



## **My Drift**

**Title: Iran**

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**You might have heard that the US and Israel are at war with Iran. At this writing, the war has been going on for over 30 days. This major conflict involving the United States, Israel, and Iran began on February 28, 2026, initiated by surprise airstrikes on Iranian targets. This military operation, frequently referred to in that context, followed long-standing tensions over Iran's nuclear program and regional activities.**



**Iran and Israel have been engaged in a proxy conflict since 1985. In the Israeli–Lebanese conflict, Iran has supported Lebanese Shia militias, most notably Hezbollah. In the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, Iran has backed Palestinian groups such as Hamas.**

**Motivated by the periphery doctrine, Imperial Iran and Israel had close relations, seeing Arab powers as a common threat. However, after the 1979 Islamic revolution, Iran cut off relations with Israel and started supporting Israel's enemies.**



At the outset of the U.S.-Israel-led war in Iran, President Trump and our allies told Iran that they needed to stop their nuclear bomb building program, but the current regime refused. This is the primary reason for teaming with Israel in launching the strikes on Iran. Other reasons include:

- **Preventing Nuclear/Military Escalation:** Strikes aimed to degrade Iran's ballistic missile development and nuclear capabilities.
- **Regional Security and Proxies:** The U.S. is aiming to disrupt Iranian support for regional allies such as Hezbollah and Hamas.
- **Securing Oil Supplies:** Iran targeted shipping lanes in the Strait of Hormuz, threatening about 20% of global oil supplies.
- **Retaliation and Deterrence:** The conflict escalated following Iran's actions in the region, including attacks on U.S. bases.
- **Strategic Objectives:** The U.S. is targeting the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to restrict its regional influence.

You may be against or for the war in Iran. Everybody is entitled to their opinion. Me, I'd just as soon not see any terrorist group getting their hands on a nuclear bomb.

Enough about the war! In the rest of this article, we will learn more about the country of Iran.



## Overview

Iran, officially the Islamic Republic of Iran, and also known as Persia, is a country in West Asia. It borders Iraq to the west, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Armenia to the northwest, the Caspian Sea to the north, Turkmenistan to the northeast, Afghanistan to the east, Pakistan to the southeast, and the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf to the south. With a population of over 92 million, Iran ranks 17th globally in both geographic size and population and is the sixth-largest country in Asia. It is divided into five regions with 31 provinces. Tehran is the nation's capital, largest city, and financial center.

Home to one of the world's oldest continuous major civilizations, the territory of present-day Iran was first unified under the Medes, led by Cyaxares, in the 7th century BC and reached its territorial height in the 6th century BC, when Cyrus the Great founded the Achaemenid Empire. Alexander the Great conquered the empire in the 4th century BC. An Iranian rebellion in the 3rd century BC established the Parthian Empire, which later liberated the country. In the 3rd century AD, the Parthians were succeeded by the Sasanian Empire, which oversaw a golden age in the history of Iranian civilization. During this period, ancient Iran saw some of the earliest developments of writing, agriculture, urbanization, religion, and administration. Once a center for Zoroastrianism, Iran underwent Islamization following the 7th century Muslim conquest. Innovations in literature, philosophy, mathematics, medicine, astronomy and art were renewed during the Islamic Golden Age and Iranian Intermezzo, a period during which Iranian Muslim dynasties ended Arab rule

and revived the Persian language. This era was followed by Seljuk and Khwarazmian rule, Mongol conquests and the Timurid Renaissance from the 11th to 14th centuries.

In the 16th century, the native Safavid dynasty re-established a unified Iranian state with Twelver Shia Islam as the official religion, laying the framework for the modern state of Iran. During the Afsharid Empire in the 18th century, Iran was a leading world power, but it lost this status after the Qajars took power in the 1790s. The early 20th century saw the Persian Constitutional Revolution and the establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty by Reza Shah, who ousted the last Qajar Shah in 1925. Following the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran in 1941, his son Mohammad Reza Pahlavi rose to power. Attempts by Mohammad Mosaddegh to nationalize the oil industry led to the Anglo-American coup in 1953. The Iranian Revolution in 1979 overthrew the monarchy, and the Islamic Republic of Iran was established by Ruhollah Khomeini, the country's first supreme leader. In 1980, Iraq invaded Iran, sparking the eight-year-long Iran–Iraq War, which ended in a stalemate. Iran has since been involved in proxy wars with Israel and Saudi Arabia; in June 2025, Israeli strikes on Iran escalated tensions into the Twelve-Day War. Following the war and amid a growing economic crisis, the largest protests since 1979 erupted in late December 2025. The United States and Israel launched a major attack on Iran in late February 2026, where regional strikes across the Middle East have occurred since the attacks. Mojtaba Khamenei became the country's new supreme leader in March 2026 following the assassination of his father, Ali Khamenei, in those strikes.

