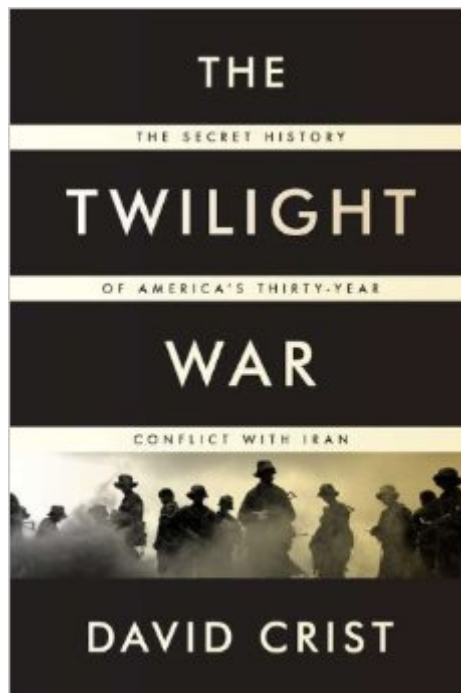


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The Twilight War: The Secret History Of America's Thirty-Year Conflict With Iran



Synopsis

The dramatic secret history of our undeclared thirty-year conflict with Iran, revealing newsbreaking episodes of covert and deadly operations that brought the two nations to the brink of open war. For three decades, the United States and Iran have engaged in a secret war. It is a conflict that has never been acknowledged and a story that has never been told. This surreptitious war began with the Iranian revolution and simmers today inside Iraq and in the Persian Gulf. Fights rage in the shadows, between the CIA and its network of spies and Iran's intelligence agency. Battles are fought at sea with Iranians in small speedboats attacking Western oil tankers. This conflict has frustrated five American presidents, divided administrations, and repeatedly threatened to bring the two nations into open warfare. It is a story of shocking miscalculations, bitter debates, hidden casualties, boldness, and betrayal. A senior historian for the federal government with unparalleled access to senior officials and key documents of several U.S. administrations, Crist has spent more than ten years researching and writing *The Twilight War*, and he breaks new ground on virtually every page. Crist describes the series of secret negotiations between Iran and the United States after 9/11, culminating in Iran's proposal for a grand bargain for peace—which the Bush administration turned down. He documents the clandestine counterattack Iran launched after America's 2003 invasion of Iraq, in which thousands of soldiers disguised as reporters, tourists, pilgrims, and aid workers toiled to change the government in Baghdad and undercut American attempts to pacify the Iraqi insurgency. And he reveals in vivid detail for the first time a number of important stories of military and intelligence operations by both sides, both successes and failures, and their typically unexpected consequences. Much has changed in the world since 1979, but Iran and America remain each other's biggest national security nightmares. "The Iran problem" is a razor-sharp briar patch that has claimed its sixth presidential victim in Barack Obama and his administration. *The Twilight War* adds vital new depth to our understanding of this acute dilemma; it is also a thrillingly engrossing read, animated by a healthy irony about human failings in the fog of not-quite war.

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Customer Reviews

656 pages. That's a lot. 30 years of quasi-war - that's a lot, too. Meticulously researched, with great insights into US government decisions and actions, but also written in a very fluid and easy to read style, this book is nothing short of a true masterpiece. It illuminates the stubbornness, stupidity, arrogance, misunderstandings, errors and transgressions that determined the relationship between the US and Iran for the past 30 years - on both sides. Naturally, there is more detail available on the US side than with the decision making process involved in the Iranian government. It also certainly helped the author that he is the son of a former CENTCOM commander, and thus had unprecedented access to documents and personnel, including former secretary of states. But he tries to tell the story in a fair way, putting blame where it belongs, on either side. The Iranians are not portrayed as demonic evildoers, and the US is not portrayed as the helpless victim of the Ayatollah's machinations. To be honest, reading how the US governments in the past 30 years have played this game, left a distinctive feeling of horror with me - what a bunch of amateurs and self-promoting idiots! But to be fair, the Iranians also seldomly acted like a responsible and caring state. I found it especially enlightening to read about how the Iran-Contra weapons for hostages scheme came into being, who was involved and how it was carried out eventually. But this is just the tip of the iceberg - reading this book, I could not help but come to the conclusion that this kind of action is not an aberration, but it is the normal modus operandi of the US government.

When I heard that David Crist was a senior historian for the federal government and an advisor to government officials on the Middle East, I was slightly concerned because one is never sure whether or not someone has a political agenda. While, I can't determine anyone's political leanings, David Crist has written a painstakingly thorough and detailed history on the thirty year conflict with Iran. Although every president from Carter to Obama is covered, wide swathes of the book are dedicated to the Reagan and George W. Bush administrations. The Reagan administration

(1981-89) takes up approx. three hundred pages or more than half the book. This may not indicate any political bias either way as the Reagan administration was tasked with dealing with the Iran-Iraq war, the 1983 marine barracks bombing in Lebanon by Hezbollah, and Iran-Contra affair. No president since Reagan has been tasked with dealing with quite so much on the Iran front. This twilight war, like any other war conventional or otherwise has ebbed and flowed, perhaps explaining why some presidents get so much coverage, while some get decidedly less. The war was hot during the Reagan and Bush II administrations, while other presidents had other concerns (Bush I had the Gulf War, while Clinton had his own personal conduct to deal with, for example.) Crist because of his unique position is able to take the reader on ships and airplanes that had the task of patrolling the Persian Gulf with the pilots and crewmen while simultaneously taking us inside presidential administrations to detail the decision making and infighting among administration officials, which I feel is the ultimate strength of the book.

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