



Policy Recommendations for Canada

- A. Canada should treat Iran as any other important regional player in the Middle East. Canada must recognize Iran as an inevitable regional player with interests and a long-standing relationship with the Middle East. It will continue to be a key player in the region, and attempts by some politicians to ostracize and demonize it will only prolong and exacerbate regional issues. Canada should maintain a single standard in its relations with all regional powers, and must apply them uniformly.
- B. Canada should discourage all arms trading into, from and within the Middle East. Arms trading in the Middle East, whether involving Iran, Israel or others should be discouraged. The volatility of the region, sectarianism, and Israel's nuclear program mean states particularly view each other in terms of relative gains: the gain of one state is seen as the loss of another. Consequently, changes in the region's balance of power have wide ranging repercussions and can lead to increased tensions. Weapon sales within the Middle East only amplify the tensions, and provide the tools to ignite conflict.
- C. Canada should not view Iranian rhetoric as representative of the Palestinian cause. The Palestinian struggle for independence, and Iranian policies should not be linked as they are two separate issues. The Palestinian struggle has nothing to do with Islamic fundamentalism or a desire to see Israel destroyed. It is a nationalistic independence movement which seeks the creation of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders. The rhetoric of Iran's leaders is sometimes gratuitously inflammatory and should not be conflated with the Palestinian struggle for self-determination.

A: Canada should treat Iran as any other important regional player

1. Canada should maintain a single standard in its relations with the regimes of the Middle East, and must apply them uniformly. Standards on human rights, democracy, labour, governance, secularism, etc. are standards that cannot be selectively applied out of political motivation. Canada is right to criticize the Iranian government's poor human rights record and its persecution of pro-democracy activists. But Canada can not in good conscience excoriate Iran on these issues, while exonerating Israel of longstanding and well documented human rights abuses, war crimes and crimes against humanity.
2. Canada must understand regional dynamics when it comes to Iran, Israel and the Middle East. Iran is an influencer in the Middle East, and is therefore threatened by Israel's military reach and nuclear capacity. The exaggerated accusations leveled against Iran by fear-mongers fail to incorporate the realities of Middle East geography and geo-politics, yet result in a fearful and reactionary climate in Canada. Canada should not resent Iran's intent to be influential in the region, but should factor such intents into its own regional strategies and relationships.
3. Canada should welcome a rapprochement between Iran and Iraq. The American-led war in Iraq has fundamentally changed the balance of power within Iraq in favour of the Shia Muslims. Bilateral relations between Iraq and Iran (a predominantly Shia society) have consequently improved. Iraq is a sovereign country with the right to make or break relations with any other state. Unless Iran seeks to unnecessarily meddle in Iraqi politics, improved relations between the two countries should be seen as natural and positive. (Canada must remember that American accusations of prior Iranian support for terrorism in Iraq were exaggerated. Data collected by the Multi-National Force in Iraq showed that very few terrorist arms were from Iran,)

B: Canada should discourage all Middle East arms trading

1. Canada should discourage military involvement with Middle East resistance groups. The provision of arms to Fatah, Hamas, Hezbollah and other Middle East resistance movements should be highly discouraged, whether provided by Iran, or other countries. Canada's training of Fatah security forces

under Operation Proteus is a mistake, as is Iran's military support for Hezbollah and Hamas. Yet despite the relationship that each of these groups may have with Iran, neither should be falsely characterized as a proxy for Iran. Hezbollah was created in reaction to Israel's invasion and occupation of Lebanon in the 1980s. Its primary objective was to end Israel's military occupation of Lebanon which began in 1982 and only ended in 2000. Hamas is also a response to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, and was initially encouraged by Israel as a rival to the PLO.

2. Canada must not ignore Israeli weapons sales and purchases. Israel has a far greater weapons arsenal than any regional group or state, and the bulk of its weapons are from the US. The US gives billions of dollars annually to Israel in military and economic aid. These weapons have been used in Israeli war crimes against civilians. Israel is also a major arms manufacturer and exporter, selling weaponry to such countries as China. Many Canadian military companies export directly to Israel or export to the US for weapons systems then used by Israel. Canada is also using Israeli drones in Afghanistan. Canada cannot legitimately condemn Iranian weapons sales while ignoring Israeli weapons imports and exports. And Canada itself should have no business dealing in arms with a country that does not consistently uphold human rights and international law.
3. Canada must not sell arms in the Middle East. Canadian military companies do business with Israel, and have also sold weapons to Saudi Arabia, Iran's chief rival for influence in the Persian Gulf. Such weapons sales only exacerbate geo-political tensions in the region as states and groups begin to engage in a regional arms races.

C: Canada should not view Iranian rhetoric as representative of the Palestinian cause.

1. Canada should ignore Iranian rhetoric on Palestine. Iranian politicians have frequently made inflammatory and provocative comments about Israel and the Palestinians. Such statements are an attempt to appeal to certain segments of Iranian society, and are not encouraged nor supported by mainstream Palestinians or their leaders. Both major Palestinian political parties, Fatah and Hamas, have accepted the Road Map Peace Plan, the Saudi Peace Plan and other agreements and offers that would lead to independent Israeli and Palestinian states living side by side based on 1967 borders.
2. Canadian politicians must not accept a simplistic vilification of Iran. Some Canadian politicians have attempted to portray Iran as a one-dimensional, diabolic state intent solely on the destruction of Israel. The US, for its part, openly promoted regime change in Iran for many years. Engaging Iran constructively has been made far more challenging for the international community by such misguided Canadian and US policies. Reliance on sanctions at the expense of incentives has also undermined Iranian reformers and strengthened the hand of the more extremist elements in the regime. Canada may be right to emphasize reform in Iran in certain areas, but it should not allow such concerns to eclipse opportunities for greater constructive engagement with the existing Iranian regime.

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