

## Books on Iran

**Abrahamian, E. (1982). *Iran: Between two revolutions*. Princeton: Princeton**

**University Press.**

*Emphasizing the interaction between political organizations and social forces, Ervand Abrahamian discusses Iranian society and politics during the period between the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1909 and the Islamic Revolution of 1977-1979.*

**Ahmad, E. (2006). *The selected writings of Eqbal Ahmad*. New York: Columbia**

**University Press.**

*Activist, journalist, and theorist, Eqbal Ahmad (1934--1999) was admired and consulted by revolutionaries and activists as well as policymakers and academics. In articles and columns published in such journals as the Nation, New York Review of Books, Monthly Review, and newspapers in Pakistan and Cairo, Ahmad inspired new ways of thinking about global issues. Whether writing on the rise of militant Islam, the conflict in Kashmir, U.S. involvement in Vietnam, or the cynical logic of Cold War geopolitics, Ahmad offered incisive, passionate, and often prophetic analyses of the major political events and movements of the second half of the twentieth century.*

*This work is the first to collect Ahmad's writings in a single volume. It reflects his distinct understanding of world politics as well as his profound sense of empathy for those living in poverty and oppression. He was a fierce opponent of imperialism and corruption and advocated democratic transformations in postcolonial and third-world societies. A uniquely perceptive critic of colonialism and U.S. foreign policy, Ahmad was equally vigilant in his criticisms of third-world dictatorships.*

*Like few other writers, Ahmad's life experiences shaped his political views. He grew up amidst the turmoil of postcolonial India, worked alongside the Algerian FLN in their fight against the French occupation, and later became a prominent spokesperson for peace between Israel and Palestine.*

**Aslan, R. (2006). *No God but God: The origins, evolution, and future of Islam*. New**

**York: Random House.**

*Aslan's introduction to the history of Islam, which also devotes several chapters to the place of Islam in the contemporary world, tackles its subject with serious and well-informed scholarship. But, miracle of miracles, it's actually pretty fun to read. Beginning with an exploration of the religious climate in the years before the Prophet's Revelation, Aslan traces the story of Islam from the Prophet's life and the so-called golden age of the first four caliphs all the way through European colonization and subsequent independence. Aslan sees religion as a story, and he tells it that way, bringing each successive century to life with the kind of vivid details and like-you-were-there, present-tense narration that makes popular history popular. Even so, the depth and breadth here will probably be a bit heavy for some, who might better enjoy Karen Armstrong's shorter, if less authoritative, *Islam* (2000). That said, this is an excellent overview that doubles as an impassioned call to reform.*

**Baer, R. (2008). *The devil we know: Dealing with the new Iranian superpower*. New York: Crown Publishers.**

*Former CIA operative Baer (See No Evil) challenges the conventional wisdom regarding Iran in this timely and provocative analysis, arguing that Iran has already half-won its undeclared 30-year war with the United States and is rapidly becoming a superpower. In Baer's analysis, Iran has succeeded by using carefully vetted proxies such as Hezbollah and by appealing across the Muslim sectarian divide to Sunni Arabs, and is well on its way to establishing an empire in the Persian Gulf. Baer claims that since Iran's dominance in the Middle East is a fait accompli, the United States has no viable choice but to ask for a truce and enter into negotiations prepared to drop sanctions against Iran and accept a partition of Iraq, which is already, and irretrievably, lost. Baer's assumptions are often questionable—most tellingly that Iran is now trustworthy—and his conclusions premature: he states unequivocally, for example, that the Iranians have annexed the entire south [of Iraq]. But his brief adds an important perspective to a crucial international debate.*

**Benjamin, M. & Evans, J. (2005). *Stop the next war now: Effective responses to violence and terrorism*. Maui, San Francisco: Inner Ocean Publishing.**

*Violence begets violence—so believes the majority of people around the world who have stood up in protest against war. Stop the Next War Now is a reflective look and call to action to end violence, by acclaimed peace activists, experts, and visionaries, including Eve Ensler, Barbara Lee, Arianna Huffington, Janeane Garafalo, Nancy Pelosi, Maxine Hong Kingston, and many more. The book shares expert insight on the issues and powers-that-be that encourage war, including the media, politicians, global militarization, and the pending scarcity of natural resources. A powerful, smart, and passionate work, this book aims to educate and reflect on the effectiveness of peace movement activities and offer hope—through shared ideas, action steps, and checklists—to transform a culture of violence to a culture of peace. How can people humanize each other, ask the authors, and act as responsible global citizens? With vitality, joy, and a dash of CODEPINK-style humor, Stop the Next War Now insists that the time is ripe for the first-ever global movement to put an end to war—and tells readers what they can do about it.*

**Bennis, P. (2005). *Challenging empire: How people, governments and the UN defy US power*. Northampton: Olive Branch Press.**

*When millions around the world marched to protest the Iraq war and the U.S. drive towards empire, the New York Times dubbed global public opinion "the second super-power." What empowered those protests was their alliance -- if only for a brief moment -- with governments unexpectedly willing to stand up to U.S. pressure, and with the United Nations itself, when it followed its Charter's command to stop "the scourge of war." Bennis tracks the rise of U.S. unilateralism and the doctrine of preemptive war, looking particularly at Iraq and Israel/Palestine, and examines both the potential and the challenges ahead in reclaiming the UN as part of the global peace movement.*

**Bennis, P. & Moushabeck, M., eds. (1991). *Beyond the storm: A Gulf crisis reader.***

**Northampton: Olive Branch Press.**

*The "War for Kuwait" was over before most Americans could blink. In *Beyond the Storm*, 31 prominent authors argue why it was an unsettling conflict and offer countless reasons for looming uncertainties. The heart of the discourse here is the Arab world. For a majority of the writers, the politics of linkage between the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the Arab-Israeli conflict exist, and, no matter how often the proposition was dismissed as fantasy, the reality persuaded them otherwise. The authors conclude that the false analogies made in the press throughout the past year deserve systematic responses. In major essays, Edward Said, Noam Chomsky, Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Yvonne Haddad, Clovis Maksoud, and Hanan Ashrawi, among others, provide these responses and highlight the perceptions of victimized Arabs. For those tired of the same fare, this collection is sure to provide food for thought. Essential for every public library because of its bold contents.*

**Byrne, M. & Kornbluh, P. (1993). *The Iran-Contra scandal: The declassified history.***

**New York: The New Press.**

*The National Security Archive, a private public interest agency founded in 1985 to break through the codes of government secrecy, has assembled 100 documents concerning the Iran-Contra scandal, covering the period from Reagan's original presidential finding on December 1, 1981 to Bush's grant of executive clemency on December 24, 1992. With contextual introductions, a helpful chronology of key events, and a glossary of major participants, the volume sets forth the documents relevant to this major controversy in contemporary American politics. The editors have arranged the primary materials to allow the "facts" to speak for themselves so that readers may determine if these actions indeed constitute the undermining of the U.S. Constitution, as Theodore Draper has charged in *A Very Thin Line* (LJ 6/1/91). Among the myriad books from this event, this volume alone provides the public record needed to reach a final verdict. A professionally done volume, it belongs in every public school and academic library.*

**Cleveland, W. L. (2004). *A history of the modern Middle East.* Boulder: Westview**

**Press.**

*This comprehensive work provides a penetrating analysis of modern Middle Eastern history, from the Ottoman and Egyptian reforms, through the challenge of Western imperialism, to the American invasion of Iraq and Iran's new influence in the region. After introducing the reader to the region's history from the origins of Islam in the seventh century, *A History of the Modern Middle East* focuses on the past two centuries of profound and often dramatic change. Although built around a framework of political history, the book also carefully integrates social, cultural, and economic developments into a single, expertly crafted account. In updating this fourth edition of the late William Cleveland's popular introductory text, Martin Bunton addresses recent transformative developments in the Middle East, charting the decline in the peace prospects between Israelis and Palestinians, elaborating upon the resurgence of Islam, and devoting a new*

chapter to "America's Troubled Moment in the Middle East," which details the aftermath of the Iraq war and Iran's nuclear ambitions.

