

Transcript — George Friedman on America's Real Iran Goals: Regime Change or Regional Reset?

Christian Smith: Hello and welcome to this podcast from Geopolitical Futures. I'm Christian Smith. The ongoing US Israeli strikes on Iran come after a protracted period of tension, negotiations and military buildup and less than nine months after last year's 12 day war. So although not surprising, the current attacks are still shocking, particularly the killing of Iran's supreme leader for a region that has known his leadership for more than 35 years. So on this podcast, I am joined by Geopolitical Futures chairman and founder George Friedman to unpack how we got here, where it could go next, and what it means for the great powers interested in the region. George, hello. Welcome. Along to start with, how much of an intelligence failure was this for Iran? Or perhaps do you think there's something of the Venezuela situation here where perhaps there were elements inside Iran that were they believed that the Iranian supreme leader's time was up and they wanted a change and they thought this might help bring about it?

George Friedman: Well, I think they wanted a change. At the same time, they didn't want the devastation that the US and the Israelis are placing on Iran. Iran's intelligence failure is that they really didn't have an intelligence service operating in the United States, tracking the air power and so on and so forth. Also, although they should have had more intelligence coming from the Arab states in which the United States had bases, they simply were not focused on it. And that happens. Pearl harbor happened and it was not anybody's mistake. They just didn't anticipate it and didn't do it. I think they thought that the key the I think they thought that the negotiation process could go on indefinitely. And I think they wanted as much time as they could get and they thought they might get out of it from that and maybe that persuaded them that there was not going to be an attack. The day before, Trump said that he was very irritated that they would not get rid of the nuclear capability. Remember, fundamentally, there's only one issue at stake here, getting rid of the nuclear capability. They were holding onto it, claiming they needed it for scientific research and so on. The United States wanted them to get rid of it, and that really was the fundamental principle here of this war. So, you know, intelligence is partly spies. Intelligence is partly analysis. They analyze the situation wrong.

Christian Smith: There's a bit of an interesting pattern that's emerging here with things that have happened over the last year or so in terms of the attacks on Hezbollah and then Hamas and the leaders there congregating to discuss negotiations. And now the same with Iran and

then being attacked in the process. You do wonder why they, why they were so exposed. I mean, let's, let's take it back to basics here, George. In a world where the US is trying to withdraw, for want of a better word, from, from regions it doesn't want to be involved in, it's less interested in Europe, of course, less interested in anything outside Western hemisphere, why does the US still care about Iran?

George Friedman: We have care about Iran plus its nuclear capability. So the only nation in the Middle east that we're engaging with this way is Iran. And the statement is it's because of its nuclear capability. And I think that's true. One of the things that I've mentioned before is 9 11. It's not understood in much of the world how much of an impact that had not only the American population, but American policymakers. So here we have a country where Al Qaeda is still fragmented, but there Hezbollah is operating there. All sorts of other Islamist, what we would call, might call terror organizations or militias are operating there. If they get a nuclear weapon. Okay. Given the ideology that currently exists, not necessarily of Islam, but of current Islamic world, we saw 9 11, which was a catastrophic event in the United States. Now imagine a nuclear 9 11. That is a situation where nuclear weapon is loaded on a ship flying a foreign flag, a French flag or a Polish flag or something sailing into New York harbor and detonating. We already know that the kinds of groups that might do such a thing are operating and are supported by Iran. So from the American point of view, and I have no evidence that this was on Trump's mind, should have been. He's looking at this. This is the one country that is capable, given all the people it supports, of doing other 911 and doing that 911 with a nuclear weapon. Therefore, the obsession with the nuclear capability. Now, this is only my view. I've never heard anybody talk about it. I don't think anybody would. But I think that's what the obsession is. Unlike other countries having nuclear weapons, they were afraid this won't be used.

Christian Smith: Yeah, I mean, the obvious comparison, of course, is, is North Korea, who got a nuclear weapon a few years ago. They. They from the point of view of the US at the very least less so Japan and China. But. But they have the ability to. They don't have the ability rather for their missiles to strike most of America, I believe, at the moment. But why not the same concern there then? Why the concern with Iran and not with North Korea?

George Friedman: Well, for one thing, the Islamic forces that are deployed there did 9 11. The North Koreans have their weapons and it's seen as primarily a deterrent. Don't attack us, don't invade. We have nuclear weapons, by the way. They do have ICBMs, supposedly that can reach the United States. And that was most important to make certain that the United States would not try to destabilize them or invade or South Korea attack or even China, which is not that friendly with them these days, not do it. Having nuclear weapons was primarily a

guarantee of a defensive position, not a deterrent, not seen as something they would use. Again, we have to emphasize 9, 11, this was carried out under the ideology of radical Islamic forces. And we look at them very differently as what they're capable of, what they're likely to do, than we would in North Korea. So even though we realized in 2006 when there was a nuclear explosion underground in North Korea, we never saw them as likely to press a button because they'd be devastated. We look at the Arab world somehow, not just Arab, but Persian, but the Islamic world somehow, in different ways.

Christian Smith: And I suppose the other factor, of course, is Israel, and they are significantly closer than the US Is. I mean, that concern would have been top of both Israel, of course, but also American minds as well.

George Friedman: Well, from the American point of view, after Gaza and everything else, there was a little distance developing. Certainly having a nuclear weapon would threaten Israel. And the United States is still close to Israel, not necessarily as dedicated as it was before, but still close. So Israel certainly played a role in it. But that was not the only issue. There was the issue of 9, 11, which talking to various people, you know, it comes up, we always talk about it, and it's not been publicly discussed because I don't think anybody wanted to have that discussed publicly. But from my point of view, these were the groups Al Qaeda still there, some form that were willing to have suicide attacks, carry out suicide attacks on just buildings. Now imagine with what nuclear weapons would be. And I think this is in part what obsessed the Americans, Trump, with this nuclear program. And this is why they were insisting that it be discontinued. The Iranians wanted to let it be continued at a much smaller scale. They said at one point, for medical research and so on. We didn't trust them. We didn't trust them for outside inspection. And a nuclear Iran is a more frightening thing in many ways than nuclear North Korea, China, Russia, so on.

Christian Smith: That's sort of the imperative there. I suppose. These negotiations have been going on for a while now. We had the 12 day war last year. There was a sense that that had kicked things into the long Grass. Now we've had this. Why did these negotiations fail?

George Friedman: Because the fundamental thing the United States wanted, it did attack just the nuclear facilities. The attacks did not completely annihilate that capability. And it would appear that it was possible that the Iranians were beginning redevelopment in there. So there was a fundamental issue that drove them back. It was the same issue in WEI that drove them into attacking the nuclear facilities in the first place. But this point, given the fact that they failed to fully take out the nuclear capability, still in small part there to be developed, and

simultaneously that the government of Iran clearly wanted badly to develop nuclear weapons, and it was assumed that they had a reason for doing this. Okay. It was obviously decided in negotiations when this couldn't be solved that the only reason this couldn't be solved is a high likelihood that they want to use them in some way. And therefore it became a question of regime change rather than simply nuclear weapons.

Christian Smith: Why won't Iran abandon its nuclear program? I mean, from their perspective, is it a matter of not trusting the US not wanting to back down to the US do they believe they need it for defensive reasons? It strikes me as somewhat bizarre given maybe they just misread the situation. But it strikes me as somewhat bizarre given that they probably knew very well what the US And Israel were willing to do if they didn't abandon their nuclear program. Why did they hang so tightly onto their hope?

George Friedman: Well, you also have to remember that they don't have very many friends in the region. The Saudis have very tense relationships with them. People on the Persian Gulf, the UAE and these countries. These countries have very bad relationships with them. Okay, so this is not as if this is a country that is at peace in the region. The Israelis, of course, have very bad thoughts. Hezbollah is based there now. It always was, but that's the founding element of Ferguson, Hamas. It was Iran. But it was not just Israel that didn't like it. The Saudis never liked the terrorist groups that merged. The Persian Gulf nations also were much more interested in economic development, making money than engaging in war. So it has to remember that Iran had created many enemies because it clung to the ideology of radical Islam, the only one really in the area, for the most part. So they had a regional problem, and they were facing countries like Turkey that are evolving militarily day by day, massively. And they're looking around and they're looking for a deterrent, a deterrent against the United states, perhaps with 9, 11, but also somehow some deterrent from other countries. So Iran is not necessarily. Firstly, it's not an Arab country, it's a Persian country. And there's a fundamental difference there. And secondly, it's surrounded by other countries that are potentially hostile.

Christian Smith: I suppose, though, if they're faced with this sort of option of continue your nuclear program but have the quite high risk of having the US And Israel come in and try to decapitate your leadership and your regime, or giving up on the nuclear program, wouldn't the logical solution be give up on the nuclear program?

