“This is the voice of Iran, the voice of the true Iran, the voice of the Islamic Revolution.”
--Iran National Radio
February 11, 1979
Why Study Iran?

- World’s only theocratic republic
- Theocracy with democratic elements
- Unique among Middle Eastern countries
- Tradition versus modernization
Geography

- Crossroads between:
  - Central Asia and Asia Minor
  - Indian subcontinent and the Middle East
  - Arabian Peninsula and the Caucasus Mountains

- Historically vulnerable to invaders
- 3x the size of France
- Much of territory inhospitable to agriculture
- 2\textsuperscript{nd} largest oil producer in the Middle East and 4\textsuperscript{th} largest in the world

- Urbanized and partly industrialized
  - 68% live in urban centers
  - 70% labor force is employed in industry and services
Population

- 67% of population on 27% of land
  - Mostly in the NW and cities of Tehran, Qom, Isfahan, Shiraz, & Ahwaz

- Persian country, NOT Arab
  - Strong sense of nationalism – Identify as Persian before Muslim

- 89% Shi’a Muslim

- 58% speak Farsi (Persian)
  - Recent years, successful literacy campaign
  - Over 90% of population can now communicate in Persian, the national language
Population

- Iran has a large young population
  - 24% of all Iranians are under 15 and 27 is median age (was 23!)
Population and Statistics

- Youngest population of the AP6
  - After 1979 Revolution, government encouraged births to produce soldiers for the war against Iraq
  - Then, it encouraged birth control
    - Even had a state-owned condom factory! (b/c economy could not support rapidly growing population)
- The government is made up of mostly the older generation
- 83% of adults are literate, life expectancy is over 70
- Middle income country with per capita income above that of Mexico, Brazil, and South Africa
POPULATION PYRAMIDS COMPARED - IRAN AND UK

Iran 2008

UK 2008

SOURCE: US Census Bureau
Population

- Discussion Question: What future problems might be Iran need to address based on this population pyramid? Why is Iran now promoting population growth?
# Sunni v. Shiite

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunnis</th>
<th>Shiites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Majority of population in most Muslim countries</td>
<td>Majority in Iran, Iraq, Bahrain, possibly Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“Followers of tradition”</strong></td>
<td><strong>“Partisans of Ali (son-in-law)”</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most prominent members of community should select new leader, 4 caliphs (and heirs), based on piety, wisdom, morality, leadership ability, competence; ruled continuously until breakup of Ottoman Empire at end of WWI</td>
<td>Leadership should be based on bloodlines to Muhammad…all the way to Twelfth (Hidden) Imam who went into hiding; his return will herald end of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any religious educated person can rule</td>
<td>Senior clerical scholars (ayatollahs) should interpret Shari’a until Twelfth Imam returns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overwhelming majority in world</td>
<td>Less than 10% of Muslims worldwide -See themselves as “party of oppressed”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
History – Safavids & Qajars

Safavids (1501-1722) conquered Iran in 16th century
- Forcibly converted their subjects to Shi‘ism
  - Sunni population remained on periphery
  - Rulers claimed to be descendants of 12 Imams
    - Imam: a Muslim leader of the line of Ali held by Shiites to be the divinely appointed, sinless, infallible successors of Muhammad
  - Tolerated religious minorities
    - Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians

Qajars (1794-1925)
- A Turkish tribe takes power after invasion and civil war
  - Did not claim hereditary links to 12 Imams
- Move capital to Tehran
- Declared Shi‘ism to be state religion; clerical leaders’ interpreters
- Economic troubles during time of imperialism
  - Iran was never colonized, but imperialist nations (GB, Russia) gained concessions
**History – Introduction of Democracy**

- **Constitutional Revolution (1905-1909)**
  - Merchants and local industrialists demanded constitution
  - Shah (king) agreed

- **Constitution of 1906**
  - Direct elections
  - Separation of powers
  - Laws made by elected legislature (Majles)
    - Very strong – controlled cabinet members
  - Popular sovereignty
  - Bill of Rights
  - Retained Shiism as official religion
  - Created **Guardian Council** of clerics
    - Veto power
History – The Pahlavi Dynasty (1925-1979)

- 1921 - Reza Shah carried out coup d’etat
  - Military officer
  - Abolished Qajar dynasty
    - 4 years later named himself “shah-in-shah” (king of kings)
  - Ruled with iron fist; Majles lost its power
  - Created centralized bureaucratic state by modernizing economy and secularizing political life of the country (built first national railroads, first modern factories, and took land from rural elites)
    - Women did not have to wear veil
    - Men had to shave their beards
    - Closed religious schools
      - Replaced with free, state-run institutions that stressed science and other modern topics
  - Changed name from Persia to Iran; allied with Nazis
    - Forced to abdicate in 1941 because of his pro-German sympathies
History – The Pahlavi Dynasty (1925-1979)

