with it. Furthermore, if a revolutionary regime does not renounce its revolution but continues both to uphold it and to remain hostile to the United States, then Washington has no other strong incentive to seek improved ties with it either.

Does Iran meet any of these conditions? It does not really meet the first condition of posing an increasing threat to American interests. The Islamic Republic has not

tried, and does not have the capacity to, directly attack and defeat a neighboring state allied to the United States. And while many complain about Iranian support for Islamic revolutionaries seeking to overthrow U.S.-allied governments, it is increasingly understood that the extent that such groups are strong is mainly due to the political situation in the countries they are operating in, and only peripherally - at most - to Iranian support.³⁰ In addition, it appears that the level of support Iran provides for such groups has declined markedly since the 1980s.³¹

Nor does Iran possess nuclear weapons. Ironically, while Iranian acquisition of them would worsen U.S.-Iranian relations in the short run, it might serve to improve them in the long run. The U.S. response to the development of nuclear weapons by North Korea was to arrange for Pyongyang a generous aid package in exchange for halting its weapons program. This is something the United States would have felt no incentive to do if North Korea had not developed nuclear weapons. And if a state as poor as North Korea can acquire them, it seems highly likely that a much richer one like Iran could too. Thus while this first condition of being able to pose an increasing threat to American interests through acquiring nuclear weapons is not yet present, it could well be in the not too distant future.³²

It is ambiguous whether the second condition relating to a common threat to both the United States and Iran has emerged. Clearly, the prospect that Iraq has developed a strong biological weapons capability indicates that the potential exists for collaboration against it. But even at the height of the Iran-Iraq war, Washington and Tehran only achieved a limited degree of cooperation during the Iran-Contra episode, which collapsed once it became public knowledge.³³ Nor did the United States seek active Iranian involvement in the coalition it put together to oust Saddam Hussein from Kuwait. Similarly, there has been no overt collaboration between the United States and Iran during the **[End Page 177]** present crisis with respect to Iraq.

Finally, Iran cannot be said to have met or not met the third condition. The Islamic Republic has obviously not denounced its revolutionary heritage or abandoned hostility toward Washington. But as the election of Khatami demonstrated, Iran has made important progress toward democratization and moderation. Although the political transformation of the Islamic Republic is far from complete, it has definitely begun. To the extent this trend continues, the prospects for improved Iranian-American relations should increase.

How evolutions evolve

Looking at Iran in relation to other revolutionary regimes, the literature on the evolution of revolutionary regimes suggests that once this moderating trend begins, it tends to continue, although not always along a straight path. David Armstrong observed that while highly ambitious revolutionary regimes may at first reject the existing system of international relations entirely and earnestly attempt to transform it radically, they slowly but surely lose their fervor for this task. Initial

efforts to spread their brand of revolution are usually frustrated, and regimes eventually tire of expending scarce resources on unsuccessfully spreading revolution when they have serious domestic problems (and they all do) that need to be addressed. Slowly but surely, revolutionary regimes which initially set out to destroy the status quo become status quo powers themselves.³⁴ Iran may not have reached the end of Armstrong's delineation of the evolution of revolutionary regimes, but it is clearly well past the initial phase of naively thinking it can single-handedly transform international relations. Though not completely problem free, Iran has reasonably good relations with all the status quo Western powers except the United States.³⁵

Another stream in the literature focuses on the long-term internal transformation of revolutionary regimes through the process of *embourgeoisement*. Revolutionary regimes require an educated elite to keep themselves in power. Although the initial revolutionary leadership may be highly anticapitalist, the educated elite that it raises up sooner or later comes to understand that efforts to foster economic development through central planning are fraught with far greater problems than a market-based approach. Furthermore, although the initial revolutionary elite may also be highly anti-Western, the educated elite it raises up comes to see cooperation [End Page 178] with the West as a useful means of achieving their most important goal: keeping the regime in power. The *embourgeoisement* of the regime itself, then, comes about not through its conversion to democracy, but through the practical consideration of how to keep itself in power as well as grow wealthier.³⁶

