

## A HISTORY OF MODERN IRAN

REVISED AND UPDATED

In a radical 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, Iran has experienced a bitter war with Iraq, the transformation of society under the rule of 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, who is one of the most distinguished historians writing on Iran today, 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, who have endured and survived a century of war and revolution. 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.

ERVAND ABRAHAMIAN is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History at Baruch College and Graduate Center, City University of New York. His previous publications include *The Iranian Mojahedin* (1989), *Khomeinism* (1993), and *Tortured Confessions* (1999).

### Praise for the first edition

“Ervand Abrahamian’s *A History of Modern Iran* is a splendidly well-researched and well-written, interpretive overview of nineteenth- and twentieth-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 1979 – 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.*

“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 has done for Iran what de Tocqueville did for France, showing how the revolution continued the work of the *ancien régime*, through the ever increasing power of the state.”  
EDWARD MORTIMER *Senior Vice-President, Salzburg Global Seminar.*

# A HISTORY OF MODERN IRAN

Revised and updated  
ERVAND ABRAHAMIAN  
*City University of New York*



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-107-19834-0 — A History of Modern Iran  
 Ervand Abrahamian  
 Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

**CAMBRIDGE**  
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India  
 79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107198340](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107198340)

DOI: 10.1017/9781108182348

First edition © Ervand Abrahamian 2008

Second edition © Ervand Abrahamian 2018

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2008

12th printing 2018

Second edition 2018

Printed in the United States of America by Sheridan Books, Inc., 2018

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

NAMES: Abrahamian, Ervand, 1940– author.

TITLE: A history of modern iran / Ervand Abrahamian.

DESCRIPTION: Second edition. | New York : Cambridge University Press, 2018. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2018007007 | ISBN 9781107198340 (hardback)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Iran – History – 20th century. | BISAC: HISTORY / Middle East / General.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC DS316.3 .A27 2018 | DDC 955.05–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2018007007>

ISBN 978-1-107-19834-0 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-316-64814-8 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-19834-0 — A History of Modern Iran  
Ervand Abrahamian  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

*In memory of the more than three hundred political prisoners  
hanged in 1988 for refusing to feign belief in the supernatural*

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-19834-0 — A History of Modern Iran  
Ervand Abrahamian  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

## Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	page viii
<i>List of Maps</i>	x
<i>List of Tables</i>	xi
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
<i>A Political Who's Who of Modern Iran</i>	xv
<i>Chronology</i>	xxiv
<i>Glossary</i>	xxvi
Introduction	I
1 "Royal Despots": State and Society under the Qajars	8
2 Reform, Revolution, and the Great War	35
3 The Iron Fist of Reza Shah	65
4 The Nationalist Interregnum	100
5 Muhammad Reza Shah's White Revolution	126
6 The Islamic Republic	159
<i>Notes</i>	205
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	226
<i>Further Reading</i>	229
<i>Index</i>	237

## *Figures*

3.1	Coronation stamp, 1926	<i>page</i> 68
3.2	Road construction stamp, 1934	81
3.3	Stamp set depicting Pahlavi ideology, 1935	81
3.3a	Persepolis	81
3.3b	Tehran airport	81
3.3c	Sanatorium near Tehran	82
3.3d	Cement factory in Abdul 'Azim	82
3.3e	Gunboat	82
3.3f	Railway bridge over Karun	83
3.3g	Tehran post office	83
3.3h	Justice: woman with scales and sword	83
3.3i	Education: angel teaching youth	83
3.4	Stamp set celebrating ancient Iran	84
3.4a	Persepolis: ruins of main palace	84
3.4b	Persepolis: lion carving	84
3.4c	Persepolis: Darius	84
3.4d	Persepolis: warrior	85
3.4e	Pasaraga: Cyrus' tomb	85
3.4f	Carving at Naqsh-e Rostam: the god Mazda's investiture of Ardashir	85
3.4g	Carving at Naqsh-e Rostam: Shahpour accepting Emperor Valerian's submission	86
5.1	Stamps (1963–78)	139
5.1a	Stamp set celebrating aspects of the White Revolution	139
5.1b	Stamp set commemorating Reza Shah	140
5.1c	Stamp set commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Pahlavi dynasty	141
5.2	Class structure (labor force in the 1970s)	144

