

40 Years after the Revolution: Understanding the Islamic Republic of Iran

A Conversation with Gholam Reza Afkhami, Houchang Chehabi, and Ray Takeyh, moderated by Reuel Marc Gerecht. Featuring remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu, Toby Dershowitz and Richard Goldberg.

TALEBLU: "What the Iranians most wished for they never gained, and what they most sought to preserve they lost." That sentence, written by James Buchan, an Oxford University-trained Persianist, in his 2013 book about modern Iran entitled "Days of God", remains in my mind the single best one sentence summary of the Iranian Revolution, which today turns 40, that I have ever read and that I have ever heard.

I'm Behnam Ben Taleblu. I serve as a Research Fellow focusing on Iran at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies in Washington, DC. Today at FDD we're proud to welcome members of the US Government, diplomatic corps, think-tank and policy community, and media. Thank you all for joining us.

As I mentioned just a moment ago, the revolution in Iran turns 40 today, an event that the regime in Tehran is sure to felicitate, an event that many Iranians, be they inside Iran or in diaspora, are likely lamenting.

"Has it really been 40 years?" exclaimed my mother this past weekend, who through some stroke of coincidence was born in Iran two decades before the Revolution, that also on February 11th. That's the 22nd of Bahman, for those of you who know your Persian calendar well.

Yes, it has been 40 years. What have we seen from Iran in these past four decades? In my view, it's one word: dissonance. Dissonance between the Iran we know through our friends and families and the Iran we hear of and read in books and newspapers and see on TV. Dissonance between state and society. Dissonance between the center and the periphery. Dissonance between national interests and regime interests. And lastly, dissonance between what the Iranian people were promised and the current reality in which they find themselves.

Was it like this 40 years ago as the Shah fled, as Khomeini returned, and as the army declared neutrality, and as the revolutionary forces declared victory? For the past 40 years, the Iranian state has been defined and explained in contrast to the prevailing norms of the world system, which it rejects.

So, what are the forces that turned Iran into such a revolutionary regime? Where did Iran's current cadre of leaders come from and what convictions did they covet, carry and conceal? What was the state of civil society then compared to now? And, perhaps most importantly, after 40 years, where is Iran headed to from here?

To help explore these important questions, we're honored today to have four distinguished scholars of Iran, all of whom have been widely published on the Revolution, as well as its causes and consequences. Moderating the discussion is FDD Senior Fellow Reuel

Marc Gerecht, one of his previous life was in the clandestine service at the CIA serving as an Iran target's officer. He is joined by Ray Takeyh, the Hasib J. Sabbagh Senior Fellow for Middle East Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations where he focuses on Iran. Previously, Ray was at the State Department early in the Obama administration and, before that, at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Next is Houchang Chehabi, a professor of International Relations and History at Boston University. Houchang has taught and lectured at countless other academic institutions on Iran and Islamist movements around the world. And last, but not least, we have Gholam Reza Afkhami, the Director of the Oral History Program and Director of Social Science Research in International Studies at the Foundation for Iranian Studies. Prior to the Revolution, he was Deputy Minister of Interior in Iran.

In addition to keeping our eyes on the present in Iran and what it holds for the future, today FDD is doing something different. FDD is making sure the analytical community, the media, and the international community does not forget about the past, not because of any particular academic inclination or obsession but, because the past matters. Iran's leaders, hardened men, shaped by history, who prefer the term revolutionaries more than anything else, rightly understand this. That's why all that came before the Revolution is treated in Iran today more as narrative history and state secret rather than straight empirical history.

By way of housekeeping, I should note that in addition to being live-streamed today's event is being graciously covered by C-Span. So I encourage guests seated here or watching online to join in on the conversation via Twitter using the handle @FDD. And also, kindly silence your cell phones or electronic devices.

Now please join me in extending a warm welcome to the panel. And Reuel, over to you, sir.

GERECHT: Thank you, Behnam. I'm going to do something atypical for me because I like to hog the moderator chair, I'm actually going to turn it over to my good friend Ray Takeyh, because Ray is writing a book on the Islamic Revolution and I've had a great pleasure of actually sharing conversations with him almost daily on what he's uncovered in the material that he's working on.

I would say this about Ray because it needs to be said. There are very few individuals I have ever met in Washington, DC who when they entered government service retained their curiosity and a certain historical desire to get into government documents, that's largely because people are very busy, government work is very hard and it dulls you. Ray is the exception to that. When he got into government, he actually started reading the government documents on Iran, and I think it helped change his life.

Just one other little thing then I'll turn it over to Ray, we may actually today get the opportunity to actually reject James Buchan's line on the Revolution, at least the two of us fundamentally disagree with it, but I'll let that play out in today's discussion. I'll turn it over to Ray.

TAKEYH: Thanks very much and thanks for FDD for doing this conversation about history, it's rare in this town. I'd like to begin by asking Professor Chehabi and I want to focus on the years before the storm '70 to '76. There was a lot of discontent in Iran at that point, whether it was armed struggle, whether it was a variety of hope, whether there was religious revivals. Could you set the stage about why was Iran between the years '70 to '76 in such state of discontent, given the fact that there was a growing economy? Iran at those years felt like a dynamic country that nobody wanted to live in. So could you tell me why is it that there was such pervasive discontent in those years?

CHEHABI: I think the main thing to do is to avoid generalizations.

TAKEYH: Okay.

CHEHABI: Different Iranians were discontent for different reasons. The members of the modern middle-class were discontent because of censorship, because of lack of participation, because of corruption. But there was a much deeper sense of discontent among many Iranians, perhaps the majority of the population, who felt alienated from the ruling elite. And by the ruling elite, I don't only mean a few thousand people running the country, but the sort of people who are defining the parameters of public culture.

This was a discontent over lifestyles. They felt that the people who were running the country, even school directors, et cetera, were not representative of the deeper values of Iranian society. The result of that is that when the revolution happened after a few years, we get a total decapitation of Iranian society. I mean, no revolution has resulted in such deep a break with the previous social elite as the Iranian had been.

TAKEYH: Professor Afkhami, you were in the state, you were working in the Pahlavi bureaucracy, what is the Iran that Professor Chehabi described, how does it look from within the state? Because even the Shah seemed to have recognized there's something wrong here, Houshang Nahavandian has put together a scholarly committee to address these issues, what is the Iran before the Revolution and its discontent look from those who were managing the state?

