



Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the United States

Trita Parsi

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In this era of superheated rhetoric and vitriolic exchanges between the leaders of Iran and Israel, the threat of nuclear violence looms. But the real roots of the enmity between the two nations mystify Washington policymakers, and no promising pathways to peace have emerged. This book traces the shifting relations among Israel, Iran, and the United States from 1948 to the present, uncovering for the first time the details of secret alliances, treacherous acts, and unsavory political maneuverings that have undermined Middle Eastern stability and disrupted U.S. foreign policy initiatives in the region.

Trita Parsi, a U.S. foreign policy expert with more than a decade of experience, is the only writer who has had access to senior American, Iranian, and Israeli decision makers. He dissects the complicated triangular relations of their countries, arguing that America's hope for stability in Iraq and for peace in Israel is futile without a correct understanding of the Israeli-Iranian rivalry.

Parsi's behind-the-scenes revelations about Middle East events will surprise even the most knowledgeable readers: Iran's prime minister asks Israel to assassinate Khomeini, Israel reaches out to Saddam Hussein after the Gulf War, the United States foils Iran's plan to withdraw support from Hamas and Hezbollah, and more. This book not only revises our understanding of the Middle East's recent past, it also spells out a course for the future. In today's belligerent world, few topics, if any, could be more important.

Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the United States Details

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From Reader Review Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the United States for online ebook

mohamed says

Sumit Mehrotra says

Just loved it. Well written by Trita Parsi.

Phoenix says

Ignore its rhetoric, my dog won't bite

An interesting book, up to about Ch. 19 at which point it does go off the rails. The range of coverage of the Israeli point of view is excellent and reasonably reflects the diversity of opinion. Parsi was afforded wide access and used it well. The coverage of Iranian internal points of view is less extensive. Particularly disappointing was a lack of coverage of the Basiji, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard which now dominates the economy and internal security services.

Parsi's basic argument is that the actions of Iran and Israel can be understood solely in geophysical terms. Because of its large population (about 68 million), position on the Gulf and industrial capacity Iran's natural role is to dominate the region. I should add, to Iran's credit, a point that Parsi missed in as much as Iranian poetry and literature was historically considered to be high culture in neighbouring countries such as Pakistan and Afganistan. What Parsi doesn't mention, by starting with the Shah, is the 200 years of the Qajar

dynasty where Iran was not a natural leader in the region and was actually quite weak. In geopolitical terms Iran's largest city to the south is Shiraz and most of the population is concentrated in the north towards the Caspian sea.

Parsi's characterization of Israeli policy is that of the "Periphery Doctrine". Briefly stated he believes that Israel was friendly with Iran from 1948 to the early 90s because it weakened its neighbouring Arab states. When Iran broke off all contact, Israel forged relationships with countries further on the periphery - India and China and the small . Whereas there is some basis for this approach a better view is that Israel is like a puppy dog with a short memory. Throughout its history the country has held out the possibility of peaceful relations with all of its neighbours. In its bid for a regional hegemony Iran doesn't consider the possibility of advocating openly peaceful relations with everyone as well, merely playing off opposing forces to make itself more relevant.

His analysis of why Iran will not acquire nuclear weapons is also flawed, IMHO. Parsi asserts that if Iran develops nuclear weaponry, so will its neighbours, but mostly by acquisition, which will negate Iran's superiority in conventional forces. I agree with the probable outcome of proliferation but disagree with his conclusion. Historically Iran's military has done rather poorly against neighbouring Iraq and they are ill suited for engaging Afghanistan. If one looks at a map one finds that deploying troops against the GCC is a possibility, but forget about Pakistan. Against Israel - forget it - they'd have to cross borders. Though Iran borders the Gulf the bulk of their population and infrastructure is to the north east of the country. The best use of Iran's army is defending home turf, not for projecting power outside the country,

Iran is a fear based state where opposition to the established leadership gets crushed, as we have seen in this year's "elections". It's rhetorical antipathy towards the Jewish State should be taken seriously as should its efforts to undermine the government of Lebanon through its proxy Hezbollah. As Thomas a Becket ruefully discovered, words matter, especially in an autocratic state such as Iran.

The dog in fact may bite.

