NUFDI
NATIONAL UNION FOR DEMOCRACY IN IRAN



THE IRAN CONFERENCE 2024 SUMMARY

SEPTEMBER 26-27, 2024
WASHINGTON, D.C.

INSTITUTIONS REPRESENTED AT THE IRAN CONFERENCE 2024













































Speakers at the Iran Conference expressed their own views, not those of the institutions with which they are affiliated.

OPENING REMARKS FROM NUFDI PRESIDENT & CEO

Dr. Saeed Ganji



Dear friends,

I would like to thank our supporters, speakers, and our esteemed Board of Directors and Advisory Council for their work in making the third annual Iran Conference a reality. Most importantly, I would like to thank our dedicated and tireless team.

In preparation for the conference, I was speaking to a partner at a top Washington law firm who works with many organizations like ours and his response struck me. He said, "The NUFDI team works harder than anyone I know in the nonprofit world." He's right and I'm incredibly proud to call them my colleagues.

> *This year, again. The Iran Conference gathered a remarkable group of experts on Iran. Together, they provided invaluable insights into Iran's role on the international stage and offered perspectives on how this role could transform after the fall of the current regime.*

For far too long, both Democratic and Republican administrations in the U.S. have sought to deal with the ayatollahs, hoping that diplomacy or concessions would lead to a change in behavior. The Iran Conference asked the questions: if this approach has failed for the past 45 years, what reason do we have to believe it will succeed now?

This conference also asked a more pressing question: "what next?" We gathered to show lawmakers and decision makers in the United States and throughout the free world that a democratic Iran is in their best interests.

The time has come for them to support the Iranian people's demand for regime change—a demand shared by the overwhelming majority of Iranians.



SCHEDULE

Day 1
Thursday Sept 26

Opening Remarks	Dr. Saeed Ganji	
Headline Speaker	Elahe Tavakolian	
Faith Under Fire: The Battle for Religious Freedom in Iran	Janatan Sayeh Johnnie Moore	Nathan Sales Nazenin Ansari
Tehran's Tentacles: The Islamic Republic's War in the Middle East	Robert Greenway Michael Pregent	David Schenker Elina Shirazi
The New Axis of Evil: Russia, China, and the Islamic Republic in Iran	Carrie Filipetti Gabriel Noronha	Danielle Pletka Andrew Ghalili
Interactive Iran Protest Timeline Video	NUFDI	
45 Years of Terror: The Islamic Republic's War on America	Elliott Abrams Brian Katulis	Morgan Ortagus Cameron Khansarinia
Iran Prosperity Project Presentation	Amir Sharif-Emami	
Iran Prosperity Project	Mohammad Jahan-Parvar Saeed Ghasseminejad	Shervin Pishevar Cameron Khansarinia
Keynote Speaker	HRH Reza Pahlavi	
The Path to Peace: From Abraham to Cyrus Accords	Victoria Coates Saeed Ghasseminejad	Lisa Daftari Emily Schrader
A Message of Solidarity	Jonathan Greenblatt	
From Protest to Revolution: Woman, Life, Freedom Two Years On	Parmida Barez Gazelle Sharmahd	Marjan Keypour Nina Khoshkish

SCHEDULE

Day 2
Friday
Sept 27

Headline Speaker	Afsoon Najafi	
A Message from Congress	Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC, Second District)	
The Ticking Time Bomb: Khamenei's Nuclear Ambitions	Matthew Kroenig Michael Singh	Behnam Taleblu Afschineh Latifi
Maximum Pressure, Maximum Support: A Bipartisan Approach to Iran Policy	Jason Brodsky Patricia Karam	Ray Takeyh Andrew Ghalili
A Free Iran: Aligning America's Values and Interests	Navid Mohebbi Ellie Cohanim Walid Phares	Michael Rubin Tymahz Toumadje
A Message from Silicon Valley	Jacob Hellberg	
Closing Remarks	Cameron Khansarinia	

2024 Participants

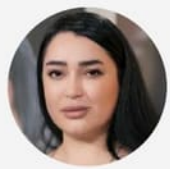
SPEAKERS



HRH Reza Pahlavi
Crown Prince of Iran



Elahe Tavakolian
Iranian Activist



Afsoon Najafi
Activist, Sister of Slain Protester Hadis Najafi

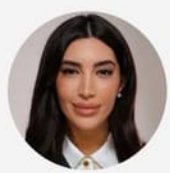
PANELISTS



Elliott Abrams
Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations



Nazenin Ansari
Managing Editor, Kayhan London



Parmida Barez
Author, Songwriter, and Activist



Jason Brodsky
Policy Director, United Against Nuclear Iran



Ellie Cohanim
Former U.S. Deputy Envoy to Combat Antisemitism



Victoria Coates
VP for National Security, Heritage Foundation



Lisa Daftari
Editor-in-Chief, The Foreign Desk



Carrie Filipetti
Executive Director, Vandenberg Coalition



Saeed Ghasseminejad
Senior Iran and Economics Advisor, FDD



Andrew Ghalili
Senior Policy Analyst, NUFDI



Robert Greenway
Director, Center for National Defense, Heritage Foundation



Mohammad Jahan-Parvar
Economist



Patricia Karam
Senior Policy Advisor on Iran, Freedom House



Brian Katulis
Senior Fellow, Middle East Institute



Marjan Keypour
Founder and Director, Alliance for Rights of All Minorities



Cameron Khansarinia
Vice President, NUFDI



Nina Khoshkish
Communications Associate, NUFDI



Matthew Kroenig
VP and Senior Director, Atlantic Council Scowcroft Center



Afschineh Latifi
Partner, Tucker & Latifi LLP



Navid Mohebbi
Iran Analyst



Johnnie Moore
President, Congress of Christian Leaders



Rep. Joe Wilson
R-SC, 2nd District



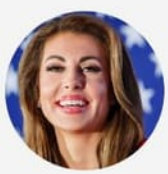
Jonathan Greenblatt
CEO, Anti-Defamation League



Jacob Helberg
Senior Advisor, Palantir Technologies



Gabriel Noronha
Executive Director, POLARIS



Morgan Ortagus
Founder, POLARIS



Walid Phares
Author and Scholar



Danielle Pletka
Distinguished Senior Fellow, American Enterprise Institute



Shervin Pishevar
Entrepreneur and Investor



Michael Pregent
Senior Fellow, Hudson Institute



Michael Rubin
Senior Fellow, American Enterprise Institute



Nathan Sales
Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council



Janatan Sayeh
Research Analyst, FDD



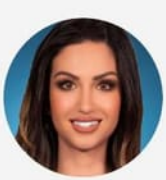
David Schenker
Senior Fellow, The Washington Institute



Emily Schrader
Journalist



Gazelle Sharmahd
German-American Activist



Elina Shirazi
Correspondent, NewsNation



Michael Singh
Senior Fellow, The Washington Institute



Behnam Taleblu
Senior Fellow, Foundation for Defense of Democracies



Ray Takeyh
Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations



Tymahz Toumadje
Policy Analyst, NUFDI


NUFDI
THE IRAN CONFERENCE


EXIT
THE IRAN CONFERENCE

The Iran Conference | 10 Takeaways

The Iran Conference is the premier forum for Washington's leading analysts, policymakers, experts, and activists from across the political spectrum who gather to discuss Iran and Iran policy.

Through informative presentations, engaging panel discussions, and networking opportunities, the conference aims to empower participants with both knowledge and actionable insights. The Iran Conference was held September 26-27, 2024 in Washington, D.C.

