

Why Trump could topple Iran's tyrants and secure his place in history

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'Doomed' Iran regime can no longer 'hide' nationwide grievances from its people: Former US national intel manager for Iran

Panelists Norman Roule and Karim Sadjadpour discuss the raging anti-regime protests in Iran and on 'Special Report.'

The difference between the illusion of power and its reality is the difference between Ayatollah Khamenei and President Donald Trump. Trump is on the cusp of joining the very small number of American presidents who reorder the world. Khamenei is on the cusp of history's abyss reserved for murderous fanatics. If Trump tips Khamenei over that edge, the president's place in history will be secure. He will have returned freedom to the great Persian people.

The belief in the unlimited power of a totalitarian government to maintain itself and protect its rulers is a dangerous conceit, as Syria's Bashar al-Assad and Venezuela's Nicholas Maduro have both discovered. It may be that Ayatollah Khamenei is in the process of discovering the same hard reality: No government, no matter how ruthless, can endure for centuries or even decades in the face of a resentful population.

Not even the rulers of Rome at the height of the Caesars or the Severan dynasty were guaranteed an endless run of power. The Soviet Union, which possessed both nuclear weapons and an omnipresent security service, survived only from 1922 to 1991.

The Assad family took power in 1971 when Hafez Al-Assad consolidated control in Syria and kept it until December 2024, when his son and other family members were obliged to flee to Russia.

"Papa Doc" Duvalier took power in Haiti in 1957 and held it to his death in 1971. He was succeeded by his son Jean-Claude Duvalier, nicknamed "Baby Doc," who was forced to flee in February 1986.

Hugo Chavez first tried to gain power via a coup in Venezuela in 1992, failed, and then won power in 1999, which he never relinquished until his death, when Nicholas Maduro took over the police state until this month, when the American military assisted American law enforcement on the orders of President Trump to remove Maduro to a New York Jail cell.

The American government endures because it rests upon the consent of the governed. Any political entity that doesn't, enjoys, at best, an uneasy control punctuated by attempted uprisings of a people desiring freedom and prosperity.

We are watching in real time the third effort of the people of Iran to throw off the shackles of the "Islamic Republic of Iran," imposed on them by the fanatic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1979, which has oppressed the Iranian people for decades years. Khomeini ousted the Shah of Iran in 1979 and now the Shah's son may return as a constitutional monarch to replace Khomeini's hand-picked successor, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. This ayatollah is as ruthless as the first and hundreds are being mowed down by his thugs in a desperate attempt to hang on to control of their kleptocracy, but the people of Iran have seen their life savings wiped out, their drinking water polluted and their electricity subject to repeated outages. The country is on the ropes and, humbled by Israeli and American air and missile power last summer, the people have begun their third week of massive protests. If either the U.S. or the Jewish state provide the final push, the great people of Persia — older than Christianity by 500 years — will re-emerge and regain their place among the great civilizations on the planet.

Even as the mullahs and their shock troops in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps shudder and fire wildly into crowds of hundreds of thousands, so too does the dictatorship of Cuba's Miguel Díaz-Canel, successor to Fidel, and then Raul Castro look shaky. As with Venezuela, and Syria and the Soviets before them, the Cuban regime depends upon the illusion of permanence. But, their people cannot eat illusions or drink fantasies.

Three times before, the tyrants of Iran faced serious challenges to their power, but each time — in the late 1990s, during the 2009 Green Movement and in 2022 with the Iranian women's movement which is widely known as the "Woman, Life, Freedom," — the power of the ayatollahs was challenged, but those challenges were not supported with even encouraging words by the American presidents of that era. Ayatollah Khomeini took power when Jimmy Carter was in office, and Khamenei kept power during the aborted revolutions that happened under Bill Clinton, Barack Obama and Joe Biden.

In this present convulsion of Iran, President Donald Trump has been a vocal supporter of the Iranian people seeking freedom. Just as he did with Maduro, President Trump has issued many warnings to Khamenei. Just as Maduro ignored them, so too has Khamenei responded with mockery of the president of the United States. The ayatollah has also cut off his nation's internet and cellular services and ordered his thugs to open fire.

Will it work again? Nobody knows. All we know is that a repressed people cannot forever be held down. And that the presidents who help free them earn history's applause and respect.