

**What Makes Tehran Tick:
Islamic Ideology & Hegemonic Interests**

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Dr. Tanter: Thank you very much. I was expecting a much longer introduction. No, not really. [Laughter].

I'm pleased to be here again, and I would like to say that I wrote my PhD thesis in 1964, before most of you were born and the subject was on terrorism and counter-terrorism and I had to decide whether to become a terrorist or a counter-terrorist, and I found that terrorists lived in caves; counter-terrorists spoke at hotels before distinguished groups. So it was something that was slam dunk to decide to make this choice. [Laughter].

What I'd like to do is talk about nuclear proliferation with special reference to the Islamic Republic. We wrote a book which you can get on Amazon called *What Makes Tehran Tick* and we also have another book called *Baghdad Ablaze* which is mainly about the Iranian influence in Iraq. *What Makes Tehran Tick* deals more with the nuclear side, but takes up terrorism as well. *Baghdad Ablaze* doesn't spend much time at all on the nuclear side.

There are going to be three topics to discuss: the nuclear weapons program, the Islamic Republic of Iran, that's the formal name; secondly, the December 2007 national intelligence estimate of the U.S. government and its impact on the Republic's nuclear weapons program; and countering the threat from the Islamic Republic of Iran, in other words what can be done, what are the policy options.

First of all, it's important to understand why Iran needs the bomb. The issue is not whether Iran is building the bomb. All the evidence indicates that it is. It's enriching uranium at a very fast pace. It's acquiring centrifuges in order to enrich that uranium. The issue is why.

One of the reasons is because the bomb is a guarantee of survival of the regime against its defiant population. The regime is not going to use the bomb against the people, but in order to show the people of Iran that the Islamic Republic is here to stay it has to defy the international community. It has to expand its revolution abroad in order to survive at home, and it has to defy the international community, and getting the bomb is one way of doing so.

Establishing global Islamic rule is a necessity on the part of the regime for its own survival. The nature of the regime is such that unless it expands throughout the region creating, if you will, a Shiite crescent all the way from Tehran through Sadr City in Baghdad into southern Lebanon as a first step to radicalizing, if you will, the entire Uma, the Islamic world. Establishing global Islamic rule is not a choice, it's something of a necessity.

In addition, the Islamic Republic of Iran would like to exercise hegemony. I gave a talk the other day and someone said who is she? I said no, no. It's not a person. Hegemonic rule is when you assert your control over the neighborhood. So Persian interests under the Shah were dispositive. They were controlling. These interests were very important. In other words, Iran was an expansionary power before the Islamic revolution in 1979. But if you add the revolutionary fervor to the Persian interests in the region, you have a combustible mix.

This is one of my favorite cartoons. You heard the story about the scorpion who asked the frog, "Would you take me across the Jordan River?" The frog says, "But if I take you, you'll sting me." The scorpion says, "Why would I sting you and we both die?" So the frog calculated that it's in their mutual interest for the scorpion not to sting, but in fact halfway across the Jordan River the scorpion stings the frog. What happens? They both die.

The frog says, "Why did you do that?" He says, "I'm a scorpion. It's in my nature. I sting for a living, I sting to die."

What we're arguing here is that if you ask the scorpion will you help in Baghdad, you the frog, the scorpion's going to say but of course. But in fact what is the Islamic Republic of Iran doing in Iraq? It is supplying explosively formed projectiles across the border. Those projectiles are killing coalition forces.

Now you might say that the surge and the counter-insurgency strategy and the intelligence that comes out of the counter-insurgency strategy's protection of the people will eventually make these weapons not unusable, but not controlling, they're not going to kill Americans. But the capability is there. The weapons have come. The EFPs are there.

With respect to the nature of the regime, Islamist ideology is very important. We should try hard to explore it, the revolution to the world. We shall confront the

world with our ideology. This is Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini.

Now many scholars, Iran, especially the area experts, discount the rhetoric. They say these are people with whom we can do business. Don't worry about the rhetoric. The rhetoric is made for internal consumption. I think it demeans, it's very demeaning of Western scholars to second-guess the Ayatollahs. We at the Iran Policy Committee assert, on the basis of evidence, that there is a correlation between words and deeds, and therefore you should listen very carefully at the words.