Here are the ten takeaways from The Iran Conference:

1 **The Islamic Republic, Russia, and China Form a New Axis of Evil**

2 **The Regime Is On the Cusp of Having Nuclear Weapons**

3 **Tehran's Drone Warfare Is Shaking Global Security**

4 **The Regime's Proxy Networks Are Expanding Globally**

5 **The Pro-Democracy Movement Is Just Getting Started**

6 **Maximum Pressure Along With Maximum Support Can Collapse the Regime**

7 **There Is a Growing Population of Underground Christians in Iran**

8 **A Free Iran Could Be the Next Silicon Valley Powerhouse**

9 **A Post-Islamic Republic Iran Could Join Israel in the 'Cyrus Accords'**

10 **Reza Pahlavi Offers a Vision for Iran's Future**






THE IRAN CONFERENCE
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DAY 1
THE IRAN CONFERENCE





HEADLINE SPEAKER

Elahe Tavakolian, Iranian Activist



Greetings to you all, greetings to our dear Prince, I want to thank NUFDI for inviting me to this year's Iran Conference. I am happy to be among you, dear friends. I am Elahe Tavakolian, a victim of Mahsa's national uprising in Iran in 2022.

Mahsa's revolutionary uprising was the largest protest movement against the Islamic Republic. This movement quickly gained global attention and made headlines around the world for months. The vocal support from people and politicians worldwide from different countries was a great encouragement to us. In the United States, we also witnessed the solidarity of political leaders, prominent social and cultural figures, and the American people, and I would like to personally thank all of them.

We, the people of Iran, were hopeful during those days that the world could stand united against the Islamic Republic regime, but that never happened. Many significant steps were taken in this direction, which were remarkable, but no one could stop the regime's brutality. We, the people of Iran, quickly realized that we were unarmed and up against terrorists who are not only enemies of progress and the prosperity of Iran but also enemies of the Iranian nation.

For forty-five years, we, the people of Iran, have been facing a sect that is against civilization, against Iranian history, against democratic countries, and against the modern world. They have turned Iran into a giant prison, and if anyone disobeys the rules of this prison, it is considered a rebellion, with the most severe consequences.

> *For example, I was shot in the eye because I clenched my fist and shouted, 'Freedom'. My right eye is one of hundreds of eyes that the Islamic Republic deliberately targeted because they also shouted 'Freedom'.*

They killed hundreds more and imprisoned thousands upon thousands to this day, all because they cried out, "Freedom." The Islamic Republic is doing everything it can to make us like them. From early childhood in school, they teach children to be skeptical of freedom and democracy, forcibly implanting their toxic beliefs in their minds, and imposing a false version of Iranian and world history on them.

Thousands of young people leave Iran every year to save their futures because the Islamic Republic cannot build a bright future for them. People are getting poorer by the day, while crime has risen so much that they no longer even announce the statistics. My right eye does not lie.We, the injured victims of Mahsa's uprising, are living evidence of the Islamic Republic's crimes.

We risked our lives so that today our voices could be heard. I ask you to be our voice. We fully understand that every country looks out for its own interests, but we are worried. We are worried that the world will once again fall for the regime's games and make deals with these criminals. A deal with this sect means a deal with our deaths, our imprisonment, and more oppression upon us. A deal with this sect means arming them further A deal with this sect means more Western citizens will be taken hostage and more terrorist and destructive attacks will occur in European countries and the U.S. However, we, the people of Iran, have one great hope, and that is ourselves.

We, the people of Iran, will continue on this path together. Relying on our cultural and historical heritage, and national assets like Prince Reza Pahlavi and the Queen, we will use every opportunity to fight this regime. We, the people of Iran, are writing history. We believe that light will overcome darkness, and soon, a day will come that will be remembered forever in history as the victory of the Iranian people.

I hope that on that day, you will be standing beside us.

Long live freedom, Long live Iran, Long live the memory of our homeland's fallen heroes.

1 Faith Under Fire: The Battle for Religious Freedom in Iran



PANELISTS

JANATAN SAYEH	Research Analyst, FDD
JOHNNIE MOORE	President, Congress of Christian Leaders
NATHAN SALES	Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council
NAZENIN ANSARI	Managing Editor, Kayhan London

The panel titled "Faith Under Fire: The Battle for Religious Freedom in Iran" opened with a broad discussion of the ongoing religious persecution in Iran following the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Moderator Nazanin Ansari opened the discussion by addressing how the revolution transformed Iran into a theocratic state, stating, ***"Iran became a vehicle for a fundamentalist version of Shia Islam, dominating all political, legal, and social institutions."*** This change brought by the Islamic Republic, Ansari emphasized, resulted in the exclusion of non-Shia Muslims from holding key positions in the regime's government and society.

The persecution of religious minorities, particularly Bahá'ís and Christian converts, was central to the conversation. Jonathan Sayeh underscored the gravity of the situation for Christian converts, noting, ***"Converting from Islam is a crime punishable by execution under Iran's Sharia law."***

Rev. Johnnie Moore followed this by highlighting that, despite these harsh realities, there is a growing underground movement of Evangelical Christians, with Moore estimating that up to a million Iranian converts are practicing their faith in secret. ***"Despite all the efforts of the regime to marginalize and persecute, one of the fastest-growing Christian movements in the world may be happening underground in Iran today"*** he remarked, stressing the resilience of these communities under oppression.

The panel eventually shifted to discussing Tehran's influence beyond its borders. Jonathan Sayeh pointed out that the regime's anti-Zionist stance often extends to promoting anti-Semitic sentiment globally. He explained, ***"The Islamic Republic capitalizes on pro-Palestinian movements and anti-Israel sentiment to spread anti-Semitism, even funding protests in the U.S. and Europe."*** Sayeh called for greater awareness of how Iran's actions abroad affect Jewish communities, stating, ***"This is not just about Zionism; it's an attack on Jewish people worldwide."***

Throughout the panel, there was a clear consensus on the need for stronger international responses. Former Special Envoy to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS Nathan Sales argued that current measures, particularly from the United Nations, have been ineffective. ***"The U.N. lacks the moral standing or will to bring about real change in Iran,"*** he stated, urging for a coalition of like-minded nations to apply maximum pressure on the regime. Moore agreed with this, emphasizing that Iran's regime only responds to strength, not negotiation: ***"The Ayatollahs will not be bribed into better behavior; they respect power, and we need to show that strength."***

The session concluded with messages of hope for Iran's future. While the regime continues its oppressive policies, the people have been pushed away from its version of Shia Islam. Sayeh summed it up poignantly: ***"The future of Iran's government is going to be secular and democratic, so we have high hopes for the future."*** Sales added to this hopeful sentiment, saying, ***"What will emerge will be something very familiar to the United States; a multi-confessional, multi-ethnic, secular democracy in which authentic religious practice thrives."***

2 Tehran's Tentacles: The Islamic Republic's War in the Middle East





PANELISTS

ROBERT GREENWAY	Director, Center for National Defense, Heritage Foundation
MICHAEL PREGENT	Senior Fellow, Hudson Institute
DAVID SCHENKER	Senior Fellow, The Washington Institute
ELINA SHIRAZI	Correspondent, NewsNation

This panel examined the regime's destabilizing influence through alliances and support for proxy groups in countries like Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen. The discussion focused on how the regime leverages sectarian divides, particularly by backing militias such as Hezbollah, the Houthis, and various Shia groups.

David Schenker explained, ***"Iran does best in failed or failing states, particularly where there are Shia populations more susceptible to Iranian influence,"*** with countries like Syria and Iraq serving as key examples. The regime exploits power vacuums left by ineffective governance to expand its influence.

Sanctions and their effectiveness were a major point of debate. Robert Greenway argued, ***"Sanctions serve a critical purpose, but when unenforced they are horribly ineffective."*** He mentioned that during the Trump administration's maximum pressure campaign, regime proxies faced financial difficulties, with Hezbollah even asking members to donate organs for funds.

