

IRAN



<http://teachmideast.org/country-profiles/iran/>

IRAN



President: Hassan Rouhani

Hassan Rouhani won a resounding re-election victory in May 2017 as voters overwhelmingly backed his efforts to reach out to the world and rebuild the struggling economy.

Rouhani, who is regarded as a moderate, reformist figure, spearheaded a 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. He was elected in 2013.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14541327>

IRAN

Supreme Leader: Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

The Supreme Leader - the highest power in the land - appoints the heads of the judiciary, military and media. He also confirms the election of the president.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was appointed for life in June 1989, succeeding Ayatollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic republic. He previously served two consecutive terms as president in the 1980s.

Iran has been led by a highly conservative clerical elite since the revolution in 1979.

IRAN



The leader of the Iranian revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, returned from exile in 1979

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14541327>

IRAN

Iran became an Islamic republic in 1979, when the monarchy was overthrown and clerics assumed political control under supreme leader Ayatollah Khomeini.

The Iranian revolution put an end to the rule of the Shah, who had alienated powerful religious, political and popular forces with a programme of modernisation and Westernisation, coupled with heavy repression of dissent.

Persia, as Iran was known before 1935, was one of the greatest empires of the ancient world, and the country has long maintained a distinct cultural identity within the Islamic world by retaining its own language and adhering to the Shia interpretation of Islam.



IRAN





Print this map



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IRAN

Iran



LIFE EXPECTANCY
70 (M) 73 (W)



CAPITAL
Tehran



LARGEST CITY
Tehran



NATIONALITY
Iranian



RELIGIONS
Islam

IRAN OVERVIEW



CURRENCY
Iranian
Riyal (IRR)



POPULATION
82,801,633
(2016)



LANGUAGES
Persian, Azeri, Turkic,
Kurdish



AGRICULTURE
Wheat, Rice, Sugar Beets,
Sugar Cane, Fruits, Nuts,
Cotton, Dairy, Wool, Caviar



INDUSTRIES
Petroleum, Petrochemicals, Lye,
Fertilizers, Textiles, Cement,
Food Processing, Armaments

Basic statistics

Indicators	Statistics	Year
Population (thousands)	77447	2013
Population aged under 15 (%)	24	2013
Population aged over 60 (%)	8	2013
Median age (years)	29	2013
Population living in urban areas (%)	72	2013
Total fertility rate (per woman)	1.9	2013
Number of live births (thousands)	1455.5	2013
Number of deaths (thousands)	398.3	2013
Birth registration coverage (%)	99	2010
Cause-of-death registration coverage (%)	...	
Gross national income per capita (PPP int \$)	15600	2013
WHO region	Eastern Mediterr...	2013
World Bank income classification	Upper middle	2013

... Data from 2007 onwards not available.

Source:
Country statistics and global health estimates
by WHO and UN partners

For more information visit the Global Health Observatory
(<http://www.who.int/gho/en/>)

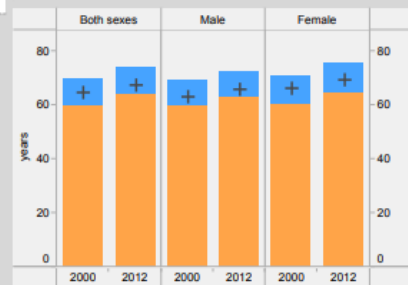
Last updated: January 2015

Life expectancy (years), 2012

		Country	WHO region	World Bank income group
Life expectancy	At birth	74	68	74
	At age 60	20	18	20
Healthy life expectancy	At birth	64	58	66

Life expectancy at birth for both sexes increased by 4 year(s) over the period of 2000-2012; the WHO region average increased by 3 year(s) in the same period.

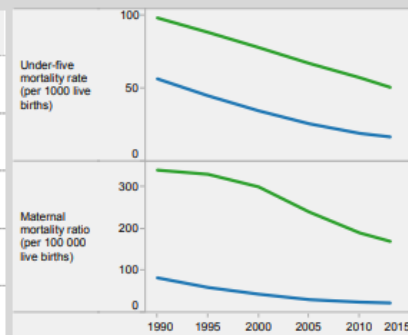
In 2012, healthy life expectancy in both sexes was 10 year(s) lower than overall life expectancy at birth. This lost healthy life expectancy represents 10 equivalent year(s) of full health lost through years lived with morbidity and disability.



■ WHO regional life expectancy at birth
■ Healthy life expectancy at birth
■ Lost healthy life expectancy

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

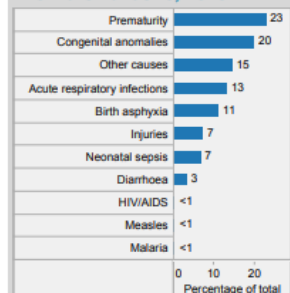
Indicators	Statistics	
	Baseline*	Latest**
Under-five mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	57	17
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100 000 live births)	83	23
Deaths due to HIV/AIDS (per 100 000 population)	0.5	6.0
Deaths due to malaria (per 100 000 population)	0.0	0.0
Deaths due to tuberculosis among HIV-negative people (per 100 000 population)	3.8	3.2



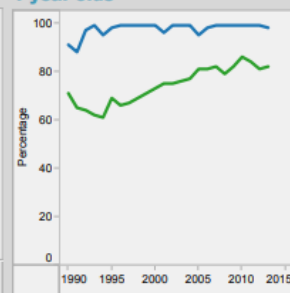
*1990 for under-five mortality and maternal mortality; 2000 for other indicators
**2012 for deaths due to HIV/AIDS and malaria; 2013 for other indicators

■ Country
■ WHO region

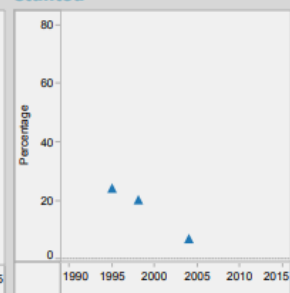
Distribution of causes of deaths in children under-5, 2013



DTP3 immunization among 1-year-olds



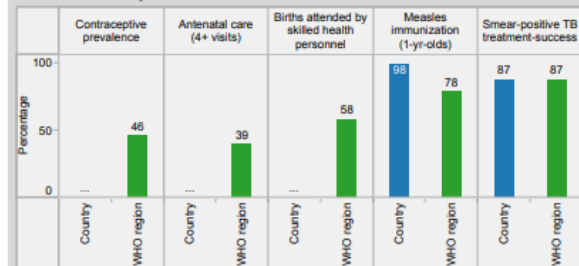
Children aged under-5 stunted



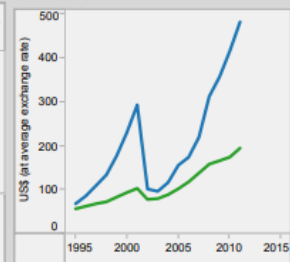
Country statistics and global health estimates by WHO and UN partners. For more information visit the Global Health Observatory (<http://www.who.int/gbo/en/>). Last updated: January 2015.

Utilisation of health services*

*Data refer to the latest year available from 2007.

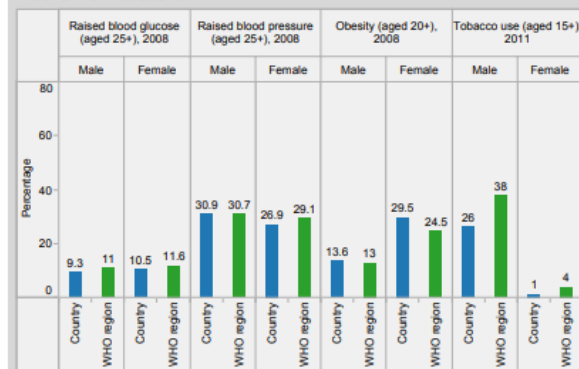


Per capita total expenditure on health

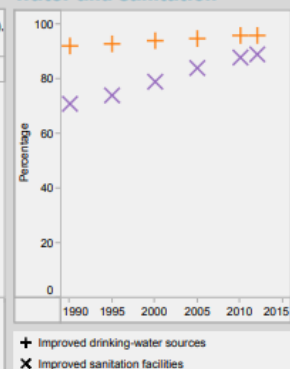


...Data not available or applicable.

Adult risk factors



Population using improved water and sanitation



+ Improved drinking-water sources
 X Improved sanitation facilities

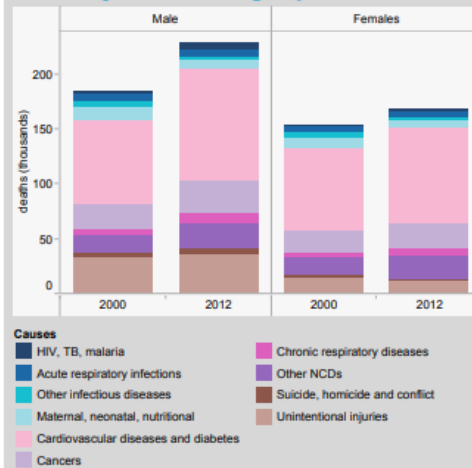
Top 10 causes of death

Ischaemic heart disease was the leading cause of death, killing 97.7 thousand people in 2012

	No of deaths (000s) 2012	Crude death rate 2000-2012	Change in rank 2000-2012
Ischaemic heart disease (24.7%)	97.7		◆
Stroke (10.5%)	41.6		◆
Road injury (8.1%)	32.0		◆
Hypertensive heart disease (3.6%)	14.1		▲
Lower respiratory infections (2.7%)	10.6		▼
Diabetes mellitus (2.2%)	8.8		▲
Stomach cancer (2.1%)	8.2		◆
Endocrine, blood, immune disorders (1.9%)	7.5		▲
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (1.6%)	6.3		▲
Preterm birth complications (1.5%)	6.1		▼

Rank ▼ decreased ▲ increased ◆ no change

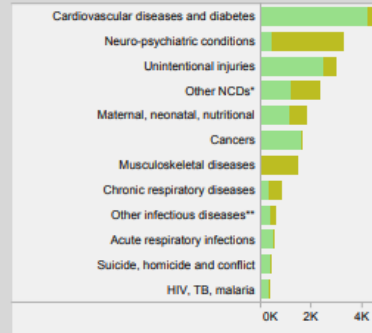
Deaths by broad cause group



Burden of disease, 2012

Disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) are the sum of years of life lost due to premature mortality (YLL) and years of healthy life lost due to disability (YLD).

DALYs, YLL and YLD (thousands) by broad cause group



*Other noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) including non-malignant neoplasms; endocrine, blood and immune disorders; sense organ, digestive, genitourinary, and skin diseases; oral conditions; and congenital anomalies.

** Infectious diseases other than acute respiratory diseases, HIV, TB and malaria.

▼ YLL ◆ YLD

Probability of dying, 2012

Probability of dying between relevant exact ages, for a person experiencing the 2012 age-specific mortality risks throughout their life.

Before age 15, all causes	Male	9%
	Female	8%
Before age 70, all causes	Male	47%
	Female	39%
Between ages 15 and 49, from maternal causes	Female	1%
Between ages 30 and 70, from 4 major noncommunicable diseases (NCDs)-	Both sexes	17%

-Cancers, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes

Source: Country statistics and global health estimates by WHO and UN partners

For more information visit the Global Health Observatory (http://who.int/gho/mortality_burden_disease/en/)

Last updated: January 2015

IRAN

GEOGRAPHY

Iran (pronunciation: **ih-rah-n**) is dominated by rugged mountains, high basins (visit [this link](#) to learn about the difference between a valley and a basin), and desert, offering a unique and diverse geography ranging from snowy mountainous regions and hot and dry plains to subtropical lowlands. It borders seven countries and two large coastlines. In the west, it shares its longest border with Iraq and smaller ones with Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. To Iran's north is the Caspian Sea and to its south are the Arab-Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Gulf of Oman, which leads out to the Arabian Sea and the larger Indian Ocean. In the East, Iran borders Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. Iran's geographic features have protected it from invaders over the years while also dictating the country's political ambitions.

Iran has several prominent topographic features. It has two high mountain ranges, the Zagros and the Elburz. The Zagros range runs along most of Iran's western edge while the Elburz range runs east to west, between the Caspian Sea and Iran's capital, Tehran. The Elburz includes Iran's highest mountain, Mount Damavand, at over 18,000 feet. Between the Caspian Sea and the Elburz Mountains is subtropical lowland.

The majority of Iran's population lives among the mountains, as the country's lowlands are difficult to live in. These lowlands include two desert plateaus — the Dasht-e Kavir (Salt Desert) and the Dasht-e Lut — with conditions so harsh that they are virtually uninhabitable. Because of this, approximately 70 million Iranians are mountain-dwellers; even the capital city of Tehran sits in the foothills of large mountains.



