



Going to Tehran: Why the United States Must Come to Terms with the Islamic Republic of Iran

Flynt Leverett , Hillary Mann Leverett

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An eye-opening argument for a new approach to Iran, from two of America's most informed and influential Middle East experts

Less than a decade after Washington endorsed a fraudulent case for invading Iraq, similarly misinformed and politically motivated claims are pushing America toward war with Iran. Today the stakes are even higher: such a war could break the back of America's strained superpower status. Challenging the daily clamor of U.S. saber rattling, Flynt and Hillary Mann Leverett argue that America should renounce thirty years of failed strategy and engage with Iran—just as Nixon revolutionized U.S. foreign policy by going to Beijing and realigning relations with China.

Former analysts in both the Bush and Clinton administrations, the Leveretts offer a uniquely informed account of Iran as it actually is today, not as many have caricatured it or wished it to be. They show that Iran's political order is not on the verge of collapse, that most Iranians still support the Islamic Republic, and that Iran's regional influence makes it critical to progress in the Middle East. Drawing on years of research and access to high-level officials, *Going to Tehran* explains how Iran sees the world and why its approach to foreign policy is hardly the irrational behavior of a rogue nation.

A bold call for new thinking, the Leveretts' indispensable work makes it clear that America must "go to Tehran" if it is to avert strategic catastrophe.

Going to Tehran: Why the United States Must Come to Terms with the Islamic Republic of Iran Details

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Julie says

so, this is definitely not the book to read if you are trying to learn about Iran but have little primer on your knowledge of the middle east. thus, this book took me quite a long time to finish as my knowledge on the middle east is limited. having stated this, I did learn quite a bit from this book but won't be able to tool this new knowledge as much as I could if I had read foundational texts first.

Going to Tehran is the essential finger-pointing book...the Leveretts know exactly who opposes them, down to specific names. clearly, the Leveretts knew their views are unpopular - both even comment on how the NYT occasionally gets the Iran story wrong. the book's thesis is essentially that the IRI is not going away any time soon and the US should rework our relationship with the IRI, much like we did with China during the early 1970s. after stating this, the Leveretts go to town pointing out how -blank- has done these actions in the past, has this background and as a result is not improving the US-IRI relationship. definitely a battle cry for change and a scorching critique of US diplomacy. perhaps the only flaw I found in this book is the lack of discussion concerning human rights violations in the IRI but even if the Leveretts did discuss IRI human rights violations, it would not discredit their argument. once again, note the blatant human rights violations that occur in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, China, and even Vietnam while the US still maintains diplomatic relations with each state.

the most compelling point in *Going to Tehran*, is why the US is so insistent on regime change. the Leveretts write that the US isn't really interested in the happy human rights of the country but rather, the US is interested in expanding our area of influence. hence Vietnam, hence Iraq, hence why a vast portion of our foreign military sales go to Saudi Arabia despite massive human rights violations...rather than attempting to meet "mutual accommodation" as Nixon and Kissinger did with China, US diplomacy, has essentially been "my way or the high way". such globalization began in the H.W. Bush Administration, gained strength in the Clinton Administration and dominated the G.W. Bush and Obama administration. Obama gets some points for trying a little bit to reopen the US-IRI relationship but unfortunately his efforts ran out of steam. but, the Leveretts emphasize that the IRI is a legitimate force to be reckoned with (unlike North Korea) and the US would be wise to change diplomatic tactics.

looking forward (as this book came out in 2012), whatever happens between the IRI and the US under the Trump Administration will certainly be interesting, if not unfortunate. though no one in Washington seems to know what the Trump Administration makes of anything foreign policy wise, it does seem apparent that the hegemonic attitude of US diplomacy is not going to change which does not bode well for US-IRI relations. if the Trump Administration wants to back out of the Iranian nuclear deal, continue to dismiss the IRI as a legitimate power or even declare war on the IRI, the US is in for a bumpy ride. US allies, even Saudi Arabia, do not want a US-Iran war as a war will deeply dent the oil market that flows through the Strait of Hormuz. should the US go to war with Iran, air defense would likely be targeted first which would disable oil exports through the Strait of Hormuz and there goes 20% of oil exports consumed by Japan and a chunk of Europe. the world runs on oil as well - almost 94 million barrels are consumed per day in the world. not to mention, many middle eastern economies would be crippled as many middle eastern economies are not diversified and heavily dependent on oil exports. furthermore, the US would be on its own in this ordeal as those involved in the Iranian nuclear deal (United Nations Security Council) have already stated they would not help the US if we choose to dismiss the Iranian nuclear deal. so now not only is the US on thorny terms with the IRI but we are also alone in our position. this scenario doesn't even consider the implications between the US and the

