

## **Crossing over the Wall: A View of US-Iran Relations from the Former US Embassy in Tehran.**

By Babak Rahimi

*'I wasn't particularly surprised that they did it, but I wish they hadn't waited so long. If it wasn't an election year they might not have ever gotten around to it. But it's too late. You can't deal with those people. You're not dealing with rational people over there in Iran. It's like talking to a drunk, it doesn't do any good.'*

Irving Bierman, in response to U.S. military operation to rescue the American hostages in Iran, aborted due to mechanical problems and a severe sandstorm. Quoted in "Incident Leaves Bay Public Sad, Frustrated," San Francisco Examiner, April 25, 1980

*'The United States can distinguish a director and a terrorist but it intends to belittle Iranians and therefore every Iranian should be careful not to be deceived by American dubious olive branches.'*

Ezzatollah Zarghami, deputy head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) and a former militant student that participated in the seizure of the American embassy on November 4, 1979, in reply to US refusal to grant visa to Abbas Kiarostami, an Iranian film director, November 4, 2002.



**Fig. 1. Embassy front gates.**

As I stand facing the low-slung wall of the former U.S. embassy in Tehran, smeared with various anti-American and revolutionary slogans and murals, I find myself imagining the morning of November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1979. I imagine how between 300 and 400 Islamist students, known as “Students following the Line of the Imam” (Ayatollah Khomeini), surrounded and later stormed the embassy by climbing over the wall and taking 52 American staff members hostage.<sup>1</sup>

I could hear the repeated shouts of “*Marg bar America*” (“Death to America”). The noisy crowd is outside the embassy, with pictures of Ayatollah Khomeini, effigies of former US President Jimmy Carter and banners, written with bad English spelling, condemning the great “imperialist” for welcoming the “defunct” shah (the former ruling monarch of Iran) for medical treatment.<sup>2</sup> The front of the main entrance door, with two metal doors and a bas-relief of an American bald eagle in between, symbolically depicting the outer boundaries of an American diplomatic territory with a shape of a slender rectangular building, marks the central staging place where the Iranian students planned a three day takeover of the embassy. It was here that over several hours students from the University of Tehran stormed the embassy without fear of the intervention of the revolutionary guards or the police.

I wonder how this brick wall witnessed the crossing of the Muslim revolutionary students? I wonder how on that Sunday morning the Embassy staffers felt when they looked out the window seeing the first stirrings of a crowd crossing over the wall? And

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<sup>1</sup> Originally, the students took more than 90 hostages, including 65 Americans. On November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1979, the non-US hostages and 13 Americans, mainly female and minority Americans, were released, which brought the total of American hostages to 52.

<sup>2</sup> In November 1979, the deposed shah was admitted to the United States for medical treatment. Reza Mohammad Shah (1919-1980) was suffering from chronic lymphocytic leukemia, and eventually died from it in Cairo in July 1980.

what emotions did the students have as they marched across the compound toward the ambassador's residence?

In my mind, I see hundreds of armed students run feverishly and hurriedly on the front lawn of the 27-acre compound. Some students get through windows in the basement and move to the first floor of the Embassy building. Others stand outside the main door by the stairwell, yelling and trying to smash the closed doors. After a brief resistance by several U.S. Marine guards (a tear gas canister was set off in the central hallway in the second floor), the students enter the building and surround the American staff members. Blindfolded and with hands tied behind their backs, they march out of the front entrance to the Embassy residence. The hostages are not permitted to talk to each other, as the students prepare to make their case for taking over the embassy to the world. At 1:15 p.m. the seizure of the capital embassy is completely.

Later, one of the hostage-takers would speak to reporters by telephone from inside the seized embassy, giving assurance that all the hostages were safe. This phone call signaled the beginning of a political crisis on an international scale; it marked the first day of a siege, in which the American hostages were held for 444 days and which led to the end of diplomatic ties between the two countries. But, more importantly, it marked the beginning of an explosive event in U.S.- Middle East relations, of which echoes can still be heard to this day.

The straining of US-Iranian relations, that began with the Iran Hostage Crisis, is based on a wall of mistrust, and the crossing of the wall continues to be difficult because of Tehran's alarming behavior in making fissile material for nuclear weapons, as well as Washington's lack of an effective foreign policy, both of which prevent the creation of

new diplomatic relations between the two countries. After 25 odd years of wariness and tension, it may be argued that both Iran and the United States, and certainly the rest of the world, would be better off if there were a renewal of ties. But how could the two states re-establish relations after years of suspicion, when they regard each other as either a satanic overlord (“Great Satan”) or a member of an exclusive demonic association (“Axis of Evil”)? In short, how could either make a pact with an untrustworthy devil?