I R A N

Iran's mountainous terrain serves to both protect and stifle the country. Iran is extraordinarily difficult to conquer, given that the mountains effectively deflect intrusions from nearly every direction. Only the Mongols under Genghis Khan were able to conquer the Persian heartland. While Iran remains relatively insulated from external threat, its progress is impeded by the isolating, mountainous fortress. Its desire to control and inhabit the plains of Iraq would require mobilizing an army through the Zagros mountains; this would be difficult without the cooperation of the Iraqis. Furthermore, the mountains create internal issues for Iran by clustering and dividing different ethnic and religious groups. Because these groups are hidden away in the mountains, it is an ongoing challenge to assimilate them into the Persian majority. So, it is necessary for Iran to have a strong central government to prevent separatist movements; all this just because of some mountains.

Iran's geography also informs its economy. Because of the country's famous mountains, transportation is costly. Even though Iran has the third-largest oil reserves in the world, oil cannot overcome the geographic isolation and difficulties of having a mountainous population. Despite its oil, Iran's is not an economic powerhouse like its neighbor Saudi Arabia. It is difficult for Iran to develop more advanced infrastructure because of the absence of flat, inhabitable plains.

I R A N

The harsh geography and location of the country contributes to its political ambitions. Iran has long held an interest in controlling Iraq (more on this below in International & Regional Issues), and part of that is because Iraq has plenty of flat, workable, and livable land. Iraq was once part of the Persian empire, and during that time Iraq's fertile plains were the foundation of the empire. If Iran were to reclaim this land, it would be a huge boost to their geopolitical and economic power.

Iran faces several environmental problems. Like many of its neighbors, many parts of Iran suffer from a lack of drinking water, either because of the arid climate of its desert plateaus or due to water pollution. Iran is also prone to frequent droughts in some areas and flooding in others as well as dust/sand storms and earthquakes. Zabol, a city in eastern Iran near the Afghan border, has previously ranked as **one of the most polluted cities in the world**.

IRAN

HISTORY

The territory that Iran occupies has a long and rich history filled with empires, battles, cultural achievements and events that changed the world. The area was originally ruled by the Medes, an ancient Indo-Iranian (Aryan) people who inhabited an area known as Media in the western and northwestern portions of present day Iran from 678 BCE-549 BCE. Persian King Cyrus the Great conquered the territory as he was expanding his empire. Alexander the Great helped conquer the Persian Empire, succeeding Darius III as the empire's king. The next several decades were a time of many rulers, but it was also the time in which Iran rose to prominence in the scientific and cultural arena. The ancient Silk Road ran through its territories, allowing for such things as porcelain and silk from China to be brought to Europe, while also facilitating the exchange of knowledge, religion, technology and culture. Iran fell to the control of Arab Muslims in 1502 and it has remained under Muslim influence since; however, during World War I, both Russia and England tried to occupy the land due to its strategic location.

The Islamic Republic of Iran was formed in 1979 after the Iranian Revolution, a short conflict in which the Iranian monarchy was overthrown and replaced by a theocracy. The revolution was led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a popular Shia cleric (Ulema), who then became its first leader, a position referred to as Supreme Leader.

I R A N

The overthrow of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi in 1979 and the ascendance of Saddam Hussein in Iraq added to tensions that had been building between the two countries over their national borders on the Shatt al-Arab waterway. When Hussein ordered his military across the Iranian border in September 1980, it sparked a decade-long conflict that killed or wounded over 1 million soldiers and civilians and economically crippled both nations. Despite Iraq's pro-Soviet tendencies, the United States and most Gulf nations supported Hussein over the staunchly anti-Western Iranian regime under Ayatollah Khomeini. The United States and Gulf nations supplied weapons to Iraq's military and the U.S. Navy participated in limited naval warfare campaigns against Iran following repeated Iranian attacks on Gulf oil tankers.

The Iraqi military used chemical attacks against Iran during the ongoing war. Iran reciprocated by capturing the southern Al-Faw Peninsula, which was the main point of Iraqi access to the Shatt al-Arab waterway. The war finally ended in 1987 with the signing of United Nations Security Council Resolution 598. This resolution effectively returned both countries to their pre-war borders, with very few gains on either side. Despite the resolution, tensions between the two countries remained high throughout the 1990s and early 2000s.

I R A N

Iranians once again took to the streets for democratic rights in 2009 with the Green Movement. The next presidential election was scheduled for June 12, and the victory was expected to go to the incumbent president, Ahmadinejad. But a new character stepped into the race: Mir Hossein Mousavi, a former prime minister. Mousavi energized Iran's emerging civil society, reformers, the women's movement, and students, and he was met with large crowds to cheer him on. But the results of the election told a different story — Ahmadinejad had won by a landslide. Mousavi and others said the election was rigged to keep Ahmadinejad in power. Hundreds of thousands filled the streets of Iran wearing green, the color of a sash that had been given to Mousavi by former president Muhammad Khatami. These groups were met by security forces sent to deter them. Green Movement leaders were subjected to show trials by the government. Any newspapers, magazines, or websites that supported the Green Movement were shut down. Government response halted the movement's momentum in 2010, but many still hope for its return and democratic reform.

Indeed, these plains were the foundation of the Persian Empire. The Persians originated in the Zagros Mountains as a warrior people. They built an empire by conquering the plains in the Tigris and Euphrates basin. They did this slowly, over an extended period at a time when there were no demarcated borders and they faced little resistance to the west. While it was difficult for a lowland people to attack through mountains, it was easier for a mountain-based people to descend to the plains. This combination of population and fertile plains allowed the Persians to expand.



PERISTIWA UTAMA

1794 - Mohammad Khan Qajar seizes power and founds the Qajar dynasty.

1921 - Military commander Reza Khan seizes power and is later crowned Reza Shah Pahlavi.

1941 - Britain and Russia occupy Iran during Second World War.

1953 - Coup engineered by British and US intelligence services after parliament nationalises mainly British-owned oil industry. Shah, who had fled into exile, returns.

1979 - Iranian revolution unseats the shah.

1980-1988 - Iran-Iraq war.

2002 - US President George W. Bush describes Iran, Iraq and North Korea as "the axis of evil".

2004 - US says Iran's nuclear programme is a growing threat and calls for international sanctions.

2016 - International economic sanctions are lifted after the UN nuclear watchdog, the IAEA, confirms that Tehran had complied with its promises to scale back its nuclear activities.

2018 May-June - President Trump announces the US withdrawal from the 2015 international deal on Iran's nuclear programme. Iran in turn warns that it will begin increasing its uranium enrichment capacity if the deal collapses as a result of the US withdrawal.

A chronology of key events:

550-330 BC - Achaemenid dynasty rules the first Persian Empire. At its greatest extent under Darius I stretches from the Aegean Sea and Libya to the Indus Valley.

Advent of Islam

636 - Arab invasion brings end of Sassanid dynasty and start of Islamic rule.

9th century - Emergence of modern Persian language, written using a form of Arabic script.

1220 - Mongol forces of Genghis Khan overrun Persia, which becomes part of the Ilkhanate, ruled by descendants of Genghis' grandson Hulagu.

1501 - With the support of Shia Qizilbash warrior tribes, Shah Ismail I becomes first ruler of Islamic Safavid dynasty; Shia Islam declared state religion.

1571-1629 Apogee of the Safavid Empire under Shah Abbas I, who reforms the army, sidelines the Qizilbash and establishes first diplomatic links with western Europe.

1794 - Mohammad Khan Qajar founds the Qajar dynasty, restoring stability to Iran after half a century.

1828 - Iran cedes control of Caucasus to Russia after second Russo-Persian war.

Achaemenid Empire



The ruined city of Persepolis testifies to the grandeur of the first Persian Empire



The Si-o-Se Pol ("Thirty-three arches") Bridge in Isfahan was completed under Safavid ruler Shah Abbas I in 1602

1907 - Introduction of constitution which limits the absolutist powers of rulers.

Pahlavi dynasty

1921 February - Military commander Reza Khan seizes power.

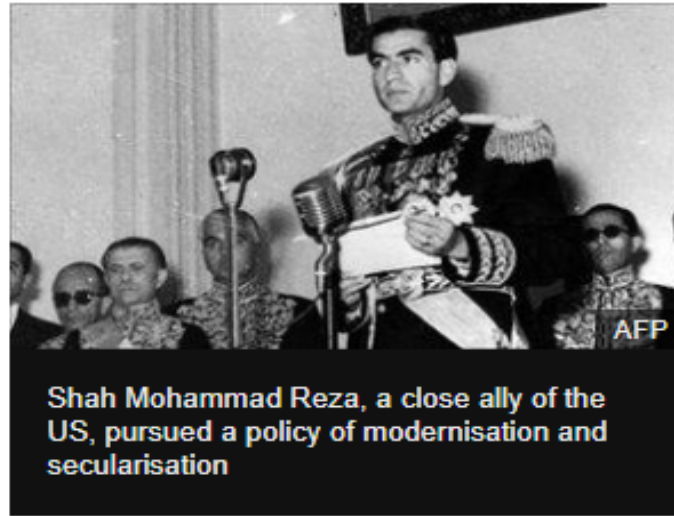
1926 April - Reza Khan crowned Reza Shah Pahlavi.

1935 - Iran is adopted as the country's official name.

1941 - The Shah's pro-Axis allegiance in World War II leads to the Anglo-Russian occupation of Iran and the deposition of the Shah in favour of his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

1951 April - Parliament votes to nationalise the oil industry, which is dominated by the British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. Britain imposes an embargo and a blockade, halting oil exports and hitting the economy. A power struggle between the Shah and nationalist Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq ensues.

1953 August - Prime Minister Mossadeq is overthrown in a coup engineered by the British and US intelligence services. General Fazlollah Zahedi is proclaimed prime minister, and the Shah returns from temporary exile.



Shah Mohammad Reza, a close ally of the US, pursued a policy of modernisation and secularisation

Campaign to modernise

1963 January - The Shah launches the 'White Revolution' programme of land reform and social and economic modernisation. During the late 1960s he becomes increasingly dependent on the SAVAK secret police in controlling opposition movements.

1978 September - The Shah's policies alienate the clergy and his authoritarian rule leads to riots, strikes and mass demonstrations. Martial law is imposed.

Shah exiled, Khomeini returns

1979 January - As the political situation deteriorates, the Shah and his family are forced into exile.

1979 February - Islamic clerical opposition leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returns from 14 years of exile in Iraq and France.

1979 April - The Islamic Republic of Iran is proclaimed following a referendum.

1979 November - Islamic militants take 52 Americans hostage inside the US embassy in Tehran. They demand the extradition of the Shah, in the US at the time for medical treatment, to face trial in Iran.

1980 January - Abolhasan Bani-Sadr is elected the first president of the Islamic Republic. His government begins work on a major nationalisation programme.

1980 July - The exiled Shah dies of cancer in Egypt.

Ayatollah Khomeini



- Born 1902, died 1989
- Exiled under Shah 1964-79
- Supreme leader 1979-89

1979: Exiled Ayatollah Khomeini returns to Iran

Iran-Iraq war

1980 22 September - Start of Iran-Iraq war, which lasts for eight years.

1981 January - The American hostages are released, ending 444 days in captivity.

1981 June - President Bani-Sadr is dismissed and later flees to France.

1985 - After the US and Soviet Union halted arms supplies, the US attempted to win the release of hostages in Lebanon by offering secret arms deals. This would later become known as the Iran-Contra affair.

1988 July - An Iran Air Airbus is mistakenly shot down by the USS Vincennes.

Iran-Iraq War



- Iraq invades Iran in 1980

Ceasefire

1988 July - Iran accepts a ceasefire agreement with Iraq following negotiations in Geneva under the aegis of the UN.

1989 February - Ayatollah Khomeini issues a religious edict (fatwa) ordering Muslims to kill British author, Salman Rushdie, for his novel, 'The Satanic Verses', considered blasphemous to Islam.

1989 3 June - Ayatollah Khomeini dies. On 4 June, President Khamene'i is appointed as new supreme leader.

1989 August - Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani is sworn in as the new president.

1989 November - The US releases 567 million dollars of frozen Iranian assets.

Major earthquake kills thousands

1990 June - A major earthquake strikes Iran, killing approximately 40,000 people.

1990 - Iran remains neutral following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

1990 September - Iran and Iraq resume diplomatic ties.

reversed, resulting in stalemate

- Cease-fire signed in 1988
- Casualties (est): 1m (Iran), 250,000-500,000 (Iraq)

Witness: 30th anniversary of Iran-Iraq War

US imposes sanctions

1995 - US imposes oil and trade sanctions over Iran's alleged sponsorship of terrorism, quest for nuclear arms, and hostility to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

1997 May - Mohammad Khatami wins the presidential election with 70% of the vote, beating the conservative ruling elite.

1998 September - Iran deploys thousands of troops on its border with Afghanistan after the Taliban admits killing eight Iranian diplomats and a journalist in Mazar-e Sharif.

Student protests

Mohammad Khatami



Reformist Khatami: Isolated
by conservative resurgence

Student protests

1999 July - Pro-democracy students at Tehran University demonstrate following the closure of the reformist newspaper Salam. Clashes with security forces lead to six days of rioting and the arrest of more than 1,000 students.

2000 February - Majlis elections. Liberals and supporters of Khatami wrest control of parliament from conservatives for the first time.

