Discerning Iran

Exploring the Motives for Iranian Foreign Policy

Sohaib Perwaiz, Princeton University, 2010

Introduction: Exploring the Motives of Iranian Foreign Policy

In recent years, the turbulent nature of politics in the Middle East has captured the attention of nations worldwide. Iran, in particular, has garnered more than just alarmed glances due to its aggressive foreign policy against the US, as evident in its defiant nuclear energy program and its active assertion of influence in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East. To many analysts the reason for Iran's revisionist agenda is a shifting balance of power in the Middle East. Soon enough, however, Iran may find itself diplomatically overextended, facing hostilities with a superpower on its own.

One may wonder why Iranian political leaders would risk such high stakes with an obstinate position against a superpower. This could be answered if one looked beyond the realist perspective that oversimplifies a complex nation's problems into the overused balance of power equation. This paper hopes to provide another, lesser mentioned perspective on the motives behind Iranian foreign policy and looks to internal political dynamics, rather than elusive security dilemmas, for answers. By bypassing the security dilemma perspective of Iranian policies that has become so popular nowadays, we shall see that Liberal IR theory, with its emphasis on domestic interest groups, is the best analytical tool to understand Iran. Once we see the Iranian state as a representative of its political elite, and then understand the troubles and motives of that elite, Iranian

foreign policy begins to make a lot more sense. Through this perspective, we see that the Iran's aggressive foreign policies are motivated by a troubled regime facing internal challenges to its legitimacy; this regime is using a bold posture against the US, to manipulate Iranian nationalism, promote uncertainty, and in the process legitimize its monopoly on power.

This paper rests on the assumption that Iranian foreign policy is indeed aggressive towards the US and its allies. Even a cursory glance of any newspaper would confirm this. Rather than dwelling on the foreign policy itself, I hope to establish the motives for that foreign policy. The arguments here will be presented in four parts. First I will construct the Liberal theory context in the Iranian scenario. Next, I will present the domestic position of the Iranian regime and its diminishing legitimacy. The third part will deal with explaining why an anti-US position is a plausible strategy for the clerical regime in Iran. Finally, I will attempt to present the above arguments in the perspective of an actually facet of Iranian foreign policy, its controversial nuclear energy program.

Iranian Politics 101: A Liberal Theory Lens

Liberal IR Theory rests on the assumption that a state isn't an autonomous actor but a representative institution for "fundamental actors" or interest groups within it, who draw support from a political selectorate, a network of broader political coalitions, within the societal framework,

and are constrained to act within differential societal influence. This model fits the Iranian political system well because the Iranian state is dominated by a particular group of “fundamental actors”, the elite clergy, who have institutionalized their dominant position within the state.¹

Iran has two levels of government. There is a democratic government and president which works under the constitutional purview of a supervisory religious leader with the title “the just jurist” or *faqih* (a clerical figure who rules for life) and a Council of Guardians (also mostly comprised of clerical elite), a body of twelve chosen directly or indirectly by the *faqih* to act as religious monitors of legislature and executive policy. These clerics are the final authority in Iranian politics and can veto legislature, judicial decisions, and policy set by any other departments of government.² As Liberal Theory would assume, the *faqih* and his Council of Guardians act based on self-interest and self-preservation, and are constrained by domestic political realities, such as falling support for their monopoly on power. Moreover, since these clerical elites have institutionalized their hegemony through the Islamic Republic’s constitution, the Iranian state has become a representative of their interests. We will soon see that Iran’s aggressive foreign policy is a strategy used by the Iranian regime through the state. In better understanding this strategy, we must now look to the Iranian regime’s position on its home front.

Losing Battles on the Home Front: A Loss of Legitimacy for the Iranian Regime

Iran, like most modern nations, faces a plethora of national crises. What makes these crises relevant to our discussion is that they are eroding the Iranian regime’s legitimacy. Two issues are of particular concern here: the dwindling support from the regime’s traditional selectorate and

failure of the reform movement, both of which are resulting in frustration against the regime and the consequent abatement of their legitimacy.

