



THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

Quick Facts

Population: 82,021,564 (2017 est)

Area: 1,648,195 sq km

Ethnic Groups: Persian, Azeri, Kurd, Lur, Baloch, Arab, Turkmen and Turkic tribes

Religions: Muslim (official) 99.4% (Shia 90-95%, Sunni 5-10%), other (includes Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian) 0.3%, unspecified 0.4%

Government Type: Theocratic Republic

GDP (official exchange rate): \$431.9 billion (2017 est)

Map and Quick Facts Courtesy of the CIA World Factbook (Last Updated September 2018)

INTRODUCTION

Since its founding in February of 1979, the Islamic Republic of Iran has consistently ranked as the world's most active state sponsor of terrorism, according to the estimates of the United States government. Iran's support for terrorism is both pervasive and ideological, encompassing a vast array of official and quasi-official institutions, individuals and policies. It finds its roots in the ideas of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Revolution, who espoused the need to "export" Iran's successful religious model the world over. Nearly three decades after Khomeini's death, that priority continues to animate Iran's leaders and guide their sponsorship of instability, both in Iran's immediate geographic neighborhood and far beyond.

Today, Iran's capabilities to do so have expanded significantly. In the decade between 2003 and 2013, the Iranian regime's persistent pursuit of a nuclear capability engendered escalating pressure from the United States and international community in the form of economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation. Over time, these measures took their toll, progressively isolating the Islamic Republic and severely impacting its economic fortunes. However, the successful conclusion of a nuclear deal between Iran and the P5+1 powers in July of 2015 fundamentally altered this dynamic, providing the Islamic Republic with massive direct economic relief, totaling upwards of \$100 billion¹, and a surge in post-sanctions trade with a range of international partners. This served to greatly expand the resources available to the Islamic Republic to support terror proxies in the region and beyond, and breathed new life into Tehran's longstanding efforts to reshape the global order in its own image.

The advent of the Trump administration has been followed by a new, more robust U.S. approach toward Iran. The centerpiece of this new strategy has been a U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, and the reimposition of a range of sanctions on the Iranian regime. That process – underway as of this writing – has significantly impacted Iran's economic fortunes, precipitating an exodus of international

commerce from the Islamic Republic and causing a massive devaluation of Iran's national currency, the rial. As of yet, however, it has not caused a material change in Iran's regional behavior, or its persistent sponsorship of terrorism, both in its immediate neighborhood and more globally.

ISLAMIST ACTIVITY

The Iranian regime's support for international terrorism predates the establishment of the Islamic Republic itself. In the 1960s and 1970s, while in exile in Iraq and in France, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini formulated his ideas about the need for a radical Islamic transformation in his home country, Iran, and of subsequently "exporting" this system of government throughout the Middle East and beyond.² In keeping with this thinking, Khomeini's political manifesto, *Islamic Government*, extolled the virtues of "a victorious and triumphant Islamic political revolution" that would go on "to unite the Moslem nation, [and] to liberate [all] its lands."³

When the Ayatollah and his followers subsequently swept to power in Tehran in the spring of 1979, this principle became a cardinal regime priority. The preamble of the country's formative constitution, adopted in October 1979, outlines that the country's military would henceforth "be responsible not only for guarding and preserving the frontiers of the country, but also for fulfilling the ideological mission of jihad in God's way; that is, extending the sovereignty of God's law throughout the world."⁴ These words were backed by concrete regime action, with Khomeini consolidating the country's various radical religious militias into an ideological army known as the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC, or Pasdaran), tasked with promoting his revolutionary message abroad, with violence if necessary.

The nearly-four decades since have seen a consistent regime commitment to international terrorism. In the early years of the Islamic Republic, Iran is known to have ordered, orchestrated or facilitated a series of terrorist attacks in the Middle East, among them the 1983 U.S. Embassy and Marine Barracks bombings in Beirut, Lebanon, as well as abortive coup attempts and bombings in Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait.⁵ These activities, and the rationale behind them, were reinforced by the outcome of the country's bloody eight-year war with Iraq, which strengthened the Iranian government's belief that radical proxies could serve as an attractive, low-cost substitute for direct military action. As a result, the principle of "exporting the revolution" remained a vibrant element of regime policy after the death of Khomeini in 1989. In the decade that followed, the Islamic Republic continued to bankroll assassinations and terrorist acts on foreign soil, aided the infiltration of countries in Europe, Africa and Latin America by radical Islamic groups, and assisted irregulars in various international conflict zones.⁶

