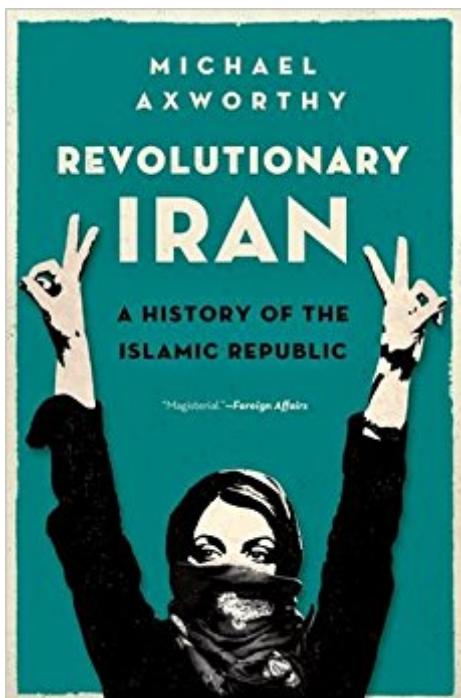


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# Revolutionary Iran: A History Of The Islamic Republic



## 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

"This is one of the few must-read books of this year... excellent and insightful from beginning to end." --Tyler Cowen, Marginal Revolution "If you were to read only one book on present-day Iran you could not do better than this. Michael Axworthy, a Foreign-Office-expert-turned- academic, has drawn on his own experience as well as archival research to produce a highly readable narrative of the Islamic Republic." --Ervand Abrahamian, Times Higher Education "Balancing scholarly precision with narrative flair, Mr. Axworthy depicts an Islamic movement that exploited and distorted traditional Shia beliefs in order to seize and hold on to power... scholarly rigor and first-class analysis." --The Economist "Meticulously fair and scholarly... a very fine work that deserves to be read by anyone interested in the Middle East. Iran is inevitably still central to events in the region and beyond, not just through the potential for war over its nuclear program, nor even because of its continued support for the Assad regime in Syria, but because it is, as Axworthy says, less a country than a continent, more a civilization than a nation." --James Buchan, The Guardian "Because of [the Iranian] election, Revolutionary Iran, which takes the reader up to the end of 2012, is particularly well-timed. It will be invaluable for those hoping to make sense of the coverage. With it, Axworthy has confirmed his position as one of the most lucid and humane western interpreters of Iran writing at the moment." --The New Statesman "This book puts much-needed flesh on the simplistic caricature of Iran." --The Times (UK) "The Shah's imperial folly and overthrow are described grippingly." --The Daily Telegraph

Michael Axworthy is Former Head of the Iran Section of the British Foreign Office from 1998-2000. He is currently Senior Lecturer and Director of the Centre for Persian and Iranian Studies at the University of Exeter, and the author of Empire of the Mind: A History of Iran.

I loved this book. Knowing next to nothing about Iran, my curiosity was piqued with the outstanding academy award winning Iranian film — *A Separation* — that depicted a complex, vibrant and tragic nation unlike what I'd imagined from my limited reading of alarming news about Iran. The news depicts a theocratic, threatening, paranoid, murderous government. All this is sadly and tragically true, but Iran's government is not Iran and, as the book makes clear, Iranians themselves have very different views and aspirations. Though Iran's deep history as Persia is covered, the book is effectively about the period 1970-2012, from the lead up to the 1979 revolution to the book's publication. Unlike other modern revolutions and contrary to the expectations of most, a clerical elite ended up on top after Iran's revolution. However, to get on top this elite had to make extensive use of ruthless and cynical violence. Thus Iran's politician-clerics represent an extreme wing of overall

clerical opinion in Iran. The need for constant violence and intimidation tends to select for clerics who can justify the maintenance of power over the tenets of their religion. Large segments of the Iranian population have lost faith in their governing religious leaders, even as they remain committed to their version of Islam. This suggests parallels to Cromwell's 1650s England, or Martin Luther's pre-reformation Germany. Indeed, the book describes several points where modern Iran came tantalizingly close to developing in a different direction. The author's excellent grasp of Farsi allows him to impart an authentic and empathetic sense of hopes, opinion and debate in contemporary Iran. His status as a foreigner lets him see Iran more clearly than many Iranians and his calibre as a writer/historian let him explain it all in compelling fashion.

Even as a long time Iranian-American, I've usually been skeptical of history of Iran written by non-Iranians. It's not out of any cultural concern, but due to doubts about scholastic depth and motives. However, this work by Axworthy not only has made me rethink that presupposition, but also made me think that it is sometimes possible that a non-Iranian can research, compile, and present Iran's history in a more competent and interesting way than a native. The book is very readable, engaging, factually informative, fairly presented (though as the author acknowledges no one is without bias), and quite interesting. I had a hard time putting it down despite its 500 pages. A sincere kudos and appreciation to the author for his interest in the history of modern Iran, and his dedicated and careful study of its complexities summarized and presented as well as anyone might have been able to.

I read Axworthy's book on Iran Empire but liked this one more; he did a great job of describing a very volatile, confusing time very well; I especially liked the way he handled the three plus decades of interactions between the USA & Iran; he was very objective & pointed out the times both sides blew potential opportunities to improve relations between the countries in that time period; if they had, the world would be a better place today than it is; I have read several books covering this time period and this is the best from my perspective; I have visited Iran & his insights agree with my take aways very well; an interesting country despite its being ruled by such a ruthless bunch of thugs; the Iranian people will succeed in getting rid of the current regime I am sure not sure when

I learned a ton about Iran and I thought it was a really good book in general. But if you are looking for an impartial history, this is not the book for you. I am fine with the way it was written and I do not think it was intended to be written as an unbiased peek into Iran, but the author does have an

implicit bias and a sometimes explicit bias throughout the book. Good book though.

Really enjoyed this book which begins before the 1979 Revolution and ends in 2012. The majority of the book is dedicated to the 1979 Revolution and then the Iran-Iraq War. The latter part of the book discusses the demonstrations of 2009. Thoroughly researched and objectively written.

Provided a fair and balanced assessment of Iran. I highly recommend this book.

great

Excellent account of the history & revolutionary Iran. Highly recommend

Very informative. I saw a review in The Economist years ago and put this on my wish list.

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