

Ardeshir Zahedi: Legend and Lesson

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The career of Iran's last pre-revolution ambassador to the United States offers both an example and a warning to American policymakers and diplomats today.

Pahlavi Iran's last ambassador to the United States, Ardeshir Zahedi, who died on Thursday at the age of 93, was nothing short of legendary. He was arguably the most flamboyant foreign ambassador in the history of Washington, an icon of 1970s excess. All of this celebrity served a clear purpose. Zahedi persuaded Americans that the richer Iran became, the more stable it became, and that selling it arms on a massive scale would spread that stability. He so charmed and mesmerized America that it failed to see the weaknesses of his master, Mohammed Reza Shah. Zahedi's story demonstrates the vulnerability of American policy to foreign manipulation. The United States is often accused of interfering in the domestic affairs of other countries. As Zahedi's case shows, it works both ways...

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