IRAN Briefing Paper

Medford High School

Platini Nguyen, John Chambers Committee on Governance Briefing Paper Assignment

Before the Revolution of 1979, that would change Iran to the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iran was under the rule of the “Sha” Muhammad Reza. Under Reza, Iran became a one-party state. However by attempting to secularize the government and capitalizing the economy, the people of Iran decided to change regimes and follow a lead; whose belief reflected their own. By the official vote of the people, Iranians had voted the monarchy out of power and establish the Islamic Republic. Under the rule of Ayatollah Khomeini, a constitution was written up, which drew up the Assembly of Religious Experts. There are many cleavages in Khomeini’s vision of the state, in which a policy of “equal with difference” is established, allowing many discriminations to reflect how Iran is as a whole.

In Iran, religion is based on all aspects of life, including the government. Known as a theocracy, the clergy exercises supreme religion and laws are bound by religion. In this form of government, the Council of Guardians examine legislation with Islam and determine the election of candidates on their religious levels. But the Assembly of Religious Experts is whom have the authority of electing and removing the Supreme leader. The supreme leader sets the overall policies of the state, as well as choosing the key figures in the Islamic Republic. His power allows him to elect the head of the Judiciary , members of the Council of Guardians as well as the Expediency Council. However he does not chose the who the president is, the president is elected by elections held every four years. Similar to our government, but with restrictions. The president has to be a Twelver Shiite and a man. The president’s job is to lead the executive, sign bills into laws, and chose members of the cabinet and governors. The difference is the president is not the most powerful ruler, but the supreme leader is, to rule over the people.

There are 68 million people living in Iran, whom beliefs create social cleavages within the Iranian society. There are many ethnic groups, but more than half of Iranians are Persian. The Iranian people are heavily ruled and followed under religion. 89 percent of all Iranians are Shi Muslims. While ten are Sunnis, the other one being a mix of Jews, Christians, Zoroastrian, and Baha’I. With the constitution of 1979, religious minorities are given basic rights and to be recognized by the government.

On the Transparency International index, Iran gets a 1.9. This is a fairly bad rating, but it is not the worst. Iran has had a history of being very “opaque” when it comes to their politics. This index compares countries and how “corrupt” they are thought to be. The US has a 7.5, which means fairly low corruption, but that there is still some.

The country holds elections for president and some other governmental officials. These elections are highly monitored by the guardian council and the supreme leader, both of which remove thousands of candidates that they feel are not suitable for the position they are running for. This last summer, there was an election for president. The two top candidates were Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the standing president, and Mir HosseinMousavi who was the last prime minister of Iran in 1989, and is considered a “reformist”. Ahmadinejad had won the election by a landslide. This caused thousands to take to the streets of Tehran. The people thought the election had been compromised by the government so that Ahmadinejad would win.

These protests lasted for days, and many were killed due to intervention of armed forces. Casualties included innocent civilians that were not even involved. The guardian council did a “recount” and announced Ahmadinejad to be the true winner. Eventually, after a while, the protests died down, but the movement for reform still exists.

Iran also has a developing nuclear program that several countries, including the US are against. The government has told the UN that the program is only for energy, but this is highly disbelieved by many, who believe that their uranium enrichment projects will lead to development of Nuclear Weapons. George W Bush coined the term “axis of Evil” which consists of Iran, and two of its allies, North Korea and Iraq, which refers to how the countries could pose a threat on the world stage.

According to how the first Ayatollah wanted the government to work, the position and power of Supreme Leader was supposed to be dissolved to a group of a few senior clerics. This has never happened. The difference between the first Ayatollah, Khomeini, and the current one (Khamenei) is significant. The latter has been quoted to say that “economics is for donkeys”. Obviously, someone who could say that should not be in charge of a country. This coupled with a president who believes that Israel should be wiped from the face of the earth and that the holocaust did not happen, are the obvious makings for a corrupt, and dysfunctional government.