*List of Figures*

ix

6.1	Statue of Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi during the revolution. Tehran, February 1979. Copyright Abbas/Magnum Photos	164
6.2	Woman passing soldiers during the revolution. Tehran, 1978. Copyright Abbas/Magnum Photos.	165
6.3	Chart of the Islamic constitution	170
6.4	Stamps honouring the forerunners of the Islamic Revolution.	175
6.4a	Two stamps for Ayatollah Beheshti and the seventy-two martyrs.	176
6.4b	Stamp for Ayatollah Kashani.	177
6.5	Stamps issued by the Bazargan government for al-e Ahmad, Shariati, Mossadeq, and Dehkhoda	178
6.6	Anniversary stamps for the Islamic Revolution	179

*Maps*

1	Iran and the Middle East	<i>page</i> xxviii
2	Iranian Provinces	xxix

## *Tables*

0.1	Vital Statistics	<i>page</i> 6
1.1	Communal Composition of Iran, 1900	19
3.1	Government Budgets, 1925–26 and 1940–41	71
3.2	Expansion of Public Education, 1923–24 and 1940–41	87
3.3	Changes in Place Names	91
3.4	Changes in State Terminology	91
4.1	Prime Ministers, 1941–53	106
5.1	Oil Revenues, 1954–76	127
5.2	Prime Ministers, 1953–77	132
5.3	Military Expenditure, 1954–77	136
5.4	Industrial Production, 1953–77	137
5.5	Urban Household Expenditure, 1959–60 and 1973–74	145
6.1	Oil Revenues, 1977–94	181
6.2	Presidents, 1980–2017	193

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-19834-0 — A History of Modern Iran  
Ervand Abrahamian  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

## *Preface*

We view the past, and achieve our understanding of the past, only through the eyes of the present.

E. H. Carr

This book is an introduction written primarily for general readers perplexed by the sound and fury of modern Iran. It tries to explain why Iran is often in the news; why it often conjures up images of “Alice in Wonderland”; why it has experienced two major revolutions in one century – one of them in our own lifetime; and, most important of all, why it is now an Islamic Republic. The book subscribes to E. H. Carr’s premise that we historians inevitably perceive the past through our own times and attempt to explain how and why the past has led to the present. This premise can have an obvious pitfall – as Carr himself would have readily admitted. If, by the time this book is published, the regime and even the whole state has disappeared into the “dustbin of history” because of a major external onslaught, then the whole trajectory of the book will appear to have been misconceived. Despite this danger, I take the calculated risk and work on the premise that if no ten-ton gorilla barges onto the scene, the Islamic Republic will continue into the foreseeable future. Of course, in the long run all states die. The period I cover is Iran’s long twentieth century – starting from the origins of the Constitutional Revolution in the late 1890s and ending with the consolidation of the Islamic Republic in the early 2000s.

Since this book is not a work of primary research intended for the professional historian, I have dispensed with the heavy apparatus of academic publications. I have used endnotes sparingly to cite direct quotations, support controversial statements, or elaborate further on needed points. For readers interested in exploring specific topics, I have compiled a bibliography at the end listing the more important, more recent, and more available – mostly English-language – books. For transliteration,

I have modified the system developed by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, dispensing with diacritical marks, and, where possible, adopting the spelling used in the mainstream media. Consequently, I have Tehran instead of Teheran, Hussein instead of Husayn, Nasser instead of Nasir, Mashed instead of Mashhad, Khomeini instead of Khom'ayni, and Khamenei instead of Khamenehi.

