

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

FALK AUDITORIUM

THE PROTESTS IN IRAN

Washington, D.C.

Friday, January 5, 2018

Introduction:

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Featured Speaker:

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Author, *Then They Came for Me*

Discussant:

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Moderator:

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. SACHS: Good morning everyone. Thank you for braving the aftermath of the cyclone bomb and the polar vortex, and other linguistic innovations. And welcome on behalf of Brookings and the Center for Middle East Policy. My name is Natan Sachs; I'm the Director of the Center for Middle East Policy. And, again, welcome to everyone here in the room, everyone joining us on our webcast on the Brookings website, and everyone joining via C-SPAN at home.

We have an extremely important topic this morning and an excellent panel to discuss it. We often have debates on Middle East policy on interests and what the U.S. should do in terms of immediate policy and pursuing its interests. We often have debates about what the U.S. should do in terms of its values, promoting its vision of the good life, its vision of what the world should look like. And once in a while we have an issue that very clearly encapsulates both, and this is one of them. It pertains directly to some of the most important policy issues regarding the Middle East in recent years, in decades even, with the JCPOA in play, and the president about to make decisions about that. And we also have the issue of democracy in the Islamic Republic of Iran and people on the streets calling for a change.

We have, as I said, a stellar panel with us. I'll just mention one more logistical thing, which is you can follow also at #IranProtests. And if you're tweeting about it please use that hashtag. We're very pleased and honored to have Maziar Bahari with us. As you can see from the bios that you've received, he is an Iranian-Canadian journalist and a filmmaker and a human rights activist, and was a reporter for Newsweek for many years, from 1998-2011. He was incarcerated by the Iranian government from June 2009, a time that is reminiscent of this one, to October 20, 2009. And he wrote most notably a New York Times bestseller called "Then They Came For Me". It was later -- a movie was made based on it by someone you may have heard of, Jon Stewart. The movie was called "Rosewater." He later founded the IranWire citizen journalism news site, which is a very important source

of information for many people following this, and also the freedom of expression campaign, journalism is not a crime. And, again, we're extremely happy and honored that you've joined us.

With him on the panel will be our very own Suzanne Maloney. She is the deputy director of our Foreign Policy program, as well as my colleague at the Center for Middle East Policy. Suzanne is our Iran expert extraordinaire. She also is an expert on energy and Gulf energy issues. Among her many achievements I just want to note two books, a monograph in 2008, "Iran's Long Reach", but also an excellent book published in 2015 by Cambridge University Press called "Iran's Political Economy Since the Revolution". She was formerly on the State Department's Policy Planning Staff and is now, as I said, one of our leaders here at Brookings.

And moderating we have one of the very best we could hope for here in Washington, Susan Glasser. She's Politico's chief international affairs columnist and host of its new weekly podcasts, The Global Politico, which is very well worth a listen. Her list of accomplishments is very long. She was the founding editor of Politico, she was also the editor-in-chief of Foreign Policy, she was a reporter from Congress from Tora Bora, from Afghanistan, of course, from Iraq, from the Soviet Union as Co-Bureau Chief in Moscow and for a variety of different outlets. And we're extremely happy that you've joined, Susan.

So thank you all. Please join me in welcoming our three panelists to the stage. (Applause)

MS. GLASSER: Well, thank you, Natan, and thank you to all of you for braving the cold to come out this morning. We're very grateful. And I can't think of a more timely event to get us started in 2018. I don't know about you guys, but I'm a little bit exhausted by 2018 already. (Laughter)

And, you know, certainly it's a good reminder, the outbreak of these protests in Iran and the question already of what to make of them. I can't think of a better panel to figure that out. And, of course, we'll get to your questions as well. But I think a lot of us are

starting out this morning with questions around, first of all, is this panel discussion going to end up being an after action report essentially on a series of protests that are remarkable but little understood and possibly fizzling out, or is this the beginning of a new movement that we'll be talking about throughout 2018. So that's a question that I have beginning this conversation. And, of course, I think the timing, as Natan pointed out, is really remarkable because we are here in Washington and once again we see the convergence of one of our internal foreign policy debates -- President Trump, as you know, faces a deadline next week to once again decide whether or not to certify Iranian compliance with the nuclear deal. He's called the fate of that nuclear deal into question with his decision last October not to certify it, but at the same time not yet to withdraw or to proceed in any other radical way. How, if at all, does the outbreak of these protests affect that decision, how do we understand the still very opaque and unclear decision making of the Trump Administration when it comes to this and other foreign policy issues, especially related to the Middle East, but not exclusively so. What kind of information do we have about the protests, what does this tell us about the state of our knowledge or lack thereof, that it seemed to surprise just about everybody, not only here in the United States but arguably even inside Iran at this moment. And so what have we learned as a result of this? I can't think of anyone better to start out that conversation than Maziar, who not only has his own deep experience inside Iran, but there was mention of the IranWire project that he helped to found which is providing invaluable accounts from inside the country of what's going on right now.

So let's just jump right into that. We can talk later about the Washington piece of the story. It's been incredible to sort of watch not only every Middle East hand in Washington waiting with their own takes and debates, but how much we are so self-absorbed -- right, Suzanne (laughing) -- and very much -- you know, we spend half the time, as far as I can tell, reading all these critiques, discussing and debating what we did in 2009 and whether or not that was the right thing as much as discussing what we should be doing now in 2018.

But what is happening in 2018, Maziar? Is this the end or the beginning?

MR. BAHARI: Well, thank you so much to Brookings and Suzanne, to organize this. And thank you so much for coming. Before that I just want to say that a lot of people in Iran, especially from the government, say that this series of protests were organized by foreigners. If it was so it was a very bad, you know, decision because it was at the worst time. It was between Christmas and New Year's when most people were off, journalists were off. So I mean if I think that in itself it can show that it was not organized by foreigners.

So what's going on in Iran? From what we know, on the 28th, last Thursday, on the 28th of December -- not last Thursday, the Thursday before -- on the 28th of December there were some demonstrations in Mashhad and there is circumstantial evidence -- we do not have concrete evidence yet -- that there was a demonstration organized by the government itself and by the hardliners in order to protest against Rouhani's economic policies, against poverty, and unemployment. So about between 2000-3000 gathered in the City of Mashhad, Iran's Shohada Square, which is marcher's square. And I'd like to translate the names of the places in Iran because they are very symbolic as well. When you see there are demonstrations on Enqelab Avenue, which means Revolution Avenue. People say death to the dictator next to Azadi Monument, which means Freedom Monument. So I think it's very interesting to understand what the names of streets and monuments mean in Iran as well.

So there was a small demonstration organized by the government in Mashhad. And then on Friday we saw demonstrations all over the country. And then, of course, it became more widespread and two nights ago -- three nights ago I was counting the cities and there were at least 54 cities involved in the demonstrations. Some people have said that it's up to 70 cities.

So the demonstrations we do not know exactly -- and I think anyone who is telling you they know exactly who is demonstrating is lying (laughter) because no one knows who are exactly the people who are in demonstration. But it seems that most of the

demonstrations are because of poverty, unemployment, and economic situations. Most of the people who have been arrested during the protests are young. The average age they say is under the age of 25. They are either teenagers or in their early 20s. That means that the oldest of the people who have been arrested, they were 17 in 2009. So they didn't even have the right to vote at that time and many of them did not take part in 2009 protests.