**Ebadi, S. (2006). *Iran awakening: A memoir of revolution and hope*. New York:**

**Random House.**

*Millions of Iranian women were sidelined by Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution, but few fought back the way Shirin Ebadi did. She had become Iran's foremost woman jurist by the 1970s, but Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's theocracy stripped her of her judgeship in 1980. Her steely tenacity enabled her to take on a new role as a human rights lawyer battling for justice in Iran's revolutionary courts -- a fight that won her the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize and brought her face to face with the terror her clients confronted. In the fall of 2000, as she studied a dossier about the premeditated killings of dissidents that was made available after a judicial investigation, her gaze fell on a chilling sentence: "The next person to be killed is Shirin Ebadi."*

*Her new memoir, Iran Awakening, is a riveting account of a brave, lonely struggle to take Islamist jurists to task for betraying the promises of their own revolution. Life was supposed to improve for Iranians after the despotic rule of the U.S.-backed shah. But rather than protect its citizens, the new government set upon a cruel track. Ebadi's tale is told from the perspective of an ordinary mother and an extraordinary lawyer determined, despite the ruthless reign of the ayatollahs, to do what is right.*

*In her dealings with the grim and arbitrary judicial machinery in Islamist Iran, Ebadi demonstrates that her own patriotism is beyond reproach. She faces her foes with cunning and the quiet calculation of a superb chess player. The resulting book (written with the help of Azadeh Moaveni, a Time magazine correspondent) sometimes reads like a police thriller, its drama heightened by Ebadi's determination to keep up the quotidian aspects of her family life. She goes through the daily rituals of washing dishes and mincing fresh herbs before dinner, preparing meals ahead of time as she maps out her game plan to embarrass the regime.*

*Iran Awakening is not a literary work but an insider's view of the merciless daily grind that drives women to struggle, submission or suicide. Ebadi's reactions are sometimes movingly normal, as when she tries to insulate her two daughters from the terror by doing something as different as taking them skiing -- which, it turns out, requires this 40-something mom to get permission from her own mother.*

*The description of her own imprisonment -- she was jailed in June 2000 for videotaping the testimony of a key witness in the case of a young activist killed during the previous year's student riots -- offers a rare glimpse inside Tehran's notorious Evin prison. One guard, assuming that any female inmate must be a prostitute, asks the dignified dissident whether she is there "for a moral offense," which reduces her to hysterical laughter. Her mirth soon fades. "It was so odd to me, how the rhythm of prison life became familiar," she writes. "The personality quirks of the guards, the dank, dusty smell of the cells, even the howls of the addicts seemed normal to me after a couple of days."*

*Despite her opinion of the ruling mullahs, Ebadi continues to believe that Islam, or a progressive version of it, is compatible with modern democracy. Not everyone will agree with her, but her passion to prove the point is formidable.*

*Returning home three years ago as a Nobel laureate, she was greeted at Tehran's airport by a mostly female throng, including a group of students singing "Yar-e Dabestani," the adopted anthem of Iran's "young pro-democracy organizers," a sorrowful, bittersweet*

*yet galvanizing song used to lift spirits at sit-ins and gatherings. Its lyrics ask, "Whose hands but mine and yours can pull back these curtains?"*

*Those curtains are far from lifted. "I am not free enough to write what I want to write," Ebadi said in a recent interview. But she adds: "I am willing to be tried in any court for what I said in this book." It is being published in 16 languages. But not Farsi, the language of Iran.*

**Ehrlich, R. (2007). *The Iran agenda: The real story of U.S. policy and the Middle East crisis*. Sausalito: Polipoint Press.**

*Ehrlich explains how the U.S. planned to subvert the Iranian government and then lied about it to the American people. In addition to covering the political story, the author offers firsthand insights into Iran's population, domestic politics, and popular culture.*

**Falk, R. (2002). *Unlocking the Middle East: The writings of Richard Falk*. Ed. Jean Allain. Northampton: Olive Branch Press.**