In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the Islamic Republic chose to dramatically strengthen its links to international terrorism, redoubling its support for Lebanon's Hezbollah militia and Palestinian rejectionist groups, expanding its footprint in the Palestinian territories, maintaining at least low-level links to the al-Qaeda network, and becoming heavily involved in the bankrolling of radical Shi'ite militias and activities aimed at hindering the U.S.-led Coalition in post-Saddam Iraq. This support for terrorism, while ideologically driven, was and remains rooted in pragmatism. While Khomeini's Islamic Revolution was a distinctly Shi'a one, in the nearly four decades since its establishment, the Islamic Republic has embraced a more universalist conception of its international role, aspiring to serve as the vanguard of Islamic revolution worldwide.⁷ The Iranian regime today funds a broad range of both Sunni and Shi'a groups throughout the greater Middle East and beyond. The critical determinant appears to be the degree to which these movements and organizations can reinforce Iran's leading role in the "Shi'a revival" taking place in the Muslim world, and their shared animosity toward the West, most directly Israel and the United States.

The scope of Iran's support of violent Islamism is global in nature, and so is its reach. In the decade that followed the 9/11 attacks, it encompassed: ongoing support for Hezbollah in Lebanon and a reconstitution of the Shi'ite militia's strategic capabilities;⁸ extensive involvement in post-Saddam Iraq, first through

the provision of arms and materiel to the country's various Shi'a militias and later through political and strategic support of various forces both inside and outside of the government of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki;⁹ the provision of significant military and operational assistance to the insurgency in Afghanistan, increasing the lethality of forces arrayed against the government of President Hamid Karzai and Coalition authorities there;¹⁰ exerting influence in the Palestinian arena through financial aid and support to Palestinian rejectionist groups, chief among them Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad¹¹ and; bankrolling terrorist and subversive activities in various countries, including Egypt.¹²

The onset of the Arab Spring in early 2011 marked a turning point for Iranian activities—and for its regional standing. In the early stages of the “Spring,” Iranian officials sought to take credit for the anti-regime sentiment sweeping the region, depicting it as the belated product of the Ayatollah Khomeini's successful Islamic revolution in 1979 and heralding an “Islamic awakening” in which Iran would inevitably play a leading role.¹³ Iran's stance was not simply rhetorical; the Islamic Republic became a political supporter of various regional insurgent causes, from protests by Bahrain's majority-Shi'ite population against the country's ruling al-Khalifa family¹⁴ to the successful struggle by Yemen's al-Houthi rebellion against the central government in Sana'a.¹⁵

Iran's most conspicuous initiative, however, was to assume the role of a lifeline for the regime of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad. Shortly after the eruption of anti-regime unrest in Syria in March 2011, Iran took on a major role in bolstering and strengthening Assad's hold on power. It did so through extensive financial assistance, as well as the provision of forces to augment Syria's military in its fight against the country's disparate opposition elements. This has included the deployment of a large IRGC contingent to the Syrian battlefield, including hundreds of trained snipers who have helped to reinforce Syrian forces and increase their lethality against Syria's opposition.¹⁶ Together with its Lebanese proxy Hezbollah, it has also played a key role in organizing pro-Assad militias among the country's Alawite and Shi'a communities, as well as coordinating pro-regime foreign fighters from Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon and Afghanistan.¹⁷ Over time, this migration of Shi'ite militants eclipsed the broad-based mobilization of Sunni jihadists in the Muslim World in both size and scope. As of April 2018, the size of this jihadi legion was estimated at around 80,000¹⁸, or twice the size of the foreign fighter contingent believed to have been mobilized up to that point by the Islamic State terrorist group.¹⁹

Iran's objectives in this effort are two-fold. Most immediately, Iran's aid is intended to shore up the stability of the Assad regime, its most important regional partner. More broadly, however, Iran sees its involvement in Syria as a direct blow against the “Great Satan,” the United States. “Since Syria was and continues to be part of the Islamic resistance front and the Islamic Revolution, it provokes the anger of the Americans,” IRGC commander Mohammad Ali Jafari explained on Iranian television in April of 2014.²⁰ Additionally, Iranian leaders view the Islamic State and its exclusionary, aggressive Sunni interpretation of the Islamic faith, as something approaching an existential threat to the Islamic Republic, and accordingly have marshalled massive resources against the group, both within their national territory and beyond it.²¹

Broadly construed, Iran's regional efforts have been singularly successful. The Iranian regime can now be said to control four regional capitals in the Middle East. The first is Damascus, where Iranian (as well as Russian) support has been instrumental to keeping the Assad regime in power to date. The second is Baghdad, where Iran simultaneously wields extensive influence among the country's political elites and supports an extensive network of powerful Shi'a militias, collectively known as the hashd al-shaabi. The third is Lebanon, where the group's principal terrorist proxy, Hezbollah, maintains a powerful grip on national politics. The fourth is Sana'a, Yemen, where since the spring of 2015, Iranian-supported rebels have effectively taken over the national government, precipitating a pitched civil war that – some three years on – has created the world's worst humanitarian catastrophe.