AFKHAMI: Let me begin with this, in order to see what was happening before and afterwards, one of them is this, that as far as I know nobody's perfect and the Shah, of course, had these issues, problems. On the other hand, he had significant dimensions of commitment to the country, to Iran, to what it could become, which many people did not agree with or did not see it. But he thought that Iran was in a position that in fact it could become one of the major countries of the world and we could do this thing and he was working for that, or trying to work for that.

In the process, of course, there were certain mistakes made that he came to understand and to try to do something about it. But it seems to me that the essential issues you know, that came up it wasn't as a result of – If you know, by 1975, for example, Iran was a country in which a lot of people from outside and a lot of Iranians students and others were turning back to Iran in order to work over there. It wasn't like that you would say that it was a failing country.

In fact, nobody thought, nobody thought, that something like the Islamic Revolution would happen until it came to the end and it did happen. In fact, no one in the United States, for example, there were very few people who might have thought it in those terms. Sullivan, for example, the Ambassador to Iran, came out only in November, I think it was, that he wrote back to the State that something odd is happening and we must be thinking about those things and so on.

So in that sense, I think that it's difficult to say that, at least as far as I can tell, both at the University as I was and then across the country, that a majority of Iranians, in the sense that was just said, were unhappy, when you're thinking about it in, let's say, in the 1970s to later on, then something terrible happened, something very bad happened in two ways.

One of them was that suddenly we got a lot of money coming out of oil. It became too much of it. And that corresponds to something else where the doctors came and told the Shah that he had a big problem and they did not exactly told him what that problem was. But whatever it was, and the way that they said it, he understood, and this is my take, I believe he understood that he didn't have that much time.

As a result of that, the money had suddenly increased manifold and that he wanted to do this thing. He started doing things that essentially the infrastructure in Iran was not able to deal with it. And as a result of that all kinds of situations came up with respect to which then everybody began to say that there is something going on very badly in Iran.

That is how we are looking at what it was, because otherwise when you look at Iran and you compare it to what it was in, let's say, the beginning of the 20th century and what it had become when the Revolution occurred, then you would see some changes that, if there is time we can talk about it, but it does say that Iran was moving in a direction, that had this Revolution not occurred, which is something else that I suppose at some point we're going to talk about.

Again, at this time, when we looked at Iran, if we took any curve of change in any dimension of interest for any society in terms of moving forward, and you would take it from where it was in the beginning of the 20th century to 1976, '77, '78, and then you just continue it, not at that curve, lower than that, but continue to here, to this time, and then you compare it to what Iran is now and what it could have been, then we do get a sense of the opportunity cost of the Islamic Republic for the people of Iran as it was at that time. But let me stop over here.

TAKEYH: We'll turn to Reuel Gerecht, my dear friend Reuel, who spent the 1980s in CIA clandestine services, perhaps yet another reason why the Islamic Republic is still here today. There is a lot of discussion about intelligence failure. I want to read a couple of excerpts randomly and get your opinion on it, and I'll try to be brief.

National Intelligence Estimate of Iran in 1969, quote, "Demands for greater political participation by educated groups are likely to grow. If such participation is now limited and if Iran's economic progress falter, this could pose a serious problem for this narrowly-based regime, particularly if there's dissent in the military."

1975 CIA report, "Dissent among civil servants in Iran has now reached alarming degree, even though superficially everything appears normal on the surface, students and the labor groups have always been the source of discontent but now the malaise has reached the civil servants."

1975 NIE, "Prominent in the opposition are the religious leaders and through them the religious establishment. Religion has become a major influence among the urban lower classes and the bazaar merchants. Even the intelligentsia, who in other circumstances would be scornful of the religious establishment, now apparently perceive the religious leaders as sharing common grievances against the present system." The report goes on to suggest Ayatollah Khomeini commands considerable support and popularity in bazaar and elsewhere in Iran.

Was there an intelligence failure?

GERECHT: I think you could say there's a big difference between the analytical assessment of a general malaise and then being able to predict that you're going to have a revolution at a given moment. I mean, I think the American intelligence community, and that would also include the State Department, was well aware of problems in Iran. I don't think that really was the question. The question was, should they have had a better idea, a sharper idea in the late 1970s that this could actually escalate into a full-blown Islamic Revolution?

I don't know, the retrospective game is a hard one. When I was looking at certainly agency files, which I looked at in a fair amount of detail, what was clear is that the Americans weren't trying to spend a lot of time understanding Iranian society. Certainly, the CIA wasn't by the late 1970s. What has been said that Henry Kissinger had a deal with the Shah, that the Americans weren't going to really work the Iranian target, that the primary objective would be the Soviet target. I think that sort of bears some fruit, you see it in reporting. I don't know how good American reporting would have been if Kissinger hadn't made that agreement.

I mean, when the Revolution happened I believe there wasn't a single CIA officer, for example, who had Persian on the ground. There were two officers who did, Michael Metrisko and John Limbert, both of them were state officers. It'd be good – John was actually supposed to be here and I'd asked Michael to be here, but I can't get him away from his farm in Pennsylvania. It would be good to have their perspective as they look back now to see how much did they really appreciate, and also, at that time, whether they were in favor of the Revolution or not.

I think you had a real disconnect in Washington. There were some who actually were very sympathetic to the downfall of the Shah and then there were others who were oblivious. Then there were those like Kissinger, I think, I mean, he's a bit earlier, who I think was just delusional. I mean, I remember a party in Paris where Kissinger was explaining to a young Iranian woman where, if only her generation had only been more patient, then somehow the Shah would have taken Iran to a new secular age. I mean, in and of itself I think that shows you how little he knew about the Islamic Republic and the recipe for a giant mess, particularly when the Americans started to indulge the Shahs appetite for weaponry.

So, it's an excellent question but I'm not sure if it's easy to answer.

TAKEYH: Let me return to you, Professor Chehabi. Iran in late '70s has 9,000 mosques, 50 Ayatollahs, a venerable party called the National Front, a liberation party of Mehdi Bazargan that you yourself have written about, a variety of other opposition actors. How did Khomeini come to exercise such complete hegemony over such diverse collection of forces almost none of whom shared his objective?

CHEHABI: Well, first of all, the National Front and the Liberation Movement were there in name only. I mean, these were groups that hadn't been active since the early 1960s, a bunch of men over the age of 70, unconnected; there was no social base for them. They had lingering prestige because of their association with Ghotbzadeh, but not more than that. The real opposition were more radical groups, like the Fadayan, like the Mojahedin, Marxists, et cetera, Kurdish, Regionalists, in the west of the country, for instance.

