**Unrest in Iran**

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First, I will quote a few pieces of advice about friends and foes by an ancient Chinese general, philosopher, and writer, Sun Tzu, in The Art of War: “If your enemy is secure at all points, be prepared for him. If he is in superior strength, evade him. If your opponent is temperamental, seek to irritate him. Pretend to be weak, that he may grow arrogant. If he is taking his ease, give him no rest. If his forces are united, separate them. If sovereign and subject are in accord, put a division between them. Attack him where he is unprepared, appear where you are not expected.”

The death of Mehsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish woman in Iran, who died in the custody of the moral police on 16 September, has shocked the world and triggered unprecedented demonstrations in the country. The police say the woman was taken to hospital and died of natural causes. The moral police enforce strict restrictions on women’s clothing in the Islamic Republic, but now many people, especially young people, indeed women, stand up against rules they find extreme and unfair. It is said that Iran is facing the biggest demonstrations since the year of the Islamic Revolution in 1979 when the current regime came into power. As a traditional sign of discontent, women cut their hair in the crowded demonstration. The Iran Government desperately tries to cool down the demonstrations, also arresting hundreds of people and risking severe charges and penalties. But it appears a difficult task as the people want more freedom and certainly not illogical and quite intrusive rules about their lives.

[Soldier martyred in cross-border attack from Afghanistan](https://www.nation.com.pk/24-Oct-2022/soldier-martyred-in-cross-border-attack-from-afghanistan)

The serious situation has been given an international dimension as the United States is accused of fuelling the unrest, said to be using it to destabilise the country. The protests remain widespread. Some people say there is a parallel in people’s reaction to the death of George Floyd, the 46-year-old black man who died as he was arrested by the US police in 2020. The police used excessive force causing the man’s death; besides, he was picked up for what was a minor offense, and indeed, he was a black man. Widespread demonstrations were held and the case came to symbolise that there is racism in the police force. Several police officers have been sentenced to long prison terms.

Compare the reaction to the current Iran case, and the George Floyd case may shed some light on how people unexpectedly can react to laws and rules that have been wrong for a long but have seemingly been accepted by people. All of a sudden, people ‘get enough’ and mobilise against the authorities and their intended and hidden attitudes, which, on the other hand, may even have been accepted by the majority of the people, who simply have not wanted to bother about them.

[CAS Serena Hotels Int'l Men, Combaxx Sports Int'l Women Squash Championship concludes](https://www.nation.com.pk/23-Oct-2022/cas-serena-hotels-int-l-men-combaxx-sports-int-l-women-squash-championship-concludes)

In Iran, the local issues get an international, or rather, American dimension, all the time since 1979 when Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a Shiite cleric, overthrew the last Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, whose rule was seen as leading to extreme Westernisation of Iran. Today, the country faces major international sanctions and accusations about its development of nuclear weapons. It should also be remembered that US and Iran have not had good relations since 1953 when the Iranian military overthrew the country’s democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh with the help of the US and British intelligence. Later, the establishment of OPEC has become and powerful economic force the oil-producing countries, including oil-rich Iran.

One of the main reasons for the deepening hostility between the USA and Iran was when Iranian college students in 1979 took fifty-two Americans hostage at the U.S. embassy in Tehran, demanding that the United States extradite the Shah. The failed attempt by the Americans to rescue the hostages was humiliating, and they were kept for 444 days before being released in 1981.  Washington severed its ties with Tehran, including sanctions on Iranian oil imports and the freezing of Iranian assets in the US.

[Sherry eulogizes Begum Nusrat Bhutto on her 11th death anniversary](https://www.nation.com.pk/23-Oct-2022/sherry-eulogizes-begum-nusrat-bhutto-on-her-11th-death-anniversary)

Many other incidents have led to the further development of poor relations between the US and Iran, both affairs that are both ‘inter and Intra in character. The ongoing protests are also an opportunity to create unrest in Iran. We live in a non-traditional era when countries do not directly invade the territory of their enemy but use more indirect destabilising measures.

There are several ways and methods for contributing to the destabilising a government, even assisting its change, internationally: overt and covert operations, the assassination of a leader, creating an economic crisis, funding the media to make a regime unpopular, contributing towards creating public chaos, and other things to destabilising the regime.

It is not certain what the demonstrators in Iran want, except for more liberal rules and laws for how to dress and live. Whether they want more far-reaching changes, even the fall of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the rest of the clerical leadership is not known. But protests of this kind can lead to drastic demands even if that was not planned and targeted from the outset. Thus, the situation can go beyond what the demonstrators want—and one or more foreign powers can play a major role. Unlike the demonstrators, they may even have clearer goals and targets.