

ifa ECP Monitor At a Glance

Iran

PRÉCIS

Iran faces a challenging situation domestically and geopolitically, with economic stagnation, youth unrest, sanctions, and regional conflicts all taxing the regime's stability. Within this context, it uses ECP to gain regional influence, which is mostly concentrated in the Middle East, especially neighboring Iraq and Syria. At the same time, it seeks to project its understanding of Shia religion, politics, and culture farther afield as well to gain more economic and political partners. To date, Iran has aimed at wielding some influence in Europe as well as with countries more politically at odds with the United States. However, with tensions between the US, and China and Russia rising, Iran may feel encouraged to embrace an "anti-Western" stance more firmly and seek alliances accordingly (Merat, 2022). Regardless of how geopolitics evolves, Iran's history of navigating great power rivalry and wielding cultural influence to shape its region and advance its religion is unlikely to change in the near future.

Outstanding Fact:

Islamic Azad University is one of the largest universities in the world, having over 300 branches worldwide and about a million students.

KEY INDICATORS 2019

Population	Rank/number	19 th / 82,914,000
GDP	Rank/number	28 th
GDP per capita	Rank/number	100 th / 5,550
Cultural economy	As share of GDP	-
Education economy	As share of GDP	3.95
R&D economy	As share of GDP	-
Media economy	As share of GDP	-
Geopolitical position	Hard power	14 th
	Sharp power	n/a
	Soft power	n/a
	Diplomacy rank	n/a

OVERVIEW OF EXTERNAL CULTURAL POLICY 2019

Number of countries with ECP activities	55
Total number of institutions abroad	195
Government financial support (€ million)	-
Comparative ECP ranking	major

Regional Focus

- Middle East, especially Iraq and Syria
 - Southeast Asia
 - Latin America
-

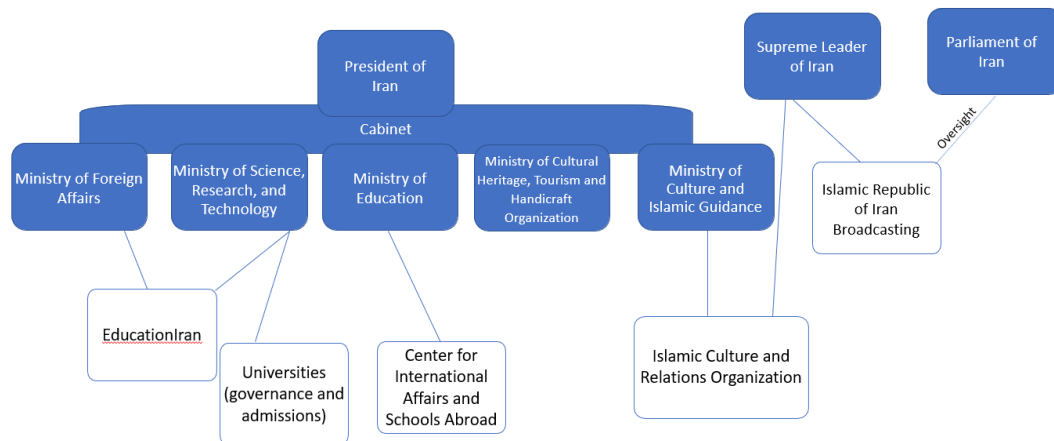
Main Objectives

- Spread of Shia Islam and political ideology throughout the Middle East and other parts of the developing world
 - Build partnerships with other countries outside of the US-led orbit, such as Russia and China
-

Policy Context

- Geopolitical tensions, most notably with the United States, Israel, and Saudi Arabia
 - Political instability in the Middle East, expanding role in war-torn countries like Iraq and Syria
 - Heavy sanctions regime, requiring trade partners outside of the major western powers
-

INSTITUTIONAL MAP



Iran's political structure is divided between the authority of the president and head of government (currently Sayyid Ebrahim Raisolsadati) and the Supreme Leader and head of state and religion, (currently Ali Khamenei). ECP activities are shared between the two. Much of Iran's ECP is run through the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. In addition to the more straightforwardly cultural events run under the auspices of the MoC, local embassies¹ also participate in ECP activities, albeit with a more directly political bent.

FIELDS OF EXTERNAL CULTURAL POLICY

	2019	2015	Comment
Culture and the Arts			
Number of countries present	9	9	
Number of institutes	10	10	

¹ Iran has a total of 40 embassies and 15 cultural affairs offices. Iran Data Portal (2022).

Language			
Dehkhoda Lexicon Institute / Sa'di Foundation	15	15	
Number of countries where courses are offered	~750	~750	
Number of students enrolled	827	n/a	
Education – Primary & Secondary			
Number of countries	43	43	
Number of schools	95	95	
Number of students	14,000	~25,000	
Education – Tertiary			
Number of university branches abroad	55	55	
Number of domestic universities / colleges	274	274	
Number of foreign students	24,379	~20,000	
Media			
Radio			
Number of countries with offices	20	20	
Number of languages	30	30	
Number of channels	40	40	
employees	30,000	30,000	
MFA Twitter Followers	57,400	n/a	

CURRENT ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENTS

- Economic difficulties and budget cuts
- High tensions with the West over nuclear program and heavy sanctions

FURTHER INFORMATION, SOURCES, AND REFERENCES

- A user-friendly summary with additional data and data sources is here: “*Iran – External Cultural Policy: Data Fact Sheet*”
- A full set of references are presented here: “*Iran – External Cultural Policy: References*”
- A fuller report with a descriptive analysis is found here: “*Iran – External Cultural Policy: A Report*”

Imprint

The External Cultural Policy Monitor

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