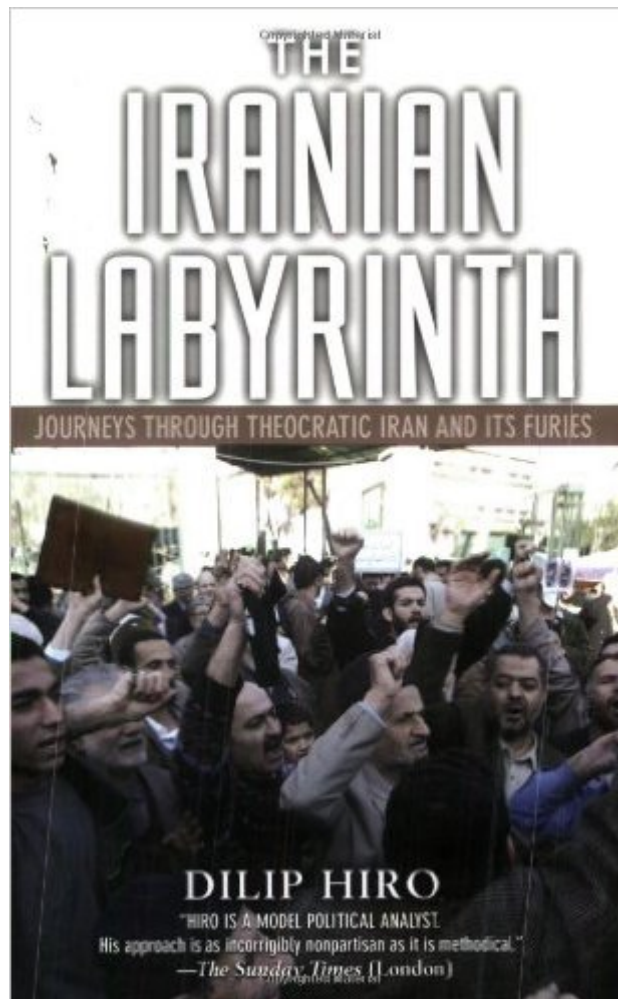


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The Iranian Labyrinth: Journeys Through Theocratic Iran And Its Furies



Synopsis

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.

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Customer Reviews

It can now be taken as an axiom that the Western press cannot be trusted to report honestly the events of the Middle East as they are occurring and how they have occurred in the past. Journalism has been morphed into a game of politics and self-aggrandizement on the part of journalists. The study of history has been exposed as a game of promoting a particular worldview, and historians have exhibited an extreme bias that is sometimes admitted but frequently is not. For these reasons the study of historical events has taken on particular importance at the present time. Those who sincerely desire an accounting of history in most cases must undertake the study themselves. In addition, the prevailing political climate dictates that an accurate picture of history be available, in order to not be subjected to the mental tyranny of propaganda. Every citizen must now become a

historian, and must practice extreme skepticism towards any assertions that are put into print that claim to be accurate appraisals of past events. Documents and sources must be checked meticulously, and no apologies must be given if research indicates that historical events do not conform to prevailing ideologies. This book, written by one of those who have been "on the ground" in the Middle East, attempts to give an overview of the history of Iran in the twentieth century. The accounting that he gives sounds plausible, and as a whole the book seems to be free of any extreme bias or hidden political agendas. However, it should be remembered that the author has viewed the Middle East through finite time windows, and therefore his appraisal of the events he has observed may not reflect the true situation.

Politics in any nation can appear confused, especially to outsiders. In a nation where religion is an influence, the complications grow intense. When religion dominates and theocracy threatens in a secular world, the twists and turns can only be described as Byzantine. Dilip Hiro makes a valiant attempt to impart what he's learned of Iranian politics and society in this book. It wasn't an easy task and Hiro has spent much time in Iran to understand it. He explains his revelations in a readable account. The reader is warned, however, that following his account isn't done easily. He's a journalist, but this isn't something to be consumed like the Sunday supplement in your local newspaper. Hiro reminds us of Iran's special position in the world. It's not just another "Middle East" nation. Its history stretches back many millennia, even before it was the heart of the Persian Empire. That Empire's strength came largely from the area being a crossroads for trade and cultural exchange. Although the Persian Empire faded, the region was a factor in later imperial ventures, with the Ottomans in the 17th Century. Parcelled out by the European Allies during World War I, "Iran" was literally the creation of the British Foreign Office. The discovery of oil ensured Iran was rarely free of foreign influence thereafter. Whenever Iran attempted to shake off the oil-thirsty West, first the British, then the Americans, took steps to quell nationalism and restore "stability" and the free flow of petroleum. The most glaring of these intrusions was the overthrow of the Mossadegh government by the CIA, replacing a democratically elected government with a royal figure, the Shah. The central theme of the book is Iran's Revolution of 1979.

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