2000 April - The judiciary, following the adoption of a new press law, bans the publication of 16 reformist newspapers.

2001 June - President Khatami re-elected.

2002 January - US President George Bush describes Iraq, Iran and North Korea as an "axis of evil", warning of the proliferation of long-range missiles being developed in these countries.

2002 September - Russian technicians begin construction of Iran's first nuclear reactor at Bushehr despite strong objections from US.

2003 June - Thousands attend student-led protests in Tehran against clerical establishment.

2003 October - Shirin Ebadi becomes Iran's first Nobel Peace Prize winner. The lawyer and human rights campaigner became Iran's first female judge in 1975 but was forced to resign after 1979 revolution.

2003 November - Iran says it is suspending its uranium enrichment programme and will allow tougher UN inspections of its nuclear facilities. The IAEA UN nuclear watchdog concludes there is no evidence of a weapons programme.

2003 December - 40,000 people are killed in an earthquake in south-east Iran. The city of Bam is devastated.

**Reformist Khatami: Isolated
by conservative resurgence**

Reformist Khatami: Isolated
by conservative resurgence

**Khatami justifies years in
office**

**Profile: Mohammad
Khatami**

Conservative resurgence

2004 February - Conservatives regain control of parliament in elections. Thousands of reformist candidates were disqualified by the hardline Council of Guardians before the polls.

2004 June - Iran is rebuked by the IAEA for failing to fully cooperate with an inquiry into its nuclear activities.

2005 June - Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Tehran's ultra-conservative mayor, wins a run-off vote in presidential elections, defeating cleric and former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

2005 August-September - Tehran says it has resumed uranium conversion at its Isfahan plant and insists the programme is for peaceful purposes. IAEA finds Iran in violation of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

2006 February - Iran resumes uranium enrichment at Natanz.

2006 August - UN Security Council deadline for Iran to halt its work on nuclear fuel passes. IAEA says Tehran has failed to suspend the programme.

2007 March - Diplomatic stand-off with Britain after Iran detains 15 British sailors and marines patrolling the mouth of the Shatt al-Arab waterway separating Iran and Iraq.

2007 October - US announces sweeping new sanctions against Iran, the toughest since it first imposed sanctions almost 30 years ago.

2008 September - UN Security Council passes unanimously a new resolution reaffirming demands that Iran stop enriching uranium, but imposes no new sanctions. The text was agreed after Russia said it would not support further sanctions.

Supporter of Lebanese militia



Iran is an ally of Lebanon's powerful Shia Muslim Hezbollah group

- Tehran says its support is moral, political
- Israel, US accuse Iran of supplying arms
- Group emerged in 1980s with financial backing from Iran

Past president



Election protests

2009 June - Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is declared to have won a resounding victory in the 12 June presidential election. The rival candidates challenge the result, alleging vote-rigging. Their supporters take to the streets, and at least 30 people are killed and more than 1,000 arrested in the wave of protests that follow.

2009 August - Mahmoud Ahmadinejad sworn in for second term as president, presents cabinet - the first since the founding of the Islamic Republic in 1979 to include women.

A number of senior opposition figures are accused of conspiring with foreign powers to organise unrest and are put on trial.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei says there is no proof that opposition leaders blamed for the post-election unrest were agents of foreign powers.

2009 September - Iran admits that it is building a uranium enrichment plant near Qom, but insists it is for peaceful purposes.

The country test-fires a series of medium- and longer-range missiles that put Israel and US bases in the Gulf within potential striking range.

Former president Rafsanjani has been influential since the revolution

Profile: Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani

Disputed election



The 2009 election sparked reformist protests and a brutal police response

Q&A: Iran protests

Montazeri dies

More sanctions

2010 June - UN Security Council imposes fourth round of sanctions against Iran over its nuclear programme, including tighter financial curbs and an expanded arms embargo.

2010 September - Stuxnet - a computer worm which affects industrial systems - is reportedly detected in staff computers at the Natanz nuclear plant. Iran accuses Israel and the US of infecting its system.

2011 September - Iran announces that the Bushehr nuclear power station has been connected to the national grid.

2012 July - European Union boycott of Iranian oil exports comes into effect.

2012 September - International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) quarterly report says Iran doubles production capacity at Fordo nuclear site and "significantly hampered" IAEA ability to inspect Parchin military site.

2012 October - Iran's rial currency falls to a new record low against the US dollar, losing 80% of its value since 2011 because of international sanctions. Riot police attack about 100 currency traders outside the Central Bank.



A leading figure of the 1979 revolution, Grand Ayatollah Montazeri became a vocal critic of the system

Obituary: Ayatollah Montazeri

Nuclear dispute



Iran's nuclear programme is a source of tension with the West

Q&A: Iran nuclear issue

Iran's key nuclear sites

Rouhani becomes president

2013 June - Reformist-backed cleric Hassan Rouhani wins presidential election.

2014 April - The International Atomic Energy Agency says Iran has neutralised half of its higher-enriched uranium stockpile under a deal agreed earlier in the year.

2014 June - President Rouhani says Iran is ready to assist the Iraqi government in its battle against extremist Sunni insurgents, amid reports that Iranian Revolutionary Guards are in Iraq providing military training and advice.

Nuclear deal

2015 July - After years of negotiations, world powers reach deal with Iran on limiting Iranian nuclear activity in return for lifting of international economic sanctions. The deal gives UN nuclear inspectors extensive but not automatic access to Iranian sites.

2016 January - Serious rift in relations after Saudi Arabia executes leading Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr. Crowd sets Saudi embassy alight.

International economic sanctions on Iran lifted after UN says satisfied with progress on fulfilling nuclear agreement. President Rouhani embarks on the first European state visit of an Iranian president for 16 years.

2017 May - Hassan Rouhani wins re-election as president.

2017 June - Several people are killed in co-ordinated attacks on parliament and the shrine of Ayatollah Khomeini. Islamic State group claims responsibility.

2017 December - Mass protests in several cities over economic grievances, which are acknowledged by President Rouhani and Supreme Leader Khamenei.

Sanctions biting?



Iran has responded with defiance to ever tighter sanctions imposed by the UN and the West.

- UN ratified four rounds of sanctions between 2006 and 2010.
- EU has imposed trade, travel and oil export bans.
- US, UK and Canada have imposed sanctions on trade and financial institutions.

Q&A: Iran sanctions

US withdraws from nuclear deal

2018 May-June - President Trump announces the US withdrawal from the 2015 international deal on Iran's nuclear programme. Iran in turn warns that it will begin increasing its uranium enrichment capacity if the deal collapses as a result of the US move.

2018 September - Gunmen open fire on a military parade in Ahvaz in Khuzestan Province, which has a large Arab population. An Arab nationalist organisation and the Islamic State jihadist group both claim responsibility for the attack, in which 25 people were killed.

2019 March-April - Floods cause widespread damage in across the country, leaving at least 70 people dead.

2019 May-June - Tensions rise as US accuses Iran of attacking oil tankers in the Gulf, which Tehran denies.

IRAN

GOVERNMENT

Iran is a theocratic republic. The country has regular elections, but they are closely ruled over by the top clergy. Moderates have often won powerful positions, which shows that Iranians do want a choice in their political affairs and that the government is not wholly conservative or radical.

As an Islamic republic, Islam is infused into much of society. Its legal system is based on Sharia, or Islamic law. People often believe that the Iranian president is the leading figure in power; however, the most powerful person in Iran is the Supreme Leader who is also the leading religious leader. He has the last say in all internal and external matters and appoints many powerful positions, including commanders of the military. The Supreme Leader is selected for a lifetime term by Assembly of Experts, a group of leading Islamic scholars (mujtahid) who are elected by popular vote. The Iranian president and the single legislative body, the Consultative Assembly, are also elected by popular vote.

Political parties are a relatively new phenomenon in Iran, and traditionalists still prefer to work through pressure groups. The party system in Iran is unique in that parties often form prior to elections and disband soon thereafter. Iran has two major political ideologies: traditional conservative religious side and reform-minded. Recently, these two sides have increasingly become at odds with one another, leading the reformers to stage mass protests against the conservatives in power.

Ali Khamenei is the current Supreme Leader, a position held since 1989. Hassan Rouhani, the current president of Iran, was elected in 2013. The previous president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, took advantage of his image as a modest, simple man, and drew significant attention and often ire from the rest of the world for his rhetoric. In 2002, former U.S. President George W. Bush labeled Iran a member of "Axis of Evil" — along with Iraq and North Korea — and accused it of supporting terrorism and seeking weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

IRAN

The Revolutionary Guard

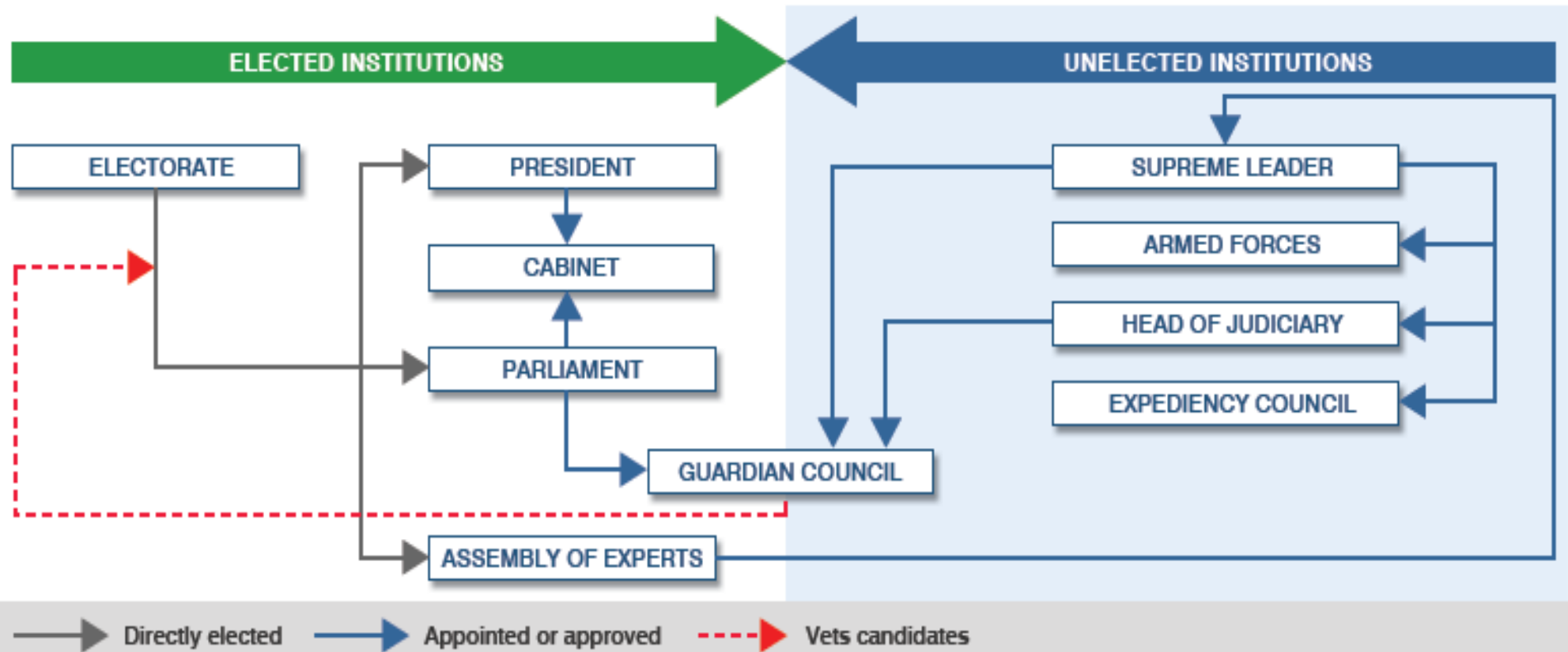
The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is the country's most powerful security and military organization. Established after the 1979 revolution by Ayatollah Khomeini, its sole purpose is to protect the regime. This role has become increasingly important as the ayatollah's authority declined amid new calls for political reform. The IRGC also is responsible for executing war plans in the event of a military attack from an enemy country, such as Israel. It is divided into land, sea, and air forces, with up to 150,000 members who are primarily apportioned to the land branch. Within the IRGC, there are several branches. The secretive Qods Force carries out Iran's proxy warfare strategies, training and arming such groups as Hezbollah and Hamas. Another notable organization under the IRGC is the Basij Resistance Force, which is a paramilitary auxiliary force that maintains internal security and has steadily gained power since uprisings of the 2009 Green Movement.

In addition to its conventional military role, the IRGC wields tremendous economic power through its affiliate companies, which are involved in many sectors of Iran's economy and it dominates everything from construction to banking and finance. The IRGC has actually benefited from Iran's sanctioned economic climate, standing tall over its competitors because of its ability to secure government contracts.

STRUKTUR NEGARA IRAN

Guide: How Iran is ruled

Click on the flow chart below to find out more about Iran's complex political system.



