

# IRAN: FROM WESTERN ALLY TO ISLAMIC REPUBLIC



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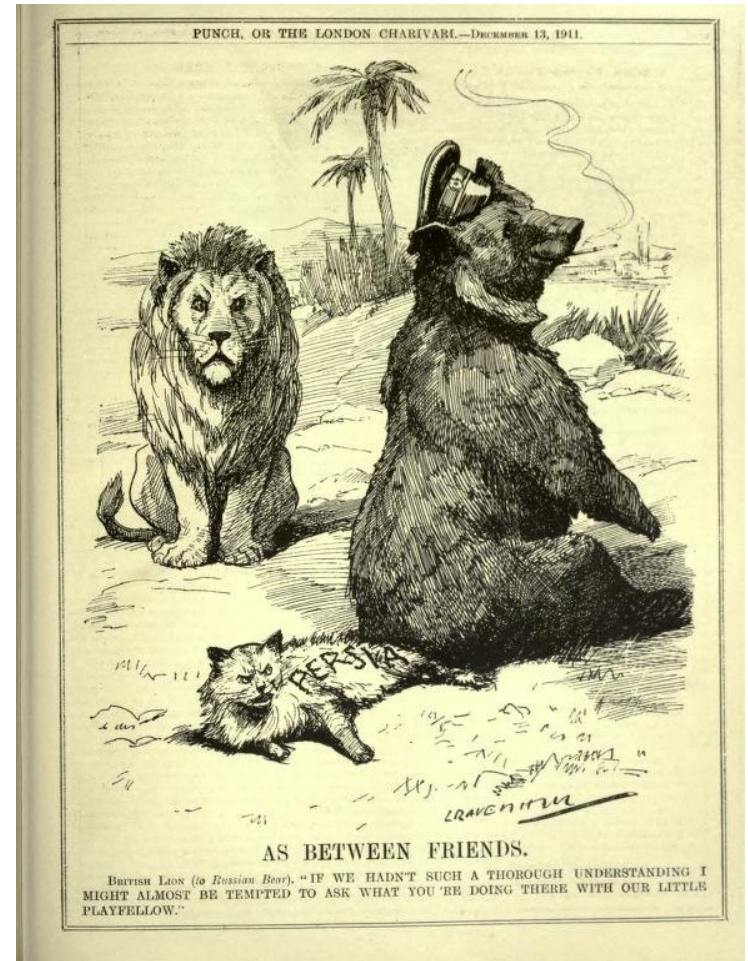
*Politics and Society in the Middle East*

# PERCEPTION OF EXCEPTIONALITY

1. Glorious history (thousands years of the empire)  
+ feeling of cultural supremacy
  2. Indo-European origin and language.
  3. Shia Islam.
- Significant impact till today on Iranian foreign politics and the political status of Iran in the Middle East.

# PERSIA IN 18th AND 19th CENTURY

- Limited contacts with the outside world – 3 main groups of activities:
  - Missionary activities.
  - Trade.
  - Travellers and scientific missions – prof. Marinus Zwemer (translation of Koran to English).
- Great Game – the competition of Russia and Great Britain over Persia (agreement in 1907).



# POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT TO WW1

- 1906-1911 civil war in Persia (attempts to make some constitutional changes).
- Growing geostrategic significance of Persia due to the oil resources (1908 oil discovered in Masjed Soleyman).
- WW1: Persia declared neutrality → 1919 Anglo-Persian treaty – Persia became the protectorate of Great Britain.
- Change of the ruling



# PERSIA BETWEEN WORLD WARS

- Difficult political position between Great Britain and USSR (expansion of communism, dispute over the division of the Caspian Sea).
- Continuing economic problems: oil trade limited by D'Arcy's concession, the oil extraction made by Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (Great Britain got most of the earnings, Persian government received only 16 % of the profit).
- Rapid modernization of the country according to the western standards (economy, education, culture) – partial success.
- Shah attempted to modernize the army – negotiations with Nazi Germany.
- 1936: official change of the name from Persia to Iran (= land of the Aryans).

