

The Islamic Republic of Iran's Foreign Policy and Developmental Activities in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Question

- How has the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) instrumentalized development to further its geopolitical, economic, and ideological interests in Sub-Saharan Africa?

Case Study

- Construction Jihad (CJ) (1979-2001)
 - Rural development organization
 - Helped the IRI consolidate power against domestic and foreign opponents (1979-1983)
 - Improved rural infrastructure and services
 - Spread revolutionary and Islamist values
 - Provided logistical support during Iran-Iraq War
 - Became ministry and began overseas operations in 1984-1985
 - Merged with Ministry of Agriculture to form Ministry of Agricultural Jihad (MAJ) in 2001

Scholarly Contribution

- Temporality: De-Radicalization of IRI's Foreign Policy in Africa and Beyond (1984-2005)
- Geography: IRI's Foreign Policy in Non-Muslim and Sunni-Majority Africa vs. Shiite World
- Tactics: Development as Soft Power Mechanism vs. Covert, Military Assistance and Ideological Propagation

Methods

- Interviews with IRI/ CJ Officials and Development Experts in Iran and Africa
- Archival Research at the IRI's Parliamentary Library and National Library & Archives and the MAJ's Library and Research Center

Outline

- Theoretical Framework: Complex Realism
- De-Radicalization (1984-2005)
- CJ in Africa (1985-1991)
- Re-Radicalization (2005-2013)
- MAJ in Africa (2007-2009)
- Conclusion

Theory: Complex Realism

- Ehteshami & Hinnebusch
- Dependent Variable: Foreign Policymaking & Outcomes
- Three Independent, Structural Variables:
 - Anarchic and Dynamic, Regional & Int'l System
 - Domestic Politics: State Formation, Institutional Configuration, Decision-Making, Power Concentration, Intra-Elite Conflict (vs. Agency)
 - Realist or Material and Constructivist or Ideological Objectives

Radicalization (1980-1984)

- International: Bipolar World/ Cold War
- Regional: Iranian Revolution, American Hostage Crisis, Iran-Iraq War & Radical Regimes in Africa
- Domestic: Radical Government in Iran
 - Material: Financial and Military Support to National Liberation Movements in Africa
 - Ideological: Revolution & Anti-Imperialism

De-Radicalization - Conservatism (1984-1988)

- International: Bipolar World/ Cold War
- Regional: Iran-Iraq War, International Sanctions & Radical Regimes in Africa
- Domestic: Conservative Government in Iran
 - Material: Mitigate Isolation and Establish Diplomatic & Commercial Relations with Africa
 - Ideological: Shiite Islam & Guardianship of the Jurist (*velayat-e faqih*)

De-Radicalization - Pragmatism (1989-2005)

- International: Unipolar World/ Post-Cold War
- Regional: Gulf Wars in Middle East & Fragile Democratization in Africa
- Domestic: Moderate & Reformist Governments in Iran
 - Material: Strengthen Diplomatic & Commercial Relations with Africa
 - Ideological: Minimize Ideological Propagation & Religious Proselytization

CJ in Africa (1985-1991)

- Formalized, Routinized & Professionalized
- Tanzania (1987) & Ghana (1989)
 - Expanded Mechanized Agriculture, Improved Farming, and Increased Production of Strategic Crops, Livestock, and Fish
 - Distributed Medication, Administered Vaccinations, and Provided Vocational Training
 - Offered Loans, Supplied Irrigation and Drinking Water, Supported Rural Industry, and Constructed Roads, Dams, Hospitals, and Health Clinics

CJ in Africa (1985-1991)

- Sudan & Sierra Leone (1991)
 - Agricultural Mechanization and Extension
 - Road Construction
 - Medication and Hygiene

Source: CJ's Office of Stats & Info

		Country and Year of Establishment						Total
		Tanzania 1987	Ghana 1989	Lebanon 1989	Sudan 1991	Sierra Leone 1991	Albania 1993	
Project Title	Rural Construction							
Agricultural Mechanization Services	Hectares	9,450	5,500	100	1,000	200	850	17,100
Livestock Extension	Families	450	55	--	--	--	--	505
Agricultural Extension	Hectares	4,250	1,850	--	6,000	50	300	12,450
Rural Industry	Cases	12	28	--	--	--	--	40
Loans	Cases	258	198	--	--	--	--	456
Miscellaneous Services	Cases	25	20	10	20	5	4	84
	Construction							
Road Construction, Repair, & Maintenance	Kilometers	250	25	--	42	--	--	317
Building Construction & Reconstruction	Units	28	24	25	2	6	4	89
Water & Irrigation Facilities Construction	Cases	1	--	--	--	--	--	1
Hospital & Clinic Reconstruction	Units	3	2	3	1	2	2	13
Hospital & Clinic Equipment	Units	3	2	--	1	2	2	10
Medical Service Provision	People	8,500	3,500	--	125,500	75,200	250,000	462,700
	Hygiene							
Hygiene	People	160	65	--	100	10	200	535
Agriculture	Families	1,250	830	--	257	55	125	2,517
Technical & Professional	People	345	255	--	525	15	25	1,165
	Education/ Training							
Agriculture	Cases	10	8	2	5	3	4	32
Social	Cases	5	5	--	2	2	2	16
Cultural	Cases	5	5	2	2	2	4	20
Economic	Cases	13	10	2	3	3	4	35
	Project Surveys							
By Authorities & Officials	People	552	384	120	415	54	77	1,602

Re-Radicalization (2005-2013)

- International: Unipolar World/ Post-Cold War
- Regional: Iran Nuclear Crisis & Int'l Sanctions
- Domestic: Hardliner Government
 - Material: Intensify Diplomatic & Commercial Relations with Africa
 - Ideological: Radical Anti-Imperialism & Conservative Religious-Political Doctrine

MAJ in Africa (2007-2009)

- Formalized, Routinized & Professionalized
- Expanded Presence in Africa
- Economics
 - Assistance w/ Agriculture & Fisheries
 - Vocational Training
 - Bilateral Investment & Trade Agreements
 - Business Contracts & Export Markets

MAJ in Africa (2007-2009)

- Geopolitics
 - Uranium Deposits
 - Access to Strategic Routes along Red Sea
 - Conflict Mediation
 - Multilateral Organizations
 - UN/ IAEA Votes
- Limitations
 - Geostrategic Priorities
 - Resource Allocations

Conclusion: Mixed Results

- Opportunities
 - Radical Regimes (1960s-1990s)
 - Sizeable Agrarian Economies
 - Widespread Rural Poverty
 - Formidable Developmental Challenges

Conclusion: Mixed Results

- Material & Ideological Gains:
 - Diplomatic Recognition & Regional Clout
 - Conflict Mediation & Multilateral Organizations
 - Business Contracts & Export Markets
 - Strategic Routes along Red Sea (Force Projection)
 - UN Votes for Human Rights Record

Conclusion: Mixed Results

- Constraints:
 - Inauspicious Demographics
 - Foreign Competition

Conclusion: Mixed Results

- Material & Ideological Setbacks:
 - Temporary Cessation of Diplomatic Ties
 - Covert, Military Assistance & Ideological Propagation
 - UN/ IAEA Votes against Nuclear Program
 - Minimal Conversions