Mike Murphy, Rafael Moure, and Oscar Jacob

EPIIC Briefing Paper

Southeast Security

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 The nation of Iran is one of the key players in the Southeast Asian region. The movements made, both internally and externally, by Iran have a large impact on their surrounding neighbors. As one of the area’s only nations actively pursuing nuclear weaponry, and the most powerful of the modern theocracies, Iran has set itself up for many conflicts with nations in its immediate area and on a global scale.

 Iran’s internal security is overseen primarily by the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC). The SNSC replaced Supreme National Defense Council in 1989. The SNSC was created during the process of revising the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and was meant to oversee and preserve the “Islamic Revolution”. The constitution states three major responsibilities of the SNSC: To determine national defense policies, to coordinate political activities in relation to these security policies, and to allocate resources for internal and external defense. In addition to these classic roles, the SNSC has the leading role in Iran’s nuclear program. As it has expanded, the SNSC has created subcommittee, including the defense and national security subcommittees. The hierarchy of the SNSC includes the heads of the Executive, Legislative, and Judiciary powers, the Chief of the Supreme Command Council of the Armed Forces, the official in charge of the Plan and Budget Organization, two representatives of appointed by the Supreme Leader, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Information, and the highest authorities in the army and Islamic Revolution’s Guards Corps (IRGC).

 The Iranian Army (Artesh) and the Iranian Republican Guard Corps (Pasdaran) are parts of Iran’s Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics (MODAFL), which oversees external security and handles administrative matters of the regular armed forces of Iran. Established in 1989, the MODAFL’s chain of command flows from senior officers separated by division, fleet, and wing and moves down through intermediate level commanders to section commanders and their staffs. The IRGC follows a similar chain of command, only separated geographically from local commander, to provincial commanders (given the title of colonels), and provincial general commanders (generals). The Joint Staff of the Armed Forces oversees all operational matters of the Pasdaran and the National Police.

 The civilian government in Iran has a policy of using the military in domestic issues. If there is a need for force, even against Iranian citizens, the army is called in. Recently there has been a surge in demonstrations. The government has called in the Army to suppress these demonstrations. Suppression has meant firing on and killing protestors. International attention was given to the death of Neda Soltan, a bystander who was shot and killed while observing a protest. This drew attention to the use of military force in Iran, as she was shot by Army forces.

 There has been a large civil conflict in Iran resulting from the most recent presidential elections. There was a controversy over the legitimacy of the election, with many claiming that the incumbent, Ahmadinejad had the results of the election changed to win. The results became more skeptical when the opponent Mossavi, lost by a large margin in his native region.

 After the Revolution, the production of alcohol was limited in Iran. Islamic law forbids the consumption of alcohol, so leaders forbade its production, and demanded that Bitrex be added to liquor, making it too bitter to drink. There is an illicit liquor trade in Iran, and every month tens of thousands of bottles are confiscated by the government. The profits from being involved in this trade make it worth the potential consequences for getting caught.

 According the Iranian Health Ministry, Iran has a serious drug problem with over 3.7 million addicts in the country. This problem stems from the rampant drug trade that plagues Iran that the Iranian government is having a difficult time stopping. The Iranian Government states that over 3,000 security officers have lost their lives fighting the drug trade and they have put billions of dollars into preventing this trade by creating defenses alone the 1,800 kilometer border with Pakistan and Afghanistan. Despite these efforts, the sale of illegal narcotics is still growing in the middle east and around the world since the demand in Europe is increasing. The Iranian Government has called for increased financial support from the European Union for counternarcotics forces since the majority of drugs passing through or originating from Iran are headed for Europe.