I would like to thank Baruch College, especially the History Department, for giving me the time to write this book. I would also like to thank Marigold Acland for inviting me to undertake the task and for guiding the manuscript through the whole process from inception to publication. Thanks also go to Amy Hackett for editorial work and to Helen Waterhouse for helping out in the publication process. Of course, I am fully responsible for errors and views found in the book.

## *A Political Who's Who of Modern Iran*

AHMAD SHAH (1896–1929) The last Qajar monarch. He ascended the throne in 1909 while still a minor and did not come of age until 1914. Lacking real power and fearful for his life, he left the country soon after the 1921 coup. He died in Paris and was buried in Karbala.

AHMADINEJAD, MAHMUD (1956–) The conservative president elected in 2005. Son of a blacksmith and veteran of the Iraqi war, he won the presidential election campaigning on populist themes. He promised to distribute the oil wealth to the people, revive the revolutionary ideals of Khomeini, and deliver a final blow to the “one thousand families” who have supposedly ruled the country for centuries. He was supported by some of the most conservative *ulama*.

ALAM, ASADALLAH (1919–78) The main confidant of Muhammad Reza Shah. From a long line of notables in Sistan and Baluchestan known as the “Lords of the Marches,” he joined the court in 1946 and served as an advisor to the shah until his death at the beginning of the revolution. Some speculate that his absence explains the shah’s vacillations in 1977–78 and thus the eventual revolution. His posthumously published memoirs, however, support the view that he was very much part of the larger problem.

ALAVI, BOZORG (1904–95) A leading figure in modern Persian literature. Educated in Germany, he returned home in the 1930s, co-edited *Donya*, was imprisoned for belonging to Arani’s circle, and, on his release in 1941, helped found the Tudeh Party. Among his works are his prison memoirs, *The Fifty-Three*. He was influenced by Kafka, Freud, and Hemingway as well as by Marx. He was a close friend of Sadeq Hedayat, another literary luminary.

AL-E AHMAD, JALAL (1923–69) The initiator of the “back to roots” movement. He began his career as a Marxist in the Tudeh Party and

remained to his last days an intellectual skeptic, but increasingly in the 1960s searched for the cultural roots of Iran in Shi'ism. His best-known work is *Gharbzadegi*, which literally means 'Struck by the West' but whose argument is that Iran is being destroyed by a "plague coming from the West." He was one of the few intellectuals openly praised by Khomeini.

ARANI, TAQI (1902–40) The father of Marxism in Iran. Educated in Germany in 1922–30, he returned home to launch the journal *Donya* (The World) and form an intellectual circle whose members later founded the Tudeh Party. Sentenced to ten years' imprisonment for advocating "socialism" and "atheism," he died in prison.

ASHRAF, PRINCESS (1919–2016) The shah's twin sister. A forceful personality, she played an important role behind the scenes and helped many young Western-educated technocrats attain wealth and high office, especially cabinet posts. Some feel that she epitomized the worst features of the regime. Others claim this is a misogynist's view.

BAHAR, MUHAMMAD TAQI (MALEK AL-SHU'ARA) (1885–1952) Poet laureate of classical Persian literature. He began his political life as an active member of the constitutional movement and died as the president of the pro-Tudeh Peace Partisans. In addition to his prolific poetry, he wrote a well-known work entitled *Short History of Political Parties in Iran*.

BANI-SADR, SAYYED ABUL-HASSAN (1933–) Iran's first president. Although son of an ayatollah who had supported the 1953 coup, Bani-Sadr sided with Mossadeq and spent much of his adult life in Paris active in the National Front and the Liberation Movement. He returned with Khomeini in 1979 and briefly served as his president before accusing the clergy of scheming to establish a "dictatorship of the mullahtariat." He had to escape back to Paris.

BAZARGAN, MEHDI (1907–95) Khomeini's first prime minister. A deputy minister under Mossadeq, he was much more religious than most of his National Front colleagues. In 1961, he founded the Liberation Movement, committed to the ideals of Iranian nationalism, Western liberalism, and Shi'i Islam. Secularists deemed him too religious; the religious deemed him too secularist. He resigned his premiership to protest the students taking over the US embassy in 1979.

- BEHBEHANI, SAYYED ABDALLAH (1844–1910) One of the two ayatollahs prominent in the Constitutional Revolution. In the subsequent fights between secular Democrats and the religious Moderates, he was assassinated. His son, Ayatollah Muhammad Behbehani, actively supported the 1953 coup. The money spent in the bazaar for the coup was known as “Behbehani dollars.”
- BOROUJERDI, AYATOLLAH AQA HAJJ AQA HUSSEIN TABATABAI (1875–1961) The last paramount Shi’i leader. After a long seminary career in Najaf and Boroujerd, in 1944 he moved to Qom where he soon gained the reputation of being the supreme *marja-e taqled*. Although he frowned on clerics participating in politics, he turned a blind eye to those who helped the 1953 coup. His death prompted younger grand ayatollahs to compete for his paramount position. It also prompted the shah to launch the White Revolution.
- CURZON, LORD GEORGE (1859–1925) The British foreign minister so enamored of Iran that he tried to incorporate it into his empire. As a graduate student he traveled to Iran and published his classic *Persia and the Persian Question*. His Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919 created a nationalist backlash in Iran.
- DEHKHODA, ALI AKBAR (1879–1956) A leading intellectual in modern Iran. A biting satirist during the Constitutional Revolution, he aroused much opposition, especially from the clergy and the landed class. He withdrew from politics and devoted his life to compiling his famous *Loqatnameh* (Lexicon). In the chaotic days of August 1953, when the shah fled the country, some radical nationalists offered him the presidency of their prospective republic.
- EBADI, SHIREN (1947–) Iran’s sole Nobel Prize winner. A young judge in the last years of the old regime, she, together with all women, was purged from the judiciary. She opened her own law firm specializing in human rights, especially cases involving women or children. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003.
- FARMANFARMA, FIRUZ (NOWSRAT AL-DOWLEH) (1889–1937) Prominent notable. A scion of the famous Farmanfarma family and descendant of Fath Ali Shah, he headed numerous ministries after World War I and was one of the triumvirate that helped Reza Shah establish a strong centralized state. The latter eventually imprisoned and then murdered him. In prison, he translated Oscar Wilde’s *De Profundis*.

- FATEMI, SAYYED HUSSEIN (1919–54) Mossadeq's right-hand man executed by the shah. A French-educated journalist, he was a vocal and early supporter of the campaign to nationalize the oil industry. He served Mossadeq in a number of capacities, including foreign minister. After the coup, he was arrested and executed for "insulting the royal family" and plotting to establish a republic. He is regarded as a hero of the nationalist movement. He is one of the few National Front leaders to have a street named after him by the Islamic Republic.
- HOVEIDA, ABBAS (1919–79) The shah's longest-lasting premier. A career public servant, he was raised in a Bahai family – although he himself was not a practicing Bahai – and was appointed premier in 1965, when his patron, the previous premier, was assassinated by religious fanatics. He remained in that post until 1977, when the shah, in an attempt to mollify the opposition, first dismissed him and then had him arrested. He was one of the first to be executed by the revolutionary regime.
- ISKANDARI, MIRZA SULAYMAN (1862–1944) Qajar prince prominent in the socialist movement for half a century. Opponent of royal despotism, he participated in the Constitutional Revolution – his elder brother fell victim to the civil war; helped lead the Democrat Party, 1909–21; was imprisoned by the British in World War I; headed the Socialist Party in 1921–26; and returned to politics in 1941 to chair the Tudeh Party.
- KASHANI, AYATOLLAH SAYYED ABUL-QASSEM (1885–1961) The main cleric who first supported and then opposed Mossadeq. A refugee from Iraq where his father had been killed fighting Britain after World War I, he was arrested by the British in World War II. He threw his weight behind Mossadeq when the campaign for the nationalization of the oil industry began. He broke with Mossadeq in 1953, avowedly because the latter did not implement the *shari'a*. His supporters vehemently deny that he actively supported the 1953 coup.
- KASRAVI, SAYYED AHMAD (1890–1946) Leading historian of modern Iran, especially of the Constitutional Revolution. A staunch advocate of national solidarity, he persistently denounced all forms of communalism and sectarianism, including Shi'ism. His most controversial work is *Shi'igari* (Shi'i-mongering). Denounced as an "unbeliever," he was assassinated. Khomeini, however, continued to keep on his shelves Kasravi's *History of the Iranian Constitution*.

