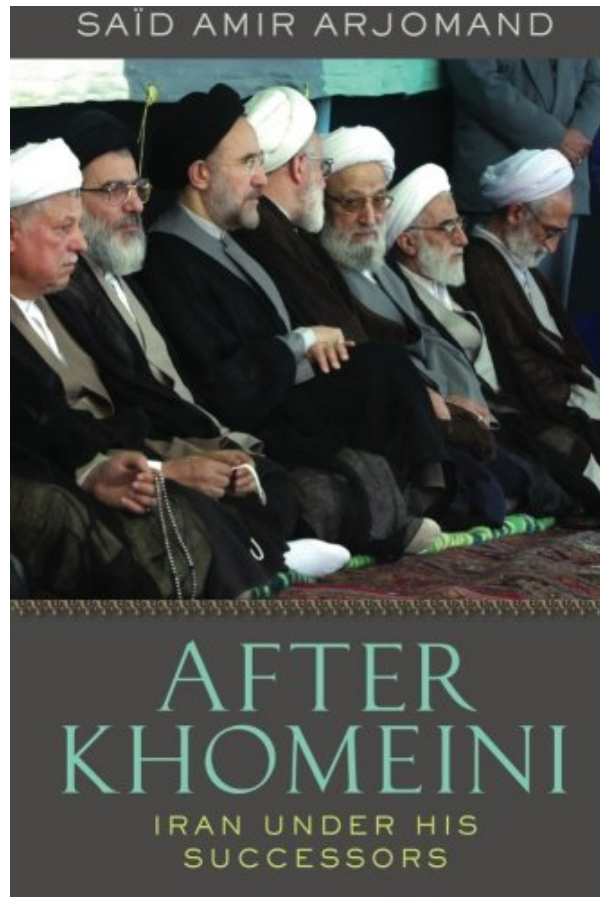


AFTER KHOMEINI: IRAN UNDER HIS SUCCESSORS BY SAID AMIR ARJOMAND



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For many Americans, Iran is our most dangerous enemy--part of George W. Bush's "axis of evil" even before the appearance of Ahmadinejad. But what is the reality? How did Ahmadinejad rise to power, and how much power does he really have? What are the chances of normalizing relations with Iran?

In *After Khomeini*, Saïd Amir Arjomand paints a subtle and perceptive portrait of contemporary Iran. This work, a sequel to Arjomand's acclaimed *The Turban for the Crown*, examines Iran under the successors of Ayatollah Khomeini up to the present day. He begins, as the Islamic Republic did, with Khomeini, offering a brilliant capsule biography of the man who masterminded the revolution that overthrew the Shah. Arjomand draws clear distinctions between the moderates of the initial phase of the revolution, radicals, pragmatists, and hardliners, the latter best exemplified by Mahmud Ahmadinejad. Taking a chronological and thematic approach, he traces the emergence and consolidation of the present system of collective rule by clerical councils and the peaceful transition to dual leadership by the ayatollah as the supreme guide and the subordinate president of the Islamic Republic of Iran. He explains the internal political quarrels among Khomeini's heirs as a struggle over his revolutionary legacy. And he outlines how the ruling clerical elite and the nation's security forces are interdependent politically and economically, speculating on the potential future role of the Revolutionary Guards. Bringing the work up to current political events, Arjomand analyzes Iran's foreign policy as well, including the impact of the fall of Communism on Iran and Ahmadinejad's nuclear policy.

Few countries loom larger in American foreign relations than Iran. In this rich and insightful account, an expert on Iranian society and politics untangles the complexities of a nation still riding the turbulent wake of one of history's great revolutions.

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7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Analysis of the Islamic Revolution

By James R. Maclean

This is a book about the decay of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) into a patrimonial regime over the course of thirty years. For a look at the actual revolution, I recommend Milani's *The Making Of Iran's Islamic Revolution*.

Arjomand wisely balances his examination of the economics and power politics with a sincere look at the Iranian revolutionary ideology. This is not monolithic, and, as Arjomand demonstrates, it is not unproblematic either (not even for adherents). The basic doctrine of **velayat-e-faqi** is translated as "mandate of the jurist," but this simple expression leaves serious difficulties in interpretation. The partisans of the revolution were undecided as to if there was to be one single jurist (Khomeini) or the entire ecclesiastical community (in which case, Khomeini would have been balanced by, say, Ali Montazeri); if the jurists were to govern by guidance, by example, or by direct supervision. In the event, the immense constitutional powers awarded to the supreme leader would eventually ensure a system of adoptive Caesars.

