Certain characteristics of the Islamic Republic drive its foreign policy, affecting both its overall objectives and the manner in which it pursues them. Twenty years after the Islamic revolution, Islam remains the characteristic that receives the most attention, with Persian nationalism often cited as a competing source of Iran’s inspiration. While Islam and nationalism are important drivers, their importance has diminished, and evolved, as Iran’s revolutionary enthusiasm has given over to the pragmatic concerns that all states must take into account. Geopolitics has reasserted its importance, and economics has grown from a foreign policy irrelevance to a leading factor. Ethnicity and other communal considerations also drive Iran’s foreign policy, leading the Islamic Republic to adopt far more conservative policies than its Islamic and nationalist ethos might otherwise dictate.

This chapter explores these factors and notes their relative importance. It argues that, today, the fundamental drivers of Iran’s foreign policy favor caution and prudence over the adventurism that characterized the Islamic Republic’s foreign policy in its early years.

**SOURCES OF ADVENTURISM**

Since the Islamic Republic’s establishment, two factors—revolutionary Islam and Persian nationalism—have driven it into confrontation with its neighbors, with the superpowers, and with a host of governments in the Muslim and broader world. These two sources of
adventurism are still strong today in Iran, particularly among key sectors of the elite. Nevertheless, their overall influence on Iran’s foreign policy has declined.

**Revolutionary Islam**

The Islamic Republic of Iran is a self-professed revolutionary state. Riding high on the initial euphoria after the Islamic revolution, Iranian leaders self-consciously pursued “Islamic” objectives in foreign policy. The clerical regime aided a variety of coreligionists abroad, focusing particular attention on inspiring radical Shi’a groups. Iran, in general, also tried to aid the “dispossessed” against dominant powers, such as the United States and the Soviet Union. Iran rejected the status quo and deliberately incited regional instability—these policies caused it to become a pariah. In general, Tehran forged ties to a variety of Islamist movements and, at times, created them out of whole cloth. Iran supported Islamist revolutionary groups in Iraq, Lebanon, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, among other countries. Tehran also denounced any regional governments with pro-Western tendencies as corrupt and un-Islamic, directly challenging their legitimacy.

Iran’s revolutionary aspirations did not imply territorial ambitions; its revisionism was related to status, not land. Iran’s leadership touted the country’s revolutionary credentials to impress sympathizers abroad and, in turn, used its resulting influence abroad to validate its leadership at home.

As time went on, however, the exigencies of day-to-day life made revolutionary ardor a luxury Iran found difficult to afford. Iran’s rejection of the status quo and support for regional instability caused its isolation. The war with Iraq forced Tehran to undertake a desperate search for weapons and assistance, even leading it to work in a clandestine manner with its supposed nemeses, Israel and the United States. Years of failure to export revolution successfully—failure that carried a heavy price and led to the regime’s isolation—also made Tehran cautious. Iran subsequently avoided massive meddling in Iraq after the Gulf war, despite Baghdad’s temporary weakness, and did not make a major play for influence after the Soviet collapse. Tehran also reduced rhetoric critical of pro-Western states, particularly in the Gulf.
Although necessity and foreign policy blunders account for part of Iran’s deemphasis of political Islam, much of the explanation for this shift lies in domestic politics. As the heady days of revolution became a distant memory, other concerns rose to the fore. In particular, growing popular disenchantment with the revolutionary regime led to a renewed focus on economic prosperity, and unrest along Iran’s borders increased fears of instability at home. The new generation of Iranians taking power is more pragmatic and less committed to revolutionary ideology.1

**Persian Nationalism**

Since the days of the Shah, Iranian leaders have believed that Iran’s size, historical importance, and self-Professed cultural superiority merit a significant role for the country in the region. The clerical regime trumpeted nationalism in its war with Iraq to garner domestic support more broadly. In recent years, the regime has also allowed the celebration of the pre-Islamic new year, and many elite members now laud the nationalist hero Mohammed Mosaddeq, despite his anti-Islamic attitude.2

Iranian nationalism today, however, is a source of prudence as well as adventurism. In part, nationalism is a reaction to the over-extension of Iran’s commitments as dictated by political Islam—a sort of “Come home, Iran,” where Iran’s own nationally defined (and hence circumscribed) interests take precedence. Hence, it is an “Iran first” movement that rejects unlimited and costly commitments in areas of marginal or indirect importance. Related to this is the secular nature of nationalism, which implies a rejection of the world view espoused by the mullahs that calls on Iran’s influence to be identical to that of the broader Muslim religious community.

