

Iran's Protests Are Grassroots, Not Foreign-Driven, and that's the Real Problem

By [Andrew Korybko](#)

Global Research, November 19, 2019

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)
Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

Iran's problem isn't that foreign forces are politically encouraging the latest unrest and possibly even directly supporting some of the most violent provocateurs to an uncertain extent, but that the vast majority of the participants in these nationwide protests are there for well-intended reasons and represent a real grassroots movement.

Iran has been [rocked by unrest](#) ever since the government increased fuel prices to 15,000 rials (approximately \$0.13) a gallon last week and imposed a rationing policy of 60 liters (13 gallons) a month in order to [fund direct payouts to most families](#) and curb corrupt smuggling activities by those who were abusing the previous subsidy system. Its citizens used to be able to purchase up to 250 liters a month for 10,000 rials each, but will now have to pay 30,000 rials for every liter beyond 60. Although this price increase is minuscule compared to Western standards, it's disproportionately impactful for the average Iranian given their country's ongoing economic crisis that's been gradually exacerbated by the US' unilateral sanctions regime. It's little wonder then that tens of thousands of people took to the streets over the past few days to protest against this decision since it contributed to the prevailing uncertainty about Iran's overall economic future, but some of their demonstrations turned violent after provocateurs started attacking police officers and burning & seizing buildings.

President Rouhani [declared](#) that "People have the right to protest, but that is different from riots", after which he strongly hinted at an impending crackdown by warning that "We cannot let insecurity in the country through riots". [As for the Ayatollah](#), he shrewdly declined to give his opinion on the wisdom behind the latest price hike because he's "not an expert on such matters" but said that he stands by the government's decision on the principle that it was reached by the heads of the three branches of government after consulting competent experts. The Supreme Leader acknowledged that "some people are certainly worried or upset about this decision", but blamed "hooligans" and "thugs" for the recent acts of "sabotage". He said that this "adds insecurity to any possible problem" and "is the worst disaster for every country and every society". He's certainly right about that, and he's also correct in pointing out that "all malicious centers in the world, which work against us, have encouraged these actions...ranging from the sinister and malicious Pahlavi household to evil and criminal munafiqeen terrorist cult (who) are constantly encouraging such actions in social networks and via other outlets."

Iran's problem, however, isn't that foreign forces are politically encouraging the latest unrest and possibly even directly supporting some of the most violent provocateurs to an uncertain extent, but that the vast majority of the participants in these nationwide protests

are there for well-intended reasons and represent a real grassroots movement. The security forces have the right to crack down on those who commit crimes against the population and acts of terrorism against the state, but it's a gross oversimplification to blame the recent events solely on foreign forces. Although the US is most directly responsible for Iran's economic woes over the past few years, the "politically inconvenient" fact of the matter is that its sanctions policy has indeed succeeded in creating the conditions whereby people naturally take to the streets in protest from time to time (and especially after so-called "trigger events" such as the latest fuel price hike), after which they function (whether knowingly or unwittingly) as de-facto "human shields" for provocateurs to hide behind when carrying out their attacks against the state. So long as they have a critical mass of people to "protect" them, the security forces will be reluctant to kinetically respond to the provocateurs out of fear of causing "collateral damage".

Given the scope of the latest unrest, the rapidity with which it's spread across the country, and the intensity of some of the riots, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that Iran has a nascent crisis on its hands that could easily spiral out of control if it's not properly resolved, thus generating a self-sustaining cycle of unrest that could then facilitate more direct foreign intelligence meddling in its domestic affairs. The key is to contain the grassroots rage and separate legitimate protesters from professional provocateurs, which could happen by the state enacting some "concessions" in order to encourage them to leave the streets. There's also the risk that doing so could embolden both the protesters and the provocateurs who hide behind them, but it might be a risk worth taking. The Ayatollah shrewdly declined to state his opinion on the price hike other than to say that he supports the state in principle because the agreement was reached by the government's three branches, so there's some leeway for him as the Supreme Leader to propose a "compromise solution" if he feels the need, one which could then be used as the pretext for removing some of the more unpopular officials responsible for this decision.

Should the state stand its ground and refuse to make any "concessions" (whether symbolic or of substance) prior to kinetically (forcefully) responding to the provocateurs, then it risks radicalizing the well-intended majority of the protesters who might get caught in the crossfire and thus worsening the same incipient [Color Revolution](#) dynamics that it wants to offset. Furthermore, any attempt to paint the protest movement itself as being purely the result of foreign intelligence meddling risks delegitimizing the population's genuine economic grievances and absolving the state of any responsibility for the crisis even though the government should have realized that it was extremely poor timing (to put it mildly) to enact the fuel price hike against the backdrop of the recent riots in neighboring Iraq and nearby Lebanon. That's not to say that the government "deserved" this response, but just that it was entirely predictable given the regional security context. The state has the right to respond to rioters however it sees fit, as does it have the right to implement policy, but both must be done responsibly in order to reduce the odds of blowback and ensure the success of both initiatives. As long as the latest unrest continues to be driven by grassroots forces, however, then Iran's present security challenges will remain very serious.

*

Note to readers: please click the share buttons above or below. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

This article was originally published on [OneWorld](#).

Andrew Korybko is an American Moscow-based political analyst specializing in the relationship between the US strategy in Afro-Eurasia, China's One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity, and Hybrid Warfare. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

Featured image is from OneWorld

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Andrew Korybko](#), Global Research, 2019

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Andrew Korybko](#)

About the author:

Andrew Korybko is an American Moscow-based political analyst specializing in the relationship between the US strategy in Afro-Eurasia, China's One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity, and Hybrid Warfare. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca