

# ITME FELLOWSHIP | 2025

BY AVI MELAMED

“TO UNDERSTAND ISRAEL, WE MUST UNDERSTAND THE MIDDLE EAST”

# ITME FELLOWSHIP | 2025

- SESSION ONE Historical Framing of the Middle East
- SESSION TWO Nationalism In The Middle East
- SESSION THREE Islam is the Solution | The Rise of Militant Islam
- SESSION FOUR Turkey and Neo-Ottomanism | Erdogan and his Quest for Regional Power
- SESSION FIVE** The Islamic Republic of Iran: An Insider perspective
- SESSION SIX The Israeli Palestinian Conflict | A view from the Region
- SESSION SEVEN The West Bank and Gaza | An Insider's Perspective
- SESSION EIGHT Israel | Path, Identity, Direction
- SESSION NINE Lebanon, Syria & Iraq | Identity and the struggle for sovereignty\*\*(extended session 1:00 - 3:30 pm EST)
- SESSION TEN Jordan | A Monarchy in Transition
- SESSION ELEVEN The Arab Gulf Monarchies and the Region Middle East Entering a New Era
- SESSION TWELVE Regional Update & Reflections \*\* (extended session 1:00 - 3:00 pm EST)

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## | COURSE OVERVIEW

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Inside  
The  
Middle  
East



3 / 4 / 2025



# TURKEY AND NEO-OTTOMANISM | ERDOGAN & HIS QUEST FOR REGIONAL POWER

## AVI MELAMED



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## | SESSION'S EDUCATORS

## NEGAR MOJTAHEDI



2003 TO 2025 | THE ERA OF RECEP TAYYIP ERDOĞAN

PAN-ISLAMISM &  
NEO-OTTOMANISM  
VISION

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| TÜRKIYE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Inside  
The  
Middle  
East



3 / 4 / 2025



# SESSION #5 IRAN : AN INSIDER PERSPECTIVE

3/2/2025

**ITME FELLOWSHIP**

**GUEST EDUCATOR |  
NEGAR MOJTAHEDI**

“TO UNDERSTAND ISRAEL, WE MUST UNDERSTAND THE MIDDLE EAST”

# GENERAL BACKGROUND - IRAN



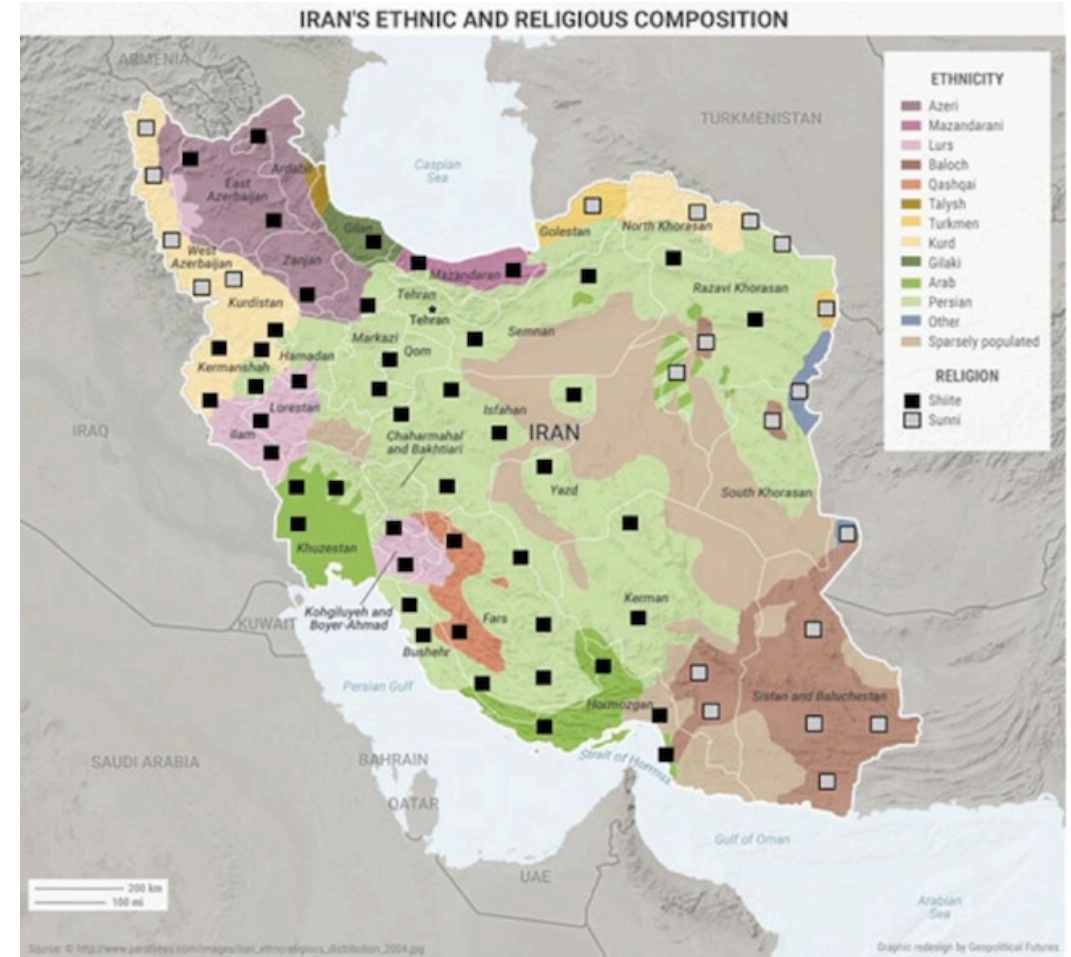
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## BRIEF OVERVIEW