The Moroccan scholar, Abdallah Laroui, described how this process occurred in states where Arab nationalist regimes had come to power.³⁷ Jerry Hough described how it took place in the Soviet Union.³⁸ Although he did not use the term *embourgeoisement*, Iranian scholar Farhang Rajaee described how this process is occurring in Iran. He noted that although the *bazaaris* of the late 1970s were among the strongest supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini and were highly anti-Western, it is their more educated children who now see cooperation with the West as useful.³⁹ This is a trend that appears likely to continue.

An examination, then, of both the conditions under which rapprochement occurs between the United States and revolutionary regimes, as well as the normal evolution of revolutionary regimes, suggests that the prospects for a U.S.-Iranian rapprochement are improving and that this is highly likely to occur eventually.

Conclusion

We are left, then, with something of a paradox. A U.S.-Iranian rapprochement seems unlikely now in the current context of the bilateral relationship, but increasingly likely in the changing international context. In other words, a U.S.-Iranian rapprochement is probably not going to occur until some significant change takes place that either persuades or forces Washington and Tehran to

cooperate.

In my view, the most likely catalyst for an improvement in U.S.- Iranian relations is the emergence of a common threat to both. One such possibility is an increasingly nationalist post-Yeltsin Russia ruled by an ultranationalist such as Alexandr Lebed or Vladimir Zhirinovsky, or by a hardline communist such as Evgeny Zyuganov. Once in office, any of these might attempt to reassert Russian control over the Caucasus and Central Asia as well as their oil resources. Washington and Tehran might then quickly recognize a joint interest in cooperating to ensure the continued independence of these republics and to secure petroleum export routes for them through Iran, which would be less subject to Russian interference than most other possibilities. Just as Nixon [End Page 179] responded to a Soviet Union that appeared to be growing stronger and more threatening by pursuing detente with Moscow while at the same time allying with Beijing against it, the U.S. response to a Russia that was threatening its southern neighbors might be to try to improve relations with Moscow while simultaneously cooperating against it with Tehran.

Another scenario that could lead to a rapid U.S.-Iranian rapprochement would be an Islamic fundamentalist revolution in Saudi Arabia. It might appear at first that Iran would ally with an Islamic fundamentalist Arabia. This, however, would not be likely. An Islamic revolution in Saudi Arabia would in all probability be led by Sunnis, and a Sunni fundamentalist Arabia would never defer to Shi'a Iran. Should they ever come to power, Sunni fundamentalists in Arabia are far more likely to compete with Iran for influence in the Islamic world than to cooperate with it. Iranian hostility toward the Taliban indicates that Iranian, as well as U.S., interests would be threatened by the rise of Sunni fundamentalism in Saudi Arabia. Whether or when either of these or any other "significant change" in the international context affecting U.S.-Iranian relations will occur cannot be foretold. This significant change, however, will have to be of sufficient gravity to enable the proponents of rapprochement in both countries to persuade a sufficient number of its opponents that, despite all previous hostility between them, improved U.S.-Iranian relations would now not just be desirable, but vital for both.

This, of course, is a rather indefinite statement. What can be said, though, is that, more than at any other time since the Iranian Revolution, there is now a greater appreciation in Washington and Tehran for how beneficial an Iranian-American rapprochement would be for both countries. This alone may serve to help the proponents of rapprochement on both sides overcome the legacy of the past and seize upon any opportunities to improve the Iranian-American relationship whenever they might arise.