 The recent rapid urbanization in Iran has created a series of crime problems that the Iranian Government has not been able to adequately cope with. Over 60% of inmates are incarcerated for drug related charges and other problems leading to crime are poverty and class polarization. The expanding crime rate has led to an overcrowding of the court system. This in turn causes the procrastination of the proceedings, some of which drag for months and years, entangling those citizens who are referred to the courts. Those who are convicted are forced into the Iranian prison system which is just as degenerate. Citizens often disappear into state jails, never to be seen again and the jails that have been examined are not adequate to hold all the inmates that Iran claims it has.

 Iran’s nuclear program has a significant effect on its international relations. The Iranian government has the position of using the threat of nuclear weapons as a negotiating piece. Iran may be enriching uranium; the United Nations is unclear on whether there is a covert operation for creating nuclear weapons. Iran uses this possibility to intimidate other countries in the region.

 After the Islamic Revolution in 1979, many of the more educated citizens fled Iran. Most of these citizens have filed for refugee status in nations like the United States. This has led to a general lack of intelligent thinkers and reformers in Iran, and there is little progress in this area.

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Nima Jama, Sarah Mason February 28, 2010

AP Comparative Government – Period 5 Briefing Paper Assignment

**Committee on Economic Challenges**

 Since the time of the Pahlavi’s, Iran’s economy is known as a rentier state, which means that it receives rents from other countries for a particular good, which serves as the basis of the entire economy. In Iran’s case, this good is oil. They make most of their income by leasing out oil fields to other countries which greatly increases their income. Because of this, they have not needed to rely on its citizens for domestic taxes. However, the rentier state in Iran can be risky at times because it is heavily dependant on one product. This means that instability plagues Iran since employment, development, and many other factors depend on the price of oil. In order to understand Iran’s economy, we must understand its current situation, policies, and development, including its reliance on developmental assistance, aid from other countries, the role of remittances, the employment and education situation, and any new economic and development innovations.

 Iran has the second largest economy in the Middle East and North Africa regions (Ilias). And today, Iran is the second largest oil producer from the members of OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) (Daneu Notes). Because of factional disagreements between conservatives and reformists, there is a lot of struggle with how the economy should be handled and organized. The conservatives support having religious leaders as economic policy-makers, while the reformists want secular leaders. This dispute between these two factions has lead to many of Iran’s economic problems today. For example, there are high unemployment rates as well as high poverty levels. In fact, the unemployment rate in 2008 was 12.5% and in 2002, and one-fifth of Iranians lived below the poverty line (Ilias). Although they have high economic growth rates, of about 6.4% annually, there are still many internal and external problems (Ilias). Some other internal problems include very high inflation, mismanagement, and incompetence. These problems all have roots in their political culture, which has never had an emphasis on dealing with economic issues.

 Iran’s current President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has certainly not helped with Iran’s current economic situation and its policies. For example, in 2009, he got rid of a state planning board that was created under the shah. It was a group of people who were very highly skilled with giving out construction contracts to the Revolutionary Guard. However, he eradicated this potentially beneficial board. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has not made economics a priority, and he even stated, ‘I pray to God that I will never know about economics’ (“The populist’s problem”).

Iran has long been subject to sanctions and embargos by the United States and more recently the United Nations because of its uranium and nuclear related programs and support for terrorist activities (Ilias). These sanctions have contributed to Iran’s international isolation. Right now, Japan and China are the leading export partners while “Western” Germany and Italy are its leading import partners (Daneu notes). Iran has recently signed a new trade agreement between itself and Iraq to revamp their weak trade flow. This and agreements with countries in the region such as Syria is a response for those Western-backed sanctions. And with success in the past few years, Iran is looking to double its trade with Iraq to 8 billion in 2010 (Aref.).

Iran is classified as a developing country because it is full of corruption on many levels; therefore, other countries must assist in helping Iran become a developed and more successful country. One organization that helps Iran with development is the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). Part of UNDAF’s millennium development goals (MDGs) is improving the economic performance and generating employment (UNDAF 3). This is especially important in a country like Iran because there is a great lack of competent leaders and people who are educated on economic issues.

