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Iran is a Nation, Not a “Regime”

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Photograph Source: Photo by [Sajad Nori](#).

Every day, my frustration grows as American politicians and corporate media churn out mindless rhetoric regarding the Islamic Republic of Iran.

They have shown little curiosity or interest in uncovering the reasons and motives behind the unwarranted and illegal U.S.-Israeli war of choice against Iran. Instead, they parrot demonizing language; most notably the reflexive use of “regime” to delegitimize the Iranian nation and its government.

It is curious that the media has avoided asking why Iran with no record of modern territorial aggression, and that signed a politically binding agreement to strictly limit its civil nuclear program in 2015 should be referred to as an enemy “regime”.

Do they know that after World War II, the term became associated with totalitarian forms of government, including fascist, communist and dictatorial systems? And are they willing to acknowledge that branding the Islamic Republic a regime is inaccurate, as it does not meet the definition?

The contradictions between what the Iranian nation is and what is said about it by American officials and their media scribes are rooted in the country's ideological rejection of U.S. and Israeli hegemony in West Asia, and its principled commitment to free Palestine.

That repudiation is evidenced in Article 152 (Principles) of the 1979 Constitution of the Islamic Republic:

“The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based upon the rejection of all forms of domination, both the exertion of it and submission to it, the preservation of the independence of the country in all respects and its territorial integrity, the defence of the rights of all Muslims, nonalignment with respect to the hegemonist superpowers, and the maintenance of mutually peaceful relations with all non-belligerent States.”

The struggle for the liberation of all oppressed peoples, notably the Palestinians, has always been a core principle of the government.

As Israel continues to stoke chaos and instability throughout the region, the early warnings of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Iran's first Supreme Leader, have renewed relevance. He presciently argued that if Israel was not stopped in Palestine, its expansionist aims would eventually threaten the entire region.

Although the U.S. and Israel have serially invaded and violated the territorial integrity of other countries, abrogated agreements and treaties, and humiliated citizens of other nations, the legacy media and its pundits have not branded either government as “regimes”.

The charged rhetoric has made military action legitimate in the eyes of a public steeped in anti-Iran propaganda. That treatment has rationalized violence against Iran and its leaders.

Much like any other nation, Iran is not without faults. Washington has, however, amplified its shortcomings to justify war against it. Uninformed comments and loaded rhetoric have obscured the reality of Iran, a country of 93 million.

With a written constitution, the Islamic Republic stands out in a region dominated by absolute monarchs, military dictators, and a supremacist apartheid Israel that has no written constitution and no defined borders. Ironically, the United States has been more comfortable with it and with Arab despots.

After the Revolution of 1979, Iranians transited from a monarchical political structure to a participatory government based on the ideals of Islam, rooted in justice, independence and equality. That they have survived U.S.-Israeli maniacal wars, economic sanctions, sabotage, and assassination of their leaders and scientists speaks to their perseverance and the foundational strength of the country's governing bodies.

An objective review reveals a sophisticated political culture and intricate state structure that has combined the conflicting principles of republicanism and theocracy; essentially an Islamic democratic system.

Adopted by public referendum, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, a comprehensive document with numerous checks and balances, went into effect on 3 December 1979. What follows are the core structures of the government.

Supreme Leader (Rahbar): The office of the Supreme Leader is the central institution in the governmental structure of the Islamic Republic. He is the head of state and highest authority in Iran.

The position is rooted in the doctrine of *Vilayat-e faqih* (Guardianship of the Jurist) wherein political authority stems from religious expertise. The Supreme Leader is required to demonstrate religious scholarship, political competence and moral authority.

The Assembly of Experts, whose members select the Supreme Leader, have the power to remove him if he is incapable of fulfilling the duties of the office.

The Leader sets national policy, appoints the Head of the Judiciary and other key officials, commands the armed forces, and has the power to declare war. Through his control of the Guardian Council, he vets electoral candidates and vetoes parliamentary laws.

President: The president is the head of government and second highest ranking official after the Supreme Leader. Candidates must be approved by the Guardian Council.

Elected by direct popular vote for a four-year term, the constitution permits the president to serve only two consecutive terms; after which the incumbent must step down for one term before being eligible to run again.

As administrator of the executive branch, the president leads the Council of Ministers and the National Security Council, signs legislation and treaties, and serves as deputy commander of the Iranian army.

Islamic Consultative Assembly: The Majlis, known as the Islamic Consultative Assembly, is the unicameral legislative branch of government.

Members are elected by popular vote to the 290-member assembly (40 additional seats were approved in 2025) for four-year terms. Five seats are reserved for recognized religious minorities (Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians).

To qualify for parliament, candidates must be: Iranian citizens, aged 30-75; possess an associate degree (or equivalent); demonstrate a belief in Islam and the principles of the Islamic Republic; express loyalty to the constitution and to the Supreme Leader; and be in good physical health.

The Majlis drafts legislation, ratifies international treaties, examines and approves the national budget, investigates national affairs, and removes cabinet members when necessary.

Guardian Council: The Council ensures that legislation and elections conform with the constitution and Islamic principles. The 12-member body consists of 6 legal scholars, approved by the Majlis, and 6 Islamic law experts appointed by the Supreme Leader.

It has veto power over legislation passed by the Majlis; and supervision over elections, with authority to vet candidates seeking office in local, parliamentary, presidential and Assembly of Experts elections.

Assembly of Experts: The Assembly of Experts for the Leadership, established after the Revolution to draft the constitution, is mandated to appoint, monitor and remove (if necessary) the Supreme Leader.

Elected by popular vote every eight years to the 88-member body of Islamic jurists, representatives meet twice a year during their tenure.

Candidates must be approved by the Guardian Council and must demonstrate mastery of Islamic law; be of good moral character; and be familiar with the issues of the day.

The Assembly, on 8 March 2026, elected Mojtaba Khamenei as the country's third Supreme Leader, following the U.S.-Israeli assassination of his father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Expediency Discernment Council: The Expediency Council was integrated into the constitution when it was amended in 1989. The 27-member body, appointed by the Supreme Leader for 5-year terms, is made up largely of senior clerics, political leaders and military officers.

Formed to advise the Supreme Leader, it acts as final arbiter in legislative disputes, and helps manage the transition if the Supreme Leader dies or is incapacitated.

Judiciary: The Iranian constitution is the supreme law of the land.

The judiciary, which operates within a framework of Islamic and civil law, is overseen by the Head of the Judiciary, a senior Islamic jurist, appointed by the Supreme Leader for a five-year term. He is responsible for judicial administration and appointment of judges.

The Supreme Court, public prosecutor and lower courts (criminal and civil) are the key components of the judicial system. Separate revolutionary and special clerical courts also exercise legal authority. Although the Supreme Court is the highest court of appeal, it does not have judicial review authority over legislation.

Elections are governed by the constitution and electoral laws. Campaigns are typically short and financed through a mix of private donations (individuals and businesses) and personal assets. Although the state does not allocate funds directly to political campaigns, it provides free access to radio and television and some public spaces for advertising.

Conclusion

Iran moved away from monarchical absolutism into a new political reality in 1979. One can only imagine how the country might have thrived if it had not been vital to divert its talent and resources to defending the nation.

After more than four decades of U.S. and Israeli harassment, hostilities and now war, Iran has retained its independence under the Constitutional Islamic Republic. That its institutions have survived; and its social contract is intact, speaks to its coherence and endurance.

Iranians are now in a defensive war for survival. Resistance is their only option, as they fight to retain the country's sovereignty against two of the world's most militarily powerful and brutal hegemonic bullies.

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