Tabriz

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Tehran

Bakhtaran

Esfahan

Discussion of Iran

Bandar-e 'Abbas

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"Lessons from the Iranian Experience"

- What are some major themes in political culture from the countries we have studied?
 - Examples: U.S.- individualism, democracy, civil rights and liberties
- What are some political actions that exemplified these major themes?
 - Examples: U.S.- civil rights protests, taxation debates
- TASK: read "Twentieth Century Iran" (Lessons from the Iranian Experience) and identify major themes of Iranian political culture and political actions that represent these themes?



THE BASICS

Iran

Size 1,648 sq. km. Roughly the size

of Alaska

Population 68.3 million

Age distribution 29% under 15 years old

Infant Mortality 44.2 children per 1,000 births

HIV/AIDS rate 0.01%

Ethnic distribution Persian (51%), Azeri (24%),

Kurds (7%), Arabs (3%),

Others (15%)

Religion Shiite Muslim (89%), Sunni

Muslim (9%), Other (2%)

GNP per capita \$8,700

Growth GNP 7.6%

Poverty rate 40% (estimate)

Literacy rate 79%

Currency 9.222 rial = US\$1 (2006)

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Introduction to Iran

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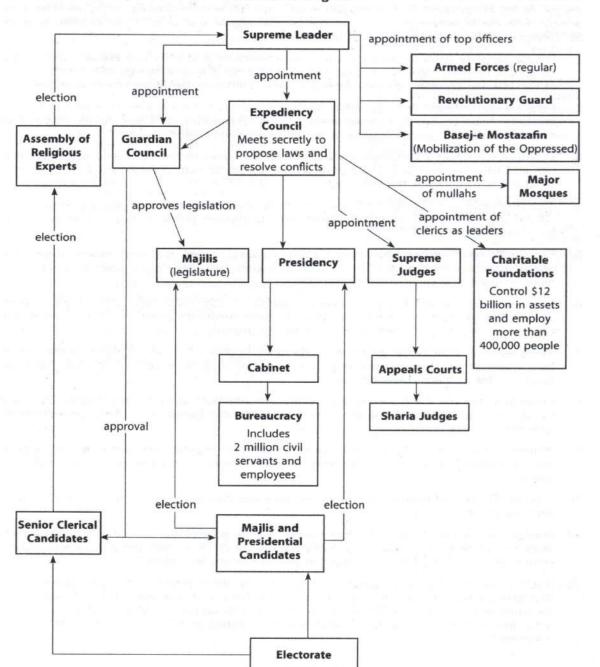
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The Islamic Regime

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Questions About Iran

- Why is economic development difficult?
- Does Iran's isolation limit the development of democracy?
- What are the differences between Shiah and Sunni (12 Shiism)?
- What historical developments have led to the establishment of a theocracy?
- How has the Islamic Cultural Revolution led to the current Constitution?
- What role has the U.S. played in the development of Iranian government and culture?
- What effect has the Iran-Iraq war has on the current generation of Iranian leaders?
- How is Iran's constitution strong but dishonest at the same time?
- How has the unique political culture of Iran been shaped by international events and how has this led to distrust of foreigners?

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TABLE 13.3 Iran: 1900–1979

| YEAR | EVENT |
|------|------------------------------------|
| 1905 | Start of Constitutional Revolution |
| 1911 | End of Constitutional Revolution |
| 1925 | Reza Khan becomes shah |
| 1941 | Muhammad Reza Pahlavi becomes shah |
| 1953 | Overthrow of Mossadeq government |
| 1979 | Islamic Revolution |

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TABLE 13.1 2005 Presidential Election

| CANDIDATE | FIRST BALLOT | SECOND BALLOT |
|---|---|------------------------|
| Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani Mahmoud Ahmadinejad Mehdi Karroubi Mostafa Moeen Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf Ali Larijani Mohsen Mehralizadeh Blank or invalid votes | 21.13 19.43 17.24 13.93 13.89 5.83 4.38 4.17 | 35.93 61.69 2.37 |

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TABLE 13.4 Key Events in the Islamic Republic

| YEAR | EVENT |
|---------|---|
| 1979 | Khomeini becomes supreme leader |
| 1980-88 | War with Iran |
| 1989 | Death of Khomeini |
| 1997 | Election of Khatami |
| 2004 | Victory by conservatives in Majlis election |

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TABLE 13.5 Presidents of Iran since 1979

| IAME | YEARS IN OFFICE |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| Abolhassan Bani-Sadr | 1979-80 |
| Muhammad Ali Rajai | 1980-81 |
| Ali Khamenei | 1981-89 |
| Hashemi Rafsanjani | 1989-97 |
| Mohammad Khatami | 1997-2005 |
| Mahmoud Ahmadinejad | 2005- |

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REVIEW: What is a theocracy?

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- A theocracy is a political system based on religious authority. A system of governance based on rule of the clerics. Muslim religious scholars are called ulema.
- Iran combines elements of democracy and theocracy

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What are some democratic institutions in Iran?

- 1. "Democratically" elected Parliament (Majles). Multiple candidates for Parliament are elected by universal suffrage using party lists, like many parliamentary systems.
- 2. Democratically elected President. The president is directly elected by citizens for up to two terms.
 - After they are elected, both the Parliament and the president will work on <u>secular policies</u> such as the economy.
 - Their power is limited, however, because it must be approved by the assembly of religious experts and the expediency council.

What are some theocratic institutions in Iran?

- 1. Shari'ah is the <u>religious</u> <u>legal</u> <u>code</u> and forms the basis for laws.
- 2. Supreme Leader. The Supreme Leader serves for life and is the commander in chief of the armed services and heads the police.
- 3. Guardian Council. Has the function of ensuring that candidates for public office conform to high religious standards and they can disqualify candidates who do not meet their criteria.
- Both groups have the primary function of ensuring that Iran remains a theocracy.

Which Iranian bodies are DIRECTLY elected by citizens?

- Bakhtaran
- Parliament (majles)
- Esfahan
- Assembly of Religious Experts
 - Shiraz
- Presidency.

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How have Iranian leaders democratized the political process?

- Liberalization of the press and other media.
 - Currently, the press is <u>independent</u>, but heavily regulated by the government.
 - The Head of the Radio and Television Organization is directly appointed by the <u>Supreme</u> <u>Leader</u> and the media is not allowed to be directly critical of the government's policies.
 - The exact rules for the media are a bit vague, and it is not unusual for the newspapers to be shut down by the government for violating a rule.
 - Satellite dishes are illegal, but many franians have them anyway.
 - Many journalists have been imprisoned or attacked, are heroes of many youth.

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<u>Elections</u> (regular, competitive)

- Iran has <u>multi-member</u> constituencies. Each voter can write down the names of as many candidates as there are seats, and the top vote getters in each constituency are elected. If a constituency has more seats than candidates who passed the 50% barrier, a second round is held to determine the remaining MP's from among the runners up.
- In 2000, parliamentary elections, the Council of Guardians disqualified an unprecedented number of the candidates and the winners were mostly the very religious.
- In 2003, however, the Council of Guardians chose not to vet candidates. Even <u>avowed secularists</u> were allowed to run.
- In 2005, many secular Iranians boycotted the elections as a form of protest to the disqualification of candidates.

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- Protests by <u>leaders</u> (members of Parliament, etc)
 - Protests come from teachers, ethnic groups, and university groups. The regime will generally suppress these protests but Parliament is given greater freedom to protest.
- Allowing more <u>political parties/</u> allowing more candidates to run.
- Relaxation of the <u>dress codes</u> (examples of civil liberties)
 - Veiling is now enforced less strictly and partial covering of the head called "mal-veiling" has spread.
- Beginning in 1999, they have allowed for <u>local/city</u> elections.
 - However, ultimate power rests with the unelected bodies so voting is seen as a futile exercise
 - In the 2 003 elections, only 15% of eligible voters in Tehran have voted. (mostly conservatives, who elected Ahmadinejad as mayor.

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Greater acceptance of nongovernmental organizations (NGO's)

- Examples: Martyr's foundation, Foundation of the Disinherited, Society
 of the Devotees of the Islamic republic, and Headquarters of the POW's.
- All represent war veterans, families of martyrs, and those disabled in the Iran-Iraq War

Broadened participation of women. "Islamic feminism"

- Allowed voting in elections
- Creation of organizations designed to protect the role of women
- Female candidates running for political office
- Women have, increasingly, supplemented their husband's income by joining the labor force.
- Women, now, constitute about 60% of students at universities.
 Restrictions on what they can study have been removed (agronomy, mining engineering, sports, for example, were forbidden to women).
 This has very recently changed and women's admissions are being limited.

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How have they resisted democratization of the political process?

- Still, vetting of candidates.
- Shari'ah law governs <u>election</u> <u>procedures</u>
- The <u>Basij morality police</u> is a pro-regime volunteer organization that monitors and contends with the political activities of students and faculties. They often mobilize political activities of students for <u>pro-regime</u> activities on the campuses.
- <u>Divorce laws</u> are still degrading to women.
 - According to Islamic law, marriage is a contract whose clauses have to be agreed upon freely by both husband and wife. A woman has the right to ask her marriage contract include a clause giving her the right to initiate divorce proceedings. This clause, in the past, has had to be added to the standard contract issued by the state, which was rarely allowed (meaning women did not have the right to ask for a divorce.)
 - Since the 1980's few women have consented to the state contract, and now the clause is automatically included in MOST marriage contracts.

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- Arresting professors/dissenter/demonstrations.
- Criticism of Supreme Leader forbidden.
- Guardian Council vetoes legislature. All are directly or indirectly appointed by the Leader.
- Blocking the Internet.



Compare the executives in Nigeria and Iran

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Similarities:

- Similarities IRAN
- Direct popular election
- More than one candidate.
- Fixed election cycle
- President cannot fun for a third consecutive term

Differences:

- Guardian Council vets candidates.
- Requirement for <u>regional</u> support throughout Nigeria.
- Religious qualifications.
- Differences in <u>formal</u> criteria (e.g., minimum age qualifications)
- Role of electoral commissions
- Exclusion of female candidates
- Transparency; election observers.
- Party affiliation
- Military coups.