The economic dimension of the Islamic revolution is ambiguous. The regime's older eminences favored a very strict market economy, yet confiscated the sham "enterprises" of the Shah's friends. Rather than nationalize these to serve the developmental state, Khomeini created several **bonyad** (foundations), each of which held many enterprises in trust. These were later assimilated into the business empires of the military-security complex, dominated by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC, or **Pasdaran**) and the Mobilization Corp (**Basij**). The normal social functions of government developed under the Shah nearly collapsed during the revolution before rebounding to somewhat larger dimensions under Pres. Hashemi-Rafsanjani (1989-1997), but this was mainly to rebuild a country devastated by revolution and war with Iraq. Eventually, of course, the military-security complex has come to dominate economic policy in Iran; it has been a major consolation to being permanently underneath the clergy, who retains actual power.

The book's narrative style is somewhat difficult to follow; Arjomand is not clear as to what the reformists and radicals want, and why so many radicals became reformists. Also, Arjomand constantly refers to topics that he expects the reader to already be familiar with, such as "integrative revolution" (a theory of revolution propounded by Vilfredo Pareto, and of course totally unfamiliar to most Iranians). He also drops a lot of startling revelations about the involvement of the IRGC in overseas terrorism, which I think remain unproven.

Overall, a valuable contribution to the scanty literature on the revolution. I remain a bit skeptical of some claims, such as the ties to terrorist acts or the egregious corruption of the **Pasdaran** economic empire; these are not, in my view, adequately documented.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

The cross roads of theology and politics... still a mystery

By C P Slayton

You can't study Iran without looking deeply at the philosophical discussions between its Shi'a scholars on the Mahdi (the revealing of the 12th hidden Imam), the debate on divine authority and political theology. If any

of those topics seem a little to dense, well, they are... but Arjomand does a great job of hashing it all out.

Iran's current government system was an evolutionary process. Khomeini himself debated through the years how the Grand Ayatollah would first, work under a Shah and later, how every secular authority was evil. By 1979 Khomeini's lectures on Islamic governance (Hukumat Islami) were widely circulated from his exile in Najaf. Arjomand explores the debates counter to Khomeini's ideas and introduces Khomeini's contemporary opposition clerics and the modern dissidents.

What I found intriguing was the political theology debates. In more common language, Iran's clerics wrestled over dualism: dual morality, dual authority and even 'Kingdom' theology, in Shi'a terms, how were preparations for the Mahdi supposed to be executed? With the intense political debates intertwined in politics, Iran's brand of Shi'ism could hardly have survived unscathed. The theology of Iran is not found in other Shi'a dominated areas like Southern Iraq or Bahrain. Khomeini's idealist attitudes towards Islamic government had to evolve as Iran's 'revolution' trudged on.

And Khomeini had to compromise. Politics was not what he wrote it to be. Arjomand looks at the debates within the government, the nuances between ideas that shaped the 1989 constitutional revision. Khamenei, Khomeini's successor, did not meet the requirements for the position, according to Khomeini's earlier teachings. With political compromise came religious compromise and even Shi'a division. In 1992, Khoi died, the leading Shi'a cleric in Iraq. It was the moment of truth. Could Iran's leader claims as the global marja'iyat (source of imitation) unite the Shi'a world? No.

Khomeini's ideals have continued to spiral out of control, revealing their impossible claims. Iran's government is far from accepted global Shi'a doctrine and Arjomand explains how the leadership doesn't even try to reconcile the blatant Shar'ia contradictions with Iranian law. Arjomand has a different take than most on the dynamics between Ahmadinejad and Khamenei, placing the blame for foreign policy blunders in ambiguous places. What will happen to a government whose constitutional is impossibly applicable, whose leadership is at odds and whose people fully recognize the ethical disparities?

This book is not only a good study of Iran but of debates within Shi'a politics, understanding the connections between Middle East regimes, their self-interested motives and outlooks.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

A concise primer

By John Roemer

A scholar's account of where the Islamic Republic is heading. It is well-researched and argued but not as easy to read. Still for Iran followers it is a worthy resource.

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