Basically, everybody saw a different Khomeini because, of course, many of these people knew exactly what the clergy are like; they are anti-clerical like any religious Iranians are anti-clerical because they see the clergy as hypocrites, except the notion was always Khomeini is different. The clerics are like this, but Khomeini is not a typical cleric. If you read his book "Islamic Government", there were vicious attacks against the traditional clergy.

They said, "Yeah, I mean, we are uneasy about the clerics, about the clergy, but Khomeini is different." So that allowed them to accept his leadership, perhaps a lot of wishful thinking was involved, but there was nobody else. And as far as people who really knew him, I mean, Bazargan knew him personally, they thought that if they do not go under his umbrella they'd be totally marginalized, they'll become irrelevant.

And one man who proved that to be true was Bakhtiar. I mean, Bakhtiar broke with him and look what happened to him. That if they went under his umbrella, given that he was suspicious of their traditional clergy, perhaps they could keep him away from the ultra-puritanical conservatives and nudge him into a more moderate direction, which of course failed. But that's a prediction with the benefit of hindsight.

TAKEYH: Therefore, you have to presuppose that there was some sort of a religious revival in the country for the cleric to emerge, however, sanitized as the leadership of an opposition movement.

CHEHABI: Yeah.

TAKEYH: Shiism became the religion, became an ideology of dissent and rebellion.

CHEHABI: Yeah, absolutely.

GERECHT: Can I just add one thing on that point?

TAKEYH: Sure.

GERECHT: I actually think in the American government there was a real resistance, and the same thing was true with a lot of Iranians, the idea of clerical rule just seemed a little far-fetched. It just didn't seem likely. I don't know how many American officials were aware of the history from, say, Bakhtiar, Majlis forward, but that there was actually a tradition of what you might call profound clerical interjection of the government, if not a certain desire to actually rule. That just simply wasn't digested, and hence Khomeini's advantage.

TAKEYH: Well, I mean what I'm trying to get to is, I mean, I'm sorry, professor, is there is a question and Buchan introduced it, what did Iranians revolt for in 1979? Given the choice of leadership that they made, given the individual they turn to, is it fair to say, I think it's indisputable to suggest, that they revolted for an Islamic Government?

CHEHABI: No, not necessarily. I don't think so. If you all you have to do is to look at the slogans that people shouted in the course of the demonstrations, they believed wrongly, now we know wrongly, but at the time, they believed that the Shah was an American puppet and so they called for independence, which meant curtailing American influence in this country. They revolted against corruption in high places. Yes, a very important part revolted for Islam, but not everybody. Not everybody was Islamic.

Of course, one thing we have to keep in mind is that, precisely in the 1970s, we get the emergence of an Islamist counter-elite, because that's the point when students from poorer backgrounds enter university and the atmosphere at the universities changes. Many secular Iranians now go to the United States or to Europe to study and the universities become a hotbed of Islamist agitation. So this emergence of an Islamist counter-elite of educated people, who can speak about modern problems, who can speak about social problems, who can speak about the economy, that was also one of the factors in the Islamization of the revolution movement.

TAKEYH: Afkhami, did you have something?

AFKHAMI: Yeah, well, exactly that, that Chehabi was just talking about. For one thing, in order to get this thing you have to start from beginning of it, where it actually starts, which goes somewhere just after President Carter came to Iran. Then a few days after was Khomeini started talking about how terrible to meet on his situation was –

TAKEYH: He was doing it, to be fair.

AFKHAMI: Yeah, I know. But continuing this, immediately after that. Then a couple of months afterwards, you had this thing in Tabriz, that it was a religious uprising that started over there. Essentially, that was that. And then from that, they started going on every 40 days and so on and then that was the beginning of it that started going.

The essential point is that this revolution, from the time that it began, it was controlled by the clerics, by the clergy. It was controlled by the clergy because they have been much better organized than any other group that existed over there. At the beginning they came and it was something that was happening nobody was particularly concerned about how this is going to end. It came on and it took and it began to develop, I'm coming back.

Sometime about the middle of 1978, the military began to be very nervous about what was happening. It was trying to get the Shah. Because this is a very important matter to have in mind, that somehow the military culture had evolved in this way, that unless the Shah ordered them to do something they would not do it. I know the Shah told them that you can come into the street but you shouldn't shoot at anybody, you shouldn't kill anybody.

TAKEYH: Do you think they would have?

AFKHAMI: That they would have?

TAKEYH: Yeah.

AFKHAMI: I think they would.

TAKEYH: Okay.

AFKHAMI: It maybe – Now I know people say a lot of things that they don't know exactly what, the military relationship with the Shah –

TAKEYH: No, the deliberations of military itself suggests that they don't want to do it.

AFKHAMI: Yeah. Because the military essentially was not made for doing this kind of thing. That's other people –

TAKEYH: Right.

AFKHAMI: But it wasn't the same thing as if the Shah ordered them to do something, they would not do it. They would do that. But the point is that he – May I tell you something about my own personal experience with the Shah?

TAKEYH: Okay.

AFKHAMI: It was sometime in, I would say September, when Sharif-Emami had become Prime Minister. The number of us, a lot of us actually thought that this was the worst kind of chore, to do, to put him as prime minister. A lot of people talked to me and so on, I was able to go and see the Shah because I was the secretary-general of the National Committee for World Literacy Program at that time, of which the Shah was the head, but wasn't particularly concerned.

When I want to see him, they said that he is coming. In order to make it possible, because he was very busy with a lot of – one of things that I said was that I have something to take to him from Mr. Amini, who was a very, very important person. As soon as I go in there, he tells me, "What is it that Mr. Amini wants that you're going to come over there?" And I now have to find a way of saying that it wasn't really Mr. Amini and that I came over there on my own. I said that we are in a horrible situation in this country because we are moving in a direction that is going to be absolutely disturbing, the whole situation.

Then he said how we are doing things and so on. I sort of said that, "Well, you see, it seems like there are two options to your majesty, to the king. One is for you the name of the history of Iran and name of the future of Iran and what has happened so far that your majesty pushes military on. And I hadn't finished when I was going to say this that he said that when it comes to that, I would rather leave Iran. I would not do that, leave Iran. Then I said that, "In that case, perhaps you should put somebody else." Then the rest of it was nonsense, because we just talk and he does certain things that I have relation to. But it does show that this man in fact denied his military the possibility of stopping this thing before it came to a position where it was impossible to stop, which that was probably around November or so. Yeah, I would assume. I can't tell, I don't know for sure.

But it is I think important to put all of these things in context of what the situation was at that time or not. There is no doubt that Khomeini's followers are getting the control of what was going on. It was really have very little to do with what Bazargan did or what the other one did, or what any of these people did, even the people who were on the actual left even though they –

GERECHT: Can I cheat in here? In your own mind, do you think SAVAK failed?