Nationalism, however, does not mean the end of a difficult Iran. Iran’s nationalism is strongly fueled by the history of intervention, manipulation, and exploitation of the country by foreign powers.

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Hence, it defines national independence in terms of following its own path culturally and in foreign policy, of avoiding dependence and extolling self-reliance, and of having a role to play in general. The quest for influence and status will remain an important component of any future Iran.

Iran’s nationalism, like its Islamic identity, matters less for territory than for status. Although Iran under the clerical regime has reaffirmed its claim (disputed by the United Arab Emirates [UAE]) to the Greater and Lesser Tunb Islands and expanded its presence on Abu Musa, in general Tehran has not made territorial claims that it might justify through past Persian predominance. Thus, it has avoided claims to parts of Afghanistan, Central Asia, Iraq, and the Gulf that at one time or another were parts of historic Persia.3

**SOURCES OF CONSERVATISM**

Islam, and to a lesser extent nationalism, initially tended to lead Iran into conflict with its neighbors. Yet Iran’s policies have become less confrontational in the last 20 years. Several other forces—Iran’s improved geopolitical position, its economic weakness, and its concern for the spread of communal conflict—explain this shift. Iran’s security position is difficult even in the best of times. Afghanistan and Iraq, two outright adversaries, host anti-Tehran insurgents. Civil wars and domestic unrest have plagued the Caucasus, Pakistan, and parts of Central Asia. Growing conservatism on the part of Iran’s leadership is hardly surprising given this basic instability, Iran’s economic weakness, and turmoil at home.

**Geopolitics**

Iran’s geopolitical environment has changed dramatically since the Islamic revolution. Since that time, the collapse of the Soviet Union,  

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3U.S. policy has fed nationalist grievances regarding status. There are those among the nationalists who saw the U.S. policy of containment as posing a direct challenge to Iran’s cultural, social, and political well-being. Many nationalists support the government and associated revolutionary causes in part because of this resentment. These and other perspectives are discussed in Hooshang Amirahmadi, ed., *Revisiting Iran’s Strategic Significance in the Emerging Regional Order* (New Brunswick, NJ: U.S.-Iran Conference, 1995).
the defeat of Iraq by the U.S.-led coalition and subsequent isolation of Baghdad, and the larger U.S. military presence have altered Iran's basic strategic outlook, making the state and the regime far more secure. As a result, Iran's policies, in the words of Minister of Defense Admiral Ali Shamkhani, are driven in large part by “deterrent defense.”4 With extended maritime borders and seven neighbors by land, Iran has a potentially difficult role in ensuring its own defense.5 Illegal migration, drug dealing, and smuggling magnify the problem of border security.

There is no clear and present danger to Iran today. The only candidate, Saddam’s Iraq, is currently constrained by UN sanctions, international isolation, and its ongoing conflict with the United States and its regional allies. Leaders of all political tendencies in Iran, and the population in general, view the Baath regime with loathing and see Iraq as a long-term threat. Securing Iran against Iraq’s threat, however, does not require an immediate military buildup from Iran at this time.

Another feature of Iran’s geopolitical situation is the rampant instability that characterizes its immediate neighborhood. A brief survey is sobering:

- Iraq is in danger of fragmenting. The Kurdish north, under U.S. protection, is developing its own institutions, while central authority in Baghdad remains weak.
- Turkey has been fighting an insurgency under a national emergency for the past decade and a half, leading to incursions in neighboring states.
- Pakistan has recently suffered intermittent civil conflict, repeated regime changes, and a military coup.
- Azerbaijan and Armenia have not yet settled their territorial disputes, including those along Iran’s border.

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5 This at least is the perception of the Iranian leadership. See Ayatollah Khamene’i’s comments to an officers’ academy, *Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Network 1* (Tehran, in Persian), October 31, 1999, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (hereafter cited as BBC) ME/3681 MED/7-8, November 2, 1999.
• Afghanistan’s civil war is entering its third decade.
• Tajikistan and its civil war have destabilized several of Tajikistan’s neighbors.

Relative to many of its neighbors, Iran is stable. It has a settled historical identity, tested forms of succession, and considerable resources. It is not a failed, or even a failing, state.

With the end of the Soviet Union, the role of Iran in a “new Middle East,” defined culturally to include the states of the Caucasus and Central Asia, has become more central. The Soviet Union, and Russia before that, had been a perennial threat to Iran’s security and territorial integrity. Its collapse removed a major threat to Iran’s security. Moreover, as a crossroads between the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf, Iran’s position as a transit point and market was enhanced.

While the collapse of the Soviet Union offered opportunity in the north, the relative rise in U.S. power in the Gulf presented a danger and a challenge. Since the 1991 Gulf war, the southern maritime frontiers of Iran have hosted, on average, some 20,000 U.S. troops. Tehran, with reason, sees this presence as aimed at Iran as well as Iraq.

Iran’s relative influence with the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) also has diminished, in large part because of U.S. efforts. The UAE has repeatedly resisted Iran’s territorial claims to several disputed islands in the Persian Gulf, perhaps made bolder by the U.S. defense umbrella. The United States and other Western powers have sold sophisticated equipment to several Gulf states since the end of the Gulf war, leaving Iran—the Gulf’s former superpower—a generation or more behind. In its air force today, Iran is both qualitatively and numerically inferior to the Saudis, who had a tiny fraction of Iran’s air power when the revolution took place.

The overall geopolitical outlook for Iran, in general, is far more positive than it was in the first decade of the revolution. The situation, however, lacks clarity. As a result, Iranian leaders must take a more

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nuanced view of their situation, focusing on the particulars of various countries rather than on a single, coherent threat.

**Ethnicity and Communalism**

Both religion and nationalism can, and do, unite Iran’s myriad communities, but Iran remains ethnically and religiously diverse. Persians compose 51 percent of Iran’s total population. The remainder of Iran’s population are Azeri Turk (24 percent), Mazandarani (8 percent), Kurd (7 percent), Arab (3 percent), Baluch (2 percent), Lur (2 percent), and Turkoman (2 percent). Iran is far more unified religiously, roughly 85 percent are Shi’a Muslims, but Sunni Muslims, Christians, Bahais, and Jews also are found in Iran.8

While the ethnic minorities differ in their political strength, religious affiliation, and other factors, they have certain elements in common:

- Ethnic minority groups are concentrated mainly in border areas and have ties with ethnic groups or states across the border.
- Many have fostered separatist movements, some of which have briefly led to the establishment of independent states (Kurds in the Mahabad Republic, and the Turks in Azerbaijan, 1945 and 1946).
- The subnational ethnic loyalty competes with and, some would say, overshadows the national (and supranational) identity.
- These groups are largely Sunni (including some Kurds, the Baluch, and the Turkomans), which complicates their relationship with the Shi’a state.

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7 Iran’s Azeri population, located largely in the northwest but also in Iran’s major towns and cities, outnumbers the Azeris in Azerbaijan. Turkish-speaking, the Azeris are Shi’a and, as a result of a long interaction, are a well-integrated linguistic minority. The common religious background has served to facilitate the assimilation of the two separate linguistic groups. Farhad Kazemi, “Ethnicity and the Iranian Peasantry,” in Milton Esman and Itamar Rabinovich, eds., *Ethnicity, Pluralism and the State in the Middle East* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 213.

8 Gabriel Ben-Dor, “Ethno-politics and the Middle Eastern State,” in Esman and Rabinovich, pp. 85-87. Traditionally, Iran’s Shi’a population is given at 90 percent or higher, but this estimate probably undercounts religious minorities. Buchta, *Who Rules Iran?* p. 105.
No group has pursued its drive for autonomy more tenaciously than the Kurds. And none has been more savagely repressed, in part as a warning to other groups. In the years immediately after the revolution, perhaps 20,000 Kurds died as the Islamic Republic brutally suppressed their drive for more autonomy.

As it has with other minorities, Iran has traditionally attempted to assimilate the Kurds into Iranian society but without special nationality status or privileges. Moreover, many Persians look down on Kurds, seeing them as provincial and backward—a sharp contrast to common attitudes toward Azeris and other groups. Iranian officials profess to see no problems with their Kurdish population. This is echoed in statements by some Kurdish leaders, who contrast the Kurds’ treatment in Iran favorably with that accorded Kurds in Iraq and Turkey. Kurdish national aspirations are currently limited.

