



Iran: Prospects for Regime Change

Tuesday, April 6, 2010

The ongoing turmoil in Iran almost nine months after 2009's fraudulent presidential election raises questions about the continued viability of the Iranian regime. With the United States exploring sanctions at the United Nations and key members of Congress calling for increased support to the Iranian opposition, the Foreign Policy Initiative hosted a half-day conference entitled "Iran: Prospects for Regime Change," on Tuesday, April 6th. Leading Iran experts examined the state of the opposition and discuss U.S. policy options. With a growing consensus in Washington that the actions of the Iranian regime make a negotiated settlement to the Iranian nuclear crisis unlikely, this timely conference explored the prospects for change in Iran from within and what the United States should be doing to support Iran's democrats and resolve the Iranian nuclear question once and for all. Video footage and a transcript of the event will soon be available at www.foreignpolicyi.org.

Key Quotes from "Iran: Prospects for Regime Change"

"But I think it's not right to say that for United States or any Western country, 'We don't want to interfere in Iranian internal affairs, we don't want to meddle with Iranian internal affairs.' Why? Because every move – every move – even indifference of the United States and the West, would affect the internal situation in Iran. If Mr. Obama does not react to the violation of human rights in Iran, it would affect this movement. It would affect the destiny of this regime. If he reacts to it, it will change the course. You cannot say that, 'Okay, we don't say anything because we don't want' – your silence is meaningful and effective."

—Mehdi Khalaji, *Washington Institute for Near East Policy*

"This is what Green Movement should do, to show them that to get bread, to get your salary, to get better life from economic point of view, there is no other way, to go for democracy, to go for freedom, to go for the goals of the Green Movement."

—Mohsen Sazegara, *Research Institute for Contemporary Iran*

"The realists in this world who like to believe that the regime is this pillar, this concrete pillar, and the Green Movement is going to crack up against it, and they are inevitably going to lose, I would just suggest to them they should be a little bit more patient, that again, if you look at what has happened inside of Iran in the last 20 years, if you see the way the regime has essentially lost the best and the brightest almost without fail, that it eats its own kind, I would just suggest that I think the regime's days are numbered."

—Reuel Gerecht, *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*

"I just don't think sanctions as a policy instrument are going to condition the behavior of this regime. I think what they will do is potentially get you to the table, where you have a tactical and rather inconclusive discussion, sort of what the Iranians did for all those years, tie you up into negotiations."

—Ray Takeyh, *Council on Foreign Relations*

“Five years ago, nobody thought that the end of the regime was really an option. That's a new option. What surprises me about the Administration is the diplomatic option is disappearing with each passing month because Iran is making further and further progress towards the nuclear weapon. What we should be doing is either shortening the sanctions time scale, which we are not doing...and/or we should be really hitting the question of helping the Green Movement, and we are not doing that either...”

—*Elliott Abrams, Council on Foreign Relations*

“It wasn't that the President was reticent about laying out what he thought was going to happen. He wanted to sit down and negotiate with the Iranians and if they were going to come to the table...either we would succeed or we wouldn't, but at least we were going to build our credibility. What is mysterious to me is this passage of a year and a half almost in which that time was not used effectively to build up agreement with those with which we would have to plan the Iranian sanctions with if in fact they didn't come to the table. The Iranians said no around September, and we kept going back and saying are you sure, come on. Now we're saying it's a great achievement that the Chinese want to talk to us about this, but of course, getting the Chinese to talk to us is not exactly solving the problem with Iran's nuclear weapons.”

—*Danielle Pletka, American Enterprise Institute*