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Notes

1. John Lancaster, "Khatemi Seeks U.S. 'Dialogue,'" *Washington Post*, 15 December 1997; and Barton Gellman, "Iranian Leader Urges Exchanges with U.S.," *Washington Post*, 8 January 1998.
2. Barton Gellman, "U.S. Proposed Direct talks in Overture to Iran," *Washington Post*, 9 January 1998.
3. "Clinton Backs More Contact with Iranians," *Washington Post*, 30 January 1998.
4. Thomas W. Lippman, "U.S. Rethinking Economic Sanctions," *Washington Post*, 26 January 1998.
5. Richard W. Murphy, "It's Time to Reconsider the Shunning of Iran," *Washington Post*, 20 July 1997; and Robin Wright and Shaul Bakhash, "The U.S. and Iran: An Offer They Can't Refuse?" *Foreign Policy* (Fall 1997) pp. 124-36.
6. ILSA imposes a variety of penalties on the American business operations of any foreign corporation investing \$40 million (reduced to \$20 million in August 1997) or more annually in the Iranian petroleum sector.
7. For more on this topic, see Mark N. Katz, "Central Asian Stability: Under Threat?" *SAIS Review* 17:1 (Winter-Spring 1997) pp. 31-46; and Zanny Minton Beddoes, "A Caspian Gamble," *The Economist*, 7 February 1998, pp. S7-S12.
8. For a recent account of Iran's economic problems, see Jahangir Amuzegar, "Iran Under New Management," *SAIS Review* 18:1 (Winter-Spring 1998) pp. 81-5.
9. An exception has been the French oil company, Total S.A., which after the passage of ILSA agreed to make a two billion dollar investment in the Iranian petroleum sector. So far, the Clinton Administration has been reluctant to impose sanctions against it--much to the disgust of Henry Kissinger ("The Oil Deal with Iran," *Washington Post*, 28 October 1997). See also Amuzegar, "Iran Under New Management," p. 87.
10. Shaul Bakhash, "From Iran, an Understated Overture," *Washington Post*, 18 December 1997.
11. Thomas Friedman, "A One-Word Strategy," *New York Times*, 6 January 1998. In early 1998, reports circulated within the Washington foreign policy-making community that leading figures in the Iranian government wished to have some sort of "security dialogue" with the U.S. before it launched any strikes against Iraq.
12. In January 1998, the Iranian authorities allowed the Iraqi foreign minister to visit Tehran, but then pointedly snubbed him during his visit. Elaine Sciolino, "Iran

Keeps its Distance on U.S. Crisis with Iraq," *New York Times*, 25 January 1998.

13. IRNA, 7 October 1996.

14. Barbara Crossette, "U.S., Iran Join to Seek Ways to End Civil War in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, 15 December 1997.

15. See, for example, Peter W. Rodman, "Dialogue with Iran?" *Washington Post*, 24 December 1997; Tarek E. Masoud, "Misreading Iran," *Current History* 97 (January 1998) pp. 42-3; and Patrick Clawson, "The Continuing Logic of Dual Containment," *Survival* 40:1 (Spring 1998) pp. 33-47.

16. Laura Drake, "Hegemony and Its Discontents: United States Policy toward Iraq, Iran, Hamas, the Hezbollah and Their Responses." Paper presented at the International Studies Association Conference, Toronto, 18-23 March 1997, p. 17; and John Lancaster, "Head Iranian Cleric Rejects Talks with U.S.," *Washington Post*, 17 January 1998.

17. Lancaster, "Head Iranian Cleric Rejects Talks with U.S."

18. Gellman, "Iranian Leader Urges Exchanges with U.S." See also Masoud, "Misreading Iran," pp. 41-2.

19. Even then, the Iranian government has indicated that while it does not support the American-sponsored Arab -Israeli peace process, "if the parties come to an agreement, Tehran will accept it." Gary Sick, "Rethinking Dual Containment," *Survival* 40:1 (Spring 1998) p. 14.

