

IRAN



History & Ideology

The Islamic Republic of Iran emerged in 1979 with the overthrow of the Shah, who was replaced by a theocratic government headed by Ayatollah Khomeini. Khomeini's theocracy is based on clerical supremacy and an Islamic order.

State Sponsor of Terrorism

The radical regime in Iran has sponsored terrorism against the United States, Israel and the West for decades. The State Department has repeatedly designated Iran as the world's leading state sponsor of terror, noting its support for groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad. Recently, Tehran has also sponsored the insurgency in Iraq, supplied arms to the Taliban and hosted al-Qaeda terrorists. Iran has sponsored airplane hijackings, lethal attacks against U.S. soldiers stationed in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, kidnappings of Americans and Europeans, and a restaurant bombing in Spain. Hezbollah has openly expressed its alliance to Iran. Hezbollah's 1985 platform states, "We obey the orders of one leader, wise and just, those of our tutor and jurist who fulfills all the necessary conditions, [Ayatollah] Khomeini."

Incitement of Genocide

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has consistently denied the Holocaust, called for the destruction of Israel and led Iranians in 'death to America' and 'death to Israel' chants. According to Canadian Member of Parliament and international human rights scholar Irwin Cotler, there is significant factual evidence of state-sanctioned incitement to genocide (as defined by the Genocide Conventions) in Ahmadinejad's Iran.

The incitement to genocide is part of an effort to return to the original themes of the 1979 Islamic revolution, which has disturbing Messianic elements. The Iranian ayatollahs speak often of the re-emergence of the "Twelfth" or "Hidden Imam," sometimes referred to as the "Mahdi." According to their beliefs, after a stormy period of apocalyptic wars, the clouds will part, and the "sun" (the Mahdi) will be revealed. They believe that when he is released from his imprisonment, the entire world will submit to Islam.

Nuclear Proliferation

Iran is rapidly overcoming technical obstacles and significantly increasing its uranium enrichment capabilities, according to the September 2008 report from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). If Tehran sustains its current efforts in defiance of U.N. Security Council resolutions, it could stockpile enough material by the end of 2009 that could be quickly processed into the highly enriched uranium needed for a nuclear bomb.

Iran continues to make rapid advancements in its uranium enrichment capabilities.

- The IAEA in its November 2008 report said that Iran has increased the number of centrifuges to 3,800 and significantly increased the efficiency of the machines, thus reducing the time required to produce the highly enriched uranium needed for nuclear weapons.

- According to the IAEA report, Iran also is expanding its use of more advanced centrifuges that are capable of enriching uranium at two to five times the speed of older models.
- Iran continues to make rapid progress on the construction of its heavy water reactor at Arak, and the facility now appears to be in operational condition, the IAEA said. The reactor could be used to produce plutonium for nuclear weapons without having to master the uranium enrichment process.

Iran has repeatedly failed to address concerns about the military nature of its nuclear program.

- The IAEA has documents and photographs suggesting Iran secretly tried to modify a missile cone to fit a nuclear bomb.
- Iran has failed to cooperate with repeated IAEA requests for design information or access to additional locations related to the manufacturing of centrifuges, research and development on uranium enrichment, uranium mining and milling.

Nuclear Arms Race

The prospect of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons and obtaining the ability to launch missiles against countries throughout the Middle East and even Europe has alarmed the international community. If Iran succeeds in developing nuclear weapons, this will shift the balance of power in the Middle East, specifically in the oil-rich Gulf region, thereby dangerously destabilizing world oil markets. A nuclear-armed Iran would pose a threat to Middle Eastern stability that could provoke a dangerous nuclear arms race throughout the region. The absence of Arab reaction to the Israeli bombing of a suspected nuclear facility under construction in the Syrian desert was a sign of the fear spreading in the region.

International efforts to deter Iran from continuing its quest for nuclear weapons

U.S. efforts to synchronize its policies with the European Union in pressing for tougher sanctions and diplomacy against Iran have achieved some success in the last year. But the trade void is being filled by other nations, particularly Russia, China, Japan, South Korea, and the United Arab Emirates. In order for sanctions to be successful, these nations need to participate fully, especially since financial sanctions are necessary for diplomacy to work. At a time when oil prices have dropped significantly causing increased pressure on an already severely depressed Iranian economy, the timely use of diplomatic and economic measures remain critical to defusing this crisis.