# IRAN DURING WW2

- At the beginning of WW2, Iran declared neutrality – not respected by the great powers.
- The strategic geopolitical location of Iran (border with USSR, access to the Caspian Sea, oil resources).
- In June 1941 military occupation of Iran by Soviet Union and Great Britain (later replaced by USA) → Reza Khan was forced to abdicate from throne → his son Mohammad Reza became the new shah.



Mohammad Reza

# IRAN DURING WW2

- Occupation of Iran during the war very unpopular among the local population → January 1942 Great Britain and USSR declared that they would withdraw from Iran at latest 6 months since the end of the war + would provide the financial compensation.
- Tehran conference 1943 (Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin) – discussion of the current events of WW2, confirmation of the territorial integrity of Iran.



Stalin, Roosevelt, Churchill

# IRAN IN BIPOLAR WORLD

- Strategic position of Iran.
- Fears that USSR shall attempt to include Iran among its satellites:
  - Significant support of USSR to the Communist Party of Iran (Tudeh).
  - Reluctance to withdraw from northern Iran.
  - November 1945 the declaration of independent Kurdish People's Republic (unsuccessful).
- Pressure from USA and Great Britain on USSR in UN → January 1946 Soviet troops forced to leave Iran.



# IRAN IN 1950s – MOSADDEQ'S CASE

- USA became the guarantor of political sovereignty of Iran (1947 Truman's doctrine) – close relations to shah Mohammad Reza.
- Mohammad Mosaddeq became famous as the leader of Iranian nationalists → 1951 prime minister of Iran – the attempts to nationalize Iranian oil industry that time under control of Great Britain.
- Great Britain and USA saw Mosaddeq as anti-western politician who might cooperate with USSR → CIA organized the coup against Mosaddeq → damage of USA image in Iranian society.
- Mosaddeq became a symbol of US oppression of the

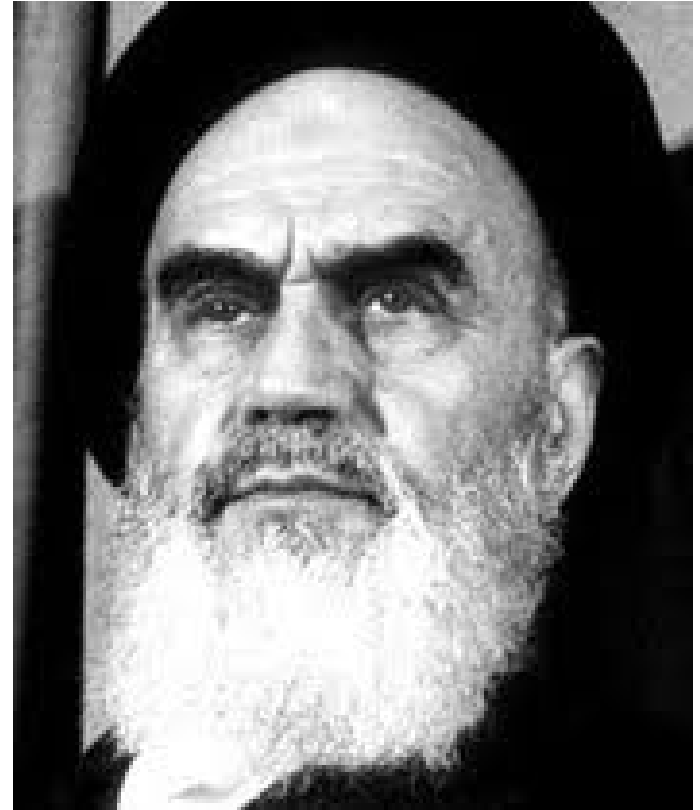
# IRAN-USA MUTUAL RELATIONS

- USA fully supported the regime of Mohammad Reza even though shah was criticized for his autocratic government, violation of human rights etc.
- Iran under shah understood as a close US ally in the Cold War and the guarantee of stability in the Middle East.
- USA provided a significant economic aid to Iran as well as supplies of weapons and military equipment.
- Close collaboration of secret



# GROWTH OF OPPOSITION

- 1963 Ruhollah Khomeini had a famous speech in Qom where he criticized the shah for his alleged atheism, corruption, and friendly ties to Israel and USA → arrested and later forced to leave to exile.
- Khomeini's popularity had increased in Iran especially in the conservative part of the society but he also had support of those who disapproved the shah's regime (corruption, secret police, limited civil rights etc.)
- Opposition against shah was rather heterogeneous: Communist Party (Tudeh), republicans, Islamic nationalists, anarchist, etc.



