

Bridging the Gulf with Tehran

The former Foreign Secretary Jack Straw looks at the evolution of the West's troubled encounters with Persia, and then Iran, from "Great Game" imperialism, through the 20th century politics of oil, to

While in office Straw visited Iran and negotiated with its leaders. In this programme he explores the roots of the tension between the UK and Iran, and what can and should be done about it.


Since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, relations with Iran have moved seemingly from crisis to crisis: the taking of hostages at the American embassy; the Satanic Verses affair; President Ahmadinejad's rhetoric, and suspicions about Tehran's nuclear programme. From the West there have been diplomatic and economic sanctions, accusations of international terrorism, talk of an "Axis of Evil" and threats of military action. In between, occasionally fruitful negotiations and common cause over ISIL and Al-Qaeda have brought moments of detente.

But do Western political leaders truly understand Iran and its current incarnation, the Islamic Republic? Can Iran ever come to deal cooperatively with the West? Can the Islamic Republic go from being pariah to partner? Can this gulf of understanding with Tehran ever be bridged?

Contributors include Lord William Hague, Seyed Hossein Mousavian, Amir Taheri, David Frum and Sir Richard Dalton

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