*The Middle East, broadly defined, has long been a nodal point of US foreign policy. In a seemingly constant state of upheaval, the region lurches from crisis to crisis. The few things that tie the region together is an across-the-board lack of democracy; enormous gaps between wealth and poverty; vast disparities between the tiny oil-bloated emirates and the massive, restless populations of Egypt and other resource-deprived states; and the growing poverty-, repression-, and occupation-fueled Islamist-oriented movements reflecting spiraling discontent throughout the region.*

*Unlocking the Middle East brings together over three decades of work by Richard Falk, a leading observer of the region and analyst/critic of US policy toward it. Beginning with 1969 Lebanon, then giving a close and critical examination of the Iranian revolution of 1979, and moving through the final decades of the twentieth century to the second Palestinian uprising that opened the twenty-first century, Falk's prescient and comprehensive assessments provide valuable insight to the region's spiraling discontent.*

*The book includes sections on the geopolitics of the region and US policy toward it, Islam in history and in newer political forms, the international law implications of the Lebanon war, and the Iranian revolution. Through it all, runs the stream of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The book also includes the 2001 report of the United Nations Human Rights Inquiry Commission, appointed by the UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights, of which Falk was a leading member.*

**Gasiorowski, M. J. & Byrne, M. (2004). *Mohammed Mosaddeq and the 1953 coup in Iran*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.**

*Mohammad Mosaddeq is widely regarded as the leading champion of secular democracy and resistance to foreign domination in Iran's modern history. Mosaddeq became prime minister of Iran in May 1951 and promptly nationalized its British-controlled oil industry, initiating a bitter confrontation between Iraq and Britain that increasingly undermined Mossaddeq's position. He was finally overthrown in August 1953 in a coup that was organized and led by the United States' Central Intelligence Agency. This coup*

*initiated a twenty-five-year period of dictatorship in Iran, leaving many Iranians resentful of the U.S. - legacies that still haunt relations between the two countries today. The book examines the turbulent political climate that prevailed in Iran during Mosaddeq's time the struggle between Iran and Britain for control over oil, the strategic considerations that led U.S. officials to opt for a coup, and the details of the coup itself. Based on exhaustive research by leading academic experts in the field, this is the most authoritative account of the tragic events that led to the overthrow of Mosaddeq. With the recent declassification of CIA documents regarding the 1953 coup that overthrew Mohammad Mossadeq's government in Iran, there is an opportunity for new in-depth analysis into not only the coup itself but the events that led up to it.*

**Gonzalez, N. (2007). *Engaging Iran: The rise of a Middle East powerhouse and America's strategic choice*. Westport: Praeger SI / Greenwood Press.**

*Gonzalez (founder, Nationandstate.org, an open-source foreign policy think tank) calls for a new approach for US foreign policy towards Iran grounded in a more sophisticated understanding of Iran's trajectory of independence, a trajectory that may have led to violent resistance to foreign intervention but also has brought Iran closer to homegrown democracy than any country in the neighboring Arab world. He argues that this trajectory of independence has been developing for roughly the past one and a half centuries and that it is set to place Iran's increasingly educated and pro-American youth at the forefront of Iranian politics. He sets this argument next to an analysis of the legacies of recent Presidents Ahmadinejad, Khatami, and Rafsanjani and concludes his discussion with a proposal for engaging Iran and enlisting it as an American ally in the Middle East.*

**Hiro, D. (2005). *The Iranian labyrinth: Journeys through theocratic Iran and its future*. New York: Nation Books.**

*As Tehran faces a crisis in its escalating showdown with the International Atomic Energy Agency regarding its nuclear program, renowned Middle East expert Dilip Hiro clears the way through the labyrinth that defines today's Islamic Republic. In a country stereotyped as fundamentalist by America, Hiro finds a contradictory land—where black chador-clad women are the majority at universities, Iranian films are shown at international festivals, and human rights lawyer Shirin Ebadi is a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. Drawing on Iran's rich history, its vast oil and gas reserves, and its unique strategic importance, Hiro reveals a complex nation whose theocratic rulers are struggling to prove that Islamic democracy is a viable and enduring social system.*