# GENERAL BACKGROUND - IRAN

<b>Population</b>	86.8 Million (2022 est.)
<b>Official Religion</b>	Shi'a Islam Shia 90-95%   Sunni 5-10%
<b>Zoroastrian, Jewish &amp; Christian</b>	0.3% (2016 est.)
<b>Unspecified</b>	0.2% (2016 est.)
<b>Ethnic Groups</b>	Persian (75 percent) Afghans, Arabs, Azerbaijanis, Azeris, Balochis, Circassians, Kurds, Tajiks, Turkmen, etc.



# MILESTONES | THE PERSIAN EMPIRE AT ITS HEIGHT



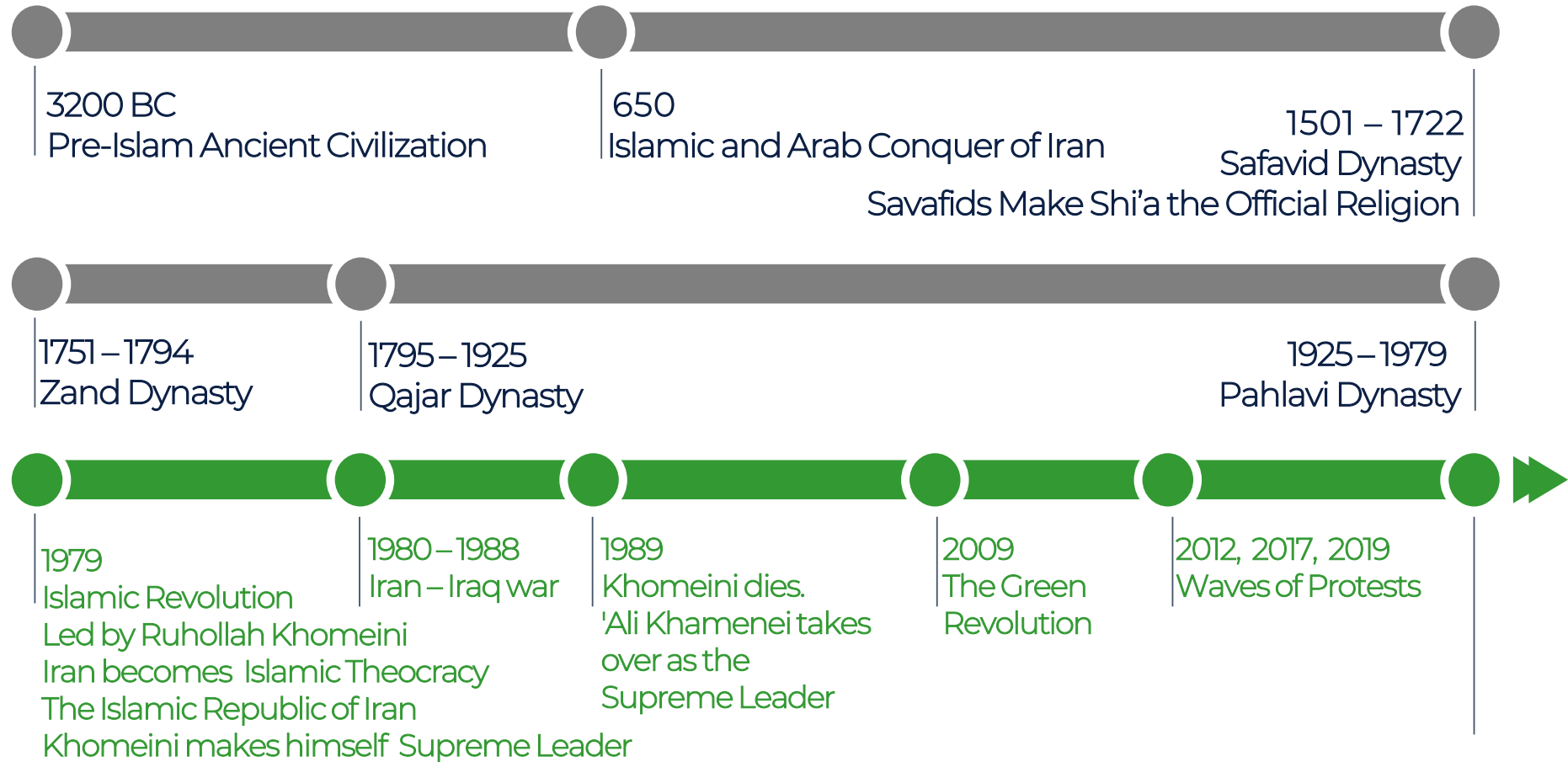
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## | BRIEF OVERVIEW





# MILESTONES



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# CHARACTERISTICS OF IRANIAN IDENTITY

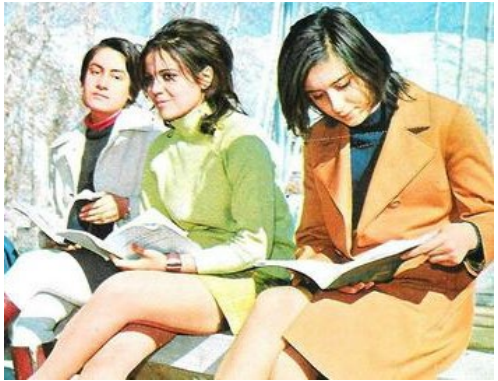
**PERSIAN ETHNICITY**



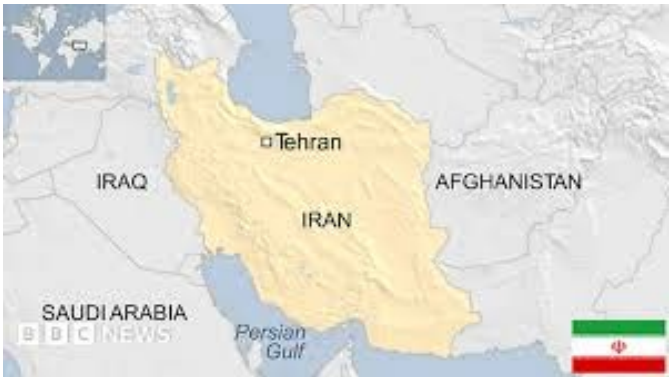
**SHI'A ISLAM**



**WESTERNIZATION**



**TERRITORIAL NATIONALISM**



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**| CORE BUILDING BLOCKS**



# 1925 – 1979 THE PAHLAVI DYNASTY | SECULAR NATIONALISM

1925 – 1941



1941 to 1979



## National Identity Features

Persian Ethnicity

Pre-Islamic Past & Heritage of Iran / Persia

Territorial Integrity of Iran

Islamic Shi'ite Heritage and Religion Were Less Emphasized

Promoted Modern Western Norms, Values, and Society

Policies Favored Persians & Neglected minorities

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| CORE BUILDING BLOCKS



# 1979 THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION

Bakhtiar wins Senate's confidence and hopes for support of Khomeini

## Embittered Shah leaves Egypt, and exile, today

From Martin Westcott  
 The Shah of Iran will leave his country today for Egypt, a place he has chosen to spend the remainder of his life. He will take with him, according to an official statement, a large amount of money. The Shah was in Iran for 27 years, but he was forced to flee in 1979. He is now in exile in Egypt. The Shah's departure is a significant event in the history of Iran. He will be replaced by a new leader. The Shah's departure is a significant event in the history of Iran. He will be replaced by a new leader. The Shah's departure is a significant event in the history of Iran. He will be replaced by a new leader.



## Khomeini promises rule by Islamic Council

From Martin Westcott  
 Obscured for a long with the departure of one man, Iran is now waiting for the arrival of another. The Shah has not yet left but his disappearance is taken for granted by crowds chanting praise of Ayatollah Khomeini, whose potential power is as great as ever was the Shah's. It has been an amazing transition from a situation in which what mattered were the decisions of the man in the Niavaran palace to one in which the views of a 69-year-old religious leader in a Persian suburb are the real key. Khomeini's portrait has been ubiquitous here for months — but only on photocopied pamphlets. Now there is talk of large colour prints of Khomeini. The portraits outnumber those of the royal family. The impact of Khomeini's statements at the weekend about an Islamic Revolutionary Council has been enormous. It has rattled the Bakhtiar government, worried the liberal opposition, worried the army, and added to the general feeling of anti-Shah demonstrations continue sporadically in Tehran, soldiers were ordered to use sticks rather than guns to dealing with rioters, one of whom (above) is helped to his feet by a stooped soldier after being felled to the ground. Meanwhile Faris gradates, socialist leader, Khomeini, French socialist, communist leader.



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# THE ROAD TOWARDS RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM



# FORMATIVE MOMENT OF SHIA ISLAM | THE BATTLE OF KARBALA



- On the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month of 'Muharram, in the year 680, a battle took place in **Karbala, Iraq**.
- **Hussein Bin 'Ali Bin Abi Talib** and his followers clashed with the army of the Caliph **Mu'awiyah Bin Abi Sufyan** (the same ones who challenged Hassan) led by **Mu'awiyah Bin Abi Sufyan's** son **Yazid**.
- **In that battle, Hussein Bin 'Ali Bin Abi Talib and his followers were butchered. Hussein** was beheaded and his body was buried in Karbala.
- The Shia commemorate that day and they call it '**Ashura**'. The origins of the word are Aramaic and Hebrew and come from the word "*Eser*" meaning "ten" memorializing that he was killed on the tenth day of the month.

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| **THE RISE OF ISLAM & ISLAM'S INNER SUNNI-SHI'ITE POLITICAL POWER STRUGGLE**

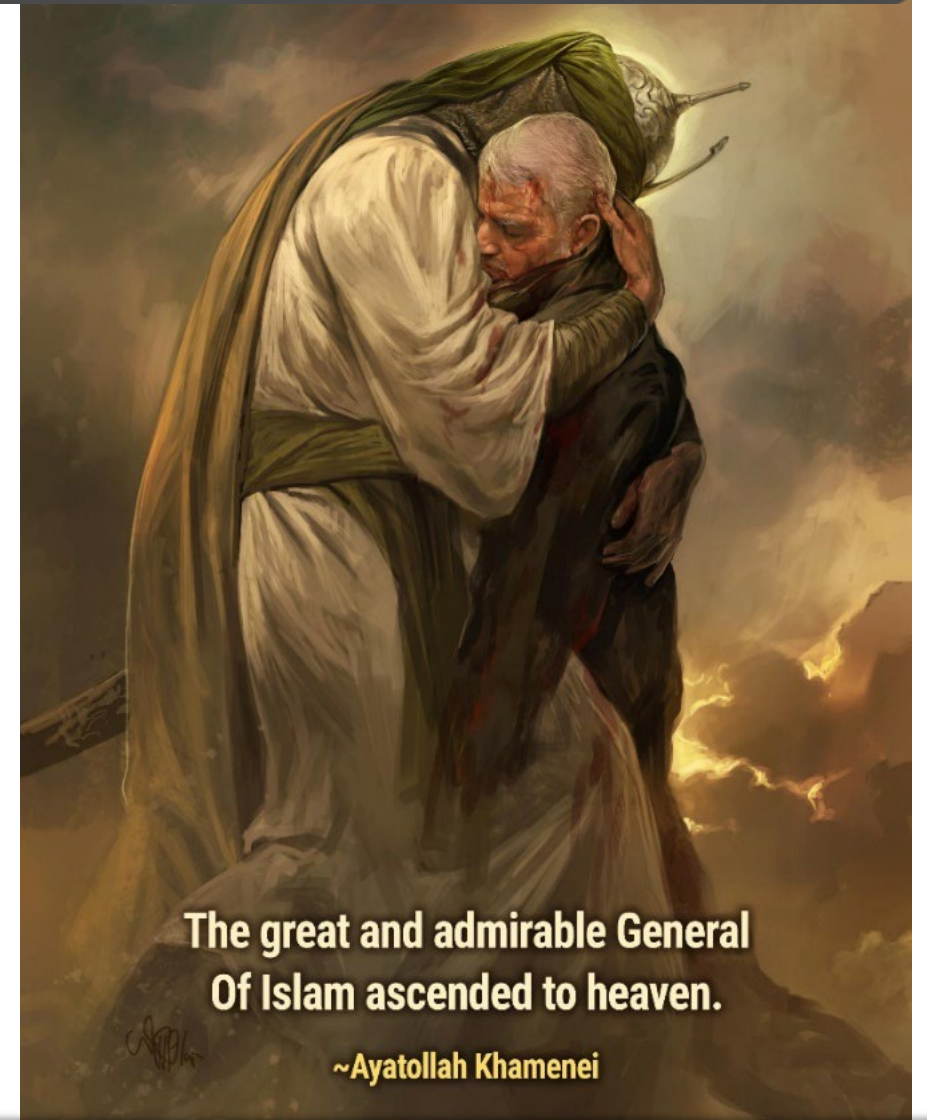


# FORMATIVE MOMENT OF SHIA ISLAM | THE BATTLE OF KARBALA

*The '**Lord of Martyrs**' welcomes Major General Qasem Soleimani in heaven.*

**Soleimani was the former commander of the Iranian Al-Quds Force. He was killed by the US on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020.**

**[This poster was published by the office of Iran's Supreme Leader.]**



ITME FELLOWSHIP | SESSION #5

**| THE RISE OF ISLAM & ISLAM'S INNER SUNNI-SHI'ITE POLITICAL POWER STRUGGLE**



# THE SHIA / SHI'ITE CORE BELIEFS

- **Imam** is a person leading the religious rituals and prayers. The Shia believe the **Imam draws his knowledge from a divine source**, and therefore, he is immune from mistakes.
- **The Twelvers Shia** is the major Shia branch. A line of Twelve Imams that started **with 'Ali Bin Abi Talib**.
- **The Anticipated Imam (Al-Mahdi, the Messiah)**. The Shia believe that the twelfth and the last *Imam*, **Mohammad Bin al-Hassan al-Askari, who disappeared in the 9th Century, is not dead** but that he is waiting 'outside of time and history' to return and redeem mankind. In the Shia belief, he is known as **The Anticipated Imam**. That will return as **Al-Mahdi** "the one leading the path" - the Messiah. He is also described in Shia as **'The Master of Time'**.
- **Ashura** the day Hussein Bin 'Ali was killed. The word originated in Hebrew and Aramaic word "*Eser*" meaning "ten." Many Shi'ites commemorate this day by conducting a self-torture ritual known as *Ta'aziyah*. **Shia slogan "Every day is Ashura and every place is Karbala"**