STRUKTUR NEGARA IRAN



Dr Rouhani in a meeting with Governor-Generals of Tehran, Qom and Alborz:
Governor-Generals should work harder on production, resolving business problems, increasing employment/ E-government project must be completed faster/ Housing construction plans government priorities

IRAN

SUPREME LEADER

The role of Supreme Leader in the constitution is based on the ideas of Ayatollah Khomeini, who positioned the leader at the top of Iran's political power structure.

The Supreme Leader, currently Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, appoints the head of the judiciary, six of the members of the powerful Guardian Council, the commanders of all the armed forces, Friday prayer leaders and the head of radio and TV. He also confirms the president's election. The Leader is chosen by the clerics who make up the Assembly of Experts.

Periodic tension between the office of the Leader and the office of the president has often been the source of political instability. It increased during former president reformist Mohammad Khatami's term in office - a reflection of the deeper tensions between religious rule and the democratic aspirations of many Iranians.



Ayatollah Khamenei has been Supreme Leader since 1989

IRAN

GUARDIAN COUNCIL

This is the most influential body in Iran and is currently controlled by conservatives. It consists of six theologians appointed by the Supreme Leader and six jurists nominated by the judiciary and approved by parliament.

Members are elected for six years on a phased basis, so that half the membership changes every three years.

The council has to approve all bills passed by parliament and has the power to veto them if it considers them inconsistent with the constitution and Islamic law. The council can also bar candidates from standing in elections to parliament, the presidency and the Assembly of Experts.

Reformist attempts to reduce the council's vetting powers have proved unsuccessful and the council banned all but six of more than 1,000 hopefuls in the 2005 elections.

Two more, both reformists, were permitted to stand after the Supreme Leader intervened. All the female candidates were blocked from standing.



Ayatollah Jannati is chairman of the Guardian Council

IRAN

HEAD OF JUDICIARY

The Iranian judiciary has never been independent of political influence. Until early last century it was controlled by the clergy. The system was later secularised, but after the revolution the Supreme Court revoked all previous laws that were deemed un-Islamic. New laws based on Sharia - law derived from Islamic texts and teachings - were introduced soon after.



Ayatollah Shahrudi is considered close to the president and Supreme Leader

The judiciary ensures that the Islamic laws are enforced and defines legal policy. It also nominates the six lay members of the Guardian Council. The head of the judiciary, currently Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahrudi, is appointed by, and reports to, the Supreme Leader.

In recent years, the hardliners have used the judicial system to undermine reforms by imprisoning reformist personalities and journalists and closing down reformist papers.

IRAN

EXPEDIENCY COUNCIL

The Council is an advisory body for the Leader with an ultimate adjudicating power in disputes over legislation between the parliament and the Guardian Council. The Supreme Leader appoints its members, who are prominent religious, social and political figures.

In October 2005, the Supreme Leader gave the Expediency Council "supervisory" powers over all branches of government - delegating some of his own authority as is permitted in the constitution.

It is not clear exactly how much this will affect the Council's influence, although observers say it is likely to strengthen the position of its present chairman, former President Hashemi Rafsanjani, who was defeated in the 2005 presidential elections by Mahmoud Amadinejad.

IRAN

ELECTORATE

Of a total population of about 65 million, more than 46 million people - all those over 18 - are eligible to vote. Young people constitute a large part of the electorate with about 50% of voters being under 30.

Voter turnout hit a record high at 80% in the 1997 elections which delivered a landslide victory for reformist President Mohammad Khatami. Women and young people were key to the vote.

But with disillusionment growing, only about 60% of the electorate voted in the final round of the 2005 election which brought hardliner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to power.



Turnout has fallen from 80% in 1997 to 60% in 2005

IRAN

PRESIDENT

The president is elected for four years and can serve no more than two consecutive terms.

The constitution describes him as the second-highest ranking official in the country. He is head of the executive branch of power and is responsible for ensuring the constitution is implemented.

In practice, however, presidential powers are circumscribed by the clerics and conservatives in Iran's power structure, and by the authority of the Supreme Leader.

It is the Supreme Leader, not the president, who controls the armed forces and makes decisions on security, defence and major foreign policy issues.

All presidential candidates are vetted by the Guardian Council, which banned hundreds of hopefuls from standing in the 2005 elections.

Conservative Tehran mayor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad became president in 2005 after he defeated former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani in a second round run-off poll. Mr Ahmadinejad is Iran's first president since 1981 who is not a cleric.

Mr Ahmadinejad replaced reformist Mohammad Khatami who was elected president in May 1997 with nearly 70% of the vote. He failed to get key reforms through the Guardian Council and was hampered further after conservatives won back a majority in parliament in elections in 2004.



President Ahmadinejad: elected in 2005

IRAN

CABINET

Members of the cabinet, or Council of Ministers, are chosen by the president. They must be approved by parliament, which in 2005 rejected four of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's initial nominees for his hardline cabinet. Parliament can also impeach ministers.

The Supreme Leader is closely involved in defence, security and foreign policy, so his office also holds influence in decision-making. Reformist ministers under former President Khatami were heavily monitored by conservatives. The cabinet is chaired by the president or first vice-president, who is responsible for cabinet affairs.

IRAN

PARLIAMENT

The 290 members of the Majlis, or parliament, are elected by popular vote every four years. The parliament has the power to introduce and pass laws, as well as to summon and impeach ministers or the president.

However, all Majlis bills have to be approved by the conservative Guardian Council.

The first reformist majority was elected in 2000, but this was overturned four years later in elections in 2004. Many reformist candidates were banned from standing.

The current speaker of the parliament is Ali Larijani, a former chief nuclear negotiator.



The current speaker, Ali Larijani, is a former chief nuclear negotiator

IRAN

ARMED FORCES

The armed forces comprise the Revolutionary Guard and the regular forces. The two bodies are under a joint general command.

All leading army and Revolutionary Guard commanders are appointed by the Supreme Leader and are answerable only to him.

The Revolutionary Guard was formed after the revolution to protect the new leaders and institutions and to fight those opposing the revolution.

The Revolutionary Guard has a powerful presence in other institutions, and controls volunteer militias with branches in every town.



Army leaders are appointed by the Supreme Leader

I R A N

INTERNATIONAL & REGIONAL ISSUES

The Nuclear Issue

Iran, much maligned for its nuclear weapon aspirations, finally struck a peaceful agreement with other world powers in 2016 with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or simply the Nuclear Deal. With this deal, Iran's nuclear program is expected to exist only as a peaceful resource. All previously existing facilities for building a nuclear arsenal are to be converted for scientific research, and low-enriched uranium stockpiles would be reduced by 98%. Iran also agreed to supervision by the International Atomic Energy Agency. With these new restrictions, Iran's "breakout" time, the amount of time to produce bomb-grade material for one nuclear weapon, has been extended to at least one year instead of the current 2-3 months. In exchange for these concessions, the rest of the world will lift some of the economic restrictions, or embargoes, that have been in place for decades. Iran will receive access to billions in frozen assets, and its economy will recover from its prolonged isolation.

IRAN

Regional Dynamics

Iran enjoys a certain regional influence, and it actively seeks to preserve its interests, even if those interests are in other countries. Iranian officials openly claim to control four Arab capitals: Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad, and Sanaa. Through its meddling in other states' domestic affairs, Iran has facilitated the progression of several deadly area conflicts. Here are a few of the times it has reached across borders.

Iraq: Iran supported the former prime minister of Iraq, Nouri al-Maliki, who was elected in 2006 after the American-led coalition that had invaded in 2003 allowed Iraq to select its own government. It was Iran's support that allowed Maliki to stay in office after a weak 2010 election, and pressure from Tehran often determined his agenda, such as blocking negotiations with Obama from succeeding or allowing Iranian planes in Iraqi airspace en route to Syria. Maliki's rule heightened sectarian tensions in the region because of his Shia affiliation. He was succeeded in 2014 by Haider al-Abadi who made **determined efforts to increase Sunni** participation in the Iraqi government. Under his rule, the state-sponsored umbrella organization known as the **Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) helped defeat the Islamic State in Iraq**. The PMF was composed of some 40 militias that were predominantly Shia Muslim groups, but also including Sunni Muslim, Christian, and Yazidi soldiers as well. hat the PMF was receiving financial support from Iran and some its members were loyal to Iranian clerics. In 2018, the PMF was officially made part of the Iraqi military and **Abadi issued** "regulations to adapt the situation of the Popular Mobilization fighters," giving them ranks and salaries equivalent to other branches of the Iraqi military. The United States has persistently **pressured Baghdad to distance itself from Iran** and urged it to dismantle the PMF. With the election of another Shia politician, Adil Abdul-Mahdi, to the office of prime minister in October 2018, economic engagement with Iran has continued. In February 2019, during an official visit by an Iranian delegation, Mahdi announced that Iraq would **not be part of U.S. sanctions** against Iran or any other people.

The Trump administration has **urged Iraq to stop buying energy** from Iran – its sole foreign supplier. The pressure on Iraq is part of the administration's push on Iraq to use sanctions to weaken Iran's economy and prompt political or policy change. Administration officials aim to coerce Iranian leaders to fully dismantle their nuclear and ballistic missile programs and curb their support for Shiite Arab militias in the Middle East. Currently, Iraq has a waiver that allows it bypass the sanctions on Iranian oil exports to zero, but they gave leeway to some countries when imposing sanctions in November. The State Department and Treasury has **granted waivers to several countries** – including Iraq, which received a 90-day extension in March 2019. The waiver stipulates that the **countries must take steps to reduce Iranian purchases** and move towards ending imports. However, Iraq relies heavily on Iranian gas imports to feed its power grid and in April 2019, Iraq's electricity ministry said it was planning to increase Iranian gas imports to from 28 million cubic meters to 35 million in June to meet the country's needs.

I R A N

Syria: Iran has had a constant ally in Syria since the 1979 revolution, mainly because Iran and Syria's ruling family, the Alawites, are both adherents of Shia Islam. Historically, Syria has aided Iran in its regional interests in Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine. Most recently, Iran has acted to support Bashar al-Assad's regime in the midst of Syria's Civil War, which began in 2011. Tehran has sent military advisors, equipment, and billions of dollars in aid. It has even assembled a fighting group called the National Defense Forces; made up of 80,000 Alawites, Shiites, and regime loyalists who fight alongside the Syrian army.

Yemen: Iran has been heavily involved in the ongoing civil war in Yemen between the government and the Houthi rebels, a group that practices Zaydi Shiism. Iran has provided money and training for the Yemeni rebels in order to wage proxy war with Saudi Arabia, its regional rival. Saudi Arabia has led a coalition of 10 Sunni nations in airstrikes against Houthi rebels, and has denounced Iran's participation in the war. As recently as April of 2016, the U.S. Navy intercepted a shipment of arms from Iran bound for Yemen.

Iran's Geopolitical Imperatives

- 1. Control the Zagros and Elburz mountains. These constitute the Iranian heartland and the buffers against attacks from the west and north.*
- 2. Control the mountains to the east of the Dasht-e Kavir and Dasht-e Lut, from Mashhad to Zahedan to the Makran coast, protecting Iran's eastern frontiers with Pakistan and Afghanistan. Maintain a line as deep and as far north and west as possible in the Caucasus to limit Turkish and Russian threats. These are the secondary lines.*
- 3. Secure a line on the Shatt al-Arab in order to protect the western coast of Iran on the Persian Gulf.*
- 4. Control the divergent ethnic and religious elements in this box.*
- 5. Protect the frontiers against potential threats, particularly major powers from outside the region.*

Iran has achieved four of the five basic goals. It has created secure frontiers and is in control of the population inside the country. The greatest threat against Iran is the one it has faced since Alexander the Great – that posed by major powers outside the region. Historically, before deep-water navigation, Iran was the direct path to India for any Western power. In modern times, the Zagros remain the eastern anchor of Turkish power. Northern Iran blocks Russian expansion. And, of course, Iranian oil reserves make Iran attractive to contemporary great powers.

I R A N

SOCIETY

Iran's population is as diverse as its geography. It has nine ethnic groups: Persian, Azeri, Gilaki, Mazandarani, Kurd, Turkmen, Arab, Lur and Balochi. For the most part, however, these groups are not meshed in one big melting pot, but rather occupy their own distinct communities in different regions of the country. By far, the Persians are the largest group accounting for over half the entire population. The Azeri make another quarter of the population, while the remaining 22 million people compose the rest of the ethnic groups.