Iran's government is a theocratic Islamic republic governed by elected and unelected institutions, with ultimate authority vested in the supreme leader. While it holds elections, key offices, including the head of state and military, are not subject to public vote. The Iranian government is an authoritarian regime which has been widely criticized internationally due to its poor human rights record, including restrictions on freedom of assembly, expression, and the press, as well as its treatment of women, ethnic minorities, and political dissidents. International observers have raised concerns over the fairness of its electoral processes, especially the vetting of candidates by unelected bodies such as the Guardian Council. Iran maintains a centrally planned economy with significant state ownership in key sectors, though private enterprise exists alongside this. It is a middle power, due to its large reserves of fossil fuels (including the world's second largest natural gas supply and third largest proven oil reserves), its geopolitically significant location, and its role as the

world's focal point of Shia Islam. Iran is a threshold state with one of the most scrutinized nuclear programs, which it claims is solely for civilian purposes; however, the IAEA, a United Nations (UN) agency tasked with monitoring the production of nuclear weapons, has on two occasions found Iran to be non-compliant with its safeguard's obligations. It is a founding member of the UN and a member state of numerous international organizations. Iran has 29 UNESCO World Heritage Sites (the 10th-highest in the world) and ranks 4th in intangible cultural heritage or human treasures.

## Statistics



**Flag of Iran**

**The following is a list of the eight most populous cities in Iran:**

| Rank | City                    | Province                        | population |            |
|------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|------------|------------|
|      |                         |                                 | City       | Metro      |
| 1    | <a href="#">Tehran</a>  | <a href="#">Tehran</a>          | 8,693,706  | 14,700,000 |
| 2    | <a href="#">Mashhad</a> | <a href="#">Razavi Khorasan</a> | 3,001,184  | 3,100,000  |
| 3    | <a href="#">Isfahan</a> | <a href="#">Isfahan</a>         | 1,961,260  | 3,100,000  |
| 4    | <a href="#">Karaj</a>   | <a href="#">Alborz</a>          | 1,592,492  | 2,500,000  |
| 5    | <a href="#">Shiraz</a>  | <a href="#">Fars</a>            | 1,565,572  | 1,700,000  |
| 6    | <a href="#">Tabriz</a>  | <a href="#">East Azarbaijan</a> | 1,588,693  | 1,760,000  |
| 7    | <a href="#">Qom</a>     | <a href="#">Qom</a>             | 1,201,158  | 1,240,000  |
| 8    | <a href="#">Ahvaz</a>   | <a href="#">Khuzestan</a>       | 1,184,788  | 1,320,000  |

