

Defiance of Arms vs. Defiance of Will

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I want to thank the American Enterprise Institute for having me here today.

Today I hope to lay out both the problems and the solutions to addressing gaps in US policy and the role of the international community to address, what I consider to be, one of our most imminent threat today.

I titled my speech “Defiance of Arms vs. Defiance of Will”. *Defiance* is an important word, suggesting either an act of bold resistance to further a just cause or an act of disobedience and rebellious disregard for rules and standards.

I would suggest that defiance is a word to sum up Iran. The regime’s rebellious disregard for human rights and global security is a defiance that should not be tolerated. The Iranian people’s bold resistance of the regime’s dictatorial disregard for democracy and human rights is a moral defiance for truth and justice. As we witnessed in the Polish

Solidarity movement, the defiance of the people eventually cracked the defiance of the government.

And that is why a two-track approach to the crisis in Iran is needed: an approach that challenges the regime externally, and an approach that challenges the regime internally. The US has a strong role to play in both and neither should be forfeited for the other. They are independently important, but vitally connected.

Earlier this week in his State of the Union address, the President of the United States spoke to the people of Iran. He said: “America respects you, and we respect your country. We respect your right to choose your own future and win your own freedom.”

I’d like to add something to the President’s stirring call. Yes, America respects the people of Iran, and we respect your right to choose your future. But we must do more to help you be able to exercise that right.

This year, the United States will spend \$10 million supporting political reform for Iran. Last year, we spent \$3 million. Lest you think I am boasting about this number, make no mistake: I am not.

Just for comparison sake, the United States spent \$10 million on planetariums in the US last year.

Let's review the threat. Since coming to power in a bloody revolution 26 years ago, the Islamic Republic has steadily eroded the rights of the Iranian people. Women's rights are a thing of the past. Freedom of expression is almost unknown except on anonymous web sites. Student leaders opposed to the regime have been imprisoned under brutal conditions.

But it's not just vocal opponents of the regime who have suffered. There are plenty of disturbing indicators that Iran is moving backwards. Unemployment is close to 30 percent. University presidents have been replaced wholesale to install regime yes-men. Iran's once robust intellectual life is under constant assault. President Ahmadinejad has even banned western music.

Union members – not democracy activists – are being imprisoned for their activities. Just yesterday, five hundred unionists, drivers and other workers of the United Bus Company of Teheran, who were arrested during a bus strike on Saturday, 28th of January, and transferred to the notorious Evin Prison, reportedly began a collective hunger strike.

In a statement published yesterday, the Syndicate called for another bus strike today. Why are they protesting? They are demanding the immediate release of all 700 jailed unionists, drivers and other employees of the United Bus Company of Tehran, as well as their wives and their children.

Why are people striking? They're not being paid; they are being denied basic rights. Rights are for the leadership in Iran, not the people.

Anecdotally, we hear that corruption in Iran is staggering, with most mullahs and petty bureaucrat on the take. Money is in Europe; it is probably in the United States; for the Iranian leaders who have been on the take for years. This is money that has been

stolen from the Iranian people. Twenty-six years ago, the Iranian people shed blood to rid themselves of a corrupt and autocratic leader. And what has replaced him? A regime that is far worse.

While Iranians are suffering at home, stifled without economic opportunity, the regime is frittering away hundreds of millions of dollars on supporting terrorist groups like Hezbollah and on anti-Semitic propaganda campaigns. Sounds like Germany in the 1930s.

While Iranians are suffering at home, the Iranian regime is funneling money to political parties and militias in Iraq, seeking to replicate its own brand of Islamic dictatorship next door. They're also using that money and the arms it buys to try to kill coalition soldiers.

While Iranians are suffering at home, the regime is spending hundreds of millions on arms, longer and longer range missiles and a nuclear program that does not serve the interests of the Iranian people. Iranians are not short of energy, and they're not short of oil. The statistics make that abundantly clear: According to the CIA, Iran produces

approximately 3.9 million barrels of oil per day, consumes 1.4 million barrels per day, and exports 2.5 million barrels per day. If Iran was hard up for energy, surely it would consume more than one-third of what it produces.

And just in case you suspected they were worried about the future, consider that the growth rate of oil production in Iran is estimated at 10% annually, while the growth rate of consumption is only 4 percent. Beyond the basic analysis of Iran's energy rich resources, The Energy Information Agency has conducted research which has determined that it would not be cost effective for Iran to develop nuclear power.

Let's face it: The suspicions on the International Atomic Energy Agency, United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia and China are not wrong. Iran is using its peaceful nuclear program as a cover for its illegal weapons program. These tyrants are hiding behind their rights under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to develop nuclear weapons.

Some people have suggested that even a different regime in Iran would want nuclear energy or even nuclear weapons. We should address that problem. If a law

abiding and peaceful Iran wants to live by the rules, then the United States should accept that. There is no bar on a peaceful nuclear energy program. I suspect that a peaceful Iran would not be interested in nuclear weapons; I hope they would not be.

But the mullahs and their henchmen in Iran are not interested in a peaceful nuclear program. They are interested in nuclear weapons. They want those weapons for several reasons: First and foremost, the regime wishes to intimidate all who might threaten their stranglehold on power. Second, they want to assume what they believe to be their rightful place, dominating the entire Middle East. Finally, there is reason to suspect that they could use nuclear weapons against the United States or our democratic allies in the Middle East, Israel in particular.

Ayatollah Khomeini called on “[e]very Muslim...to prepare himself for battle against Israel.” His successor Ayatollah Khamenei described Israel as a “cancerous tumor” in the Middle East and called for its destruction. A few months ago, President Ahmadinejad speaking at a conference titled, “A World Without Zionism,” appealed to his audience to “wipe Israel off the map.” He followed these comments a few weeks

later by expressing doubt about the Holocaust and defending his earlier condemnation of Israel.

Is there a reason we should not take these threats seriously? Is there a reason that any leader should threaten to eradicate another nation and be ignored?

It sounds absurd to suggest that any nation would invite its own destruction by using such weapons. But this is a special regime, and its irrational hatred of Israel and the Jewish people knows no bounds.

So now we come full circle back to the United States and the rest of the world. We have not sat idly by. The United States has worked with enormous determination to ensure that Iran is referred to the United Nations Security Council by the International Atomic Energy Agency. That will happen tomorrow, and we'll have to see whether concerted action by the permanent five members of the Security Council will bring Ahmadinejad to reason.

But this Iranian government even without nuclear weapons is still the world's foremost sponsor of terror and a vicious tyrant to its own people. We must do more. And we can -- which brings me back to our \$10 million.

First and foremost, we must appropriate enough money to start the job. I am calling for the appropriation of \$100 million this year to support democracy and human rights in Iran.

How can we use the money effectively? First, we must support independent human rights groups inside Iran which maintain internationally recognized human rights standards. I have urged my colleagues to provide financial and political assistance to entities that support human rights and democracy. Eligibility should be contingent on individuals and groups who officially oppose the use of terrorism, support adherence to nonproliferation regimes, and are dedicated to democratic values and human rights.

Last year the United States increased democracy and human rights funds by over \$200 million. We increased funds to the National Endowment for Democracy by 35%. We added the new account, titled the Democracy Fund at \$175 million. We earmarked

\$50 million for democracy and human rights in Egypt, which will for the first time, actually to be used to build democracy.

But the Congress has been able to secure only a small amount of funding over the last several years for democracy and human rights in Iran. We've moved from securing \$1 million in the FY2004 Foreign Operations Bill, to \$3 million in the FY2005 bill and close to \$10 million in last year's Appropriations bill. Much more is needed for such an important task of peace

Some suggest that Iranians will be afraid to come to us for support. That may be true and they may pay in Evin prison if they are caught working with the United States. But that doesn't mean we should give up; it means we must work creatively to find funding mechanisms and in kind support for Iranians who want to do the right thing. It means we must stand up for those who are imprisoned and we can do that.

We need a regional human rights dialogue with Iran that is modeled on the Helsinki process by engaging countries in the region. The Helsinki process was one of

the tools that brought human rights to the Soviet Empire. We must engage the world in bringing a better future to the Iranian people.

I call on the Secretary of State to appoint a special envoy for human rights in Iran within the Department who can coordinate and promote efforts to improve the respect for the fundamental human rights of the people of Iran by working with the UN, EU and regional entities, consult with NGOs, and coordinate with other appropriate offices.

Then, we must push aggressively in international organizations. We have worked well within the International Atomic Energy Agency. Now let's ensure that we do the same in the United Nations and at the World Bank. I am betting that few Americans realize that the Iranian regime is among the top ten borrowers of the World Bank. Over the last three years, Iran has received more than \$1.1 billion from the Bank, more than half in the last year.

And the #1 bankroller of the World Bank?? Yes, it is the United States. The World Bank must stop lending to the Tehran regime until they renounce terrorism and stop pursuing nuclear weapons.

We should also make it a top priority to help the people of Iran achieve a free press, and assist programs that effectively communicate democratic ideals to the Iranian people as an essential means of fostering change.

Our own US broadcasting services should work on programming in consultation with Iranian-Americans, Iranians inside the country and other reformers that have recently fostered change through the Orange Revolution, the Rose Revolution, and the Cedar Revolution to ensure that programming is devoted to discussing democratic change. We should be working to create satellite broadcasting networks, websites, and distribute translated books, videos and other documents on democracy and human rights. And the US should take a leading role in imposing diplomatic or economic sanctions on foreign nations or entities that assist the government of Iran in jamming, blocking, or preventing free transmission of US government radio and TV broadcasts into Iran.

These steps aren't dramatic. It just requires the will to take the promises of the President of the United States and the pleas of the people of Iran and do something.

When the words “regime change” are uttered around Washington, there is a silence that fills most rooms. But we must not be constrained by words that actually promote liberty, equality and justice. Regime change can happen from within, and I am confident that the Iranian people can champion their future.

As we remember the life of Coretta Scott King this week, we are reminded of the peaceful civil rights movement that blossomed in the United States. Freedom is not an American birthright. There are people with King’s courage the world over. They need our help. The time for pretty words is past. This is a matter of urgency, of morality and of national security. Thank you.