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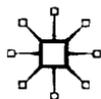
Eternal Iran: Continuity and Chaos

By Patrick Clawson and Michael Rubin

ETERNAL IRAN
CONTINUITY AND CHAOS

*Patrick Clawson
and
Michael Rubin*

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SERIES EDITOR'S FOREWORD

More than a quarter-century ago, Iran's revolution took its place alongside those of America, France, Russia, and China as one of those rare but massive events that changed the course of history.

Iran's revolution, like its predecessors, ushered in a chain of developments that shook the world. It originated a whole, original ideology capable of mobilizing millions of people and a new form of government. Although the resulting Islamism did not take power elsewhere in the Middle East, it staged armed uprisings, international wars, and unprecedented terrorist attacks.

Yet meanwhile the new order in Iran carried on. It tried to build an alternative political, economic, and social system, though often having to compromise with the necessities required to remain in power. In some ways, its experiences paralleled those of other dictatorial regimes and absolute ideologies though, in each aspect, with a flavor of its own.

By the 1990s, widespread disillusion set in among Iranians to the point that a majority of the population voted against the regime's candidates in elections. Yet the rulers outmaneuvered their opponents. And by the twenty-first century, Iran's Islamist regime remained in control, despite war, emigration, economic problems, and international pressure.

Indeed, it is on the verge of becoming a nuclear power. Almost everything about Iran is controversial; the most basic facts about it can be disputed. And these myriad events and crises also make earlier work on that country outdated.

Telling the story of modern Iran, then, is both a task of the greatest importance and of the most exquisite difficulties. Patrick Clawson and Michael Rubin, two long-term and dedicated students of Iran, are well qualified to navigate these treacherous waters. In this book they have told the complex story of Iran's modern history, assessed its institutions, and chronicled its strengths and weaknesses as well as the ideas of its defenders and critics.

They have thus provided the most reliable guide to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Their book provides a welcome addition to our series on the Middle East.

Barry Rubin
Director, Global Research
in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center,
and editor of the Palgrave Middle East in Focus Series

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In our day jobs at our respective think-tanks, we are each wrapped up with current policy concerns and U.S.-Iran relations. Having a deadline to produce this manuscript forced us to carve out more time for exploring Iran's history, a topic for which we both have great affection.

The Iranian fashion is to apologize that we humble servants are not fit to speak when there are so many more knowledgeable than we. Indeed, the list of those who have helped us learn more is so long that we can only mention but a few. Yale University historian Abbas Amanat has been invaluable, as has the noted historian Willem Floor with whom Mr. Clawson had the privilege of working on several coauthored articles. We have learned much from many of our colleagues at the American Enterprise Institute and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and our gratitude is due to those two institutions and especially our supervisors, Danielle Pletka and Robert Satloff. We had the invaluable help of our assistants, Suzanne Gershowitz, Molly McKew, Naysan Rafati, and Haleh Zareei. Mr. Clawson owes a debt to his many Persian-language instructors, especially Simin Mohajer, and Mr. Rubin wishes to acknowledge the patient instruction of Fereshteh Amanat-Kowssar. Our editors, David Pervin and Barry Rubin, have been patient and understanding. Most important, in our respective visits to Iran, we owe much to the many Iranians who have helped us better understand their fascinating and complex land. Of course, the errors in what we have written are our own.