So there were different kinds of slogans chanted during the demonstrations. Some of them they chanted about the economy, some of them chanted against Ayatollah Khamenei. And for the first time we noticed that they brought down pictures of Ayatollah Khamenei, Qasem Soleimani, Commander of Quds Force, which is the extraterritorial branch of the Revolutionary Guards. And different groups within Iran and outside of Iran had their followers in different cities taking part in the demonstrations. So that's why you saw that in certain cities they were chanting for the Pahlavi Monarchy, Reza Shah, the father of the Shah, and also the Crown Prince, who lives in this area. There were some chants in favor of Ayatollah Montazeri in the City of Najafabad, which is his birth place. There were some chants just about the economy, very apolitical, and people were saying that this is not a political protest, this is only about the economy. So it's a very confusing picture that we see coming out of Iran. But it shows that there is a fertile ground for protest, there is widespread discontent all across Iran. And even the government, when you go beyond what they're saying, you can see that they're admitting that there is wide discontent in Iran that can be triggered by anyone, any group, into protest as soon as there is a measure of space for people to protest.

So in the last couple of days we have seen organized demonstrations by the government itself against what they call sedition. They have narrowed the bandwidths, they have shut down telegram messaging app, which has been the main way for people to communicate. So we have seen less protests maybe in the past couple of days, especially today. There were Friday prayers all around Iran and there were demonstrations after the Friday prayers organized by the government itself against the "sedition". So it will be

interesting to see what will happen later on today.

So this is the brief --

MS. GLASSER: No, I think you're right to highlight there are so many different slogans. There's also the question of is there any leadership this time. In 2009, of course, it was taking place in the context of elections and the Green Movement, had a very specific set of political leaders, and it had an apparent set of demands.

I'd be curious for both of you what you make of the political context in which this is occurring. The reformists are now in some ways in the government and so they seem to also be a part of the crackdown. They're not joining these protests as we understand them.

What do you make of that, Suzanne?

MS. MALONEY: Well, I think that is one of the key differences between what's happening today in Iran and what happened in 2009. And there are a number of distinctions that are worth considering and exploring, but the lack of an obvious figurehead, the lack of an organization that is spearheading this, at least insofar as we actually know. That is quite distinct from both 2009 and prior periods of protest -- the 1999 student demonstrations in Tehran, for example. And it bears noting, of course, that Iran has experienced routine demonstrations, labor strikes, periods even of significant unrest that are somewhat localized over economic grievances typically, over bureaucratic and administrative issues. You'll see teachers go protest before the parliament or before another government office building to demand back pay, labor unions that are active. I think what's interesting about what's happening today is this contagion effect that appeared to have happened so very quickly. Within 24 hours of the very first protest -- whatever sparked that first one, to whatever extent it may have been orchestrated as an attempt to undermine President Rouhani and his economic reform agenda, whatever sparked it, it then morphed immediately into places all around the country, 24 cities I think on day 2, and then continued to mushroom, but also quickly moved from slogans that were focused on economic grievances

to what I think can only be seen as very radical and very deeply alienated slogans about the government. And, again, it happened progressively over 2009. Maziar was there of course, so he can speak to it from a firsthand perspective. But it took some time and there was in fact quite a degree of disagreement among those who were organizing and leading the movement in 2009 about to what extent this should be about asking the government to respect its own rules, to adhere to the constitution, or to what extent it was now time to articulate anti systemic, anti-Islamic Republic messages. That moved quickly.

MS. GLASSER: And that's what different here, right?

MS. MALONEY: Yeah, that's --

MS. GLASSER: It's quickly become a very antigovernment broad based kind of -- they have different critiques or they're citing different slogans, but it seems that most of these protestors, would you agree, are basically against the government in some broad way? They're not asking the government to reform.

MR. BAHARI: No, they're against the government as a whole. They're against the Islamic Republic of Iran, they're against the corruption in the past four decades, they're against the cronyism that's been going on in the past four decades. And they do not distinguish between the reformists and conservatives, they look at them as part of the system. In 2009 the demonstrations started with a clear objective, to recount the votes. That was it. People, millions of people, in big cities were going to the streets asking "where is my vote," meaning where are my rights as citizen of this country. The protests were peaceful, the protests were silent actually. The silence was deafening for the government. And there were clear leaders. There were basically three figureheads. We had Mir-Hossein Mousavi, his wife, Zahra Rahnavard, and Karroubi as the three figureheads for the -- not that much of a leader, but figureheads for these protests.

In this protest -- for that movement, we can call it the Green Movement, these recent protests they do not have a clear objective. Yes, there are people around the country who say they are not happy with the system, they say death to Khamenei, they say



death to the Revolutionary Guards. They know what they do not want. But I have not heard even one slogan about what they want, one clear example of what is the clear objective. And that shows the confusion that the Iranian people have as well because when you talk many Iranians in especially major cities among middle classes they cannot really identify with many of the protestors because they say we do not know what they want.

And at the same time because of the desperate situation of many people around the country, because of the sheer poverty, because there are so many people who have nothing to lose, there is some violence. And there are some people outside of Iran who are inciting violence. So there is, for example, a person who lives in this country, he has a challenge for people to torch mosques or banks. And he has some followers. He may not be a leader, he's a -- his name is Mohammad Hosseini, he's a former game show host in Iran. He's a cross between Drew Carey and Howard Stern. (Laughter) Imagine if you had a revolution in Iran led by Drew Carey and Howard Stern. So he's that kind of a character. And he's asking people to torch mosques and to torch banks, and they do it because they're just desperate for change.

And that has alienated many people in Iran as well who do not want to be associated with this because they think it can lead to Iran becoming something similar to Syria. And the government has been very good in terms of taking advantage of people's fear for security. And as Suzanne knows better than I do, that Iranians have always -- fear of lack of security has always been the primary fear for Iranians. In the early 20th century, when there was chaos in the country, when people could not travel between cities, Reza Shah, the father of the Shah took over the country. He established certain rule of law and people were happy with his rule for a long time. Then, during 1953, there was chaos on the streets. (Inaudible) seemed to be out of control, people went -- there was that coup, people did not come to the streets and support him. And at the moment the government knows that people really fear insecurity in the country and they are taking advantage of scenes of violence, torching the banks, torching the mosques, violence slogans, in order to portray these

demonstrators -- as the government calls them, 40,000 hooligans who are being manipulated by outside forces.

MS. GLASSER: Well, that's a very resonant rhetoric. But let's talk a little bit more while we're on the sort of causes and who are these people. You talked about how quickly it spread to different cities. One of the things most commentators have remarked upon is that it's not -- it does not appear to be the more traditional kind of upper middle class, middle class, big city type protest, but it's almost like the Iranian version of Trump country. You know, these are people who perhaps supported former President Ahmadinejad, they are more the kind of working class, lower middle class, smaller cities around the country. There have even been protests in some of the heavily religious cities, such as Qom.