Despite the sanctions, aid is given to Iran from the United Nation’s Developmental Assistance Framework to meet global targets by the year 2015 (UNDAF). Because of rapid urbanization, pollution caused by fossil fuels, low energy efficiency, waste disposal and etc., Iran’s diverse fauna and floral are continuing to deteriorate. The UN is continuing to support Iran in its effort to reverse these negatives inclinations. And because Iran is prone to natural disasters (100 earthquakes in the first four months of 2002), the UN will also support disaster management and vulnerability reduction of earthquakes, flood, and droughts that occur. Improving health and education as well as preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS remain at the top of the aid-receiving agenda (UNDAF). What is surprising is that the United States indirectly gave money for nuclear aid to countries like Iran and Syria by being the biggest financial contributors to the UN’s body’s program that promotes the peaceful use of nuclear energy (Gorman).

One important aspect of Iran is that 70% of Iran’s population is under 30 years of age (Daneu notes). This is relevant to the economy because there are not enough economically adept people who can help solve Iran’s problems, especially after what was known as the ‘brain drain’ during the Revolution of 1979. This is another reason why Iran has so many problems with its economy. Also, this means that there are not enough employment opportunities for people. This is best exemplified by a statistic which says that the highest unemployment rate is among people in the 15-24 age group (UNDAF 4).

 In Iran, education is important and very much part of their culture. Under the Constitution, it is mandatory for children to have an elementary education (Education in Iran-Part-I). Iran has a rigorous education system where every student takes an exam after every year of grade school which determines the promotion to the next grade level. And after every cycle (i.e. elementary, middle, high school) there are nation-wide exams that determine the student’s faith. After 8th grade, the student chooses whether to move on to a normal academic track or a vocational track in high school (Iran embassy). Education in Iran has become more accessible to everyone. In fact, in 2002 for the first time, female students in universities outnumbered the male students. And because of the mandatory elementary school education, the literacy rate is relatively high compared to previous rates; women – 73 percent and men – 86 percent (Daneu notes).

Iran’s innovations are not focused on improving the economy; rather, they are centered on improving weapons (though this is not highly publicized), education, and improving the military. One newer aspect of the Iran’s innovations is its improvements in the military, known as the “Iranian Cyber Army” which censors websites so that its citizens may not view its contents or so that comments cannot be made that speak out against the Iranian government.

 Iran’s economic situation is very complex, and the problems that it faces today are deeply rooted in its political culture and its history. The faction of the conservatives versus the reformists in Iran has been one of the major sources of tension in how Iran should handle its economy, and it has caused many of its current issues.

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02/28/10

Period 5

**Committee on Resources:**

**Iran Briefing Paper**

The Islamic Republic of Iran is classified to have a developing economy. In spite of its vast resources in natural gas and oil, government corruption and poor distribution efforts have left many of its citizens without the benefits of the refineries. Accordingly, the population operates on the few resources available through arable land and advance irrigation systems. However, these same advancements and instant industrialization have brought about difficulties regarding global warming and climate change. Despite the consequences, Iran continues functions as a primary economy country through the extraction of minerals and oil. If Iran aspires to be an advanced capitalist or even newly industrialized nation, it would need to further solidify its food security. Iran’s resources coupled with the efforts made by the government and citizens have brought about progress and advancement.