- KHAMENEI, AYATOLLAH SAYYED ALI (1939–)** Khomeini's successor as Supreme Leader. From a minor clerical family in Azerbaijan, he studied theology first in Mashed and then in Qom with Khomeini. He did not attain prominence until after the revolution, when he held a series of high positions – including, briefly, the presidency. Immediately after Khomeini's death, the regime elevated him to the rank of ayatollah and hailed him as the new Supreme Leader. He inherited Khomeini's powers but not his charisma.
- KHATEMI, HOJJAT AL-ISLAM SAYYED MUHAMMAD (1944–)** Liberal president. Son of an ayatollah who was a close friend of Khomeini, Khatemi studied theology in Qom and philosophy at Isfahan University, in the process learning some English and German. At the beginning of the revolution, he was administering the Shi'i mosque in Hamburg. After the revolution, he headed the government publishing house, sat in the Majles, and as culture minister aroused conservative anger by relaxing the censorship on books and films. Resigning from the ministry, he headed the national library and taught political philosophy at Tehran University. Running on a reform platform, he won the presidency twice – in 1997 and 2001 – both with landslide victories.
- KHOMEINI, AYATOLLAH SAYYED RUHOLLAH (1902–89)** Charismatic leader of the Islamic Revolution. Born into a clerical family, he spent his early life in seminaries in Qom and Najaf. He entered politics in 1963, when he denounced the shah for granting "capitulations" to American military advisors. Deported, he spent the next sixteen years in Najaf developing a new interpretation of Shi'i Islam. He drastically expanded the traditional Shi'i concept of *velayat-e faqeh* – from clerical jurisdiction over orphans, widows, and the mentally feeble to clerical supervision over all citizens. He also combined clerical conservatism with radical populism. Returning triumphant in 1979, he was hailed by the new constitution as Commander of the Revolution, Founder of the Islamic Republic, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, and, most potent of all, Imam of the Muslim World – a title Shi'is in the past had reserved for the Twelve Sacred Infallible Imams.
- MODARRES, SAYYED HASSAN (1870–1937)** The main ayatollah opposed to Reza Shah. A member of the Majles since 1914, he was known chiefly as a parliamentary politician. He participated in the

national government that opposed the Allies in 1914–18, was a vocal opponent of the 1919 Anglo-Persian Agreement, and tried to stem the rise of Reza Shah. Banished to the provinces, he was eventually murdered there. Modern Islamists view him as one of their forerunners.

**MOSSADEQ, MUHAMMAD (MOSSADEQ AL-SALTANEH)** (1881–1967) The icon of Iranian nationalism. From a long line of notables, he studied in Europe and had a successful career in government service until forced into retirement by Reza Shah. Returning to politics in 1941, he gained fame first as an “incorruptible” deputy, and then as leader of the National Front campaigning for the nationalization of the British-owned oil company. Elected prime minister in 1951, he promptly nationalized the oil industry and thus sparked off a major international crisis with Britain. He was overthrown by the military coup organized by the CIA in August 1953. Islamists distrusted him because of his deep commitment to secular nationalism.