### **“Nest of Spies”**

Since the release of the hostages in January 1981, the former U.S. embassy compound has become a military base of the Iranian revolutionary guards, who have now turned the main embassy grounds into a temporary exhibition, which they call “the Nest of Spies.”

I walk the grounds of the Embassy knowing that the students of Imam Khomeini used an American flag to carry away trash from the compound. I stare at the former embassy entrance, where the students walked out the blindfolded American hostages. I walk up to the main building and turn back. There is a forest of signs and banners on the trees of the compound with the words of “*Marg bar America*” (“Death to America”). Facing the front entrance of the Embassy are the smashed up remains of an American airplane that was used in a failed military rescue mission in April 1980, ordered by the former President Carter. A sign that reads: “This is American democracy” is posted on the U.S. military artifact. On the stairs stands a bronze colored statue of an American marine, with hands over his head, symbolizing the submission of American power to forces of good, namely, the followers of Imam Khomeini. There is also a model of the Statue of Liberty with its belly turned into a grotesque looking prison, where a white dove morbidly lies.

Inside the main building, the organizers of the exhibition have turned the central hallway - which runs the length of the rectangular building - and rooms of the second floor, into a series of art galleries with works depicting the satanic nature of the United States and the Zionist entity (Israel). There are also exhibition rooms, devoted to a narrative account of the take-over of the embassy by the students. Here one finds newspaper clips, statements by students and hostages, eavesdropping equipment, and some of the embassy's extensive files and classified material from the political section and safes on the second floor, which the students recovered in the form of shredded items and systemically reassembled.<sup>3</sup>

There is a soundproof chamber that was used for secret meetings, with bizarre looking dummies of American diplomats sitting around a table, apparently planning their next espionage activity. One could get a glimpse of the Great Satan by looking at these dummies. They look cold, decayed and arrogant, enthroned on their chairs like men of hubris: those esteeming themselves as equal to, or greater than, the gods. Their western attire, their golden-brown and gray hair, their expressionless faces, personify what the students hated the most about the America they perceived in 1979: its arrogance, greed and pride.

The "Nest of Spies" has now transformed the former embassy into a weird postmodern Islamic revolutionary shrine to one of the ideological basis of the Islamic Republic of Iran: anti-Americanism. As I walk through the exhibition hallway, I become dismayed by the ghostly remains of the past. Here, American territory is beset by anti-Americanism.

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<sup>3</sup> By 1990, 65 volumes of the embassy documents were published by the Iranians.



**Fig. 2. Embassy front entrance.**

## **Ghostly Remains: “Operation Ajax”**

I enter a room at the end of the large hallway of the embassy, where the sign indicates its former function as the information and communication operative center. While looking at the outdated 70s communication technology, like a huge fax machine that looked more like a huge woodcutter machine, I come across the place where secret materials and files in the communications vault were removed and hurriedly fed to the shredder on the morning when the students seized the Embassy.

I leave the communication chambers and I suddenly become aware of an important and yet horrid historical fact. It was most likely in this very embassy that the CIA and the British SIS orchestrated a coup d’etat that brought down the popular government of

Mohammad Mossadeq in 1953. The thought of this makes me reflect on pre-revolutionary Iran, and events that led to the eventual take-over of the U.S. Embassy.



**Fig. 3. Communication room 1.**



**Fig. 4. Communication room 2.**



**Fig. 5. US Embassy Safe.**

Originally conceived by the British government and implemented by the US State Department and certain hawks in the CIA, the aim of the coup was to prevent the nationalization of the Iranian oil industry under Mossadeq’s government, which denied the British 51% of its ownership and 84% of its profits. Mossadeq’s controversial move to nationalize the Anglo-Iranian oil company, marked the first direct confrontation with a foreign power that enabled Iran to affirm its independence from what (colonial British Foreign Secretary) Lord Curzan regarded, in 1919, as a country that remained significant to the “safety of our eastern Empire.”<sup>4</sup>

It was perhaps in this very room, the “communication center” section of the Embassy, that CIA agents communicated their plans and ideas to Washington for the return of the Shah under the presidency of Dwight Eisenhower. It was perhaps here in the secret chamber room that the CIA made plans to pay off Iranians to pose as Communists to harass Shi’i religious leaders and stage the bombing of one ulama’s (cleric) home in a

<sup>4</sup> “Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939”, First Series, Vol. IV, London Government Printing Press, pp. 1119-1121, in Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, New Jersey: Wiley, 2003.



campaign to turn Iran's religious community against Mossadeq's government. It was most likely in this very Embassy that a group of Iranians were paid off (\$100 each) to organize a demonstration and eventually set the house of the Prime Minister Mossadeq on fire.

However, the objective of the coup was not only to undermine the regime of Mossadeq, which was believed to be flirting with Moscow at the time, but also to curtail the rise of Iranian nationalism that hampered the interests of the US and its allies (United Kingdom) in the country. The best way to topple a popular prime minister who challenged the great powers was to engage in a covert strategic action that maintained the political legitimacy of an incompetent king by making the bribed demonstrators appear to be a popular movement. Accordingly, the installment of the Shah of Shahs, the King of Kings, Mohammad Reza Shah, was to protect British and U.S. interests in a country that, like a number of other post-colonial countries, such as India, was experiencing an upsurge of nationalistic sentiments amidst the Cold War, while superpowers vied for global mastery.

As *New York Times* reporter Stephen Kinzer argues in *All the Shah's Men*, "Operation Ajax" was aimed to undermine Mossadeq's government by bribing political figures and military elites, and by organizing rumors and false reports in newspapers to provoke unrest in the country. Based on recently released CIA classified documents, Kinzer shows how the Shah was used by the British and US intelligence agencies, led by Kermit Roosevelt, the grandson of President Theodore Roosevelt, to issue a verdict dismissing Mossadeq's government. For Kinzer, the roots of the events of 9/11 can be linked to collective resentment against the US, which the coup fostered in the Middle East.

Accordingly, the CIA involvement in the overthrowing of Prime Minister Mossadeq's popular government in 1953, looms extraordinarily large in the collective consciousness of Iranians. As a young student at the University of Isfahan explained to me, "America stole from my father and I our democracy. I resent America for that. I am upset how Americans can be so ignorant about their government's past mistakes. Think about the possibility, just the possibility of a democratic Iran existing and growing to this day! I wonder how my life would have been different if America was not behind that coup."

The above statement represents a view that is shared by many Iranians, especially the younger generation under the age of 30, which comprises 70% of Iran's population. Post-revolutionary Iran continues to be haunted by the ghost of "Operation Ajax" as a mythical presence of a foreign power behind the curtain of domestic politics, making an impression in the Iranian collective consciousness that the ultimate aim of the U.S. is to make Iran its dominion, governed by a puppet regime and administrated through the CIA. However, more importantly, the coup of 1953 identified a future denied, a future that may have, by now, led to a consolidation of a democratic Iran.

## **Cultivating a Dictator: Chemical Saddam**

As I continue my stroll in the large, silent hallway, I come across a huge poster sign with the following words written on it: "The Role of Evil: A Review of the American government's crime against Islamic Iran." The poster highlights a series of U.S. involvement in Iranian political affairs, mainly events that mark the U.S. military involvement in the Iran-Iraq war.

It is a known fact that with the Iran-Iraq war escalating in the early 80s, then President Ronald Reagan sent his Middle East envoy, a former secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld, to Baghdad with the message that Washington was interested in resuming diplomatic relations. The December 19<sup>th</sup> 1983 visit by Rumsfeld also involved “topics of mutual interest,” which mainly aimed to curtail the military expansion of Iranian forces into Iraq and thwart the influence of the Shi‘i revolutionary state in the region.

Just three months after the meeting on March 5<sup>th</sup> 1984, when the Iran-Iraq war had grown into its most brutal stage, the U.S. State Department reported the Iraqi use of “lethal chemical weapons” in the war. In the same month, the United Nations also reported the use of mustard gas, laced with a nerve agent, on Iranian soldiers, since beginning of the conflict 43 months earlier (the Iran-Iraq war began September 1980). But Rumsfeld was back in Iraq later that year, after the 1984 UN report. Rumsfeld traveled to Baghdad during a period when Saddam Hussein was using chemical warfare in defiance of international law, a practice outlawed by the 1925 Geneva Protocol.

