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USADI Commentary

"Earthquake Diplomacy" in Iran: Been There, Done That

1990 Earthquake, Rudbar, Northern Iran

The deteriorated relationship with Iran can still be turned around if President Bush moves to take advantage of the goodwill generated by the spontaneous outpouring of American aid in June, after the tragic earthquake in the Caspian region of Iran...

The Christian Science Monitor, Thursday, August 16, 1990

2003 Earthquake, Bam, Southeastern Iran

The earthquake that destroyed the historic city of Bam has established an opening for improvement of relations between the two nations, and the United States should be careful to project respectful receptivity. Behind the help that America quickly delivered to Iran and the expressions of concern it sent, a path is open for diplomats to follow...

International Herald Tribune, January 5, 2004

A case of *de javu*, would you not say?

After Tehran predictably rebuked President Bush's attempts to reach out to the Iranian people by sending a humanitarian mission to deliver relief assistance to the victims of the deadly earthquake in Bam, the zealous proponents of the "thaw" between Washington and Tehran must be exhausted from playing this broken record far too many times.

The above headlines echo the wishful thinking of those who for more than two decades have consistently failed to see what Iran's clerical regime really is: A theocracy intrinsically and structurally incapable of reform, inherently schizophrenic, and thriving on domestic terror and the export of fundamentalism.

At home, Tehran rulers have demonstrated that they don't have the slightest capacity for democratic reform. Sound bites, smiles, and mimicking Montesquieu, and Alexis de Tocqueville notwithstanding, the PR savvy president of Iran, Mohammad Khatami, has not delivered on any of his half-hearted yet fashionable promises of reform. This "moderate" cleric is cut from the same cloth as other mullahs.

Similarly, Tehran is incapable of sustaining a fully transparent, long-term relationship with any principled nation. Its foreign policy is studded with double talk, lies, and deception. Eighteen years of lies about its nuclear program is just one example of Tehran's deceptions. It would be naive to think that Iran's ruling theocracy can change over night.

A policy of "engagement," preceded by "earthquake diplomacy," is strategically flawed and a miserable failure. The past quarter century stands as the ultimate proof. Only Tehran's clerics, and not the millions subjected to its iron-fisted rule, have benefited.

To ease the suffering of the victims of the Bam tragedy and all Iranian citizens, policies must be focused on eliminating the root of all their misery - the ruling clique in Tehran. "Been There, Done That" will weave its way through every Iran policy until the West comes to accept the hideous truths about this regime and finally shuts the door to deals and "dialogue" with mullahs. To engage them now, would be the worst possible signal to their victims, the millions of in Iran. And it would be the worst possible lesson to despots everywhere in this dangerous world.

Rafsanjani: U.S. Must Apologize for its Stance Towards Tehran

TEHRAN - Influential former President Hashemi Rafsanjani said on Wednesday Iran should not rush into patching up relations with its arch-foe the United States and called on Washington to apologize for its stance towards Tehran.

Tehran last week turned down a U.S. offer to send a humanitarian mission to Iran headed by Senator Elizabeth Dole.

Rafsanjani said the U.S. offer "showed America needs relations with Iran."

But he said that for ties to improve, "U.S. officials must say that they have made a mistake in their past approach towards the Islamic revolution."

Reuters, Jan. 7, 2004

Similar Predictions Failed

... A disaster of such scope can create an opportunity for conversations that otherwise may not have taken place, the experts said. "It could be interpreted as earthquake diplomacy".... "It could be used as a starting point for dialogue."

Similar predictions of thaws in the past have come to naught — including one in 1990 after a private American relief plane landed in Tehran ferrying supplies to the victims of a devastating earthquake in the Caspian region.

The New York Times, Dec. 31, 2003

Khatami Seeks More US Signals

TEHRAN -- ... Khatami reiterated Tuesday that Iran could not trust the United States without more signs of a real change in policy towards the Islamic republic, particularly on the nuclear issue.

"The United States is now facing a test to give up its inappropriate policies, and refrain from taking any action against Iran in international forums such as the IAEA Khatami said.

