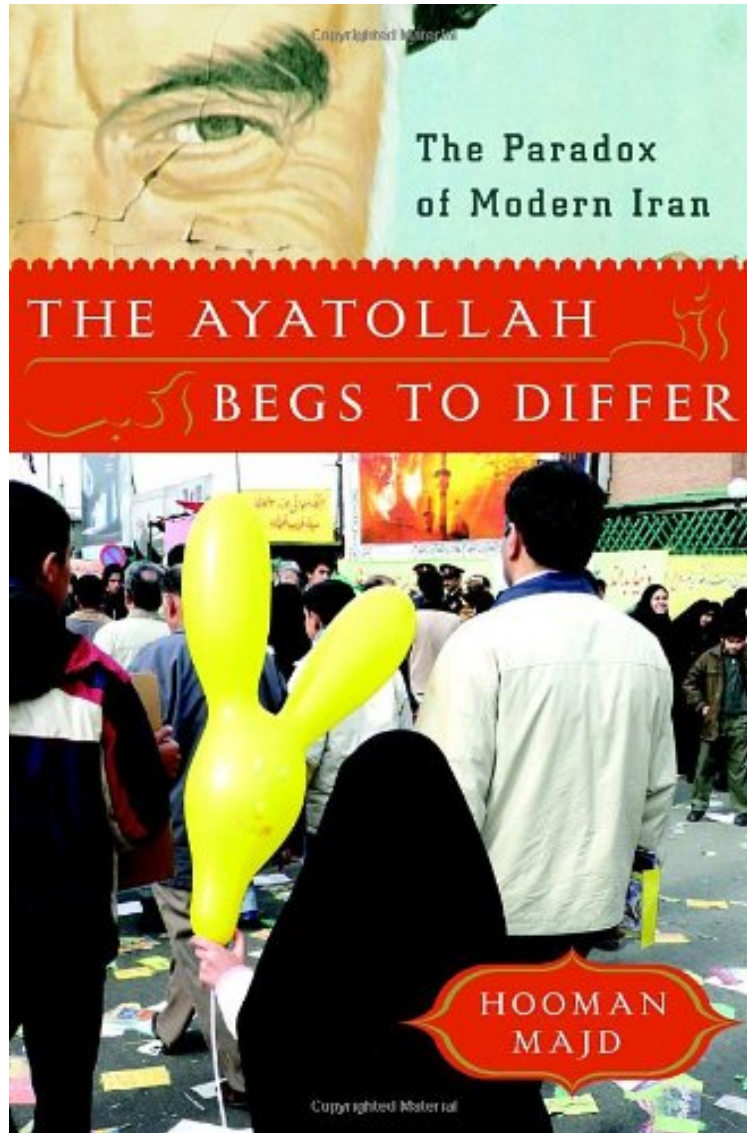


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The Ayatollah Begs to Differ: The Paradox of Modern Iran

Hooman Majd

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Hooman Majd : The Ayatollah Begs to Differ: The Paradox of Modern Iran before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Ayatollah Begs to Differ: The Paradox of Modern Iran:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good Information About Iran, But You Have To Work Your Way Through A Turgid Writing Style To Get To It By Retiree This book has interesting information about Iran, but you have to force your way through a horrible writing style to get it. This author has never learned to write a simple declarative sentence. His sentences are long, wandering, disorganized and muddled. I often had to go back and read a

sentence several times to figure out what the point was. But once I learned how to work through what he was saying, he had some interesting facts to share. This would have been a much better book if the publisher had assigned an editor to it. Unfortunately there are not many books about modern Iran, so there is not much competition for this one.² of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Cultural and Political Window on Iran By Will Jerom Content Summary: This book is primarily a cultural window into modern Iranian society - which is admittedly a paradox of secularized, even Westernized youth, and ultra-conservative Shia clergy who still govern the State. Majd is very apologetic for the reformists, such as Ayatollah Khatami, who are part of the regime. Even the reformists like Khatami, however, are not going to back off a theocratic Shia-Islamic state. He portrays a battle between more moderate voices like Khatami's, and radicals like Ahmadinejad. In the midst of this, he provides us with a cultural window into what Iran is like, from the perspective of a man who straddles the vast divide between the United States and Iran. Analytical Review: Some may be wary of Majd's relative lack of severe criticism for the Iranian regime. Suffice it to say, my understanding of Majd's intent with this book is that he believes enough of that criticism has been said elsewhere. His purpose is to give a greater humanistic and cultural appreciation of a land that is inaccessible to the thought of most Americans. I believe he has succeeded for the most part, and if you are looking for a critical political overview of Iran's politics (which is certainly warranted) you should look elsewhere and read more. In a small but significant way, Majd shows the warts and promises inherent on a very ancient and paradoxical country.⁰ of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting Book Demonstrating the Expat Bourgeoisie Mentality By Tenchi in DC This book didn't seem to shed too much new light on internal dynamics of Iran. But it did seem but dint of its organization and meandering style of story telling, demonstrate the bourgeoisie attitude of the Iranian middle class. The story told from the first person is replete with anecdotal characters the author encounters throughout Iran who give evidence of the authors assertions and challenge western assumptions. After the long strange trip to Iran is over, you might be wondering why the author told it.