AFKHAMI: Me?

GERECHT: Yeah.

AFKHAMI: No. I think SAVAK is too exaggerated in terms of the power that SAVAK had. The SAVAK had it because in fact the country was moving forward. Once it started something like this, the SAVAK in fact didn't seem to have any power of doing anything. He could do it with some people, but –

TAKEYH: But the Islamic Republic has published vast majority of SAVAK files. There's 110 volumes in the Library of Congress.

AFKHAMI: Yeah, I know. I've seen it.

TAKEYH: I'm not saying, to Reuel's question, that they could have coercively stopped it. I'm saying in the '72, '73, '74, where the analytical division of SAVAK saying to the Shah "We have a problem here." Because the SAVAK files that I have seen are almost entirely surveillance, which means nobody really could go to the Shah and say this is – We're in a difficult situation in '74, '75, '76. I mean, what was SAVAK –

AFKHAMI: No, no –

TAKEYH: I know what CIA was saying, I read a little excerpts of it, but what was SAVAK saying? I mean, Nassiri, he's not a guy who goes, frankly, as a character, to go in and say, "Boss, we got a problem."

AFKHAMI: Well, I don't know. To be honest with you, I don't know. I would think that they would take all of these things that happened across, you know, they took it to the Shah. No,

I don't know whether they did it, how they did it, and so on. I was not privy to that. But I know that this was taken to him. It was taken to him, that how it was. The thing was that what he actually thought that things were happening. The guy thought that, for one thing, when he went out, everybody came out and said all kinds of fantastic things about how great he was and everything else. So this thing, this thing that happened, when he went out on a helicopter to see what is going on and then they brought him the thing that how they talked about him, he was absolutely flabbergasted. He just was saying all the time, "Now look what they were saying. Look what they were saying about me."

To ask why the revolution occurred, at least for me, I just can't have no answer for it. If you ask how it did, then I think we can move on and say what's happened –

TAKEYH: Well, let me ask you – I'll stay with you. When did the Shah give up on his regime?

AFKHAMI: I think about the time that I talked to him.

TAKEYH: September?

AFKHAMI: No. I don't know. It may have been, as far as he is concerned, it was a little bit before that. He was all the time coming out, he says that they are doing these things, the left and the right, they want to take the country back, they won't do, which I presumed once Khomeini came, and then what he had in his book and what Ashraf Dehghani said later on that Imam had come and whatever Imam had said was the law and, therefore, we tried to make the law legal, put everything that he had said in the kind that he had said it in the Constitution, so that at least what was happening was all legally justified, which he did that.

For the Shah, I have no idea when, maybe a little before. At any rate, this was my experience that he told me that, which I was very surprised.

TAKEYH: Would you agree, September would be the time when he sort of said, "I'm done with this."?

CHEHABI: I would probably – I mean, I wasn't there. I was a student in the United States, so I defer to Afkhami's views. But my hunch would be to make it a little bit later, to make it November or December. I cannot give you a reason.

TAKEYH: Because the Shah spans, and I don't want to spend too much time, the fateful summer of Iran, the summer of '78, everybody leaves town. The Shah spends most of the summer in Caspian.

CHEHABI: Yeah.

TAKEYH: He was in Caspian. When he comes back, and Shah's habit was he would open up himself to the Westerners, so he starts telling Parsons and others that this is out of hand. His another unusual habit, he would open himself up to Western journalists. So when New

Yorker's correspondent comes in September, the Shah says, "There's no use of force available," which promptly appears in the December issue of The New Yorker when the military government is in power. I think September seems to be the date where he kind of throws in the towel.

Now I'm one of the few people that's prepared to defend the Sharif-Emami administration. I think I'm the only one. And I should be brief. As you know, in the summer, Hoveyda and to some extent Moghadam, the new head of SAVAK are negotiating with Shariatmadari for some kind of a compromise, and it falls apart. Shariatmadari suggests that after Rex Cinema that we have to have a new government with two prime ministers that he recommended. It was Amini and Sharif-Emami. The Shah hated Amini and Sharif-Emami had connections to the clerical community. He begins the negotiating process with Shariatmadari and Bazargan, and he succeeds. He does get an agreement with Bazargan. He does get an agreement, the 13 Point Plan. And they take it to Imam in Paris and Imam says no.

He does have an agreement about the future of the monarchy that's been signed off by Shariatmadari and Mehdi Bazargan, and those individuals proved –

CHEHABI: None of them were Republicans.

TAKEYH: None of them had guts enough to defy the Imam. So that's only success that one can think of. Let me ask you, the role of the United States, because it hasn't come up, or it hasn't come up substantially, it is fair to say that the role of the United States in this deliberation, in this movement was absolutely, completely inconsequential. Here's why. Cyrus Vance wants coalition government that Khomeini will not allow. Brzezinski wants the military to shoot that the military and the Shah want. You can go home after that. I mean, why have another interagency meeting?

GERECHT: Yeah, and I agree.

TAKEYH: What do you do after that, if you're David Aaron, and you, Cy Vance, and you're, Carter? I mean, then what?

GERECHT: I mean, I would agree with that. I think the Americans were deeply confused and the amount of leverage they had was highly limited. They didn't have many people on the ground. Once it became clear, I mean, the Americans, I actually think the Americans would have had a very hard time backing the use of force, something Brzezinski wanted to do.

TAKEYH: And did call the Shah in November saying, "Go ahead and clear the streets."

GERECHT: Yeah. But I mean, it did not happen.

TAKEYH: Because the Shah wouldn't do it.

GERECHT: Right.

TAKEYH: And I would say his military wouldn't do it had he ordered it. But you and I can disagree on it.

AFKHAMI: I mean, these are the sort of things that I may very well defer to you because it's already past and you never know. Nobody knows exactly whether they would or not.

TAKEYH: I think the conscript would.

AFKHAMI: What I'm saying is that they could not at the time that we are talking about, September, October, November, this one, this side. Essentially, the whole situation had changed.

TAKEYH: Yeah. But both Vance and Brzezinski were correct about each other's option. Vance was correct to say there's no military option, Brzezinski was correct to say there is no coalition government option.

GERECHT: Yeah.

TAKEYH: After that you can pretty much put a gone fishing sign on your door and go home because what's there to do? But anyway, I've just one more before I open up –

CHEHABI: Khomeini put it very well, he said, "America can't do a damn thing."

