

Regime Change and the Overall Campaign Against Iran

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The question of regime change in Iran has recently resurfaced in light of its weakening following the Israeli strike, the serious blow to the pro-Iranian axis—culminating in the collapse of the Assad regime—and the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States. This article argues that if Israel makes a strategic decision to promote regime change in Iran (regardless of its feasibility or the possible alternatives to the current regime), the means and methods for achieving this goal should be assessed according to two main criteria. The first is whether these means (which will not be discussed in this article) shift the balance of power between the Iranian regime and its opponents in favor of the latter. Second, is whether the measures used to achieve Israel's broader strategic objectives in its campaign against Iran—primarily containing its nuclear program—contribute to the goal of regime change or hinder it. In parallel, it is also essential to examine whether the means used to promote regime change would contribute to or delay the achievement of Israel's other strategic objectives. This is not a call for a passive or defensive approach toward Iran but rather a proposal to critically and pragmatically assess possible courses of action, choosing the most effective option with the least risk. In any case, Israel should avoid placing unrealistic hopes on regime change in Iran as the ultimate solution to all the threats posed by the Islamic Republic, particularly its ongoing nuclearization.

A series of recent developments has once again reopened the question of regime change in Iran. The Israeli strike on October 26, 2024, which damaged Iran's air defense system and ballistic missile production capabilities—along with the severe blow to the pro-Iranian axis in the region, particularly the weakening of Hezbollah and the collapse of the Assad regime—has led some in Israel to see an opportunity to leverage the Islamic Republic's growing weakness to push for regime change. The Iranian regime is already facing intensifying internal challenges, primarily an [economic crisis](#) and one of [legitimacy](#). Furthermore, the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States and the new American administration's expected return to the policy of maximum pressure on Iran also create an opportunity to weaken the regime in Tehran. This is despite the recent [statement](#) by Brian Hook, who was the Iran envoy in Trump's previous administration, that the Trump administration does not seek to change the regime in Iran, only to weaken it. The ongoing debate over [regime change](#) in Iran is largely based on the assessment that the only way to change the Iranian regime's harmful policies is to replace it. The current regime is unlikely to abandon its ideological

conceptions, renounce its hostility toward Israel and the United States, or relinquish its ambitions to expand its regional influence and acquire nuclear weapons.

The journalist Amos Harel recently [reported](#) that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had begun briefing journalists about a “golden window of opportunity” that has now emerged “to take care of” the Iranian nuclear program and perhaps also to overthrow the regime in Tehran. Journalist Shirit Avitan Cohen [quoted](#) sources in Israel who believe that those within President Trump’s circle are preparing plans to overthrow the Iranian regime. Knesset Member Amit Halevi from the Likud Party, who is a member of the Knesset’s Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, [stated](#) on the night of the Israeli strike on Iran that the objectives of the campaign must be clear—“the overthrow of the little ayatollah regime in Lebanon and the big one in Iran.” Calls to promote regime change in Iran have recently been heard outside the political system. Jacob Nagel and Mark Dubowitz [argued](#) that Israel cannot stand idly by and settle for merely deterring Iran but must instead shift to a proactive offense to overthrow the Iranian regime. They wrote that Israel has now been given an opportunity to do so, thanks to the election of a supportive administration in Washington. Similarly, the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) [recommended](#) overthrowing the regime in Iran through American support “for the secular ethnic groups that oppose the ayatollah regime,” while Zvi Yehezkeli, the Arab affairs correspondent of I24NEWS, [argued](#) that the Israeli strike on Iran marked the beginning of a broader campaign aimed at overthrowing the regime in Tehran. “The Iranian people have been waiting 40 years for the regime’s overthrow. I think that it’s even simpler than attacking the nuclear facilities. Don’t forget that the Iranian people are not a single entity; they are composed of many different groups, some of whom would be very happy to see the regime fall,” Yehezkeli surmised.

