"The Legacy of US Intervention in Iran and its Impact on the Post-Revolutionary Reform Movement"

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DESCRIPTION

The reform movement that emerged in Iran in the 1990s under President Mohammad Khatami has been largely dismissed as a failure due to internal ideological inconsistencies as well as external pressure from the existing power structure, also born of ideological differences. What is missing in this analysis is a study of the role that United States intervention has played in creating a hostile climate for reform, explaining why the movement emerged in the manner that it did, and why it engendered such negative reactions. Through an examination of the intellectual trends that have emerged both within and in opposition to the reform movement, this article seeks to highlight the significant legacy of foreign intervention. The opposition to the reform movement will be shown to be grounded in a concern—born of prior Western interference—for the continued independence of Iran through a study of statements by the Supreme Leader and other prominent conservative anti-Western leaders. The internal failings of the reform movement will, through an examination of the history of reform in Iran, also be shown to be a result of a tradition that created a climate in which the reformist-intellectual was engaged more seriously with the West than with the Iranian population. This climate was created largely due to American influence and foreign policy objectives in the pre-revolutionary era. The “failure” of the reform movement cannot be explained on a purely ideological level; rather, it is the continuing legacy of the United States intervention that has created an environment in which reform is difficult to understand within an Iranian context and is thus viewed with suspicion.