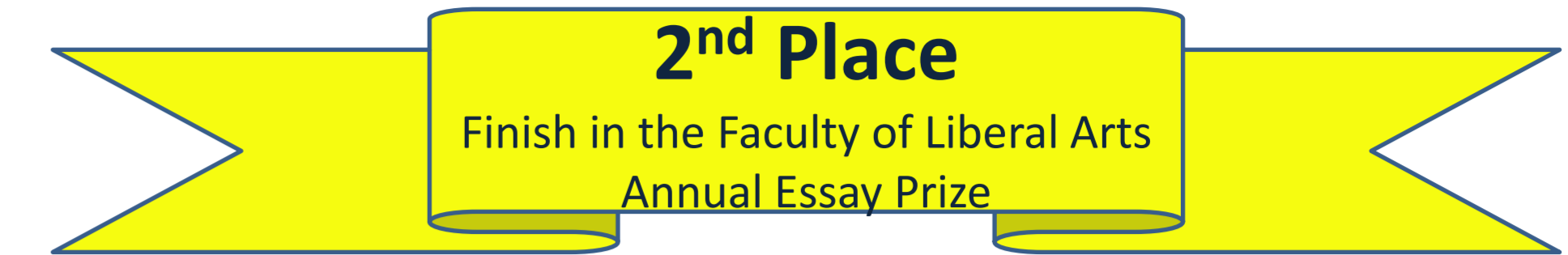


FLEEING BRAINS: Iran's Brain Drain Problem

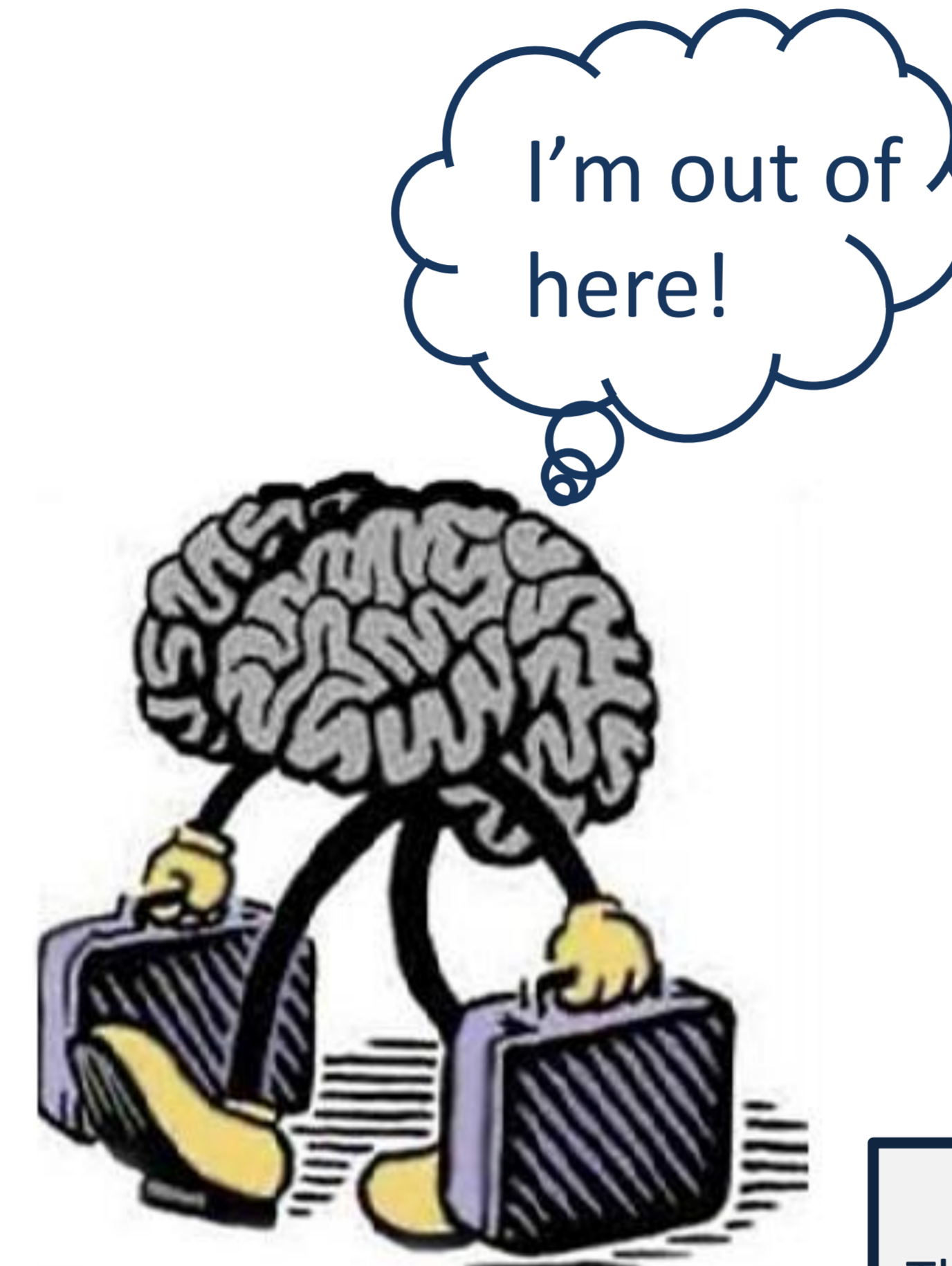


5. What to do?
Is reverse brain drain possible?
-Although it is fuelled by a variety of factors, varying from socio-political to economic, the Iranian brain drain only seems to be treatable under one particular remedy; political led reform. To ease and eventually reverse this trend, **the political status quo must be dismantled or drastically restructured so that investments—whether in dollars or brains—are not frightened away.**

4. Why is the government allowing some of its brightest to leave?
Regime survival. Who wants to have a large group of educated but dissatisfied (and potentially unemployed) citizens? It is a recipe for social unrest.
– **Economically unfeasible** to create the amount jobs needed to cease the brain drain.