What do you make of the different geographic map of this kind of protest?

MS. MALONEY: Well, it's absolutely one of the most interesting features of what's happening, the fact that so many people who know Iran didn't really know anyone who was part of these protests. It's worth noting, as Maziar said, the numbers are different this time around from 2009. When the government talks about 40,000 hooligans that's their upper estimate of how many people have been participating in these protests. Even if it's off by a factor of 10, you know, it's still significantly smaller than what happened in 2009. But I think it's that question of deep alienation among the people who were expected to be the base in terms of the legitimacy of the Islamic Republic which came to power and has consistently sought to enhance its legitimacy with its own people by talking about social justice, by talking about, you know, sort of the disenfranchised, the dispossessed. This was a major theme of the revolution, has been a major aspect of economic policy throughout the post-revolutionary period. And if they've lost that constituency, if that constituency feels not just angry at one leader or one faction or one policy, but if they've lost that constituency in a sense that those people are prepared to engage in violence and prepared to repudiate everything about the Islamic Republic then it's got to be deeply unnerving. And, as Maziar said, this question of even if the protests die down -- and I think we still have some question

as to whether that is in fact happening -- what is going to be the next spark, how can it be anticipated, how can the security forces and the government try to forestall it. We've seen them rounding up student leaders who don't appear to have been directly involved in what has happened over the past week. But what I think what they're trying to do is inoculate society as much as possible and prevent anything from sparking again.

MS. GLASSER: Also, Maziar, that brings us back to this question of the crackdown and the playbook. And you can speak to that both your own personal experience from 2009 as well as what we're reading and observing from the report out of Iran today. Tell us a little bit about your own experience in 2009. And, you know, I was struck in going back and looking at your remarkable memoir -- which I recommend to everyone here -- "Then They Came For Me". There was almost a prepared quality to when they came to arrest you. It appeared that they had almost instantly from the beginning of the Green Movement protest work to construct a narrative for how they would communicate about what these protests meant and that it was an outside agitator and that you had been in effect designated to play a role in the regime's explanation for what had occurred.

MR. BAHARI: So I think what happened in 2009 was directly related to what happened in 1997 when Mohammad Khatami, a pro-reform candidate, became President. That took conservatives by surprise, that when people saw any possibility of a peaceful change and a different candidate from the chosen candidate of Ayatollah Khamenei, the Supreme Leader, and the clique around him, they voted for him and they voted for him four years later and he became President.

So during the first four years of Khatami and the second four years of Khatami the conservatives they tried to gather information about the reformists, they tried to look at the paradigms outside of Iran, especially in the former Soviet Union, how the regimes in those countries crumbled, and they wanted to prevent such a thing to happen again. That's why we saw the mass killings of intellectuals because according to some people who were interrogated at that time those intellectuals were the leaders of the movements in

Eastern Europe, like (inaudible). They wanted to get rid of future (inaudible).

So the Revolutionary Guards, between 1997 and 2005 they prepared themselves for another wave of reformist movement. And at the same time the reformists they proved to be very ineffective to the point of irrelevance in a sense. And people became really disappointed in reforms. That's why many people who voted for Khatami in '97 and wanted change, they voted for Ahmadinejad in 2005. Then four years later we had the Green Movement and the Revolutionary Guards again had the scenario for the inevitable protests that would happen after rigging the votes. And, as you said, their scenario at that time was that these protestors are led by certain people within the reform movement who are being directed by foreigners.

So when I was arrested, for example, maybe 90 percent of my interrogation was not about what I did, it was about what they wanted me to confess. That I had put Rafsanjani or Montazeri or so and so in touch with foreign embassies. They were asking me to give the details of how did I put Rafsanjani's son with the British embassy. Something that -- I had never even met Rafsanjani's son. And, you know, they were saying that other people are confessing, why didn't you confess? And, you know, so that's -- I mean I didn't confess so I was saved because of that. But this time around I think the Revolutionary Guards, the people who are in charge of Imam Khomeini Charity Foundation, who are supporting 10 million families across the country, many imams of Friday prayers who pride themselves in being in touch with the poor, many conservative leaders, many conservative religious leaders around the country they were surprised by these demonstrations. And as a result we saw that the Revolutionary Guards came up with the same theory that they had in 2009 about two-three nights ago and they repeated that on Iranian television.

And, also, going back to what Suzanne said about arresting students, they are using this opportunity in order to settle scores. The Revolutionary Guard's commander implicitly said that Ahmadinejad was involved in the sedition, the new sedition. He didn't mention Ahmadinejad by name, he said the high ranking former official, you know, whose

name is Mahmoud, but we don't say that. (Laughter) But he could have said that. And then, you know, the Revolutionary Guard's theoretician, who is also an interrogator, two nights ago on Iranian television suggested that it was American, Saudi, Israeli plans and they come up with the Israeli strange ideas that each social media is playing a role for the American intelligence that Twitter is supposed to be organizing, telegram is supposed to be a messaging service. So they really don't know as well.

MS. GLASSER: So you think they're struggling for a narrative? That they didn't have --

MR. BAHARI: They're struggling for a narrative as well because they see all this disparate slogans as well. And they're surprised that how can some of these 40,000 hooligans, almost 40 years after the Iranian 1979 revolution chant for the Shah, in support of the Shah. And when you look at them -- I mean I haven't had a chance to ask the Revolutionary Guards -- that why do we have 40,000 hooligans in the country and who are these hooligans? Yes, let's accept that there are 40,000 hooligans, how come we have not been able to rehabilitate 40,000 hooligans who are willing to risk their lives to be killed? And, you know, what is the economic background of these hooligans, who are these people to be able to come to the streets? So I think as we are as journalists struggling with questions, as you guys in Washington are struggling with questions, I think the Revolutionary Guards themselves, the system itself, is also struggling for answers as well. And the answer is not easy and it's almost impossible for this regime to provide because people are protesting against the economic condition that has been compiled for the past 40 years, people have different kinds of grievances. You see that there are some ethnic minorities like Arabs that are protesting in the City of Shadigard, which is one of the poorest areas in Iran I've ever been to. And there are people in Mashhad who have lost their investments in different banks and pyramid schemes and financial institutions. So there are different layers of grievances.

MS. GLASSER: Right. It's not just you rig the election and --

MR. BAHARI: And many of these grievances have to do with the

Revolutionary Guard's involvement in economic activities in Iran. As you know the Revolutionary Guards are not only a military force they're also the biggest industrialists in Iran. They have some of the biggest industrial contracts in the country. They are some of the biggest industries. And some of the biggest companies in Iran are run by the institutions that are under direct supervision of the Supreme Leader and they cannot be fully audited. I recommend Suzanne's book about the bone yards, the foundations. And you can see the depths of corruption. So for the Rouhani government, who he himself admitted that only one-third of the budget is in my hand, the rest is basically controlled by the Supreme Leader. He cannot do anything.