Efforts in Iran have been made to improve both its water and land resources. The water supply in Iran has undergone drastic improvements, particularly in terms of improved access for urban populated areas. According to estimates made by Joint Monitoring Program, access to cleaner water supply was 99 percent in urban areas such as Teheran and 84 percent in the more rural areas. Seasonal rainfall and extreme climates have denied Iran of major rivers and lakes4. However, these same factors have attributed to Iran’s development in regards to water supply and access. Examples of development include construction projects to build dams, reservoirs and other forms of infrastructure4. Accordingly, these irrigation mediums provide drinking water supply for rural areas and small towns. Previous to all advancement and development, the water sector in Iran was largely decentralized5. Provinces were accountable and in charge of their own water services and provision. This changed in 1990 with the approval of the Provincial Water and Wastewater Companies law4. Modern day Iran has drastically improved their water resources, a parallel also evident with its land. Aforementioned, rainfall is highly seasonal and generally occurs between the months of October and March. This, coupled with the fact that most of Iran is generally mountainous terrain, renders most of the land not arable5. Only about 11 percent of Iran’s land surface is considered arable5. The most productive and fertile agricultural land borders the Caspian Sea, which is 5.5 percent of Iran’s total area5. In spite of these hindrances, Iran capitalizes on what arable land it has. Their advance irrigation system and extreme climate temperatures allow for a diverse crop production. These crops include [wheat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wheat), [barley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barley), [figs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Figs), [pomegranates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pomegranates), [cotton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cotton), [sugarcane](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sugarcane), [pistachios](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pistachio) and [saffron](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saffron), with the latter two as the world’s largest producer4. Surprisingly, Iran’s 11 percent arable land and agriculture activities accounts for 20 percent of the Gross Domestic Product6. As evident, these advancements and industrialization have had its benefits and negatives; the latter being contributions to global warming and climate change.

Climate change will have a dramatic impact on Iran and its environment. The abundance of fossil fuels in Iran has discouraged the advancement of alternative fuels resources. Accordingly, in urbanized areas, vehicle emissions, refinery operations, and industrial effluents contribute to worsen the air quality5. Moreover, between 1985 and 2005, increases in energy usage have tripled the carbon emissions of Iran5. Temperature changes would most likely devastate crops that are subject to specific environments and temperature. In addition, draughts would hinder the already depleted water supplies of Iran. Accordingly, Iran has stressed concern over global warming and its effects. The country has made efforts to improve energy efficiency, fuel switching, and use of clean and renewable energy resources5. Iran has demonstrated commitment to these advances by participating in the Kyoto Protocol4.

Iranian economy is not largely dependent on agriculture; rather it is concentrated on its natural oil and gas reserves as natural resources. Iran's economy can be broken up into three main sectors; primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary economy includes revenue generated from extractions such as oil, mining, and agriculture. Iran's economic income is weighed heavily on the primary sector. Iran's basis of its economy is dependent on the extraction of natural gases and oil. This resource classifies Iran as a rentier state; a country who depends on one product to suffice its income2.Moreover, Iran’s abundant mineral reserves and extraction has advanced their primary sector; they have the world's largest zinc reserves and the second largest copper reserves3. Also, their agriculture is developing and provides a small yet consistent income for the country. Secondary economy comprises of any income brought about from finished products. Iran's secondary economy is deficient and contributes about less than 10% of all revenues3. The country’s secondary economy is brought about by textile commerce and production. Finally, tertiary sector and its revenues are derived from services such as hotels and tourists attractions. Akin to the secondary sector, the tertiary sector of Iran is substandard and contributes about less than 5% of the revenue3. Tourist attractions are minimal in Iran which is the primary reason why their tertiary incomes are so low. Aforementioned, the primary sector of Iran contributes to a majority of it’s commence as a rentier state.

Although Iran is not rich in a vast spectrum of resources, it is rich in a highly desired one- oil. Iran is OPEC's second largest producer of oil behind Saudi Arabia. Iran produces approximately 4.2 million barrels of oil per day2. The state-owned National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) under the supervision of the Ministry of Petroleum is responsible for oil and natural gas production and exploration2. After the war with Iraq ended in 1988, Iran began to improve their oil refining and start new projects. Projects include bringing refining sites such as Azadegan from 75,000 millions barrels per year up to 150,0003. Around the mid 20th century, [Mohammed Mosaddeq](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohammed_Mosaddeq), made an attempt to nationalize the oil7. This contradicted the interest of UK and United States. After revolution and a reinstatement of the Shah by foreign powers, Mosaddeq was exiled, imprisoned and put under house arrest where he died three years later7. Accordingly, the oil industry is owned by a few conglomerates and not readily available to the population. Iran’s natural resources have provided monetary benefits that the country continues to utilize to their advantage. Today, through this single resource, Iran has become the world’s seventeenth largest economy5.

