

IRAN

Party Portrait

Iran became an Islamic republic in 1979, when Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini established a theocratic system of government. Iran's largest ethnicity (Persian) comprises two-thirds of the population, the largest religion (Shia Islam) is close to 90% of the population, and the largest language (Persian) is spoken by half of the population. Only 3% of Iran's population are immigrants, which reinforces the strength of the country's shared history, culture, and identity. Iran has been designated by the United States as a state sponsor of terrorism for its support of Hezbollah in Lebanon and remains subject to US, UN, and EU economic sanctions.

Key Interests

- Counter Sunni power in Middle East
- Limit American/Western Influence in the region
- Reduce Israel's influence in the region
- Improve economy including expanding oil exports
- Defeat ISIS
- Support Palestinian cause and its militant proxies against Israel
- Increase spread of political Islam in the region
- Maintain internal security including threat from Balochistan Province

Sources of Leverage

Military - Two-pronged ownership over its clandestine nuclear program and purse strings for regional militias. Able to use it as a strong bargaining chip to achieve better economic and political outcomes, or to incite fear

Economic - Burgeoning economy, potential to become massive global exporter and consumer

Energy - Impressive oil reserves and refusal to kowtow to GCC requests has created significant economic tension, while simultaneously pumping critical funds into the Iranian economy.

Regional Strategy

Given the Islamic Republic's history of isolationism and pervasive Persian-Shia identity, Iran's external conflicts are characterized by both strong adherences to current positions and weak international relations. Iran has attempted to build regional coalitions along ethnic and religious lines, but the hardline nature of political leadership has hampered partnerships with neighbors and the West.

Powerful Individuals

Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, President Hassan Rouhani, Speaker of Parliament Ali Larijani, Chief Justice Sadeq Larijani, Chairman of the Guardian Council Ahmad Jannati

Potential Negotiation Moves

Normalize US/EU Relations - By continuing to abide by the Iran Nuclear Deal and increasing ties with the West, Iran can continue to access European markets including exporting its oil

Play Russia and US Rivalry - Iran could exacerbate the American/Russian rivalry by playing each great power off the other.

Use Assad Regime Support as Bargaining Chip - Iran could negotiate with the West, using a relinquishing of their support for Syria to gain concessions

Internal Conflicts

Some political modernization has occurred in the past decade, particularly under the more moderate leadership of Presidents Khatami and Hassan Rouhani. Now, even though relations with the US are not yet thawed despite the nuclear agreement, and conservative Muslim clerics continue to view the US as an aggressor, much of Iran's population is ready to move toward a position of partnership with the West. The Republic Right represent the most West-leaning views, and has helped with recent progressive outcomes such as the 2015 nuclear agreement.

Memberships

IAEA, OIC, OPEC, UN

Allies

PALESTINE Hamas, LEBANON Hezbollah, SYRIA Government, LEBANON Government, YEMEN Houthis, KUWAIT, OMAN, Russia, IRAQ al-Ahraq Sadrist Party, IRAQ Islamic Supreme Council, IRAQ Sadrist Movement,

Partners

RUSSIA, EGYPT Government, JORDAN, EUROPEAN UNION, GERMANY, CHINA, JAPAN, INDIA, IRAQ State of Law Coalition, FRANCE, HOLY SEE, TUNISIA, QATAR, OMAN, ARAB LEAGUE, INDIA, KUWAIT, SOMALIA al-Shabaab

Rivals

SAUDI ARABIA, YEMEN Government, JORDAN, SUDAN, SOUTH SUDAN, EGYPT Government, NATO, TURKEY, UNITED ARAB EMIRITES

Adversaries

SAUDI ARABIA, BAHRAIN, ISRAEL, ISIS, SOMALIA Government, LEBANON Government, IRAQ Secular Nationalist Parties, SYRIA Jabhat Fateh a-Sham, UNITED STATES, LEBANON Government, GCC, UNITED NATIONS

Active Armed Opponents

KURDS of Iran, SYRIA Other Opposition Groups, AQAP

Proxy

YEMEN Houthis, Syria Government, KURDS of Iran, PALESTINE Hamas, IRAQ State of Law Coalition

External Sponsor

RUSSIA

Aid Recipient

N/A

Aid Donor

N/A