In addition there is something called [veliat afahi] which means rule of the jurisprudent. That is the clerics should rule. It would be as if Billy Graham said look here, I should rule, I should be President. To hell with elections, I want to be President. The clerics are unelected and they assert themselves as the final arbiters of who rules in Iran.

Of course there are elections that go on top of the clerical rule, and the elections appear to suggest that Iran is a democratic state, but it is not a democratic state. Just as fascist Mussolini's state of Hitler's fascist state were not democracies. So is the Islamic Republic of Iran not a democracy.

You notice we have Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini on one side, and Grand Ayatollah Ali Hamine on the other side. Hamine is really not qualified to be an Ayatollah, but he shot his way, if you will into this title. Hamine is actually qualified, he's a distinguished jurist. But the point is that with respect to the Islamist ideology, they take it seriously.

Now Ahmadinejad, the President of Iran, is the one who gets the press. But behind Ahmadinejad is the Supreme Ruler.

This Shiite crescent is the issue about which I just spoke, the nature of the Islamic Republic of Iran is to expand according to this idea of a Shiite crescent. But in addition, the interest of the Persian Empire, which of course preceded the 1979 revolution, also reinforcing, if you will, the nature of the regime. So the regime is expansionary by nature on top of which you find the Persian interest kicking in, making for clashes with others in the neighborhood.

I've been to Saudi Arabia, to Kuwait and various places in the Gulf, and my Arab friends are deathly afraid of the Iranian threat but they don't say anything.

I'm on Al Jazeera once a month. Why? Because I tell it like it is with respect to the Iranian threat. They can't find people in the region who will dare criticize the Islamic Republic of Iran. I've heard that my name is - I have a very thick file in Tehran on me, but don't worry, there's this dog running around who is making sure there are no threats here. [Laughter].

Here's your friend Ahmadinejad, looking like something of a comedian, but he's dressed that way in order to visit a uranium enrichment facility.

What about the capabilities of the Islamic Republic prior to 2003? In relation to the national intelligence estimate about Iran's capabilities. There has been a new strategy since 2003 and what I want to do is to go into some detail about how the Islamic Republic of Iran has accelerated its nuclear capabilities, and in addition developed its advanced missile program as well.

This is the Bushehr nuclear reactor. It's the reactor that the Russians have been providing materials for. It's really a cover for Iran to justify why it needs to enrich uranium. Enriching uranium supposedly as a feed stock for the Bushehr facility. But in fact the enrichment process is going on at a far greater pace and a far greater level than you would need if you were only intent upon creating enough feedstock fuel for electric power generation.

It's a thousand megawatt facility built by the Russians, almost operational, and as I mentioned, it acts as a justification for uranium enrichment because reactors need enriched uranium.

It takes about maybe four to five percent level of enrichment of uranium for civilian electrical generation. If you can go up to 80 to 90 percent you can get into the nuclear fuel level.

This is a uranium mine at Savand. It can produce over 130,000 tons of uranium annually - enough for 60 tons of yellow cake, to create about seven bombs a year. China has helped to build that site in return for which China has negotiated long term contracts for energy.

The uranium conversion facility at Isfahan in central Iran. It's been operating since 2004. It converts the yellow cake into UF₆ fed into the centrifuge machines.

Iran has probably at least 3,000 centrifuge machines operating. Centrifuge machines, as many of you know, are in cascades. The Islamic Republic of Iran has developed its own machine tool expertise such that they don't have to go outside in order to purchase centrifuge machines, but they need certain kinds of equipment. That's why one of the things that can be done is to increase the level of sanctions on Tehran such that Tehran would have a harder time acquiring some of the proliferation materials. But the Islamic Republic of Iran has the complete nuclear fuel cycle located within the country. This is why I'm emphasizing the fact that it has the mines, it has the enrichment, it has conversion facilities. One of the most important enrichment facilities is at Natanz, and it was revealed by the National Council of Resistance of Iran in 2002, August of 2002, and a year later the U.S. State Department placed the National Council of Resistance of Iran on its terrorist list which is a little strange given the fact that the most significant evidence about the Islamic Republic of Iran's enrichment came from this opposition group and it's been validated by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The National Council of Resistance of Iran is a parliament in exile. The Mujahedin-e Khalq, MEK, or People's Mujahedin of Iran is the largest constituent unit in the NCRI, the National Council of Resistance of Iran. Both have been instrumental in providing key intelligence not only on the nuclear side but also on the terrorism side as well as with respect to Iraq. But the breakthrough in terms of intelligence came at the Natanz facility. Google Earth is very important in this kind of a presentation, by the way.

