

3-19-1999

Perestroika All Over Again: Is Khatami Gorbachev?

Editor

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp>



Part of the [International Relations Commons](#), and the [Other Political Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Editor (1999) "Perestroika All Over Again: Is Khatami Gorbachev?," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*: Vol. 6 : Iss. 11 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol6/iss11/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Bulletin of Political Psychology by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact commons@erau.edu.

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

Title: Perestroika All Over Again: Is Khatami Gorbachev?

Author: Editor

Volume: 6

Issue: 11

Date: 1999-03-19

Keywords: Gorbachev, Iran, Khatami, Soviet Union

Abstract. This article provides a brief analysis of national political events in Iran within the context of a seemingly analogous moment in the mid to late 1980s--that of perestroika in the Soviet Union.

Nearing what would be the end of the Cold War, United States (U.S.) policy and intelligence analysts were involved in an intense debate over the meaning of perestroika--a sound bite that was similarly listened to even as it was differentially heard. Perestroika was linked with a secretary general of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev--the likes of whom had not been seen by informed observers since well before Bolshevik revolutionary activity in 1917-1918. To some, perestroika was a restructuring and opening that would ineluctably lead to the rule of law, democracy, and markets at least as free as those of countries in the West that professed freedom. To others, perestroika was but an intelligence provocation, a ruse, a Potemkin village, or another Dzerzhinsky-inspired Trust. The Soviet Union was not changing, but Soviet authorities intended for Western authorities and domestic and international opponents to believe it was. The most significant consequences of such misperception would be a lowering of the Western guard, increased Western aid to what still would remain an adversary--facilitating the capitalist selling of rope to hang itself--and the identification of domestic and international opponents who would come out of the "woodwork" and become easy targets to influence and/or exterminate. To still others, perestroika was merely a convenient excuse or cover to trade more easily with the Soviets regardless of whether change was occurring or not. And to a small number of others, perestroika was a signal that the Soviet Union was in dire trouble: that Soviet demise was near and that the crushing contradictions of the Soviet system were finally reaching a critical mass. The signal itself--whether intended or unintended--was fraught with contradictions and intractable problems with only unknowable solutions. After so many years of artful Soviet propaganda and employment of yet other, finely honed tools of the intelligence trade, after so many very intelligent observers of the Soviets engaged in apologies and outright deceptive communication to put the Soviet union in a flattering light, it is no wonder that so few got perestroika right.

Now it's ten years later in Iran. With the election of a president, Mohammad Khatami--the likes of whom have not been seen by informed observers since well before the Iranian revolution of 1979--has perestroika risen again? To some, Khatami's rise exemplifies a restructuring and opening that may ineluctably lead to the rule of law, democracy, and markets at least as free as those of countries in the West that professed freedom. To others, Khatami's rise is but an intelligence provocation, a ruse, an effort analogous to the contempt-motivated manipulation of arms and money for hostages so successful during the second Reagan administration. To still others, Khatami's rise is merely a convenient excuse or cover to more easily engage in trade and investment --especially oil, gas, and military and dual-use technologies--with the Iranians regardless of whether changes among national political powers are occurring or not. Finally, few--if any--responsible observers are linking Khatami's rise with the demise of Iran. Still, the similarities in the interpretations of Khatami's rise and Gorbachev's coming to power are striking.

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

Unlike Gorbachev who--during his years in power--seems to have been much more popular outside his national borders than inside, Khatami apparently has a large majority of Iranian citizens on his side. To some, this majority provides him an opening for an agenda that is somewhat independent of Iran's ultimate political authority, the senior religious leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, regardless of what this agenda might be. But to others, this majority--that has just been revalidated in elections--may seal his doom. Iran may not self-destruct, but Khatami's popularity may lead to his destruction. And so another opening may only close. (See Brown, A. (1996). *The Gorbachev factor*. Oxford University Press; Greenwood, R., & Hinnings, C.R. (1996). *Understanding radical organizational change: Bringing together the old and the new institutionalism*. *Academy of Management Review*, 21, 1022-1054; Greve, H.R. (1998). *Performance, aspirations, and risky organizational change*. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 43, 58-86; Koopman, C., Shiraev, E., et al. (1998). *Beliefs about international security and change in 1992 among Russian and American national security elites*. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 4, 35-57; St anley, A. (March 10, 1999). *Iran's leader welcomed in Italy; Main topic is business*. *The New York Times*, p. A3; Tompson, W.J. (1993). *Krushchev and Gorbachev as reformers: A comparison*. *British Journal of Political Science*, 23, 77-105.) (Keywords: Gorbachev, Iran, Khatami, Soviet Union.)