A revealing look at Iran by an American journalist with an insiders access behind Persian walls The grandson of an eminent ayatollah and the son of an Iranian diplomat, now an American citizen, Hooman Majd is, in a way, both 100 percent Iranian and 100 percent American, combining an insiders knowledge of how Iran works with a remarkable ability to explain its history and its quirks to Western readers. In *The Ayatollah Begs to Differ*, he paints a portrait of a country that is fiercely proud of its Persian heritage, mystified by its outsider status, and scornful of the idea that the United States can dictate how it should interact with the community of nations. With wit, style, and an unusual ability to get past the typical sound bite on Iran, Majd reveals the paradoxes inherent in the Iranian character which have baffled Americans for more than thirty years. Meeting with sartorially challenged government officials in the presidential palace; smoking opium with an addicted cleric, his family, and friends; drinking fine whiskey at parties in fashionable North Tehran; and gingerly self-flagellating in a celebration of Ashura, Majd takes readers on a rare tour of Iran and shares insights shaped by his complex heritage. He considers Iran as a Muslim country, as a Shi'ite country, and, perhaps above all, as a Persian one. Majd shows that as Shi'ites marked by an inferiority complex, and Persians marked by a superiority complex, Iranians are fiercely devoted to protecting their rights, a factor that has contributed to their intransigence over their nuclear programs. He points to the importance of the Persian view of privacy, arguing that the stability of the current regime owes much to the freedom Iranians have to behave as they wish behind Persian walls. And with wry affection, Majd describes the Persian concept of *taarouf*, an exaggerated form of polite self-deprecation that may explain some of Iranian President Ahmadinejad's more bizarre public moments. With unforgettable portraits of Iranians, from government figures to women cab drivers to reform-minded Ayatollahs, Majd brings to life a country that is deeply religious yet highly cosmopolitan, authoritarian yet with democratic and reformist traditions an Iran that is a more nuanced nemesis to the United States than it is typically portrayed to be.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . In this critical but affectionate portrait of Iranian politics and culture, Majd, the Western-educated grandson of an ayatollah, delves into the very core of Iranian society, closely examining social mores and Farsi phrases to identify the Persian sensibility, which, Majd determines, cherishes privacy, praise and poetry. Nothing is too small or too sweeping for Majd to consider, and although he announces his allegiance to the former president Khatami, he remains scrupulously even-handed in assessing his successor Ahmadinejad, shedding light on the Iranian president's obsession with the Holocaust and penchant for windbreakers and why the two are (surprisingly) intertwined. The author's brisk, conversational prose is appealing; his book reads as if he is chatting with a smart friend, while strolling around Tehran, engaged in *ta'arouf* (an exaggerated form of self-deprecation key to understanding Persian society). Although Majd seems to gloss too quickly over realities that don't engage his interest women's voices are only intermittently included this failing scarcely mars this remarkable ride through what is often uncharted territory. (Oct.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Praise for *The Ayatollah Begs to Differ* In this delightful book, Hooman Majd, a gifted storyteller, takes us on a tour of his own private Persia, which is also the Iran of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The results are illuminating, humorous, sobering, and ultimately reassuring. Jon Lee Anderson, author of *The Fall of Baghdad* Hooman Majd is a

stylish and engaging guide through the by-ways of Iranian life. Leading us from seminary to opium den to the presidential compound, his wry sense of humor makes this book a pleasure to read. Gary Sick, Ph.D., senior research scholar at Columbia University and member of the National Security Council staff under Presidents Ford, Carter, and Reagan. A witty, timely perspective on the nation posing the greatest challenge to our next President. Bill White, mayor of Houston and U.S. secretary of energy under President Clinton.

About the Author
HOOMAN MAJD was born in Tehran, Iran, in 1957, and educated in the West. He has written about Iran for GQ, the New York Times, The New Yorker, and the New York Observer, and was executive vice president at Island Records and head of film and music at Palm Pictures. A contributing editor at Interview magazine, he lives in New York City.