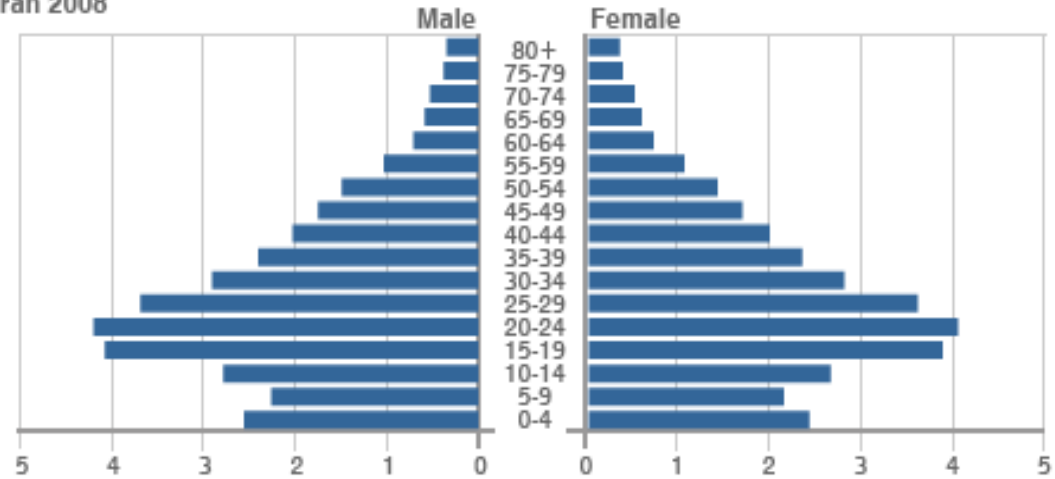
In the southwestern province of Khuzestan which borders Iraq, the majority Arab population most of whom are based in the capital city, Ahvaz, have engaged in periodic separatist activities including several bombing attacks in 2005. The Ahvazi Arabs have made claims of discrimination and have been the subject of studies by such groups as [Human Rights Watch](#) and Amnesty International.

A large majority of Iran's population (over 45 million) lives in urban areas. It has seven cities with over one-million people. While Iran has a decent health care system that extends into the rural areas, it faces increases in air and water pollution, especially in urban areas. Iran's growing urbanization will be a challenge for Iran's future.

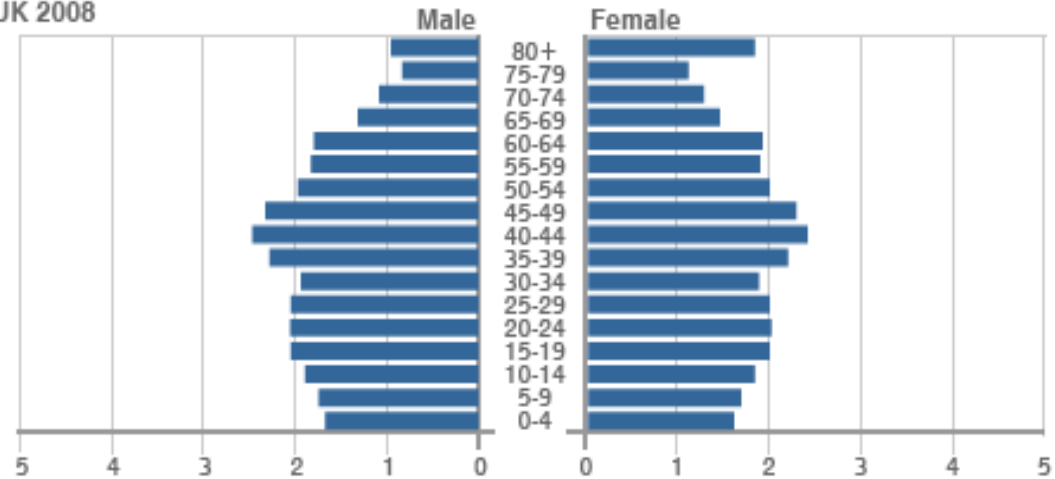
The wealth that oil has brought to Iran has enabled a virtually free and modern education system at all levels, from elementary school through university. The only stipulation at the university level, however, requires all students to serve the government for every year spent at the university. Iran's education system, which was originally revamped in the early 1970s, has raised the literacy rate to around 87%. Iran's biggest literacy challenge is to get education to be extended further into the many rural areas as well as to ensure that women are guaranteed a basic education.

POPULATION PYRAMIDS COMPARED - IRAN AND UK

Iran 2008



UK 2008



Population in millions

SOURCE: US Census Bureau

Literacy rates among young people bear comparison with much of the world, although there is a marked difference between men (87.3%) and women (77.2%) over the age of 24.

IRAN

HEALTH

Iran's health indicators are among the best in the Middle East because of a government drive over the last 20 years to improve the nation's health by focussing on primary care and disease prevention in both rural and urban areas.

In 2005 Iran spent 7.8% of its GDP on health, compared with neighbours Saudi Arabia's figure of 3.4% (2007), Iraq's 4.1% (2007) and Turkmenistan's 4.8% (2005). The UK spent 8.2% of GDP on health care in 2005.

But massive unemployment - analysts put it between 20% and 30% - has led to a "brain drain" from the country, leaving it short of (among others) health professionals, particularly doctors and dentists.

Yet life expectancy is above the global average (though nowhere near that of most of the Western world), diabetes and tuberculosis are at relatively low levels.

Only 4% of its population was undernourished in 2003, according to the World Bank, though 4.3% of under-fives were overweight - putting it a lot higher up the global "league table" of child obesity.



The government has invested heavily in health care

ECONOMY

Iran has one of the strongest-performing economies of the major oil-producing countries in the Middle East.

But critics argue it has squandered much of this wealth through imprudent public-sector spending, subsidies, corruption and inefficiency.

An International Monetary Fund report estimated that the country's non-oil fiscal deficit would rise to about 18% of its GDP by the end of the last financial year, making it even more at risk to a fall in oil prices.

While UN sanctions, imposed over its refusal to suspend its uranium enrichment programme have played some role in Iran's recent economic decline, the general feeling is that although they have made some aspects of business more difficult, they are not economically that significant.

Financial institutions and assets were targeted, deterring foreign banks from doing business in Tehran.

Petrol rationing, introduced in June 2007, sparked angry protests in which a number of petrol stations were burnt to the ground.

IRAN FACTS

- ♦ **Major trading partners:** EU (24.3% of total import/exports), China (14.3%), Japan (9.8%), South Korea (6.3%), Turkey (5.6%)
- ♦ **Economically active population:** 23.5 million (2006 estimate, CBI)
- ♦ **GDP:** 294.1 billion dollars, (2007 US estimate)
- ♦ **Unemployment:** 9.6%, rising to 20.3% among people under 24 (spring 2008, CBI)
- ♦ **Annual inflation:** 25.3% (May 2009, CBI)
- ♦ **Oil production:** 4.4m barrels per day (2006, IMF)

▶ Country profile: Iran

IRAN

ENERGY

As the world's fourth-highest oil and gas producer, Iran enjoys good economic growth, but commentators fear it is too reliant on its petrorchemical revenues.

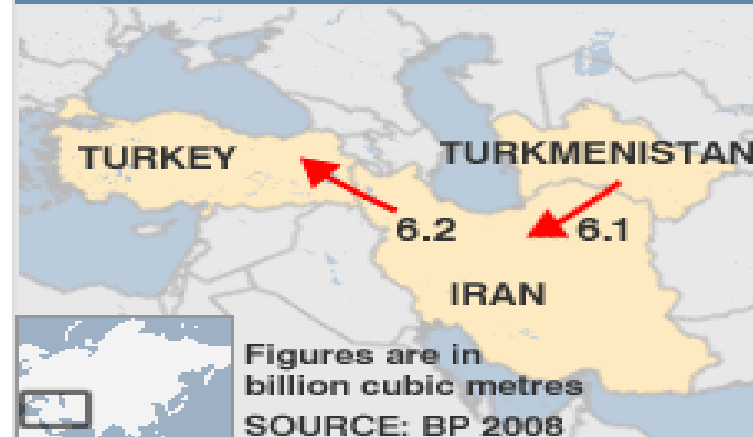
They account for 80% of its export earnings, yet a lack of domestic refining capacity means it imports around 40% of its petrol.

Much of its oil income is used to fund public spending and subsidies.

The IMF estimates that energy subsidies amount to about 17.5% of its gross domestic product in a country that has some of the cheapest petrol in the world - and fuel rationing.

And while the country boasts the biggest reserves of natural gas in the Middle East (and second only to Russia globally), its consumption is also markedly high, behind only the US and Russia.

IRAN'S GAS IMPORTS/EXPORTS



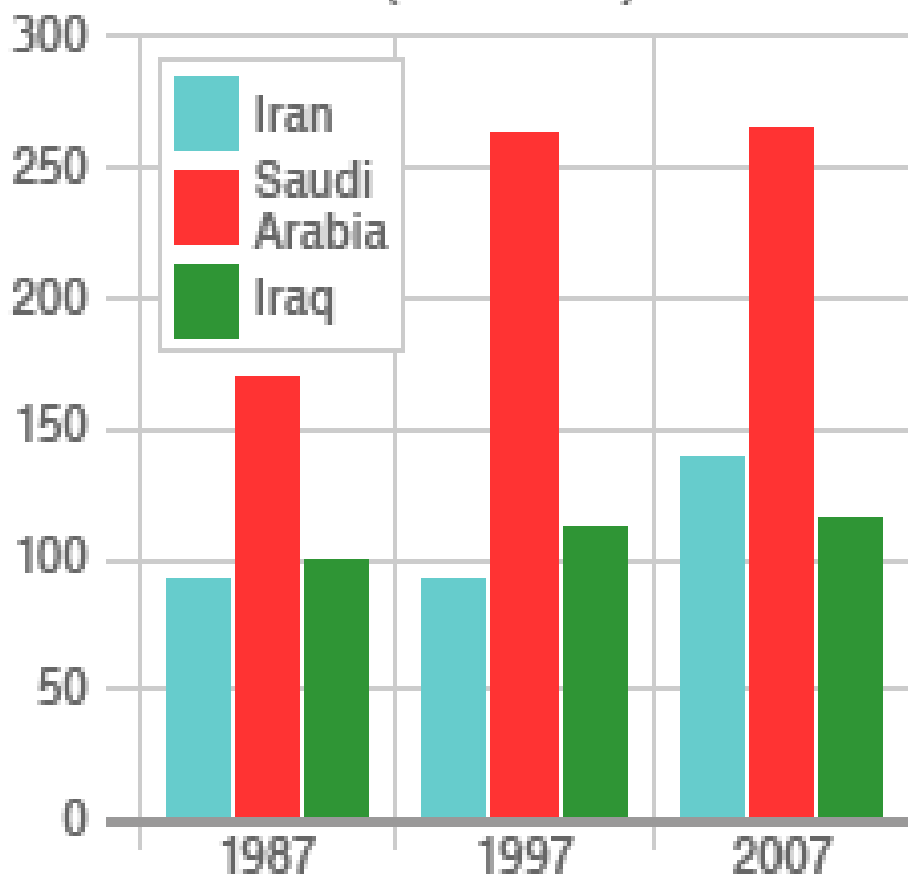
- ◆ Proven reserves 2007 - 27.80 trillion cubic m (15.7% of world total)
- ◆ Production - 111.9bn cu m (3.8%)
- ◆ Consumption - 111.8bn cu m (3.8%)

Source: BP 2008 report

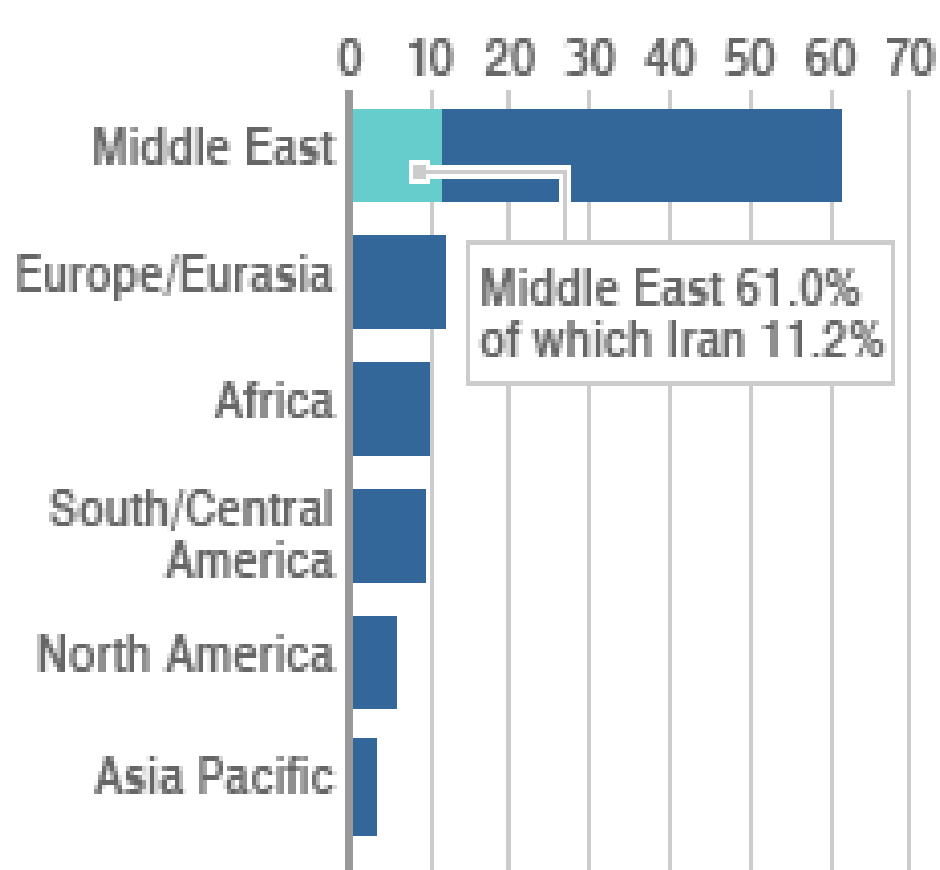
IRAN

IRAN'S OIL RESERVES COMPARED

Proved reserves (bn barrels)