However, Greenway pointed out that under the Biden administration, sanctions have been less effective, leading to increased Iranian oil revenues. ***"The hundred billion dollar revenue surplus [the regime] has experienced under the Biden-Harris administration is equivalent to two years of their entire defense budget."***

Michael Pregent criticized U.S. efforts to build institutions to counter Tehran, stating, ***"The United States builds institutions to counter Iran that end up being co-opted by the Islamic Republic."*** He cited the example of Iraqi militias, like Hashd al-Shaabi, being funded by Iraq's U.S.-supported Ministry of Defense, highlighting the paradox of U.S. resources inadvertently benefiting regime-backed groups.

Hezbollah's role in Lebanon was another focus. Schenker described Hezbollah as ***"a more potent force than almost all of the Arab armies in the region,"*** emphasizing that it was primarily created to defend the regime in Iran's nuclear program from Israel, rather than to liberate Lebanon or defend Palestinians.

The discussion also covered Tehran's growing military capabilities. Schenker remarked, ***"Iran's use of drones and missiles has completely altered the security dynamics in the region, and we don't yet have a good, economical solution for countering them."*** The regime's arms exports, particularly to Russia during the Ukraine conflict, have further expanded its regional influence.

The panel concluded that the Islamic Republic's destabilizing role in the Middle East will remain a significant challenge to regional and global security. Greenway summarized, ***"[The Islamic Republic] is the principal threat in the region and absent that threat, you are looking at new horizons and real peace and prosperity."***

3 The New Axis of Evil: Russia, China, and the Islamic Republic in Iran



PANELISTS

CARRIE FILIPETTI	Executive Director, Vandenberg Coalition
GABRIEL NORONHA	Executive Director, POLARIS
DANIELLE PLETKA	Distinguished Senior Fellow, American Enterprise Institute
ANDREW GHALILI	Senior Policy Analyst, NUFDI

This panel explored the growing cooperation between these three regimes in military, economic, and technological spheres. The discussion highlighted how these alliances affect global stability and U.S. interests, focusing on the Islamic Republic's reliance on China and Russia.

Gabriel Noronha noted that China is Iran's largest trading partner, but the relationship is asymmetrical. ***"For China, Iran is just a speck, while for Iran, China is their number one partner,"*** he said, emphasizing how Iran's economy depends heavily on oil exports to China. However, he also pointed out that China's broader geopolitical interests are not focused on Iran, leaving room for U.S. strategy. Danielle Pletka added, ***"China isn't putting its eggs in any one Middle Eastern basket,"*** suggesting China's engagement with the Islamic Republic in Iran is more opportunistic than strategic.

On the military front, Carrie Filipetti explained that the regimes in Iran, Russia, and China frame their partnership as an alliance aimed at ending U.S. and Western hegemony. ***"They view this as a 'new world order,'"*** she said, pointing to joint military exercises and the supply of Islamic regime drones and missiles to Russia for its war in Ukraine. While China's role is more centered on technology and surveillance, Iran and Russia's cooperation is much more direct, with Tehran providing drones to Moscow and receiving nuclear knowledge and intelligence in return.

Noronha highlighted the dangers of Tehran supplying ballistic missiles to Russia, calling it ***"massively escalatory"*** in the context of the war in Ukraine. He also noted that Russia's transfer of nuclear secrets to the regime in Iran violates UN Security Council resolutions, lamenting the lack of attention this has received in Western media. ***"This act has gotten almost no attention in the Western press,"*** he said, expressing frustration at the absence of diplomatic or economic consequences.

Pletka warned about Russia's military support for Tehran-backed proxies like Hezbollah and the Houthis. She stated, ***"China is not interested in the problems of the Middle East, unlike the Russians who are,"*** highlighting Moscow's growing influence in the region. Russian involvement, particularly in supplying weapons to regime proxies, could shift the regional military balance, making it harder for the U.S. and its allies to contain Tehran's influence.

In their concluding remarks, the panelists agreed that the U.S. must develop a more proactive strategy to counter this emerging ***"axis of evil."*** Filipetti stressed that the regimes in Iran, Russia, and China reinforce each other's anti-American propaganda and protect one another in international forums like the United Nations. To counter this, the panel outlined several steps, including bankrupting Iran Air, sanctioning Rosatom, and targeting Chinese entities involved in Iran's oil trade. Filipetti concluded by stating, ***"The fight of the Iranian people is the fight of the United States,"*** framing the struggle as an ideological battle between freedom and authoritarianism.

4 45 Years of Terror: The Islamic Republic's War on America





PANELISTS

ELLIOTT ABRAMS	Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations
BRIAN KATULIS	Senior Fellow, Middle East Institute
MORGAN ORTAGUS	Founder, POLARIS
CAMERON KHANSARINIA	Vice President, NUFDI

The panel titled "45 Years of Terror: The Islamic Republic's War on America" examined the regime's decades-long aggression against the U.S., using tactics like terrorism and cyber warfare. The discussion focused on Tehran's consistent targeting of Americans and the U.S.'s often inadequate responses.

Elliott Abrams highlighted events like the 1979 hostage crisis and the 1983 Beirut Marine Barracks bombing as evidence of the regime's ongoing hostility. He stated, ***"From the point of view of the regime, it looks like its policy of killing Americans is a success."*** Abrams argued that the lack of a strong, consistent U.S. response has emboldened Iran's leadership over the years.

Brian Katulis criticized U.S. policy as largely reactive, saying, ***"We've been playing defense for 40 years."*** He called for a more proactive approach, stressing the need for greater coordination with Middle Eastern allies to put Iran on the defensive. ***"We need to build a team with our allies in the region,"*** he suggested.

Morgan Ortagus discussed the Trump administration's maximum pressure campaign, highlighting its success in restoring deterrence through economic sanctions and military actions, such as the killing of Qasem Soleimani. She argued that much of this deterrence has weakened under the Biden administration's softer stance.

Ortagus also warned of Tehran's growing partnerships with Russia, China, and North Korea, forming what she referred to as a "quartet of evil." She called for a "whole-of-government" strategy to cut off the flow of arms and resources to Iran.

The panel then addressed future U.S. policy toward Iran. Abrams urged for stronger deterrence, particularly in response to missile attacks and proxy wars. He proposed sending a clear message: ***"Iran needs to understand that if they hit an American ship with one of their so-called 'Houthi missiles,' they will have no navy. The Iranian navy is gone."*** He recounted how, during the Trump administration, Iran reduced its attacks by 90% after a warning that any attacks on Americans would result in retaliation against the regime itself, not just its proxies. ***"The regime is evil, but it's not crazy,"*** Abrams noted, suggesting that firm actions could deter further aggression.

Katulis agreed, emphasizing the need for renewed deterrence given the current regime's alliances with other authoritarian nations. ***"The Islamic Republic and its network are working together like termites, chipping away at the international order,"*** he warned. He urged the next U.S. administration to develop a strategy that restores American strength in the face of these alliances.

To conclude, Abrams stressed the importance of supporting the Iranian people in their quest for freedom. He predicted that regime change would swiftly end the hostility that began with the 1979 hostage crisis. ***"When the Iranian people can choose their government, this 45-years of hostility will disappear very quickly,"*** he concluded, highlighting the long-term benefits for both the U.S. and Iran.

5 Iran Prosperity Project Presentation: Amir Sharif-Emami



Amir Sharif-Emami's presentation on the NUFDI-sponsored Iran Prosperity Project (IPP) introduced a comprehensive plan aimed at rebuilding Iran's economy and society following a potential government transition. IPP outlines a clear roadmap for socioeconomic reconstruction in a post-Islamic Republic Iran, addressing the challenges of instability while proposing solutions for financial, political, and legal stabilization.

Sharif-Emami emphasized that IPP is based on the assumption of a mostly peaceful transition, acknowledging the limitations of available data but underscoring the need for planning.

