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R. Armstrong, Scott
Soc 4.01.1 "Mission to Iran"
CIA 4 Iran (SAVAK) (Hostage)
Soc. 4.01.1 "Inside the Iranian Revolution"
✓ "Roots of Revolution"
CIA 1.01 Helms, Richard
Soc. 4.01.1 "An Ambassador's Wife"
✓ "America Held Hostage"
✓ "Iran, The Untold Story"
"Inside and Out: Hostage to Iran, Hostage to Myself"
✓ "No Hiding Place: The New York Times Inside Report on Hostage Crisis"
CIA 1.01 Turner, Stansfield (orig under Armstrong)

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BOOK WORLD
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Diplomatic Debacle: What in Iran?

MISSION TO IRAN. By William H. Sullivan. Norton. 296 pp. $14.95.
INSIDE THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION. By John D. Stempel. Indiana University Press. 348 pp. $17.50
ROOTS OF REVOLUTION: An Interpretive History of Modern Iran. By Nikki R. Keddie, with a section by Yann Richard. Yale University Press. 321 pp. Paperback, $5.95
AMERICA HELD HOSTAGE: The Secret Negotiations. By Pierre Salinger. Doubleday. 359 pp. $16.95
IRAN: The Untold Story. By Mohamed Heikal. Pantheon. U.S. publication forthcoming in February.
INSIDE AND OUT: Hostage to Iran, Hostage to Myself. By Richard Queen, with Patricia Hass. Putnam. 286 pp. $13.95
NO HIDING PLACE: The New York Times Inside Report on the Hostage Crisis. By Robert D. McFadden, Joseph B. Treaster, Maurice Carroll et al. Times Books. 341 pp. $15.50

By SCOTT ARMSTRONG

AS AMERICANS, we have learned to appreciate the delicate balances of a complicated world. We are often reminded that Europe, the Pacific, and the Persian Gulf are so frighteningly interdependent that no crisis can be dealt with in isolation. We understand, for example, how even a temporary disruption in the flow of oil to the United States or its allies can escalate rapidly into the most global, and the most final, of wars.

Intimidated by these new dimensions, we are ever more willing to cede to our government broad authority to conduct foreign policy. We accept that much of the information on which its deliberations are based, along with portions of the deliberations themselves, must remain secret for the time being.

Yet an Islamic revolution halfway around the world has uprooted our confidence in the government's ability to conduct foreign policy. Critics from both the right and the left have replaced Vietnam with Iran as the contemporary paradigm of American diplomatic arrogance, ignorance and impotence. The public has the right to demand more than a new president; it is time for an explanation of what went wrong in Iran.

We must halt the assembly line of conspiracy theories that continue to undermine our confidence in the way foreign policy is made. Did America covertly plot a military coup to prop up the shah before he fell? Did Jimmy Carter entice him to le
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Surely we deserve reassurance that our government has learned some basic lessons from our experience in Iran. Who lost Iran is no longer the most pressing question. First we need to answer lingering questions about the epistemology of American national security and foreign policy. How does America go about perceiving change in the world? Who gathers the raw data? With whom is it shared? How is it analyzed? Who suggests—and who decides—what actions should be taken?

Although these seven books on the Iranian revolution and hostage negotiations raise more questions than they put to rest, each touches at least obliquely on more fundamental points. While they do not agree on many of the whys and wherefores, the authors seem to agree that:

- When the shah insisted on gorging his appetite for sophisticated U.S. military hardware in spite of a severe shortage in trained Iranian technicians, he had to increase drastically the number of Americans working in Iran. This in turn gave the Islamic leadership the palpable proof they needed to show their followers that the shah must be purged before Western values totally corrupted the society.
- By early 1977, nearly a year before Jimmy Carter toasted "the great leadership of the shah" that had made Iran "an island of stability," the shah and his regime were immensely unpopular with all segments of Iranian society except the most affluent reaches of the upper class and the military hierarchy.
- Although this was recognized by the lower and occasionally even the middle ranks of the U.S. foreign policy establishment, our ambassador, his ranking staff and official Washington all felt the shah's problems were manageable and failed to recognize that the shah's regime was crumbling until well after the shah and virtually every other Iranian had begun to come to grips with it.

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