

# No 'regime change' moves against Iran

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Ilan Berman argues that the one surefire way to eliminate the threat of an atomic Iran is for Washington policy-makers to incite a regime change, "Pre-empting Iran's ambitions," Op-Ed, Friday. Apparently, we did not learn our lesson when we overthrew Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh in 1953.

Unless America wants to risk another violent Iranian revolution and a repeat of events similar to the Iranian hostage crisis, policy-makers should not directly intervene in the domestic politics of Iran. America simply cannot afford to take the risks that are involved in an overt regime change.

Fortunately, America may not have to do anything for political power to change hands. This year, new members will be elected to the Assembly of Experts.

This forum, according to the Iranian Constitution, elects the spiritual leader and supervises his activities. Moderate and progressive clerics stand an excellent chance of gaining seats in this predominantly conservative forum. Though this may not directly result in Mahmoud Ahmadinejad losing his presidential seat, it would drastically reduce his influence and perhaps even moderate his radical views.

Iranians may have a high measure of appreciation for American culture, but they also have a high degree of mistrust of American policies. Open, direct support for a regime change would have the same effect as a military strike: It would increase the nationalist sentiment within the Islamic republic and tighten the current regime's hold on power. Furthermore, it likely would speed up the production of a nuclear bomb.

The State Department should continue its role of disseminating truthful information to the Iranian people - but that should be the limit of our involvement. Anything more risks helping Iran rally around the flag in opposition to America. Inciting a coup should be considered only when America and American lives are directly at risk.

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