- Reza’s son, **Muhammad Reza Shah** took power in 1941
  - Formed **SAVAK**: secret police
    - Arrested, tortured, killed dissidents at home and abroad
  - Authoritarian regime
    - Centralized power (e.g., Interior Ministry appointed provincial governors, town mayors, district superintendents and village headmen)
    - Built up military – 5th largest in world by 1979
  - Secularized legal system (supplanted shari’a)
  - Close ally with United States (puppet)
  - Improved infrastructure

- Rise of the National Front (opposition)
  - Led by Muhammad Mosaddeq
  - Drew support from middle class
  - Emphasized Iranian nationalism
History – The 1953 Coup

- Mosaddeq advocated nationalizing the British owned-company that monopolized Iran’s oil business
  - British establish the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (later = BP)
  - Supported by Tudeh – Communisty Party
  - Also wanted to take armed forces out from under shah’s control
- Elected Prime Minister in 1951
  - Power grew & forced shah to flee country in 1953
- British and U.S. orchestrated overthrow of Mosaddeq & restored shah to power…Why?
History – Muhammad Reza Shah

- **Westernization/Secularization** of Iranian culture

- **White Revolution** (1963):
  - Focused on land reform
    - Gov’t bought land from large absentee owners and sold it to small farmers at affordable prices
    - Purpose was to encourage farmers to become entrepreneurs with irrigation canals, dams, and tractors
  - Secularized Iran further by extending voting rights to women, restricting polygamy, and allowing women to work outside the home
  - Called “white” to counter “red” influences
Rentier state - Derives much of its revenue on a regular basis from payments by foreign countries in the form of “rent”

- Rentier economy is heavily supported by state expenditure, while the state continuously receives “rent” from abroad
- Iran received an increasing amount of income by exporting its oil
  - Income so great that by 1970s govt no longer relied on internal taxes for support
  - Paid most of its expenses through oil income
  - Import-substitution placed emphasis on capital-intensive industries and led to neglect of small-scale production and agriculture

Industrialization

- Rapidly industrialized from oil revenue

Centralization

- State controlled – banks, tv/radio, Natl. Iranian Oil Co.; local govt’ came under control; Majles became a “rubber stamp”
History – Muhammad Reza Shah

Discussion Question: Can a government that doesn't depend upon its constituents for income (rentier state) really be representative or legitimate?
History – Muhammad Reza Shah

The Shah’s Downfall:
- Became more distant from people over the years
- Became very wealthy
  - Bolstered personal wealth by establishing tax-exempt Pahlavi Foundation, a patronage system that controlled large companies that fed the pocketbooks of the shah and his supporters
- Ignored civil liberties
- Stifled newspapers, political parties, and professional associations
  - 1975 – Shah announced the formation of the Resurgence Party and declared Iran to be a one-party state with himself as the head
- Alienated clergy, intelligentsia, and urbanites

Overstepped bounds of political culture:
- Perceived as being totalitarian
- Secularized too fast
- Offended nationalists and clergy with ties to west (particularly U.S.)
### Comparative Iranian Regimes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rulers</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Influences on Modern Political System</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Safavids      | Converted Iranians to Shiism  
               Tolerated “People of the Book”  
               Ruled from Isfahan  
               Relied on local rulers  
               Rulers claimed to be descendants of the 12 Imams | Almost 90% of Iranians today are Shiite  
Tradition of isolation  
Authoritarianism, NOT totalitarianism  
Foundations for Theocracy |
| (1501-1722)   |                                                                                 |                                                                                                        |
| Qajars        | Turkish invaders  
               Ruled from Tehran  
               Retained Shiism, but lost hereditary claims to 12 Imams  
               Dominated by other countries  
               Loved luxury; fell into debt | Loosened Shiite influence  
Tradition of trade/contact with others  
Authoritarianism, NOT totalitarianism  
Foundations for secularism, separation between religious and political leaders  
Failures of regime led to the creation of a repressive government |
| (1794-1925)   |                                                                                 |                                                                                                        |
| Pahlavis      | Overthrew representative govt  
               Centralized power in shah  
               Increasing oil income: rentier state  
               Contact with West  
               Secularization  
               Corruption | Reinforced authoritarian rule; led to resistance to totalitarianism  
Modern corruption issues in govt, economy  
Increased secularization led to re-establishment of a theocracy |
| (1925-1979)   |                                                                                 |                                                                                                        |
History – 1979 Revolution

- Triggers:
  - Oil prices decreased by 10% and consumer prices increased 20%
  - Revolution of rising expectations
  - U.S. put pressure on shah to loosen restraints on opposition
    - Encouraged others to voice frustrations

- Organized and led by clerics, but broadly supported by many sectors
  - Revolutionary coalition:
    - Urban poor (especially recent rural-urban immigrants)
    - Moderate middle classes, concerned with political freedoms
    - Leftists
    - Bazaar merchants: ability to bring economy to standstill
    - Clergy: moral focal point, and hierarchical internal structure, communication networks, capable orators

- Charismatic leader – Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini
  - In exile in Paris, but speeches were influential