As I mentioned, 3,000 centrifuges were installed. In April 2008 Iran began installing an additional 6,000 centrifuges underground. Again, this information comes from the Iranian opposition.

I gave a talk the other day and someone said look, been there, done that, we know for a fact that opposition groups have a horse in the race, a dog in the fight, why believe their intelligence? Well, don't. Compare what they say with information you have acquired on other grounds. In other words, use the opposition intelligence as lead information to lead you not down the wrong path, but lead you in such a fashion that you can complement what you know from other sources.

When the Natanz facility was revealed, the U.S. intelligence agencies knew this information, but had not

provided all of it to the International Atomic Energy Agency. But one of the things that the opposition group did was to go public with the information in such a fashion as to give the United States an impetus to providing in fact more of that information to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

If you're in the business of generating electric power you don't need 6,000 centrifuges and you don't bury them underground. You bury them underground because you think you're in violation of the transparency requirements of the International Atomic Energy Agency, especially the additional protocol which Iran had signed but is trying to get out of as we speak.

Here's a copy of the National Intelligence Estimate of November 2007. We judge with high confidence that in the fall of 2003 Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program. This got quite a lot of press. It implied that Iran had given up the nuclear track, nuclear bomb track. It also said we assess with moderate confidence that the Islamic Republic of Iran had not restarted its nuclear weapons program as of mid 2007.

Now weaponization is the least important part of a nuclear bomb program. What's the most important part is the enrichment, is the mining, the whole nuclear fuel cycle of which weaponization is the last part. Marrying the bomb with the missile comes at the end of a long process. Once you've developed the nuclear fuel that is explosive, that's the most difficult part.

After the national intelligence estimate came out, Michael McConnell, the Director of National Intelligence, issued a statement that if he had now to think about it he would probably change a few things, especially with respect to how the U.S. government would describe the Iranian nuclear program. In effect, he walked back from the NIE. But the problem is that the NIE weakened the credibility of the negotiations track with Iran because the Iranian regime said look, if the NIE, which got all the publicity that we've given up in effect the quest for the bomb, if that is the thing that everyone believes, we'll go with that and we'll continue to enrich, we can move scot free, and the statement by McConnell in March 2008 got very little publicity, even though he tried to give it a bit.

Now what did the Islamic Republic of Iran do during this period between 2003 and 2004? There was a decision made in the Supreme National Security Council of the Islamic Republic in August, and there was a place called Lemazan Shian which was the site of the weaponization. It

was raised. It was in effect moved. So the NIE was correct that in the fall of 2003, in December specifically, the Iranian regime had ceased weaponizing, but it ceased weaponizing in order to go underground. It ceased weaponizing not because there was an intent to give up its quest for the bomb, but for the purpose of going underground.

The Lemazan site was exposed by the Mujahedin-e Khalq, the MEK, in May of 2003 and one of the things that you'll notice is that the site - Lemazan Shian has never been investigated thoroughly because the Islamic Republic does not want the inspectors to see what has been going on. But it was exposed by the MEK in the spring of 2003. All of a sudden in December 2005 there's a soccer field, a football field, where it used to be the facility that was there in 2003. So what happened?

Ahmadinejad was the Mayor of Tehran at the time, having been appointed by his colleague Ali Hameni, the Ayatollah. Ahmadinejad said look, I had no choice. The City Council forced me to build a soccer field and therefore we decided to get rid of all of this nuclear facility. This is a joke. The facility is underground. The inspectors are not allowed to go underground because it's a militarily sensitive place.

Now Lemazan II was exposed in November 2004. Access not provided to the International Atomic Energy Agency. But there is photographic evidence to indicate that it is also a facility.

There's another one called Mozade, nuclear command and control center, exposed in February 2008 by the resistance. I will go more quickly through that slide.

This slide is a bit busy, but the most important part of it has to do with the metal case casting. There's no other rationale for metal casting in the manner in which the Iranian regime is doing except for bomb-making purposes.