**Juhasz, A. (2006). *The Bush agenda: Invading the world one economy at a time*. New York: HarperCollins.**

*In The Bush Agenda, Antonia Juhasz exposes a radical corporate globalization agenda that has been refined by leading members and allies of the Bush administration over decades and reached its fullest, most aggressive implementation under George W. Bush—and Bush Agenda adherents plan for it to outlast him. Juhasz uncovers the history and key role of U.S. corporations in the creation of this agenda—focusing on Bechtel,*

*Lockheed Martin, Chevron, and Halliburton—then presents the Iraq War as its most brutal application to date. Expertly revealing the oil timeline driving the war, Juhasz charts exactly how the administration has fundamentally transformed Iraq's economy, locked in sweeping advantages to its corporate allies, and expanded its target to the whole Middle East. The results of these same corporate globalization policies—dislocation, extreme poverty, and increased violence and terrorism—have been demonstrated in regions from South America to Africa to the Middle East and Asia, and in the United States. Extensively researched and now updated with a new afterword, The Bush Agenda is a brilliant, informative analysis, revealing the hard truths about where the Bush administration and its corporate allies are leading the modern world—and what we can do about it.*

**Juhasz, A. (2008). *The tyranny of oil: The world's most powerful industry – and what we must do to stop it*. New York: HarperCollins.**

*In this thorough, readable takedown of Big Oil, the most profitable industry in the world, Juhasz (The Bush Agenda) exposes the ways in which a half dozen oil companies have achieved control over American families and U.S. politics, triggering environmental and humanitarian catastrophes they have no intention of resolving. Within 10 years of Standard Oil's founding in 1870, John D. Rockefeller monopolized the refining, marketing and output of U.S. oil; ever since 1890's Sherman Antitrust Act split the company into small constituent parts, oil players have scrambled to evade regulation, regather into ever-larger corporations and regain the ability to set prices and control output. Debunking industry claims over recent oil price escalation, Juhasz exposes how Big Oil has used techniques like speculative futures markets and the "Enron Loophole"--along with massive operations opacity--to reap record profits year after year while growing their political influence; indeed, Juhasz locates the current "oilgarchy" making "the most pressing decisions of our time" from inside George W. Bush's White House, crafting policy and advocating war. Calling for a "Separation of Oil and State," this excellent, wide-ranging study of disastrous monopoly capitalism should shake up notions that major energy players are interested in any alternative to more oil, money and power.*

**Keddie, N. R. (2003). *Modern Iran: Roots and results of revolution*. New Haven: Yale University Press.**

*In this updated edition of Nikki Keddie's Modern Iran—itself a substantially revised and expanded version of her classic work Roots of Revolution—the author provides a new preface and a fully annotated and indexed epilogue, reviewing recent developments in Iran since 2003. Keddie provides insightful commentary on Iran's nuclear and foreign policy, its relations with the United Nations and the United States, increasing conservative and hard-line tendencies in the government, and recent developments in the economy, cultural and intellectual life, and human rights.*

**Kinzer, S. (2004). *All the Shah's men: An American coup and the roots of Middle East terror*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons Inc.**

*With breezy storytelling and diligent research, Kinzer has reconstructed the CIA's 1953 overthrow of the elected leader of Iran, Mohammad Mossadegh, who was wildly popular at home for having nationalized his country's oil industry. The coup ushered in the long and brutal dictatorship of Mohammad Reza Shah, widely seen as a U.S. puppet and himself overthrown by the Islamic revolution of 1979. At its best this work reads like a spy novel, with code names and informants, midnight meetings with the monarch and a last-minute plot twist when the CIA's plan, called Operation Ajax, nearly goes awry. A veteran New York Times foreign correspondent and the author of books on Nicaragua (Blood of Brothers) and Turkey (Crescent and Star), Kinzer has combed memoirs, academic works, government documents and news stories to produce this blow-by-blow account. He shows that until early in 1953, Great Britain and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company were the imperialist baddies of this tale. Intransigent in the face of Iran's demands for a fairer share of oil profits and better conditions for workers, British Foreign Secretary Herbert Morrison exacerbated tension with his attitude that the challenge from Iran was, in Kinzer's words, "a simple matter of ignorant natives rebelling against the forces of civilization." Before the crisis peaked, a high-ranking employee of Anglo-Iranian wrote to a superior that the company's alliance with the "corrupt ruling classes" and "leech-like bureaucracies" were "disastrous, outdated and impractical." This stands as a textbook lesson in how not to conduct foreign policy.*