FACT: At the time of the Iranian revolution in 1978/79 there were approximately 100,000 Iranians studying abroad; half were situated in the U.S. During this time, one in five foreign students in America were from Iran. Nigeria was a distant second with 16,000 enrolments.

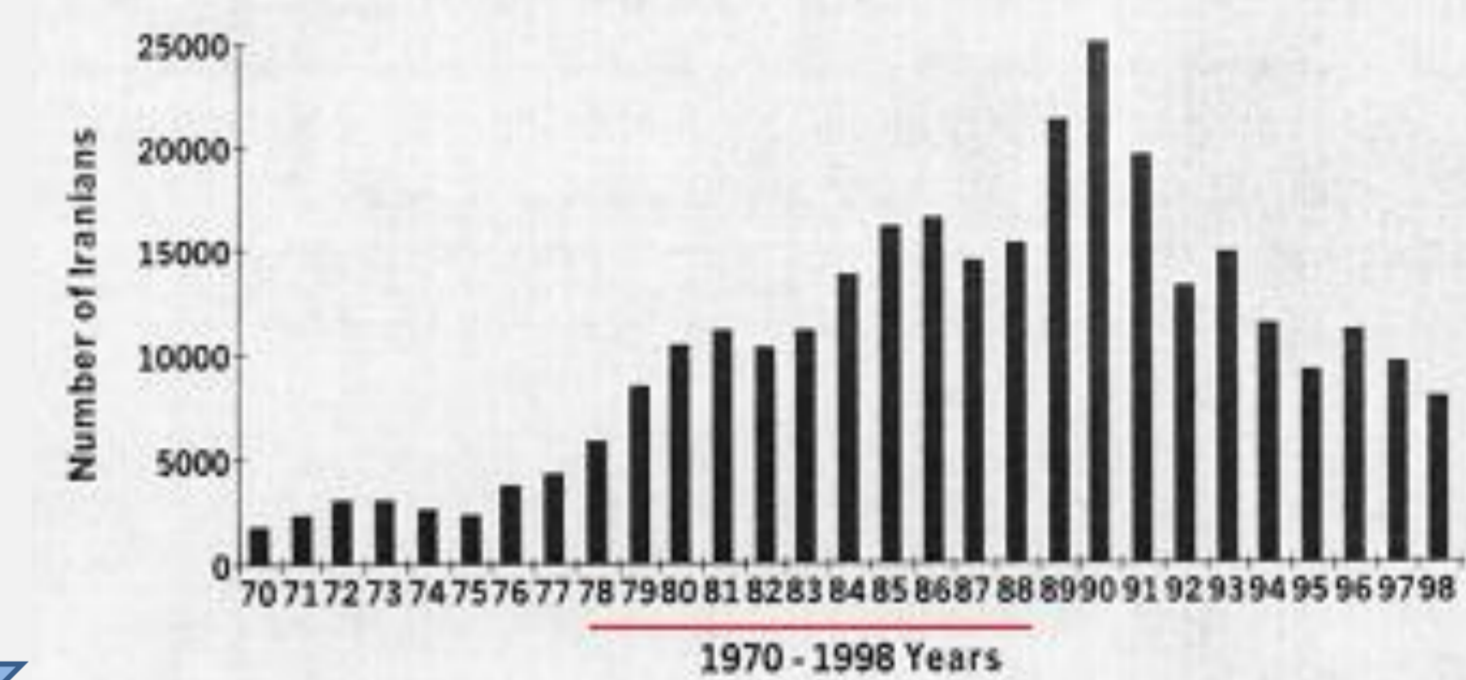
3. The cost:
-An estimated **\$40-50 billion annually** to Iran's economy. Factoring in education costs, the figures would be even higher.
-\$200-400 billion was invested by emigrants outside of Iran by the year 2000, mainly in OECD countries. Today, it is closer to **\$600-700 billion.**
– **Quantity is one thing, quality is another.** Many which have left (e.g. Scientists) were considered amongst the nation's most talented and best trained in their respective field. Additionally, how can one measure or quantify the benefits which doctors, professors, lawyers, activists, and etc., provide to a society?
– **How does this massive brain drain affect Iran's struggle to democratize?**



FACT: Iran ranked #1 in the world for its brain drain in 2009.

1. Causes:
-1979 Iranian Revolution
-1980-88 Iran-Iraq War
-Poor economic conditions (e.g. Sanctions & high unemployment)
-Socio-political atmosphere (e.g. Lack of freedoms, human rights violations)

Figure 1. Iranian Immigrants Admitted to the U.S



2. Who is leaving and who is benefiting?
-The two most notable groups:
1. Doctors: While in 1978 there were approximately 2,300 Iranian doctors in the US (a brain drain of roughly 15 percent), in 2000 this number had increased to 8,000 (or a brain drain of 20 percent).
2. Professors: At a brain drain rate of about 22 percent in the year 2000, a total of 4,000 Iranian professors taught in the U.S. (500 of which were at "top-tier" schools (e.g. Yale, MIT, Stanford, Columbia, Harvard)).
Beneficiaries: Primarily OECD countries, especially the U.S.

Ancestry	Bachelor's degree or higher	Graduate degree or higher
Egyptian	60.4	25.6
Iranian	56.2	26.0
Nigerian	52.9	26.3
Russian	49.0	24.3
Turkish	40.9	22.1

Source: US Census Bureau (1990a)

Table I. Top five ancestry groups with highest levels of education in the USA, 1998 (percent)