

An Analytical Examination of Iran-USA Relations Post-Islamic Revolution: Extended Scientific Review

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Abstract

The book “Sorry, How Can I Get to Washington?” Ellias Aghili Dehnavi highlights the historical, ideological and geopolitical features of the relations between Iran and the US from the Islamic Revolution in 1979 until now. In this book, the relationship between the two states is illustrated with the help of the analysis of the inclement of international and domestic politics, the deep rooted “faith” of the people as well as critical episodes. In this regard, the narrative is divided into a number of chapters corresponding to the specific periods in history of the Iran USA relations starting with the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution including the hostage crisis, further development of the relations, War with Iraq and further attempts including diplomatic ones leading to development or depreciation in the so called bilateral relations between the two counties¹.

Keywords— U.S foreign policy, Iran, Middle East, Strategies and Doctrines, conflict resolution

I. POST-REVOLUTIONARY TENSIONS AND THE HOSTAGE CRISIS²

The strategic locating of trajectory changes towards the Islamic Revolution’s ideological conflicts is elaborated in the first few turns. There, the dominance of American intervention and political hegemony is blocked by the new “Islamic” patriotic ideology and Dehnavi explains that to the fullest extend; he then suggests that this ideological change was the main cause of souring and conflicts resulting in incidents like the storming of the US embassy in Tehran in 1979.

He closely scrutinizes the hostage crisis, analyzing the reasons why students decided to storm the embassy and how this act of resistance became an integral part of the anti-Americanism in Iran. Also there is an analysis of how the Americans reacted; this includes a “no-response policy” and sanctions among other forms, these were demonstrated as measures that entrenched the enemies’ relations further³.

II. THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR: A TURNING POINT

This section of the book has a special attention with regard to the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) which Dehnavi views as a decisive moment in Iran-USA relations and the one that every Iranian citizen remembers. The author also examines the geostrategic facets of the conflict and notes that despite the official policy of neutrality, concerning the military conflict between Iraq and Iran, the United States did help Iraq, at least in terms of military information and financial assistance. Dehnavi posits: supported regimes were part of an even more extensive containment of “Islamization” and particularly diapason of Iran’s rise within the Middle East.

War discourse also cuts across its ramifications on internal relations in Iran where it accentuated the anti-U.S. posture of the ruling system, as well as, provided justification for the lodging of the same revolutionary policies that characterized the first years of the Islamic state. In this context, Dehnavi nails the target denoting as part of his own

¹ Dehnavi, E. A. (2020). Sorry, how can I get to Washington? ResearchGate.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381096520_Sorry_how_can_I_get_to_Washington

² Fiedler, R., & Dehnavi, E. A. (2024d). Unraveling the Enigmas: Deciphering the Causes of Discord in the Middle East: A Review. Journal of Humanities and Education Development, 6(1), 51–56. <https://doi.org/10.22161/jhed.6.1.7>

³ Fiedler, R., & Dehnavi, E. A. (2024c). Navigating Engagement with Iran: Exploring US Strategies and Options: A Futuristic Scenario and Review. International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences, 9(2), 109–113. <https://doi.org/10.22161/ijels.92.18>

research,” American Iranian” bilateral relations’ historical documents, which reveals the pervasive nature of mutual animosity and distrust among U.S. and Iranian decision-makers and cupboards.

III. DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS AND THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGY⁴

This chapter signifies the end of violent conflict and Dehnavi turns his attention to the various measures taken by both countries in order to normalize or, at least, to temperate their deteriorating relations. The book elaborates on how every new President of the US (varying in political orientation) responding was based on their political doctrine towards Iran and the whole region. Dehnavi proposes that there was a strong role played by the ideas in galleries of power in both Washington and Tehran that determined the content of each strategy.

In particular, Dehnavi illustrates the close correlation between U.S. political strategies⁵ and deep fears of the expansion of Islamic fundamentalism as conceived by Reagan administration on the one hand, and ideology that motivated legitimized Iranian aggressions, on the other. The author, in particular, analyzes the unsuccessful diplomatic policies undertaken by the leaders in Iran during the presidencies of Rafsanjani and Khatami and the reasons for the political strife in Iran and America that often curtailed such policies.

IV. THE NUCLEAR ISSUE AND SANCTIONS⁶

The book also gives a detailed account of the nuclear issue which has been a bone of contention between Iran and USA since the early part of the 21st century. Dehnavi hastens to show the developments that led to the emergence of an Iranian nuclear program, and, over the constant reticence of the majority of the world, the making of the very dangerous economic measure by the USA and its partners.

