attention to Iranian women's rights immediately before, during, and after the 1979 revolution. This is a particularly difficult chapter to write. Feminists across the secular/Muslim divide would present these years in contrasting lights, some as true steps in Iranian women's emancipation and others as window dressing by a heavy-handed state that did not care about the human rights of either gender. Once again, Naghibi is admirable in clarifying her personal position and working hard to present a fair and balanced perspective. Rather than focusing on the nature and impact of the Women' Organization of Iran (WOI) led by the late Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi's twin sister, Princess Ashraf, she focuses on the major disconnect between Western feminism and the social and political realities of Iran. Furthermore, Naghibi demonstrates that just as their earlier missionary counterparts needed the "subjugated Iranian Other" to rectify their own troubled social position, some twentieth century Western feminists were equally in need of subjugated Iranian sisters as a contrasting Other for their own image. Naghibi's narrative is rich in relevant and readable details. The 1911 telegraph exchange between Iranian and British women activists (p. 31) and the Shah of Iran's compliment to Betty Friedan (p. 83) are good examples. They bring color and texture to historical events.

Naghibi's interrogation of the concept of global sisterhood in these three chapters reveals a double silence in the feminist master narrative upheld by Western as well as upper class Iranian feminists. The narrative, originating in the 19th century and continuing to this day, is silent on issues of class inequality as well as colonial violence. Equally significantly, she demonstrates that alternative feminist narratives are frequently dismissed as cultural relativism or an apology for the Islamic regime. Naghibi's observation is to be taken seriously if the global debate on gender is to make room for the varieties of indigenous Iranian feminism. In her last, and most original, chapter, "Female homosocial communities in Iranian feminist film," Naghibi brings us a glimpse of the challenges that women face as they attempt to redefine gender roles from within the limitations imposed upon them by the laws of the Islamic Republic and traditional cultural practices. She explores Iranian women's rediscovery of homosocial spaces in two feature films and three documentaries made by female filmmakers. Through her analysis of these films, we see the conversion of unlikely social spaces into environments conducive to female bonding and support.

Rethinking Global Sisterhood could have benefited from a more rigorous editing to reduce repetition and polish sentences such as "… the place of a traditional Iranian woman's place is understood to be …" (p. 130). Such flaws notwithstanding, this is an intelligent, original, and refreshing study outspoken in its criticism of the liberal feminism that has allied itself with the state's nationalist discourse and its war on terror. In the process, she documents the inequality inherent in the notion of global sisterhood and provides a clear and concrete sense of the vibrancy of indigenous Iranian feminism working from within the state controlled spaces such as the courtrooms in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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Bitter Friends, Bosom Enemies: Iran, the U.S., and the Twisted Path to Confrontation, by Barbara Slavin. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2007. ix + 227 pages. Appendix to p. 231. Notes to p. 243. Sel. bibl. to p. 246. Index to p. 258. $24.95.

Reviewed by John Limbert

Both specialists and those new to the subject would do well to read and re-read Barbara Slavin's book on American-Iranian relations. In a clear and lively style free of academic or government jargon, she untan-

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gles a complex and difficult subject. How is it, she asks, that the United States and Iran have become obsessed with each other and seem unable to move beyond a confrontation that benefits neither side? Best of all, she has humanized her subject and reminds us that political issues play out, not in the elevated world of think tanks and policy discussions, but in the immediate and daily concerns of ordinary men and women. That reality is one that political leaders, whether Iranian or American, disregard at their peril.

Slavin is master of the small but revealing vignette. During her first visit to Iran in 1996, her polite and pleasant translator turns cold when she tells him that Tehran reminds her of Cairo. She comments, "Iranians, I soon learned did not like comparisons with Arabs" (p. 2). Indeed they do not. At the very end of her book, she quotes a housewife shopping in south Tehran who speaks both of her and her children's admiration for America and their fears that the two countries could be at war.

"I would sacrifice myself and my four kids for God," she said. "Bush and the United States should not force their ways on us." Then she added with a sad smile, "We don't want anything bad to happen. Pray for us. We always pray for you" (p. 227).

She also provides some very memorable metaphors. Iran is the "Rodney Dangerfield" of Middle Eastern nations. Not only does it get no respect, but, even worse, the Arabs seem to get it all. She compares Iran and the United States to two adolescents maneuvering over who will invite whom to the prom (to which both want to go). Each is so afraid of rejection or appearing too eager, that when one finally advances, the other pulls back.

Slavin is not an Iran specialist, but she is a keen observer and a superb reporter, willing to observe and to listen to what people tell her. Her portrait of President Mahmud Ahmadinejad is full of perceptive observations. In pursuing his background, she enters an Iranian social world that few outsiders have bothered to explore — one that many well-spoken Iranians and their Western friends still dismiss as hopelessly backward, or *omol*. Looking to the sources of Ahmadinezhad's support, she writes,

> As much as some Americans and Iranians wanted to see Ahmadinejad as a member of a lunatic fringe, he represented a potent constituency among the second generation of regime loyalists: those who came from humble backgrounds, and did not see the United States as a political or social model to be emulated, and who regarded Iran as a country much more sinned against than sinning (p. 54).

So there you have it. As the author tells us, not only does Iran's President represent those whom Iran's elite would despise and marginalize, he also represents a new generation, determined to take the places of those 20-25 aging men who have comprised the inner circle of the Islamic Republic since its infancy. Since there is no Iranian tradition of politicians ever retiring voluntarily, and since the clerical leadership has lifetime tenure, Ahmadinejad and his so-called "principleists" (*osulgaran*) have served notice that it is time for the old, the tired, and the corrupt to step aside.

Readers will learn much from reading this valuable book. In particular, they will understand the many paradoxes of our difficult bilateral relationship. In one of my personal favorite passages, she cites Ahmadinejad's 2006 interview with Mike Wallace of CBS. Echoing a condescending phrase much beloved in Washington, the President told Wallace, "[The Americans] have to change their behavior. Then everything will be resolved" (p. 61).

Barbara Slavin makes it clear that as long as each side insists that the other must first "change its behavior," there will be no changes and no relief from almost three decades of mutual hostility, suspicion, and threats.

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