The loyalty of Iran’s Kurdish population cannot be taken for granted. They have not forgotten the harsh repression of the early years of the Islamic Republic; their loyalty to the state will depend on how it meets their needs and, to a lesser degree, on regional developments. Moreover, other neighboring states, particularly Iraq, may aid the Kurds as a way of weakening Iran’s central government.

Iran’s Baluch are also active, though their degree of national consciousness does not approach that of the Kurds. Riots and unrest, along with general lawlessness, have plagued Baluch-populated areas of eastern Iran. Pakistan has allowed Baluch rebels, many of

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9Iranian Kurds number approximately 4 million to 8 million and are approximately 75 percent Sunni and the remainder Shi’a. The Kurdish language is closely related to Persian, with Iranian Kurds viewed as Iranian people with long-standing historical ties.

10Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi told IRNA (Tehran), December 1, 1998: “Like many clans in Iran, the Iranian Kurds have good relations with [the] government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and peaceful coexistence among all members of the nation created no specific tension,” BBC ME/3400 MED/7-8, December 3, 1998. Jalal Talabani, leader of the Iraqi Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) contrasted the situation in Iran with that in Turkey: “Iran never tried to obliterate the Kurds’ identity. There is a province in Iran called Kordestan province. The Iranians name their planes after the provinces in Iran [including Kordestan].” Interview in the Jordanian newspaper Al-Ahran al-Yawm (Amman), December 1, 1998, BBC ME/3398 MED/17.
whom are Sunni Islamists, to base themselves across the border in its territory.\footnote{11Buchta, \textit{Who Rules Iran}? pp. 108-109.}

The regime’s Islamic ideology has often hindered social unity, but pragmatism rather than ideology has increasingly characterized the government’s policies toward minorities.\footnote{12Religious minorities (Jews, Armenians, Bahais, and Zoroastrians) are dependent on the regime and seek its protection. This explains the apparent anomaly that ethnic minorities that are Muslim have been oppressed while religious minorities (with the notable exception of the Bahais) have, by and large, enjoyed a form of tolerance. David Menashri, “Whither Iranian Politics? The Khatami Factor,” in Patrick Clawson et al., \textit{Iran Under Khatami: A Political, Economic and Military Assessment}, (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1998), p. 221. However, tolerance is clearly relative. The 1998 show trial of Iranian Jews highlights their precarious position in Iran.} In putting forward his vision of an Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Khomeini created apprehension among non-Muslim minorities. As Gabriel Ben-Dor notes, “If an Islamic order is, as defined by its proponents, a total system, it cannot entertain political pluralism, only political separatism.”\footnote{13Gabriel Ben-Dor, “Ethno-politics and the Middle Eastern State,” in Esman and Rabinovich, p. 90; P.G. Vatikiotis, “Non-Muslims in Muslim Societies,” in Esman and Rabinovich, p. 65.} Yet over time, the emphasis was on stability rather than assimilation. As David Menashri observes, “The primary factor shaping the [Islamic Republic] regime’s attitude toward the Sunnis has \textit{not} been their ethnic identity or religious affiliation but rather the inherent danger they presented to the stability and territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic.”\footnote{14Menashri, in Clawson, p. 218.}

Yet minority issues remain a perpetual concern to Tehran. Many minority groups live on the periphery of Iran and remain largely together (Kurds in Kurdistan, Baluch in Baluchistan, and so on), creating constant concern about the maintenance of the country’s unity.\footnote{15Charles MacDonald, “The Kurdish Question in the 1980’s,” in Esman and Rabinovich, pp. 243-244.} This concern appears well justified, as many minorities have tried to increase their autonomy when the central government has weakened. In addition, many minority groups, including those that
have no political organization, such as the Turkomans, have sought closer ties to their ethnic kinsmen across the borders.\textsuperscript{16}

Instability on Iran’s borders can affect Iranian society directly. Increasingly, Iran has sought to stabilize its immediate surroundings to prevent major changes that could adversely affect it. As discussed in greater detail below, Iran’s ethnic and religious diversity has been a force for caution and moderation in its foreign policy.