The financial scope of these activities is enormous. In the past, U.S. officials have estimated that the Islamic Republic boasts “a nine-digit line item in its budget for support to terrorist organizations.”²² More

recently, in the summer of 2015, in the aftermath of the conclusion of the JCPOA, the Congressional Research Service estimated that the Islamic Republic was spending between \$3.5 billion and \$16 billion annually on support for terrorism and insurgency worldwide.²³

This funding remains pervasive—at least for the moment. In August 2018, Brian Hook, the Trump administration’s Special Representative for Iran, estimated that “Iran provides Lebanese Hezbollah about \$700 million per year,” and that the Iranian regime had spent “at least \$16 billion on supporting its proxies in Syria, Iraq and Yemen” to that point.²⁴ Additionally, Hook stressed, “Iran has historically provided over \$100 million per year to Palestinian groups, including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.”²⁵ Accordingly, Trump administration efforts are focused in large part on curtailing the funds available to the Iranian regime to engage in terror sponsorship, albeit without measurable results so far.

ISLAMISM AND SOCIETY

While “exporting the revolution” was and remains a persistent regime objective, involvement and investment on the part of the Iranian population in this pursuit is far from universal. There is little empirical data to suggest that ordinary Iranians share the depth of their regime’s commitment to the exportation of radical Islam. To the contrary, terrorism funding in Iran remains an elite—rather than popular—undertaking, directed through state institutions rather than non-governmental organizations, and overseen at an official, not a grassroots, level.

At times, Iran’s involvement in the support of radical groups abroad has served as a significant bone of contention between the Iranian regime and its population. In the wake of Hezbollah’s summer 2006 war with Israel, for example, Iran’s extensive financial support for Lebanon’s Shi’ites became a domestic flashpoint, with ordinary Iranians publicly questioning—and condemning—their government’s skewed strategic priorities.²⁶ More recently, the Iranian regime’s foreign adventurism – and its support for radical proxies – has emerged as prominent anti-regime narrative in the persistent protests that have taken place throughout the Islamic Republic since late 2017.

Support for radical Islamic causes is eroded by Iran’s complex ethno/religious composition. Although the country is overwhelmingly (98 percent) Muslim and predominantly (89 percent) Shi’a, as of 2013 ethnic Persians were estimated to hold only a modest majority (61 percent) in Iran’s population of almost 80 million. The remainder is Azeri (16 percent), Kurdish (10 percent), Baloch (2 percent), Arab (2 percent), and a range of other minorities,²⁷ many of which are systematically discriminated against by the Islamic Republic and feel little or limited allegiance to it. The base of support for Islamic radicalism—and other governmental priorities—in Iranian society is further weakened by the regime’s persecution of religious minorities, which, according to the U.S. State Department, has created “a threatening atmosphere for nearly all non-Shi’a religious groups” in the Islamic Republic.²⁸

Social and economic malaise has historically served to dilute identification with regime ideals and principles, something that was encapsulated in the mass uprising (colloquially known as the “Green Movement”) that emerged in Iran in mid-2009. Back then, the protests were successfully quashed by the Iranian regime, but these underlying factors – including unemployment, poverty and widespread regime corruption – remain potent drivers of domestic politics. This has been evident since late 2017, which has seen Iran convulsed by persistent protests that have presented its leaders with the greatest challenge to their legitimacy since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The initial period that followed the passage of the JCPOA in 2015 was greeted with considerable euphoria by ordinary Iranians, who were hopeful that the agreement would be accompanied by an economic “peace dividend” of sorts.²⁹ This, however, did not materialize, notwithstanding a surge in trade and investment into the Islamic Republic. The Iranian regime chose not to parlay the economic benefits of JCPOA-enabled trade into meaningful, sustained investments in infrastructure and prosperity within the Islamic Republic—with pronounced results.