IRI concerning immigration OR what may happen now that aggressive conspiracy-soaked conservative ideology (different from your typical brand of conservatism, by the way) has a strong say in the President's security council.

so what is the next step for US-IRI relations? no one seems to know and sadly, it seems that the chance for change for the better is slim.

Mohammad Noroozi says

An excellent book that gives the reader an opportunity to see Iran in a different lens. Flynt and Hillary Leverett's careful reasoning about why Iran's government is more reasonably understandable as a rational state acting in more or less the best interests of its people is worth reading itself. More than that, the book describes in well referenced detail America and Iran's ongoing history and the painful repeated instances where opportunity for lasting peace and rapprochement to the benefit of all the world were missed by the US.

Unfortunately, I can't give this book five stars for a couple of reasons. One, the Leverett's just flatly avoid addressing Iran's poor human rights record almost at all. At one point they seriously give time to describe the possibility that Neda Soltan's death was an MEK terrorist plot to discredit Iran. Second, the book seems to characterise analysts with differing opinions as almost uniformly dogmatic neocons or grossly misinformed. It's possible they are neither and that they simply interpret the facts differently.

Mohammad Ali says

Greg says

This was a nice surprise. I'm hesitant to give this books 4 stars though. It was pretty dry and read like a textbook.... also the organization was a bit wonky. But, it was like stepping into a whole new genre and all I can think about now is consuming more and more about Iran.

I feel like this book is good starting point and that's it. It could be much more thorough, but I'm glad I ran across this book. I want to read more about the Iran-Iraq war, more about nuclear power, and more about figures like Ahmadinejad. The stories in this book portray an Iran completely at odds with popular media and the image here in the U.S. I need to read more about this.

Jared says

The Road to Tehran was a real eye-opening book that provides a lot of insight on the United States' failed

policy in respect to Iran. The authors have ruffled quite a few feathers because the book essentially says that the last 40+ years of foreign policy with Iran has been misguided and counter-productive. The authors contend that the US has sought hegemony in the Middle East and is ignoring the powerful role that Iran could play in stabilizing the region. Iran has 15 neighboring countries and is important economically, politically, and religiously.

Even since the ouster of the Iranian shah in 1979, the US has essentially ceased nearly all forms of diplomacy with the Islamic Republic. We seem to gloss over the fact that the CIA caused a coup in 1954 that overthrew Iran's democratically elected president and focus more on the storming of the US embassy and the taking of Americans as hostages.

The book talks about how the Iranians have extended themselves on various occasions in order to open diplomatic channels, but the US has repeatedly ceased to reciprocate. The media does not shed much light on these occasions, but it is not hard to determine their veracity. For example, most Americans do not know that the Iranians helped to secure the release of the last US hostages in Lebanon in the early 1980s. The Iranians also helped during the war in Iraq. They also helped the US to overthrow the Taliban in Afghanistan. You will not hear about these things in the mainstream news because the information runs counter to the storyline that Iran is an "illegitimate, irrational, and on-the-verge-of-collapse power" with which we need to apply more pressure, especially with economic sanctions.

The book also centers on the Iranian nuclear program, which is, of course, central to our political impasse with Iran. First of all, it should be noted that the US gave Iran its nuclear program. Back in 1956, we gave the shah of Iran the Tehran Research Reactor (TRR). Yes, that's correct, we gave the Iranians the building blocks to start their nuclear program. However, after the shah was deposed, the US decided that it no longer wanted Iran to have such technology. Next, it should be noted that Iran has signed several nuclear non-proliferation treaties like other nuclear players and has agreed to IAEA inspections. The mere possession of a nuclear program is not, in itself, taboo. The science is a lot more complex, but the crux of the matter lies with whether or not a country enriches uranium to the 90+% required to make a nuclear weapon. Enriching uranium to a mere 20% is useful in creating isotopes helpful for cancer treatments, creating energy, etc.