**Nasr, V. (2006). *The Shia revival: How conflicts within Islam will shape the future*.**

**New York: W. W. Norton.**

*About 15 percent of Muslims worldwide are Shia. In Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and Bahrain, Shia constitute a majority or plurality of the populace, and areas of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia (in the latter, the oil fields) host Shia majorities. Iran's Islamic Revolution under Ayatollah Khomeini, which rushed Islam to the forefront of non-Islamic consciousness internationally, was a Shia phenomenon. Iranian Middle East researcher Nasr, who teaches, consults, and writes in the U.S., says that Khomeini was rather a maverick who discountenanced the quietism, ritualism, and celebratoriness of mainstream Shia. If that is a revelation to Westerners, so, probably, are Nasr's arguments that the Shia have been persecuted and oppressed by the Sunni majority ever since the divergence of the two Islamic strains more than 1,300 years ago, and that Islamic terrorism from well before 9/11 to the current insurgency in post-Saddam Iraq is a tactic of intransigent Sunnism. Nasr never pontificates or accuses, always choosing to show both sides' reasons for even the most heinous actions. He never so much as hints at what many readers must infer from his presentation--that the U.S. should think again and again and again before attacking Iran. So enlightening and perspective altering that no one concerned about the Middle East should miss reading it.*

**Parsi, T. (2007). *Treacherous alliance: The secret dealings of Iran, Israel, and the United States*. New Haven: Yale University Press.**

*In this era of superheated rhetoric and vitriolic exchanges between the leaders of Iran and Israel, the threat of nuclear violence looms. But the real roots of the enmity between the two nations mystify Washington policymakers, and no promising pathways to peace have emerged. This book traces the shifting relations among Israel, Iran, and the United States from 1948 to the present, uncovering for the first time the details of secret alliances, treacherous acts, and unsavory political maneuverings that have undermined Middle Eastern stability and disrupted U.S. foreign policy initiatives in the region.*

*Trita Parsi, a U.S. foreign policy expert with more than a decade of experience, is the only writer who has had access to senior American, Iranian, and Israeli decision makers. He dissects the complicated triangular relations of their countries, arguing that America's hope for stability in Iraq and for peace in Israel is futile without a correct understanding of the Israeli-Iranian rivalry.*

*Parsi's behind-the-scenes revelations about Middle East events will surprise even the most knowledgeable readers: Iran's prime minister asks Israel to assassinate Khomeini, Israel reaches out to Saddam Hussein after the Gulf War, the United States foils Iran's plan to withdraw support from Hamas and Hezbollah, and more. This book not only revises our understanding of the Middle East's recent past, it also spells out a course for the future. In today's belligerent world, few topics, if any, could be more important.*

**Takeyh, R. (2006). *Hidden Iran: Paradox and power in the Islamic republic*. New York: Times Books.**

*The current standoff between Iran and the West over Iran's nuclear ambitions appears to be a Gordian knot that some urge to be disentangled by resorting to military force. Takeyh wisely places the nuclear issue within the broader context of Iran's relations with the West, and particularly with the "Great Satan," the U.S. Within that context, Takeyh asserts that Americans have grossly misunderstood the complex realities of Iranian political life. As opposed to the image frequently shown in America--a monolithic government controlled by clerical fanatics--Takeyh presents a far more nuanced picture. Despite the recent electoral triumphs of conservative ideologies, Iran remains torn between those who seek a more secular, pluralistic state and those who hope to maintain rigid authoritarianism. The outcome is far from certain, but Takeyh insists the hostile tone emanating from the Bush administration only undermines reformers. Critics are likely to accuse Takeyh of naivete in assuming that our problems with Iran can be solved through dialogue. Still, his assertions and suggestions provide a necessary counterpoint to those who see confrontations and military conflict as inevitable.*