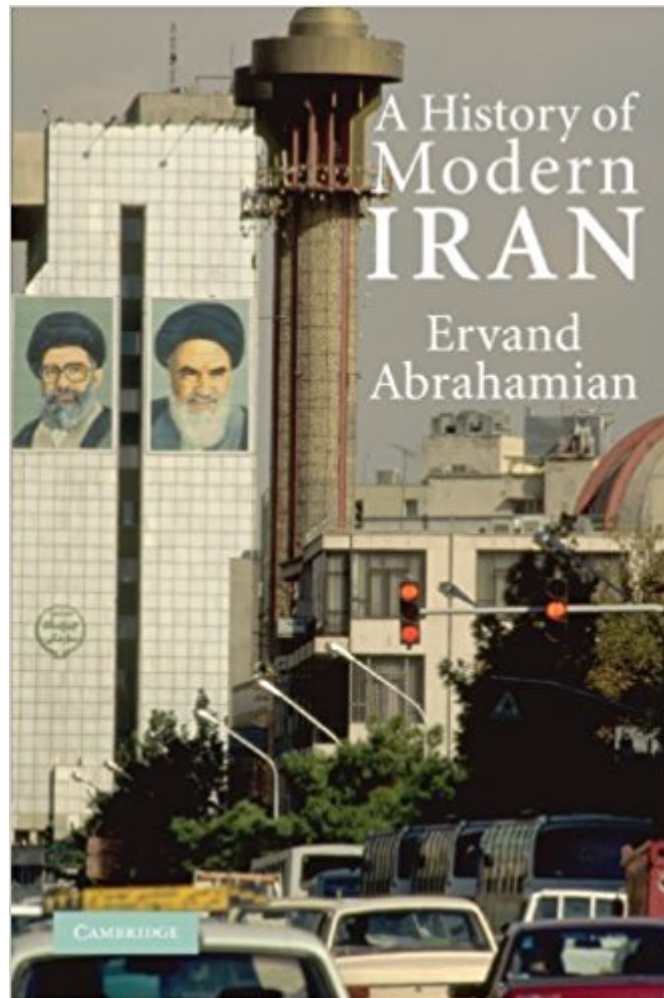




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# A History Of Modern Iran



## Synopsis

In a reappraisal of Iran's modern history, Ervand Abrahamian traces its traumatic journey across the twentieth century, through the discovery of oil, imperial interventions, the rule of the Pahlavis and, in 1979, revolution and the birth of the Islamic Republic. In the intervening years, the country has experienced a bitter war with Iraq, the transformation of society under the clergy and, more recently, the expansion of the state and the struggle for power between the old elites, the intelligentsia and the commercial middle class. The author is a compassionate expositor. While he adroitly negotiates the twists and turns of the country's regional and international politics, at the heart of his book are the people of Iran. It is to them and their resilience that this book is dedicated, as Iran emerges at the beginning of the twenty-first century as one of the most powerful states in the Middle East.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Ervand Abrahamian has done for Iran what de Tocqueville did for France, showing how the revolution continued the work of the ancien regime, through the ever increasing power of the state."  
- Edward Mortimer, Senior Vice-President, Salzburg Global Seminar, and author of *Faith and Power: the Politics of Islam*"Ervand Abrahamian's authoritative overview of twentieth-century Iran fills a large gap in the literature of Iranian studies. His predilection for social analysis and class studies provides an original prism through which the reader gains fresh insights into the drama of the drawn-out conflict between traditional vested interests and growing state power. Drawing on a lifetime of research and writing, Abrahamian has produced a book that successfully combines erudition and original scholarship with accessibility. Specialists and general readers alike will benefit greatly from its reading." - Andrew Whitley, Director, UNRWA Representative Office"Ervand

Abrahamian's *A History of Modern Iran* is a splendidly well-researched and well-written, interpretive overview of 19th and 20th century Iran. The main developments under the Qajar and Pahlavi dynasties and under the Islamic Republic, the important role of Shiism in Iran's history, the origins of modernization, the quest for democratic reform at various junctures, popular participation in the revolutions of 1906 and 1978--Abrahamian covers all this and much, much more. This book, by a first rate historian, is a must read for students and those interested in modern Iranian history." - Haleh Esfandiari, Director, Middle East Program, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

Abrahamian lucidly and objectively presents Iranian history, particularly the turbulent 20th century. The information contained in the book is truly incredible. Indispensable for anyone who genuinely desires to understand the roots of the theocracy that has taken over the country. Essential." - Choice

There are great riches to be found in this brief account of Iran's turbulent modern history. It provides a valuable and dramatic account of a century of Iranian turmoil, violence, and intrigue. The story also includes a cast of strong-willed and colorful individuals." - Middle East Journal

...Abrahamian expertly navigates through the many transformations and twists and turns of twentieth-century Iran and presents a well-researched and well-written account that provides valuable insight into twentieth-century Iranian state and Society" - History: Review of New Books

Abrahamian... does an impressive job of recounting the story of the White Revolution, this last shah's botched attempt at modernization via a series of broad-ranging economic and social reforms in 1963.... Reading Abrahamian, one gains an acute sense of the potent cocktail of factors that finally led to the regime's collapse." - The Nation

In a radical reappraisal of Iran's modern history, Ervand Abrahamian traces its traumatic journey across the twentieth century. While he negotiates the twists and turns of the country's politics, at the heart of his book are the people of Iran who survived the impact of war and revolution.

It might surprise many to know that Iran had a working parliament (majles) as early as 1906. As far as Iranian history goes, this has to be one of the best overviews of Iran's last 100 years. The book begins with the Qajar dynasty in its dying days. Iran's political borders are not what one might expect at the turn of the century. Protests that led to the 1906 revolution came from modern day Iraq, Karbala, Najaf as well as Iranian highlands around modern Tehran. When we think Iran, we think of the modern state and its boundaries, the supposed 'Persian' domination and Shi'a religiosity, Muslim extremism under Khomeini's ideas in Valayat e-Faqih (Jurist's Guardianship) an idea written about in the book called Hukumat Islami (Islamic government). Before today's Iran there

was an ebb and flow of intellectualism either suppressed or in full force guiding the will of the Iranian people. Abrahamian as an author is not pointing fingers but doesn't leave out the coups of 1941 and 1953 and the obvious self-interests of the United States, the UK and Russia. At times Iran was a pawn in the 'great game', too often to the detriment of a working parliament. There has been a democratic flavor in Iran for over a century. The people have long-demanded it, regardless of whatever Shah or Ayatollah attempted to rule otherwise. The 1979 revolution sprang from intense oppression. Mohammad Shah, receiving large amounts of western aid, built up his country in the White Revolution. The reforms had the potential of enriching the entire nation yet sadly, the rich were heavily advantaged and the poor suppressed. Abrahamian attempts to describe also the tension and utility that Islam has played for different governments in power. The religious seat at Qom has been as much a government ally or striking foe as it has been a religious educator. Besides the religious scholarly sector, Iran's politics have been influenced by the demands of the bazaar sector, the student sectors and the trade and craftsmen. When the majles was working, early on and just before Western instigated coups, there was healthy political, constructive debate. Abrahamian does a great job of looking at the intertwining relationship between the economic sectors, religion, Shi'a philosophy and foreign policy to paint an easily understood picture of modern Iran. So where does one go from here? Just know that the Majles has been at the base of Iranian society for a long time.

An excellent book which explains in great detail the levels of society in Iran in the past 100 years. It also explains the effects of foreign interest and their manipulations of the political system which caused the destruction of the entire social and economic infrastructure. This is an easy to read book which unfortunately does not explain in detail how the foreign powers caused the present middle east problems and puts majority of the blames on politicians and monarchs of this period. Overall, despite its shortfalls, an excellent book to read with wealth of information.

Another seminal, well-written, scholarly and well researched study of modern Iranian history and events from Dr. Abrahamian, integrated with deeply insightful sociological analysis throughout. A delightful book that I was unable to put down even at moments I was extremely sleepy or fatigued.

If one has read "Iran between two Revolutions", by same author, needs to read this too, since it covers the period until early 2000s. Very good and informative, not as detailed as "Iran between two Revolutions". But very good introduction to modern Iran for somebody who does not know much

about it.

Great book!! I like the way he presents his point of view concerning the history of Iran!! I'm presently using it for my MA in Middle Eastern Studies and I think that is a great tool. But I also think that it lacks the concept of women as being present in society, but overall is a great book!

Excellent, objective, and balanced. Points out the positives and negatives of both the Pahlavi and the Islamic Republic's regimes. The Qajar dynasty's history is also informative.

The book gives a very good overview of the modern Iran. It shows statistics and data to back up the claims made in the book and the author in my view could keep his opinions to himself and narrate the facts as they were. I would definitely recommend reading this book.

An excellent introduction to modern Iran. The author manages to summarize the complicated Iranian political history into a book that is easily digestible, without falling into the trap of over simplification and vilification or adulation of certain people or movements.

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