

Iran

Iran is home to one of the world's oldest continuous major civilizations, with historical and urban settlements dating back 4000 BC. The south-western and western part of the Iranian plateau participated in the traditional ancient Near East with Elam (3200–539 BC), from the Bronze Age, and later with various other peoples.

The Persians are often referred to as the "first Historical People". They have survived rulers from the Balkans to North Africa. The Roman Empire to its successor the Byzantine Empire Iran has endured invasions too, by the Macedonians, Arabs, Turks, and Mongols. Iran has continually reasserted its national identity throughout the centuries and has developed as a distinct political and cultural entity.

The Muslim conquest of Persia (633–654) was a turning point in Iranian history. Islamization of Iran took place during the eighth to tenth centuries, leading to the eventual decline of Zoroastrianism. However, the achievements of the previous Persian civilizations were not lost but were to a great extent absorbed by the new Islamic civilization.

Iran was reunified as an independent state in 1501 by the Safavid dynasty, which set Shia Islam as the empire's official religion, marking one of the most important turning points in the history of Islam. Functioning again as a leading world power, this time amongst the neighbouring Ottoman Empire, its arch-rival for centuries, Iran had been a monarchy ruled by an emperor almost without interruption from 1501 until the 1979 Iranian Revolution, when Iran officially became an Islamic republic on 1 April 1979.

Over the course of the first half of the 19th century, Iran lost many of its territories in the Caucasus, which had been a part of Iran for centuries, comprising modern-day Eastern Georgia, Dagestan, Republic of Azerbaijan, and Armenia, to its rapidly expanding and emerging rival neighbor, the Russian Empire, following the Russo-Persian Wars between 1804–1813 and 1826–1828

The Great Persian Famine of 1870–1871 is believed to have caused the death of two million people.

A new era in the history of Persia dawned with the Persian Constitutional Revolution against the Shah in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Shah managed to remain in power, granting a limited constitution in 1906 (making the country a constitutional monarchy). The first Majlis (parliament) was convened on October 7, 1906.

The discovery of petroleum in 1908 by the British in Khuzestan spawned intense renewed interest in Persia by the British Empire and the William Knox D'Arcy and Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, now BP. Control of Persia remained contested between the United Kingdom and Russia, in what became known as The Great Game, and codified in the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, which divided Persia into spheres of influence, regardless of her national sovereignty.

During World War I, the country was occupied by British, Ottoman and Russian forces but was essentially neutral. In 1919, after the Russian Revolution and their withdrawal, Britain attempted to establish a protectorate in Persia, which was unsuccessful.

Finally, the Constitutionalist movement of Gilan and the central power vacuum caused by the instability of the Qajar government resulted in the rise of Reza Khan, who was later to become Reza Shah Pahlavi, and the subsequent establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty in 1925.

Raza Shah ruled firmly but also modernized the country. He brought secularism, nationalism, and militarism. Also schools, trains, buses, radio and telephones. His attempts of modernisation brought western clothing, women were encouraged to discard the hijab and many thought he violated Islamic laws.

The Iranian government expected Germany to win the second war and establish a powerful force on its borders. It rejected British and Soviet demands to expel German residents from Iran. In response, the two Allies invaded in August 1941 and easily overwhelmed the weak Iranian army. Iran became the major conduit of Allied aid to the Soviet Union. The purpose was to secure Iranian oil fields and ensure Allied supply line. After that, Iran remained officially neutral. Its monarch was deposed during the subsequent occupation and replaced with his young son

At the Tehran Conference in 1943, boundaries were again shuffled so that northern regions of Azerbaijan and Iranian Kurdistan became part of the Soviet block. Initially there were hopes that under Mohammad Rez Pahlavi rule the parliament would hold a lot of power but as the years passed it was unstable. In 1951 the parliament nationalized the British-owned oil industry. At that time the Shah was forced into a brief exile by a failed military coup. Then a successful coup was headed by retired army general Faziollah Zahedi, aided by the US CIA with active support from the British. The Shah was brought back and supported by the Americans. The Iranian government entered into agreement with the International consortium of foreign company which ran the Iranian oil facilities for the next 25 years.

The **Iranian Revolution**, also known as the **Islamic Revolution**, transformed Iran from an absolute monarchy under Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi to an Islamic republic under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Supreme Leader in December 1979. The ideology of the revolutionary government is populist, nationalist and most of all Shi'a Islamic. Much industry was nationalized, laws and schools Islamicized, and Western influences banned.

The Islamic revolution also created great impact around the world. In the non-Muslim world it has changed the image of Islam, generating much interest in the politics and spirituality of Islam, along with "fear and distrust towards Islam" and particularly the Islamic Republic and its founder.

Iranian students seized US embassy personnel, labeling the embassy a "den of spies."^[200] Fifty-two hostages were held for 444 days until January 1981. An American military attempt to rescue the hostages failed. , it created a powerful anti-Iranian backlash. Relations between the two countries have remained deeply antagonistic and American international sanctions have hurt Iran's economy.

Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988): Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein attempted to take advantage of the disorder of the Revolution, the weakness of the Iranian military and the revolution's antagonism with Western governments. Iraq was financially backed by Egypt, the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact states, the United States (beginning in 1983), France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Brazil, and the People's Republic of China (which also sold weapons to Iran).