World share 2007



SOURCE: BP 2008

IRAN

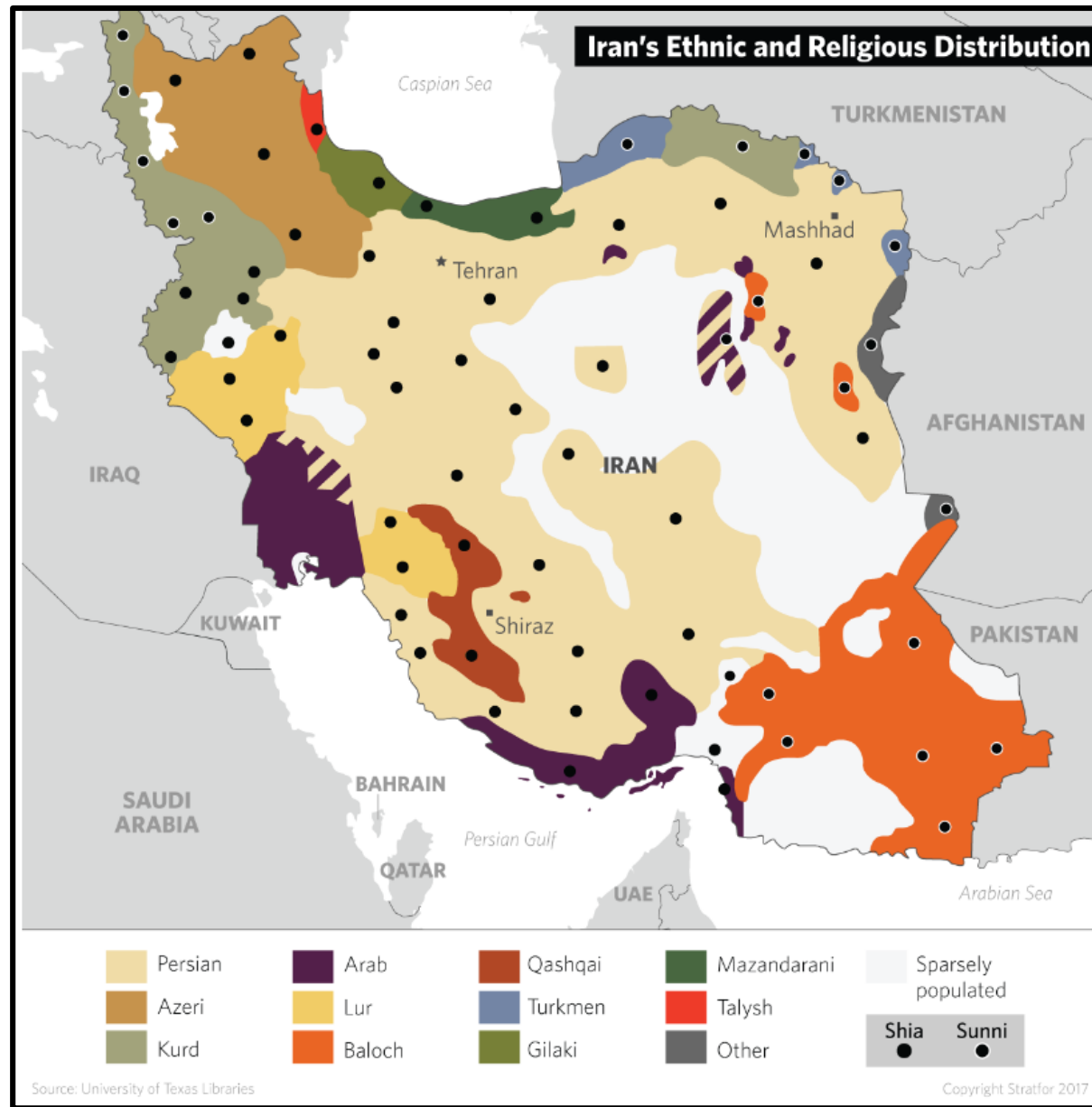
RELIGION

Although Iran has several different ethnic groups, the majority of the population, around 90 percent, adheres to Shia Islam, while most of the remainder follows Sunni Islam. Approximately 10-20% of all Muslims follow Shia Islam. Of the several sects of Shia Islam, Twelvers are dominant in Iran, as they are in Bahrain, Iraq and Lebanon. Iran has the largest population of Shia Muslims in the world.

Zoroastrianism is one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions, and it is based on the teachings of Prophet Zoroaster. It originated in ancient Iran around 3,500 years ago, and was the official religion of Persia for over 1,000 years. Zoroastrians believe that the God Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord) created the world. They believe that all elements are pure and that fire represents God's light or wisdom. They have often been portrayed as "fire worshippers" in Western media, a false representation of the faith and its believers. The Zoroastrian book of Holy Scriptures is called the Avesta. Zoroastrian beliefs can best be summed up by the maxim: "Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds", which is a creed Zoroastrians try to live by. In Zoroastrianism, humans are considered God's helpers, rather than his servants. They therefore believe that humans have more autonomy than many other religions allow for. It is believed that through man's positive choices, evil will be eradicated and god's paradise on earth will be established. Men and women, rich and poor, and young and old are all seen as equal, and the only way to be considered a better person than someone else is through good actions. Today less than 190,000 people worldwide practice Zoroastrianism. They are found in small communities across the world with regional concentrations in Iran, India and Pakistan.



Qom, Iran – Picture of the shrine of Fatima Almasomh



<https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/geopolitics-iran-holding-center-mountain-fortress>

IRAN

CULTURE

Food

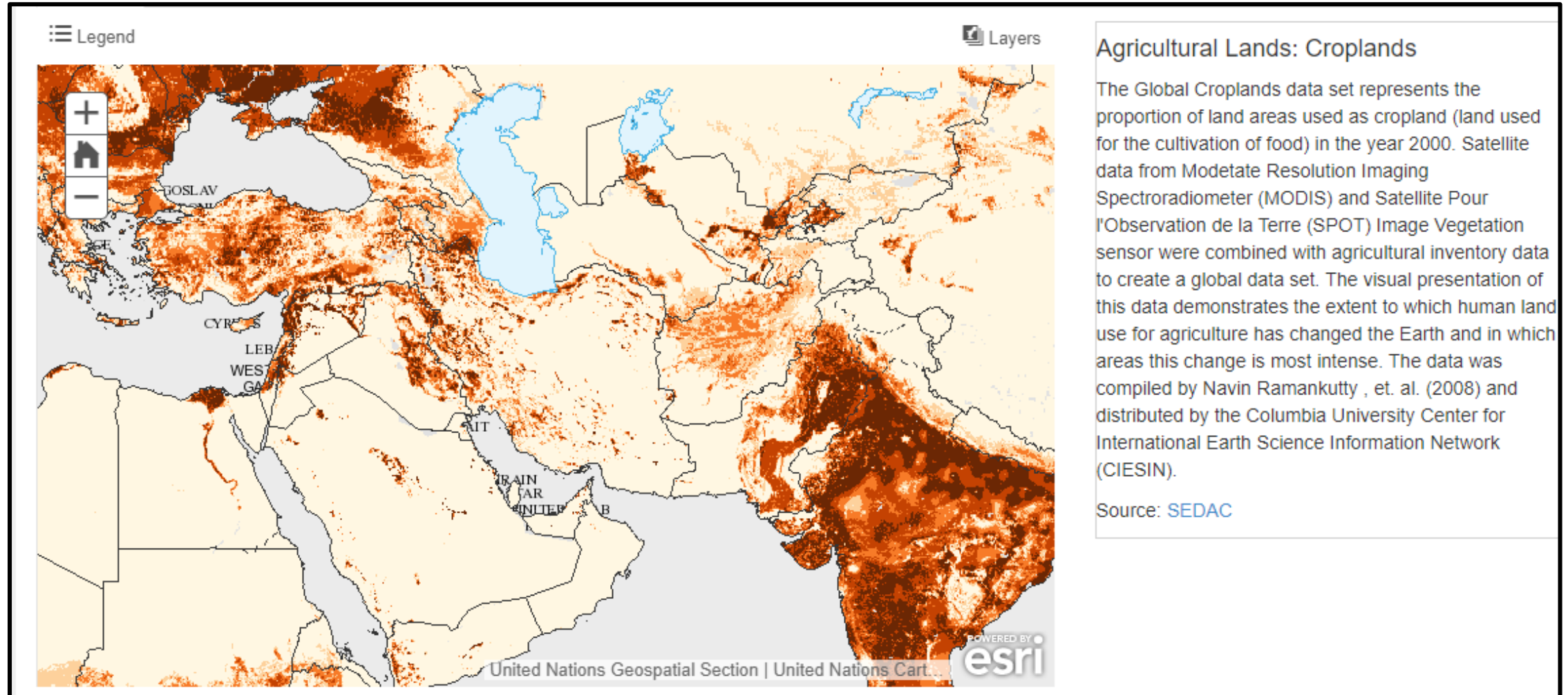
The national dish of Iran is the *chelow kebab*. Kebab is skewered, grilled meat while chelow is the Farsi word for rice. Grilled meats and vegetables feature heavily in Persian food, along with a variety of sauces, spreads or dips. Pomegranates and eggplants are frequently used in Persian food. Some of the spices that are common in Iranian cuisine are turmeric, parsley, fenugreek, mint and sumac. The rice that accompanies kebab, whether lamb, beef or chicken, is often served with butter and sumac to enhance the flavor.

Here are a few items you should order if you're at a Persian restaurant. *Khoresh* is a generic term for Iranian stews, which typically consist of herbs, fruits, and meat pieces, flavored with tomato paste, saffron, and pomegranate juice. Iran produces 90% of the world's saffron so it is a common spice in Iranian dishes. *Ghormeh Sabzi* is one kind of khoresh. This herby stew is thick and has a distinct green color from several of its ingredients, which include parsley, spinach, leeks, cilantro, kidney beans, dried limes and dried fenugreek leaves. It can be meatless or be made with seasoned lamb or beef.

Tadeeg means "bottom of the pot," and is quite literally the rice that sticks – often somewhat burnt – to the bottom of the pot. This crispy layer has soaked up the caramelized saffron from the batch of rice and adds great texture to a meal. It's especially good with the addition of zhoug, a chili paste with origins in Yemen, that is now ubiquitous in Middle Eastern cuisine. Trader Joe's even has its own version!

What do Iranians drink? Tea, tea, and more tea. Yogurt is a staple and the main ingredient in *doogh*, a sour yogurt drink with mint and cucumbers.

IRAN



Agricultural Lands: Croplands

The Global Croplands data set represents the proportion of land areas used as cropland (land used for the cultivation of food) in the year 2000. Satellite data from Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) and Satellite Pour l'Observation de la Terre (SPOT) Image Vegetation sensor were combined with agricultural inventory data to create a global data set. The visual presentation of this data demonstrates the extent to which human land use for agriculture has changed the Earth and in which areas this change is most intense. The data was compiled by Navin Ramankutty, et. al. (2008) and distributed by the Columbia University Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN).

Source: [SEDAC](#)



Yet Iran's food security is now imperiled because agriculture accounts for more than 92 percent of the country's water use but only produces about 66 percent of the food supplies for 79 million people. Tehran has to import the rest. And the intensifying "water stress" threatens to further sap agricultural output, increase import bills and aggravate fiscal burdens. Agricultural demands are even subverting food security. Some areas, such as the central Kashan plain, have been rendered unfit for farming because of soil salinity, as groundwater overdrafts sink water tables.