Agence France Presse, Jan. 7, 2003

The US Alliance for Democratic Iran (USADI), is an independent, non-profit organization, which aims to advance a US policy on Iran that will benefit America's interests, through supporting Iranian people's aspirations for a democratic, secular, and peaceful government, free of tyranny, fundamentalism, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism. The USADI is not affiliated with any government agencies, political groups or parties.

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The Washington Post (Editorial)
November 17, 1986

The "Moderate" Fantasy

Suppose we did something really radical in this country. Suppose we got rid of the word "moderate" as a political designation, this adjective that usually doesn't even have a noun to modify but which becomes its own treacherously undefined noun. As in, of course, Iranian moderates," whatever they may be. The thoughtless and promiscuous use of this word, as it is meant something and something good at that, has lead people of every political stripe to fatuous decisions over the years. "Politburo moderates," Pretoria moderates" and others of this fabricated species are forever being invoked either as interlocutors or as excuses for being nice to despicable governments. One does want to "strengthen the moderates," the reasoning goes...

The fundamental trouble with the concept of moderation in and of itself as a virtue is that it is relative and derivative. A thug can get to be a "moderate" merely by indicating cryptically with a few ambiguous gestures that he is somewhat better than the butcher he works for or somewhat less maniacal or malevolent than he used to be or than his best buddies still are. Accordingly by being only slightly to the west of a monster, he can gain "moderate" status. Albert Speer, let it be said, was the "moderate" in Adolf Hitler's inner circle. Let's hear it for Albert.

But of course that is a contradiction in terms, an absurdity. So is much of the current palaver about dealing with the "moderates" in the Ayatollah Khomeini's inner circle. The point is not that there are not some disaffected people in that gang or that there are not strains and differences of opinion and ambition among them that the government should be trying to exploit to its own advantage. The point is that our government makes a moral mistake in not seeing these factions and individuals as being unhappy because they want something they are not getting under the present dispensation or because they think that their own leader's way is dangerous, misguided, potentially costly-*to them, not to us...*

The Washington Times
January 8, 2004

Regime Change in Iran

In the wake of Iran's deadly earthquake last week, diplomats and pundits alike began to speak of "Earthquake Diplomacy" — an effort to capitalize on the goodwill generated by U.S. efforts to alleviate Iranian suffering. But the nature of the Iranian regime makes these thoughts both dangerous and wrong-headed. A more reasonable policy would be one of regime change, as Iranian support of terror, its aggressive pursuit of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and its horrific human rights record make it a suitable candidate for our next campaign in the war on terror.

President Bush stated in his September 2002 national security Strategy that America's war on terror is with those who conduct terrorist acts and with those who support terrorists. Iran, as many experts will tell you, does both.

Additionally, there is ample proof that Iran is supporting efforts to disrupt our progress in both Afghanistan and Iraq. From allowing al Qaeda and the Taliban safe refuge after their defeat in Afghanistan to sending foreign jihadists into Iraq to attack coalition troops, Iran has seemingly made it unofficial policy to see our stability and democratization efforts fail. Changing Iran's regime would go a long way toward taking pressure off our troops and diplomats as they attempt to rebuild Afghanistan and Iraq.

But supporting terror is just one part of the equation. What makes Iranian ties to terror even more frightening is the fact that it is aggressively trying to obtain WMD. Most disturbing is Iran's recent admission to the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency it has been secretly developing nuclear capabilities for more than 18 years ...

Lastly, Iran's poor record on human rights alone makes it a strong candidate for regime change. The Iranian government has... jailed, tortured and murdered those secular and religious leaders who have called for economic and political freedom. Massive popular demonstrations in the past year have shown that the Iranian people are hungry for freedom, but their cries for democracy and citizenship have been beaten down by an oppressive regime bent on denying them the most basic human rights.

Considering Iran's support for terror, its pursuit of WMD and its record of human rights abuses, the policy of the United States should be one of regime change — not by way of military invasion but by supporting internal change. The United States should increase the moral pressure against the Islamic Republic, clearly restating and condemning its evil nature. We should also offer support to opposition groups in terms of money, communications and training. We should also praise the opposition in both the international community and on U.S-sponsored Iranian radio broadcasts...

Iran is in desperate need of another revolution — this time a velvet one.

By Roger D. Carstens, a member of the Council for Emerging National Security Affairs