> *The project's primary goal is to reassure both the Iranian people and the international community that a stable interim government and a sustainable path for reconstruction are achievable.*

IPP is divided into three major parts or phases: financial and social stabilization, political and legal stabilization, and economic reconstruction.

This presentation focused primarily on the first phase—financial and social stabilization—which is made up of four sections and six white papers. These cover budget reform, currency stabilization, banking sector improvements, financial market reforms, privatization, and welfare, including healthcare and pensions.

In terms of the budget, IPP explores what would be required to balance it in the face of potential economic shocks, identifying excesses and revenue gaps, and proposing ways to unlock capital to ensure a smoother transition. Currency stabilization is also a priority, with the project examining inflation, the expansion of money supply, and the state of foreign reserves and national debt, all aimed at creating a stable financial backdrop for the future.

The banking sector, weakened by regime abuses, requires significant reform. IPP assesses the extent of non-performing loans and proposes long-term measures to clean up the sector and prevent future crises. The analysis of financial markets focuses on making them more transparent and competitive, both regionally and globally, through regulatory oversight and market diversity.

Privatization, particularly of the Bunyads (large state-controlled charitable trusts), presents a complex challenge. IPP's strategy avoids a rushed fire sale, instead proposing a gradual, prioritized process that takes into account capital needs and availability.

On the social side, the project evaluates healthcare spending and coverage, exploring how different systems impact citizens and services. The pension system analysis looks at its health, the roles of government and corporations, and demographic and economic factors influencing long-term stability.

Sharif-Emami noted that Phase One of IPP is nearly complete, and the team is preparing for future phases that will address political, legal, and economic challenges. The project invites contributions from interested parties and plans to unveil Phase One in early 2025, aiming to guide Iran toward a stable, prosperous future.

5 Iran Prosperity Project



PANELISTS

MOHAMMAD JAHAN-PARVAR	Economist
SAEED GHASSEMINEJAD	Senior Iran and Economics Advisor, FDD
SHERVIN PISHEVAR	Entrepreneur and Investor
CAMERON KHANSARINIA	Vice President, NUFDI

The panel titled "Iran Prosperity Project" discussed Iran's economic future post-regime change, focusing on the goals of NUFDI's Iran Prosperity Project (IPP). The panelists explored the country's untapped potential and the role the Iranian diaspora could play in rebuilding the nation.

Saeed Ghasseminejad stressed the importance of planning for a post-regime Iran. ***"We want the Iranian people and the international community to know that there is a plan out there for when the regime falls that has been thought out by experts,"*** he said. Ghasseminejad emphasized that this roadmap could unite various opposition factions with a non-ideological, common-sense approach to rebuilding the economy.

Mohammad Jahan-Parvar provided a comparison between Iran's pre-1979 economic status and its current situation. He noted that in the mid-1970s, Iran was on the verge of becoming an upper-middle-income country, outperforming nations like Turkey and South Korea. ***"Now, Iran ranks 117th globally in terms of income, just slightly worse than El Salvador,"*** he lamented. He attributed this decline to poor governance and international isolation, which led to missed opportunities in healthcare, education, and infrastructure. ***"The cost of 45 years of poor governance is staggering,"*** he noted.

Shervin Pishevar brought a more optimistic perspective, highlighting the success of the Iranian diaspora, especially in Silicon Valley. He referred to an ***"A/B test" between Iranians in the diaspora and those inside the country. "The Iranian diaspora has built companies worth over $5.85 trillion,"*** he said, citing companies like Uber, Google, eBay, and PayPal, where Iranian-Americans hold key roles. Pishevar argued that Iran could unlock immense potential once the regime is removed. ***"The Islamic Republic will end up being a blink in the eye of Iran's 4,000-year history,"*** he predicted.

Jahan-Parvar added that while Iran's energy sector has become a marginal player in global markets, it could regain its status as a major energy producer with the right investments and leadership. He highlighted Iran's vast reserves of oil and natural gas, emphasizing the country's potential to quickly reenter the global energy market under a new government.

The panel also addressed the empowerment of marginalized groups, particularly women, in Iran's future economy. Jahan-Parvar noted that 60% of university students in Iran are women, but many are excluded from the workforce due to the regime's oppressive laws. ***"Once the regime is gone, these structural barriers will fall almost overnight, and Iran will see a massive influx of talent into its economy,"*** he said.

In closing, the panelists expressed optimism for Iran's future after the fall of the Islamic Republic. Pishevar concluded, ***"Iran can recover, excel, and succeed faster than anything that has happened in the last 45 years. We will forget this ugly history and move forward to a new day for the Iranian people and for the world."***

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

HRH Reza Pahlavi, Crown Prince of Iran





In his powerful address at The Iran Conference, HRH Reza Pahlavi outlined a bold and comprehensive vision for Iran's future, emphasizing both political liberation and economic reconstruction. Speaking to a gathering of leaders and experts, he highlighted the progress made by NUFDI in shifting the narrative surrounding Iran in Washington, D.C., saying, ***"Now, finally, there is a true and honest voice for Iranians in Washington."***

Reza Pahlavi reflected on the catastrophic economic policies of the Islamic Republic, quoting Ayatollah Khomeini's infamous statement, "economics is for donkeys," as a symbol of the regime's ignorance and failure. ***He pointed to Iran's missed opportunities over the past four decades, lamenting that Iran "should have been the South Korea of the Middle East, but has instead become the North Korea of our region."*** The economic destruction is evident, with Iran's real GDP per capita remaining below its pre-revolution levels, a stark contrast to South Korea's exponential growth.

However, amid these grim realities, Reza Pahlavi presented a vision of hope. He announced the Iran Prosperity Project (IPP), a plan crafted with renowned economists and business leaders to guide Iran's economic recovery. "I will make no promises of free water, free buses, or free utilities," he declared. Instead, he offered a vision rooted in sound economic principles—trust in citizens, opportunities for all, safeguarding private property, and removing barriers to entrepreneurship.

The Crown Prince laid out a clear roadmap for rebuilding Iran's economy post-Islamic Republic, emphasizing that Iran "does not need to reinvent the wheel," but must adhere to proven economic practices. His plan is not only a blueprint for prosperity but also a safeguard for democracy, asserting that ***"governments that cannot provide the framework and opportunities for their citizens to thrive and prosper have been unable to sustain their democracies and their security."***

At the core of his vision is the belief that Iran's greatest untapped resource is its people. He spoke of the Iranian diaspora's success and how their talent, combined with the energy of Iran's youth, could propel the country into becoming "one of the world's most advanced startup nations." He called for the revitalization of Iran's natural resources—not to fuel "terror, death, and destruction," but to rebuild the nation and diversify its economy.

Reza Pahlavi also underscored the need for inclusion, highlighting underserved areas like Kurdistan, Sistan and Baluchestan, and Khuzestan, and stressing that "all of our people must be able to thrive." He referenced recent tragedies like the Tabas coal mine explosion, which killed 51 workers, as a stark reminder of the reforms desperately needed to protect Iranian workers.