TAKEYH: He was all wrong. In your views, and I'll open up after for question, inflection points between January '78 to January '79, inflection points where this thing could have gone different way.

AFKHAMI: You mean, the other side of what you're saying is that the Revolution was inevitable?

TAKEYH: Well, this is what I'm asking - What were those points where things could have gone differently?

AFKHAMI: No. I would say that anywhere, in the first part of the 1970.

TAKEYH: It was in January?

AFKHAMI: No. You can go afterward, and even then. The thing is that, Azhari became prime minister –

TAKEYH: That's November '78.

AFKHAMI: November '78. Even then he went over there said, even though he was very much afraid of doing this and didn't want to go there and they pushed him, Shah pushed him to go and become that back then. Then for two or three days, four days, five days, I don't know how long, everything quieted down. Then he started talking about the law and all sorts of things in

there and then everybody else came out and said, "Well, this guy doesn't seem to be exactly, can be the one they would be afraid of." But no. I mean –

TAKEYH: So he could be stopped at any point?

AFKHAMI: He could, not at any point. As I say, there was a time then that the military actually had, you know. A time came – I'm sorry that I have to say these things, I had guests in my house that was at night that Khomeini was going to be seen in the moon. Then these people were university people. I don't want to – Because if I tell you what the thing was, what did they teach and all that, then most likely a lot of people who are here were some of them at least could tell who it is and who was not, and I don't want to do that. But they were from on your range of teaching.

Then when the moon comes out and all of that, suddenly feel that everybody is just moving around and they don't know. Anyway we had place, it's sort of like go along in front of us, and so they come out and they started looking at the moon to see actually this is or not. Some of them were praising, praises. That tells me that by this time that we are talking about the mood of the country had changed. This doesn't mean that this was the mood eight months or two years or three years before that.

That is why it is a process, that as a result of this process you achieve a kind of force and power that you couldn't even think that you could have it. I don't believe really that Khomeini, even though he was willing to go and get killed, or whatnot, or everything else, but I doubt very much that a year before that that this happened he thought essentially that he would succeed in this thing.

TAKEYH: I agree.

AFKHAMI: This is a process and we have to realize that that process when it begins it doesn't mean that at that beginning of it you've seen a lot of it.

CHEHABI: Can I add something to this?

TAKEYH: Sure, please.

CHEHABI: Which is I think in 1977 there might have been inflection points, I think the point of no-return comes with the onset of mass mobilization on the streets in January 1978. In 1977, if the Shah had said, okay, do away with the monopoly of the rest of his party. We have free elections, Bazargan himself thought that Mosaddegh might get about 25% NPs in the free election. He didn't think he could win the election. But that might have diffused the tension channeled it into electoral competition, which would have taken this thing out of the opposition.

GERECHT: If the Shah killed Khomeini?

TAKEYH: You see, he's always more gruesome. Professor Afkhami, one last thing for you, did the Shah actually believe he was overthrown by Khomeini?

AFKHAMI: No. I mean, I can't be sure of that. But I think essentially that he thought that all of this thing was moving, because there were others.

TAKEYH: Others being?

AFKHAMI: Others being Americans, others being Europeans, others being whoever. Because essentially he thought that this, I'm guessing –

TAKEYH: Well, you're not to guess, he said it.

AFKHAMI: No, no. Yeah.

TAKEYH: You're paraphrasing.

AFKHAMI: I'm paraphrasing. But that was part of it. In fact, this is something that I think is important to have in mind. There were no one, no one that was actually a part of running that country, running that country and the government, running these things. Really thought, even though they knew that there are these people who are having a certain amount of power and commitment, but nobody there thought at that time that actually this is possible. They thought that it is – Because was Khomeini was saying was so outrageous that you wouldn't think people would go for it.

TAKEYH: So it must've been the CIA.

AFKHAMI: No, I don't think – CIA is somewhat exaggerated in many ways. I'm sorry.

TAKEYH: CIA has never said, "We did it."

AFKHAMI: Yeah.

TAKEYH: They made a point of references, we did not do that.

AFKHAMI: What they can do or what they cannot do.

CHEHABI: But we all know it was the British.

TAKEYH: Right. They're pretty adamant on that point. Yeah.

GERECHT: I just want to repeat. I mean, for over 150 years throughout almost all the Middle East, the secular military men had been beating the hell out of the religious establishments. They were submerging them. So it's not at all surprising that the idea that a cleric come back and essentially rule the roost. It was pretty unthinkable.

TAKEYH: Anyway, I'll open up to the questions. Please identify yourself and ask your question, not a comment.

SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Let's move forward a little bit away from history.

TAKEYH: We don't do that.

SPEAKER: What's your prediction, what anniversary will be the final anniversary of the Islamic Republic?

TAKEYH: We don't have to do this, but if you want to do this, that's your prerogative, because this is one session that we decided we're going to devote to history. If you want to know about JCPOA, good or bad, and have the tastes great less filling debate, there are plenty of places you can do that.

What's our final anniversary?

GERECHT: Who knows.

AFKHAMI: Historically speaking, I –

TAKEYH: Well, let me ask you a question that's different. Will there be a final anniversary to the Islamic Republic?

CHEHABI: Well, comparing it with other revolutions, revolutionary regimes have a great deal of longevity. I mean, the French Revolution was defeated by outside powers in 1815. The Chinese Communists are still there. The Cuban Communists are still there. Russia, well, it's not exactly liberal democracy.

TAKEYH: Right.

CHEHABI: So my prediction for my own lifetime is more of the same.

TAKEYH: Sir.

ZIADEH: Radwan Ziadeh from ACW. My question to the idea of Velayat-e-faqih because when you read actually the book of Khomeini he never mentioned actually Velayat-e-faqih in his book of Islamic Governance. When this idea came into Khomeini and he believed that it's important to implement it. What's inspired him actually to create Velayat-e-faqih to be the dominant of the Islamic structure of Republic of Iran?

TAKEYH: My impression was, and you tell me that it was in the Islamic book.

CHEHABI: Yeah, it is.

GERECHT: Yeah, definitely.

TAKEYH: He does mention it, he gave 130 interviews in Paris, where he wasn't supposed to be interviewed. When people asked him he would say it would be a government

whereby clerics will be in form of legislation. He would say things like Prophet Muhammad was not this person who hid from temporal power. I mean, he was very clear about what he was saying.

Now the journalism as a profession failed Iran in 1979 because when you went to interview Khomeini you had to submit questions in advance and those answers will be written by Banisadr and others. The few occasions where Khomeini would directly answer questions were actually with academics, and they would come out with their hair on fire about the things that he was saying.

The first speech that he gave in cemetery when he returned, he does mention Velayat-e-faqih. I think that was part of his perspective, however, it comes to be normative Shia jurisprudence. I don't think he hid from that. As I said New York Times, the failing New York Times, actually profiles the book in December 30th, 1978. Judy Miller writes a story about it. Bernard Lewis was very active in trying to say to people read this book. I think the book was a mystery to those who wished not to know about it.

CHEHABI: Yeah.

AFKHAMI: Also, of course, the book was not allowed to be published everywhere in Iran, except for the last part of it, which again people did not read –

TAKEYH: Was there awareness of it though?

AFKHAMI: But there was awareness of it. Also what was in it, I mean, of course, when you read it, it's a sort of a thing that you would think that nobody would accept in the way in which he had put it in. But it was very – How would I put it? Logically, following one after another, because he would say, authority is, it was good and you do this and why there were certain kind of people who could do it and others could not. Then the same thing is in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic now.

GERECHT: Again, just on the historical note, the idea of the Velayat-e-faqih is actually bubbling in the Shiite blood since –

TAKEYH: It predates Khomeini.

GERECHT: It predates Khomeini. It goes back to the Safavid Dynasty. I mean, you can see how this idea was developing. It's not properly belonging to Khomeini.

CHEHABI: The book has a lot of material about what's wrong with Iranian society and that resonated, that part resonated with the readers. Given this perception that he was different from the run-of-the-mill conservative clerics, the hope was, again wishful thinking, that this was just a theoretical discussion. That it had no bearing on the actual development in Iran because clerics constantly engage in theoretical discussions, which are devising rules that are not meant to be implemented in the real world.

CHEHABI: So that was a perception. This is a theoretical thick discussion. It's not relevant to the actual political life of the country. That's how people I think were rationalizing it.

TAKEYH: But in the system, in the Shah system and the interior ministry and SAVAK, there was awareness of the book and this content and this inflammatory language.

AFKHAMI: Yeah, I'm pretty sure. SAVAK essentially knew about the book.

TAKEYH: Yeah, please.

FRADKIN: Thanks. Hillel Fradkin from the Hudson Institute. Thank you very much for this really very interesting historical discussion, which is so rare, as was said before. My question originally was about just how people understood Khomeini, and partially because of the book. The book was there for a very long time from early '70s. The book doesn't really present the doctrine, it presents an argument for it. So I found helpful the accounts that people had all sorts of ways of not understanding it, taking it at face value.

So let me ask a different question, which has to do with an observation about the change over in the universities towards the, say, the mid '70s. Could you say a little bit more about that? I think it was Professor Chehabi who referred to the Islamism of the students coming in who, well, the other students, the more I suppose more modernized students were often in the United States and elsewhere, what was the content of their Islamism? Was it already Khomeini's views of things or was it something else?

CHEHABI: It was I think mostly informed by the thought of Ali Shariati.

GERECHT: Yeah.

CHEHABI: This notion that Shiism is a progressive ideology. They were in competition with the Marxists who had been dominant in the 1950s. Basically, what they were trying to do was to out-socialist the Marxist and say, "We're every bit as progressive. We care about imperialism. We care about inequality. We care about corruption, et cetera."

You saw that. I mean, I've talked to a number of university presidents at that time and they were noticing that the number of women students with head scarves was increasing. They didn't quite know what to do about it. But there was certainly a trend, the Islamization precedes the Revolution.

TAKEYH: Let me ask you –

FRADKIN: Were these people from a traditional background to begin with?

CHEHABI: They were mostly – I think there were two kinds. One was the people from a traditional background but whose parents would have had a much more traditional religiosity. First-generation college students, essentially, who basically found themselves in a tension between the atmosphere at the university with women students, unveiled women students, and

the environment of their home, which was very traditional with a mother wearing a chador, et cetera. So they solved this tension by becoming progressive Islamists, if you like.

But there was also a second group, people who came from a smaller group, I would say, from a secular background, who rediscovered their spiritual roots, who basically thought that Iran had thrown out the baby with the bathwater, that not everything about tradition was bad. This was a trend, obviously, begun by oppositional people, West-struckness, Gharbzadegi, all of that. But towards the end of the regime, the Shah discovered this as well. I mean, by 1974, 1975, there were people within the Shah's regime which were preaching this gospel of the spiritual orient versus the materialist West, and all of that. So I think there was a coming together around these values of a progressive Islam.

TAKEYH: Can I ask you –

GERECHT: Can I just say one thing on that?

TAKEYH: Sure, go ahead.

GERECHT: I mean, I am old enough to remember that in 1979, I actually knew a fair number of Iranians in the United States who were protesting and they were becoming more explicitly Islamic in their protests, even though in their daily habits, of which I had some knowledge, they would not qualify as being particularly Islamic. So I think you've got an amalgam here that is becoming ever more explosive and it's very difficult to draw lines and compartment and everything is mixing together and it's becoming a very unstable fuel.

TAKEYH: I want to ask you about, you mentioned about the universities, the population of university changes. But the population of the seminary in the 1960s, because it is a point that at this time made that there was a time, one of the successful sons of luminaries or people of high officials would enter the clergy. By the 1960s, those people are not entering the clergy. So there are people from lower classes, prominences, and so on populating the clergy, the seminary. By the time you get to 1970s, you had this dichotomy of these 50 erudite Ayatollahs debating their treatise and below them are Khomeini men.

CHEHABI: Perhaps not all but the most visible ones are.

TAKEYH: The power of Khomeini comes through the fact that the social complexion of the seminary changes.

CHEHABI: Very much so.

CHEHABI: And there were fistfights in certain seminaries between the supporters of different grand Ayatollahs.

TAKEYH: When you kind of read the reports, according to US government reports, who study this thing, they identified 90% of seminarians in terms of political disposition going to

Khomeini in ritualistic, the Shariatmadari, Khoei, Hakim, whatever, you know, they may do that. You see this throughout the –

TAKEYH: The tragedy of the Shah, I'm trying to get on it and you can comment on this too, he was a victim of his own success. I mean, he tried to modernize the Iran society through a land reform program that turned out to be successful. There's been some evidence of it and that alienated the land owning aristocracy. He tried to create opportunities in urban areas and others that changed the complexion of the clerical community to his disadvantage. He tried to create scholarship for students, they went abroad. At every step of the way –

AFKHAMI: Don't forget the women.

TAKEYH: The emancipation of women –

AFKHAMI: That is one of the most important things that were happening in Iran at that time.