While Saddam Hussein continued to acquire chemical weapons and as Iran’s mulla oligarchs, in particular Hashemi Rafsanjani, relentlessly encouraged young Iranians to die a martyr’s death through human wave attacks, on March 29, 1984, American diplomats expressed their satisfaction with relations between Iraq and the United States. Later, military technologies, including \$200 million worth of helicopters, were sold to Iraq, in addition to the significant military intelligence (satellite information) provided to Saddam Hussein’s regime in the war.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For declassified documents and National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM 4-82), indicating the White House’s interest to review and renew ties with Iraq in the early 80s, see <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB82/index.htm> last accessed 25/05/2005

The White House continued to supply Saddam Hussein with advanced military technology and battlefield intelligence on Iranian troop buildups. Along with other European states, in particular France and West Germany, China and the former USSR, American corporations supplied the Iraqi regime with material and technology for producing gas or tabun (or lewisite or nitrogen mustard) throughout the war. When in late 1987 the Iraqi air force began using chemical weapons against the Kurds in northern Iraq, the State Department and White House failed to take any action to stop Saddam Hussein.

In fact, as Assistant Secretary of State, Richard W. Murphy, wrote in a September 1988 memorandum, “The U.S.-Iraqi relationship is...important to our long-term political and economic objective.” He adds, “We believe that economic sanctions will be useless or counterproductive to influence the Iraqis.”<sup>6</sup> Oddly, as the *Washington Post* article explains, “...the supply of U.S. military intelligence to Iraq actually expanded in 1988,” highlighting the strengthening of U.S.-Iraqi ties way into the late 80s.<sup>7</sup>

It is a strange historical fact that the White House continued to speak of Saddam Hussein as a threat not only to the U.S., but the world from 1990 to 2003, as it watched the dictator brutalize his people and commit atrocities against Iranians in the 80s. How strange, I thought to myself, as I stood in the hallway of the former U.S. Embassy in Tehran, just hundreds of kilometers away, the American forces are busy securing Iraq from the last remains of Saddam Hussein, the same dictator to whom the Republican administration provided military and political assistance in the 80s, which helped him to maintain his brutal regime. What seems ironic is that this very deposed dictator, who was allied to the Reagan administration, especially during the most brutal period of his

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Dobbs, “U.S. Had Key Role in Iraq Buildup,” *Washington Post*, December 30, 2002. A01

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

authoritarian rule, is now locked away by another Republican administration somewhere in Iraq, awaiting his trial for crimes committed against humanity. Yet, for the most part, the infamous U.S.-Iraqi alliance in the 80s is now rarely mentioned as a key factor in Saddam Hussein's continued effort to acquire weapons of mass destruction throughout the 90s.

It is in this regard that I recognize the lifeblood of Iranian anti-Americanism exhibited in the former Embassy: the perceived U.S. hypocrisy. The Jeffersonian spirit to spread democracy around the world appears to have been betrayed by those who claim to be the missionaries of democracies. When it came to the Iran of 1953 and the Iraq of the 1980s it was not, in the words of Thomas Jefferson, "the people to whom all authority [belonged]," instead it fell to the hands of the state and the authorities to dictate to people their belonging. Supporting dictators (Saddam Hussein and Shah) or overthrowing democratic governments (Salvador Allende, Chile, and Mossadeq) do not reflect the Jeffersonian vision of America as "unquestionably of the republican sentiment," but present an impression of an advancing empire maintaining dominance over distant lands and shaping political realities around the globe.

## **Failures of a Culture of Enmity**

There is a curious yet disturbing emotion that I experience during my visit to the Embassy. I see paintings, pictures and posters depicting the U.S. as the world's source of evil. There is a slogan depicting one of Ayatollah Khomeini's famous statements: "We will make America face as severe defeat." An artwork by an unknown Iranian artist, displays a plastic baby, symbolizing "the present humanity" attached (by a plastic cable) to four missile bombs which represent America. The first bomb from the left signifies

political domination, the second one represents greed, the third violence and the fourth lust. Each symbolizes the roots of evil that eventually will set the world into a massive explosion. In this room, in this building, the U.S. is not only blamed for its support of the two deposed dictators, Shah and Saddam, but also for its “Role of Evil” as an immoral entity in the world. The negative artistic representation of America identifies both internal and external features of the U.S. as an evil entity, depicting a belligerent force to recognize and, ultimately, destroy. By and large anti-Americanism has become one of the main ideological justifications for the Islamic Republic. In a state that espouses the highest religious values and dictates a fundamentalist conception of Islamic faith to its citizens’ daily life is an ideological necessity to make a perceived outsider enemy as the source of absolute evil in the world, an evil which should be crushed on the way to achieving national salvation. Such ideology not only legitimizes the Iranian Mullacracy as a government representing the good, but also aims to unify its citizens against an imaginary demonic enemy, an enemy that transgressed against all the good and embodies all the evil.