Some minor irritations, without which I probably would have rated the book at 4 stars for how clearly it stated it's point of view:

1. Time and again Parsi refers to Tel Aviv as the source of Israeli government positions. He even refers to Israel's "lively and noisy capital" going silent during Saddam Hussein's scud attacks. Trita, bubeleh, the Knesset is in Jerusalem. That's where the decisions are made, not Tel Aviv. Next you'll be telling us that Beijing is running Taiwan. Also 39 scuds landed in Israel, not 34 - the Patriot anti-missile system that the US sold them was completely ineffective.
2. In Chapter 13 which covers the early 1990s its hard to keep track of what year it is as Parsi goes back and forth so much. Some better editing is required.
3. Parsi praises Iran too much for helping negotiate the release of US hostages in Lebanon. That perspective is wrong - Iran was funding and operating the hostage takers and was acting as agents on their behalf, just as Iran controls Hezbollah in Lebanon, supplies and encourages Hamas in Gaza and rebels in North Yemen against Saudi Arabia.
4. Iran's relationship with Syria is not considered at all, but this would be highly relevant.
5. Much is made of a grand offer cobbled together by a Swiss diplomat in 2003. It would have been

interesting if the US had pursued it however one of the more obnoxious items was for the US to turn over it's erstwhile allies the MKO to the Iranians. Yes, they were designated as terrorists but the US made deals with all kinds of despicable persons in both Iraq and Afghanistan and to do a treacherous about face would undermine views about American's trustworthiness. Parsi should have done a deeper analysis of the pros and cons of the grand bargain. Only a pared down proposal might have been workable. Tying Iranian assistance in Iraq to the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israels was also a clue that this would fail as an offer.

6. The 1991 Madrid Conference that did not invite Iran did not need yet another pro-Palestinian voice at the table. In and of itself the conference was a failure as all parties used it to promote set positions but it did lead to bilateral talks which were successful. Yes, Iran would have felt more important, but then other non-border states would have needed to be invited as well.

7. Parsi leaves us dangling on Russia. Both the Shah and the Ayatollahs were opposed to Godless Communism - Parsi covers this, but what about the present. Russia and Iran are no longer ideologically at odds and Russia has always sought a friendly warm water port. The Grand Game is still at play.

In spite of these objections I found it an interesting read. One does not have to agree with Parsi's conclusions to appreciate and respect his point of view.

Ahmed saad aboyossef says

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Doreen Petersen says

Very well written and explanatory book about some of what is going on in the Middle East. I think this book will help others to understand part of what is happening. I would definitely recommend this one to all.

Pam Rasmussen says

This book is sometimes dissatisfying in that it focuses very narrowly on the relationship between Iran, Israel and the United States, and thus certain more complex subjects are lacking in the broader context needed to understand them. However, it is enlightening nonetheless, clearly making the point that despite our governments' focus on Iran's anti-semitic rhetoric, other forces (mainly geopolitical) are responsible for our own belligerent behavior. In the past, all of the parties have put rhetoric in its proper place, when our own desires to maximize our power called for it.

Rod says

I borrowed this book from the library, but it's so rich in history and detail that I'm going to buy it. Having it in my own library should come in handy to combat the lies and distortions emanating from the Republican Party. The book is unique because much of its material is based on interviews Parsi obtained with figures in the U.S., Israeli, and Iranian governments. It covers the period from when the Shah was in power in Iran to the year 2007, and it shows how even the pro-Western Shah attempted to put some distance between himself and the pro-Israel policies of the U.S. There's also an interesting discussion of Israel's so-called periphery doctrine--the attempt to gain allies in Turkey and Iran to offset hostility from their immediate Arab neighbors. It discusses in detail Iran's overture in 2002 to both the U.S. and Israel for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East, and Iran's cooperation with the U.S. in helping U.S. forces oust the Taliban from power in Afghanistan. Parsi isn't a radical. Much of his perspective probably derives from the realist school, but in light of the Bushies' belief that empire creates its own reality, even the realist perspective is somewhat refreshing. The author makes a strong case that the current far-right stance on Iran, both in Israel and the U.S., is based on preemptive war doctrines and the goal of total hegemony in the Middle East, and he shows how dangerous and misinformed this stance is.

Hajar says

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Ghada Arafat says

A must read book not only for those interested in Israeli Iranian relations but also any one who is interested in ME politics and realism in international relations.

Hafsa Yusuf says

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Mohammed Lori says

abdelmoaty muhammad says

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Mustafa Basree says

Very good read. So informative, full with evidence and fairly unbiased.

Trita Parsi introduces the argument that Iran has a rational strategy that is/was consistent throughout the years of Shah, the revolution, and the current regime that it aspired domination and hegemony in the Middle East. That, in essence, collides with the very same aspiration of Israel, which fears the acquired, but before that the would-be, weaponization of any country - in the region - that contests Israel over the hegemony in the Middle East.

Whether the weaponization is militarily or conventional, Israel has to outgrow its immediate and far neighboring states militarily to secure itself and its interests in the region. This tells us that the whole issue between Israel and Iran is rather strategic, than ideological - and that's Parsi's argument.

The book is rich with references and numerous interviews conducted with a number of high rank Israeli, American and Iranian officials.

Tariq A says

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Ahmad Al-Maaini says

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