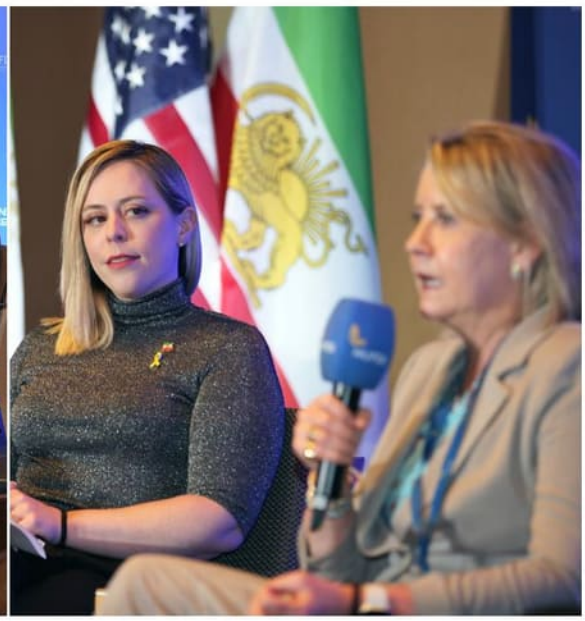
In his closing, Reza Pahlavi invoked the Marshall Plan that rebuilt post-war Europe, noting that Iran, too, would require such an effort after the fall of the Islamic Republic. "The fall of the Islamic Republic is not the end; but the beginning of Iran's renaissance," he proclaimed, adding that after nearly five decades, "Iran will be open for business."

> *In a rallying call to the diaspora and global investors, he concluded that "this is a project not just to bring down the Islamic Republic, it is a project to build up Iran…soon, we will be able to rebuild our great nation together."*

With this speech, HRH Reza Pahlavi presented a powerful, hopeful vision of a free, prosperous, and democratic Iran, inspiring Iranians worldwide to join in the effort to reclaim their nation.

6 The Path to Peace: From Abraham to Cyrus Accords





PANELISTS

VICTORIA COATES	VP for National Security, Heritage Foundation
SAEED GHASSEMINEJAD	Senior Iran and Economics Advisor, Foundation for Defense of Democracies
LISA DAFTARI	Editor-in-Chief, The Foreign Desk
EMILY SCHRADER	Journalist

The panel titled "The Path to Peace: From Abraham to Cyrus Accords" explored the potential for expanding regional peace initiatives like the Abraham Accords and envisioning a future where a post-regime Iran could join a similar framework, the Cyrus Accords. The discussion focused on how a secular, democratic Iran could reshape the Middle East through partnerships with Israel and Arab nations.

Victoria Coates opened by discussing the success of the Abraham Accords, which many had believed impossible. ***"Nobody thought that was possible,"*** she said, noting how the accords fostered trilateral partnerships between Israel, the U.S., and Arab nations in areas like security and technology. She suggested that a similar approach could work for a future democratic Iran.

Lisa Daftari then addressed the Islamic Republic's role in destabilizing the region. She highlighted Tehran's involvement in the October 7th attacks on Israel and its long-running propaganda efforts to spread anti-Israel sentiment, including on U.S. college campuses. ***"They have been working on this for decades,"*** Daftari warned. She emphasized the need for deradicalization efforts in both the Middle East and the West.

Saeed Ghasseminejad highlighted the economic potential of a future Cyrus Accords, stating, ***"The regime in Tehran is the main problem in the region."*** He argued that Iran's inclusion in a regional peace framework would significantly boost trade and cooperation in the Middle East. ***"Once the regime falls, the Middle East will be a much better place,"*** he added, calling for U.S. support for the Iranian people in their push for regime change.

Daftari echoed the economic benefits seen from the Abraham Accords for Israel and Arab partners, suggesting that including Iran could amplify those gains. She pointed out that the Iranian people are largely pro-Western and supportive of partnerships with Israel, stating, ***"The real Arab Spring was the Persian Spring of 2009."*** Daftari also noted the irony that while Iranian students risk their lives to protest, Tehran's proxies exploit protests in the West. ***"College students in Iran can't protest without risking their lives, while here in the U.S., the regime exploits our freedom to spread its propaganda,"*** she said.

The panel concluded by discussing how the international community could support the Cyrus Accords. Coates called for increased international support for Iranians, especially to help bypass the regime's internet censorship. ***"We need to export free speech to Iran,"*** she urged. Ghasseminejad emphasized enforcing sanctions to weaken the regime, suggesting that seized Iranian assets fund strikes and internal initiatives. ***"Maximum pressure, maximum support, and maximum defections—that's the path forward,"*** he concluded.

A MESSAGE OF SOLIDARITY

Jonathan Greenblatt



In his emotional and impassioned speech, Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), connected both personal and professional reasons for his presence.

He began by sharing a heartfelt story about his wife, Marjan, who was born and raised in Iran. As a 14-year-old, she fled the country, and after years of separation, was finally reunited with her family in Los Angeles. Greenblatt spoke with deep pride about Marjan, her resilience, and her advocacy for women's and minority rights in Iran, adding, "I am immensely proud that she is a fierce advocate… for the rights of women and other minorities in Iran." He highlighted their Persian heritage and the beauty of their family life, weaving in cultural references such as "khoresht, kabob, and tahdiq."

Transitioning to his role as head of the ADL, Greenblatt's tone shifted to urgency. He outlined the decades-long threat posed by the Islamic Republic in Iran, not just to Israel, but to global peace. "For the past 45 years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been the largest state sponsor of terrorism… and the primary actor in Holocaust denialism anywhere in the world," he stated.

Greenblatt explained that the Islamic regime, bound by a genocidal ideology against the Jewish state, has left "a bloody trail of deadly acts and foiled plots against Israeli interests and Jewish sites around the world."

Reflecting on the recent Hamas attacks on Israel, Greenblatt drew a direct link to Tehran, saying, ***"The brutality we saw on October 7th was straight out of the Islamic Republic's playbook. They cheered while Israel battles Iran's proxies across the region."*** He condemned the atrocities and pledged ADL's commitment to justice, highlighting the landmark federal lawsuit the ADL filed on behalf of 180 American citizens affected by the massacre. ***"We will make that case and we will win,"*** he declared, determined to prove Iran's direct role in supporting Hamas. Greenblatt emphasized the broader implications of the regime's actions, not just for Israel but for Western democracies, saying,

> *"This conflict isn't just about Israel or the Jewish people…this is a struggle pitting militant Islamism, religious extremism, and violent terrorism against Western nations and our values like democracy, pluralism, religious tolerance, and the individual freedoms that we cherish."*

With visible emotion, he expressed his desire for a better future, one where the regime's propaganda is dismantled and the Iranian people are freed from oppression. "This is the Iran that I want my children, that I want all of our children to visit one day," he concluded, calling for solidarity in the fight for freedom and justice. His closing words echoed a deep hope for reconciliation and the rebuilding of Iran's pluralistic legacy.

Greenblatt's speech was more than just a call to action; it was a powerful blend of personal pride and professional commitment, underscoring both the deep connection he feels to his Persian family and the fierce determination he brings to the global fight against extremism.

7 From Protest to Revolution: Woman, Life, Freedom Two Years On



PANELISTS

PARMIDA BAREZ	Author, Songwriter, and Activist
GAZELLE SHARMAHD	German-American Activist
MARJAN KEYPOUR	Founder and Director, Alliance for Rights of All Minorities
NINA KHOSHKISH	Communications Associate, NUFDI

The panel titled "From Protest to Revolution: Woman, Life, Freedom Two Years On" explored the growth of the Woman, Life, Freedom movement in Iran over the past two years, emphasizing the resilience of Iranian women and their ongoing struggle against the regime.

Parmida Barez opened by sharing how personal the fight is for her. ***"As an Iranian woman born in Iran and raised in the diaspora, this is a personal mission,"*** she said. Known for her advocacy through poetry, she expressed hope for a future where Iranian women can live freely. ***"I see my privilege here in the diaspora, but I recognize there is a woman like me in Iran, beaten for showing her hair,"*** she added, highlighting her commitment to the movement.

Gazelle Sharmahd discussed her father's kidnapping by the regime after 16 years of activism, stressing that the Woman, Life, Freedom movement is part of a 45-year struggle. ***"This is not a spontaneous uprising,"*** she explained, noting the Islamic Republic's imposed identity on Iran.