**MUHAMMAD REZA SHAH PAHLAVI** (1919–80) Monarch overthrown by the Islamic Revolution. He was raised by his father to be first and foremost commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Ascending the throne in 1941, he successfully warded off generals and notables who tried to gain control of the armed forces. Consolidating power after the 1953 CIA coup, he ruled much like his father, using oil revenues to expand drastically the state as well as the armed forces. He died soon after the revolution – from cancer, which he had kept secret even from his own family so as not to endanger his regime. He has been described as a “majestic failure.”

**NAVAB-SAFAVI, SAYYED MOJTABA MIR-LOWHI** (1922–56) Founder of Fedayan-e Islam – one of the first truly fundamentalist organizations in Iran. The group carried out a number of high-profile assassinations between 1944 and 1952. It also made an attempt on Mossadeq’s main advisor, and plotted to kill Mossadeq himself. It denied, however, having taken part in the 1953 coup. Safavi was executed in 1956 after an assassination attempt on the then prime minister. The far rightists among Khomeini’s followers deem Safavi as one of their forerunners.

**NURI, SHEIKH FAZLOLLAH** (1843–1909) Leading cleric opposed to the Constitutional Revolution. A prominent theologian in Tehran, he initially supported attempts to limit royal power, but, growing fearful of the secularists, ended up siding with the royalists. He issued *fatwas* accusing reformers of being secret Babis, atheists, and freethinkers. Some were

killed and executed in the civil war. After the war, he was hanged for issuing such lethal *fatwas*. The modern Islamist movement regards him as one of their very first “martyrs.”

**QAVAM, AHMAD (QAVAM AL-SALTANEH) (1877–1955)** Most notable of the old notables. A court-supporter of the 1906 revolution – the royal proclamation granting the country a constitution is reputed to have been written in his calligraphic writing – he gained the aura of a highly successful wheeler and dealer both in the Majles and in the government. He headed four cabinets in the years before Reza Shah and six after him. He had little regard for the young shah. Some credit him – rather than Truman – with keeping Iran intact by persuading Stalin to withdraw the Red Army from Azerbaijan. He died with his reputation much tarnished, since in 1952 he had offered to replace Mossadeq as prime minister.

**RAFSANJANI, HOJJAT AL-ISLAM ALI-AKBAR HASHEMI (1934–2017)** Reputed to be the *éminence grise* of the Islamic Republic. Born into a prosperous agricultural family, he studied with Khomeini in Qom, and was in and out of prison during the 1960s. He wrote a book in praise of a nineteenth-century minister who had tried to industrialize the country. After the revolution, he occupied numerous high positions including the presidency and the chairmanship of the Expediency Council. He was considered to be the most important person after the Supreme Leader.

**REZA SHAH PAHLAVI (1878–1944)** Founder of Iran’s centralized state. Born into a military family, he rose through the ranks to the Cossack Brigade – the country’s main fighting force at the time. He led a military coup in 1921, and five years later crowned himself shah, replacing the Qajar dynasty with his own Pahlavi family. He ruled with an iron fist until 1941 when the British and Soviet armies invaded and forced him to abdicate. He died three years later in South Africa. He left to his son not only the crown but also a huge private fortune – considered at the time to be one of the largest in the Middle East.

**ROUHANI, HASSAN (1948–)** Moderate cleric elected president first in 2013 and again in 2017. Born into a non-clerical family in a village some one hundred miles east of Tehran, he was educated mostly in Qom and briefly in Glasgow. One of the youngest clerics to rally behind Khomeini, he rose to the uppermost levels of the new regime before being elected president.

