

# Iran and the British Question

Prof Ali Ansari



7.30 p.m 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2015  
Main Lecture Theatre, (3.25)  
John Anderson Building  
University of Strathclyde

## Biography

*Professor of Iranian History & Founding Director of the Institute for Iranian Studies at the University of St Andrews; Senior Associate Fellow, Royal United Services Institute; President of the British Institute for Persian Studies.*

*Author of: Iran: A Very Short Introduction OUP, 2014, The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran CUP, 2012, Crisis of Authority: Iran's 2009 Presidential Election Chatham House, 2010; Iran Under Ahmadinejad, Adelphi Paper, IISS, January 2008, Confronting Iran: the failure of US policy and the roots of mistrust Hurst, London, 2006, Modern Iran since 1921: the Pahlavis and after, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Longman, London, 2007, Iran, Islam & Democracy - The Politics of Managing Change 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, RIIA, London, 2006;*

*He is also Editor of the Cambridge History of Iran Vol 8 (The Islamic Republic).*

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## Abstract

This will discuss the ways in which Iranian nationalists seeking to forge a new nation out of the Imperial state of Iran, sought European examples upon which to base both their philosophies of nationhood and policies of nation building. While many writers assume that the model was that of the French Republic, close scrutiny of the texts reveal much more empathy with the more fluid and decentralised 'British model' drawing on ideas of Whiggism, progress and conservatism to outline a new narrative of the 'nation-state' that was quite distinct to that which was adopted by the new Turkish Republic. Attitudes towards religion and minorities all drew on a 'liberalism' and 'constitutionalism', which was popularly understood to be hallmarks of the success of the British state which Iranian nationalists, with greater or indeed lesser success, sought to emulate.