

Alternative Foreign Policy Views among the Iranian Policy Elite

Apr 1, 1994



Articles & Testimony

Western policy towards the Islamic Republic of Iran has long been based on the assumption that Iran could be persuaded to change major aspects of its foreign policy, such as its support for death threats against Salman Rushdie, its murder of Iranian oppositionists in the West, its cooperation with terrorists (Lebanon, Palestinians, and various North African countries), and its sponsorship of opposition to the Israel-PLO accord. In their declaratory policy, the G-7 industrial countries share a common assumption that the problem is with particular Iranian foreign policies, not the regime: "Concerned about aspects of Iran's behavior, we call upon its government to participate constructively in international efforts for peace and stability and to cease actions contrary to those objectives." That is also U.S. policy as set out in Martin Indyk's speech on the "dual containment" policy, in which he was careful to hold the hope for normal relations with Islamic Iran:

"I should emphasize that the Clinton administration is not opposed to Islamic government in Iran. Indeed, we have excellent relations with a number of Islamic governments. Rather, we are firmly opposed to these specific aspects of the Iranian regime's behavior, as well as its abuse of the human rights of the Iranian people. We do not seek a confrontation, but we will not normalize relations with Iran until and unless Iran's policies change, across the board."

There are some contrary voices, who suggest that Iranian behavior is not likely to change. Their argument is made stronger by the frequent dashing of hopes that moderates would consolidate power and change policy -- a hope we first held out in December 1979 when the election of Bani Sadr as president was said to foreshadow release of the American embassy hostages, and then repeated regularly with each twist and turn of Iranian politics. . . .

McNair Paper 29: Iran's Strategic Intentions and Capabilities

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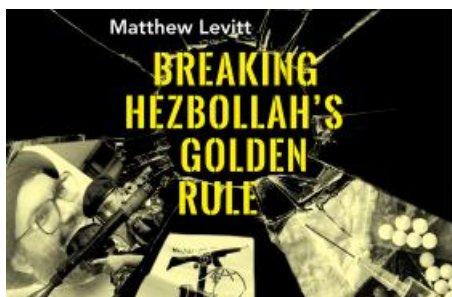
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