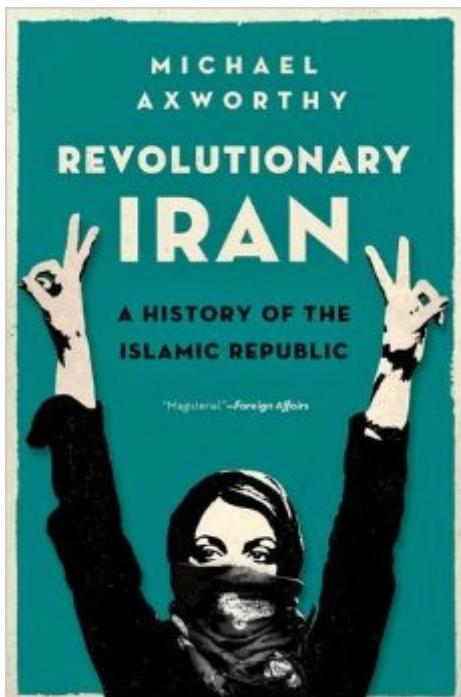


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Revolutionary Iran: A History Of The Islamic Republic



Synopsis

In Revolutionary Iran, Michael Axworthy guides us through recent Iranian history from shortly before the 1979 Islamic revolution through the summer of 2009, when Iranians poured into the streets of Tehran by the hundreds of thousands, demanding free, democratic government. Axworthy explains how that outpouring of support for an end to tyranny in Iran paused and then moved on to other areas in the region like Egypt and Libya, leaving Iran's leadership unchanged. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 was a defining moment of the modern era. Its success unleashed a wave of Islamist fervor across the Middle East and signaled a sharp decline in the appeal of Western ideologies in the Islamic world. Axworthy takes readers through the major periods in Iranian history over the last thirty years: the overthrow of the old regime and the creation of the new one; the Iran-Iraq war; the reconstruction era following the war; the reformist wave led by Mohammed Khatami; and the present day, in which reactionaries have re-established control. Throughout, he emphasizes that the Iranian revolution was centrally important in modern history because it provided the world with a clear model of development that was not rooted in Western ideologies. Whereas the world's major revolutions of the previous two centuries had been fuelled by Western, secular ideologies, the Iranian Revolution drew its inspiration from Islam. Revolutionary Iran is both richly textured and from one of the leading authorities on the region; combining an expansive scope with the most accessible and definitive account of this epoch in all its humanity.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was born in Iran one year after the revolution and lived there until the age of sixteen, when my family had to leave because of religious persecution (we are Baha'is). Although I had grown up in post-revolution Iran and knew about the major events than transpired in those years, I was looking to deepen my knowledge and understanding of the history of Iran from the last years of the Shah's regime to the current period. I had previously read and enjoyed Mr. Axworthy's previous book on the history of Iran, so I decided to give this book a try. I have to say that I fell in love with this book soon after starting to read it and stayed up till dawn on several nights because I simply could not put the book down. As a non-history major (my background is in medicine), I thoroughly enjoyed Mr. Axworthy's writing style and the book read more like an interesting novel than a history book. Furthermore, I felt that the book was very balanced and portrayed the Iranian regime and Iran's people and culture pretty accurately (at least it matched the experience I had while growing up in Iran). I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in learning about the history of post-revolutionary Iran.

Following a coup d'État instigated by the UK and the US in the early 1950s, Iran gradually became despotic. Growing conflict against foreign influence and political repression culminated in the Iranian Revolution, which led to the establishment of an Islamic republic on 1 April 1979. Under the Shah there had been arbitrary arrests and torture by his secret police - SAVAK, and were used to crush all forms of political antagonism. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini became an active critic of the Shah's government and publicly denounced it. Khomeini was arrested and imprisoned for 18 months. After his release in 1964, Khomeini publicly critiqued the United States government role in the country. Eventually Ruhollah Khomeini and his supporters drove the shah into exile and all but in the process demolished the royal army. Then, under the blanket of the war with Iraq, they wiped out their allies and rivals – leftist, liberal and other groups perceived as a threat. This authoritative work by Michael Axworthy, a former British diplomat who headed the Iran Office from 1998-2000, does much to give a good readable history of that time, and up to the relative present. Iran is a country that cannot be ignored in the Middle East region. It has foreign policy that is affecting the civil war in Syria and its active support for Hezbollah in Lebanon and its policy towards Israel – makes this a regional player that should not be ignored. There is the unsuccessful leadership of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Iran's fore ray into nuclear research, which has been seen as veiled attempt to obtain its own domestic nuclear weapons programme. Yet, it seems, that a lot of people seem to know so very little about the country. This is a tome brimming with information, as well as policy advice on how to deal with Iran.

An extraordinarily clear and comprehensible account of Revolutionary Iran. If only it were compulsory reading for western politicians, they might make fewer mistakes in their dealings with the country.

Concise and logical chronology value judged accurately with event recall. Easy style but retaining Farsi idioms. An excellent read GG

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