Officially, unemployment in Iran now stands at some 12.5 percent, but unofficially is gauged to be significantly higher.³⁰ It is also endemic, reaching as high as 60 percent in some cities within the Islamic Republic.³¹ Youth unemployment is particularly widespread, and in 2017 measured nearly 29 percent.³²

Poverty within the Islamic Republic remains pervasive as well, with some 33 percent of the country's population (26 million Iranians) suffering from "absolute poverty" and six percent facing starvation.³³ Meanwhile, commodity prices have risen significantly (with staple goods such as eggs and chicken increasing in cost by 40 percent or more), while purchasing power has declined as Iran's national currency, the *rial*, has plummeted in value in recent months. Yet, rather than focus on the country's deleterious domestic conditions, Iran's leaders systematically prioritized guns over butter. Between 2016 and 2017, Iran's national defense budget increased by some 20 percent, while its defense budget for 2018-2019 further hikes spending by nearly 90 percent.³⁴ Iran also significantly expanded its foreign activism in places like Bahrain, Yemen and (most conspicuously) Syria, at considerable cost to the regime. The Islamic Republic's ongoing campaign in Syria alone is estimated to cost the country between \$15-\$20 billion annually – roughly equivalent to Iran's total national healthcare budget of \$16.3 billion.³⁵

This combination of domestic neglect and foreign adventurism has generated a massive domestic backlash within Iran. Prominent among the slogans in the current cycle of protests within the Islamic Republic have been calls of "Leave Syria, think about us!" and "Death to Hezbollah!"³⁶ – chants that reflect a fundamental dissatisfaction with, and rejection of, the prevailing priorities of the Iranian regime.

ISLAMISM AND THE STATE

Iran's support for Islamism is channeled through an elaborate infrastructure of institutions and governmental bodies tasked with the promotion of radical Islamic thought and action. These include:

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC, or Pasdaran)

At home, the IRGC, in addition to its professional military duties, has become the guardian of the regime's ballistic missile and weapons of mass destruction programs.³⁷ The agenda of Iran's ideological army, however, is global in scope, and so is its reach. Over the past three-and-a-half decades, the IRGC has emerged as the shock troops of Iran's Islamic Revolution, training terrorist organizations both within Iran and in specialized training camps in places like Lebanon and Sudan, as well as providing assistance to radical movements and terrorist proxies throughout the Middle East, Africa, Europe and Asia via specialized paramilitary units.³⁸ The most notorious of these is the Quds Force, a crack military battalion formed in 1990 and dedicated to carrying out "extra-regional operations of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps"—namely, terrorism and insurgency in the name of the Islamic Republic.³⁹ Since the 2003 ouster of Saddam Hussein, this unit has played a leading role in Iraq as part of what analysts have characterized as an "open-ended, resilient, and well-funded" covert effort on the part of the Iranian regime to extend its influence into the former Ba'athist state.⁴⁰ More recently, the IRGC has become a principal player in the Iranian government's ongoing assistance to Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad.⁴¹

The IRGC also boasts a dedicated intelligence service, the Protection and Intelligence Department, or Hefazat va Ettelaat-e Sepah-e Pasdaran. Founded in 1980, it encompasses three main functions: intelligence in support of IRGC military operations; political operations at home and abroad; and support to the foreign terrorist operations of the Quds Force.⁴²

Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS)

Controlled directly by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, the MOIS is used by Iran's ruling clergy to quash domestic opposition and carry out espionage against suspect members of the Iranian government.⁴³ Abroad, the MOIS plays a key role in planning and carrying out terrorist operations on foreign soil, using Iranian embassies and diplomatic missions as cover.⁴⁴ MOIS operatives are also known to operate abroad under unofficial identities—for example, as employees of Iran Air, Iran's official airline.⁴⁵ The MOIS conducts a variety of activities in support of the operations of Tehran's terrorist surrogates, ranging from financing actual operations to intelligence collection on potential targets. The Ministry also carries out

independent operations, primarily against dissidents of the current regime in Tehran living in foreign countries, at the direction of senior Iranian officials.⁴⁶

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Iran's Foreign Ministry serves as an important enabler of the Iranian regime's international terrorist presence. Agents of the IRGC and MOIS often operate out of Iranian missions abroad, where they are stationed under diplomatic cover, complete with blanket diplomatic immunity. These agents—and through them Iranian foreign proxies—use the Ministry's auspices to untraceably obtain financing, weapons and intelligence from Tehran (for example, via diplomatic pouch).⁴⁷

Cultural Affairs Ministry

Supplementing the role of the Foreign Affairs Ministry in exporting terrorism is Iran's Ministry of Culture and Guidance. Tasked with overseeing the cultural sections of Iranian foreign missions, as well as free-standing Iranian cultural centers, it facilitates IRGC infiltration of—and terrorist recruitment within—local Muslim populations in foreign nations.⁴⁸ The Ministry is particularly influential among majority Muslim countries like the former Soviet Republics, many of which share substantial cultural, religious and ideological bonds with Tehran. Between 1982 and 1992, the official in charge of the Ministry—and of its role in support of Iranian terror abroad—was Mohammed Khatami, Iran's subsequent “reformist” president.