In comparison to more developed countriesIran's food security is below average1. Food security is defined by the USDA as, "when all people at all times have both physical and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs in order to lead a healthy and productive life2." Food security can be broken down into three areas; availability, accessibility, and utilization. Arguably, the per capita supply of energy and nutrients appear to be sufficient, however, due to inadequate distribution, numerous individuals suffer from malnutrition5. Accordingly, efforts to improve food security have been made and are evident by increasing crop production, significant increase in livestock production and overall increased animal protein5. Most of those who are suffering from malnourishment live in the urbanized areas where food is not produced. In regards to geography, Iran is a rural country with large plateau, mountains and plains. However, about 60% of its population resides in the six major cities8. Iran is currently making efforts to further develop their food security as the trend of individuals living in urbanized areas continues to grow.

Iran’s resources coupled with the efforts made by the government and citizens have brought about progress and advancement. However, these efforts are overshadowed by the fact that Iran is continuing to solidify their standing in the world economy. Through these natural resources, Iran has attempted to utilize import substitution industrialization. Iran is a unique and diverse country whose resources make it all the more valuable.

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EPIC

*Committee on Rights and Responsibilities Briefing Paper*

 The Iranian government policies differ from those of nations such as the United States., United States, and Russia. The policies that they have on human rights, civil rights, women’s rights, and economic and social rights are all mostly based on religion. The policies on human rights in Iran are based on it being an enigma which is a fundamentalist religious regime and an industrialized democracy (Human Rights in Iran). The policies on civil rights are changing through protest and civil rights movements (Why Iran's Green Movement Is a Civil Rights Movement). Iran has many laws and policies that limit women and it is what is custom for them in that area and it all ties in with religion (Iranian Women Demand Change). The policies on economic and social rights all vary based on what it is the citizens are doing; for example, dealing with an oil issue or importing the necesity goods which can all make or break the country (Iran (09/09)).

 Human Rights are very limited. When the citizens of Iran vote infavorably to the interests of the government, or try to use free speech they are beaten and tortured by the government. These rights even more so do not exist for woman because they need the consent of men (Iranian Women Demand Change). Equality with a Difference makes the civil rights also harsh for the people of Iran (Why Iran's Green Movement Is a Civil Rights Movement). Women are all subjected to the laws of the men which come from their religious background and they don’t seem to be making any progress of having equal rights (Iranian Women Demand Change). The human rights are very closely related to those such as the restrictions made on women, the ability to go against government or try to change it for the interests of the people, the well being of the economy, and the social factors are all based on how the government treats and uses the citizens (Iran (09/09)).

 Iran is currently in a state of reform and the changes in government have had their impact on the people of the country (Human Rights in Iran). They have little to no rights and people there are living with fear because the government is a, “power hungry” Theocratic Republic (Iran (09/09)). Most of the issues regarding the citizens rights could be resolved by the government; however, the government does not see those issues as important that should be handlded by them (Iranian Women Demand Change). Currently, Nuclear power is the priority of the Iranian government, so it has decided to put people’s rights aside for that goal of energy (Human Rights in Iran).

 In contrast to the United States, Iran's citizens have successful private and public options for healthcare. In Iran, The Ministry of Health provides a national healthcare system to the citizens; however, there is a private option which charges for their coverage. Overall, regardless of an individual being covered private or public healthcare, as the UN Development Programme depicts, “94% of the population has access to health services, 95% has access to safe water and 86% to sanitation.” Although the doctor to pacient ratio in Iran is nearly 1 doctor per 1,000 pacients, Iran's healthcare situation is similar to that of the recent Healthcare Reform Bill's where there would be a free public option, with accessibility to purchase private care.5

Although it has been decreasing in recent years, journalists are arrested in Iran annually. Although there is only vague text describing what is allowed, journalists are arrested and newspapers are shut down for critiscisng government policies or reporting an issue the government does not approve of. Reporters Without Borders once said, “Iran is the biggest prision for journalists in the Middle East” due to the country's iron fist towards free press and vague restrictions on the industry.6 Furthremore, if individuals attempt to protest in person, rather than in writing, the regime easily sends armed military to surpress such protests – as shown with the protests following the reelection of President Ahmadinejad recently.

 With the movements following the reelection of President Ahmadinejad, protests led by the opposing canidate, Mir-Hossein Mousavi, disputed the authenticity of the election results and wished to open trade with other states – in hope to reform the economy of Iran. Also, with the the crackdowns on free speech through media and press, recently more and more iranian citizens have created weblogs, online journals, and the internet to communicate with people all over the world about social and political issues in Iran – such as student protests, dating, political critism, and simply informing the world of what is occuring in Iran on a daily basis.6

 Before the Shah came to power in the mid 1900's, Iran was considered Persia. Today, 51% of Iran's population consider themselves to be Persian, or the native population. However, there are small ethnic cleaveages such as small minorties of Azeri (24%), Gilaki and Mazandaani (8%), Kurds (7%), Arabi (3%). However, the primary cleavages in the country are brought about by religion. 89% of Iranians are Shi'a, with 10% Sunni. Although the constituation guarantees equal rights to minorities and all religions, there are stil some inequality socially – because Sunni muslim is not mentioned in the consitution, rights are often abused.7 Fortunately, all areas of the population are allowed to take part in politics, in theroy, in Iran – even woman. Despite equality with a difference, as defined earlier, plauging woman's advancement in society, 4.1% of Iran's unicameral legislature, the Majiles, is woman. 7

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AP Comp. Gov

*Please provide an overview of Iran's position on the question of the future of Kashmir, of what* *Iran considers to be the most important factors in considering the future of Kashmir, of Iran's involvement in the Kashmir issue to date, and of its alliances on this issue with other states.  Does Iran believe solving the Kashmir issue impacts security and stability in* *South Asia?  What role do resources play in Iran's position on the Kashmir?*

 The state of Jammu and Kashmir is and has been unlike any other state in India, with a Muslim majority consisting about 3/4ths of the population. With its rich, diverse and mainly Islamic influences, Kashmir has been able to isolate itself in India. The state of Kashmir had been independent and separate from both India and Pakistan during the British era. Known as the '*Princely State of Kashmir and Jammu'*, it was composed of mainly Sunni Muslims, with a Hindu majority in the city of Jammu. Once the era of British rule ended, the ruler of Kashmir agreed to join India as a state, and thus began a series of disputes between India and Pakistan over the region.

Currently, the area has been divided into the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, Chinese occupied region, and *'Azad Kashmir'* (Free/Independent Kashmir), controlled by Pakistan. However, there is another country connected to Kashmir that many Kashmiris believe it to be their fatherland: Iran. Even in the pre-historic times, there had been a strong Persian influence on this region and that influence still remains. "Kashmir belongs more to Central Asia than to South Asia, owing to its glorious ties with the region in terms of culture, traditions, religion etc"[1] It was Iran that influenced culture of Kashmir and Iran had brought about Sunni religion into these areas and had successfully united a region based on one religion. Iran also played a role in helping Kashmir develop arts, crafts, cuisine, literature and festivals as well. The language itself, Koshur, has been derived from mainly Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic influences. Bulbul Shah was the first prominent Iranian that made a deep impact on Kashmiris. The ties between Kashmir and Iran have remained strong and the Kashmiris are a deep impression of Iranian culture. Lately though, Iranian influence has been fading and there have been movements to revive the strong cultural and historic ties.