- Shah fled country in Feb 1979
Founding of the Islamic Republic – 1979

- April 1979 national referendum was held – voted out monarchy established Islamic Republic
- Established a new constitution
  - Drawn up by Assembly of Religious Experts (73 man assembly of clerics directly elected by people)
  - Gave broad authority to Khomeini and clergy, although PM Mehdi Bazargan strongly objected
  - Presented to people in midst of U.S. hostage crisis – high hostility toward Americans – 99% of electorate endorsed (only 75% voted)
- Ayatollah Khomeini (Supreme Leader)
- Islamic fundamentalism
  - Emphasized literal interpretation of Islamic texts
  - Social conservatism
  - Political traditionalism
- Jurist’s guardianship (valeyat-e-faqih):
  - Gave senior clergy (Grand ayatollahs) all-encompassing authority over the whole community—not just widows, minors, and mentally disabled
- Only senior clerics could interpret Shari’a Law
Iran Hostage Crisis

- American embassy hostages held for 444 days from 1979-1981
- Believed that purpose could be to undercut PM Bazargan
  - Official prime minister of provisional government at the time of the Revolution
  - Islamic in name but democratic in content
  - Wanted to call Iran Democratic Islamic Republic
  - Resigned when he realized that Khomeini would not order the release of the hostages
Cultural Revolution

- Launched by Shia leaders after revolution
- Aimed to purify the country from the shah’s regime, secular values, and western influences
- Purged universities of liberals
- Suppressed all opposition

Similar to??
Iran–Iraq War (1980–88)

- Started when Iraq invaded Iran by land and air
  - U.S. backed Saddam Hussein and Iraq – provided weapons
- People rallied around the govt in response
- Ended in 1988 with a UN-brokered cease-fire
Khomeini died in 1989
- The Constitution specifically put Khomeini in the position for life, and stated that after his death, his authority would pass to a leadership council of two or three senior clerics
  - This did not occur when Khomeini died b/c his followers did not trust the clerics

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (1989-Present)
- Change in constitution
- A Cleric of middle rank
- Does not have same charisma or academic credentials
- Keeps spirit of revolution alive, anti-American, and maintain theocracy

President - Hashemi Rafsanjani (1989-1997)
- Moderate
- Concerned with reforming slumping economy due to theological commitments and war with Iraq
- Very few reforms
Post-Khomeini (1989–Present)

- President Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005)
  - Reformist and surprise winner
    - Vote from women, university students, and young adults throughout country, even those in armed forces
    - Originally seen as major setback for conservative clergy
    - Campaigned on theme of creating “civil society” and improving sick economy
  - Reforms:
    - Easier to organize political groups
    - Less censorship of press
    - Some open protests permitted
    - Relaxed enforcements of social interactions between sexes
    - Allowed inspections of nuclear facilities
    - Tried to improve relations with US and other Western countries
  - Reformist Khatami was left isolated by conservative resurgence
    - Most reforms overturned by Guardian Council
    - Hard line conservatives disqualified moderates from 2004 parliamentary elections
President Ahmadinejad (2005-2013)

- President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005-2013)
  - Tehran's ultra-conservative mayor
  - Won a run-off vote in presidential elections in June 2005, defeating his rival, the former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani
  - First non-cleric president in 24 years
2009 Presidential Election

- Huge push for reformist candidate Mousavi to beat Ahmadinejad
- Close race – 85% Turnout
- Allegations of fraud were strong – Mousavi urged his supporters to the streets
  - The Iranian government itself has acknowledged that in 50 areas, more votes were counted than there are eligible voters
  - The government has acknowledged that 3 million ballots were stuffed
- Khamenei agreed to an investigation
  - Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, declared the vote legitimate
- Huge protests/Government Crackdown
  - Dozens of moderate clerics and reformist political leaders in Tehran and around Iran arrested
  - Mousavi himself was "being closely monitored by police"
  - Ayatollah Khamenei has restated his position that the election results were fair
  - Significant violence at universities around the country, as well as hundreds of arrests and reports of tear gas in the dorms
THE ELECTION RESULTS HAVE OUR STAMP OF APPROVAL...

I WON HANDS DOWN
President Ahmadinejad (2005–2013)

- Council of Guardians rejected candidacies of popular reformers
- Further restrict public freedom
- Several major reformist newspapers closed
- Journalists and civil society activists arrested
- Jailed internet users who spread information “aimed at disturbing the public mind”
- Morality police and vigilantes to enforce Islamic dress codes & prevent public mingling of men and women
- Increased reports of arrest, torture, and executions
- Sharia more strictly enforced
- Called for destruction of Israel
- Questioned reality of Holocaust
- Increased nuclear fuel research
**Current**

- President Rouhani (Elected 2013)
  - Moderate cleric
  - How did he win?
    - Guardian Council disqualified two prominent candidates
      - Former President – Rafsanjani
      - Ahmadinejad’s choice – Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei
    - High turnout – 72%
      - Rouhani – 50.7%
  - What does this mean?
    - Powerful mandate to improve international relations
    - Negotiate nuclear settlement
    - Helped Supreme Leader:
      - Restored legitimacy lost after 2009 election
      - Returned a cleric to the presidency
      - Ahmadinejad often clashed with the religious order and traditionalists
Review: Crash Course