TAKEYH: I mean, the tragedy of the Shah is, if he hadn't tried to modernize and better his society he might have been in power.

CHEHABI: Well, as early as 1965, the late Sam Huntington in his book “Political Order in Changing Societies” has a whole chapter about that, the tragedy of a modernizer.

TAKEYH: Afkhami, I want to ask you about, as delicately as I can, as anybody else, about the –

AFKHAMI: You don't need to be that delicate.

TAKEYH: About the two types of Shah's elites, the elite of 50s and 60s. You can you even put Mossadegh in that category of elite. People such as Amini, their father. These are people, Alam, being the last one of that generation who had a sense for the country, who could make decisions without the Shah, the Parliament function as an institution, the military leadership could act on its own.

By the 1970s, late '60s you have a different elite. You have Amouzegar, with PhD in hydraulic from Cornell, I don't know how you can get a PhD in hydraulic, but fine, that don't have a feel for the country. They believe the country should resemble a paradigm that they learned at the Jack Kennedy School. They have no feel for it. They're in a bubble talking about their paradigms. The one person who continuously saying things are really, really, really, really bad in his diary is Alam, the last of that generation.

Did the Shah have an elite and previously that elite saved him in '53 and '63, but he had elite in '79 that couldn't save him? I mean, I apologize in advance, but the joke is if you want to find Shah's elite, go to Lufthansa lounge.

GERECHT: Excuse me, what is that?

TAKEYH: Lufthansa lounge. I don't mean to be disrespectful. But I do want to have a defense of that elite here. Let me offer a defense of them because and then you can –

AFKHAMI: I don't have a defense of those.

TAKEYH: I do.

AFKHAMI: Then go ahead.

TAKEYH: Did that elite abandon the Shah in fall of '79? Everybody comes back and fall of '79 and waiting to see what the Shah will do. When he does nothing then the people started to leave. If the Shah had taken command that technocratic elite could have served him as good as the traditional elite. But how would you assess the fall out?

AFKHAMI: These small people that you were talking about and particularly in the 1940s, people like Amouzegar, they belong to different –

TAKEYH: Qavam.

AFKHAMI: Qavam. So you must also have in mind that they also belonged to a different time. Things were changing even then in Iran. They were part of the Qajar period. Then for a period of time they were out of the play there. When the Second World War comes and the Allied occupation of Iran and these people come back and they take various important meaning that Shah is very young at that time and then is coming over. In fact, they are governing and he plays around. But then he's got this relationship even then with the military because of his father and so on and so forth.

The problem there is that the both Qavam and Mossadegh, they also did not particularly realize the importance of having the Shah there, even though they accepted him and so on. As things were moving forward, certain things happened, one of them was the question of nationalization of oil.

The Qavam situation with the Soviets had very, very difficult implications for a vast number of people in Iran. So there were all of those things involved there. I'm not quite sure that favor in a position to save Iran, in fact, to save the Shah.

In general, when you look at it, one of the things that saved the Shah the first thing is Foroughi it's a different thing, not these people. Then at the end of it, you have a problem that ended up in the tragedy of the fall of Mossadegh the way in which he did. This is a very unfortunate thing.

I must also tell you something. At the beginning, the Shah in fact wanted Mossadegh to become prime minister, twice, three times, he wanted him become that for whatever reason. The way in which Mossadegh wanted things in order to become prime minister were sort of things that the system could not accept. It wasn't the Shah, because the first thing was that the Mossadegh comes, I mean, these are funny things what happened, when the Shah first time asked

Mossadegh to become prime minister, he says, yes, he will, except that you have to go and ask the British.

He says, "Why? My father never asked the British or anybody if he wanted to become a prime minister." This is written, and then he says that, "No, you're very young, you don't know these things," but then he really knew. Then the Shah says, "Shall I ask the Soviets, the Russians also?" He says, "No, the Russians mean nothing in Iran." He goes and asks the British they say, "Well, listen, you're in the middle of the elections and you don't need it. You don't need to do this." Anyway that that doesn't work out.

Again, a little bit later, he then goes to Mossadegh. Mossadegh was at that time, I guess was a member of the Majlis. He says that, "Okay. I want you to become prime minister and then clean this thing that is happening as well." Mossadegh said, "Yes, I will. But in order to do that I have to be able to go back to the Majlis if they don't vote for me." Well, that was against the Constitution, they took it to the Shah again. They takes it to the Majlis and Majlis says that that cannot be and, therefore, that doesn't happen.

Until comes later on when Mossadegh becomes prime minister. Even then, a member of the parliament, that is was very, very close to the Shah. He is the one who suggested that is the – Do you remember the name of the guy? Emami, Jamal Emami. Jamal Emami was the one who – So essentially, there is this kind of relationships, at the end, again the reason why this happened was that Mossadegh closed the Majlis. Once that happened –

TAKYEH: But they had a feel for the country and they could speak to the Shah.

AFKHAMI: Yeah. They could speak to the Shah, but –

TAKYEH: Directly.

AFKHAMI: The feel for the country doesn't mean that those people who were afterwards they don't have the feel. They don't have the feel of the country.

TAKYEH: Well, I mean there is a –

AFKHAMI: In fact, they were in many ways, in many ways more nationalistic.

TAKYEH: Right.

AFKHAMI: In the sense that they did not as easily talked, for example, with the British, that they would ever go into that, or this thing. So I'm not quite sure that that is correct thing. But –

GERECHT: I mean, I always remember a story that Bernard Lewis told me that he was in Iran in the mid-1970s and he was the guest of the, a group of generals and he was at a cocktail, and they were talking. They were talking, I'll try to keep it brief, and the generals were all complaining about the Americans. That they can't do this without the American approval. They

can't do this, they can't do this. The Americans are checking them everywhere and they just feel neutered, to which Bernard after listening this for literally more than half an hour, he just turns to them in he asks, he says, "Can you pee without the American approval?"

AFKHAMI: Yeah.

TAKEYH: Did you have something?

CHEHABI: Yeah. I just want to add that after the repression of June 1963, we know that a delegation of the elder statesmen went to see the Shah to tell him, "Look, I mean, be a little bit more careful."

TAKEYH: It pisses him off when people are like that.

CHEHABI: Yeah, and he threw them out.

TAKEYH: Yeah.

CHEHABI: So in some ways, it's his own doing. But not only at the elite level. Remember that one of the people who mobilized the streets for the Shah was a man by the name of Shaban Jafari. Shaban the Brainless, as he was called. Well, by the 1970s, he no longer had access to the court. In 1978, he tried to mobilize the streets but nobody would listen to him anymore, so that's when he fled. So there was a disconnect with some of the deep forces in Iranian society.