On the surface, the relationship between Iran and Kashmir is just based on common traditions and other historic relations; however, such close links could lead to a close and important ally of Iran in East Asia. Kashmir region is rich in natural resources such as limestone and beautiful marble, but the most important resource is freshwater. Kashmir is an area surrounded by massive glaciers in the Himalayan mountain range that provide fresh-water to hundreds of millions of Indians and Pakistanis through the Indus and the Ganges rivers. Since Kashmir holds a large reservoir of fresh-water, it will become a critical and influential section of Asia in the future. In the future, water will become the new oil. As countries around the Earth start adopting alternate energy sources to replace oil and its products, we will see a shift in power from the Middle-East (where large quantities of oil reside), to places with easy access to fresh-water. As many countries would no longer be using oil to power their respective states, the price of oil would drop and water shortage would become the next major thing. Once the nations realize that burning fossil fuels is not only harmful for the environment, but also that they limited in quantities, we will see Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and other countries with vast fossil fuels resources loosing influence and power. Iran, with strong and cordial relations with Kashmir, could benefit in the future by having a dependable source of fresh-water as other countries would scramble for it. Until a dependable and efficient source of sea-water treatment plant could be found, most countries, especially Iran and its neighbors, would face hardships in future due to water shortages.

Since, Iran is interested in Kashmir and has so much vested into this relationship, it’s stance is heavily influenced by the resources its seeking. Iran’s stance on Kashmir has recently changed from voicing for the independence of Kashmir to a dialogue between India and Pakistan to use coercive diplomacy in order to effectively solve the situation. “Kharrazi said it was for India and Pakistan to resolve the issue through direct talks, taking into consideration the rights and sensibilities of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.”[3] Iran has maintained that position since this statement was made in 2003. Iran and the Supreme Leader have detested United States’ and United Nations’ actions to overlook and coordinate such talks for they believe their actions dilute the true problem and bury the voice of Kashmiris. They have voiced opinions, but Iran has yet to take any decisive action to influence the situation and are preferring to be by-standers rather than participate in controlling the future of Kashmir. They prefer having India and Pakistan work out the imperfections

What is amazing is that people in both India and Pakistan are open to different outcomes from the Kashmir situation.[2] For example, about 90% of Pakistanis would be happy with Kashmir being it’s own independent country while 50% of Indians would agree with that. But more than 60% in both countries would allow fro Kashmiris to determine for their own.[2] Iran wants to keep strong ties with the region and continue to influence it further after the split or autonomous rule. Iran is trying to win the favor of many Kashmiris so they would associate, as they did in history, with more Central Asian influence rather than East Asian. According to Pakistan, "Kashmir is essential to maintaining national identity.  Ceding control of the third of the country it occupies to the Indians would be regarded as a betrayal of Pakistan's historic portrayal of itself as a pan-Islamic homeland".  For India, maintaining control in Kashmir is essential because it is "the key to holding the subcontinent together, especially in this era of increasing ethno-religious nationalism"[4]

Another important factor in this really complex relationship between Kashmir, India, Pakistan and Iran is the proposal by India to build a gas line by either land or by sea. Iran does admit it will look into such possibility and the feasibility of the project. Where Iran was usually supportive of Pakistan due to religious homogeneity, they have become more pro-India in this decade. Iran has been critical of Pakistan on the fact that the have major influence on Taliban and should stop housing terrorism, while praising India for their efforts to fight terrorism. But the fact is Iran is still on the fence and will decide with the side who will influence the future of Kashmir more because they are still a little bit critical of India for they are not happy with India’s position of not letting Kashmir become an independent state. Iran is trying to influence both countries to find the best deal for itself and for Kashmir. Relations between India and Iran were warm when high-level diplomats from both countries visited each other and had deemed the trips “very successful”[3] However, due to an increasingly warm relationship between India, United States, and Israel, Iran has started to distance itself and affairs have become strained.

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