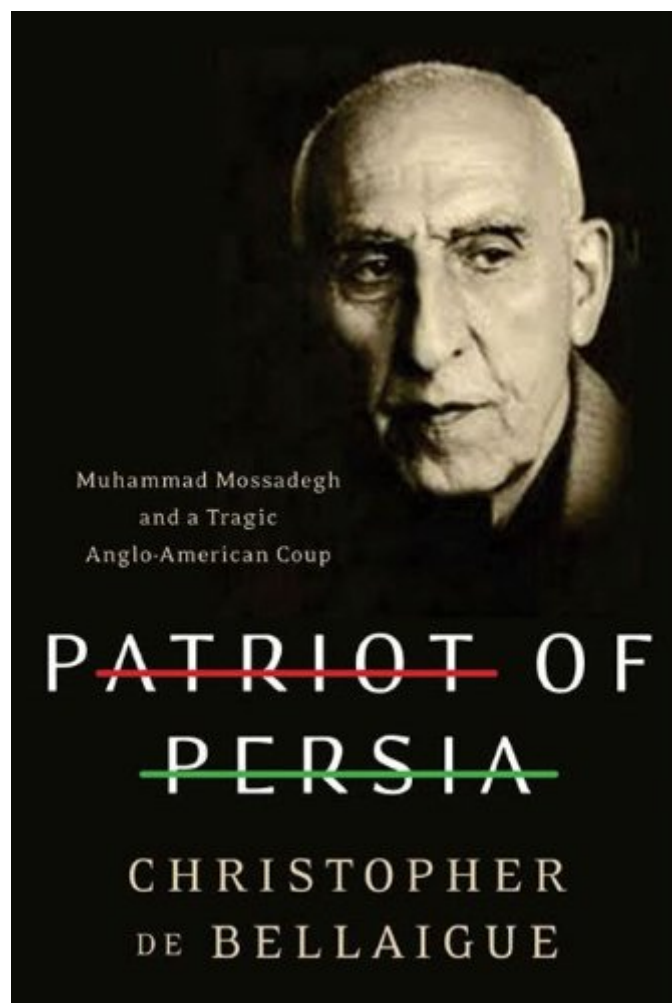


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Patriot Of Persia: Muhammad Mossadegh And A Tragic Anglo-American Coup



Synopsis

Christopher de Bellaigue, a former contributor to The Economist, brings to light the fascinating story of one of the great anti-colonial heroes of the twentieth century: Muhammad Mossadegh, the great Iranian leader whose untimely demise resulted in the Islamic Revolution of 1979, and a man who has been demonized, ridiculed, and misunderstood in the West while remaining an icon and an inspiration across the Middle East. Patriot of Persia, a new biography exploring his life and impact, opens a crucial new window into Mossadeghâ "whose role in the evolution of Iranâ™s political climate cannot be overemphasizedâ"providing a resource that will prove equally invaluable to academics, newshounds, and activists as they struggle to understand Mideast politics, Iran, Ahmadinejad, and the future of the regionâ"and the world.

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Customer Reviews

Christopher de Bellaigue narrates with much objectivity the life of Muhammad Mossadegh, a Western-educated Iranian liberal reformer whose ultimate goal was to make Iran both economically and politically independent from the West. The narration greatly benefits from Mr. de Bellaigue's intimate knowledge of both British and Iranian cultures. Iran (also known as Persia) was a pawn in

the Great Game, i.e., the commercial and military rivalry/conflict that existed between the British Empire and the Russian Empire (subsequently the Soviet Union) for supremacy in Central Asia. During his stint as Prime Minister of Iran from 1951 to 1953, Mr. Mossadegh's highest priority was to nationalize the Iranian assets of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) (today known as British Petroleum or BP) so that his country would receive a fair share of the proceeds from the extraction and sale of oil. The Iranian oil industry had been under British control since 1913. Mr. Mossadegh wanted friendship with the West based on mutual respect and independence. Great Britain, a fast declining empire whose finances were shaky in the aftermath of WWII, considered these assets essential for its solvency. Mr. de Bellaigue clearly explains to his readers how Great Britain convinced the U.S. to take its side in its quarrel with Iran to overthrow Mr. Mossadegh and to reestablish his more pliable rival, Shah Muhammad-Reza Pahlavi. The involvement of the U.S. in this coup d'État cannot be understood without the context of the Cold War that the U.S. and the Soviet Union waged for decades after the end of WWII. Mr. de Bellaigue rightly observes that this coup inaugurated a U.S. policy in support of shoddy Middle Eastern despots in the ensuing decades.

de Bellaigue has written an exceptional book. Although there's a good bit about the coup that took down Mossadegh, the book's focus is greater than that. It serves as a lesson on Iranian politics from the 30's to the 50's and it gives a good glimpse of life and politics at the time. The British do not, of course, come out of it looking good, neither do the Americans, who even going against the advice of some of its own more enlightened foreign service men, let the British fool them into a coup that did not benefit American interests. That it later led to the '79 Revolution and the Iran of today is even more tragic. It also helps the reader who does not know the real history of the area to understand the deep mistrust and oftentimes hatred of the US and the UK that can be found in some Iranian circles. Sometimes it is hard to think them wrong. It is tragic to see that had the US taken a different path, the history of the Middle East could have been different. BUT, and it's a big but, de Bellaigue does not tell an one-sided story. He criticizes Mossadegh on many occasions and points out on others how his behavior helped, in the end, the positions taken by the US and the British. Had he been more politically able on the international scene, he could have helped his cause a lot. So it is a balanced book, which gives praise and criticism on the right places. It does not make an excuse for anything that came after or during that time. That the author has real experience living in Tehran is a welcome bonus, since some books about this period have been written by people with fairly limited real experience of Iran.

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