From the revolution that established the Islamic Republic to contemporary times, the clerical regime has generally drawn support from two societal components: the Iranian merchants and the unofficial networks of clergymen. Since these were the most powerful components of Iranian society for most of the Islamic Republic’s history, the political alliance worked. Unfortunately for the clerical regime however, the socio-economic climate is beginning to change in Iran. Support from the clergy is beginning to dwindle because of the exclusive monopoly of some clergymen in power, and the resulting exclusion of others. The twelve positions in The Council of Guardians, for example, have rotated between a handful of clerics for more than twenty years. The clergymen on the outside are feeling resentful and are more openly voicing their disapproval for the regime.³

The other political pillar for the clerical regime has been the Iranian merchant class. Once again, the merchants were a powerful ally in the earlier years of the Islamic republic because they accounted for some of the most influential and wealthy components of society. Things now are changing. The influence of the merchant class is being displaced by a growing educated working class, which is much more vocal of its political and economic grievances, and is less easily pacified due to its much larger numbers. This new Iranian bourgeoisie is demanding a greater role in government and enhanced civil liberties.⁴ Moreover, the working class is growing frustrated at the painfully slow rate of economic development. Economic growth in Iran, even with the influx of oil revenue, is well below expectations. GDP growth rate averaged at 2.5% from 1998 to 2001 compared to the government goal of

6%. Inflation is exceptionally high and ran at an average 15.55% from 1997 to 2001. Unemployment is currently at 16.1% and, due to increasing number of educated entrants into the labor market, is expected to hit 25% by end of decade. Demands for change in the economic and political situation of this large working class resulted in a momentous reform movement, which even in its failure, would provide a decisive blow to the already diminishing legitimacy of the clerical regime.

In understanding the failed reformist movement in Iran, we look to the efforts of ex-Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, who reigned from 1997 to 2005. His landslide victory in the 1997 presidential election is often credited to his sweeping reforms agenda. With his promises to promote civil liberties and “democratize the theocracy”, he won mass appeal with Iranian youth, while his liberal socio-economic agenda secured the support of the powerful middle class. Once in power, his government proposed several laws to secure civil liberties, place checks on the *faqih* and his Council of Guardian, make the budget-making process more transparent, and wrest important government departments (such as the Foreign Office) away from the clerics. Not surprising, the Council of Guardians vetoed almost all the reformist legislation and most of Khatami’s prerogatives failed.⁵ As he left office in 2005, he took with him reformists’ hopes of changing the system from within.

As a result of Khatami’s failure, now reformist propaganda seems to be against the regime as a whole, and nothing symbolized this better than the boycott of the subsequent presidential elections. Whereas there was a 70% turnout in the 1997 elections that brought Khatami to office (80% of the turnout was in Khatami’s favor), the 2005 presidential elections had a turnout of 30-50% (the lower-limit being counted by boycotters, and the upper-limit by the government), out of which

the regime loyalist candidate, Mahmoud Ahmedinejad, won a 60% victory. This means that the electoral support of the regime-backing executive may be as low as 20%. Nonetheless, many dissenters note that it doesn’t matter whether the president and parliament are reformists or hardliners. The shadow clerical elite on top remain the same. Ladan Boroumand notes in her analysis of the Iranian elections, “In terms of who actually holds power, the elections mean nothing: the *de jure* winners were already the *de facto* rulers anyways.”⁶ The failure of the reform movement, the resulting frustration with regime displayed in the apathy towards the most and perhaps only democratic component of the Iranian political system spells out the declining legitimacy that the regime faces at home.

Returning to our Liberal Theory model, we see how the primary interest group in Iranian politics, the clergy in government, have struggled to maintain their hold on power, primarily by fighting off reformist moves to cordon their influence and changing the social status quo which keeps them securely above the rest in Iranian society. Also, we see how the selectorate, comprised of merchants and clergymen, that once provided the political support for the regime is now dwindling. When it comes to responding to these challenges, these fundamental actors are limited by socio-political constraints. There is only so far they can go before the Iranian populace becomes frustrated enough to replace them. This is where we use Liberal

theory's predictive capabilities. Motivated by self-preservation but limited by societal influence, the fundamental actors of the state are bound seek strategies which can be used to sustain their political hegemony. Here we stumble upon the motives of these actors in playing their high-stakes adventures in foreign policy.