MS. GLASSER: Your point about Rouhani is a good one I think to pick up on, which is this question of now Rouhani has been perceived, certainly here in Washington and elsewhere outside of Iran, as a moderate, at least in the Iranian context. We perceived the nuclear deal as an example that would lead potentially to further reforms. One question I have for both of you is to what extent are we seeing Rouhani and those around him come up to the limits of what incremental within the system reform as possible? You mentioned the Soviet Union and the regime's studying of the collapse of the Soviet Union as something to be avoided. I was thinking this morning, actually, of a classic late Soviet poem by Yevtushenko, Fatal Half Measures. You know, is that what we're looking at with Rouhani, that basically he himself has sort of unleashed this because he's not able really to deliver fully for people. What do we think about what this tells us about the future of reform inside the system? Will it simply be a pretext for more cracking down?

MS. GLASSER: I would say my theory is that it is very similar to what you just suggested, that Rouhani was the last best attempt to try to moderate the Islamic Republic and this has been a sort of ongoing effort really since the birth of the post-revolutionary state when even baked into the construct of the state there were more moderate and representative institutions and more theological and authoritarian institutions. And there's always been this tension. And each go around with attempts to create a more moderate path

and a more moderate outcome for the Islamic Republic has ended with the triumph and the further domination of the authoritarian forces. So the demise of the provisional government after the seizure of the U.S. embassy in 1979, the attempts by President Rafsanjani at the end of the war with Iraq to much as Rouhani has done, to try to reform the economy and bring Iran further back into the world also ended badly. The reformist movement, which was I think in many ways the most ambitious and most optimistic element of the reform attempts we've see within Iran, during the presidency of Mohammad Khatami sought to engage in a dialogue of civilization, sought to emphasize the precepts in the Iranian constitution that in fact do call for rule of law and representative government. At every point they found themselves outwitted, outflanked by the capacity of hardliners to control the coercive instruments of the state, to use any means necessary to sideline those who were seeking reform. And what we've seen is this sort of successive series of failures.

I was in 2013 optimistic about Rouhani. I thought in fact that this might be a path forward, to focus once again on economic reform with at least some social liberalization, to engage with the world in a way that could bring Iran's rehabilitation at least partially. And he succeeded in the sense that he was able to bring about the nuclear deal. And that was no small accomplishment from the Iranian side. But ultimately he's run up against the limits of what's possible within the Islamic Republic because the economic reform package that he's been trying to enact and that is really necessary if Iran is in fact going to create jobs and address the inequality and the poverty that has become such an obvious issue over the course of the past week, those are really politically difficult reforms. They're structural reforms, they're long-term changes that need to be made.

At the same time he has been limited in his ability to attract foreign investment at levels sufficient to overcome the problematic business environment simply because the nuclear deal was a transaction. It wasn't a transformation, it wasn't a wholesale change in Iran's relationship with the world, and it didn't bring about an end to all of the restrictions on the Iranian economy. It was sold that way to Iranians and I think one of the

questions that we will all be watching and thinking about is to what extent were the sort of expectations raised around the nuclear deal part of the mix that has created this very radical element that is deeply alienated from the Islamic system as a whole.

But my guess is Rouhani's challenges, even if the protests die down, even if the security forces manage to get control, Rouhani's challenges now are greater than ever. There's going to be greater political division making his economic reforms more difficult. And the political risk factor -- and of course U.S. policy -- will loom very large for international investors now in a way that it might not have even a month ago.

MS. GLASSER: Right. So you brought up this sort of the Washington part of this narrative. So, first of all, how have we affected or not affected things so far? You mentioned that already the government has decided to create as part of its narrative that this is imposed by the West, imposed by the United States, it's another CIA plot against the country. When in doubt that's usually a pretty good course for any threatened government in the region but, you know, President Trump made a very decisive move on Twitter to jump into the fray here. And we've been having here in Washington a debate about President Obama's decision back in 2009 not to do that. You said in your own Twitter stream, Suzanne, that you had a very vigorous debate even inside your own family about whether it was right to intervene publicly in this or not. President Trump just did a very Trumpian thing it seems to me and jumped right in with his Tweets. Did that affect the situation do you think? Did he handle it correctly?

MR. BAHARI: I think he handled it correctly. And, you know, I know a lot of people don't like Trump in this city and in this country, but to the protestors in Iran, to the protestors in Iran in 2009 or in 2017 and '18, the sexual harassment, the Russian investigation, the healthcare reform, none of those really matter. They want to hear from the President of the United States. And it was really disappointing for people not to hear from President Obama in 2009. I know that he had his reasons, he didn't want to taint the reputation of those leaders, such as Mousavi, or the demonstrators, but I think that's wrong



because whether Obama is quiet or the President of the United States is quite or vocal, they're going to blame America for everything in Iran. I mean that's the easiest, most expedient thing to do for the government. But I think in this case Trump was correct in Tweeting. And I liked what Roger Coyne of the New York Times said, that he re-Tweeted Trump's Tweet for the first time and he never thought that he would do that. And I think that was a correct decision for President Trump to do that. And I think that by the end of the month when there's an opportunity to renew some of the waivers or not to renew them, that would be another good opportunity for President Trump to act as well.

I tweeted this morning because I've been asked this question several times in the past few days, that what should America do? I think there are three things that the United States government should do which can be quite effective. One is to lift the travel ban for Iranians because that has created anger and disappointment in the American government by the majority of Iranians. And it's really unnecessary and it's wrong to have that travel ban on Iranians. The other thing is not to lift the sanctions, not to renew the waiver of sanctions on IRIB, which is Iranian television and Iranian Broadcasting Corporation. IRIB as an organization that's been under the direct control of the Supreme Leader has been one of the main instruments of suppression in Iran. It's not broadcasting corporation. Many Iranians don't watch IRIB anymore. I think it's very important to be able to impose sanctions on them. And also I think it's very important for the United States to condemn violence on both sides. It's wrong for the Iranian government to suppress peaceful protestors who are just asking for food and for a better economy and -- even if they are chanting against the government, if they are peaceful they should not be suppressed, they should be listened to. And at the same time it's wrong for anyone to incite violence. It's wrong for anyone to ask people to go out and torch banks and mosques and destroy buildings. And I think the violence should be condemned by the United States and International Committee.

MS. GLASSER: So, Suzanne, first of all what do you think will happen here in the Washington part of this policy debate as President Trump faces this next round of

decisions on the Iran nuclear deal? They've already this week imposed a new set of sanctions that relate to companies and entities involved in the development of ballistic missiles. And so what do you think is going to happen here? And tell us your perspective, which is interesting, on this rearview mirror fight we're having over whether Obama screwed up in 2009.

MS. MALONEY: I'll start with the last question because I have thought about it. I defended the Obama Administration at the time and continued to for a long time. And I understand the calculations that went into that decision, which everyone, perhaps all the way up to the President himself, has later regretted. Secretary Clinton has come out and described this as one of the greatest regrets of her time as Secretary of State. But I think it was a reasonable calculation at the time based on both the sense that an American embrace of what was at that moment the first serious legitimate opposition uprising that had ever really -- we had ever encountered in Iran since the earliest years of the revolution, that anything we did that could hurt it needed to be avoided. And so the do no harm principle perhaps applied at that time.

The Obama Administration also was clearly focused on the nuclear issue, which was a crisis, a bipartisan crisis here, it wasn't a sort of strange fixation, and felt that weighing in was in some way going to complicate the prospects for finding a diplomatic resolution to that crisis. And that that in effect was a higher priority in the sense of serving the interests of the Iranian people and the people of the region, as well as U.S. interests. So I understand what motivated it. I think it made sense in the context. I don't think that it's defensible in retrospect because it didn't succeed. It didn't protect the protestors or the leadership from the taint in allegations that they were somehow in the American's pocket. It didn't really advance the opportunities for protests because America was somehow on the sidelines. And it didn't really facilitate any diplomatic progress. There were some early talks in the weeks after the start of the Green Movement that initially appeared optimistic, but it took a number of additional years and a lot more sanctions pressure before we were able to

get to negotiations that could in fact produce the nuclear deal.

So I think the lesson learned from that experience is we should never stay on the sidelines. It's the obligation of the United States as the "leader of the free world", to the extent that we still aspire to that position, to speak on behalf of those who are asking for a better life and to condemn violence against them. And I think while I would prefer someone scrip President Trump's tweets for him in a way that might be a little bit more persuasive, I think it's the right instincts to be out in public on this. I'd like to see more of that from European governments that have been a little bit more reticent.

MS. GLASSER: Well, let me press you on the Trump thing. Your point is well taken, Maziar, about the swamp here in Washington is broadly speaking not a huge fan of President Trump's tweets when it comes to foreign policy interventions. Do you really think that it accomplished anything constructive, Suzanne? You know, you made sort of an allusion to this, but clearly the Trump Administration, not just the President himself, has deemphasized democracy and the promotion of democracy around the world, as well as human rights. It's not been a feature of this administration's foreign policy. We've seen the President himself lavish praise on autocrats in the region. It seems he's very openly taken the side of Saudi Arabia around biggest regional enemy and adversary. So, you know, is this undermining potentially American promotion of democracy by simply appearing to opportunistically use this kind of rhetoric only when it is involving one of your adversaries?

MS. MALONEY: We've always been opportunistic in the way that we try to advance democracy in the Middle East. And so much as I would like that to change I won't pin that solely on the Trump Administration. I would prefer a policy that was more even handed across the region that appreciated the risks of authoritarianism outside of Iran. But to the extent that we're focused on this moment in Iran I think it is right for the American President to be speaking words of support for those who go out to the streets because they pay attention, they listen. Maziar can speak to it more directly than I can, but I've been accosted by individuals who said, you know, where were you, where was your government in

2009 when we needed you. I don't think it would have made the difference in terms of the outcome then, and I don't think it will make a difference in terms of the outcome now, but I think sometimes we simply have to do what is the right thing to do because it helps those who are actually taking the risks.

MS. GLASSER: You've both mentioned the Trump travel ban --

MR. BAHARI: Also -- sorry -- before that I have to emphasize that opportunism and hypocrisy is not only the monopoly of the American government or others.

MS. GLASSER: We're good at it though.

MR. BAHARI: No, not -- actually you're not very good at it. (Laughter) I think if there was an Olympics for hypocrisy and opportunism the Iranian government would win the gold medal because they are shedding tears for protestors in Ferguson, for example, while they are denying many people in their own country, many of their own citizens, basic rights. They are talking about the Zionist atrocities in Palestine while they've been silent, totally silent about what has happened in Chechnya and what is happening to Muslims in China. So when we are talking about hypocrisy, yes, of course, we have different standards for the United States, but we have to always remember that the other side is not that innocent as well.

MS. GLASSER: Yes, that's an excellent point. I'm glad you brought it up because we haven't talked about one thing -- and I want to open this up to questions -- but we haven't talked about the role that Iran's policy in its own region -- and that hypocrisy that you talked about, what role, if any, that might have played in these protests. You immediately saw a lot of questions being raised about the millions or even billions of dollars spent by Iran on fighting basically the civil war next door in Syria, its involvement in Yemen, its involvement in Lebanon, and the question of whether this is a backlash to that, number one. Number two, perhaps even the reforms inside of Saudi Arabia some people have suggested have caused Iranians to look critically at their own country when it comes to how repressed women continue to be, for example.

So I'm curious what both of you think about the role that the Iranian foreign policy, its adventurism, if you will, abroad has played in the backlash at home. Are people saying why are you spending all this money elsewhere in the Middle East? It's sort of make Iran great again.

MR. BAHARI: Yeah. One of the main slogans of the protests in every city has been -- not Gaza, not Lebanon I dedicate myself it, I die for Iran. But we have to also remember that what is Iran doing now is very similar to the Shah's policy before the revolution, which was very similar to the Israeli foreign policy which was promoted by Ben-Gurion, that you have to support and have good relations with periphery states in order to keep the enemy away from your borders and you have to have alliances with periphery states. And that's why Israel had good relations with Ethiopia, with Iran, and other countries, in order to contain their surrounding area. So Iran has been somehow following that idea and also Iran intervened in other country affairs before the revolution as well. But the problem is the fact that the way that they are doing that, bragging about these interventions, is very different from the Shah's time. The fact that people are poor, people are unemployed, people do not have -- one out of seven Iranians lives under the poverty line. So when they see that Iranians are helping the Lebanese whose houses were destroyed by Israel it just creates resentment. It just creates resentment of course in their own government but also in what is happening. And also when they look at the -- the more I think sophisticated argument is in terms of what is happening in Syria and the way the Iranians are helping the brutal Assad regime to torture its own people, to gas its own people, to kill its own people, that creates resentment in their own government and also in what it is doing in the region.

MS. GLASSER: Suzanne, I want to get to you, but does it create fear do you think, Maziar, that they'll do those same things at home as well if necessary to suppress any outbreak of civil war or revolution? I mean is the message you don't what's happening in Syria to happen here and we're willing to use all those tools here?

MR. BAHARI: Well, I think this time what we have seen is that people who

come to the streets, by the government's accounts 21 people have been killed in the past 7 days. There might be more. Usually there are more people than the government's statistics. But I think this time we've seen people who have no fear, who have nothing to lose, who come to the streets. According to the government, again, 40,000 hooligans came to the streets and hooligans, they have nothing to lose. These people are desperate, they're poor, and so they don't care whether they're going to be killed or not because they don't have anything to lose.

MS. MALONEY: I want to get back to one of the questions you posed, and I inadvertently ducked a little bit earlier, which is just what's going --

MS. GLASSER: Yeah, what's going to happen.

MS. MALONEY: The U.S. policy response. Because, of course, Iran's regional adventurism plays into the Trump Administration's rationale to the opposition to the nuclear deal. And the President back in October, you all recall, declined to certify Iranian compliance with the deal largely because of this conviction that everything else that Iran is doing is somehow invalidating even whatever technical compliance there may be with the terms of that agreement. And over the course of the next 10 days we will see the expiration of the waivers and suspensions of all the U.S. sanctions that were required under the nuclear deal. So the President will have a much more meaningful opportunity next week, even as compared to what he did in October. He really will have an opportunity either to continue to abide by the nuclear deal, to take action -- he will have to take action to do so in extending the waivers, or to explicitly pull the United States out of that deal and decline to continue the actions that in fact are in compliance. It's all very technical, but fundamentally what the President does next week will determine whether or not we are compliance with the nuclear deal. And I think at this stage it's really difficult to predict how he will act. There is an effort under way to craft bipartisan legislation on the Hill that might create some sense that the President has in fact achieved his aims through decertification and that might give him an excuse to continue the waivers. That was the sort of game plan. But they won't have the

legislation ready and passed before next week. And even if they did is that sufficient? Has Trump seen in what's happening in Iran a sort of confirmation of his own narrative, that the regime is fundamentally one that should not be dealt with? And, look, Iranians themselves are saying it as well. My guess is that he continues the waivers. My guess is that the nuclear deal continues for another three months. But I think even that uncertainty is going to further erode business confidence in Iran, is going to further complicate Iran's economic rehabilitation.

And, with that, let me just make one final point. There are a lot of people out there, including in this country, but certainly many in Iran who think that Trump has somehow helped to precipitate the events in Iran by not abiding by the deal. That's not true. We've done everything that we're supposed to do. We have kept to the letter of the law on the nuclear deal, we relieved all the sanctions, waived or suspended all the relevant sanctions. What we haven't done is go out and try to create new opportunities for Iran. And that is something that the Obama Administration was clearly torn about in its final months after the implementation of the deal. But I think it's important to ensure that this narrative that's being fostered mostly by the Iranian leadership that somehow, you know, this is all the United States' fault, that the United States has destroyed the Iranian economy, it's fundamentally not true.

MS. GLASSER: All right. Well, let's bring in you with some questions. We have some microphones here. The only thing I would say is identify yourself and please do make it a question so we can get the benefit of their thoughts.

In the back here. Ma'am?

QUESTIONER: Thank you. I have two pages of comments and information and, as you said, I probably couldn't use all of it. (Laughter)

MS. GLASSER: Just one question.

MR. BAHARI: A short one.

QUESTIONER: Well, my question truly is whether or not it's a curse of

geography for Iranian people, as it comes to the question of Soviet Union and it comes to the question of Mr. Brzezinski's policy about the green belt for Iran. And how do you differentiate between the 2009 Green Movement demonstration as opposed to what it is now? Green Movement was basically after getting another mullah, another religious cleric into power, Mr. Karroubi, and Mr. Mousavi, who used to be a Prime Minister in Iran during the worst time of suppression and persecution of the opposition. During this time people are not asking for anymore mullahs, they are hungry, they want food on the table, they want freedom, they want security. How do you differentiate? They are actually talking about doing away with Islamic system. Why the opposition doesn't see that, I'm really baffled.

MS. GLASSER: I think we spoke to this a little bit, but if you want to elaborate, you know, on the key difference from 2009.

MR. BAHARI: I think we talked about.

MS. GLASSER: Okay. Okay. More questions? Please make it a question. You.

QUESTIONER: So there's so much information through --

MS. GLASSER: Can you identify yourself as well?

QUESTIONER: Oh, I'm sorry. I'm Gavin Hawkins. There's so much information through the media around the Middle East in the last decade or so that I've been conscious of politics. But it seems that there's so much information that people form an opinion before they form any like real historical understanding or context around an issue. Well, average individuals that is. So if you were to explain the Middle East and Iran to like a child or someone who didn't really have an opinion on the subject how would you give the most basic understanding to someone who really didn't understanding any of the topics at all?

MR. BAHARI: How would you describe brain surgery to a four year old (laughter)? Very difficult. It's a very complicated question. Actually, I'm joking, but I think it's a complicated question and four year old children and people who think as simple as children



should not be in charge of making policies for the Middle East (laughter). And we need more sophistication and understanding of the complicated history and complication of different people involved and different interests, the curse of geography -- that lady said -- all that have to be understood by someone in order to make the right decision. Unfortunately, especially in the past few days, we have seen many people who have very simple answers who may be a child can understand, but those answers are usually wrong because they are simple and I think simplicity and simplifying things really here is not the answer.

MS. GLASSER: Natan, you wanted to ask a question?

MR. SACHS: You mentioned earlier the Soviet Union. In many cases of democratization, including the Soviet Union, saw elite fractures that precipitate the fall. And so I wonder if you could talk a little bit about the potential for elite fractures. Khamenei is not young. Is there much of a difference between what we now call the reform flank and the more radical flank? What's the chance of these kinds of demonstrations would later feed into true fracture of the Iranian Islamic Republic?

MS. MALONEY: That's a really interesting question, although here I think the analogy might diverge a little bit in the sense that one of the defining characteristics of the political establishment of post-revolutionary Iran is that it is fractured. And so further schisms certainly can happen -- and we saw this after 2009, a really important schism that for a time appeared to be putting into question the legitimacy and continuing functionality of the Iranian government. They managed to come back together after 2009. There was even I think to some extent something of a coalescence around President Rouhani. He was elected not just because he was a good campaigner, not just because he managed to as a long time relative conservative co-opt reformist slogans and appeal to people who had been disaffected in 2009, but he also benefitted from some kind of elite maneuvering in which Mohammad Khatami, who at that point was almost a persona non grata for his role in 2009, leader and spirit and kind of figurehead for the reform movement came together with a number of more centrist conservatives to kind of manage the machinations around the election in a way that

would benefit Rouhani. And so it was actually some consolidation within the establishment that led to the Rouhani victory. And that came only four years after the most serious uprising and the most serious splintering that we had seen in many years.

So, you know, there is I think -- these developments call into question how the elite relate to one another. As Maziar said, the fact that you have reformists who are if anything as alienated and as dumbfounded by what's happening on the streets as the hardliners, they're not rushing to the barricades, they're not endorsing what's happening. In part because of the slogans are explicitly targeting them, saying we don't want any of you, throw all the bums out, as another scholar said in an interview this week. So, you know, it will have some impact, but I'm not sure fracturing of the elite is going to be the fatal flaw for the Islamic Republic because it's been part of the context ever since the beginning.

MR. BAHARI: I think in terms of the comparing Iran and the Soviet Union one of the clearest similarities that I see is the allocation of the state's resources to security and military. And that is what led to the demise of the Soviet Union because every resource in the country was allocated to security, to intelligence. And after this series of protests I think that will happen in Iran as well. That there will be more intelligence officers trained, there will be more presence of the police and the Guards and the Basij in the different cities, especially cities that we saw the protests. Already we see more security forces in cities like Kermanshah, Isfahan, and also the smaller cities around the country. And also at the same time we'll see more protests by citizens as soon as there is a measure of space available to them. And that can be a demonstration after a football match. As you know Iran is going to play in the World Cup this summer, at least they're going to play three matches if -- you know, with Portugal, Spain, and Morocco. If they beat Spain, just imagine Iran beats Spain or even draw with Spain and there will be demonstrations. Part of that demonstration will lead into protest against the government.

There might be a funeral. As we saw a couple of years ago there was a funeral of not a very popular singer, in a sense, a very bad singer (laughter), like imagine if

Michael Bolton dies, god forbid, and there will be a demonstration after his funeral. That happened in Iran two years ago, and no one knew Pashaei who was. And he was not a very good singer, but his death led to funerals and protests. And that has happened. That's actually how Iranian revolution started. Iranian revolutions started in February 1978 -- or January 1978 when there was a critical article about Khomeini in a newspaper. Some people came to the streets in January 1978, demonstrated. Some of them were killed, there were funerals for those people. Every 40 days there were demonstrations and that led to 1979 revolution. I'm not saying that this will lead to a revolution, but I'm saying that there are similarities between what happened then and now and in the Soviet Union.

QUESTIONER: Hi, my name is Adam Early and I would just ask the panelists to speculate about if and how and to what degree the conservative elements of the Iranian power structure are capable of and inclined to reform just for their own survival. In other words, so Rouhani has tried it, Khatami has tried it, Rafsanjani tried it. These are the elements that blocked them. Is there a possibility that, you know, in this sort of moment of self-reflection and analysis they say look, we've got to loosen up or we've got to take some measures from preventing this from happening again. And rather than just do it with the iron fist they find some other more conciliatory or evolutionary way to do it in terms of changing the economy and changing the (inaudible) I know it's a long shot but do you think it's possible?

MS. GLASSER: Great question.

MR. BAHARI: I was talking to an analyst a few months ago and according to him, who is very close to the reform camp, according to him the best scenario for Iran would be something as you suggested, that a group of Revolutionary Guards, a group of reformists come together and understand that in order for them to survive and in order for the regime to survive to a certain extent they have to understand that making money is better than to make war and chaos. And then they have to do something against the radical elements with the Revolutionary Guards, against some of the more ideological cohorts of Ayatollah Khamenei,

but that will require a certain action. And as an observer, and he as someone who is in Iran and who has very good knowledge of what is going on, he would not see someone like that in existence at the moment. But that can happen, that can -- you know, that has happened before in different countries that some group of officers, some group of Revolutionary Guard, they see that the situation is not tenable, they have to do something radical and they do it.

We'll see, but at the moment I don't think that people would be happy with reforms. At the moment I don't think that Rouhani is capable of creating any reforms. And, again, going back to history Rouhani was the first person who called Khomeini Imam Khomeini in September 1978. And, you know, so he's been part of the system since then, and even before that he was a revolutionary. So it's very difficult to expect him to become all of the sudden the Nelson Mandela of Iran. And it's not going to happen. But I think if there's some logic within some groups within the system they have to understand that the situation is not tenable with Khamenei in charge. That may happen even after Khamenei's death; that is possible.

MS. MALONEY: I think it's an interesting question and an interesting scenario. I guess my response is it's conceivable but it would require a transformation in terms of both ideology and in terms of the processes of government and the manner in which the Islamic Republic conducts itself at home and within the region. So I don't think Iran needs revolutionary change, but evolutionary change isn't going to be enough because, as we see, people are fed up and it may only be 40,000 this week but 40,000 over time, particularly with other precipitants, can turn into 400,000 and 4 million very, very quickly. And so my sense is that we've had this at least 25 year experiment with trying to reform Iran through economic, through political and social efforts and it's always proven insufficient. At each time there have been conservatives who've peeled off, who have been at least to some extent supportive of some aspects of reform, but fundamentally there is an unwillingness at the core of the regime to reconsider the position of the (speaking foreign language), a sort of absolute authority of the Supreme Leader over vast swaths of the State and the security forces and the judiciary.

And there is -- you know, other elements of the ideology are just fundamentally fixed at this point. And so unless there is a willingness on the part of a conservative front to rethink those core elements of the ideology I think reforms will continue to prove insufficient. The frustration is going to build up and the question is going to be, you know, can the Islamic Republic survive.

MR. BAHARI: And also it goes back to my recommendation of condemning violence. Because I think in order to persuade different regime members to jump ship and to reform themselves they have to have some assurance of no retaliation and no violence in the future. So I think it's only through peaceful nonviolent resistance that we can see some better future for Iran. And for that to happen we need some people within the regime to jump ship and to change their positions. With violence, when people call for the execution of the Revolutionary Guards or clerics, that cannot happen and that can be counterproductive.

MS. GLASSER: Suzanne, there was a piece that we ran in Politico magazine this week that said the Islamic Republic is doomed, and of course it was written by your husband. He made the point that the crackdown is inevitable more or less and that these cycles that we've seen of reform followed by reaction mean that the regime is incapable fundamentally of reforming itself. That seems to be sort of the question, is challenging that premise. Where do you come down on it?

MS. MALONEY: I've been in a different place than my husband, including right at this moment where he's speaking across town, and, you know, I think that -- I would say this, that at a time where many people in this town were comfortable with the conventional wisdom that the regime is stable, the country is consolidated, there isn't a real possibility of anything revolutionary taking place, there were people in this town who were in fact saying the opposite and they were often condemned as people who knew nothing about Iran, despite the fact that they have greater capabilities in that regard than they're often credited with. So I guess where I come down is fundamentally this, that I think we are seeing the end of a certain episode, the latest reform episode. I don't see how there is a different

strategy of kind of evolutionary change that satisfies Iranians at this time. I think it has to be some kind of transformation. Ideally, if we understand what Iranians as a whole broadly would prefer, it would be to some extent gradualist. But it has to be transformational. It can't be sort of biting around the edges. And fundamentally I don't think that that's consistent with the Islamic Republic as we know it today.

And so, you know, you think about Iran, Iran has this incredible young population, phenomenal resources, people who are well educated, literate, engaged with the world, this is a powerhouse country in every respect, except for the fact that it's led by a really problematic government. They've had these fundamental debates over the course of now at least two decades about the nature of power and about representative government. There's this 100 year history of push for accountable government. So there's a huge amount to be optimistic about with respect to Iran, but it hasn't born fruit under the Islamic Republic. The Islamic Republic has in many ways I think sacrificed so much of what could make Iran great again. And so, you know, I don't know that Iran will ever find a Nelson Mandela but it needs a political leadership than can help lead the country to a better future.

MS. GLASSER: All right. I think we have time for maybe one or two more questions.

MS. GOSS-ALEXANDER: Hi, Elise Goss-Alexander with the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. Maziar, you had brought up earlier some of the different layers that have fed into these protests, including some of the ethnic groups in the border provinces -- the Arabs and some of the Kurdish groups have weighed in as well, but we haven't really seen as much going on in like Sistan-Baluchestan.

I was wondering if you could just speak a little bit more about that aspect and how it's played in and why it hasn't sort of taken off more?

MR. BAHARI: To tell you the truth, I do not know why the demonstrations happened where they happened. I don't think that anyone has provided the answers because when we look at the map of demonstrations we don't see that many similarities

between different groups. And, yes, according to some people the demonstrators are poor and are the oppressed. There are no more poor or oppressed people than the people in Sistan-Baluchestan. We have seen demonstrations in Sistan-Baluchestan, sometimes we have seen violence by people in Sistan. But my guess is that because of the leadership of Molavi Abdolhamid, who is the spiritual leader of the Sunnis in that area, and many people respect Molavi Abdolhamid in that area, and Molavi Abdolhamid has been under a lot of pressure by the government and different intelligence apparatus in Iran. Maybe that has played a role. Maybe Molavi Abdolhamid has asked them not to come out and protest. That is the only reason I can provide. But it is a puzzling map when you look at it. People talk about unemployment, yes, there is a high rate of unemployment in all the cities where demonstrations has happened, but there are certain cities in Iran with higher rates of unemployment and we have not seen demonstrations in those cities.

MS. GLASSER: Okay. In the very back.

QUESTIONER: Thank you. My name is Tom Chiniak and I'm a graduate student at Georgetown University. Earlier we talked about how the protests had singled out Iranian support for what's happening in Syria, in Yemen, also in Iraq. To what extent do you think these current protests might actually case the regime to scale back their support and what might the implications be for their rivalry with Saudi Arabia?

MS. GLASSER: Good question.

MR. BAHARI: I think the Iranian government most probably again will stop bragging about its victories in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq. That is a really -- this bragging about their foreign involvement is a relatively new phenomenon. Up to ten years ago we did not hear much about the Quds Force, we did not know who is the commander of the Quds Force even. But it was only after their victories in Iraq and their alliances in Iraq that the Iranians started to talk about the extraterritorial involvement and especially in the past two years with the gain "victories" that they've had in Syria and sending troops, not only Iranian but also Afghan and Pakistani Shias to Syria to help the Assad regime, that they have started to brag

about this involvement.

I think they will scale back their publicity about that, but I don't think that they're going to scale back their real involvement in those countries. So I think we'll see less of Nasrallah and Hezbollah and the Shrine Defenders as they call the people who are in Syria, but I don't think that they're going to scale back their real support.

MS. MALONEY: I have the same speculation, which is that fundamentally Iran's regional activities have survived even at times of significant economic pressure. You didn't see Iran retrench from the region at the worst period of multilateral sanctions on Iran, so it isn't an expense that the State can't bear. They won't need to in any way shift their posture as a result of a need to move money and devote more resources to domestic priorities in the aftermath of these protests. I do think that the optics may change. And there are some studies -- Afshan Ostovar, who has done a wonderful book on the Revolutionary Guard, has suggested that there was a deliberate attempt to sort of publicize the victories over ISIS precisely because Iran -- like much of the rest of the world, including the United States -- was slow to pick up on what was happening with the development of this group. And Qasem Soleimani and the Guard needed to reestablish their own bona fides at home.

You know, the point is this is done on the cheap, not just financially, but also in terms of Iranian boots on the ground. There are a few hundred Iranians, at least by most estimates, on the ground in Syria, but commanding much larger forces that are drawn from Hezbollah, from Iraqi militias, and most interestingly these Shrine Defenders, the brigades of Afghan and Pakistani Shia who have been mobilized. And that has insulated the Iranian population to a greater extent from at least the casualties of war. But what's been happening recently is that, you know, there has been more publicity around and support for those non Iranians who are fighting these battles. And so there have been public funerals for Afghans who have been killed in Syria. Khamenei has embraced the families publicly, there has been a much more direct discussion about the support for those survivors of those who are killed in those actions. And I suspect what's happening will, as Maziar said, cause some kind of a



shift in the way that the leadership talks about these engagements.

MS. GLASSER: All right. I think we have time for one more question. So last question here, right here in the front.

MS. FAZEL: Hi, I'm Marina Fazel, an Afghan-American journalist, freelance. My question is about the role of the royal family of Iran. I heard you several times mention that the current protestors, although we can't precisely narrow down exactly what their motive might be, that we can say that they are poor and they have nothing left to lose. Yet I heard you say that there is an appeal now for -- some of the slogans were calling for members of the royal family. If that were to actually evolve further can you tell us whether you think that all of Iranian society would actually have an appetite for a return for a modern monarch?

MR. BAHARI: I can easily say that all of Iranian society does not have the appetite for (laughter) the royal monarchy's return. But there are some people who are nostalgic about the Pahlavi era. There are people who are nostalgic about the image that they have of the Shah's time and the fact that Iranians well respected around the country and many Iranians were well off. But of course that image is not accurate because there were many people who were not well off and there was a lot of suppression and oppression going on, otherwise we would have a revolution in 1979.

So I'm sure that either Reza Pahlavi, or whoever is part of the Pahlavi Dynasty, who is around has a role in the future of Iran. Like many other countries we've seen monarchs going back. But I don't think that the majority of Iranians want to return to pre-1979 revolution time and have a monarchy. At least that's not in the cards now.

MS. GLASSER: Suzanne, have you been surprised by this as an element of the slogans in this round?

MS. MALONEY: I think it came as a surprise surely to me. And that being said, you know, you could always find reservoirs of nostalgia, as Maziar said. Or just, in particular, Reza Shah, the founder of the Pahlavi Dynasty, always seemed to command a great deal of interest and respect among ordinary Iranians in the sense that he was someone

who was seen as the kind of father of the nation and also someone who managed to assert control at a time of chaos and threat. And to some Iranians the prospect of a kind of great man who could do the same at a similarly insecure time is appealing. I don't think that translates to any real prospects of any kind of a monarchy, but I do think that it underscores the slogans -- the fact that you've heard people chanting monarchist slogans underscores the sense that there is, at least among these current protests, some agreement about what they don't like, but very little positive agenda or forward agenda that they are aligned around. And that in many ways is parallel to what happened in the mobilization that led up to the 1979 revolution. There was a very clear sense of agreement among the revolutionaries about removing the Shah, there was no clear agreement about what would come next. And so if we ever get to a revolutionary period in Iran, and we're certainly not there yet, I think building that positive agenda is going to be a crucial factor to ensuring that there's any kind of a better future.

MR. BAHARI: I think that there is a sentiment among many Iranians to reject everything that this government stands for. That includes the Islamic Republic. So they want to return to the (inaudible), they reject Islam itself. Many people, there is a big movement towards Zoroastrianism, which is a pre Islamic religion in Iran. Many Iranians are becoming Zoroastrians, or they just are not religious anymore.

And also I think there is this image, but also I think another group that's involved in these protests is the MEK, the Mojahedin-e Khalq, that although I think it's a cult and I don't think they are capable of running anything, including the country, there is some support for them. And that is mainly the responsibility of the Iranian government because they killed so many of their members in the beginning of the revolution, maybe around 10,000 MEK members were killed. And imagine 10,000 families who have lost someone. And in many cases they were tortured to death, in many cases there was no court hearing for these people. And that has created resentment among many Iranians who have lost an MEK member among their family. And the government actually has pointed this out as well, that

among the people they have arrested there are some people whose relatives were executed. So add that to the list of grievances that the Iranians have as well.

MS. GLASSER: Well, I have to say I guess we'll have to reconvene this group a year from now at the beginning of the 40th anniversary of the revolution and see what the year brings for us.

But I want to thank both of you for starting us off in 2018 with a uniquely well timed conversation around some significant events that are happening inside Iran today.

MR. BAHARI: Thank you.

MS. GLASSER: And so thank you, Suzanne, thank you, Maziar, thank you to all of you.

MR. BAHARI: Thank you very much. (Applause)

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## CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

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Expires: November 30, 2020