It is in this sense that one could recognize the current anti-American exhibition in the former U.S. Embassy in Tehran. What the Embassy provides is a cultural space wherein the Islamic Republic can display an arch-enemy that justifies the state’s existence to protect the citizens. And of course the foe here is far more than a military force to confront; the adversary is also a moral and political calamity that corrupts (lust), disfigures (violence) and destroys (greed).



**Fig. 6. Artwork: 4 Bombs.**

While most Iranians prefer to normalize relations with the U.S., the conservative faction in the government continues to display inherited revolutionary slogans amidst shrinking anti-American demonstrations. On October 31, 2004, for instance, the new-conservative lawmakers in the parliament (where a number of controversial votes in February 2004 prevented more than 2,000 reformist candidates to stand in the polls) chanted the usual “Death to America!” after they voted to resume uranium enrichment activities.<sup>8</sup> The symbolic gesture was in a way to taunt the American and European governments for demanding the Iranian government halt all uranium enrichment-related activities.

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<sup>8</sup> The parliament did not, however, force the government to resume uranium enrichment, but only approving an outline of a new bill requiring the government to resume the activities.

## **Crisis of Legitimacy**

Iran is a country that is experiencing a crisis of political legitimacy. As the giant wall murals on the streets outside the Embassy compound continue to lose their revolutionary appeal, Iranians, especially the young, seek to find ways to crack the regime's political grip on everyday life. Though sentiments of resentment for the U.S's involvement in Iranian politics can be heard, Iranians grow more impatient with the regime's empty anti-American rhetoric and failed political policies. They have increasingly questioned, and at times, protested the direction their country is taking. Their curiosity for the U.S. has grown despite the disapproval of the fundamentalist regime.

Especially since the election of Khatami's reformist government to power in 1997, the ideology of anti-Americanism has left a deep cleft between state and society. With various para-statal, clerically-controlled foundations and non-elected governmental institutions, like the expediency council (appointed by Ayatollah Khamenei, the spiritual leader of the Islamic Republic), Iran's reformist faction continues to challenge (both pragmatic and hardliner) the conservatives' grip on power. Despite a most likely victory of the conservatives in the June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2005 presidential elections, the reformist and various political dissidents (both secular and non-secularist), despondent from the previous parliamentary and presidential elections, continue to advance their dissent in the postrevolutionary public sphere. And it is precisely in such a public sphere, the civic space between the private and the state, that a change of Iran's current political situation should be observed in the future.

I leave the exhibition that morning and come across a young man selling pirated CDs of western pop music on the sidewalk near the Embassy wall. I ask him for the price of



one and he points, mistakenly, to a Britney Spears “Oops I did it again” CD. “This one? This is 3000 Toman,” he tells me. He smiles and adds, “if you don’t buy it now, don’t worry. I’m sure one day she’ll come here and sing for us in the embassy.”

## “The Coming Wars”?

In one of his latest articles in *The New Yorker*, Seymour Hersh writes of secret commando teams, with Israeli assistance, conducting covert activities to locate Iranian nuclear facilities for a possible upcoming U.S. military attack on Iran. He writes, “The American task force, aided by the information from Pakistan, has been penetrating eastern Iran from Afghanistan in a hunt for underground installations. The taskforce members, or their locally recruited agents, secreted remote detection devices—known as sniffers—capable of sampling the atmosphere for radioactive emissions and other evidence of nuclear enrichment programs.”<sup>9</sup> According to the article, the U.S. plans to engage in precise air strikes to take out Iran’s nuclear installations, a plan which has gained more support in the White House after the CIA’s apparent intelligence gathering failure in locating Iraq’s chemical and biological arsenal.