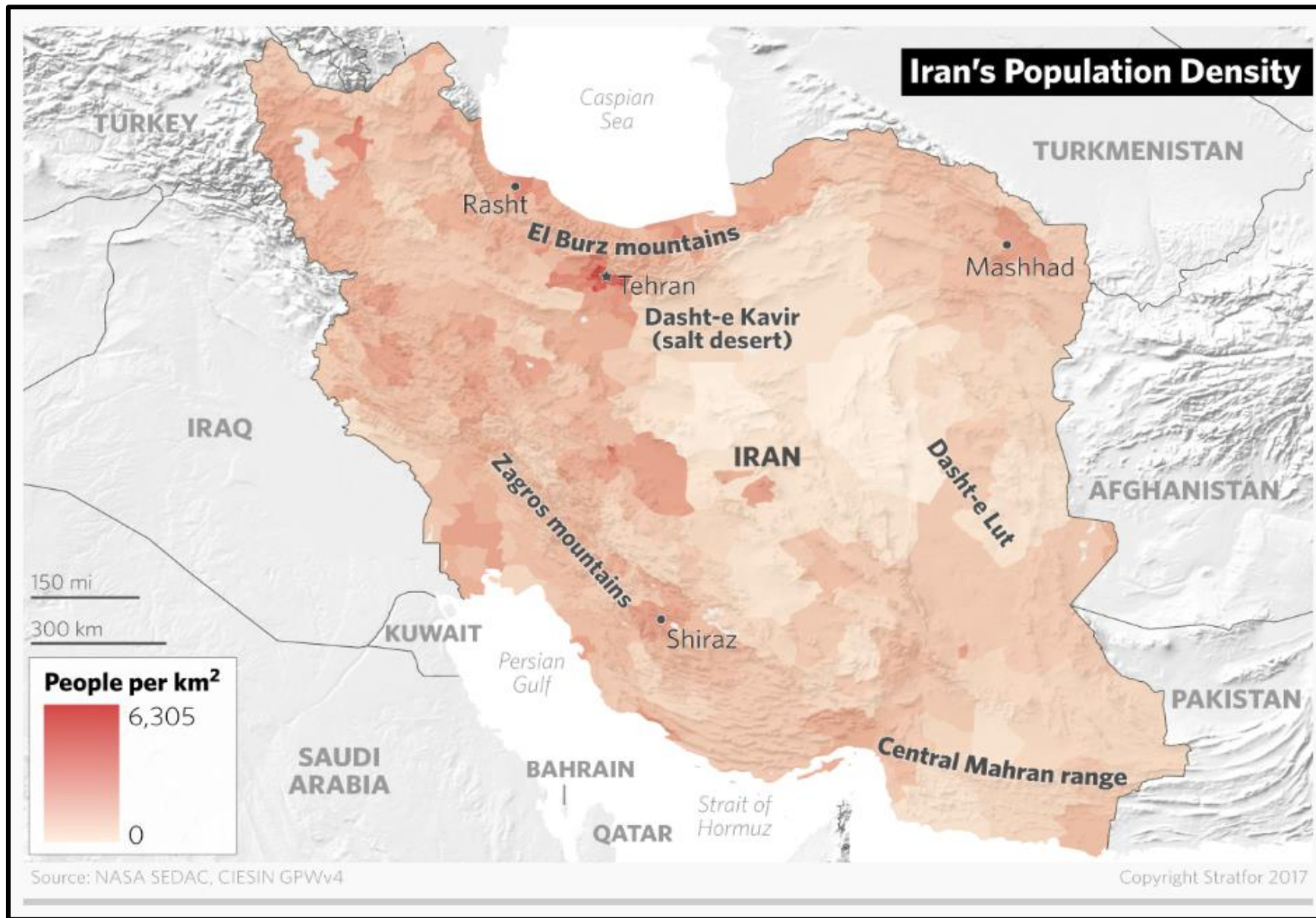
<http://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2013/oct/28/iran%E2%80%99s-environment-greater-threat-foreign-foes>

PHYSIOGRAPHY OF IRAN



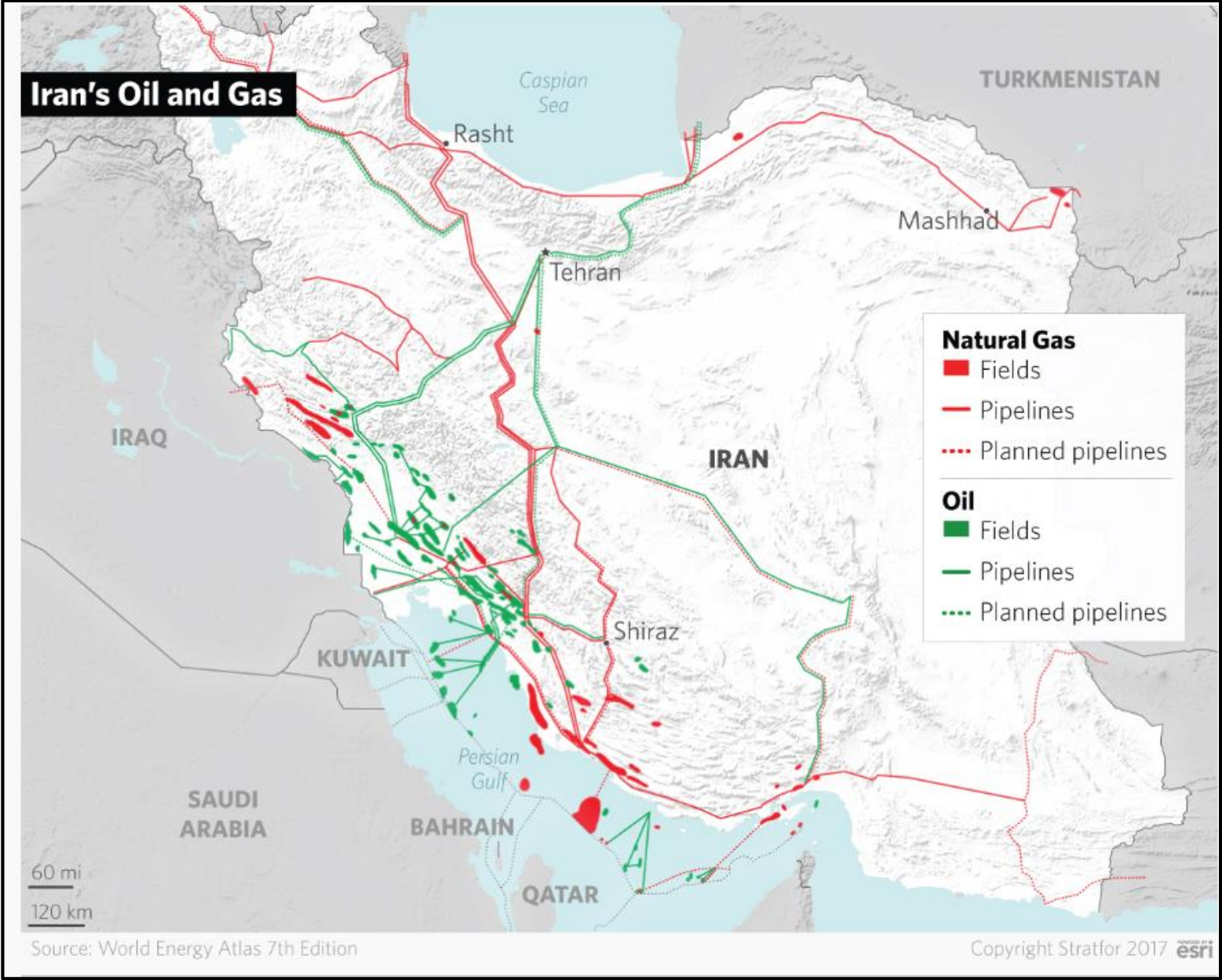
Iran's most important mountains are the Zagros. They are a southern extension of the Caucasus, running about 900 miles from the northwestern border of Iran, which adjoins Turkey and Armenia, southeast toward Bandar Abbas on the Strait of Hormuz. The first 150 miles of Iran's western border is shared with Turkey. It is intensely mountainous on both sides. South of Turkey, the mountains on the western side of the border begin to diminish until they disappear altogether on the Iraqi side. From this point onward, south of the Kurdish regions, the land on the Iraqi side is increasingly flat, part of the Tigris-Euphrates basin. The Iranian side of the border is mountainous, beginning just a few miles east of the border. Iran has a mountainous border with Turkey, but mountains face a flat plain along the Iraq border. This is the historical frontier between Persia – the name of Iran until the early 20th century – and Mesopotamia (“land between two rivers”), as southern Iraq is called.

The one region of the western border that does not adhere to this model is in the extreme south, in the swamps where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers join to form the Shatt al-Arab waterway. There the Zagros swing southeast, and the southern border between Iran and Iraq zigzags south to the Shatt al-Arab, which flows south 125 miles through flat terrain to the Persian Gulf. To the east is the Iranian province of Khuzestan, populated by ethnic Arabs, not Persians. Given the swampy nature of the ground, it can be easily defended and gives Iran a buffer against any force from the west seeking to move along the coastal plain of Iran on the Persian Gulf.



<https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/geopolitics-iran-holding-center-mountain-fortress>

Iran's population is concentrated in its mountains, not in its lowlands, as with other countries. That's because its lowlands, with the exception of the southwest and the southeast (regions populated by non-Persians), are uninhabitable. Iran is a nation of 70 million mountain dwellers. Even its biggest city, Tehran, is in the foothills of towering mountains. Its population is in a belt stretching through the Zagros and Elbroz mountains on a line running from the eastern shore of the Caspian to the Strait of Hormuz. There is a secondary concentration of people to the northeast, centered on Mashhad. The rest of the country is lightly inhabited and almost impassable because of the salt-mud flats.



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Water

Iran's fresh water supplies are now under unsustainable strains. Ninety percent of the country—which is slightly smaller than Alaska—is arid or semi-arid, and an estimated two-thirds of its rainfall evaporates before it can replenish rivers. As a result, Iran provides more than half of its water needs by drawing from underground aquifers, but public usage is rapidly draining the subterranean reservoirs. At current rates of overuse, twelve of Iran's thirty-one provinces will exhaust their groundwater reserves within the next 50 years.

Iran's economic policies have exacerbated the problem. Groundwater is free to well owners and, due to government subsidies, users pay a fraction of the actual energy costs for pumping water to the surface. Iran annually pumps 4 billion cubic meters of groundwater that nature does not replenish.



Iran's surface waters face similar pressures. Most of Iran's rivers are hydrologically closed or nearly so, meaning their renewable water supply is already committed. So they have little spare capacity for regularly recurring dry years – when precipitation falls below the average – much less to meet the demands of a growing population. Water use upstream also increasingly impinges on water needs downstream. In the northwest, Iran's dams (such as the Karun-3, left), irrigation systems, and drought have so diminished the 13 rivers feeding into Lake Urmia that the Middle East's largest lake has shrunk more than 60 percent since 1995. In the southwest, Lake Bakhtegan, once Iran's second largest lake, has dried up completely under the combined impacts of prolonged drought and damming on the Kor River.

Agriculture Imperiled

Iran's water problems now risk undermining the national economy. The agricultural sector produces 10 percent of Iran's GDP and employs a quarter of the labor force. It also supports national food security, a top priority since the 1979 revolution was carried out in the name of "the oppressed." Indeed, Tehran subsidizes producers and consumers alike in a dual strategy to promote self-sufficiency in staple crops by bolstering both supply and demand.

IRAN

Clothing

Modest dress is expected; however, the Iranian fashion might be considered more “westernized” than many other Middle Eastern nations. Pants and tunics are common for females, as well as long dresses. The cultural revolution that coincided with the Islamic Revolution introduced guidelines on how women should appear when out in public; initially this was limited to women in government and academia. By 1984, it was decreed that all women must abide by the new dress code. The *chador* — a one-piece garment that goes over the head and upper, if not entire, body — became the norm. In intervening years, many women have transitioned to a very loose interpretation of the rule, using fashionable scarves that only partially cover the hair.

Art

Iranians are famous for more than just Persian rugs; they also have developed beautiful paintings, calligraphy, pottery and metal and stone pieces. Up until the 1950s art could only be created for an academic purpose. This change happened after the death of the famous painter Kamal-ol-Molk, who symbolized the strict rules of academic paintings. While it is no longer created for purely academic purposes, it is still highly influenced by social and religious conditions. Paintings tend to portray people, rather than just landscapes.

IRAN

Literature

Persian literature has been particularly marked by poetry. The first significant Persian poet was **R?dak?**. He flourished in the 10th century, when the S?m?nids were at the height of their power. His reputation as a court poet and as an accomplished musician and singer has survived, although little of his poetry has been preserved.

Forugh Farrokhzad (1935-1967) is regarded by many as one of Iran's most influential female poets of the 20th century. Her poetry was banned in Iran after the revolution for more than ten years. Written in Persian, her work is acclaimed for its daring expression of the hidden emotions of Iranian women. Her works have been translated into Arabic, English, French, German, and Russian amongst other languages. Farrokhzad's most famous work is *Let Us Believe in the Beginning of the Cold Season* (1974), which was published after her death.

Sadegh Hedayat (1903-1951) is celebrated as one of the greatest Iranian writers of the early 20th century. Hedayat was born in Tehran to an upper class family, and was given the opportunity to travel to Europe at a young age, studying in both Belgium and France. Inspired by western literature and also by Iran's history and folklore, Hedayat's works are renowned for criticizing religion and its major influence on Iranian life. Writing in a range of forms including short stories, plays, critical essays and novels, Hedayat's most famous work is *The Blind Owl* from 1937, woven together with thought provoking symbols that explore Hedayat's national and spiritual condemnation, as well as the isolation he felt due to alienation from his peers.