- SARDAR AS'AD BAKHTIYARI, JAFAR QULI KHAN (1882–1934) Crucial figure in the civil war. He and fellow Bakhtiari chiefs led tribal contingents into Tehran, providing the constitutionalists with a decisive victory. They turned some of the ministries into family fiefdoms until ousted by Reza Shah. Sardar As'ad was murdered in prison.
- SAYYED ZIYA (AL-DIN TABATABAI) (1889–1969) Pro-British politician closely associated with the 1921 coup. An openly pro-British journalist, he was appointed prime minister by Reza Khan in 1921, only to be ousted a few months later. Returning to Iran in World War II after twenty years in exile, he made numerous attempts to become prime minister again – often with British support but invariably with Soviet and American opposition. He had regular private audiences with the shah until his death.
- SEPAHDAR, MUHAMMAD VALI KHAN (SEPAHSALAR AL-AZ'AM) (1847–1926) Crucial figure in the civil war. A major landlord in Mazanderan and the nominal commander of the royal army, he defected to the constitutionalists and thus helped seal the fate of the monarchists. He headed eight different cabinets between 1910 and 1919. In anticipation of being incarcerated by Reza Shah, he committed suicide.
- SHARIATI, ALI (1933–77) Considered the “real ideologue” of the Islamic Revolution. Studying in France in the 1960s, he was strongly influenced by theorists of Third World revolutions – especially by Frantz Fanon. His prolific lectures – totaling some thirty-five volumes – aimed to transform Shi'ism from a conservative apolitical religion into a highly revolutionary political ideology competing with Leninism and Maoism. His writings influenced many of the activists who took part in the revolution. He died in exile on the eve of the revolution.
- TABATABAI, SAYYED MUHAMMAD SADEQ (1841–1918) One of the two ayatollahs prominent in the Constitutional Revolution. A secret freemason, he played a leading role throughout the revolution and had to flee the country after the 1909 coup. His son and namesake was to become a major powerbroker in the Majles in the 1940s.
- TALEQANI, AYATOLLAH SAYYED MAHMUD (1919–79) The most popular cleric in Tehran during the revolution. A consistent supporter of Mossadeq and a founding member of the Liberation Movement, Taleqani enjoyed good rapport with all segments of the opposition – with the National Front, the Mojahedin, and even Marxist groups. He

organized the mass rallies of 1978. If he had not died soon after the revolution, he might have provided a liberal counterweight to Khomeini.

**TAQIZADEH, SAYYED HASSAN (1874–1970)** A leading intellectual–politician of the Constitutional Revolution. As a firebrand deputy in the First Majles, he spoke on behalf of the Democrat Party and aroused the wrath of the conservative *ulama*, who issued *fatwas* against him. He lived in exile from 1909 until 1924, returning home to take up a ministerial position under Reza Shah. He also served as a senator under Muhammad Reza Shah. Some see him as typifying the generation of young radicals coopted into the Pahlavi regime.

**VOSSUQ, MIRZA HASSAN KHAN (VOSSUQ AL-DOWLEH) (1865–1951)** Signatory to the notorious Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919. A prominent notable, he served in numerous administrations between 1909 and 1926. He was Qavam's older brother.

**YEPREM KHAN (DAVITIAN) (1868–1912)** Leader of the Caucasian fighters in the civil war. Member of the Armenian nationalist Dashnak Party in Russia, he had been sent to Siberia from where he had escaped to Iran. With the outbreak of the civil war, he led volunteers from the Caucasus fighting on behalf of the constitutionalists under the slogan “The Love of Freedom has No Fatherland.” Immediately after the civil war, he was appointed police chief of Tehran and was killed fighting insurgents.

**ZAHEDI, GENERAL FAZLOLLAH (1897–1963)** Nominal head of the 1953 CIA coup. A career officer from the Cossack Brigade, he was in and out of favor with both Reza Shah and Muhammad Reza Shah. He was imprisoned by the British in 1942 for having contacts with the Third Reich. Appointed prime minister in 1953, he was eased out by the shah in 1955. He moved into exile and died in his luxury mansion in Switzerland.