Since the publication of the article in January 2005, Hersh’s claim has been criticized as mere “fantasy”, “ridiculous” and a “hyperventilated assault on Secretary of Defense.” He has been even accused of espionage (by some American conservative journalists and columnists).<sup>10</sup> Some have argued that the sources Hersh uses are mostly from disgruntled CIA agents that simply intend to take revenge on the Pentagon. With all that the Bush

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<sup>9</sup> Seymour M. Hersh, “The Coming Wars: What the Pentagon can now do in secret,” *The New Yorker*, January 24 & 31, 2005, p. 43.

<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, Michael Ledeen, “The Hersh File: Sy gets it wrong again” January 21, 2005, <http://www.nationalreview.com> last accessed 25/05/2005.

administration is facing in Iraq, others have suggested that is most likely that Hersh has been duped into assisting the White House to wage a psychological war on Iran, as the perfect strategic move to derail Iran's advancing nuclear program.

However, while this could be true, the U.S. government has not categorically denied the claim that U.S. troops are on the ground in Iran. Surely, war is a costly undertaking. Despite a military overstretched in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the chances of a U.S. invasion remaining low, due to Iran's large and mountainous geographical makeup, which makes it logistically difficult to invade, one should not, however, discard military action as an option on the table.

With the possible hardliner conservative take over of the presidential office in Iran, it may be the case that the U.S. may advance a more militant foreign policy of sticks (rather than carrots) if Iran persists in producing fissile material over the next few years. If so, and if the E.U. fails to forge an alliance with the U.S. to establish diplomatic ties with Iran (using an effective policy of both carrots and sticks), a conflict of international magnitude may prove to be a possible option.

But, by and large, a hawkish foreign policy built around the use of military action, either overt or covert operations, is bound to face a serious problem of political legitimacy. The future of U.S.-Iran relations would appear as a mere extension of American violation of Iran's national sovereignty. Such policy only builds a higher wall of mistrust and suspicion, rather than paving the path towards the objective of, firstly, preventing Iran from advancing its nuclear program and, secondly, bringing about regime change in an authoritarian state that legitimizes its existence, based on a political culture of anti-Americanism and Islamist nationalism.

However, the most dangerous feature of a military action is the stifling of dissent and the hampering of a growing Iranian public sphere and advancing civil society by the conservative regime, which has certainly been the most visible and legitimate force to challenge the Mullacrats in Iran. With a military action, especially attacks on Iran's nuclear facilities, the Iranian conservatives and their militia could brand any form of opposition (including reformists) as agents of the U.S. and unleash a large scale wave of attacks against the dissidents. Ironically, a move to attack Iran's nuclear program could also be seen by many Iranians, who are in fact against the clerical regime, as a violation of Iran's national sovereignty. If legitimacy is the ultimate prize for future U.S.-Iranian relations, then U.S. military action is far from achieving such an objective.

Predicting how U.S.-Iranian relations might change their course in the next couple of years, at least while President Bush remains in the White House, is a difficult task. Much depends on Tehran and Washington's courses of action, the internal affairs (especially Iran's economic and political situation) of the two countries, and regional changes (mainly Afghanistan and Iraq) that could force either of the two to strengthen ties or continue their policy of disengagement.

However, it remains clear that Washington's stance toward Iran so far has largely failed to change Tehran's behavior, and at times has even added fuel to the regime's anti-American ideology, which certain Mullas in the Iranian government advocate on a daily basis.<sup>11</sup> The U.S.'s main objective should be to find a way to create (with the E.U) a policy balanced by rewards and penalties in order to prevent Iran's advancing nuclear

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<sup>11</sup> Here, I refer to recent remarks by certain American officials that the U.S. should take the name of Mojahedeen Khalq Organization (MKO), Iran's main opposition group, off the State Department's foreign list of terrorist organizations. In the post-9/11 era of "War on Terror", what can be regarded as hypocritical here is the fact that the MKO is a terrorist group, which has engaged in a number of violent activities since

program. This, however, would require both Tehran and Washington to begin creating incentives for negotiations and relinquish their ideological hostility against each other.

The task of democratizing Iran should, however, remain in the hands of Iranians (and Iranians alone!), since it is, as Jefferson reminds us, the people who are “in truth[,] the only legitimate proprietors of the soil and government.”

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the beginning of the Iranian revolution in 1979 (and in fact prior to the revolution), including siding with Saddam’s regime during the Iran-Iraq war in the 80s. MKO’s potential use for espionage purposes in Iran has gained the attention of a number of neoconservative ideologues in Washington since the end of Iraq war in April 2003.