Dehnavi’s insights stress the nuances of the nuclear talks, particularly the extent to which they were shaped by the fact of the time, which included political issues such as Iraq and Syria (specially the matter of the proxies⁷), and the position

of Iran in the region, its standing with Russia and China. The article examines the effectiveness of sanctions on the Iranian economy and socio-spatial relations, and exploits that although it has achieved its aim of strangulating the Iranian authorities, it eventually has aggravated the two countries’ interrelation.

V. THE OBAMA AND TRUMP ADMINISTRATIONS: DIVERGENT APPROACHES

In another one of the most up-to-date parts of the book, Dehnavi views different ways of two Presidents, Barack Obama and Donald Trump towards Iran; -to abridge the words-, president Trump and President Obama are two different ends of a pole; the pole is the United States foreign policy and what makes the difference is just their ways of navigation. The book presents a detailed study of the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran signed by six world powers and the European Union in which Iran agreed, for sanctions relief, to limit its nuclear program in exchange.

The book however also highlights how this attitude concentrated on the negative constraining future of Iran policy led to the collapse of the JCPOA as desired by the Trump administration, which re-instituted sanctions and took a tougher line against Iran. And with that aggressive policy, Iran pulled itself even closer to Russia and China than it had been under the Obama administration and made the “Middle East situation worse in more than one respect”, Dehnavi says.

VI. THEMATIC ANALYSIS: IDEOLOGY VS. PRAGMATISM

In Dehnavi’s book, the main conflict between ideology and realism between the USA and Iran’s relation is apparent throughout. He goes on to state that while on some occasions the two nations have made realistic diplomatic overtures, the ideological aspect came on the way more often than not. For Iran, Islamic Revolution ideas have always been situated at the top of the foreign relations pyramid which also restrained engagement in extra-territorial activity by American ways. For Dehnavi, this ideological narrow-mindedness has contributed to the lack

⁴ Dehnavi, E. A., & Adami, A. (2022). Futuristic research of basic problems in the way of negotiations between Iran and the United States. ResearchGate. <https://doi.org/10.2478/bjlp-2022-002064>

⁵ Dehnavi, E. A., & Jamal, M. A. (2020). From Containment to Americanism. ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/381002365_From_Containment_to_Americanism

⁶ Firoozabadi, S. J. D., Dehnavi, E. A., & Rahiminezhad, M. A. (2023). Modeling the Factors Affecting the Nuclear Negotiations

of Iran in 5+1 with the Fuzzy Approach: Structural. . . ResearchGate.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/368645640_Modeling_the_Factors_Affecting_the_Nuclear_Negotiations_of_Iran_in_51_with_the_Fuzzy_Approach_Structural_Equations

⁷ Dehnavi, E. A., & Safavipour, A. (2024). Decoding Iran’s Proxy Strategy: Determent or Destabilization? A Review and Scientific Commentary. Journal of Humanities and Education Development, 6(5), 01–06. <https://doi.org/10.22161/jhed.6.5.1>

of security and durable peace in the area; he encourages the practice of pleadings that thinks differently concerning such tricky issues.

Scientific Merit and Contribution

"*Sorry, How Can I Get to Washington?*" is an impressive piece of work in that it is a thorough and academic study of a very difficult and a complicated international issue of our contemporary times. Dehnavi employs a descriptive-analytic methodology substantiated with a plethora of primary and historical sources providing comprehensively where Iran-USA relations reside.

The real merit of the book is in the attempts to situate the facets of the relations between the countries into the geopolitical map including political, military and socio-economic dynamics. In doing this, Dehnavi not only illuminates the history, but also indicates the paths that may be taken by this strategic relationship in the future; he does not limit himself to only singular historical points but rather he takes a theoretical and general approach towards the deeper philosophical fundamentals in both countries (i.e., exceptionalism for the Americans⁸ and the role of ideology for the Iranian)

VII. CONCLUSION

Ellias Aghili Dehnavi's "*Sorry, How Can I Get to Washington?*" is an essential resource for scholars, policymakers, and students of international relations, Middle Eastern studies, and diplomatic history. The book offers a detailed and balanced analysis of Iran-USA relations, emphasizing the interplay between ideology, geopolitics, and diplomacy besides the fluctuations in the hegemony of the U.S.⁹. As such, it is a valuable contribution to the ongoing discourse on how these two nations might navigate their fraught relationship in the years to come.

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