The primary objective of this article is to propose guiding principles for discussing the issue of regime change in Iran. It will not discuss the various political-diplomatic, economic, informational-cognitive, military, intelligence, and other means and methods available to Israel and the international community for promoting regime change in Iran. Instead, it will outline basic principles by which these means and methods should be assessed as part of Israel’s overall campaign against Iran.

Is It Possible and Advisable to Overthrow the Regime in Iran?

Two main issues underlie the discussion of regime change in Iran: the chances of regime change via external foreign interference and whether the alternative to the existing regime is preferable to the current situation. In his book [*Losing the Long Game: The False Promise of Regime Change in the Middle East*](#), Philip Gordon, a diplomat, researcher of international relations, and national security advisor to former US Vice President Kamala Harris, discusses at length the opportunities and risks of American intervention in promoting regime change in the Middle East. Gordon’s [primary argument](#) is that although it would be preferable for the United States if many countries in the region were governed by different leaders and regimes, the question is not whether it should seek such changes but whether active measures aimed at undermining or overthrowing existing regimes could advance US interests in the region or harm them. Gordon, who examines dozens of cases of American diplomatic, economic, and

military interventions in the Middle East since the 1950s, concludes that the United States has failed to achieve its desired results in the vast majority of cases where it promoted regime change. According to Gordon, historical experience proves that only local forces can bring about effective regime change, while foreign intervention generally tends to achieve undesirable results.

Gordon also [addresses](#) the claim that former US President Ronald Reagan's policy toward the Soviet Union in the 1980s led to its collapse and therefore should serve as a model for the desired strategy toward Iran. He argues that while ideological confrontations, sanctions, and military buildup by the United States indeed played a role in containing the Soviet Union and its ultimate collapse, regime change was never set as an American strategic objective toward Moscow. All American leaders since World War II recognized the need to acknowledge the existence of the Soviet regime and contain the Soviet Union by maintaining significant military capabilities, establishing strong alliances in Europe and Asia, demonstrating the superiority of the capitalist and democratic order, and patiently waiting for the Soviet leadership to realize that its system was failing and required change. Thus, the collapse of the Soviet Union did not result from an American policy aimed at regime change.

Moreover, while President Reagan strongly condemned the Soviet "evil empire" and opposed policies of appeasement toward Moscow, his strategy actually reflected the need to manage the conflict with the Soviet Union for the foreseeable future. He did not seek to overthrow the Soviet regime and even demonstrated a willingness to engage in dialogue with it despite the internal repression in the Soviet Union and its expanding influence abroad. Reagan also aimed to improve relations starting in early 1983, even before Mikhail Gorbachev's leadership, and his approach toward Moscow remained unchanged even after the Soviet Union shot down a South Korean airliner in September 1983. Gordon's arguments are reinforced by researchers Simon Miles and Farzan Sabet, who [refute](#) the thesis that American policy based solely on pressure led to the collapse of the Soviet Union. They argue that while the Reagan administration increased pressure on the Soviet Union, it simultaneously showed a willingness to engage in dialogue with its leaders and ease the tensions between the two countries. For Reagan, applying pressure was just one component of a comprehensive policy that combined diplomatic, economic, and military measures.

The international relations scholar Benjamin Denison has also [shown](#) that most of the US attempts to bring about successful regime change around the world since the end of the Cold War have failed. According to data published in the [Washington Post](#), 40 out of the 66 covert operations initiated by the United States between 1947 and 1989 to achieve regime change were unsuccessful, while 26 led to the establishment of a pro-American government. Denison argues that even in cases where American foreign intervention led to regime change, it often resulted in civil wars, growing internal opposition to the new regime that came to power due to foreign intervention, and ongoing instability. Denison contends that regime change should not be seen as a quick and easy solution for significant transformation with minimal investment of resources and effort. On the contrary, efforts to change regimes often fail to achieve the desired objectives, especially when they are not accompanied by a long-term, resource-intensive process of institution building after the regime's overthrow. Except for

exceptional cases, such as Germany and Japan after World War II, external regime change operations generally increase insecurity, further undermine the possibility of promoting democratization, and sometimes lead to severe humanitarian consequences. It should be emphasized that the American experience in regime change is not necessarily comparable to Israel, which does not possess the same capabilities and resources as the United States. Furthermore, Israel itself has negative experiences with foreign interventions for regime change, including the First Lebanon War and the considerable efforts to overthrow the Hamas regime in the Gaza Strip over the past year.

