



owens: Iran provides an important example of the move toward democracy and modernization in the Islamic world. It's unique in some ways and similar to the recent Arab movements in other ways. I wonder if you might start by commenting on the status of the Iranian mode of Islamic democracy today.

peterson: Iran set a precedent in 1979 with the Islamic Revolution, which was meant to be both Islamic and democratic at the same time (hence the title, the Islamic Republic, which is still used to de-

I think this really helps us to understand why this hostility persists after 32 years. Neither side can help but stick its fingers in the eye of the other. It's so self-defeating. Both sides know that, both sides recognize that, but actually digging your way out is a completely different story. That message is a real surprise, I think, to a lot of Americans, although it's not such a surprise to Iranians, who often have couched those things in this way. It was Iranians who told me of the Iranian sense of Manifest Destiny, and you can certainly see that in terms of how the nation conducts its business regarding the nuclear program and everything else. It's like they are saying: we will not be dictated to. That's a lot of what this revolution in 1979 was about, and they act that out every single day.

owens: And yet you say in your book that this could also be a way to bring us together, and that we have natural alliances of some sort, though it seems so far away.

going to attack us, or they're both going to attack us." So our own noise about this issue is what's going to convince the Iranians, one way or the other, to go for a nuclear weapon.

owens: One last question. Speaking of bloviation, Ahmadinejad is frequently lampooned here in the U.S. as much as he's demonized for his semi-coherent exhortations on the lack of homosexuals in Iran or his Holocaust denial. Is he crazy like a fox? What is your sense of his coherence and political sensibility?

peterson: He's very smart. He also,

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