At any rate, in order to truly see what the author's arguments are, you will clearly need to read the book for yourself. I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to know the history (and not just sound bytes) about the US and its relationship with Iran. The closing argument of the book and the title of the book has to do with the US and its opening of relations with Communist China. The parallels between the two are striking: both went through revolutions, the resulting government was seen as illegitimate, both have nuclear programs, both have governments in exile that we support, etc. The authors contend that the US president should, like Nixon in 1972, go to Iran and open relations. Make it a top-down approach and not rely on committees and multiple nations and a piece-meal approach that is easily derailed by a single issue. Change the relationship in a comprehensive manner and not little by little.

I really enjoyed the book and learned a tremendous amount from it!

Here is a video of the authors talking about the book:

<http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=8Mlk7sXRsPc>

Amy says

It was fascinating to be reading this at the exact time that relationships between the USA and Iran seem to be showing the smallest glimmer of hope. Some might find it strange to call this a page turner, but it was for me. Although it stayed unread literally for months (I was overly ambitious at the public library and it is on its last renewal). While watching the news with my dad last night, I was effectively able to counter some of the so-called arguments with documentation. Although I think nuclear energy is too dangerous for ANY nation to pursue, the media has clearly been spinning one-sided falsehoods towards us for years. This is just one such example. Do I believe that Iran has problems? Of course. Do I think that they are actually doing a decent job? It seems more and more so. I would never want to live there, and I do think that there are still some human rights issues going on, but the same can be said about any country including Canada, the USA, Britain, France etc. Overall...one of the most enlightening books I have read in a long time.

Eric Randolph says

A vital book for understanding the perspective of the Iranian establishment, with many useful correctives to Western caricatures, though it misses an opportunity to provide a truly balanced perspective (the state's crimes may be wildly overblown, but they still exist).

Imran Nasrullah says

Having just read the book and gone through the footnoted references, how can one deny that the US never misses an opportunity to throw reconciliation aside? Our own national collective memory regarding Iran only goes back to 1979 - ignoring US actions in the 1953 coup of Iran's democratically elected leader. And even if we do acknowledge the coup we summarily dismiss it as a non-event, expecting Iranians to get over it. Nothing happens in a vacuum, there is always cause and effect and the '79 Revolution can be traced back to the '53 coup.

I hate to say this, but the US has always misread the Middle East and Persia, resorting to caricatures purported by Orientalists, and later, neoconservatives. In the end, you have to look at the US record of success in the Muslim world and ask how well our strategies actually work. How many years does a power have to be in government and operating before the US legitimizes Iran's right to govern itself. I am not sure the reviewer actually read the book thoroughly.

Murtaza says

The Leveretts knew they would get a lot of flak for writing this book, one which blatantly challenges established wisdom about Iran. They do debunk some of the myths which drive America's self-defeating Iran policy and articulate what is notable and unique about the IRI. Some parts of its public caricature in the West are inaccurate and damaging.

Having said that I felt like they went a bit overboard by including people such as Akbar Ganji, Hamid Dabashi and Trita Parsi in the 'soft regime-change' camp. That's not an accurate depiction of their views as I

have seen them. Looking back at the book now I was more inclined to share their views a few years earlier when I read it, but I no longer find their position very enlightening or responsible. As an Iranian I would feel rather insulted by this very uncritical apologia for the government.

Brian says

In a time where U.S. and Israel are on the verge to attack Iran, this book is the best literal antidote to this impending folly war scheme to this date. Reading the book, you really understand how the portrayal of Iran in western media and by western politicians are horrendously flawed and how extremely misled - we, the people, really have become. The the demonization against Iran have made the situation so tense that you almost cannot even raise the topic of Iran these days.

That is why this book are more than welcome.

