

Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic

By Ray Takeyh

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"Savvy and accessible . . . A shrewd, timely guide to Iran's schisms, interests and ambitions."?*The Washington Post Book World*

In *Hidden Iran*, leading Middle East expert Ray Takeyh demystifies the Iranian regime and shows how this pivotal country's internal conflicts have produced its belligerent international posture, especially toward the United States. With President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad pushing the development of a nuclear program, making a play for regional preeminence, and stirring up anti-Israel sentiment, the consequences of not understanding Iran have never been higher. Takeyh explains why this country continues to confound American expectations and offers a new paradigm for managing our relations with this rising power?at a time when getting Iran right has become increasingly urgent for America.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
In this well-constructed sketch of American-Iranian relations, Takeyh (senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations) critiques the U.S.'s unnuanced approach to Iran since its 1979 revolution as well as the failure of successive administrations to note that decades of sanctions and containment haven't significantly changed Iranian behavior. A picture emerges of a complex society marked by cultural struggle and compromise, as Takeyh criticizes the perception of Iranian politics as monolithic. He concludes that the "chimera of regime change" must finally be rejected, and pointedly observes that "it is rare... for a state that views nuclear weapons as fundamental to its security interests to dispense with such weapons under relentless threats." Takeyh urges America to look beyond President Ahmadinejad to such institutions as Iran's powerful Supreme National Security Council and Foreign Ministry, each of which distanced themselves from Ahmadinejad's anti-Israel rhetoric. Takeyh even suggests areas in which Iran and the U.S. might forge a "selective partnership"—not least their shared need for a stable Iraq. Though he occasionally slips into a too-casual assumption of the inevitability of his forecasts, Takeyh (*The Receding Shadow of the Prophet*) provides a well-argued, seldom heard viewpoint. *(Oct.)*
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From Booklist
The current standoff between Iran and the West over Iran's nuclear ambitions appears to be a Gordian knot that some urge to be disentangled by resorting to military force. Takeyh wisely places the nuclear issue within the broader context of Iran's relations with the West, and particularly with the "Great Satan," the U.S. Within that context, Takeyh asserts that Americans have grossly misunderstood the complex realities of Iranian political life. As opposed to the image frequently shown in America--a monolithic government controlled by clerical fanatics--Takeyh presents a far more nuanced picture. Despite the recent electoral triumphs of conservative ideologies, Iran remains torn between those who seek a more secular, pluralistic state and those who hope to maintain rigid authoritarianism. The outcome is far from certain, but Takeyh insists the hostile tone emanating from the Bush administration only undermines reformers. Critics are likely to accuse Takeyh of naivete in assuming that our problems with Iran can be solved through dialogue. Still, his assertions and suggestions provide a necessary counterpoint to those who see confrontations and military conflict as inevitable. *Jay Freeman*
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Review
"Savvy and accessible . . . Takeyh has written a shrewd, timely guide to Iran's schisms, interests and ambitions, as well as offering a bracing and often nicely acerbic look at U.S.-Iranian relations."
--Warren Bass, "The Washington Post Book World"
""Hidden Iran" is a skillful policy brief, written in a smooth, graceful style that is accessible to nonspecialists. Takeyh does not underestimate how difficult it is for the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America to find ways of dealing with each other, but he demonstrates persuasively that a policy of more of the same will only produce more of the same."
--Gary Sick, "Foreign Affairs"

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