Marjan Keypour reflected on her efforts to amplify the voices of Iranian women and minorities. ***"For ten years, I tried to get an audience to listen to the plight of Iranian women and minorities, but no one wanted to hear it,"*** she said. The death of Mahsa Amini sparked global awareness. ***"For the first time, people wanted to hear the Iranian people's stories, not the government's narrative,"*** Keypour explained, praising young activists for fighting for their rights.

The panel also addressed the challenges faced by diaspora activists. Barez described the emotional toll, recalling a moment when she saw a fellow activist working with her newborn. ***"It made me cry tears of pride and solidarity,"*** she said, emphasizing the determination to continue despite burnout.

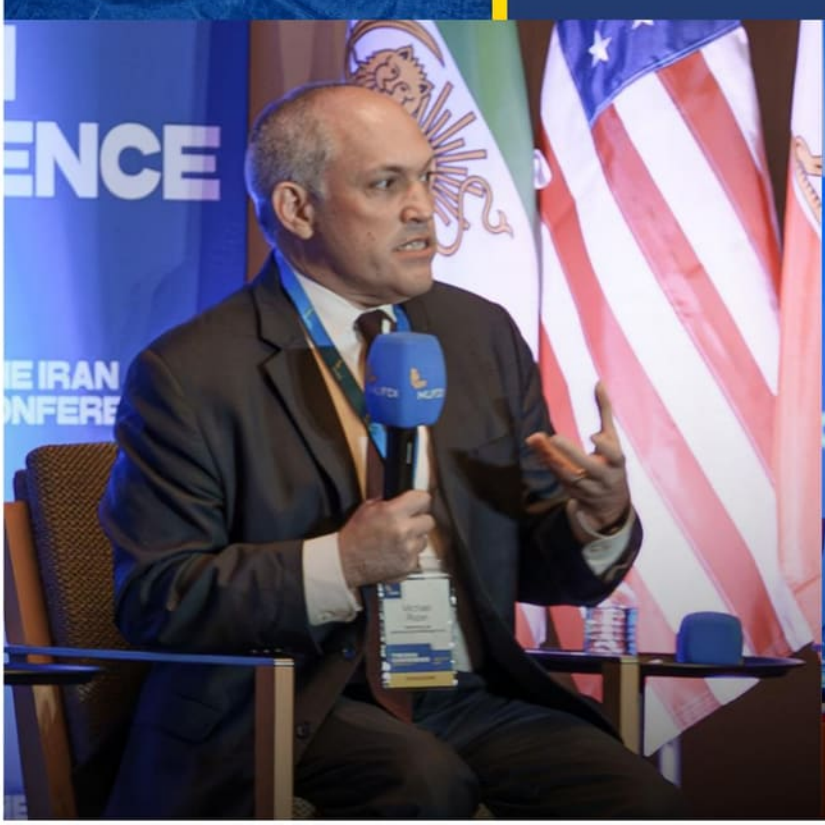
Sharmahd discussed the media's role, pointing out how disinformation has plagued coverage of Iran. ***"My father, an activist, was kidnapped, and the media reported him as a terrorist,"*** she said, underscoring the regime's propaganda campaign. She expressed hope that once the international community sees the regime's instability, the narrative will shift. ***"There's money to be made in a free Iran... and once investors realize that, the media narrative will shift,"*** she concluded.

The panelists agreed that while the movement has made strides, the fight is far from over. Keypour stressed the importance of maintaining momentum, warning that the regime seeks to suppress the next generation. ***"The regime wants to tame the next generation by closing their minds and instilling fear,"*** she warned, urging continued global support.

To conclude, Barez expressed hope for lasting change. ***"The revolution may not always look like thousands on the streets, but it's the small victories—like a woman choosing not to wear her hijab—that show real change."*** The panel called for unity within the diaspora to continue the fight for a free and democratic Iran.



DAY 2
THE IRAN CONFERENCE





HEADLINE SPEAKER

Afsoon Najafi, Sister of Slain Protestor Hadis Najafi



Dear guests, greetings to all of you. I would like to extend my gratitude to NUFDI for inviting me to speak and my greetings to the Crown Prince, who is with us today.

I am Afsoon Najafi, the sister of the late Hadis Najafi, the young woman who became a symbol of freedom and courage. We are gathered here today to speak about my sister, Hadis, whose name will forever be remembered in the history of Iran.

Hadis Najafi, with her bravery and strong will, became a symbol of resistance and the struggle for freedom. She was shot and killed during the 2022 protests in Iran.

On September 21st, in those dark and difficult days when the Iranian people were fighting for their individual and social freedoms, she took to the streets and stood courageously against oppression and inequality.

Hadis, without any weapon, took to the field of struggle and stood up against tyranny and repression. This shows her incredible determination and her great spirit. Like many other young people in our country, she believed that to achieve a bright future and justice, sacrifices must be made, and one must stand up for one's rights and freedom.

> *Hadis Najafi's name is not just a name; it represents all the young people who are willing to give up their lives and possessions for their ideals and for a better future.*

Through her courageous actions, she lit a torch of hope and resistance for future generations, showing that freedom and justice are goals that are not easily attained but require many sacrifices. *Hadis became a symbol of collective solidarity and resistance. She represents a generation that, despite all the pressures and repressions, still believes in a better future and fights for it.*

The lesson we take from Hadis Najafi's life and struggle is that freedom and justice never come free. They must be fought for, and sometimes we must give up our greatest treasure—our lives.

Today, as the sister of one of the victims of this dictatorial regime, I stand here as someone who will fight for justice until my last breath to achieve freedom. I call on the international community to apply diplomatic pressure.

As a representative of the families seeking justice, I demand diplomatic and political pressure on the Islamic Republic to prevent further violence, killings, and repression. We, the families of victims and all those affected, demand specific sanctions against government officials and security forces involved in repression and human rights violations.

Just as the Islamic Republic restricts and limits us families after making us victims, preventing ceremonies for our loved ones, controlling and threatening us, restricting freedom of expression, imprisoning us, and depriving us of personal and financial security by freezing our bank accounts and seizing our properties through fabricated cases—we demand similar restrictions, such as travel bans and asset freezes, against these individuals.

We ask the United Nations and human rights organizations to conduct independent investigations into the repression and killings and make the results public. We call for a suspension or reduction of diplomatic and economic relations from foreign countries, especially in areas that aid in the repression of the people. We victims expect that foreign governments and international bodies, instead of remaining silent, will support the protests of the Iranian people and amplify their voices in international forums. Through foreign media, networks, and platforms, the victims can be the voice of this annual crime so that it reaches every freedom-loving person in the world and helps to establish justice and bring an end to dictatorship.

Our struggles will never be in vain. The Iranian people's fight will continue until the day of freedom. The time has come to stand with us to reduce the number of victims, prevent further killings, and speed up the path to a free Iran.

Toward a free and prosperous Iran.

A MESSAGE FROM CONGRESS

Rep. Joe Wilson, R-SC, Second District





Dear friends of a free Iran,

I am Joe Wilson, a member of the U.S. Congress and the Chairman of the Middle East Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. It is my honor to address the esteemed National Union for Democracy in Iran Conference. Iranian Americans in South Carolina and across America play such a positive role in continuing to advocate for a democratic and free Iran.

We are in a conflict we did not choose—of dictators with rule of gun, invading democracies with rule of law.

> *The people of Iran do not want war; the regime, sadly, demands it. The regime in Tehran has committed heinous acts of torture and murder against its own citizens, who simply demand dignity and basic human freedoms. The people of Iran deserve a government that respects their rights and self-determination.*

As Chairman of the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia Subcommittee of the Foreign Affairs Committee, I remain committed to holding the regime accountable for its crimes against the brave people of Iran.

