

Iran and the International Community, ed. by Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Manshour Varasteh. London and New York: Routledge, 1991. xvi + 172. Notes to p. 182. Index to p. 191. \$45.00.

This book aims at exploring the decade-long conflict between the Islamic Republic's 'interpretation of and interaction with the prevailing international order' (p. xiv). Fred Halliday's introduction, by and large, summarizes the crux of the book. In the nine chapters that follow, a host of Iranian and Western scholars and experts painstakingly examine various facets of Iran's foreign policy over the last decade.

Some of the common conclusions reached by the authors are: (1) Iran remains an important player in Middle Eastern regional politics; (2) it has become an influential and autonomous actor in the global arena; (3) the devastating war with Iraq and the revolutionary leadership's militant foreign policy and economic ineptitude has cost the country dearly; and (4) the ending of the Cold War is presenting Iran with new challenges and a fewer range of foreign policy options. This reviewer, however, wishes to take point with a fifth conclusion reached by a number of the contributors concerning the emergence of Iraq as the dominant power in the Gulf. Considering the outcome of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the former's failure to challenge the regional status-quo, either militarily or ideologically, this conclusion seems to be outdated by the course of events.

Like most edited volumes, the essays vary in terms of value and originality. The weakness of the two chapters dealing with Iran's relationship with the superpowers is compensated for by two competent accounts of its relationship with the UN and the European community, respectively provided by Sir Anthony Parsons and Anoushiravan Ehteshami. Moreover, an informative essay on the status of the frantic arms race in the region by a British defense consultant and a highly adept empirical analysis of post-revolutionary foreign trade by Kamran Mofid add to the value of the book. However, the most theoretically outstanding chapter in the book belongs to a British political theorist, Iain Hampsher-Monk, who ponders on the Salman Rushdie affair through a masterful critique leveled at the proponents of cultural relativism.

Iran and the International Community suffers from a number of shortcomings. The conspicuous absence of any analysis rooted in the theoretical literature of International Relations is somewhat disappointing. A number of the essays could have benefitted from the heuristic devices of such schools of thought as (neo)realism, interdependence and regime theory. Secondly, the brevity of the book has perhaps prevented the editors from including additional chapters delineating Iran's rapidly expanding ties with Central Asia, Africa or the Far East. These additions could have made the book more truthful to its title.

These defects notwithstanding, the editors and the contributors should be congratulated for producing a scholarly and eminently readable book which is also relatively free of descriptive overlap and typographical errors. Students of Iranian foreign policy will surely consider this book as a welcomed addition to the enlarging corpus of works on the subject.

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