Now let's talk about the delivery systems.

Shahab, the shooting star in Farsi. The Shahab-3 missiles are very important with a range of 880 miles. The new version is a little longer. Iran is producing about 90 a year, has over 300. Against what threat is Iran concerned that it would develop a missile envelope that threatens southern Europe? Is Italy threatening Iran? Not really. Israel? We looked at the statements that the Islamic Republic of Iran has made about Israel in our

research about *What Makes Iran Tick* and we discovered that the leaders of Iran pay virtually no attention to what the Israeli leadership says, and when they do the leaders of Iran discount the Israeli threats. So we find that the expression of hostility to Israel is way out of proportion to the perceived threat from Israel. The expression of hostility towards the United States is in direct proportion to the perceived threat from the United States.

We inferred from these observations that the Islamic Republic of Iran is quite rightly threatened by the United States, but not at all threatened by Israel and that ideology more than interest drives the decisionmaking about Israel. So rather than postulating that Tehran is reacting to Israel, we've actually done the research looking at thousands of statements and doing the content analysis of these statements, and looking at not only what the words were but what actually the deeds were in order to make an inference concerning whether interest or ideology drives decisionmaking in Tehran about Israel.

This is the missile envelope for the Shahab-3s. They're working on the Shahab-4 as well. This is another example of the missile envelope. A different way of saying the same thing. The Shahab-3 takes in, the last line, Turkey through Egypt.

This is from the book, *What Makes Tehran Tick*, one of the graphics in the book.

Let's talk about options. A package of options.

First of all missile defense. Poland and Czech Republic are really on the right track with respect to trying to sign on to a missile defense system against the Iranian threat, especially in relation to the Russian invasion of Georgia. You need, in addition, financial restrictions on Iranian banks.

I mentioned to Secretary Rice that if she has said, in fact she has said, that the Iranian regime is the central bank of international terrorism and proliferation, then I said why is it not the case that the Central Bank of Iran is not on the terrorist list of the Treasury Department? I've asked this question a couple of times - at Treasury, at State and on the Hill - and I'm hopeful that in the next month Congress will act to push the administration by labeling the Central Bank of Iran as not only a terrorist entity but a proliferation entity as well.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, the Khudz Force, Bank Sepah, Bank Saderat and various other banks are

on the terrorist list but not the Central Bank. The Central Bank of Iran is the main method by which the Republic of Iran gets around the sanctions. The Central Bank of Iran goes to Dubai, they go to Africa, and they get banks willing to skirt the sanctions. These banks are willing to do so because Central Bank of Iran is not on the terrorist list.

But another thing that's not on the table is empowering the Iranian opposition to pressure the Islamic Republic of Iran.

So you need missile defense, you need financial restrictions, but you also need a political option. Of course you keep the threat of military action on the table, but our research indicates that Tehran pays attention to the American threat but doesn't believe that America bogged down in Afghanistan and Iraq is willing to utilize force against Iran. So the credibility of our threat has diminished with our being bogged down. I don't think we are so bogged down in Iraq, but that's the perception - based upon our research or the leadership of Iran.

With respect to countering the Iranian missile threat, the terminal high altitude area defense is something that the Gulf Cooperation Council has expressed interest in, especially Kuwait. I'm not so sure that this will be implemented but it needs to be linked to the U.S. global missile shield defense system.

As I mentioned, Kuwait really would prefer to link with the U.S. defense shield instead of just continuing to spend money on the Patriot.

There's something called the Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance that's European based and they've taken a very hard line for missile defense to counter the Iranian threat.

The radar base in the Czech Republic and ten Patriot battalions in Poland, very important. The Russian invasion of Georgia has helped to stimulate the Polish acceptance of the Patriot battalions, but for some reason the Russians are upset about the fact that Poland and the Czech Republic are concerned. Poland is much firmer, and the Czech Republic is beginning to come around.

I teach at Georgetown, and the former President of the Czech Republic is coming to my class on October 8th, and the former President of Spain as well, and they're both concerned with the Iranian threat and willing to run risks

with respect to the Russian reaction than the people in power in their respective countries now.

The threat of military attack on the nuclear missile sites. This is what you read about in the New Yorker and various other newspapers. You go to Israel or look in the Israeli press, every day there's an article about the possibility of Israeli air strikes.

Military action would be more successful if it's held in conjunction with means of countering possible Iranian responses, steps to calm the oil markets, and if you lay the ground work for post-strike diplomacy. But even then, the credibility of the threat has been diminished by Iraq and Afghanistan.

What about financial restrictions at the United Nations? It's very important to have a complement to the December 2006 UN Security Council Resolution that lists various Iranian entities with respect to the Iranian nuclear and missile defense programs. Another resolution, March 2007, that puts Bank Sepah, it names Bank Sepah as a proliferation funding entity, and it adds the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps. In March the UN Security Council voted again to bring more individuals and entities under sanctions.

The Iran Policy Committee that I helped found has briefed at Treasury, and we've provided them with a list of individuals at various Iranian facilities and we've suggested that they be added to the list. We can do this in part because we're researchers and scholars who come across information that otherwise would be, could be considered to be providing material support to a foreign terrorist organization. We're not. We're simply passing on information that the U.S. government may or may not have, and having served at the National Security Council Staff, having been a recipient of NIEs and the like, I'm convinced that some of the information the U.S. government does not have. That may be too strong.

Treasury cut off Bank Saderat from the U.S. financial system. Bank of America will not deal with Bank Saderat. But I was in Paris a couple of months ago and I found that the Bank Saderat offices were opened up. They were doing business. So I gave a talk to the French National Assembly and also met with some of the leaders of President Sarkozy's party, and I said you might as well start putting Bank Saderat and Bank Sepah on the French terrorist entity list, but I'm not so sure that France will do that.

In October 2007 the State Department listed the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps as a foreign terrorist organization and Treasury designated nine of the affiliate entities of the IRGC as terrorist entities.

In January 2008, additional sanctions were made.

But what does Ahmadinejad say about these sanctions? He said, "We will never give up our gold," i.e. uranium enrichment, "for your peanuts." Such things as economic sanctions. Such things as concessions. He won't give up the gold.

What about leverage on the Islamic Republic? It's very important to get the leverage. When the U.S. government utilizes its capability, Tehran buckles.

During the 1980 Iraq-Iran War, Ayatollah Khomeini was adamant for total victory, but he retreated when the U.S. government backed the enemy of Iran, Iraq.

Let me summarize by saying that you need a policy package. You need to keep on the table the threat of military action. As well, you need missile defense, especially for the allies in Europe and in the Middle East. You need the financial restrictions, particularly with respect to banks. But you need also to open up to the Iranian resistance by taking them from the foreign terrorist organizations list, in part because they're not terrorists. We've done studies of that as well, and we found that all the allegations on the administrative record about the main Iranian opposition groups, all these allegations are simply false and we don't have leverage over the Iranian regime in part because we have the opposition to the regime on our terrorist list.

I think I'd like to open this up for questions, now.

Moderator: We have time for just one.

Question: Very briefly. How important is the internal opposition to the Iranian government? How important do they perceive that threat to themselves?

Dr. Tanter: Good question.

In our studies we found that the Iranian regime pays attention to the main opposition groups that we have on our terrorist lists 350 percent more than all other opposition groups combined.

Now if you ask what is the capability of these people, the opposition has no weapons. They have training, they have money, they could have more money and more training if we took them off the terrorist list.

I'll just end on this. There have been three major sets of negotiations between Iran and the United States since 2003. The first item on the Iranian agenda is the Mujahedin-e Khalq. Disburse them or extradite them to Iran has been the first request. If Iran wants to get rid of the operation that much, the opposition then could be used as a source of leverage.

I want to thank this group for its patience, talking about the Iranian threat and ways to counter that threat, and I will turn it over to Mr. Sutter.

[Applause].

Moderator: Thank you again, Dr. Tanter.

There are a few copies of excerpts from Dr. Tanter's book on *Baghdad Ablaze* up here on the front chair that you're welcome to pick up.

We would like to thank you for your presentation and give you a book that is both complementary and complimentary - complementary to the gift we gave you last year because it describes the Honor Guard at the Air Force Memorial, and complimentary for your excellent presentation.

Dr. Tanter: Thank you very much.

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