

## Through the Veil:

# The Role of Broadcasting in U.S. Public Diplomacy toward Iranians

by [Mehdi Khalaji \(/experts/mehdi-khalaji\)](#)

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### ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Mehdi Khalaji \(/experts/mehdi-khalaji\)](#)

Mehdi Khalaji, a Qom-trained Shiite theologian, was the Libitzky Family Fellow at The Washington Institute.

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Over the past decade, Washington has stepped up its public diplomacy efforts toward Iran, particularly in the area of Persian-language broadcasting. Despite their good intentions, however, many of these initiatives are flawed in ways that hinder their goals and do little to reverse anti-American sentiment in Iran. From widespread mistranslation on the State Department's Persian website to terrorists appearing on Voice of America as "political activists," these flaws are keeping U.S. government broadcasting from effectively reaching the Iranian people.

In this Washington Institute Policy Focus, Mehdi Khalaji -- a former Persian-language producer for Radio Farda and the BBC -- takes a comprehensive look at the various U.S.-based broadcasting initiatives aimed at Iranians young and old. From government outlets to privately funded projects, he examines the results of their efforts and offers constructive criticism on key issues such as promoting professional journalistic standards, navigating accusations of propaganda, and overcoming obstacles on Capitol Hill. He also analyzes European and other foreign broadcasting efforts, both to broaden the picture of the Iranian audience and to foster a clearer understanding of weaknesses in the American approach.

• 28 pages

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