

THE MIDDLE EAST EXPLAINED

A project of the Duke-UNC Consortium
for Middle East Studies

STUDENT VIEWING GUIDE

Video: *Understanding the United States and Iran*

Timeline

550 BC: The Persian Empire is established by Cyrus the Great. Various imperial dynasties rule Iran for centuries.

1906: Iranian Constitutional Revolution

1941-1979: Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi rules Iran.

1951: Mossadegh becomes prime minister of Iran.

1953: Mossadegh nationalizes the Iranian oil industry.

1953: Coup d'état against Mossadegh, organized by United States and British governments.

1970s: The shah allies with other oil-producing countries to triple the price of oil.

January 1979: The shah is driven from power by a massive, peaceful, revolution and flees into exile.

February 1979: Ayatollah Khomeini returns from exile and establishes the Islamic Republic of Iran.

November 1979: More than 50 United States Embassy employees are taken hostage by a small group of Iranian militants.

1981: After 444 days, the hostages are released, just as Ronald Regan is sworn into office.

1982: Iran's allies in Lebanon attack U.S. Marines.

1982: The U.S. helps Iraq's military in the Iran-Iraq War.

2000s: Revelations about Iran's nuclear program raises concerns that enriched uranium might be intended for non-peaceful uses.

2006: The UN Security Council imposes arms embargo and other sanctions on the Iranian nuclear program.

2015: The Iran Nuclear Deal is signed.



Diplomats announce the framework for the Iran Nuclear Deal. **Photo Credit: U.S. Department of State**

Key Terms

Islamic Republic of Iran: A medium-sized country on the Persian Gulf in south-west Asia. Iran has an ancient culture dating back thousands of years. A majority-Muslim country, Iran is currently governed by a theocratic republic.

Iranian Constitutional Revolution: A revolution in which Iranians demanded democracy and sought to replace the monarchy's abuse of power with law, representative government, and social justice. The first Iranian Constitution and the first national parliament of Iran were established in 1906.

Mohammad Mosaddegh: Mossadegh served as democratically elected Prime Minister of Iran from 1951 until 1953, when his government was overthrown in a coup d'état organized by the United States and Britain. As prime minister, Mossadegh fought internal corruption, challenged foreign interference, enacted social reforms, and nationalized the Iranian oil industry.

Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi: The shah (king) of Iran from 1941 until his overthrow by the Iranian Revolution on February 11, 1979. He led a rapid industrial and military expansion in Iran and implemented economic and social reforms. At the same time, the monarchy denied human rights, tortured political prisoners, and refused to allow democratic elections. SAVAK, the dreaded secret police, suppressed all forms of opposition. Throughout his rule, the shah received consistent American support.

Iranian Revolution of 1979: Due to mounting discontent with the shah's human rights abuses, millions of Iranians took to the streets to protest. A massive general strike shut down the country for two months. In February 1979, the peaceful revolution replaced the monarchy with an Islamic Republic that placed all power in the hands of a single religious leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Ruhollah Khomeini: A religious scholar known as an "Ayatollah" (later known to his followers as "Imam"), Khomeini was the symbolic leader of the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Following the revolution, Khomeini became Supreme Leader, the highest-ranking political and religious authority of Iran.

Iran Nuclear Deal: Signed in 2015, an agreement reached between Iran, the European Union, the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States), and Germany. The agreement limits many of Iran's nuclear programs with the goal of prohibiting Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, while allowing the country to continue enriching uranium for peaceful purposes.

Comprehension Questions: Understanding the United States and Iran

1. In 1906, Iranians wished to transition to democracy and looked to the United States for support. Name one of the Americans who is considered to be a hero of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution. Why is this person considered to be a hero?

2. Professor Kurzman says that the coup d'état of 1953 was "one of the most important moments in Iranian political history." Why was the coup d'état significant?

3. How would you describe the rule of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi?

4. What were the outcomes of the Iranian Revolution of 1979?

5. What factors led to the seizure of American hostages? How is this event related to the 1979 Revolution?

6. How do the attitudes of the United States about Iran's nuclear program compare/contrast with those of Iran?