Ruhollah Khomeini

# REVOLUTION 1978

- Sometimes titled as *Islamic revolution* but this is not precise – the revolution was made by many fractions of the opposition, the Islamists took power only after few months (“revolution eats her own children”).
- During the whole year 1978 massive demonstrations and strikes all over the country → January 1979 escalation of the situation – shah lead the country while ayatollah Khomeini came back to Iran as the hero of the revolution.
- March 1979: referendum → declaration of Iranian Islamic Republic – Khomeini became the supreme leader with the support of the



# IMPACTS OF IRANIAN REVOLUTION

- Big shock in the western countries.
- Disruption of regional stability – increase of radicalism in the Middle East due to the effort of Iran to export the revolution (support of the radical groups in Middle East: Lebanon, Palestinians, etc.).
- Breaking of the mutual relations with USA (hostage crisis in USA embassy in Tehran)
- Crucial changes in Iranian society (Marjane Satrapi: Persepolis).



# HOSTAGE CRISIS IN TEHRAN

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGUI7kDLsQo>

# IRAQ-IRAN WAR 1980-1988

- President of Iraq Saddam Hussain tried to take the benefits from the political situation in Iran → the decision to attack Iran while the country is weak and unstable.
- Iranian leaders were able to use the war for their own interests: consolidation of their power, setting the new law more easily, elimination of the opposition.
- Tanker war – the intention damage of tankers transporting oil to the world markets by both sides → second oil shock – finally, the intervention of US navy.
- No side was able to get the obvious victory, both of them heavily damaged by the long conflict → roots of the future political issues such as war in Kuwait.

# IRAN-CONTRAS SCANDAL

## 1985

- Secret negotiations between Ronald Reagan's administrative, Iran, and Contras in Nicaragua.
- Contras: the need of financial help in the civil war against communist Sandinista movement.
- Iran: the need of military supplies, spare parts, and ammunition – most of their equipment came from USA so they could get them only from USA.
- The whole trade became public in 1986 – USA were discredited in the eyes of American society as well as in the eyes of the allies in the Middle East (Ronald Reagan vs. William Casey).



# POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF IRAN SINCE 1990s

- 1990 death of ayatollah Khomeini → new supreme leader ayatollah Ali Khamenei – not as charismatic as his predecessor → increase of power of Iranian president.
- A certain improvement of mutual relations with USA in late 1990s under president Khatami – only temporary.
- Iran got significantly damaged in the war with Iraq → during the time economic progress and strengthening of the political power in the region (one of the regional great powers and



ayatollah Khamenei

# IRANIAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM

- Big political issue since 2003.
- Iran claim that their nuclear program is intended only for the civil purposes but this argument is often questioned by the international community → blaming Iran from non-transparency and no adequate collaboration with International Atomic Energy Agency.
- Increase of tension – fears from the other war in the Middle East



# IRANIAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM

- 2015 Lausanne's agreement: end of economic sanctions against Iran, decrease of nuclear centrifuges, regular controls of IAEA in Iran.
- In 2018: USA decide to renew the sanctions → growth of tension.
- January 2020, assassination of general Soleimani in Bagdad →



Qassem Soleimani

# POSSIBLE REFORMS OF IRANIAN REPUBLIC

- Since the revolution, there have been the discussions if the Islamic republic can survive.
- Demonstrations in Iran in 2009-2010: protests against the results of the elections – suppressed by the government.
- Regime still get supported by the Revolutionary Guards: next to the police pressure there are also the economic programs that have got a great impacts on the population
- Since 2013 new Iranian president Hasan Ruhani.