20. There does not appear to be publicly available survey research about Iranian public opinion concerning the U.S. Western visitors to Iran (including myself) have come away with a dual impression. On the one hand, there is considerable Iranian resentment toward the U.S. government for the intrusive role it has played in Iranian politics during the era of the Shah and for the sanctions imposed on Iran since the Revolution. On the other hand, Iranians often express positive feelings about American society and culture, and display great friendliness and warmth toward Americans as individuals--as was evident recently when the U.S. wrestling team participated in an international tournament held in Tehran. Bruce Laingen, "It's Time for the U.S. and Iran to Sit Down and Talk," *Christian Science Monitor*, 12 March 1998. For my personal impressions of Iran during a visit I made there in 1992, see Mark N. Katz, *Middle Eastern Sketches* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997) pp. 101-27.

21. John Lancaster, "Iranian Cleric Disputes Ayatollah's Right to Rule," *Washington Post*, 25 December 1997.

22. Robin Wright, "Islamist's Theory of Relativity," *Los Angeles Times*, 27 January 1995.

23. Robin Wright, "Mullah Maneuvers into Power," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 June 1995.

24. On the differing Soviet and American expectations concerning the 1970s era detente, see Raymond L. Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1994, rev. ed.) ch. 2.

25. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Strategic Survey 1994/95* (London: Oxford University Press/IISS, 1995) pp. 180-3.

26. Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation*, pp. 242-70.

27. Frederick W. Axelgard, *A New Iraq? The Gulf War and Implications for U.S. Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1988).

28. Michael Dobbs, "Vietnam, U.S. Begin a New Relationship," *Washington Post*, 6 August 1995.

29. It should be noted that the process of improving relations with revolutionary regimes can also be reversed, as occurred in Soviet-American relations following Moscow's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and in U.S.-Iraqi relations following Baghdad's invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

30. Mark N. Katz, *Revolutions and Revolutionary Waves* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997) pp. 35-7.

31. The issue is complicated because some Iranian support for these groups comes not from the government but from *bonyads* (Islamic foundations) which do not appear to be under firm government control. Sick, "Rethinking Dual Containment," 14-16.

32. For a detailed discussion of the Iranian weapons of mass destruction program by a highly authoritative source, see Anthony H. Cordesman, *Iran and Iraq: The Threat from the Northern Gulf* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994) ch. 9.

33. This episode, involving the secret sale of American weapons to Iran in 1985-86, was an early attempt at improving Iranian-American cooperation which collapsed. Why it did so is highly revealing. Both the U.S. and the Iranian governments were able to collaborate in secret. But once this collaboration became publicized, it caused a public outcry in the U.S. where memories of the hostage crisis in Tehran were still fresh. Iranian hardliners also appeared to express anger over the revelations, but Ayatollah Khomeini moved quickly to stop them from airing the issue publicly, and even sought to continue the rapprochement.

What is interesting about this episode is that it showed that both the Iranian and

the U.S. governments saw rapprochement as advantageous, but the American public did not, and so it ended. The legacy of Iran-Contra is that no American administration since then has been willing to engage in the sort of secret, back channel negotiations that the Iranians seem to prefer for fear of the negative domestic political impact that the inevitable revelation of such talks would cause.

For more on the Iran-Contra episode, see Shaul Bakhash, *The Reign of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1990, rev. ed.) pp. 267-70.

34. David Armstrong, *Revolution and World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

35. But Iran's relations with other Western states-including Germany and Norway-have not been without problems. See "Kiss at Your Peril," *Economist*, 14 February 1998, p. 47; and Sick, "Rethinking Dual Containment," pp. 13-14, 24.

36. For an elaboration of this argument, see Mark N. Katz, "The Embourgeoisement of Revolutionary Regimes." Paper presented at the International Studies Association-West Conference, University of California at Davis, 18 October 1997.

37. Abdallah Laroui, *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual: Traditionalism or Historicism?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) pp. 159-66.

38. Jerry Hough, *Russia and the West: Gorbachev and the Politics of Reform*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990) pp. 10-12.

39. Farhang Rajaee, "The Islamic Yuppies in the Future of Iranian Politics." Lecture, Middle East Institute, 6 February 1998. See also Nora Boustany, "Ancient Roots, Modern Morals," *Washington Post*, 6 February 1998.