



The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America

Kenneth M. Pollack

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In his highly influential book *The Threatening Storm*, bestselling author Kenneth Pollack both informed and defined the national debate about Iraq. Now, in *The Persian Puzzle*, published to coincide with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Iran hostage crisis, he examines the behind-the-scenes story of the tumultuous relationship between Iran and the United States, and weighs options for the future.

Here Pollack, a former CIA analyst and National Security Council official, brings his keen analysis and insider perspective to the long and ongoing clash between the United States and Iran, beginning with the fall of the shah and the seizure of the American embassy in Tehran in 1979. Pollack examines all the major events in U.S.-Iran relations—including the hostage crisis, the U.S. tilt toward Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war, the Iran-Contra scandal, American-Iranian military tensions in 1987 and 1988, the covert Iranian war against U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf that culminated in the 1996 Khobar Towers terrorist attack in Saudi Arabia, and recent U.S.-Iran skirmishes over Afghanistan and Iraq.

He explains the strategies and motives from American and Iranian perspectives and tells how each crisis colored the thinking of both countries' leadership as they shaped and reshaped their policies over time. Pollack also describes efforts by moderates of various stripes to try to find some way past animosities to create a new dynamic in Iranian-American relations, only to find that when one side was ready for such a step, the other side fell short.

With balanced tone and insight, Pollack explains how the United States and Iran reached this impasse; why this relationship is critical to regional, global, and U.S. interests; and what basic political choices are available as we deal with this important but deeply troubled country.

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