## Chronology

1901	D'Arcy Concession
1905 December	Bastinadoing of merchants
1906 July	Protest in British legation
1906 August	Royal promise of constitution
1906 October	First Majles opens
1907 August	Anglo-Russian Convention
1908	First oil well
1908 June	<i>Coup d'état</i>
1909	Anglo-Persian Oil Company formed
1909 July	Revolutionaries capture Tehran
1909 November	Second Majles opens
1911	Russian ultimatum
1912	British Navy converts from coal to oil
1919 August	Anglo-Persian Agreement
1921 February	<i>Coup d'état</i>
1925	Constituent Assembly terminates the Qajar dynasty
1926	Coronation of Reza Shah
1927	Abolition of Capitulations
1928	New dress code
1933	Cancellation of D'Arcy Concession
1934	Official name change of Persia to Iran
1941 August	Anglo-Soviet invasion
1951	Oil nationalization
1953	CIA coup
1963	White Revolution
1974	Quadrupling of oil prices
1975	Creation of Resurgence Party
1979 February	Islamic Revolution
1979 November	Students take the US embassy

*Chronology*

xxv

December	Referendum for the Islamic constitution
1980 January	Bani-Sadr elected president
1980 September	Iraq invades Iran
1981 June	Mojahedin uprising; Bani-Sadr dismissed; Khomeini elected president
1983	Iran invades Iraq
1988	Iran–Iraq War ends
1989	Khomeini dies; Khomeini elected Supreme Leader; Rafsanjani elected president
1997	Khatemi elected president
2005	Ahmadinejad elected president
2013	Rouhani elected president
2017	Rouhani re-elected president

## Glossary

<i>akhund</i>	derogatory term for cleric ( <i>rouhani</i> )
<i>arbab</i>	landlord
<i>ashraf</i>	aristocrat
<i>a'yan</i>	notable
<i>ayatollah</i>	high-ranking cleric (lit. “sign of god”)
<i>basej</i>	support volunteer fighters (lit. “mobilized”)
<i>chadour</i>	long covering for women (lit. “tent”)
<i>dowlat</i>	government, state
<i>faqeh</i>	expert on <i>feqh</i> (religious law)
<i>fatwa</i>	religious pronouncement
<i>fedayi</i>	fighter; self-sacrificer
<i>hakim</i>	lieutenant-governor
<i>bojjat al-islam</i>	middle-ranking cleric (lit. “proof of Islam”)
<i>husseinieh</i>	religious center
<i>kadkhuda</i>	headman
<i>keshvar</i>	country, kingdom, state
<i>komiteh</i>	committee
<i>mahalleh</i>	district, town ward
<i>majles</i>	meeting, parliament
<i>maraj-e taqled</i>	most senior authorities of the law (singular <i>marja-e taqled</i> )
<i>mehan</i>	nation, country, homeland, fatherland/motherland
<i>mellat</i>	nation, people
<i>melli</i>	national
<i>mojabed</i>	fighter; crusader
<i>mojtahed</i>	high-ranking cleric
<i>mostazafen</i>	the meek, oppressed, exploited, wretched of the earth
<i>mostowfi</i>	accountant
<i>mullah</i>	derogatory term for cleric ( <i>rouhani</i> )
<i>pasdar</i>	guards

*Glossary*

xxvii

<i>qanat</i>	underground canal
<i>qazi</i>	judge
<i>rouhani</i>	cleric
<i>rousari</i>	headscarf
<i>rowshanfekr</i>	intelligentsia, intellectual
<i>sayyed</i>	male descendant of the Prophet
<i>shahed</i>	martyr
<i>shari'a</i>	religious law
<i>takiyeh</i>	religious theater
<i>taziyyeh</i>	passion play
<i>tuyul</i>	fief
<i>ulama</i>	clergy
<i>'urf</i>	state or customary law
<i>vali</i>	governor
<i>vaqf</i>	religious endowment (plural <i>awqaf</i> )
<i>vatan</i>	homeland, place of birth
<i>velayat-e faqeh</i>	guardianship of the jurist
<i>vezir</i>	minister

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-19834-0 — A History of Modern Iran  
Ervand Abrahamian  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)



Map 1 Iran and the Middle East



Map 2 Iranian provinces

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-19834-0 — A History of Modern Iran  
Ervand Abrahamian  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---