TAKEYH: Question. Very quick.

RECORD: Okay. Frank Record, former State Department official. Ray, I wonder if you and the panels could just, I don't know how you do this briefly, but put the Iran Revolution in context a little bit out of the exact details of how it happened, what happened, but the significance of the Revolution in terms of the Soviet revolution, the Comintern, the whole role of the Soviet Revolution was to spread revolution. It's a global revolution. It was really not supposed to even be in Soviet Union, in Russia.

So how does that relate to Iran? The Iranians, based on their view of the Revolution as they understand it, are they trying to say that's a formula for spreading the revolution in the region and other similar countries, or does it not apply? Is it sui generis or not?

TAKEYH: You want to start?

GERECHT: Well, I mean, that's a very good question and it's a big one. I think there's been several transformations and the way the regime views the export of the Revolution. I still think it's a vibrant proposition, but obviously, the regime's relationship with the Sunni world, Sunni fundamentalist. Sunni radicals has shifted and transformed itself radically. You can look at someone like Mumtaz Ali, who obviously at one time was probably the most Trotskyite of the primary characters, and by the end of his life, he was certainly no longer there.

I think the regime expands now primarily through using sectarianism and I think it's been highly successful. So do they still in theory see themselves as a vanguard of an Islamic rebellion? Yes. In practice, however, I think it's changed significantly.

TAKEYH: I don't have any time, that's what I've been told. I'm sorry, that's all the time I have left. I want to thank the panelists for coming and thank you all as well. I hope this was all right.

CHEHABI: Yeah, absolutely. I couldn't agree more.

DERSHOWITZ: My name is Toby Dershowitz. On behalf of FDD, I want to thank Professor Chehabi, Professor Afkhami, Ray, Reuel, and my colleague Behnam for sharing your insights today stemming from your personal experiences and also from your keen analysis as scholars of the Iranian Revolution.

FDD welcomes the opportunity to share a range of experts views from our stage so that our audience here in DC and also those listening in C-Span and livestream can benefit from your expertise. Today the Islamic Republic is at the center of much turmoil in the region and beyond, yet Iran has a proud history and a population that may be poised to take back the reins so that they may fulfill the hopes for a representative government and a free society, which the revolution arguably failed to deliver.

I want to thank you for a most illuminating, timely and rich discussion. But, speaking of rich, we are honored to have with us Rich Goldberg to provide remarks on behalf of the administration, brief remarks, picking up where the panel left off. Rich will reflect on policy today with a look toward what the future holds.

Rich Goldberg is Director for Countering Iranian Weapons of Mass Destruction at the National Security Council where he plans, directs, and coordinates the development of policies related to denying Iran all pathways to nuclear weapons, countering Iran's development of ballistic missiles and other delivery systems, and stopping Iranian proliferation of such capabilities to its allies and proxies. He coordinates interagency development and enforcement of economic sanctions to counter Iranian WMD and missile programs.

Rich has years of experience dealing with Iran policy working across the political aisle. He was regarded as one of the most creative and effective staffers during the 10 years in which he worked on Capitol Hill as deputy chief of staff and senior foreign policy advisor to Senator Mark Kirk. There he drafted and negotiated legislation promoting human rights and democracy in Iran, including sanctions targeting entities that provided the Iranian regime with the tools of repression.

Rich is a Reserve Officer in the US Navy. Prior to joining the NSC, Rich served as a Senior Advisor to FDD. We're honored to have you here with us today, Rich. Please join me in giving a warm welcome to Rich Goldberg.

GOLDBERG: Well, thank you so much, Toby, for that introduction. Thank you for having me, FDD.

Forty years of failure, that's what the Islamic Republic has produced for the Iranian people. In a country with such vibrant history and culture, advanced educational opportunities, and plentiful natural resources, the people of Iran rightly look at their leaders today and wonder where did all our money go? Billions of dollars wasted on terrorist organizations far away from Iran's borders. Billions of dollars wasted on threatening missiles that served no defensive purpose. Billions of dollars wasted in Syria.

Billions and billions not spent on the Iranian people. Inflation is out of control, prices are rising, and Iran's leaders spend money sending missiles to Yemen. Workers are striking. The rial is under enormous pressure and Iran is headed into recession. But Iran's leaders keep pouring resources into Syria, layer on top of that the decades of corruption, graft and diversion. Money siphoned away from the Iranian people for the personal enrichment of an elite few.

Forty years of failure. It's no wonder the Iranian people are finally asking a basic question: where's the money going? Forty years of failure is 40 years too long. The Iranian people could have a much brighter, much brighter future if their leaders chose a different path, the path of a normal nation.

As Secretary Pompeo has said, the United States is prepared to fundamentally change the relationship with Iran, including diplomatic and economic relations if Iran's leaders fundamentally change their behavior, comply with international obligations and expectations when it comes to missiles, nuclear activities, proliferation and human rights, release our citizens end state sponsorship of terrorism, stop threatening your neighbors and fomenting chaos outside your borders.

Until Iran's leaders decide to put the interests of their citizens ahead of their own self-interest, the US maximum pressure campaign will continue and strengthen. We know where the money goes and it doesn't go to the Iranian people. So the United States will do everything we can do to dry up the money the Islamic Republic uses for illicit, dangerous, and destabilizing purposes.

When the president says maximum pressure, he means maximum pressure. As Special Representative Hook recently noted, jurisdictions that receive significant reduction exceptions to import Iranian crude should not expect those exceptions to be renewed. The oil market is well supplied and can absorb the loss of Iranian crude. US sanctions will be enforced. As Ambassador Bolton and the State Department have repeatedly said, special-purpose vehicles are no exception. More sanctions are on the way. The re-imposition of sanctions in November should be considered a first step. It's a baseline, not a finish line.

Forty years of failure, 40 years too long. We know where the money goes and, like the Iranian people, we've seen enough. Thank you so much.

DERSHOWITZ: Thank you so much, Rich. Our goal today was to better understand the role of the Iranian Revolution, what it played in terms of the annals of Iran's history, and to explore how Iran can one day achieve the aspirations of its people. According to Reporters Without Borders, in the first 30 years following the Revolution, 860 reporters were arrested, imprisoned, or executed, and many more have since been.

FDD shares in the hope of seeing Iran a free country where the kind of discussion that we had today is possible without retribution. Please join me in once again thanking my colleagues, and Rich Goldberg, and our distinguished panel for a really enlightening and interesting conversation.