**Life expectancy** 75.6 years (2024 est.)  
• male 74.3 years  
• female 77.1 years

### **Nationality**

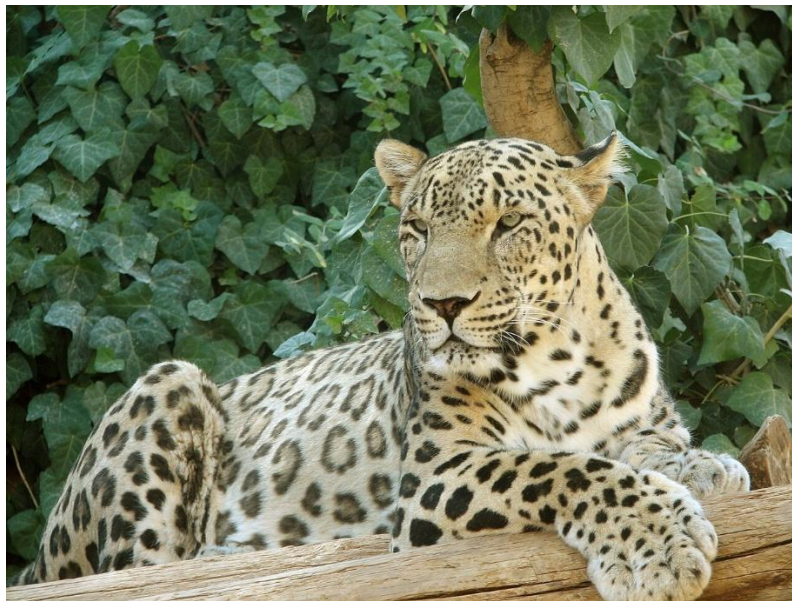
|              |                   |
|--------------|-------------------|
| Nationality  | Iranian           |
| Major ethnic | Persians          |
| Minor ethnic | Azeris      Kurds |

**Official language** Persian (also known as Farsi)

### **Climate**

Iran's climate is diverse, ranging from arid and semi-arid, to subtropical along the Caspian coast and northern forests. On the north edge of Iran, temperatures rarely fall below freezing and the area remains humid. Summer temperatures rarely exceed 84.2 °F. Annual precipitation is 26.8 inches in the eastern plains and more than 66.9 inches in the west.

### **Biodiversity**



**Persian Leopard**

Nearly 60% of Iran is mountainous, and less than 10% is forested. About 120 million hectares of forests and fields are government-owned for national exploitation. Iran's forests can be divided into five vegetation regions: the Hyrcanian region which forms the green belt of the north side of Iran; the

**Turan region, which are mainly scattered in the center of Iran; the Zagros region, which mainly contains oak forests in the west; the Persian Gulf region, which is scattered in the southern coastal belt; the Arasbarani region, which contains rare and unique species. More than 8,200 plant species are grown. The land covered by natural flora is four times that of Europe's. There are over 200 protected areas to preserve biodiversity and wildlife, with over 30 being the national parks.**

**Iran's living fauna includes 34 bat species, Indian grey mongoose, small Indian mongoose, golden jackal, Indian wolf, foxes, striped hyena, leopard, Eurasian lynx, brown bear and Asian black bear. Ungulate species include wild boar, urial, Armenian mouflon, red deer, and goitered gazelle. The critically endangered Asiatic cheetah survives only in Iran. Iran lost all its Asiatic lions and the extinct Caspian tigers by the early 20th century. Domestic ungulates are represented by sheep, goat, cattle, horse, water buffalo, donkey and camel. Iran is home to more than 570 bird species like pheasant, partridge, stork, eagles and falcons.**

### **Military**

**The military is organized under a unified structure, the Islamic Republic of Iran Armed Forces, comprising the Islamic Republic of Iran Army, which includes the Ground Forces, Air Defense Force, Air Force, and Navy; the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which consists of the Ground Forces, Aerospace Force, Navy, Quds Force, and Basij; and the Police Command (Faraja), which serves an analogous function to a gendarme. While the IRIAF protects the country's sovereignty in a traditional capacity, the IRGC is mandated to ensure the integrity of the Republic against foreign interference, coups, and internal riots. In 2019, the United States under President Donald Trump officially labeled the Revolutionary Guard as a foreign terrorist organization. It is the first time that an element of a foreign state was designated as a terrorist organization. Since 1925, all male citizens aged 18 must serve around 14 months in the IRIAF or IRGC.**

**Iran has over 610,000 active troops and around 350,000 reservists, which is at least over one million military personnel, one of the world's highest percentage of citizens with military training. The Basij, a paramilitary volunteer militia within the IRGC, has over 20 million members, 600,000 available for immediate call-up, 300,000 reservists, and one million that could be mobilized when necessary. Faraja, the Iranian uniformed police force, has over 260,000 active**

personnel. Most statistical organizations do not include the Basij and Faraja in their rating reports.

Iran ranks 7th in the number of active military personnel and 9th in size of both its ground force and armored force. Iran's armed forces are the largest in West Asia and comprise the greatest Army Aviation fleet in the Middle East. Iran is among the top 15 countries in terms of military budget. In 2021, its military spending increased for the first time in four years, to \$24.6 billion, 2.3% of the national GDP. Funding for the IRGC accounted for 34% of Iran's total military spending in 2021.

Since the Islamic revolution, to overcome foreign embargoes, Iran has developed a domestic military industry capable of producing indigenous tanks, armored personnel carriers, missiles, submarines, missile destroyer, radar systems, helicopters, naval vessels, and fighter planes. Official announcements have highlighted the development of advanced weaponry, particularly in rocketry. Consequently, Iran has the largest and most diverse ballistic missile arsenal in the Middle East and is only the 5th country in the world with hypersonic missile technology. Iran designs and produces a variety of unmanned aerial vehicles. It is one of the world's five countries with cyber-warfare capabilities and is identified as "one of the most active players in the international cyber arena".



**Iranian Missile**



**Iranian drones**

Following Russia's purchase of Iranian drones during the Russo-Ukrainian war, in November 2023, the IRIAF finalized arrangements to acquire Russian Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jets, Mil Mi-28 attack helicopters, air defense and missile systems. The Iranian Navy has had joint exercises with Russia and China.

## **Geography**

**Iran has an area of 636,372 square miles. It is the sixth-largest country entirely in Asia and the second largest in West Asia.**

**Iran is in a seismically active area. On average, an earthquake of magnitude 7.0 or higher occurs once every ten years. Most earthquakes are shallow-focus and can be very devastating, such as the 2003 Bam earthquake. Iran consists mostly of the Iranian Plateau, with its southwestern region on the Arabian plate.**

**Iran is one of the world's most mountainous countries; its landscape is dominated by rugged mountain ranges that separate basins or plateaus. The populous western Iran is the most mountainous, with ranges such as the Caucasus, Zagros, and Alborz. Mount Damavand is the highest point, at 18,406 feet, which is the highest volcano in Asia. Iran's mountains have impacted its politics and economics for centuries.**



**Mount Damavand**

**Northern Iran is covered by the lush lowland Caspian Hyrcanian forests, near the southern shores of the Caspian Sea. The east consists mostly of desert basins, such as the Kavir Desert, which is the country's largest desert, and the Lut Desert, as well as salt lakes. The Lut Desert features the highest recorded land skin temperature in the world with 159°F recorded in 2005. Large plains are found along the coast of the Caspian and at the north end of the Persian Gulf, where Iran borders the mouth of the Arvand river. Smaller, discontinuous plains are found along the remaining coast of the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, and Gulf of Oman.**

## **Human rights and censorship**

The Iranian government has been denounced by various international organizations and governments for violating human rights. The government has frequently persecuted and arrested critics of the government. Iranian law does not recognize sexual orientations. Sexual activity between members of the same sex is illegal and is punishable by death. Capital punishment is a legal punishment, and Iran is reported to have the highest execution rate per capita in the world. A group of UN experts in 2022 urged Iran to stop "systematic persecution" of religious minorities, adding that members of the Bahá'í Faith were arrested, barred from universities, or had their homes demolished. In 2024, a UN Special investigation concluded that Iran committed genocide against its political and religious minorities during 1981–1982 massacres and 1988 mass executions.

Censorship is ranked among the most extreme worldwide. Iran has strict internet censorship, with the government persistently blocking social media and other sites. Since January 2021, authorities have blocked several social media platforms.

The 2017–18 Iranian protests swept across the country in response to the economic and political situation. It was formally confirmed that thousands of protesters were arrested. The 2019–20 Iranian protests started on 15 November in Ahvaz and spread across the country after the government announced increases in fuel prices of up to 300%. A week-long total Internet shutdown marked one of the most severe Internet blackouts in any country, and the bloodiest governmental crackdown of the protestors. Tens of thousands were arrested, and hundreds were killed within a few days according to multiple international observers, including Amnesty International.

Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 was a scheduled international civilian passenger flight from Tehran to Kyiv, operated by Ukraine International Airlines. On 8 January 2020, the Boeing 737–800 flying the route was shot down by the IRGC shortly after takeoff, killing all 176 occupants on board and leading to protests. An international investigation led to the government admitting to the shootdown, calling it a "human error". Further protests against the government began on 16 September 2022 after a woman named Mahsa Amini died in police custody following her arrest by the Guidance Patrol, known commonly as the "morality police". Government crackdown on the protests has been described by the UN to be crimes against humanity.