Who is more powerful and why?

Nigerian President

- No Guardian Council in Nigeria.
- No Expediency Council in Nigeria
- No higher authority/ Supreme Leader in Nigeria.

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- Nigerian President is the commander-in-chief.
- The Nigerian Parliament is more compliant.
- Parties play a more significant role in empowering the Nigerian president because his party controls the legislature and helps get his agenda passed.
- The Nigerian President receives more international support.
- There is no <u>dual</u> <u>executive</u> in Nigeria.

ASSIGNMENT: The Evolution of Iranian Political Structure

- What are the 5 freedoms found in the 1st Amendment?
- Why are these words so controversial in American politics?
 - "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof"
- What is a theocracy?
- Is a theocracy a system where only religious leaders can be elected by the citizens?

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Further Discussion of Iran...

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What was the Iranian Cultural Revolution?

• Iran was once a monarchy, controlled by the shahs. The last shah was Mohammad-Rezah Shah Pahlavi and he was overthrown by the charismatic clerical leader, Ruhollah Khomeini, who authored the ideas for the Islamic republic.



BACKGROUND:

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- Reza Shah Pahlavi ruled as a dictator, while leaving the Iranian Constitution in place.
- Characterized by:
 - Nationalization of the Oil Industry (by the National Front Party-Mohammad Mossadegh.
 - White Revolution
- His leadership angered <u>religious</u> <u>traditionalists</u> who rioted in support of a new member of the ulema, **Ruhollah Khomeini**.
- Opponents of the shah began demanding abolition of the monarchy and its replacement with a new regime.
- Because of his oppression, mosques became the only places where one could speak one's mind and religion was strengthened.

THE REVOLUTION OF 1979

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- Ultimately, the <u>shah</u> was driven into <u>exile</u>.
- Khomeini's followers were best <u>organized</u> and proposed an <u>Islamic government</u>.
- Velayate-e-faqih (rule by jurisprudent):
 - Those most suited to rule were the ones that know divine law best (ulema).
- Soon after, <u>Iran</u> fought a war with Iraq that was costly in terms of <u>economics</u> and <u>human loss</u>.

 During this war, Khomeini's supporters gained the upper hand and used the war to strengthen their <u>legitimacy</u>.

Compare Iran's Cultural Revolution to China's Proletariat Cultural Revolution

- Cleansing of Western values/anti capitalism.
- Revising education.
- Purging political enemies
- Reinforcing political legitimacy.
- Purging educational institutions.
- Affirming revolutionary ideals/values.

- Promoting ideological conformity.
- Repressing dissent
- Discrediting the past/old order
- Elevating the status of the leader/cult of personality.



Describe the Iran-Iraq War and its implications on Iranian society.

- Khomeini's Exile.... went to Iraq during his original exile from Iran. In 1978, Saddam
 Hussein expelled him from Iraq, which led to Khomeini calling for Saddam's overthrow.
- Over <u>one million</u> Iranians were killed an injured, many due to Iraq's use of chemical weapons.
- This conflict created a "war generation"
- They tend to call for more "social order" and a greater state role in providing for lower classes (the portion of the population killed in the war)

What is a charismatic authority?

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• A personal quality that a leader possess that gives him/her the ability to persuade masses of citizens to follow his/her leadership

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Who was a leader in Iran with charismatic authority?



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REVIEW: What is a rentier state?

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• A state that is dependent on the <u>export</u> or sale of <u>one resource</u> for the <u>revenue</u> it uses to sustain the population's needs.

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How is Iran a Rentier State?

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Iran's main export is oil, and because taxes do not guarantee much revenue, Iran is dependent on its income from oil. As a result, Iran's economy will fluctuate due to the changes in the market.

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What is a population growth policy used by Iran recently?

 BACKGROUND: Iran created incentives to increase <u>family size</u> to build the army (Iran-Iraq War). After the 1980's, however, they realized <u>birth rates</u> needed to be brought down.





Policies:

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- The government widely distributed all kinds of <u>birth</u> control through state sanctioned condemn factories.
- Offered free sterilization to men and women
- Encourages reductions in family size (1989-present)
- State-controlled media campaigns to raise awareness.
- Mandatory <u>marital</u> <u>sex counseling</u> for men and women to provide education on how to avoid unwanted pregnancies.
- Increased <u>education/employment</u> opportunities for women, as more education for females leads to lower birth rates.

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Why did Iran institute this population growth policy?

- Economic development
- Fear of <u>unrest</u> resulting from overpopulation.
- Relief of pressure on government budget.
- Strain on <u>natural resources</u>.

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Activity: Policy Making in the Islamic Republic of Iran

- Which organizations play a role in making policy about taxation, property rights, or foreign relations? (do not discuss U.S. It must be a country from Comparative Government)
- KEY POINT: the complexity of policy making means that any group within an interest in a potential policy can be involved