Iran’s Formation
Introduction

• Modern Iran traces back to the Safavid dynasty
• (1501-1722).
  • First established governmental systems of Shahs (Kings)
• Qajar Dynasty (1794-1925) gained control after a series of civil wars.
  • Misrule of country led to a 1906 constitution modeled after Western Governments
    • Elections, Separation of Powers, a Majles (Parliament), and a more limited Shah
Influence of Religion

• Iran adopted Shi’ite Islam as official state Religion
  • As opposed to Sunni Islam which most Muslims follow
  • Iran sees self as protectors of Shi’ite Muslims

• The authority to interpret Shari’a should be in the hands of the senior clerical scholars
  • Iran institutes a Cleric to advise the implementation of Shari’a laws into government
Pahlavi Dynasty (1925-1979)

• Establishment of a Constitutional Monarchy
  • Started by Muhammad Reza Pahlavi

• Heavy involvement by British
  • Had interests in Iran because of oil

• 1953 attempt to nationalize Oil industry by Parliament
  • US and UK backed coup to overthrow Parliament and install authoritarian Shah
Pahlavi Rule

• Authoritarian Rule
  • Large military and developed Navy
  • Supported by Secret Police
• Rigged Election System
  • Majles filled with supporters of Shah to give rubber stamp authority
• Secularization of Iranian Government
  • European-Style Civil Code replaced Shari’a Law
• Government control of Media, Oil Industry, and Banks
  • Oil profits made Iran one of the most unequal wealth distribution countries in the world

• Patron-Client Loyalty Pyramids
  • The Pahlavi’s disbursed benefits (pay-offs) to groups in return for loyalty
  • Oversaw White Revolution
    • Land Distribution and Literacy Drives to prevent Communist Revolution
  • 1975 – Iran becomes a one-party state under Resurgence Party
1979 Revolution

- **Ayatollah Khomeini**
  - Cleric in exile begins populist movement
    - Formulated political movements based on Shia doctrine
    - Argued against Shah as the “Great Satan”
  - Jurist’s Guardianship
    - Khomeini argued only senior clerics should have authority over society

- **Starts as a student protest**
  - Shah forced to flee
  - Assembly of Experts draws up new constitution
    - Adopt Theocratic Constitution giving power to Clerics
Response to Revolution

• Iranian Hostage Crisis
  • Students attack US Embassy and hold staff hostage for 444 days

• Iran’s economy drops
  • Inflation at 20%
  • GDP halved
  • Income drops
  • Unemployment drops

• United States supports Iraq in war against Iran

• Iran develops as Rentier State
  • Parastatal – State Oil company responsible for most of GDP