Furthermore, even researchers who are skeptical of externally driven operations to promote regime change do not claim that they are always destined to fail, but rather that they do not lead to the desired results. This raises another question: whether regime change in Iran is desirable for Israel, given the possibility that the alternative could be worse. Naturally, the results of political change are unpredictable. Such was the case in Egypt, for example, when the Muslim Brotherhood seized power after the Tahrir Revolution in 2011. Prime Minister Netanyahu himself erred in his assessments when he claimed in a [speech](#) before the US Congress in September 2002, as part of his efforts to convince the United States to go to war in Iraq, that if Saddam Hussein and his regime were eliminated, this would have “enormous positive reverberations on the region.” It can be argued that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) could exploit the collapse of the Iranian regime to take control of the country’s institutions and establish a military regime. In any case, the regime’s collapse does not guarantee the establishment of a democratic system, as there is no assurance that the democratic forces (whether within Iran or among the Iranian opposition in exile) have the ability and means to establish a democratic regime.

Nevertheless, from Israel’s perspective, a military regime led by the IRGC is not necessarily worse than the current theocratic regime under Ali Khamenei. Military rule by the IRGC could be even more autocratic, aggressive, and radical than the current regime. Many former members of the IRGC, especially veterans of the Iran–Iraq War, who had almost no exposure to Western education and influence, [identify with Iran’s hardline conservative camp](#). In terms of foreign policy, they often adopt a hawkish, nationalist, and defiant stance toward the West, based on the belief that the West is in decline and that Iran must pursue an assertive policy in striving for regional influence and even international power. This position could influence Iran’s foreign policy on key issues, including the nuclear program, its regional aspirations, and its attitude toward the United States, its Arab allies, and Israel.

Conversely, it can be argued that the IRGC may be more committed to its organizational interests than to ideological considerations and revolutionary ideals. Moreover, the IRGC, which is not monolithic, could be more susceptible to internal power struggles and conflicts than the current regime, which generally has a relatively high degree of internal cohesion. Studies on the third wave of democratization in Latin America in the 1980s [show](#) that military-led regimes tend to be less stable than other authoritarian regimes. They are more vulnerable to economic crises because their leaders are trained for military objectives rather than civilian governance, and they are prone to factionalism and divisions among officers, especially in times of crisis. These weaknesses often lead them to agree to a structured transition of power

to civilian-democratic institutions; alternatively, their ineffective governance strengthens popular opposition, ultimately bringing about political change. In any case, even if it cannot be guaranteed that Iran's next regime will be better than the current one, this does not negate the need for a thorough examination of regime change as a possible—and perhaps even preferable—solution, given the various threats posed by the Islamic regime to Israel, the region, and the international community.

Guiding Principles for Discussing Regime Change in Iran

If Israel makes a strategic decision to pursue regime change in Iran—whether through military and/or overt actions, or by soft and/or covert means—the means and methods intended to achieve this goal should be assessed according to two main criteria. The first is whether these means can shift the balance of power between the Iranian regime and its opponents in favor of the latter. The second is whether the measures used to achieve Israel's overarching strategic objectives in the overall and vital campaign against Iran—primarily preventing or at least delaying Iran's nuclear program, weakening the pro-Iranian regional axis, and curbing Iran's military buildup—could advance the objective of regime change or, conversely, delay it. In parallel, it should be considered whether the means used to advance the goal of regime change would promote or inhibit the fulfillment of the other overarching goals regarding Iran. Given a contradiction between advancing the objective of regime change and promoting Israel's other objectives, Israel would need, in certain cases, to prioritize between them.

Shifting the Balance of Power Between the Regime and Its Opponents

Deep-rooted social processes and increasing internal and external pressures pose a serious challenge to the Iranian regime, potentially endangering its status and even its stability in the long run. However, [the balance of power between the regime and the protest movement](#) still favors the regime. Despite its difficulties, the regime retains several key strengths that enable it to withstand these challenges for the time being.

First, the regime wields significant and effective means of violent repression. Second, it continues to enjoy substantial support from the security and law enforcement apparatus, primarily the IRGC, which remains loyal to and dependent on it. A turning point could occur if some security forces were to refuse to participate in suppression efforts. In addition, at this stage, the ruling political elite successfully maintains internal cohesion despite political disagreements. Unlike the elite of the Shah, which had close relations with the West and could find political and economic asylum outside of Iran, the ruling elite of the Islamic Republic has no option but to fight to stay in power. Third, the regime still benefits from the active or passive support of various social groups, some of whom are ideologically loyal to it, while others are economically dependent on it.

In contrast to the regime's strengths, the protest movement has several major weaknesses. First, it has not yet succeeded in mobilizing a critical mass of demonstrators. Even at the height of the protests in 2022–2023, hundreds of thousands of people participated at most—compared to the millions who took part in the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Moreover, most of the protests have remained localized, with no national-level leadership or significant coordination between different sectors involved in the movement. Despite the occasional

participation of workers' representatives, such as contract workers in the oil industry and bazaar merchants, the protest movement has struggled to coordinate its various focal points around the country and paralyze vital economic sectors, such as the oil industry, as was the case during the Islamic Revolution. Furthermore, a nationwide social coalition, which is a necessary condition for advancing political change in Iran, has yet to emerge.

Regime change in Iran is possible only by changing the balance of power between those advocating for revolutionary change in the political status quo and those determined to maintain it at any cost. This process could lead to the gradual erosion of the regime until its eventual collapse, as its surrounding circles lose confidence in its vitality and its ability to use repression effectively to ensure its survival over time. A shift in the balance of power may be achieved by undermining the cohesion of the regime's institutions and the security-military elite that supports it, or by strengthening the protest movement both quantitatively (increasing the number of demonstrators) and qualitatively (establishing a broad cross-sector coalition). Therefore, any course of action aimed at promoting regime change should be assessed realistically in terms of how it strengthens or weakens those seeking change and those opposing it.

To clarify the issue, two examples will be presented: support for ethnic-linguistic minorities and the supply of weapons to regime opponents. Iran's ethnic minorities undoubtedly pose a challenge to the Islamic Republic, especially given their claims of deliberate discrimination and marginalization by the central government. The issue of ethnic minorities in Iran has been sensitive for years and sometimes fuels protests and even violent conflicts in minority-populated regions. Violent conflict intermittently erupts in the provinces of Khuzestan, Sistan and Baluchestan, and Kurdistan between the Iranian authorities and underground separatist organizations.

Therefore, supporting these minorities could weaken the regime and force it to contend with increasing instability in peripheral regions inhabited mainly by minority groups. However, despite the deep differences between the various ethnic groups, Iran has existed as a distinct political and cultural entity for centuries—unlike the Arab nation-states of the Middle East, whose borders were largely shaped by Western powers after World War I. Moreover, the historical development of ethnic minorities, their religious affiliation (Sunni or Shiite), and their level of integration into Iranian society greatly reduce the threat they pose to Iran's national cohesion. Over the years, members of minority groups have even held high-ranking positions, including Supreme Leader Khamenei (who is half Azeri on his father's side), President Pezeshkian (half Azeri and half Kurdish), former prime minister and leader of the reformist opposition, Mir Hossein Moussavi (Azeri), and former secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Ali Shamkhani (Arab). Furthermore, among the Iranian public—especially among members of the dominant Persian majority—there is a constant fear of undermining Iran's territorial integrity and the potential for fragmentation. As a result, any external attempt to encourage [ethnic separatism](#) within Iran is often seen as harmful and can be exploited by the authorities to rally the population around the national flag.

Similarly, supplying weapons to the regime's opponents could lead to undesirable outcomes. Some Iranians still fear that revolutionary change could lead to political chaos. Such instability could be exploited by radical elements in the IRGC and the political system or by foreign actors, primarily the United States, to impose an alternative political order on Iran that does not necessarily align with the desires of its citizens. The experience of the Arab Spring reinforced the perception that stability and gradual change are sometimes preferable to political upheaval, the results of which are unpredictable. Fear of escalating violence and chaos was particularly evident during the wave of protests in late 2017 and early 2018 when many citizens disapproved of incidents involving the destruction of public property and the use of violence. A social media campaign was even launched at that time under the slogan "[Iran is not Syria](#)," warning demonstrators against escalating the situation to the point of civil war.

However, the fall of the regime in Syria has led to a reassessment of this perception. Iranian journalist and human rights activist Mehdi Mahmoudian [addressed](#) fears among regime critics about a revolutionary change that might lead to political chaos. In an opinion piece published after the collapse of Assad's regime, Mahmoudian argued that the events in Syria proved that fears of Iran becoming another Syria or descending into civil war and fragmentation in the event of regime change were overblown. He contended that Syria's prolonged civil war and the country's deterioration into chaos resulted from foreign intervention and Assad's continued opposition to vital reforms and an orderly transfer of power. Therefore, there is no need to fear regime change in Iran or its transformation into another Syria, as the fear of the regime's collapse only exacerbates the situation.

Nonetheless, it can be assumed that the Iranian public still has concerns about destabilization in the country leading to chaos. To a large extent, the key to political change in Iran lies in mobilizing the "[silent majority](#)" within Iran—those who are dissatisfied with the authorities' conduct and sympathize with the young people's demands for change but, at the same time, reject calls from radical circles, especially outside of Iran, to violently overthrow the regime. After the 2022 protests, Iranian sociologist and journalist Hamidreza Jalaeipour [claimed](#) that the attempt to transform the protests from a civil movement into a movement for regime change, encouraged by media outlets outside Iran, had failed because many Iranians refused to join a violent revolutionary movement. According to Jalaeipour, a large portion of the public is dissatisfied with the country but is hostile toward the radical opposition, which is composed of monarchical or terrorist organizations based abroad.

Moreover, the intensification of the regime's security challenges could lead to increased efforts by the Iranian authorities to suppress [political and civil dissent](#). Along with the growing pressure on Iran and the widening gap between the authorities and the general public—especially the younger generation—in recent years, there has been a trend of increasing autocratization of the regime, particularly since the conservatives took control of all the main power centers in Iran following the election of former president Ebrahim Raisi in June 2021. In the absence of solutions to the fundamental problems facing the Islamic Republic, the regime has intensified its political and civil repression as part of its efforts to neutralize potential threats to its stability. Although over time, these measures may deepen the gap

between the regime and its citizens and strengthen radicalization trends among the population, at least in the short term, they help the authorities cope with internal challenges.

Regime Change and the Overall Campaign Against Iran

Iran's advancement to the threshold of military nuclear capability; its acquisition of sophisticated weapons systems, including long-range missiles and drones; its regional entrenchment; and its ongoing support for terrorist organizations, primarily Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Palestinian Islamic organizations—even after the serious blow they suffered during the war in the past year—pose a strategic threat to Israel's national security. This threat continues to spark extensive discussion on the [appropriate Israeli strategy toward Iran](#). Israel's ongoing campaign against Iran necessitates an examination of whether the tools being used in the overall campaign against the Islamic Republic, especially against the nuclear program, align with the goal of regime change in Iran.

In this context, three examples will be provided: the possible consequences of a military strike on Iran, increasing the economic pressure on Iran, and exacerbating the instability within Iran. Some, including staunch critics of the regime, [argue](#) that an Israeli attack on Iran (whether targeting the nuclear facilities alone or, to an even greater extent, critical national infrastructure) could [cause the Iranian public to](#) rally around the flag and strengthen the regime's internal cohesion. This claim can be questioned, given [the ongoing erosion of Iranian public trust](#) in state institutions and the regime's legitimacy, which raises doubts about its ability to mobilize public support, as it has done, to some extent, in past national crises, including external threats. However, if the assessment is correct that a significant Israeli strike on Iran would indeed rally the public around the regime, then it is worth considering whether such an action—although potentially necessary in certain future circumstances—could strengthen the regime and thus weaken the chances of its downfall. We can assume that if Iran decides to pursue a nuclear breakout, Israel will seek to prevent it, even at the cost of delaying regime change, at least in the short term. Thus, achieving the goal of preventing Iranian nuclearization is not necessarily compatible with efforts to promote regime change.

Increasing economic pressure on Iran through sanctions is another example of a possible discrepancy between advancing the goal of regime change and the objective of inhibiting the nuclear program. It is difficult to overstate the importance of the economic sanctions on Iran. Sanctions played a key role in Iran's decision to return to the negotiating table in 2012. However, this decision was also influenced by the Obama administration's agreement to recognize, for the first time, Iran's right to enrich uranium, as well as Iran's considerable nuclear progress by that time. This progress enabled it to temporarily freeze some of its nuclear activity without abandoning its strategic nuclear aspirations. Still, we cannot ignore the [problematic consequences](#) of sanctions on the potential for regime change in Iran, as they have played a [role](#) in widening the socioeconomic gaps, reversing democratization and political and economic liberalization processes, and strengthening conservative and reactionary forces.

For example, a [study](#) published in July 2024 by two senior economists revealed that the Iranian middle class contracted by 88% between 2012 and 2019 due to the impact of Western

sanctions. The ongoing erosion of the middle class—considered the backbone of movements for political and social change in Iran—has negative implications for the prospects of political change. The worsening economic crisis has forced citizens, including the middle class, to focus on the daily struggle for survival and has prevented them from engaging in the fight for freedom. Iranian economist Mousa Ghaninejad [referred to](#) the absence of the urban middle class from some waves of protests over the past decade and claimed that the improved economic situation in the 1990s allowed the middle class to make political demands, whereas the worsening economic crisis has compelled them to focus on improving their economic situation instead.

The worsening economic crisis in Iran, caused in part by the impact of the sanctions, also negatively affects the ability of Iranian workers to join prolonged strikes during waves of protests. During the 2022 protests, [researchers](#) Esfandiyar Batmanghelidj and Zep Kalb attributed many workers' reluctance to join the protest movement and organize effective strikes—as workers did during the Islamic Revolution—to their economic woes. Most workers cannot afford to strike and delay their wages or risk losing their jobs because, lacking significant savings, they are completely dependent on their salaries for their livelihood. Moreover, the two researchers pointed out that the economic sanctions on Iran limit the ability of Iranians living abroad to send money to their family members and friends in Iran by bank transfers, which would provide them with an alternative—albeit temporary—source of income. A possible partial solution to this issue could be the establishment of a foreign-funded strike fund that would sustain strikers' livelihoods during outbreaks of protests and strikes.

At the same time, the economic sanctions have contributed to the growing [economic involvement](#) of the IRGC. While the lifting of sanctions after the signing of the nuclear deal in the summer of 2015 provided an opportunity for foreign companies to enter the Iranian economy—potentially threatening the economic interests of the IRGC and exposing the Iranian public to Western influences—their reinstatement after President Trump's withdrawal from the nuclear deal largely thwarted former President Rouhani's efforts to reduce the IRGC's economic involvement. This trend further strengthened the IRGC, which has significantly expanded its influence in recent decades, and accelerated the militarization of the Iranian state. It is evident, therefore, that while economic sanctions can sometimes serve as an effective measure in pressuring the regime into making concessions on the nuclear issue, they can inhibit the prospects of political change in Iran. Such change depends on the middle class's ability to overcome its weaknesses and form alliances with other social forces, such as the working class.

Another possible contradiction between preventing Iranian nuclearization and promoting regime change is the potential impact of instability in Iran on the regime's decisions regarding the future of its nuclear program. Ensuring the regime's ability to withstand internal and external threats is a top priority of the Islamic Republic and a central factor shaping its security concept. Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, has declared on numerous occasions that Iran's enemies—primarily the United States—seek to overthrow the regime by supporting its domestic opponents and regional adversaries and by exerting political, economic, and military pressure. This perception of threat greatly influences Iran's security strategy, which aims to

prevent significant threats to its borders and to its territorial integrity, sovereignty, and national security. As part of this doctrine, Khamenei views military nuclear threshold capability as a crucial “insurance policy” for the regime’s survival. In the past, he [cited](#) Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi’s agreement to dismantle his country’s nuclear program in 2003—which ultimately did not prevent his overthrow with Western assistance—as proof of Iran’s justified refusal to submit to Western demands. It can therefore be argued that the growing insecurity within the Iranian regime—particularly in the face of widespread protests, let alone foreign intervention—could further amplify the growing chorus of voices in Iran calling for a reassessment of its nuclear strategy. This could lead to abandoning the nuclear threshold status in favor of a full nuclear breakout, which would provide Iran with the ultimate guarantee for the regime’s survival.

Conclusion

Over the years, various [assessments](#) in Israel and the West have predicted the impending collapse of the Iranian regime. Such predictions have proliferated in recent years amid increasing pressure on the Islamic Republic and more frequent displays of public unrest. Exiled opposition groups have also [declared](#) the imminent demise of the Iranian regime. The overthrow of the Islamic regime is a desirable goal not only for the State of Israel, the region, and the West but, most importantly, for the citizens of Iran. However, it largely depends on factors beyond Israel’s control and on a possible trigger that remains uncertain in both timing and likelihood.

The growing internal challenges facing the Iranian regime could offer new opportunities for the West, including Israel, to promote political change in Iran. In 2009, the Obama administration refrained from offering practical support to the protests, partly out of fear of marking the reformist opposition as US collaborators. However, it is doubtful whether such American intervention would have led to different results, given that the protest movement and its leaders at the time did not aim for a full-scale political revolution. This contrasts with recent waves of protests, which, to a large extent, have sought to undermine the existing political order. That said, it is unclear whether active Western intervention at present could effectively shift the balance of power in favor of the regime’s opposition. The prospects for comprehensive political change in Iran seem to depend mainly on developments within Iran itself, over which the West has limited influence. At most, the West can continue efforts to promote initiatives that provide Iran’s citizens with free communication and access to information, publicly express solidarity with protesters to boost their morale, and prepare in various ways for the day when millions of Iranian citizens go out into the streets and require all possible assistance.

It is important to emphasize that this does not mean adopting a passive or defensive stance that focuses solely on deterring Iran while avoiding proactive measures to undermine the Iranian regime’s stability over time. Israel should formulate an up-to-date strategy toward Iran that reflects the changing regional reality while leveraging the new opportunities that have emerged in recent months. This strategy could include a series of both covert and overt measures to delay, undermine, and counter Iran’s ability to pose multiple threats to Israel’s

national security. However, Israel would do well to critically assess its available courses of action and adopt those with a higher likelihood of success and fewer risks. In addition, Israel should prioritize its objectives within its overall campaign against Iran to ensure that the measures it employs serve its ultimate goals, even if they are less ambitious than the goal of overthrowing the regime. In any case, Israel should refrain from pinning false hopes on regime change in Iran. Even if Israel has not yet succeeded in satisfactorily addressing some of the threats posed by Iran—above all, its ongoing and accelerated nuclearization—regime change should not be seen as the ultimate solution to these threats.

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