Basij

Formed during the early days of the Islamic Republic and trained by the Pasdaran, this militia represents the Iranian regime's premier tool of domestic terror. During the eight years of the Iran-Iraq war, the organization's cadres were the Islamic Republic's cannon fodder, selected to clear minefields and launch “human wave” attacks against Iraqi forces.⁴⁹ With the end of the conflict with Iraq, the role of the Basij was reoriented, and the organization became the watchdog of Iranian society. Today, it is used by the ayatollahs to quell domestic anti-regime protests and eradicate “un-Islamic” behavior. Their role ranges from enforcing modest dress to gathering intelligence on university students, which is handed over to the regime's undercover police.⁵⁰ The Basij played a significant role in suppressing domestic dissent through violence and intimidation in the aftermath of the fraudulent reelection of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to the Iranian presidency in June of 2009.⁵¹ More recently, amid growing protests in and around Tehran and other urban centers beginning in December 2017, the Basij has played an instrumental role in regime repression, including by carrying out mass arrests of demonstrators.⁵²

There are reported to be as many as 10 million registered Basij members, though not all are on active service.⁵³ The Basij also plays an important supporting role in Iran's state sponsorship of terror. It is known to be active in training anti-Israeli forces, including carrying out maneuvers designed to ready Hezbollah and assorted Palestinian militants for guerrilla warfare.

Domestic paramilitaries (guruh-I fishar)

Supplementing the role of the Basij are the numerous vigilante or “pressure” groups that are harnessed by the Iranian government. Though officially independent, these gangs actually operate under the patronage of government officials, the IRGC or the MOIS, and target internal opposition to the clerical regime.⁵⁴ The most famous is the Ansar-i Hezbollah, which was responsible for fomenting the July 1999 crisis at Tehran University that led to the bloody governmental crackdown on student opposition forces.

Bonyads

These sprawling socio-religious foundations, which are overseen only by Iran's Supreme Leader, serve as conduits for the Islamic Republic's cause of choice. Arguably the most important is the Bonyad-e

Mostazafan (Foundation of the Oppressed), a sprawling network of an estimated 1,200 firms created in 1979 with seed money from the Shah's coffers.⁵⁵ Another is the Bonyad-e Shahid (Martyrs' Foundation), an enormous conglomerate of industrial, agricultural, construction and commercial companies with some 350 offices and tens of thousands of employees.⁵⁶ The sums controlled by these organs are enormous: more than 30 percent of Iran's national GDP, and as much as two-thirds of the country's non-oil GDP.⁵⁷ And while many of their functions are legitimate, they are also used by Iran's religious leaders to funnel money to their pet causes, from financing domestic repression to arming radical groups abroad.

Notably, even as Iran remains complicit in the pervasive sponsorship of international terrorism, it is itself the target of violent activity from a number of quarters.

One is the Free Life Party of Kurdistan, or PJAK. Led by Iranian-born German national Abdul Rahman Haji Ahmadi, PJAK is a violent Kurdish nationalist group that has carried out attacks on Iran from strongholds in neighboring Iraq since its formation in 2004. PJAK, which maintains an affiliation with Turkey's larger Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), claims to seek "democratic change" and characterizes its actions as a "defense" against Iranian state repression of its Kurdish minority.⁵⁸ Iranian regime forces clashed repeatedly with members of PJAK between 2008 and 2011, successfully arresting and killing numerous group members as part of ongoing counterterrorism operations.⁵⁹ A major counterterrorism campaign against the group by Iranian security forces followed in the fall of 2011, culminating in a ceasefire between the two parties.⁶⁰ This ceasefire held until 2013, when clashes between the group and Tehran began anew,⁶¹ and have continued sporadically until the present day.

More pronounced, however, has been the threat to Iran posed by the Islamic State. Since its ascent to regional prominence in mid-2014, ISIS has targeted Shi'a Muslim communities throughout the Middle East, and has made Iran a key target of its animus. The organization has repeatedly attempted to breach Iran's common border with Iraq, and has identified the Iranian regime as a principal adversary in its communiqués and writings. ISIS has likewise proven adept at exploiting Iran's latent ethnic cleavages, and in the past found fertile soil for recruitment among disenfranchised communities, such as Iran's Kurds, who are repressed and/or marginalized by the state.⁶²

In response, Iran has mobilized extensive resources to fight the Islamic State, both at home and abroad. Thus, Iran deepened its already extensive involvement in Iraq "in the effort to pre-empt a potential spillover across its borders."⁶³ It also justified its intervention in Syria as part of a broad counterterrorism offensive against the group.⁶⁴ These and other paramilitary activities have been spearheaded by Gen. Qassem Suleimani, the head of the IRGC's Quds Force paramilitary unit, who has emerged as a truly national figure over the past half-decade as a result.