The Regime's Strategy

So what the Iranian government can do to solve its crisis? As it turns out, the regime has few options. Dealing with opposing clergymen would initiate a major reshuffling in the upper echelons, and start debates about religious legitimacy that could displace many regime leaders. Pacifying the working class would involve political changes and liberties that would challenge the very identity of Islamic republic as seen by its current leaders. Indeed the threat of these changes is what led the regime to muzzle Khatami's reform movement in the first place. In fact, all internal solutions would require by default, a complete overhaul of the Iranian political system, an overhaul which well-entrenched conservative leaders are not too comfortable with. As Ali Rezai points out in his analysis of the Iranian reform movement:

Those entrenched in power appreciate the depth of public sentiment favoring change, but rather than consulting widely to find a way out of the state of day-to-day uncertainty, they try to erase the structural problems altogether, creating instead immediate "problems" they can solve with their familiar techniques.⁷

Indeed, rather than dealing with these structural problems, which they cannot deal with from within the current system, they seek out problems that they *can* deal with. As it turns out, the regime's strategy in dealing with its lack of legitimacy involves an astute manipulation of nationalism

and uncertainty, political forces that are well-ingrained in Iranian society. Let us now explore these Iranian perceptions and attitudes towards the U.S, and more importantly how they can be used to the regime's advantage.

Many sociologists would agree that one of the most prominent aspects of the Iranian identity is the intense sense of nationalism embedded in it.⁸ What historians may add is that modern Western powers, especially the U.S have repeatedly insulted that nationalism. When the US backed away from recognizing Iran's role in the region after the Iranian government's assistance in the U.S invasion of Afghanistan and later refused to involve Iran in a discussion on post-Saddam Iraq, the message that the US was bent on excluding Iran from interests in its own backyard stuck with Iranian people. As Clifford Kupchan notes:

Any visitor to Tehran cannot help but notice the intense craving for international respect on the part of the Iranian elite. Across the political spectrum, Iran's policymakers want the United States to acknowledge that Iran is a regional great power in the Middle East. Iran's leaders believe that the great powers deny Tehran its rightful role in the region and the world.⁹

Therefore, when the clerical regime stands up to the US in foreign policy issues, may it be in mocking Israel, supporting insurgents in Iraq, or pursuing a nuclear energy program, the regime puts itself at the helm of one thing that all Iranians, from reformists to minorities stand behind, and that is nationalism.

As long as the regime can align itself with the powerful forces of Iranian nationalism, the Iranian people are less inclined to move against it. A potent example of how the government has been using nationalism for its own ends is by blaming most of its ethnic tensions on foreigners. Abbas Samii tells us in his article on ethnic tensions in Iran, "The

central government typically reacts to ethnic unrest with a combination of repression and scapegoating.”¹⁰ He goes on to describe how two men involved in an anti-government bombing were forced to confess links with American and British security forces, even though they had committed the crimes under the flag of an ethnic rebel group. ¹¹By linking local troubles to foreigners, the regime is trying to appeal to the broader nationalism of all Iranians (including minorities) who would more easily accept government brutality if it is to fight off foreign foes.

The second social undercurrent that the Iranian regime has to its advantage is uncertainty. By using the already established image of an aggressive superpower bent on demeaning Iran, and then inflating that image, the regime propagates uncertainty, and then uses it as an excuse to stay in power. To understand this feeling of uncertainty amongst Iranians, we look to the Iranian narrative of recent history. The fact that the CIA engineered a coup to replace the democratic secular government of Mohammad Mossadeq with the oppressive Pahlavi dynasty to ensure Iranian oil supplies in 1953 is still painful memory for many Iranians. Also, President Ahmedinejad’s generation hasn’t forgotten Saddam Hussein’s brutal US-backed invasion and the lethal chemical weapons he used on the Iranian people. So when George Bush labeled Iran as part of “the axis of evil” after 9/11, and proceeded to invade both of Iran’s neighbors, the Iranians’ suspicions about the superpower only deepened. Fereydoun Hoveyda has labeled this sense of insecurity amongst Iranians as a “siege mentality.”¹² Indeed Iranians have a socio-historical inclination for feeling on the defensive; this is an inclination the regime can readily exploit.

When the Mahmoud Ahmedinejad tells his people that the Americans are perpetually scheming against Iran, the warning does not fall on deaf ears. Therefore,

it is no surprise that protesters who oppose Ahmedinejad and the regime always find themselves in a minority relative to those who feel they need the regime to defend them against what Khomeini called the “Great Satan.” Farideh Farhi aptly describes the situation:

The particular experience of Iran with revolution, war, sanctions, and estrangement from international community created a shared sense of embattlement in a hostile environment, allowing the post-revolutionary state-builders to portray themselves as the “true” guardians of Iranian security and shut off debate on foreign policy and security issues and then use national security to foil aspirations for political change. In this process, the hands of the hardliners were strengthened by essentially punishment-oriented nature of external pressures, allowing them to identify proponents of reform as weak on security.¹³

Indeed, with every hardline policy approach the US diagnoses for Iran, the Iranian regime becomes more aggressive towards the US. Using its position as a defender of the Iranian people against what is seen as their natural enemy, the Iranian regime fills in the legitimacy void created by its other failures at home.

Having explored the issues of legitimacy faced by the Iranian regime, and the sociological and cultural tools it is using for its political survival, let us now look to a current example of the Iranian foreign policy, and see the Iranian regime’s strategy at its best.

Case Study of Iranian Foreign Policy The Nuclear Energy Program in Perspective

In his article “Dealing with a Nuclear Iran,” Kori Schake raises some interesting questions about Iran’s nuclear energy program. He notes,

The Iranians have the indigenous technical ability, and possibly nuclear material, to build nuclear weapons right now. They can do it if they want to, and we [the US] know so little about their program they could likely achieve it without detection. The question is why they're so intent on detection.¹⁴

In answering this question, we look to the arguments already made in this paper. The Iranian regime is inflating the nuclear energy issue by bringing it to international attention and then being defiant about American demands, because they realize the more aggressive the US government becomes, the more the Iranian people will rally behind the regime, and validate its right to government despite falling legitimacy on other fronts in the domestic political scene.

Returning to the regime's strategy of using sociological forces, we see how the nuclear threat can raise both nationalism and the specter of uncertainty. In a speech to students in the Iranian city of Shiraz, Ahmedinejad declared, "The Iranian people will stand firm on the nuclear issue to

acquire all their rights, will continue solidly to reach the summits of perfection and will raise their fists to insist on their rights!"¹⁵ By tying Iran's nuclear energy project to its inevitable growth as a regional power, the regime has tactfully connected the nuclear program to the Iranian people's profound sense of nationalism. Because the program is the regime's pet project, it has cemented its own position as the leader of the nationalistic movement.

But more than inciting nationalism, the propagation of the nuclear energy issue is also a strategic distraction from the other things chipping away at the Iranian regime's authority. In his article on the Iranian reform movement, Muhammad Sahimi notes that,

He [Ahmedinejad] has used the U.S – created nuclear crisis not only for inciting Iranian nationalism, but also for distracting people's attention from Iran's vast economic, social, and political problems, as well as attempting to suppress Iran's democratic movement... By creating an unnecessary crisis over Iran's nuclear program, the [American] Administration has played right into the hands of Iran's hardliners.¹⁶

Where the Iranian regime couldn't claim to be democratic or progressive, it can now claim to be nationalistic simply because of its defiant policy on its nuclear energy program. The defiance has triggered an even more aggressive stance from the US, which predictably has fed into the uncertainty factor in Iranian society.

When the American government denounces the Iranian regime for its nuclear energy program, it heightens an already deeply embedded mistrust for American policy. Since the regime boldly stands up to the Americans, they gain support from their threatened people. The regime is automatically elevated from the position of detested oppressor to patriotic savior. "The conservatives need an external enemy to preserve their power", says Mohammad Reza

Khatami, a leading reformist and younger brother of the former president.¹⁷ As long as the regime can guarantee (or at least pretend to do so) Iranians protection from foreign aggressors, their legitimacy will be tied to the feeling they are needed and will trump subversive democratic movements such as those of Mr. Khatami. Seeing all they have to again from their aggressive foreign policy agenda, with regards to the nuclear program or anything else, the risks involved in pursuing such a strategy seem to be worth it.

Other Perspectives

Let us now turn our attention to the popular realist perspective on Iranian foreign policy. Realism rests on the assumption that states are autonomous unitary entities that act to maximize security and power. In terms of Iran, the realist assumption is that Iran is challenging the global hegemon (the US) because it is a rising power faced with a security dilemma. Indeed, after years of political and economic turmoil, Iran has become relatively stable in the last few years, at least relative to the Islamic Republic's past performance. Moreover, it has increased ties with Eastern powers such as China, India, and Russia and in turn has acquired international recognition. Its oil (now crossing \$70 a barrel) has supplemented its influence and growth as well. Despite its growth however, the Iranian state faces a security dilemma because it has got several hostile neighbors, namely American soldiers on both eastern and western borders (Iraq and Afghanistan) and Sunni Arab states which are opposed to a strong Persian-Shiite state dominating the Middle East. Because of the conflicting nature of Iran's growth and its security dilemma (one is propelling it forwards while the other is holding it back), realists would assume Iran is bound to challenge the current International system and attempt to remove the security threats by challenging the US and threatening

its regional allies. Though this reasoning reaches the right conclusion, the method of deduction is slightly flawed.¹⁸

The first flaw in the realist argument is of the security dilemma. If anything, Iran's security dilemma has thinned over past few years. It strengthened its alliances with Arab partners such as Syria, Lebanese Hezbollah, and the Palestinians, through aid and defense agreements. It has also won massive "street appeal" in its Arab neighbors (despite being a Shiite minority in the Muslim world) because of its Islamist propaganda, forcing Arab governments to take a more conciliatory approach. Moreover, the American soldiers on Iranian borders have helped Iran get rid of three potential hostile fronts: the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Baathists in Iraq, and the Americans themselves because of their diminished military capacity.

As for Iran's aspirations to become a regional power, it can do so much more easily by cooperating with the US than by antagonizing it. The US and its European allies have already offered Iran many economic and political incentives for giving up (or at least opening up) its nuclear energy program. These incentives involve a greater role in Iraq, lifting of economic sanctions, and developmental aid. As Kori Schake points out, "If maximizing its presumed security objectives were the Iranian government's plan, taunting the US, Israel, and Europe with an overt nuclear program would seem to put at risk at least some of the gains Iran is already achieving at very little cost."¹⁹ Indeed, if maximizing growth and influence was the objective the Iranian state would be behaving much more cautiously; and here lies the core drawback of realist assumptions. The "Iranian State" isn't acting to maximize its power interests, because there is no such autonomous entity. The Iranian state is merely a representative institution of its ruling clerical elite who are pursuing their high stakes adventures for gain at home and the strengthening of their domestic legitimacy.

Drawing Conclusions: What We Know and What We Can Predict

To conclude, let's review the claims made in this paper. We started our discussion on the assumption that Iranian foreign policy has been aggressive towards the US, and then set out to explore motives for such a policy. This paper worked within the Liberal Theory context, because it takes into account the political hegemony of the clerical interest group within Iran, and can thus be used to understand Iranian foreign policy through the perspective of that interest group's motives. Moreover, we saw that the Iranian clerical regime is losing legitimacy within the domestic context because of a diminished selectorate and public frustration. This lack of legitimacy has provoked the regime to manipulate

nationalistic sentiment and propagate uncertainty to create a demand for its services as a government, and in the process fill the legitimacy void. Such a strategy has, because of Iranian sociological reasons, involved an active foreign policy opposed to the US. The most important lesson to be drawn here is that in analyzing Iran, we must take into account the Iranian regime's priorities. This will most likely be the decisive factor in Iranian foreign policy in the near future. As long as an aggressive foreign policy against the US, or any other "Western" nation for that matter, provides legitimacy to the Iranian government at home, it will continue to pursue it. In fact foreign policy, for lack of legitimacy at home, will continue to be the *raison d'être* of the Iranian regime.

