

After Khomeini: New Directions in Iran's Foreign Policy, by K. L. Afrasiabi. Boulder, San Francisco and Oxford: Westview Press, 1994. xii + 212. Appendix to p. 217. Bibl. to p. 231. Index to p. 244. \$54.95

In this aptly entitled book, K.L. Afrasiabi, a Political Scientist at Boston University, provides a provocative account of Iran's foreign policy aspirations and actions in the post-Khomeini era. Through a close examination of the cognitive map of Iran's political elite, Afrasiabi helps the reader decipher and decode the cacophonous rhetoric and erratic moves of a so called "pariah nation." Far from embracing the simplistic and derogatory explanations so readily offered by many scholars, journalists, and policy experts alike, this book purports that Iran's foreign policy can be better comprehended in terms of the exigencies of revolutionary consolidation in a state aspiring to reestablish itself as a regional power. The author writes: "The argument I hope to establish is that remaking foreign policy in today's Iran is a complex and complicated process fraught with difficulties and potential setbacks and regressions as a result of both the nature of thematic changes in foreign (and domestic) policies and the uncertainties of normative reconstruction attached to these changes, as well as the paradoxical influences of the new regional and global orders that simultaneously press for and against affirming the Khomeinist *Weltanschauung*" (p. 3).

By providing a detailed analysis of the litany of initiatives undertaken by Iran vis-à-vis various states in the Persian Gulf, Central Asia, and the Western world, Afrasiabi demonstrates the painstaking process through which the country's foreign policy establishment has tried to redefine its mandate in the aftermath of Ayatollah Khomeini's death. While the picture that emerges is not necessarily that of a consistently judicious and dexterous group of statesmen, it nonetheless casts in a new light the subtleties and nuances of the course of Iran's post-

Khomeinist foreign policy. Afrasiabi identifies the improvement of Iran's relations with the Persian Gulf states and the newly independent states of Central Asia-Caucasus as the most critical challenge facing Iranian foreign policy establishment in the years to come. He further proceeds to summon Western and Iranian policy-makers to reexamine their perceptions of one another by counseling the former to be more considerate of the "uniqueness" of the Iranian case (and therefore adopt a "neo-Nixon" doctrine), while encouraging the Iranians to rethink some of their ill-fated policies of the past.

Another interesting facet of this book is its level of theoretical sophistication. Contrary to most books on the foreign policies of Middle Eastern states which tend to be purely descriptive and/or atheoretical, this book is refreshingly theoretical. The author's post-structuralist epistemology and keen understanding of the classical literature on international relations lends credence to his claim that "this is the first ... [book] to present a post-positivist critical theory of a country's foreign policy" (p. 3).

This book, however, is not without its shortcomings. The author's inadequate explanations for appropriating a constellation of concepts ("cameralism," "quasi-state," "parallelism," "monological and dialogical communication," "discursive consciousness," "panopticism," "eteroglossia") from modern social thinkers constitutes one major handicap. Afrasiabi's penchant for summarily rejecting the arguments of those scholars with whom he disagrees is equally disturbing. A third drawback is the author's advancement of a number of debatable arguments and highly speculative propositions. For example, his suggestions that the 1978-79 Iranian revolution marked the beginning of the end of the Cold War or that a second Cold War between Iran-China on the one hand and Western powers (led by the U.S.) on the other is in the works are bound to be questioned by many scholars of International Relations.

Finally, one can cavil at Afrasiabi's negligence regarding misspellings and errors in citing authors (most flagrantly in attributing an article by Shahrough Akhavi to Eric Hooglund) book titles ('`Clerical Establishment'' instead of ``Critical Establishment'' [p. 49]; ``Neorealism and its Critics'' instead of ``Neoliberalism and its Critics'' [p. 225]), places of publication and publishers.

Despite these shortcomings, *After Khomeini* deserves to be added to the short list of theoretically commendable books on Iranian foreign policy.

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