## **List of Iran's Wars and Conflicts**

Iran has a long history of conflicts spanning from antiquity to modern-day proxy wars. Major conflicts include the ancient Roman-Persian Wars, numerous Ottoman-Persian wars, the 1980s Iran-Iraq War, and modern tensions/proxies involving the U.S., Israel, and Saudi Arabia.

### **Modern & Recent Conflicts (1979–Present)**

- **2025–2026 Israel-Iran Conflict:** A 12-day war in 2025 and ongoing 2026 escalations involving airstrikes.
- **Iran–Saudi Arabia Proxy War (2011–present):** Ongoing regional rivalry, including conflicts in Syria and Yemen.
- **Iran-Israel Proxy Conflict:** Ongoing, including Iranian support for Hezbollah and Hamas.
- **Iranian Intervention in Iraq (2014–present):** Against ISIS and supporting local militias.
- **Iran–PJAK Conflict (2004–present):** Conflict with Kurdish separatists.
- **Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988):** A brutal 8-year war started by Iraq's invasion.
- **Iranian Revolution and Consolidation (1979–1982):** Internal upheaval and post-revolution purges.

### **Selected Historical Conflicts**

- **Anglo-Soviet Invasion of Iran (1941):** Allied invasion during WWII.
- **Anglo-Persian War (1856–1857):** War with Britain over Herat.
- **Caucasus War (1804–1813):** Conflict with Russia.
- **Ottoman–Persian Wars (16th–19th Century):** Numerous, including the wars of 1730–1735, 1743–1746, and 1821–1823.
- **Muslim Conquest of Persia (633–644):** Fall of the Sassanid Empire.
- **Roman-Persian/Byzantine-Sassanid Wars (54 BCE–628 CE):** Centuries of conflict between Rome/Byzantium and Parthian/Sassanid empires.
- **Greco-Persian Wars (499–449 BCE):** Conflict with Greek city-states.

### **Internal Conflicts**

- **1999 Student Protests**
- **1953 Coup d'état**
- **1905–1911 Constitutional Revolution**

## Religion

Twelver Shi'a Islam is the state religion, which 90–95% of Iranians adhere to according to both official and unofficial sources, such as the CIA. About 5–10% of the population follow the Sunni branch of Islam, mainly the Hanafi school.

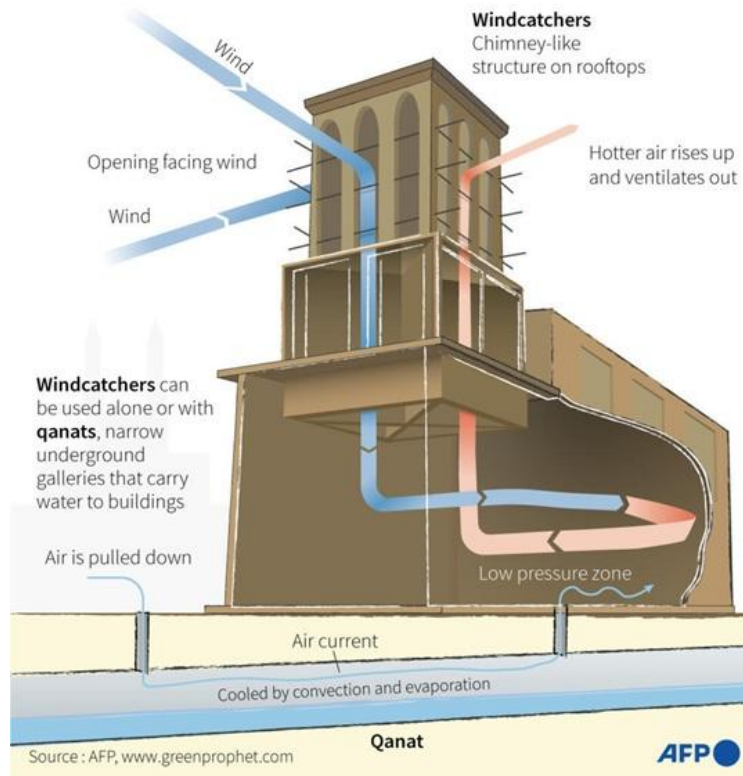
## Some Facts about Iran:

- **Saffron Capital:** Iran produces over 90% of the world's saffron, making it the largest producer of the world's most expensive spice, which can cost more than gold.
- **Nose Job Capital:** Iran has one of the highest rates of rhinoplasty (nose jobs) in the world, with as many as 320,000 procedures performed in 2022.
- **Ancient Origins:** Iran was known as Persia until 1935. It is home to one of the world's oldest continuous civilizations, with settlements dating back to 4000 BC.
- **Young Population:** Despite its ancient history, Iran has a very young population, with over 60% of its roughly 80 million people under 30 years old.
- **Weekend Days:** The Iranian workweek runs from Saturday to Thursday, with Friday as the official weekend holiday.
- **Polo Origins:** The game of polo originated in ancient Iran, known as "Chovgan," dating back to around 600 BC.
- **Unique Wildlife:** Iran is home to the rare Persian cheetah, often called the "cheetah of Iran," which is found in the northern Kavir National Park.
- **Free Education:** Primary and secondary education in Iran is free and compulsory, and state-provided university education is also free.
- **Ancient Air Conditioning:** The city of Yazd is known for its centuries-old "wind towers" (badgirs), designed to provide natural air conditioning.



## Iran's ancient windcatchers

Yazd in Iran, one of the hottest cities in the world, is known for windcatchers, traditional structures on rooftops to cool buildings



- **World's Largest Gas Field:** Iran shares the South Pars natural gas field with Qatar, which is the largest natural gas field in the world.
- **Spies Detained:** In 2007, Iranian officials reportedly detained 14 squirrels on suspicion of spying, claiming they were carrying foreign tracking devices.
- **Female Graduates:** Women in Iran make up a significant portion of university students, frequently outnumbering men in engineering and science fields.

### What does the future look like for Iran

The future of Iran is marked by profound uncertainty, balancing between potential regime collapse and hardened authoritarian continuity. Following 2025–2026 conflicts, Iran faces a weakened economy, degraded military infrastructure, and deep domestic discontent, with future scenarios including a transition to a democratic, secular state, or a shift toward a military-backed, populist, or more repressive, authoritarian structure.

## Key Aspects of Iran's Future:

- **Political Structure:** The Islamic Republic may see "continuity with recalibration," where a new, potentially more pragmatic supreme leader is chosen by the Assembly of Experts to manage a heavily damaged state. Alternatively, the regime may collapse under pressure from mass protests and a failing economy, potentially replaced by a coalition favoring a democratic, non-religious state.
- **Economic Outlook:** Iran faces severe long-term economic issues, including high inflation and crumbling infrastructure, likely worsened by continued sanctions. Recovery depends heavily on resolving international conflicts, lifting sanctions, and reforming the state's economic structure.
- **Social Trends:** A large part of the population, particularly millennials, seeks modernization, democracy, and improved rights for women. The country is becoming increasingly secularized, widening the gap between the populace and the aging clerical elite.
- **Foreign Relations:** A post-war Iran might be forced into a "Venezuela scenario," where it pursues de-escalation with the U.S. for economic relief. However, the state may remain reliant on partnerships with Beijing and Moscow, becoming a more isolated and volatile regional actor.
- **Security & Military:** The IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) may consolidate power, leading to a military-dominated state if the clergy's hold weakens. Alternatively, the reduction in Iranian missile capabilities could lead to a less aggressive regional stance.
- **Revolutionary Change:** The ongoing, widespread protests could lead to the collapse of the Islamic Republic, potentially leading to a new, secular, and democratic Iran.
- **Regime Hardening:** The regime could evolve into a more brutal military dictatorship, using intensified repression to suppress social discontent.
- **Pragmatic Transition:** A new, moderate government could emerge that prioritizes economic recovery and re-engages with the international community, similar to Turkey's model.

The future remains a contest between a society desiring significant change and a regime with intense coercive power.

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