This book (written by former State dep. US National Security Council and CIA members that had were part of negotiations with Iran), they, in general, demolish the lies, myths and misconceptions about Iran, it dismantles the flawed western media portrayal of Iran that are daily pushed, primary by:

Israel> Neoconservatives & Israel Lobby> Liberal interventionists > Iranian exiles > Western "experts" on Iran

Leveretts nicely demolish the arguments from the above groups and show how wrong they are on topics such as Iranian election 2009, iranian domestic/foreign policies, their electoral system, their religious system, the statements and offer by Iran et.c. and how these flawed arguments affects the western view of Iran and also how their flawed arguments hurt american interests and also hurt chances of a peace between Iran and the US. One could say that the views pushed by the groups mentioned above are a simplistic, orientalist view of Iran, as a backward, violent and irrational regime bent on destroying Israel.

Leveretts show how wrong this labeling are and what kind of dangerous policies that have come out of it.

The main argument Leveretts are making is what while US are loosing influence in the region, Iran is not, in fact Iran is expanding its influence throughout the region, thus for US to keep its interests alive and expanding they need to realign with Iran - they must come to terms, they must recognize the Islamic republic of Iran, that is - US need Iran's help in the region. Iran is a major player in the region with vital ties to every issue going on in the middle east thus the constant hostility against Iran and the work-around them doesnt benefit the U.S., Leveretts fittingly compare the US/Iran situation with the US/China situation and propose the "Nixon goes to China"-model (or to apply the thesis today - "Obama goes to Tehran") to solve the issue with Iran.

In sum it is the best book out there that should be read by anyone that want to know Iran beyond the flawed western media and political portrayal and understand why its such a important state for America and for the region and thus rest of the world. If I have to pick one that should read it, Obama would be the one since he have the power to stop this mad dash for war.

Joseph says

America has wanted to put an end to the government of Islamic Republic of Iran since it overthrew the Shah. Iran for the most part wants to enjoy the rights allowed to other nations. Going to Tehran shows Iran's efforts and history as a nation that strives for acceptance, demonstrates it is a sovereign state, and pursues its interests in a non-threatening way; It is the United States (practically by itself) that wishes to deny Iran its rightful position. This position seems to be at odds with what almost every American believes about Iran, even those who actually knowledgeable international relations or Middle affairs. The Leverett's provide more than ample of examples of Iran's efforts for acceptance.

The United State's policy with post revolutionary Iran has been a policy of buying time and moving a problem to the future rather than trying to solve anything. The U.S. refuses to deal with Iran as a legitimate state when in public. America creates issues and offers unattractive proposals. When they fail, the United States responds with sanctions. A more practical approach presented is treating Iran like Nixon did China. In 1972, Nixon visited China, America's enemy, who bent on its destruction, opened relations and entered into meaningful dialog. The situation was diffused and there have been stable relations since then.

Iran is viewed as a rogue nation supporting terrorism and wanting nuclear weapons. In the Iran-Iraq War, America's ally, Iraq used chemical weapons against Iran. Iran having chemical weapons refused to use them on moral grounds. Since the end of the Iran-Iraq, the United States spends seventy times more than Iran on defense. Saudi Arabia spends four times more than Iran spends on defense. The Iranian Revolution was about independence from foreign powers and ending (American) hegemony than spreading revolution or exporting Islam by sword. Iran does not have a military capable of exporting revolution, even if it wanted to; it can barely defend its own borders. Iran has 15 neighbors bordering it, none of them can be considered allies. It is Shite state surrounded by Sunni majority states. As far as concerns of supporting terrorism are concerned, Iran does have relations with Hezbollah (who since the 1990s, under the influence of Iran, has moved to becoming a political party instead of a terrorist group). However, America's enemies, the Taliban and Al-Qa'ida are Sunni groups supported by allies Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

In 1988 the Taliban attacked an Iranian Consulate in Mazar e Sharif (Afghanistan) killing nine Iranians and hundreds of Shites in the area. Rather than retaliate, Iran went to the UN to find a solution. The result was the 6+2 Plan. Six neighboring states and the U.S. And Russia coordinate a response. There was not a unilateral retaliation but a responsible international effort.

During the Afghan War, Iran actively assisted the United States. It opened its borders for search and rescue, provided the US with intelligence, and gave the support of the Northern Alliance. An independent Afghanistan would secure a major border problem for Iran, something very positive and in the interest of Iran. Iran offered further support but it was turned down by the U.S. in favor of Pakistani and Saudi Arabian support, two of the largest supporters of Al Q'iada.

