

Iran has a serious water problem. Major lakes, such as Oroumieh, are drying up, as are water systems that have sustained the countryside villages for thousands of years. Some years ago, the shortage of water in Tehran, which, with its surrounding suburbs, may have to water 15 million people, alarmed the leadership. Iran became the first Muslim country to mandate population control.

Couples wanting marriage licenses had to take a class in contraception and buy into the idea that two children were enough in a modern state. The new law has worked better than they expected, with fertility rates dropping to well below the replacement level of 2.1. The great increase in urbanization, along with the emptying of agricultural villages, has been responsible. City people, with better education and health, are increasingly opting for only one or two children.

The climate change in Iran is fomenting unrest. Dust storms, which were once rare, are now frequent as top soil dries out and blows away. Iran is not alone in this experience; droughts and unpredictable rainfall is desertifying much of North Africa, Egypt's once predictable Nile River, and Iraq's Tigris and Euphrates river delta.

Climate change deniers dismiss this scientifically based concern as "climate always changes, so what?" Around the world, however, this too rapid change is becoming a major security challenge. Where do villagers go when their wells and streams dry up? What conflicts can arise as cities overflow with shanty towns in their environs? What conflicts arise between countries with headwaters and neighbors downstream needing water? How much has climate change contributed to global unrest and civil wars?

The U.S. military has been concerned about climate change and have issued a warning that global warming makes solving the 21st century's problems much harder. Food insecurity is leading to more food riots in such overpopulated countries as Egypt, once the breadbasket of the Middle East. Predictions of hot-climate diseases moving northward, of once-in-a-century storms now coming every couple of years, and of general extremes of weather (colder winters, hotter summers, and stormier throughout), are now commonplace.

There is much debate about what to do about these threats, and more than a few weird attempts to account for these obvious changes. An Iranian general recently resorted to a conspiracy theory: that Israel is manipulating weather to prevent rain clouds from forming over Iran. "Israel and another country in the region (Saudi Arabia?) have joint teams which work to ensure clouds entering Iranian skies are unable to release rain," said General Jalali, Civil Defense Chief. "On top of that, we are facing the issue of cloud and snow theft!"

With tongue firmly in cheek (and eyes rolling), Iran's chief meteorologists noted that climate change is a global threat, not just Iran's problem. "It is not possible for a country to steal snow or clouds," he said. "Raising such questions not only does not solve any of our problems, but will deter us from finding the right solutions."

The good meteorologist has his work cut out for him in offering a scientific alternative to a nonsense conspiracy theory. Other members of the Iranian military have made claims, for example, that Israel has trained rats to spy; had programmed birds and insects so do mischief in Iran, and has even trained dolphins and other sea creatures to surveil for Israel. These idiotic reports are met with considerable amusement in Iran.

Israel's president Netanyahu (also with tongue in cheek) suggested to General Jalali that Israel will happily share Israel's water expertise with Iran. "Israel faced similar water issues and found ways of dealing with it. Israeli technology can help the Iranians."

Climate change deniers claim that our oceans have not risen one millimeter, yet low lying Pacific islands that have existed for a millennium are now readying to move their populations out. The oceans are not only inundating islands around the world, but are endangering coastal cities everywhere. Coastlines are facing ocean intrusion, and each new storm brings more flooding. Venice and New York's Wall Street districts are not imagining this problem. The struggle is real.

681 words

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