**Economics**

Ayatollah Khomeini famously said that the revolution was not about “the price of watermelons.” Two decades later, however, the Islamic Republic has found that its own nostrums and dicta have little, and diminishing, resonance. As the regime has led the people into war, isolation, and economic decline, it has found the largest part of the population, the young, increasingly alienated. As a result, the revolution is increasingly being judged by the price of watermelons. The legitimacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is now based in large part on what it can deliver economically. This shift is conditioning Iran’s attitude to foreign relations. Foreign policy must now buttress the regime economically, even at the price of revolutionary principles.

The basic elements of the economic picture are noted only briefly here. Iran’s foreign debts stand at some $14 billion to $17 billion. The “misery index”—the combination of inflation and unemployment—stands at a record high.\textsuperscript{17} Inflation rates are between 20 percent and 50 percent. The International Monetary Fund reports that Iran’s real GDP per capita remains well below its 1977 level.\textsuperscript{18} Some two thirds of Iran’s population of 62 million is under 25 years old. Only 14.5 million are now employed. Of the 2 million unemployed, 40 percent are college graduates. As President Khatami put it: “At present our fledgling society wishes to slow down, not eliminate, unemployment figures. It is obliged, therefore, to create 760,000 to

\textsuperscript{16}Buchta, *Who Rules Iran*? p. 103.

\textsuperscript{17}Jahangir Amuzegar. See, for example, his “Khatami and Iranian Economic Policy in the Mid-term,” *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 53, no. 4, Autumn 1999, pp. 534-552.

800,000 jobs a year."\textsuperscript{19} The Iranian economy must grow at about 6.7 percent a year—and gain roughly $10 billion in investment a year—to prevent unemployment from increasing.\textsuperscript{20} The recent surge in oil prices will buy Iran’s leaders some time to maneuver, but this does not eliminate the underlying fundamental problems with Iran’s economy. Iran’s dependence on oil for some 85 percent of its foreign exchange is as much a handicap as an asset, as it hinders the creation of a competitive and entrepreneurial economy and makes long-term planning difficult due to the fluctuation of oil prices.

These economic problems have taken their toll on Iran’s effort to improve its military. Anthony Cordesman writes that Iran’s military expenditures in constant dollars were at $8.9 billion after the end of the Iran-Iraq war and have fallen by over half in the latter part of the decade. He notes, “Iran is spending too little to maintain its present force structure to ‘recapitalize’ it to replace the equipment lost to combat, age, and war, or to modernize its current force structure.”\textsuperscript{21}

It is hardly surprising that this state of affairs has had serious political repercussions. The demonstrations of some 20,000 youths in July 1999—the largest in the history of the Islamic Republic and a palpable shock to the system—were in large part a reaction to economic problems. These demonstrations were particularly disturbing to the regime, as many participants were from families that had benefited from government programs, including preferred admission to higher education as a result of service in the military or to the government.

The sources of Iran’s economic ills are deep. The government and parastatal foundations control most of Iran’s economy, stifling initiative and hindering the development of a robust private sector. Oil dominates Iran’s economy, to the detriment of other industries. Restrictions on foreign investment, often arbitrary government ac-

\textsuperscript{19}Excerpts from President Khatami’s question-and-answer session with students of the Science and Technology University, December 12, 1999, \textit{Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran} (Tehran, in Persian), December 13, 1999, BBC ME/3720 MED/6-10, especially p. 9, December 17, 1999.


\textsuperscript{21}Anthony Cordesman, \textit{Iran’s Military Forces in Transition} (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), p. 45. For a general review, see pp. 41-45.
tions, and general political uncertainty also reduce the prospects for growth.

The remedies to Iran’s economic problems are very demanding politically.22 A summary of several of the requirements is indicative:

- Greater transparency and respect for the rule of law with regard to property rights.
- A reduction in the government’s role in the economy, including privatization of state industrial units, banks, and insurance companies.
- Freedom for the market to determine interest and exchange rates.
- A reduction in the size and scope of the subsidies on food, fuel, medicine, and utilities.
- A reduction in the power of the bonyads (parastatal revolutionary foundations), which control much of Iran’s economy.23 The bonyads are not accountable to the public or even to much of the government. Moreover, they are largely monopolistic and discourage competition in large parts of Iran’s economy.
- Encouragement of investment, requiring a revision of tax laws and greater guarantees for investors.
- Acquisition of outside expertise to modernize Iran’s oil and gas industries.
- Encouragement of direct foreign investment in Iran’s economy.