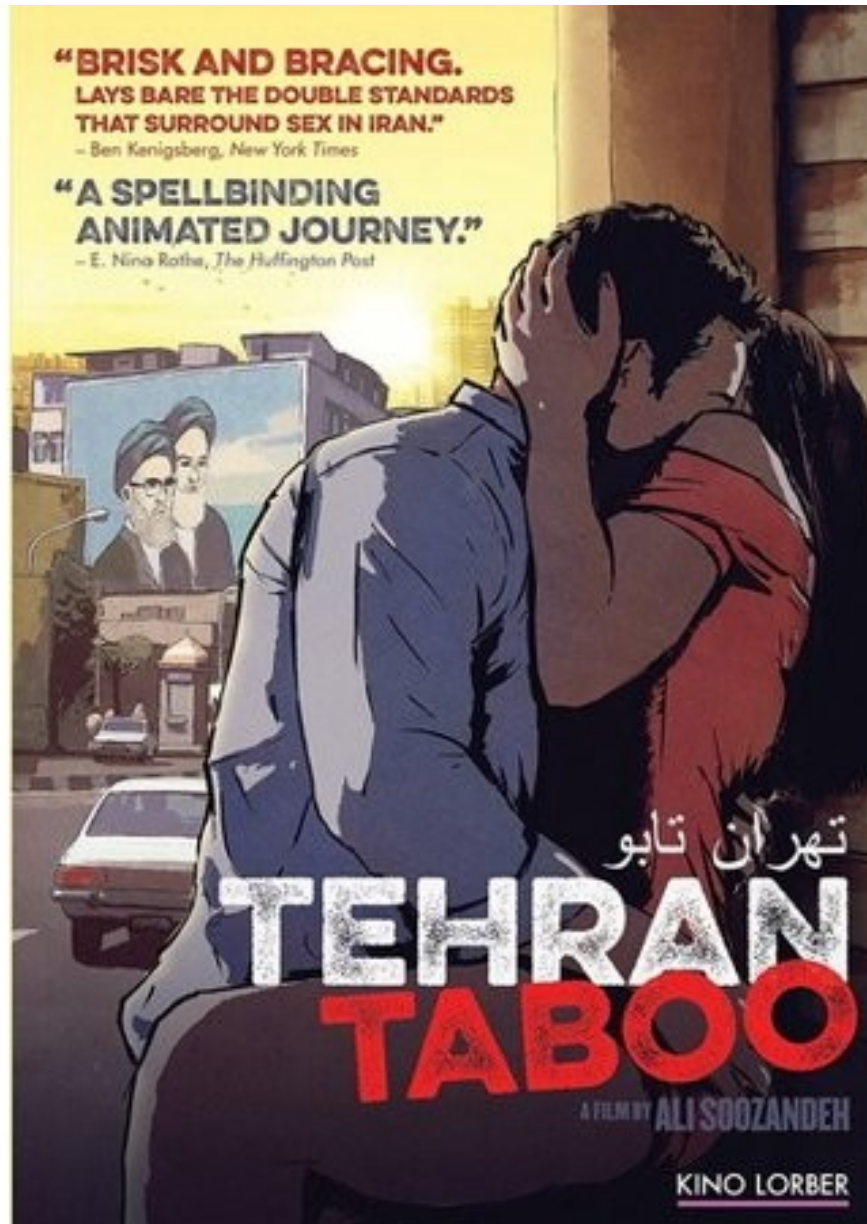


**"BRISK AND BRACING.  
LAYS BARE THE DOUBLE STANDARDS  
THAT SURROUND SEX IN IRAN."**

— Ben Kenigsberg, *New York Times*

**"A SPELLBINDING  
ANIMATED JOURNEY."**

— E. Nina Rothe, *The Huffington Post*



تهران تابو

# TEHRAN TABOO

A FILM BY ALI SOOZANDEH

KINO LORBER

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION**