

Book Review: Nasr, Vali. *Iran's Grand Strategy: A Political History*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2025, 368 pages, \$35.00 hardcover.

Vali Nasr's new book, *Iran's Grand Strategy: A Political History* Nasr's new book, *Iran's Grand Strategy*, focuses on understanding aspects of Iran's political strategy. The book begins with a recent history highlighting several recent and important political events, then runs back through various historical pieces that help to bring together the overall strategy as noted by Nasr. The book is an important addition to the literature as the author takes a new approach to understanding Iran's ambitions and strategy in the international political arena.

International relations, as a discipline, focuses on several important factors that impact relationships between countries. In essence, these concepts help politicians, political advisors and scholars of international politics to make appropriate decisions when working with other countries. Nasr's argument reminds readers that Iran's strategy is complex and rich in the cultural political history of the country—and, how it relates with other countries in the Middle East.

Nasr's argument is an important one. The recent history that Nasr opens with highlights a strategic alliance between Iran and Hamas. Nasr writes, "Hamas was part of the Axis of Resistance and shared Iran's strategic objectives. Iran and its close ally, Lebanon's Hezbollah, had trained and funded Hamas's military wing—and its sister organization, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad—boosting its intelligence and operational capabilities" (p.1-2). This alliance is an important one for understanding the inner-workings of Middle East politics. Nasr continues to explain, "They displayed an uncanny ability to translate their shared objective of combating Israel and the United States into a coordinated but flexible region-wide response" (p.2). It also demonstrates a renewed political crisis and one that perhaps the West was not prepared for.

Instead, Nasr highlights the overall strategy of Iran noting that the country's strategic plan is rich in its cultural and political history and is "guiding their defiant actions on the world stage" (p.7).

Nasr unpacks the politics surrounding Iran's grand strategy and walks the audience through the components of Iran's strategy. The book is broken into two parts. Part 1: The Crucible of Revolution and War and Part 2: Khamenei and the Grand Strategy of Resistance. In Part I, four chapters explain aspects of Iran's history and strategy: Chapter 2: seeking revolutionary independence; Chapter 3: the struggle to win the revolution; Chapter 4: sacred defense: how the war transformed Iran's strategy; and Chapter 5: how the war made the Islamic Republic. Part II includes five chapters that explain and discuss aspects of Nasr's argument. These chapters include Chapter 6: After the War: Reform or Resistance; Chapter 7: Forward Defense: Seeking Strategic Depth for Resistance; Chapter 8: The Rise of the Axis of Resistance; Chapter 9: the Cost of Success; Chapter 10: the Nuclear Gambit and Chapter 11: the Price of Resistance. Nasr eloquently notes that how Iran "evolved over the last four decades [has] shaped Iran and relations with the West." The crux of Nasr's argument is that "Iran's foreign policy was calculated and pragmatic, a matter of national security working to compel the United States to abandon its own cause against Iran and its containment of the country" (p.8).

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Nasr's book, *Iran's Grand Strategy: A Political History* is an important contribution to the political history literature. The book is a very important read for anyone trying to understand the political undercurrents of the Middle East politics. It would be a good read for any scholar of

international politics or international security and would be suitable for graduate political science or history students.

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