I was grateful to extend the Maximum Pressure Act and the REGIME Act to impose severe costs on the regime, but that has not been enough. We must also have maximum support for the people of Iran, who courageously put their lives on the line in pursuit of freedom and dignity.

God bless you, and thank you for your courageous and meaningful work.



1 The Ticking Time Bomb: Khamenei's Nuclear Ambitions



PANELISTS

MATTHEW KROENIG	VP and Senior Director, Atlantic Council Scowcroft Center
MICHAEL SINGH	Senior Fellow, The Washington Institute
BEHNAM TALEBLU	Senior Fellow, Foundation for Defense of Democracies
AFSCHINEH LATIFI	Partner, Tucker & Latifi LLP

The panel, titled ***"The Ticking Time Bomb: Khamenei's Nuclear Ambitions,"*** examined the risks posed by Tehran's nuclear advancements and the potential consequences of a nuclear-armed Islamic Republic. The discussion focused on Tehran's motives, steps toward nuclear capabilities, and the international community's response.

Behnam Taleblu opened by emphasizing that the regime's pursuit of nuclear weapons has been a long-standing goal tied to its foreign policy. He noted that while Tehran has backed down a few times—such as after the Iran-Iraq war or during the JCPOA negotiations—these instances are rare. ***"The Islamic Republic has only backed down a handful of times in its history, and we can count them on one hand," Taleblu said. He explained that "deterrence by detection," or exposing the regime's covert activities, can sometimes pressure the regime into halting its efforts, but consistent strength is necessary.***

Michael Singh echoed Taleblu's points, stressing that nuclear weapons are central to the Islamic regime's national security strategy. ***"They are not pursuing nuclear weapons as a lark; it is a crucial part of their national security,"*** Singh said. He argued that the international community must impose severe consequences to deter Tehran. ***"We need to make them worry that the cost of pursuing nuclear weapons will be so high that they won't succeed,"*** Singh added.

Matthew Kroenig presented an urgent perspective, expressing concern over how close the regime is to obtaining a nuclear bomb. He referenced Secretary of State Antony Blinken's statement that Iran could produce enough fissile material for one bomb in one to two weeks. ***"Once they have enough fissile material, the game's over,"*** Kroenig warned, explaining that the regime could hide the material, making it nearly impossible for intervention. He also warned that a nuclear-armed regime could become more aggressive. ***"It's not just about deterrence; a nuclear-armed Iran could use its power for coercion,"*** Kroenig said.

The panelists discussed the role of sanctions, with Taleblu stressing that while sanctions are important, they must be paired with military threats and diplomatic pressure. ***"Sanctions are critical, but they're not enough on their own,"*** he noted, urging a comprehensive strategy that includes credible military options. He highlighted Iran's advancements in uranium enrichment, noting that the regime had enriched uranium to 60% and briefly reached 83-84%. ***"Iran is a razor's edge away from weapons-grade uranium,"*** Taleblu warned.

In terms of U.S. responses, Singh called for a more proactive approach that includes a credible military threat. ***"The regime needs to worry about what the U.S. would do if they pursue nuclear weapons,"*** Singh stated. Kroenig criticized the Biden administration's lack of a clear plan to prevent Iran from acquiring a bomb. ***"We need a strategy, and I don't see one right now,"*** he said.

2 Maximum Pressure, Maximum Support: A Bipartisan Approach to Iran Policy



PANELISTS

JASON BRODSKY	Policy Director, United Against Nuclear Iran
PATRICIA KARAM	Senior Policy Advisor on Iran, Freedom House
RAY TAKEYH	Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations
ANDREW GHALILI	Senior Policy Analyst, NUFDI

The panel titled "Maximum Pressure, Maximum Support: A Bipartisan Approach to Iran Policy" examined how the U.S. can balance pressure on the Islamic Republic while supporting the Iranian people. The discussion emphasized the need for a bipartisan U.S. policy combining sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and support for civil society.

Ray Takeyh provided historical context on U.S. sanctions against the regime, noting their evolution since the 1979 hostage crisis. He explained that while sanctions have restricted Iran's economy, the regime has shown resilience. ***"Sanctions are a viable tool, but I think we've exaggerated their impact,"*** Takeyh said, pointing out that while they've drained the regime's treasury, they haven't changed its core strategy. Tehran has adapted by diversifying partnerships and evading sanctions through complex oil trade strategies.

Patricia Karam highlighted inconsistent sanctions enforcement, especially concerning the regime's oil trade. ***"Iran is one of the most heavily sanctioned countries in the world…but enforcement has been lacking,"*** she noted. Karam called for greater cooperation with European and regional partners to close loopholes and target networks helping the Islamic Republic evade sanctions. ***"Sanctioning Chinese teapots, for example, who are the largest buyers of Iranian petroleum, could curb illicit oil sales,"*** she explained, referring to private Chinese refiners.

Jason Brodsky argued that sanctions alone aren't enough without diplomatic isolation and a credible military threat. ***"Sanctions are politically convenient and are the easiest tool for policymakers to employ, but we're missing a diplomatic and military strategy,"*** he said. He criticized the Biden administration's failure to fully enforce sanctions, allowing the regime to earn $100 billion since 2021.

Brodsky also criticized the regime's access to platforms like the U.N. General Assembly. ***"We cannot allow them to exploit our open airwaves to spread propaganda,"*** he declared, pointing to Iranian officials appearing on major U.S. networks despite being under sanctions.

The panelists agreed that U.S. policy must combine maximum pressure with support for the Iranian people. Karam stressed the importance of human rights in shaping U.S. policy, calling for stronger consequences for the regime's crackdown on protesters. ***"We need to name-and-shame human rights abusers,"*** she argued, emphasizing support for Iran's civil society and opposition movements. She also highlighted providing Iranians access to information through internet freedom initiatives and tools to bypass censorship.

The panel concluded with a consensus that the U.S. must adopt a bipartisan, long-term strategy. Takeyh warned, ***"This is going to be a protracted struggle…but the U.S. can create the context to facilitate the regime's collapse."*** The panelists agreed that while regime change must come from within Iran, the U.S. plays a crucial role in weakening the regime and empowering the Iranian people.

3 A Free Iran: Aligning America's Values and Interests





PANELISTS

NAVID MOHEBBI	Research Analyst, FDD
ELLIE COHANIM	President, Congress of Christian Leaders
WALID PHARES	Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council
MICHAEL RUBIN	Managing Editor, Kayhan London
TYMAHZ TOUMADJE	Policy Analyst, NUFDI

The panel titled "A Free Iran: Aligning America's Values and Interests" explored the strategic and moral reasons for advocating regime change in Iran. The discussion highlighted how a free Iran would improve U.S. national security, promote regional stability, and support human rights and democracy.

Walid Phares opened by discussing the Islamic Republic's role in creating instability in the Middle East since 1979. He explained how Tehran's influence extends to Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen, criticizing U.S. policy for lacking a coherent strategy. ***"The regime is winning not because they are strong, but because we are not employing the appropriate strategies to win,"*** he argued. Phares also warned of Tehran's influence within U.S. academia, media, and politics, stating, ***"There is a force that has emanated from the Islamic Republic and landed here in the United States, blocking any serious action."***

Navid Mohebbi emphasized the growing tangible threats from the regime. ***"The threats posed by Iran's nuclear program, terrorism, and regional expansionism have grown increasingly dangerous over the past 10 years,"*** Mohebbi said. He stressed that a free Iran would benefit U.S. security by removing a regime that undermines peace. He also noted that Iran could become an energy hub, reducing Europe's dependence on Russian exports.

Ellie Cohanim focused on human rights abuses and how addressing these aligns with U.S. interests. ***"Would human rights improve under a free Iran? That should go without saying,"*** she stated, explaining that the regime threatens both the Iranian people and the U.S. ***"The Iranian regime poses an unprecedented threat not just to its own people, but to the United States as well,"*** Cohanim said, referencing the regime's election meddling and assassination plots against U.S. officials.