Despite these steps, and notwithstanding the Islamic State's larger path of decline in the Middle East, the organization still poses a threat to Iranian security. This was demonstrated dramatically in the summer of 2017, when gunmen attacked the national parliament and Mausoleum of Ayatollah Khomeini in Tehran in a coordinated attack that left at least 13 dead.⁶⁵ More recently, ISIS has claimed credit for a September 23rd attack on an Iranian military parade which resulted in 29 casualties.⁶⁶

ENDNOTES

1. See, for example, Guy Taylor, "Iran is Banking Billions More Than Expected Thanks to Obama's Deal," *Washington Times*, February 3, 2016, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/feb/3/iran-claims-100-billion-windfall-from-sanctions-re/>.
2. Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 188–207.
3. Ruhollah Khomeini, *Islamic Government* (New York: Manor Books, 1979).
4. Preamble of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, http://www.oefre.unibe.ch/law/icl/ir00000_.html.
5. Robin Wright, *Sacred Rage: The Wrath of Militant Islam* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986), 111–21.
6. "Iranian Terrorism in Bosnia and Croatia," *Iran Brief*, March 3, 1997, <http://www.lexis-nexis.com>; Mike O'Connor, "Spies for Iranians Are Said to Gain a Hold in Bosnia," *New York Times*, November 28, 1997, 1.
7. Vali Nasr, *The Shi'a Revival: How Conflicts within Islam will Shape the Future* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 137.
8. "Hezbollah has 50,000 Rockets: Report," Agence France Presse, December 7, 2010, http://www.spacewar.com/reports/Hezbollah_has_50000_rockets_report_999.html.
9. Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, "Iranian Strategy in Iraq: Politics and 'Other Means,'" Combating Terrorism Center at West Point *Occasional Paper*, October 13, 2008, http://ctc.usma.edu/Iran_Iraq/CTC_Iran_Iraq_Final.pdf; Ned Parker, "Ten Years After Iraq War Began, Iran Reaps the Gains," *Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 2013, <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/mar/28/world/la-fg-iraq-iran-influence-20130329>.
10. "Chapter 3. State Sponsors of Terrorism," in *Country Reports on Terrorism 2012* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, May 2013), <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2012/209985.htm>.
11. *Ibid.*
12. The historically tense relations between Iran and Egypt deteriorated precipitously during 2008–2010, spurred in large part by Egyptian fears of Iranian internal meddling. These worries were showcased in spring of 2009, when Egyptian authorities arrested a total of twenty-six individuals suspected of carrying out espionage for Hezbollah, and of plotting to carry out terrorist attacks within Egypt. The suspects were subsequently formally charged with plotting subversion against the Egyptian state. "Egypt Charges 26 'Hizbullah Spies,'" *Jerusalem Post*, July 26, 2009, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellitecid=1248277893866&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>.
13. See, for example, "Lawmaker: Uprisings in Region Promising Birth of Islamic Middle-East," Fars News Agency (Tehran), February 5, 2011, <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8911161168>.
14. "Iran's Support for Bahrain Protesters Fuels Regional Tensions," *Deutsche Welle*, April 15, 2011, <http://www.dw.de/irans-support-for-bahrain-protesters-fuels-regional-tensions/a-6504403-1>.
15. See, for example, Eric Schmitt, and Robert F. Worth, "With Arms for Yemen Rebels, Iran Seeks Wider Mideast Role," *New York Times*, March 15, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/15/world/middleeast/aiding-yemen-rebels-iran-seeks-wider-mideast-role.html>.
16. Luke McKenna, "Syria is Importing Iranian Snipers to Murder Anti-Government Protesters," *Business Insider*, January 27, 2012, <http://www.businessinsider.com/syria-is-importing-iranian-snipers-to-murder-anti-government-protesters-2012-1>.
17. See, for example, Farnaz Fassihi, "Iran Recruiting Afghan Refugees to Fight for Regime in Syria," *Wall Street Journal*, May 15, 2014, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304908304579564161508613846?mg=reno64-wsj&url=http%3A%2F%2Fonline.wsj.com%2Farticle%2FSB10001424052702304908304579564161508613846.html>.
18. Seth J. Franzman, "Who Are Iran's 80,000 Shi'ite Fighters in Syria?" *Jerusalem Post*, April 28, 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Who-are-Irans-80000-Shiite-fighters-in-Syr>

ia-552940

19. Richard Barrett, *Beyond The Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees* (The Soufan Center, October 2017), 5, <http://thesoufancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Beyond-the-Caliphate-Foreign-Fighters-and-the-Threat-of-Returnees-TSC-Report-October-2017-v2.pdf>.
20. “Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Commander Jafari: We Support Resistance to U.S. and Israel in Syria and Elsewhere in the Region,” Middle East Media Research Institute *Clip* no. 4272, April 21, 2014, <http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/4272.htm>.
21. See, for example, Dina Esfandiary and Ariane Tabatabai, “Iran’s ISIS Policy,” *International Affairs* 91, iss. 1 (2015), https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/field/field_publication_docs/INTA91_1_01_Esfandiary_Tabatabai.pdf.
22. Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Stuart Levey, Remarks before the 5th Annual Conference on Trade, Treasury, and Cash Management in the Middle East, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, March 7, 2007, http://uae.usembassy.gov/remarks_of_stuart_levey_.html.
23. Carla Humud, Christopher Blanchard, Jeremy Sharp and Jim Zanotti, “Iranian Assistance to Groups in Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and the Palestinian Territories,” Congressional Research Service *Memorandum*, July 31, 2015, <http://www.kirk.senate.gov/images/PDF/Iran%20Financial%20Support%20to%20Terrorists%20and%20Militants.pdf>.
24. Brian Hook, Remarks at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, Washington, DC, August 28, 2018, <http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/FDD-Summit-Brian-Hook.pdf>.
25. *Ibid.*
26. See, for example, Azadeh Moaveni, “The Backlash against Iran’s Role in Lebanon,” *Time*, August 31, 2006, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1515755,00.html>.
27. U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, “Iran,” *World Factbook*, August 13, 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/ir.html>.
28. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, *International Religious Freedom Report 2008*, n.d., <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108482.htm>.
29. See, for example, Ebrahim Mohseni, Nancy Gallagher and Clay Ramsey, *Iranian Public Opinion on the Nuclear Agreement*, Center for International & Security Studies at Maryland, September 2015, <http://www.cissm.umd.edu/sites/default/files/CISSM-PA%20Iranian%20Public%20Opinion%20on%20the%20Nuclear%20Agreement%20090915%20FINAL-LR.pdf>.
30. Andrew Torchia, “Crisis of Expectations: Iran Protests Mean Economic Dilemma for Government,” Reuters, January 1, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-rallies-economy/crisis-of-expectations-iran-protests-mean-economic-dilemma-for-government-idUSKBN1EQ15S>.
31. “Iran Worried as Unemployment Reaches 60% in Some Cities,” *Radio Farda*, October 2, 2017, <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/iran-unemployment-60-percent/28768226.html>.
32. Patrick Cockburn, “Corruption and Inequality Fueling Protests in Iran as Rouhani Faces Pressure to Crack Down,” *Independent* (London), January 1, 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/why-iran-protests-demonstrations-violence-corruption-inequality-hassan-rouhani-donald-trump-a8137051.html>.
33. “26 Million Iranians Suffer Absolute Poverty, Says Prominent Economist,” *Radio Farda*, April 10, 2018, <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/iran-million-suffer-from-poverty/29156808.html>.
34. Chirine Mouchantaf, “Iranian Protest: ‘Military Adventurism’ at the Core of Citizens Outcry,” *Defense News*, January 5, 2018, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/mideast-africa/2018/01/05/iranian-protest-military-adventurism-at-the-core-of-citizens-outcry/>.
35. Amir Basiri, “Iran Increases its Military Budget in Response to Nationwide Protests,” January 30, 2018, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/iran-increases-its-military-budget-in-response-to-nationwide-protests>.
36. Philip Issa, “Iran Protests put Spotlight on Military’s Vast and Shadowy War in Syria,” *Asso-*

- ciated Press, January 5, 2018, <https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2018/01/05/iran-protests-put-spotlight-on-militarys-vast-and-shadowy-war-in-syria.html>.
37. Mohammad Mohaddessin, *Islamic Fundamentalism: The New Global Threat* (Washington: Seven Locks Press, 1993), 132-136.
 38. See, for example, Michael Eisenstadt, *Iranian Military Power: Capabilities and Intentions* (Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1996), 70-72.
 39. Mohaddessin, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, 102.
 40. Michael Knights, "Iran's Ongoing Proxy War in Iraq," Washington Institute for Near East Policy *Policywatch* 1492, March 16, 2009, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=3029>.
 41. See, for example, Amir Toumaj, "IRGC Special Officer's Death Highlights Involvement in Syria," *Long War Journal*, October 1, 2016, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/10/irgc-special-forces-officers-death-highlights-involvement-in-syria.php>.
 42. "Rev. Guards Intelligence," *Iran Brief*, January 6, 1997, <http://www.lexis-nexis.com>.
 43. "Ministry of Intelligence and Security [MOIS]: Vezarat-e Ettela'at va Amniyat-e Keshvar VE-VAK," [globalsecurity.org](http://www.globalsecurity.org), February 19, 2006, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/intell/world/iran/vevak.htm>.
 44. [Eisenstadt, *Iranian Military Power*, 70.
 45. Federation of American Scientists, "Ministry of Intelligence and Security [MOIS]: Organization," n.d., <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/iran/vevak/org.htm>.
 46. See, for example, "Khamene'i Ordered Khobar Towers Bombing, Defector Says," *Iran Brief*, August 3, 1998, <http://www.lexis-nexis.com>; American intelligence officials have long maintained that Iranian terrorism is authorized at the highest official levels. See, for example, CIA Director R. James Woolsey, "Challenges to Peace in the Middle East," remarks before the Washington Institute for Near East Policy's Wye Plantation Conference, Queenstown, Maryland, September 23, 1994, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC07.php?CID=66>.
 47. Eisenstadt, *Iranian Military Power*, 71.
 48. Ibid.; Mohaddessin, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, 101-102.
 49. Drew Middleton, "5 Years of Iran-Iraq War: Toll May Be Near a Million," *New York Times*, September 23, 1985, 4.
 50. Geneive Abdo, "Islam's Warriors Scent Blood," *Observer* (London), July 18, 1999, 26.
 51. "Basij Commander Admits Forces Shot at 2009 Protesters," International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, January 6, 2014, <https://www.iranhumanrights.org/2014/01/basij-shot/>.
 52. See, for example, "Six People Said Killed, 300 Arrests at Sufi Protest in Iran," *Radio Farda*, February 20, 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-sufi-gonabadi-protests-tehran-deaths/29050268.html>
 53. Angus McDowall, "Tehran Deploys Islamic Vigilantes to Attack Protesters," *Independent* (London), July 11, 2003, 12.
 54. For more on the *guruh-i fishar*, see Michael Rubin, *Into the Shadows: Radical Vigilantes in Khatami's Iran* (Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2001).
 55. Robert D. Kaplan, "A Bazaari's World," *Atlantic Monthly* 277, iss. 3 (1996), 28.
 56. Wilfried Buchta, *Who Rules Iran? The Structure of Power in the Islamic Republic* (Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy – Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2000), 75.
 57. Ibid.; See also Kenneth Katzman, Statement before the Joint Economic Committee of the United States Congress, July 25, 2006.
 58. "Tehran Faces Growing Kurdish Opposition," *Washington Times*, April 3, 2006, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2006/apr/3/20060403-125601-8453r/>.
 59. See, for example, "4 Members of PJAK Terrorist Group Arrested in Iran," Fars News Agency (Tehran), November 30, 2010, <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8909091200>; See also "Iranian Troops Attack Kurdish PJAK Rebel Bases in Iraq," BBC (London), July 18, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14189313>.
 60. "Iran Deploying Troops, Tanks to Kurdistan Border," *World Tribune*, July 19, 2013, <http://>

- www.worldtribune.com/2013/07/19/iran-deploying-troops-tanks-to-kurdistan-border/.
61. “Five IRGC Soldiers Killed in Clash with ‘Terrorists’ in Western Iran,” Xinhua, October 11, 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/world/2013-10/11/c_125510936.htm.
 62. See, for example, Fuad Haqqaqi, “ISIS Boasts Rising Number of Recruits Among Iranian Kurds,” *Rudaw*, November 12, 2014, <http://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iran/101220141>.
 63. Esfandiary and Tabatabai, “Iran’s ISIS Policy.”
 64. Mohamad Bazzi, “Iran Will Do What it Takes to Fight ISIS,” *CNN*, April 2015, <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/01/03/opinion/bazzi-iran-iraq/>.
 65. “Gunmen Attack Iran’s Parliament, Khomeini Shrine,” *Al-Jazeera* (Doha), June 7, 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/06/attacks-reported-iran-parliament-mausoleum-170607063232218.html>.
 66. “ISIS Releases Video Purporting to Show Iran Military Parade Attackers,” Reuters, September 24, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/isis-releases-video-purporting-to-show-iran-military-parade-attackers-1.6494383>.