Iran is also popular in post Saddam Iraq. Iran's support for the Kurds and Shites has made Ahmadinejad more popular than other foreign leaders including American presidents. The Karzai received over \$500 million from Iran. Iran is interested in trade and economic development in the new Iraq.

Iran's nuclear problems stem from the Ford Administration (including Cheney and Rumsfeld), where it was seen as a way for Iran to export more oil. Iran claims that nuclear weapons are not in their interest. First because they do not have the wealth to compete with the United States, and secondly like chemical weapons, nuclear weapons are against Islam. Iran is currently trying to enrich uranium to 20% for use in its research reactor. This is far below the 90% enrichment needed for nuclear weapons.

Iran sees itself as a regional power or a “soft power” basing its support not on military but on three other fronts. Cultural: many of the other states in the region have Shiite minorities and Iran considers itself the cultural center of Shiite in the region. Political: Iran is an example of a stable state based on Islam and having democratic institutions and processes. Foreign Policy: Iran's foreign policy is not anti-US, but anti-US hegemony. It sees American policies as harmful, colonial, and repressive.

Iran has repeatedly opened itself to serious dialog with the US. Moderate leaders in Iran felt betrayed by the Reagan Administration. When the US asked Iran to use its influence to secure the release of American hostages in Lebanon. The US promised arms in return (Iran was struggling in the Iran-Iraq War). There was not a program of giving arms to terrorists in exchange for hostages, but America paying Iran for its help. Iran held up its end of the bargain but the American government backed down after profits from the arms sales were discovered going to the Contras.

George H.W. Bush in his inaugural address said of Iran, “Goodwill besets goodwill.” Iran worked to free the hostages in Lebanon and gave quiet support to the U.S. lead Coalition war against Iraq. In return Iran was banned from the peace conference and was removed as a player in the New World Order. The Clinton Administration needed a way to get arms to the Bosnia Muslims without appearing to be an ally of the Bosnian and not breaking the arms embargo. The Clinton Administration turned to Iran for help. Iran agreed to help. For its help it is rewarded the U.S. blocking American oil companies from developing Iranian oil reserves, followed by economic sanctions, the first since the Iranian hostage ordeal. In 1996, after the Kobar Towers terrorist attack the US blames Iran even though the Saudi's insisted it was done by Saudis and intelligence pointed to Al Qaida. Finally, Iran saw “hope” and “change” with the election of Obama as US president. Obama spoke of better relations and is the first president to call Iran by its proper name The Islamic Republic of Iran. Iran is still waiting for change; but, instead there have been new rounds of sanctions. (Reported by the Washington Post, Iran again is open to talks with the United States 11/9/2012)

Iran has proved itself to be a legitimate and stable government. The United States believes that unless Iran is a secular democracy, it remains a threat. This is counter to the view of Turkey, an ally, a largely Muslim country with open elections and when given the choice, elects representatives from religious parties over secular leaders. Iran elects its leaders and representatives. To ensure representation seats are set aside for Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrians. Iran demonstrates open elections, and peaceful transitions of power. As much as America believes Iran is a fragile government, it has survived a major war, elections, peaceful transitions of power, and the Green revolution. In the polarized American political system, both neoconservatives and liberal internationalists find themselves on the same side of the Iran issue.

Neoconservatives still not forgetting or forgiving the Shah's overthrow and liberals wanting open democracy and human rights. This unusual position puts Iran in a unique and dangerous position.

The Leveretts provide a very well documented report on Iran and its history with the United States. Despite the documentation Going to Tehran does appear to be very one sided and if it were not for the credentials of its authors, one might think at times the book was written by the Iranian Information Ministry. However, the authors' purpose is to sway opinion and to take a new look at Iran who had been demonized since 1979. The argument that is presented is convincing. There will be arguments on human rights issues, but then too, leaders like Saddam Hussein, Pinochet, and Somoza were given full support of the United States. Nixon went to China. Reagan went to the Soviet Union. Why won't America go to Iran? Sooner or later Iran will tire of extending its hand only to have it slapped. It is doubtful that the United States and Iran will become allies, but assurances of peace or even diplomatic recognition would provide regional stability that both countries desire. While having an enemy for diplomatic saber rattling (or calling a Great White Satan), or rallying around the flag (or burning flags) is helpful for governments to maintain military strength or

detracting populations from real issues, United States already has those enemies and they are also enemies of Iran. In all this book provides a straight forward, sensible approach to stability in the Middle East and South West Asia.