ITME FELLOWSHIP | SESSION #5

| **THE RISE OF ISLAM & ISLAM'S INNER SUNNI-SHI'ITE POLITICAL POWER STRUGGLE**



# CORE IDEOLOGY

**SHI'A** is the authentic Islam and Iran is entitled to lead the Muslim world

**SUNNI** Arabs distorted and tainted the essence and message of Islam

Iran is the defender of the oppressed people (*Mustaz'afun*)

Iran is the torchbearer of the struggle against condescending, oppressing Western Imperialism (*Estikbar*)  
west is **'The Big Satan'**

Exporting the Islamic Revolution Hatred of Jews and vowing to eliminate Israel **'The Little Satan'**

**Wilayat al-Faqih ('rule of the jurispudent')** The head of the system is the Jurispudent. . According to Shi'ite belief, he acts as a place holder of the 'anticipated Imam'







## NATIONAL IDENTITY FEATURES

Islamic Shi'ite Heritage and Religion

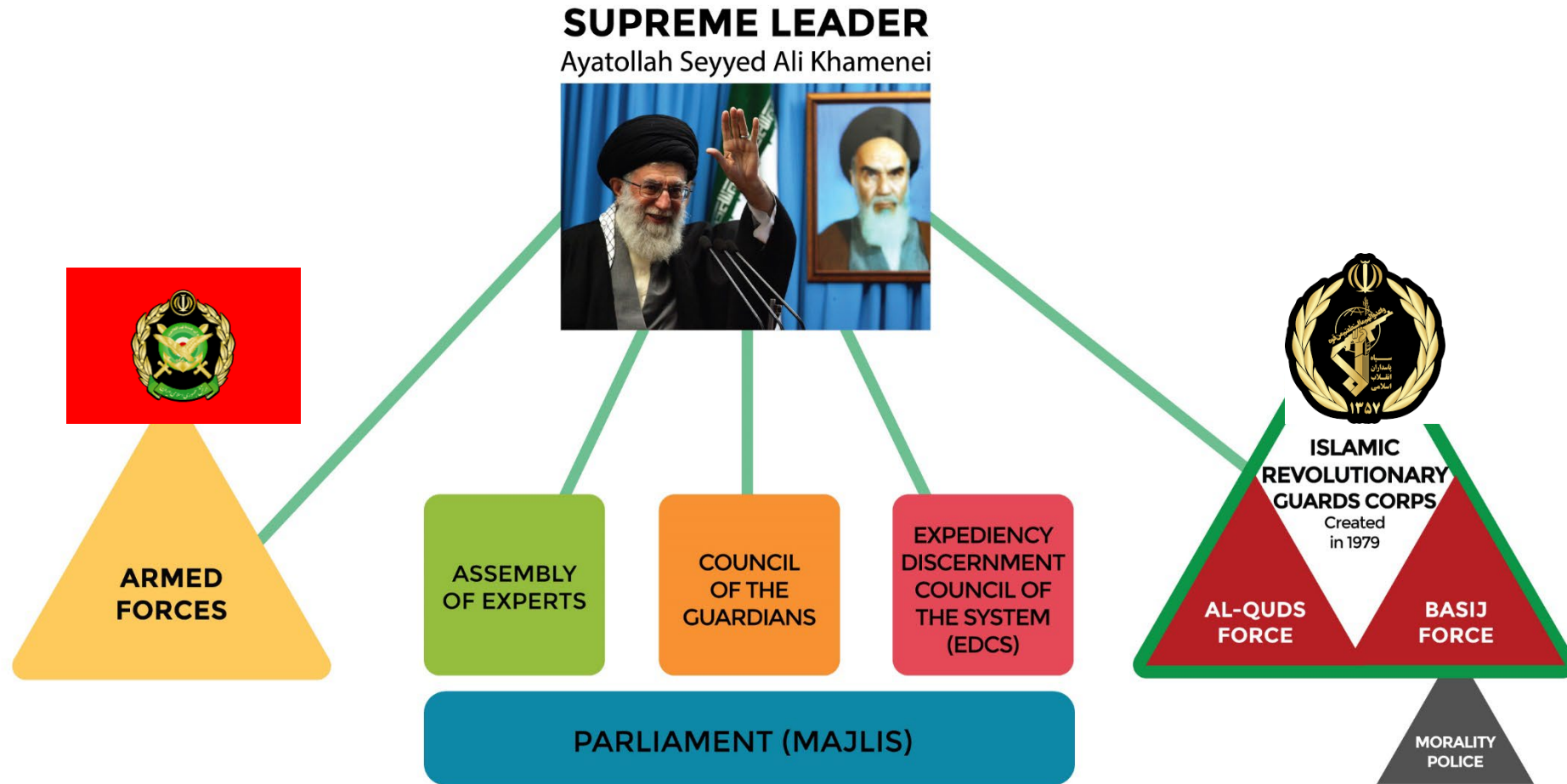
Persian Ethnicity

Pre-Islamic Past & Heritage of Iran / Persia

Territorial Integrity of Iran



# IRAN | THE POWER STRUCTURE



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| **MULLAH REGIME**





## NEGAR MOJTAHEDI

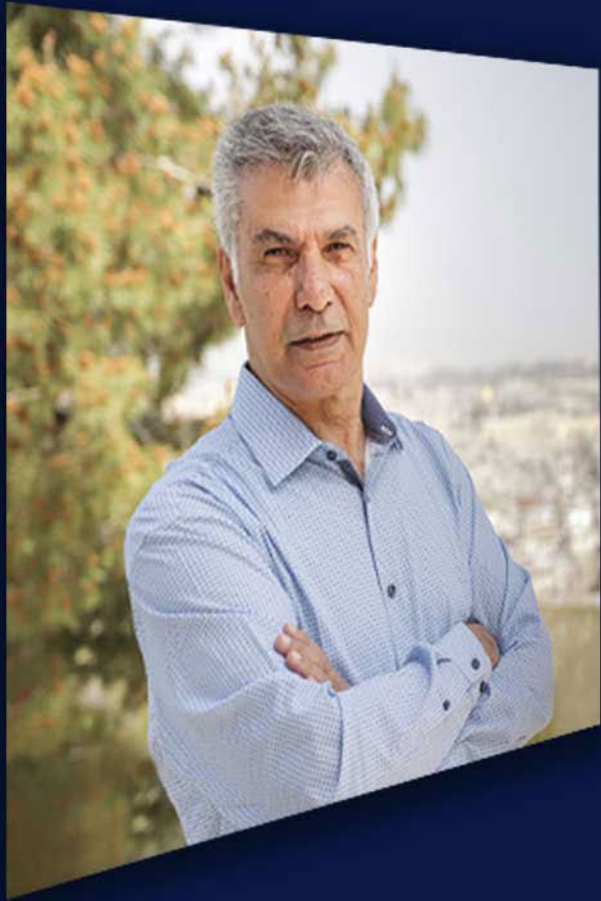
Negar Mojtahedi is a multi-platform journalist working at Iran International English. She previously worked as a reporter and producer at Global News/Global National, CBC News and CTV in Canada. She is also an investigative reporter who broke the story on Iranian regime interference in Canada, exposing regime-linked affiliates operating in Canada and threatening the lives of Iranian-Canadians.

She pushed for answers and accountability on the national security issue from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. She is passionate about storytelling and uses her skills to raise awareness, help people and bring about positive representation to combat negative stereotypes. Negar is an award-winning documentary filmmaker. Her first documentary 'My dream goes all the way to Iran' is a powerful portrait of the Iranian expatriate, an immigrant population that is often misunderstood and misrepresented. Negar believes the heart of every story is emotion.

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| GUEST EDUCATOR





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**SESSION SIX**  
**THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**  
**| A VIEW FROM THE REGION**  
**AVI MELAMED & DALIA ZIADA**

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| **NEXT SESSION**