Endnotes

- 1 Moravcsik, Andrew "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics" International Organization, 51.4 (1997). 513-23.
- 2 Abrahamian, Ervand. "Iran." Joseph, William A., Mark Kesselman, Joel Krieger, eds. Introduction to Comparative Politics. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007)
- 3 Taheri, Ali. "Getting Serious About Iran: For Regime Change." Commentary. (2006) EBSCOHOST. Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 20, 2007.
- 4 Sherman, Steve. "IRAN" New Internationalist. (2004). EBSCOHOST. Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 20, 2007.
- 5 Rezai, Ali. "Last Efforts of Iran's Reformists" Middle East Report. (2003) EBSCOHOST. Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 21, 2007.
- 6 Boroumand, Ladan. "Iran's Peculiar Election: The Role of Ideology" Journal of Democracy, 16.4 (2005)
- 7 Rezai, Ali. "Last Efforts of Iran's Reformists" Middle East Report. (2003) 45 EBSCOHOST. Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 21, 2007.
- 8 Farhi, Farideh. "Crafting a National Identity amidst Contentious Politics in Contemporary Iran" Iranian Studies, 38.1 (2005) EBSCOHOST Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 21, 2007.
- 9 Kupchan, Clifford. "Iranian Beliefs and Realities." The National Interest. (2005) 108 EBSCOHOST Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 21, 2007.
- 10 Samii, Abbas William. "Ethnic tensions could crack Iran's firm resolve against the world." The Christian Science Monitor, 98.128. (2006) EBSCOHOST Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 21, 2007.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Hoveyda, Fereydoun. "Iran and America." American Foreign Policy Interests. (2006) 16 EBSCOHOST Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 21, 2007.
- 13 Farhi, Farideh. "Crafting a National Identity amidst Contentious Politics in Contemporary Iran" Iranian Studies, 38.1 (2005) 19 EBSCOHOST Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 21, 2007.
- 14 Schake, Kori. "Dealing With A Nuclear Iran" Policy Review. (2007) 3 EBSCOHOST Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 30, 2007.
- 15 Ahmedinejad, Mahmoud. Shiraz, April 16, 2007
- 16 Sahimi, Muhammad. "Leave Us Alone, Iranian Reformers Say" Progressive. (2006) 21 EBSCOHOST Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 21, 2007.
- 17 Quoted in: ibid.
- 18 For a discussion of the Realist Perspective see: "All at Sea over Iran" The Economist (2007)
- 19 Schake, Kori. "Dealing With A Nuclear Iran" Policy Review. (2007) 6 EBSCOHOST Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 30, 2007.

Works Cited

- Abrahamian, Ervand. "Iran" Joseph, William A., Mark Kesselman, Joel Krieger, eds Introduction to Comparative Politics. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007
- Ahmedinejad, Mahmoud. Shiraz, April 16, 2007.
- "All at Sea over Iran" The Economist (2007) EBSCOHOST Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 21, 2007.
- Boroumand, Ladan. "Iran's Peculiar Election: The Role of Ideology" Journal of Democracy, 16.4 (2005)
- Ehsani, Kaveh. "High Stakes for Iran" Middle East Report (2003) EBSCOHOST. Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 20, 2007.
- Farhi, Farideh. "Crafting a National Identity amidst Contentious Politics in Contemporary Iran" Iranian Studies, 38.1 (2005) EBSCOHOST Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 21, 2007.
- Halliday, Fred. "Iran and the Middle East: Foreign Policy and Domestic Change" Middle East Report (2001) EBSCOHOST Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 21, 2007.
- Hoveyda, Fereydoun. "Iran and America." American Foreign Policy Interests. (2006) EBSCOHOST Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 21, 2007.
- Kupchan, Clifford. "Iranian Beliefs and Realities." The National Interest. (2005) 108 EBSCOHOST Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 21, 2007.
- Moravcsik, Andrew "Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics" International Organization, 51.4 (1997). 513-23.
- Pilger, John. "IRAN" New Statesman (2006) EBSCOHOST. Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 20, 2007.
- Rezai, Ali. "Last Efforts of Iran's Reformists" Middle East Report. (2003) EBSCOHOST. Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 21, 2007.
- Sahimi, Muhammad. "Leave Us Alone, Iranian Reformers Say" Progressive. (2006) 21 EBSCOHOST Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 21, 2007.
- Samii, Abbas William. "Ethnic tensions could crack Iran's firm resolve against the world." The Christian Science Monitor, 98.128. (2006) EBSCOHOST Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 21, 2007.
- Schake, Kori. "Dealing With A Nuclear Iran" Policy Review. (2007) 3 EBSCOHOST Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 30, 2007.
- Sherman, Steve. "IRAN" New Internationalist. (2004). EBSCOHOST. Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 20, 2007.
- Taheri, Ali. "Getting Serious About Iran: For Regime Change." Commentary. (2006) EBSCOHOST. Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 20, 2007.
- Vakil, Sanam. "Iran: Balancing East against West" The Washington Quarterly. (2006) JSTORR. Princeton U Library: Princeton, Apr 20, 2007.