Full disclosure: This book was given to me as an advance copy, free from the publisher through Goodreads. My review based solely on my reading of the book and background/education in international relations.

Katie says

Flynt and Hillary Mann Leverett lay out a comprehensive, compelling, well researched argument for their position, which is the consistent mismanagement of Iranian relations by the U.S. for the last twenty years, and it is absolutely worthwhile reading for people interested in international relations (first) and Iran (second). Because it is making a positional argument, it isn't a particularly good book for people who don't already have some grounding in Iranian history or politics. In order to get a complete and balanced look at the situation, you would need to read at least one other book on the subject, and maybe two or three. I was also hoping for a better look at the feelings and positions of ordinary Iranians when I picked this up (not with regard to the argument, just in general), but the book largely only focuses on policymakers, and only opinion polls are cited to represent ordinary citizens.

Hooman says

Democracy is messy and sometimes spies and collaborators take an advantage of the loopholes available in the system. Mohsen Rezaei a former commander of IRGC has informed Ayatullah Khamenei (The Supreme Leader of Iran) to establish an Iranian Lobby as powerful as AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) in United States in order to influence policy makers in Senate and the White house to penetrate the system and get some positive image of Islamic Republic out or change the aggressive laws passed by them. Therefore a budget was specified to pay the useful idiots and those who love Petro Dollars to get their hands on some hard cash.(i.e blood money). Leverett family paid with Petro Dollars have started a campaign of appeasement, misinformation and lies in such a way that they can portray white as black.

Iran's oil Mafia is one of the most powerful Mafias directly running under the members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and Quds forces, they posses a huge budget to enforce the will of Supreme leader. Therefore under the direct supervision of MOI (Ministry of Intelligence) they hire anybody no matter if Christian or Jew, to do the dirty work and get paid handsomely. A Recently published Pentagon Report indicated that MOI hired many foreign citizens to work for the mullahs. One of them who was named in this report is a British Citizen and a Professor with completely liberal features who constantly appeases Ayatullahs in Tehran but we all know that government of United States is very much aware about the Leverett family and other American Citizens whom were hired by the MOI.

These Lobbyists carry a special tone in their projects and that is "Anti War movement", Under the slogan of Anti war movement these lobbyists start the campaign of lies, misinformation and propaganda to challenge and threaten people who stand for Change and Freedom in Iran. Here is another failed try by Leveretts to publish a book and get a special bonus from Supreme Leader of Iran. What Leverett missed in their appeasement of mullahs is that the Islamic Regime had done so much damage to the world that People of the

world will hate it even more by daily basis.

It has been 35 years that Islamic Republic of Iran rule the Iranian people , if nobody knows, Iranians such as myself know very well, what we are dealing with. We don't need Leverett family to Advertise for the Dear Leader or show that Iran is very nice and Iranians are still praising Mullahs. One simply can travel to Tehran, put a little beard and pretend he is a hardliner and see whether he can find a Taxi or any ride from the Airport, People of Iran are the most secular people I have ever seen in my life. Their contempt toward Mullahs and Islamic Government is shown in the way ladies dress to show the mullahs, we will not rest until we overthrow your Islamic caliphate, What media is missing is a morality Police going street by Street and arrest these young ladies for their make up or walking with their boy friends, or going to the roof tops smashing Satellite Dishes, If anything the Iranian youth despise the mullahs and their Islamic Establishment. Majority of Iranian even those who serve in Armed forces are tired of Mullahs, The rotten fruit of Theocracy made everybody contemptuous, Yet Leveretts meditated that Iranians love the mullahs. this preposterous claim is so mind boggling that even themselves can not believe it.