On his deathbed in 1989, Khomeini appointed a 25-man Reform Council which named then president Ali Khamenei as the next Supreme Leader,. A smooth transition followed Khomeini's death on June 3, 1989. While Khamenei lacked Khomeini's "charisma and clerical standing", he developed a network of supporters within Iran's armed forces and its economically powerful religious foundations.

power. However, these new amendments did not curtail the powers of the Supreme Leader.

In the [2005 Iranian presidential election](#), [Mahmoud Ahmadinejad](#), mayor of Tehran, became the sixth president of Iran. During this time, the American invasion of Iraq, the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime and empowerment of its Shi'a majority, all strengthened Iran's position in the region. During 2005 and 2006, there were claims that the United States and Israel were planning to attack Iran, with the most cited reason being Iran's civilian nuclear energy program which the United States and some other states feared could lead to a nuclear weapons program. China and Russia opposed military action of any sort and opposed economic sanctions. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei issued a fatwa forbidding the production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons. The fatwa was cited in an official statement by the Iranian government at an August 2005 meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna.

In 2009, Ahmadinejad's reelection was hotly disputed and marred by large protests that formed the "greatest domestic challenge" to the leadership of the Islamic Republic "in 30 years". The resulting social unrest is widely known as the Iranian Green Movement. Reformist opponent Mir-Hossein Mousavi and his supporters alleged voting irregularities and by 1 July 2009, 1000 people had been arrested and 20 killed in street demonstrations. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and other Islamic officials blamed foreign powers for fomenting the protest.

On 15 June 2013, Hassan Rouhani won the presidential election in Iran, In his press conference one day after election day Rouhani reiterated his promise to recalibrate Iran's relations with the world.

Reading out a joint statement, European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini hailed what she called a "decisive step" after more than a decade of work. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif followed with the same statement in Persian. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and the top diplomats of Britain, France and Germany also briefly took the stage behind them. The deal they made was intended to be a provisional framework for a comprehensive agreement and was signed in 2015, and marked a significant breakthrough in the 12-year history of negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program

When Donald Trump was campaigning to become President of the US, he repeatedly said he would abandon the Iran nuclear deal. After he was elected president, the USA announced its withdrawal from the agreement on 8 May 2018. The Iranian-backed group known as Kataib Hezbollah attacked the United States embassy in Baghdad on December 31, 2019.

On January 3, 2020, the United States military executed a drone strike at Baghdad Airport, killing Qasem Soleimani, the leader of the Quds Force, an elite branch of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

On 3 August 2021 Ebrahim Raisi was elected 8th President of Iran, and in January 2022 Joe Biden became the President of the United States and has talked about re-making the Nuclear Deal.

Statistics and facts that we might keep in mind:

- The regime has been relatively successful providing basic goods and services to much of the population, especially in non-urban areas.
- The population is young with 60% under 30 (too young to remember what life was like under the Shah.)
- 84% of the population uses the internet. Because of the internet, people are well aware of what is happening in the West. During protests the government shuts down the internet and people resorted to Virtual Private Networks. China has helped them with encoding and introduction facial recognition so it can spy on citizens.
- In 2020 half of the respondents of a 50,000 people poll conducted by Gamaan, a Dutch research company, said they had lost or changed their religion and less than a third identified as Shia.
- Ayatollah Khamenei appoints head of security, intelligence and economic forces, as well as the head of the judiciary and the guardian council who vet election candidates. He has the final say in most matters and is supported by the Revolutionary Guards.
- Can and will organized entities like teachers and University professors, labor forces like civil servants and oil workers join and take leadership against the present regime?
- The Revolutionary Guards are expected to remain loyal. What would our goals be in regard to Iran?

What are our Foreign Policy Options?

More Sanctions, getting more allies to sanction?

Support protestors - Shia Spring? Can we count on a more friendly government to US? Is voicing discontent a prelude to revolution or not?

Does the US have any influence about the treatment of minority groups like Sunni Muslims, Christians, Jews, Bahais, and Kurds? Would more sanctions do anything to help that situation?

Is there anything our Foreign Policy or influence can do about the unequal treatment of women?

Assassinations, with Israeli help, to change regime? Limited War? Continued cyber warfare like The Student worm?

Could we use their Hormuz Peace Plan as a basis for our own plan if it encompassed both Sunni and Shia Arabs?

Should we go back to having an Embassy agreement with Tehran giving us direct ability to talk with each other?

If we resume talks, what are other items that should be on the table like drug smuggling, support of terrorist groups, and security in the Persian Gulf?

Could an advantage of a Treaty with Iran be new oil supply for the west?

How do we work with the democratic idea of separation of church and state and Capitalism and the Iranian Islamic State ideology that resists western cultural onslaught and calls on its population to restore moral order?

New deal with Iran, perhaps using intermediaries? Reinstate the Joint comprehensive Plan of Action (the Nuclear Deal)?

Is there a path to a New Nuclear Deal? What difference would that make in our Foreign Policy?

How should we handle keeping our forces in the Gulf?

What about Iran's ties with China, Russia and India?

Do we have any options as far as Iran's support for Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen?

How does Iran's part supplying arms to Russia to use in Ukraine factor in and should it be a factor?