



Issam Fares Institute for Public
Policy and International Affairs

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العامة والشؤون الدولية

“Manufactured Crisis: the Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare”

Lecture by Dr. Gareth Porter

June 9th, 2014

Summary by Amir Richani

Despite the recent rounds of talks between Iran and the six major world powers to reach a settlement for the decade-long dispute over Iran’s nuclear threat, little is known about the details of this crisis.

Dr. Gareth Porter, an investigative historian and journalist and author of a new book titled, “Manufactured Crisis: The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare”, spoke in an open roundtable discussion at the Issam Fares Institute about what he called the “manufactured crisis” of Iran’s nuclear program. He introduced his most recent investigative work on the successful efforts of the Bush Administration and Israel to steer various actions taken of Western nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to claim that Iran’s ‘covert’ nuclear program is militarized.

Dr. Porter started with a brief summary and analysis of the main excavations presented in his book, mainly focusing on the evolution of the Iranian nuclear crisis and the anomalies surrounding its development. Since 2006, Dr. Porter had gradually come to identify certain contradictions that do not quite fit the perceived threat of Iran’s nuclear program, leading him to unravel the pervasive dubious intelligence dossier that has developed and been widely accepted by the international community. Most importantly, investigating the “laptop documents”, which were allegedly stolen from the laptop of one of Iran’s nuclear scientists and handed to the Central Intelligence Agency in 2004 and included a series of drawings of a plan to acquire a nuclear weapon.

Based on his extensive investigative research and lengthy interview with a high ranking German official who maintained solid relations with the German Federal Intelligence Service (BND), Dr. Porter noted that the source of these documents was Al Mujahedeen-el-Khalq (MEK), an Iranian dissident group which had a patron-client relationship with Saddam Hussein’s regime during the Iran-Iraq war and close ties with Israel. Dr. Porter later discovered that the documents were of Israeli origin which he explains in detail his book.

In his lecture, Dr. Porter contextualized the events and political dynamics that navigated the current nature of US-Iranian relations. “If we go back in time until the 1990s, the first time the US talked about Iran as a threat for the development of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and nuclear power was at the end of the Cold War,” explained Porter. With the threat of the Soviet Union gone and weakened Iraqi military power after the first

Gulf War, he added, the US was desperate to find a threat that would justify their levels of appropriation of the national security state.

With regards to US foreign policy, he highlighted that the neo-conservatives had previously a plan to amplify the Iranian nuclear threat as a convenient alibi for military intervention to redraw the political map of the Middle East, but that plan was hampered by the 2003 US Iraqi-invasion. Therefore, there lies a hidden story behind all the accusations, sanctions and the pressure by the US, Israel and the international community, particularly the IAEA on Iran's nuclear program. The trajectory of the imminent Iranian nuclear threat is based on a handful of powerful actors with a particular political agenda and documents with little veracity.

During the Q&A session at the end of the lecture, questions revolved around the technical solutions that were proposed to Iran to enrich uranium off Iranian soil and the IAEA's intrusive inspection. Other questions focused on the recent rounds of negotiations and Iran's strategy throughout, knowing that Dr. Porter had interviewed Mohammad Javad Zarif, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Tehran before his arrival to Beirut.