Islamic regime of Iran like all the Fascist regimes before it uses apologists and useful idiots to lie and manipulate the media, but I am sure Freedom loving Americans will put an end to it. The blood of dissidents who were murdered in the streets of Europe and Iran will not let the appeasers to carry on with their lies, The Phoenix of Freedom will rise again from ashes in Tehran and this time it will send the mullahs to the trash bin of History.

For more Information please read the website [...]

"If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. The lie can be maintained only for such time as the State can shield the people from the political, economic and/or military consequences of the lie. It thus becomes vitally important for the State to use all of its powers to repress dissent, for the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie, and thus by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the State."

-Joseph Goebbels

Adolf Hitler's right hand man & minister of Propaganda of the Third Reich.

Jennifer says

Looking at some of the other reviews, I gather that this book is not overly popular (I'm pretty intuitive). However, I think that those who gave it low ratings and negative reviews are swayed (perhaps not surprisingly) by their own personal experiences with Iran and by other stories they have heard about the Islamic Republic. Regardless of your level of agreement with the argument or with the premise of the book, the Leveretts' documentation and research were superb. There are pages and pages of notes, and they painstakingly work to show that their references and claim of expertise are not unfounded.

This book was a fireball. The Leveretts know that they hold an entirely unpopular view, but they are not afraid to stand tall and make their case for diplomatic relations with Iran. They lay out specific cases of Iran reaching out to the U.S., Iran assisting American in delicate Middle East situations, Iran volunteering for stricter and more widespread oversight of their nuclear program. Their facts were shocking, since the American media would never report overtures of that kind. At the very least, it has to make you question why we are only allowed to hear one side of the story. The reasons laid out in this book just make sense. It

makes sense that America tries to ostracize Iran to achieve Middle East hegemony. It makes sense that those who rave against Iran have personal reasons for doing so that might prevent them from being neutral. Americans need to ask themselves what the reasons are for our sanctions against Iran, when we regularly deal with China, who has human rights violations galore. If we really are ostracizing and putting sanctions on Iran because we think they are an illegitimate, oppressive regime, then why don't we carry that strategy to other oppressive nations?

I think there was a great argument made to show why Iran is, contrary to popular belief, a legitimate nation. The Leveretts took common arguments against legitimacy and made a solid case to prove them wrong. They discussed the beginnings of the Islamic Republic, their elections, and more, and made a case for why the way Iran is right not really is the desire of the majority of the people. They also shredded the argument that Ahmadinejad's second election was staged. I consider myself to be a critical thinker, and their proof seems to hold up.

My largest issue with the book was their almost complete lack of reference to some of the human rights violations that took place and perhaps still take place in Iran. I still believe that regardless of what the regime does, it is not America's place to police the world, but I do think it is important to be aware of and discuss things that happen around the globe. They only referenced the children used in the Iran-Iraq War-- children who were promised entry to paradise, given cheap mass-produced keys to wear around their necks, and sent into fields to clear mines. That discussion is important and needs to happen. Similarly, the loss of civil liberties and many freedoms needs to be discussed within the context of the Iranian culture and the Islamic Revolution, but I didn't see that addressed enough. Perhaps that is because the Leveretts know that is a weak spot in their argument for accepting the Islamic republic.

There is so much more I could say about this book, but I think this was above all an important book to read. The relationship that we have with Iran is so nuanced, and the general public of America needs to realize that, rather than just accepting talking points from politicians on both sides of the aisle.

Manuel says

Though a bit dated in terms of how fast (and furious) U.S. foreign policy and politics move since 2016 (as we are now in the Trump era), it is nonetheless a very important book to read right now. The antagonistic relationship of the United States with the Islamic Republic of Iran reminds me of the antagonistic relationship of Washington with the socialist government of Fidel Castro of Cuba since 1959. Both nation-states have been subjected to harassment (via economic sanctions and covert military actions) by the hegemonic power, the United States. As former insiders in Washington, and now academics, the Leveretts write with authority and deep insight about the nature of the Islamic Republic and of the nature of U.S. hegemony in relation to it. They cogently argue that understanding deeply and accepting the legitimate sovereignty and independence of the Islamic Republic of Iran is crucial and maybe the only way to achieve peace and true stability in the Middle East region.