Michael Rubin emphasized that the regime and its proxies' actions are driven by ideology, not just grievances that could be addressed through negotiations. ***"This isn't grievance-related; it is ideology pure and simple,"*** he stated. Rubin further argued that a free Iran would shift the regional balance of power, particularly by weakening Tehran's proxy militias. ***"When the Islamic Republic falls we are going to see these proxies have a very hard landing indeed,"*** Rubin stated.

The panel also discussed the regime's financial control, with Phares noting that despite sanctions, Tehran continues funding proxies and influence operations while neglecting its economy. ***"What is protecting them is not their weapons, but the influence they have cultivated abroad,"*** Phares said.

To conclude, the panelists emphasized the need for U.S. leadership in supporting the Iranian people. Cohanim stressed the moral imperative, stating, ***"A free Iran would not only benefit U.S. security, but it would also align with our core values of freedom, democracy, and human rights."***

A MESSAGE FROM SILICON VALLEY

Jacob Hellberg, Senior Advisor, Palantir Technologies



In a powerful address, Palantir Senior Advisor Jacob Helberg emphasized the critical threat posed by the Islamic Republic to global peace, stability, and human rights. Speaking before an engaged audience, Helberg began by acknowledging the personal nature of the issue for many, including those with family members suffering under this repressive regime. ***"For Jewish people like myself, this issue is a personal one too,"*** he noted, linking the regime's internal oppression with its broader goal of exporting violence and instability beyond its borders.

Helberg directly addressed Tehran's role in fueling terrorism across the Middle East, stating that the regime armed and trained Hamas, enabling the group's barbaric October 7 attacks on Israel, which claimed over 1,000 innocent lives. The regime's support for Hezbollah's attacks on Israel and its backing of the Houthis, who have closed vital shipping routes in the Red Sea, were also highlighted as key examples of the regime's destabilizing influence. ***"They're not*** between the regimes in Iran, Russia, China, and North Korea, forming what he called "a new authoritarian axis." This coalition, he argued, seeks to reverse the outcome of the Cold War and replace the U.S.-led global order with an autocratic system.

Helberg didn't mince words when discussing the Iranian regime's alliances, particularly its reliance on China. Beijing's recent public endorsement of Iran's sovereignty and territorial integrity was described as "'Orwell speak' for promoting terrorism, repressing its people, interfering in Western elections, pursuing the development of more lethal weapons, and threatening Israel and the U.S. in the Middle East and beyond."

In one of the speech's most striking moments, Helberg laid out the gravity of the current global situation, asserting that ***"this has helped push the world to its most dangerous breaking point since World War Two."***

He called for a return to the Trump administration's maximum pressure campaign against Tehran, arguing that cutting off the regime's funding of terror groups like Hamas and Hezbollah is essential.

Helberg criticized attempts to revive the Iran nuclear deal, describing such efforts as offering Tehran "a lifeline" it desperately seeks to build a nuclear weapon.

> *"This is the behavior of a mad dog on the rogue, and you cannot reward belligerent behavior and expect an improvement," he stated firmly.*

Instead, he argued for holding the regime accountable, imposing consequences, and supporting the courageous Iranian people who continue to fight for freedom.

The speech ended on a hopeful note, with Helberg expressing solidarity with the Iranian people and their desire for a ***"free Iran at peace with itself and the world."*** He voiced confidence that discussions at the conference would generate new ideas to help turn the tide against tyranny, pledging his ongoing support to the cause.

CLOSING REMARKS

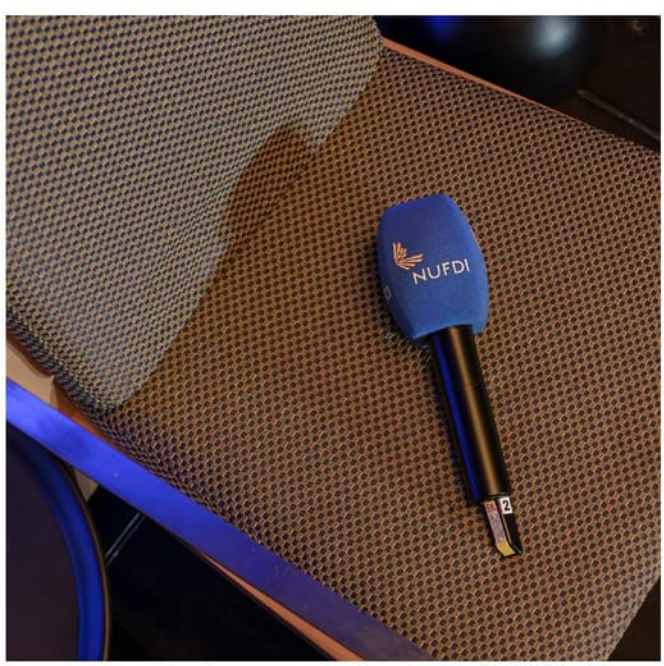
Cameron Khansarinia



In his closing remarks at the Third Annual Iran Conference, NUFDI Vice President Cameron Khansarinia expressed deep gratitude to the nearly 35 distinguished speakers who volunteered their time without compensation. He emphasized that their participation reflected a shared commitment to truth, standing with the Iranian people, and advancing U.S. national security interests.

Khansarinia also praised the dedication of NUFDI's small team of seven full-time staff, whose tireless efforts over the past two months made the conference possible. He noted that, despite the organization's limited budget, NUFDI continues to have a significant impact, serving as a critical voice for the Iranian-American community in Washington, D.C.

He encouraged continued financial support from the community, underscoring that contributions, no matter the size, are essential for sustaining NUFDI's mission. Khansarinia concluded with breaking news about an airstrike in Beirut, potentially affecting Hezbollah's leader, drawing a parallel to the hopes for the liberation of both the Lebanese and Iranian people. He closed by inviting attendees to stay engaged and return for next year's conference.



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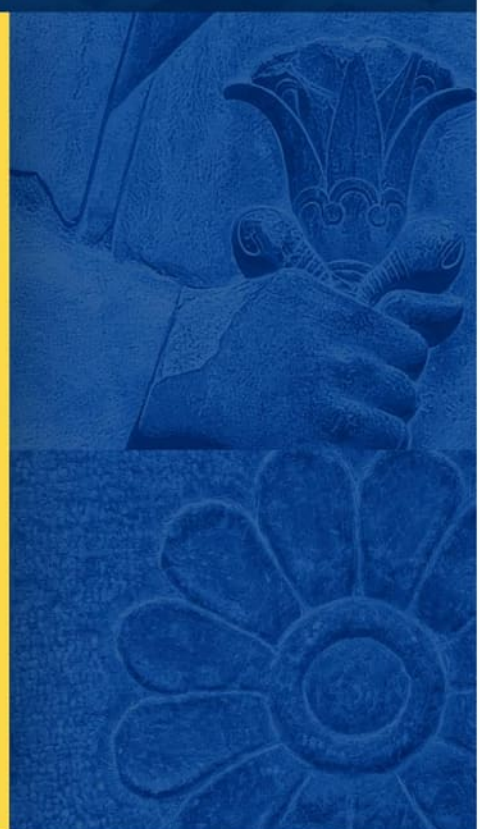
"As recently as five years ago, the Iran conversation in Washington, D.C. was dominated primarily by the Islamic Republic's nefarious lobby and secondarily by fringe groups. In only a few years, those two well-funded, state-backed interest groups were given a run for their money by an underdog—NUFDI. Now, finally, there is a true and honest voice for Iranians in Washington."

—HRH REZA PAHLAVI, CROWN PRINCE OF IRAN



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