In general, undertaking these reforms requires good, or at least not hostile, relations with Iran’s major trading partners and the world’s leading economies. Regional conflict and a hostile Iranian foreign

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23Leading bonyads include the Bonyad-e Mostazafan va Janbazan (Foundation of the Deprived and War Veterans), the Bonyad-e Alawiy, the Bonyad-e Shahid (Martyrs’ Foundation), the Bonyad-e Maskan (Housing Foundation), the Bonyad-e 15th Khordad, the Imam Khomeini Relief and Aid Organization, and the Jihad-e Sazandeghi (Reconstruction Crusade).
policy will hinder investment, prevent the return of expertise to Iran, and make ties to the international market (both financial and trade) a source of instability rather than prosperity.

A lukewarm consensus on the need for reform exists in Iran, but its shape remains fuzzy. An improved economic performance—currently taking place due to the higher price of oil in the last year—might buy the regime time and so make substantial political reforms unnecessary. Hence, even Khatami’s conservative opponents are prepared to give him a certain amount of leeway to see if he can produce results and to blame him if he cannot. Nevertheless, vested interests will likely stop many necessary measures from being undertaken. The clerical regime (so far) is unwilling to undertake the requisite measures because of the impact on its core constituency, the bazaar, which opposes privatization, and the hard-liners, bully boys, enforcers, and gangsters (for example, Ansar-e Hezballah) on which it depends. Ideological concerns also inhibit reform. Many among the old guard believe that market-friendly reforms will disadvantage Iran’s poor. Differences exist on the priority to be attached to social justice policies, such as subsidies to various businesses, and the level of overall government spending and taxation.

**IMPACT ON IRAN’S FOREIGN POLICY**

The foreign policy implications of revolutionary Islam, geopolitics, nationalism, ethnicity, and economics differ considerably. Moreover, these concepts are vague enough that, when applied to specific policies, their implications are not clear. Nevertheless, Table 2.1 presents notional and brief descriptions of core foreign policy areas. It suggests how the source in question (that is to say, Islam, economics, and so on) should affect policy and then notes Iran’s actual policies. When the impact is not clear, the box is blank. The purpose is to compare the different inputs and note their relative strength.

As the table suggests, Iran’s actual policies do not square neatly with any of the main drivers identified. Rather, a combination of factors, which often rise and fall in importance, has affected Iran’s actual policies. Ethnicity and economics, however, dominate Iran’s behavior in several key areas. Relations with the United States are one of the few exceptions where ideology and nationalism appear to play a greater role.
Table 2.1
Drivers of Iran’s Foreign Policy Compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Issue</th>
<th>Revolutionary Islam</th>
<th>Geopolitics</th>
<th>Nationalism</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Economics</th>
<th>Actual Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defense spending level</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ties to revolutionary movements</td>
<td>Strong ties to Muslim groups, particularly Shi’a</td>
<td>Ties to groups in key states, such as Iraq</td>
<td>Ties to groups in the Gulf region, Central Asia, and other historical areas of interest</td>
<td>Reject most ties; strong ties to governments</td>
<td>Reject most ties that might hinder trade or stability</td>
<td>Cautious ties to various religious groups; decline in support in recent years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations with the Gulf states</td>
<td>Competition and rejection of legitimacy</td>
<td>Attempt to decrease U.S. influence</td>
<td>Seek recognition of Iran’s leadership</td>
<td>Avoid policies that might anger Arab Iranians</td>
<td>Seek close ties to gain goodwill of West, improve oil cooperation</td>
<td>Steady rapprochement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations with Central Asia and the Caucasus</td>
<td>Support for religious groups</td>
<td>Balance Azerbaijan (and Turkey) with Armenia</td>
<td>Seek influence in Tajikistan, other Persian areas</td>
<td>Strong ties to governments to prevent irredentism</td>
<td>Pursue close economic ties</td>
<td>Pursue economic ties; good relations with regional governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations with the United States</td>
<td>Reject ties</td>
<td>Recognize U.S. power; avoid confrontation; minimize U.S. influence</td>
<td>Reject ties, particularly if perceived as subordinate</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Seek good relations with Washington</td>
<td>Continued resistance to normalization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>