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Cyrus Bina to Speak at Conference on Iran

Summary: Cyrus Bina, a Distinguished Research Professor of economics at the University of Minnesota, Morris, will be a featured presenter at a conference this week dealing with the topic of Iran.

(February 29, 2012)-Cyrus Bina, a Distinguished Research Professor of economics at the University of Minnesota, Morris, will be a featured presenter at a conference this week dealing with the topic of Iran.

The conference, taking place in Santa Barbara, California from March 1 – 3, is entitled “Constitutional Politics in Modern Iran: A Re-Examination and Implications for the Future”. The conference will assemble an international group of foreign policy experts, constitutional lawyers, Iran specialists, academics, and journalists to look at Iran’s constitutional political history over the past century. According to conference materials, speakers will use that history as a context to “examine the challenges of a transition from Iran’s current theocratic constitution to a more democratic mode of governance and propose recommendations that could meet the needs of the Iranian people in the 21st century.”

“This conference is important in many ways,” said Bina. “It tells the Americans what Iran and Iranians stood for in recent history and how the interference of the U.S. government had proved fatal in killing of democracy in Iran by the CIA coup of 1953.” It also, said Bina, tells “how the 1979 Iranian Revolution was a response to such interferences.” According to Professor Bina, his presentation will focus on and illuminate the primary objectives of Iran’s 1906 Constitutional Revolution, which were to “(1) abolish autocracy and institute democracy, and (2) to put an end to foreign intrusion and prevent ‘Great Powers’ from infringing on Iran’s sovereignty.”

In 1906, the Iranian people rose up against centuries of foreign intrusion and oppressive authoritarian regimes, and established the first parliamentary constitution which opened the door to a democratic form of government. However, according to Bina, Iran’s ability to sustain and develop its democratic aspirations has been severely hindered by the West. In 1953, when Iran’s popular Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh nationalized Iran’s petroleum industry and oil reserves, the U.S. and British governments engaged in a covert operation to depose Mosaddegh and overthrow the democratically elected civilian government. “Operation Ajax”, as it was called, ousted the Prime minister and strengthened the hand of the Shah, whose rule became increasingly oppressive.

In 1978-79, the people revolted against the Shah, overthrew his regime, and put in its place an Islamic Republic, governed by a theocratic constitution, and led by the Ayatollah Khomeini. According to Bina, that transition was “brought to fruition, among all other alternatives, by the Carter administration and with the influence of Jimmy Carter’s National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski.”

With Iran’s constitutional political history and the West’s intrusion into that history as a context, Bina intends to offer suggestions for U.S. foreign policy toward Iran while also offering recommendations for Iran’s transition toward a more constitutionally democratic society in the 21st Century.

Bina, a well-known expert on the political economy of Iran as well as on the economics of oil, energy and globalization,

will also address the role of oil and its alleged connection with dictatorship.

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