IRAN

Music

There is a rich history of musical tradition in Iran. Archaeological evidence of musical instruments dates back to 800 BCE, and records show that music was important to each new succession of Persian society. Rulers were often patrons of the arts. Instruments such as harps, lutes, flutes, and bagpipes were played, expressing the joys, loves, and sorrows of the human experience and Iranian life. Persian music became the foundation for Islamic music. However, as the Shia influence grew in Iran, music became less popular because some Shia clerics looked unfavorably upon it. In the 19th century, elements of western music began to influence Persian music.

The finest examples of Persian music were exhibited with the Golha Radio Programs from 1956-1979. Beautiful music was broadcast by the Iranian government, as well as the best of classical and modern poetry, recited with musical accompaniment. It was the prestigious nature of these broadcasts that shifted public view of music as a fine art and its creators as virtuosos and maestros.

Today, Persian pop music is growing in popularity throughout the Middle East led by pop bands such as the Arian Band. Persian pop, also known as Iranian pop and Farsi pop, is the combination of pop music style with lyrics in Persian and Farsi. Hip hop is burgeoning in the country as well, particularly with the youth population, going under the name 021, the zip code for Tehran, where most of the artists are. The artist Hichkas is considered the godfather of hip hop in Iran, and he started the movement in the early 2000s. Most of the rap artists making this music are working underground or abroad, like Salome MC, Iran's first female rapper who lives in Japan.

Iranian officials have deemed this music appropriate to listen to as long as it is decent by religious standards. The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance must issue a permit before an album can be released. They are also responsible for deeming the music "decent." The Ministry estimates that only 20 percent of the music reviewed is identified as appropriate.

Sites



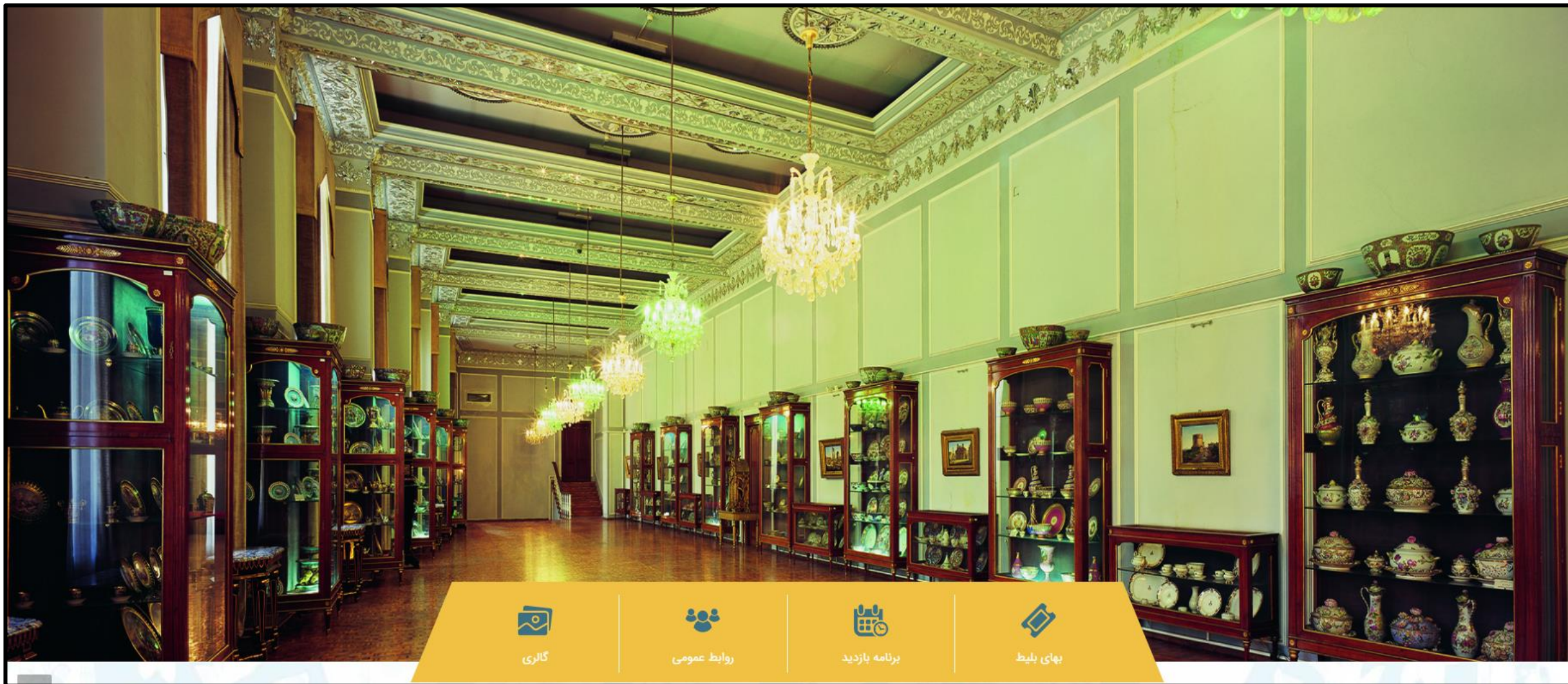
Iran is the home to one of the oldest known civilizations and has been left with numerous historical sites. Evidence of the country's rich history can be seen in its ancient cities and in the artifacts housed in museums. Altogether, Iran hosts 19 UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The ruins of Persepolis, which was the center of power and grandeur of the Persian Empire, is located near the city of Shiraz. Persepolis is the Greek name for "City of the Persians". Persepolis was the capital of the Achaemenid dynasty, and King **Darius the Great** ruled the Persian Empire from the city between 522-486 BCE. Its ruins are among the best known and most visited archaeological sites in the world. When you visit the site today you will see the massive columns and former palaces, innumerable reliefs depicting nationalities that once walked through there, and three sepulchers on the hillside behind the ruins, as well as the **Gate of All Nations**. Persepolis became a World Heritage site in 1979.

The **Golestan Palace** was the seat of government for the Qajar dynasty. The architecture is a mix of early Persian design and European influence. The palace holds pools, green spaces, and mosaic facades as well as masterpieces from painter Kamal ol-Molk. Golestan Palace became a world heritage site in 2013. The palace is located right by Tehran's grand bazaar.

Iran has also built modern structures and cultural centers that bridge the traditional and modern cultures, such as Tehran's Azadi Tower. Through the links below you can read more about some of Iran's most famous sites.

ISTANA GOLESTAN



گالری



روابط عمومی

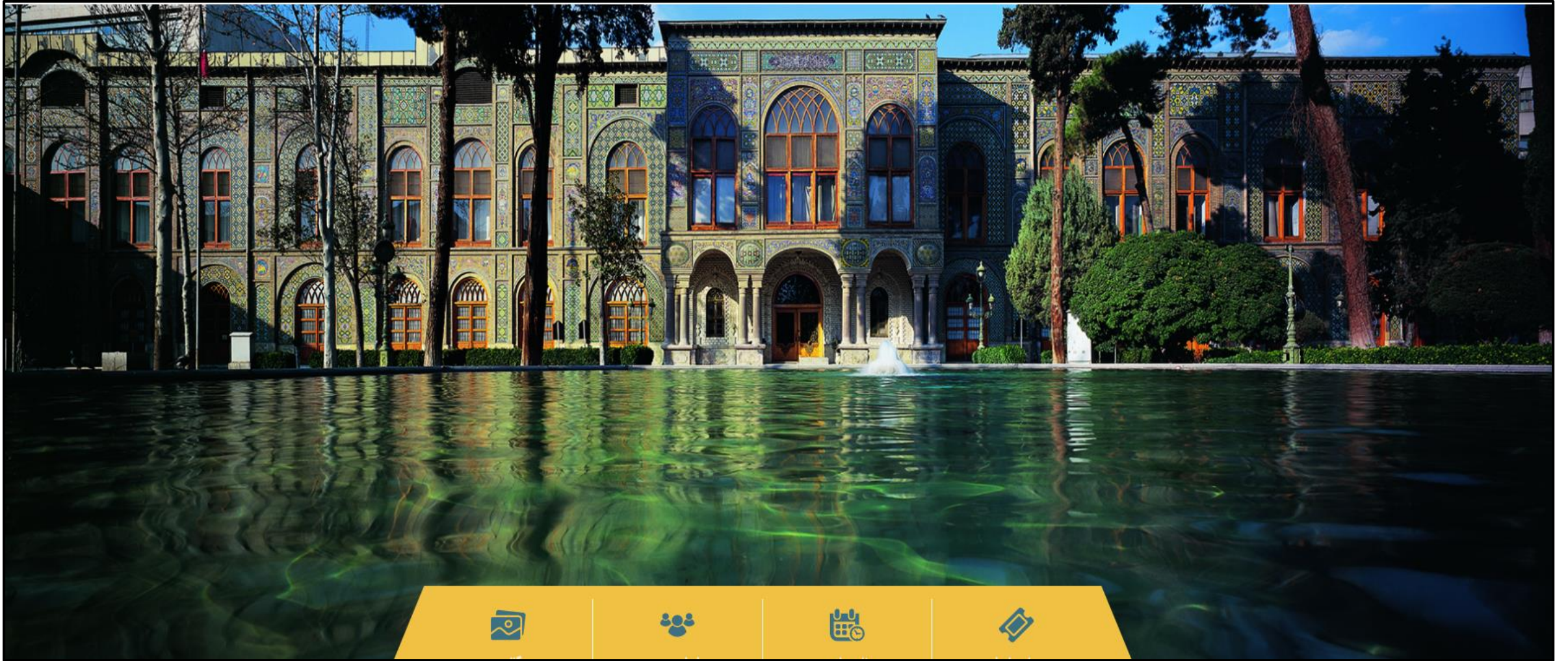


برنامه بازدید

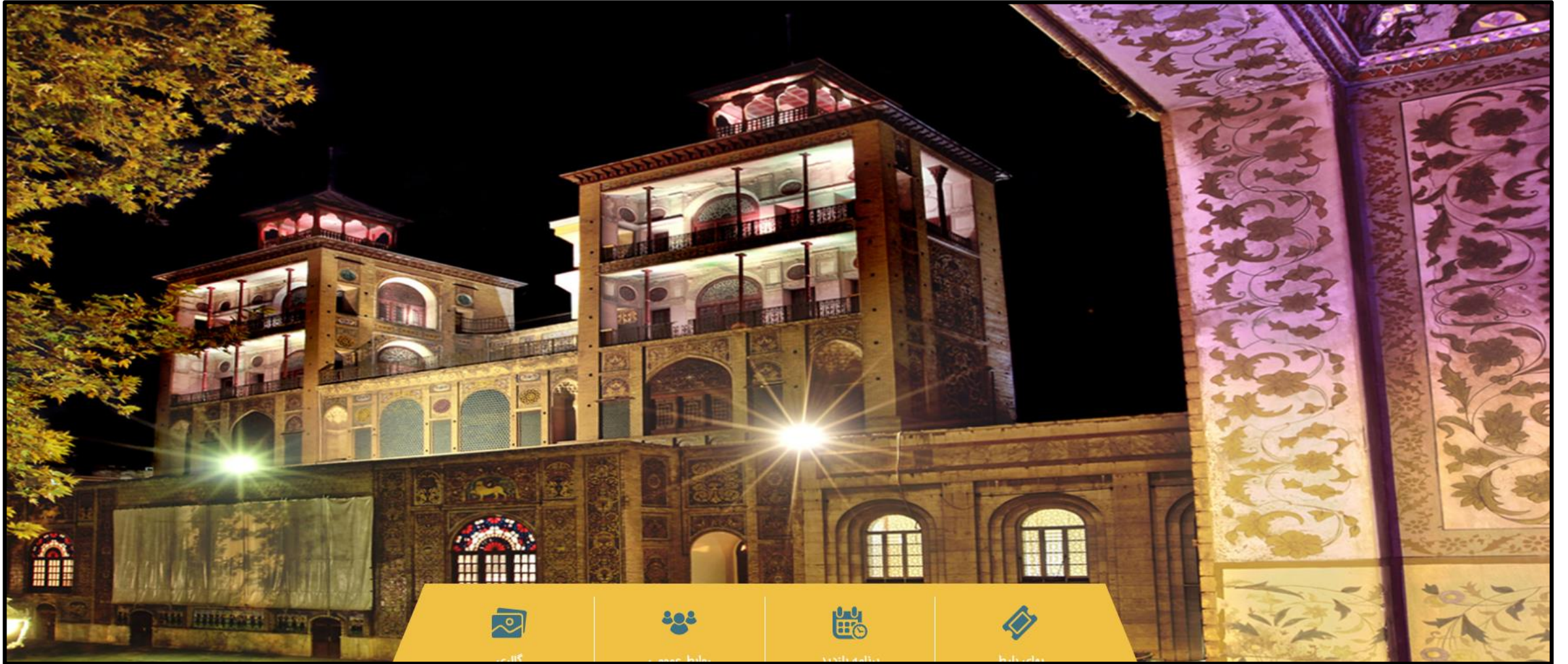


بهای بلیط

ISTANA GOLESTAN



ISTANA GOLESTAN



MASJID ISFAHAN



Northern façade and northern eyvan of the mosque © MJIB

AZADI TOWER

