

A Single Roll of the Dice: Obama's Diplomacy with Iran
by Trita Parsi.
Yale University Press, 2012.

Relations between Iran and the United States since the fall of the Shah have veered between bad and terrible, such was the legacy of American support for the Shah's repressive regime and the deep mistrust and loathing felt by the mullahs for US foreign policy in the Middle East.

The election of the Holocaust-denier Ahmadinejad, and the casting by President Obama's unlamented predecessor George W. Bush of Iran as part of an 'axis of evil' added further layers of difficulty to an already complex non-relationship.

A Single Roll of the Dice is a compelling account of the attempts by Barack Obama, told with the authority and inside information that might be expected of the President of the National Iranian American Council, to try and put US-Iranian relations on a better footing.

Divided into 12 chapters, A Single Roll of the Dice details the stop-start nature of US-Iranian relations, the very genuine desire of Barack Obama to try and set them on a different footing leading to genuine engagement, the challenge posed by the close US-Israel alliance, and then the almost insuperable barriers erected by the Iranian nuclear power developments, the international sanctions they provoked, and the rigged second election of Ahmadinejad to the Presidency.

This is a compelling read, and one is left with the strong sense that for the two nations to achieve anything like normal diplomatic relations a revolution in both thinking and action will need to take place, because the levels of mistrust, misunderstanding, fear and loathing run so deep that even the best of intentions are doubted and undermined.

A Single Roll of the Dice is essential reading for those interested in 21st century international politics in general, and particularly how the relationship between an America of declining influence and an obdurate Iran may affect the world in years to come.

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