George Friedman: Unless you believe that if you didn't have a nuclear program and nuclear capability, Israel, the United States, Saudi Arabia, the Turks, everyone else would be coming

into you. If you could be able to develop this, then the Islamist regime inside of Iran may be more secure. The thing that happened was the United States pushed back their program many years, okay? And their first strike, that they continued to develop it, that they did not want to give it up, and they were so adamant in not giving it up, meant that at some point they would either develop a nuclear weapon and be dangerous in the region as well as to the United States and not be able to be handled. One of the conclusions may have been, look, sooner or later, we're going to have to deal with the Iranians. Better sooner than later in this particular case. And remember that the amount of danger that the United States encountered without those nuclear weapons, we're not sending troops on the ground. We're not suffering infantry casualties. We will, as the President said, have losses. But this is air strikes, missile strikes and so on. It is a much different sort of war that we had, for example, in Iraq under George Bush. That was a war, an infantry war, with high casualties in long time. This is a much shorter term activity designed fundamentally to take out the nuclear capability and then take out the regime itself. So what we saw was what was called a decapitating attack. A decapitating attack is one which is designed to take out the leadership, either the military force or the political structure. So it was not the nuclear capability, which was not yet in place, that was the focus. It was taking out the regime that wanted to develop nuclear powers. And it should also be remembered that the Arab world, as opposed to the Persian world here, is not particularly upset by this. In fact, the Iranians lashed out and attacked many countries in the region, some with bases there and some attacking buildings that were not bases. So it was a vast, potentially powerful, but surrounded by forces that did not like them all around them. It was a much more complicated thing than Trump waking up one morning and having a bad day and doing this it was a fundamental necessity that the unwillingness to abandon nuclear program really stuck in the crawl.

Christian Smith: This concept of decapitation is really becoming a Trump favorite. We've seen it in Venezuela so far this year and arguably you've seen it with Hamas last year as well. Of course, I mean the US people are, they're not just, you know, not in favor of, of boots on the ground in the Middle east, but aggressively opposed to. It was part of the reason Trump was elected. It was some of the campaigning that he did, he ran on that. What does this tell us about Trump's no more wars strategy? Because I suppose the question is, the idea is that let's keep this to airstrikes. We can have minimal, minimal casualties, but then. But then what?

George Friedman: Well, first of all, in all wars, decapitation is a goal, usually a dream because the enemy does not bunch together so you can take them out. So shattering. In a war, the enemy's decision making capability is always an imperative. At the same time, the United

States did not want to face, as I said, a nuclear Iran and many of the countries in the region didn't want to face that. So the idea of no war, okay, is frequently something you can promise in a campaign, but given the evolution of things. But he really didn't want a war like we had in Vietnam, like we had in Afghanistan and so on and so forth. He didn't want boots on the ground. He didn't want us taking casualties and the war lasting for years in those terms, giving him credit for this, if it's worthwhile doing it, is. He saw one, a fundamental potential long term threat to the United States as well as his stability region. But it doesn't. And he saw a low cost solution which was first destroying the nuclear capability that didn't totally work, then decapitating the regime and opening the way within Iran for forces that are not as loudest to take control and so on. And I think now the question is now that Khomeini is gone, now the many in the regime are gone, can the regime continue operating? And there is fundamental possibility of change within Iran because all the Iranians were not lined up loving all this.

Christian Smith: What's interesting has come obviously a month or so after those horrendous protests in Iran that reports suggest have cost the lives of tens of thousands.

George Friedman: We should also point out something interesting. Iran has two armies. One is the irgc, the Islamic Army. The other is the army they inherited from the Shah of Iran when it was pro American. The two don't get along Together, the secular army, which it really is a secular army, it is not an Islamist army, is larger than the irgc. IRGC gets all the good weapons. On the other hand, this is a very professional army. This army has never been easy with Khomeini and this government. In addition, Khomeini has never been comfortable with them. So we talk about a division inside of Saudi Arabia, inside of Iran. I should say we talk about this issue of a division in Iran. There's a fundamental military division, a division between the regular army, which is secular and tends to be a very professional force, and the irgc, which is an Islamic and force that's linked up with many terrorist organizations. So there is a tension inside Iran. And I suspect that one of the things that the Trump administration is trying to do is let that tension come to a head at the point where the Iranians are the weakest, knocking out the government and opening the door for the possibility of the army asserting itself.

Christian Smith: Take a moment to follow and rate us on your preferred podcast platform. For video versions of the show and much more, subscribe on YouTube Eopolitical Futures GPF click the link in the description below to gain access to our full 2026 forecast re anchoring the world, complete with geopolitical predictions, maps and graphics from our global team of analysts. That's really interesting, of course, because I suppose what you're saying there, George, is that on the one hand, what we've heard from Trump in his speech announcing the

attacks was that he wants the Iranian people to rise up and throw off their shackles when the attacks are over. But I suppose in many respects what he that would be nice. But at the end of the day, what he probably wants is just a regime that doesn't want a nuclear weapon.

George Friedman: Well, remember, in the past months the Iranian people did rise up and the result was incredible bloodshed in Iran. The president has used this to justify the attack. On the other hand, I'm not sure he cares that much about the slaughter. At the same time, you can't assume that in Iran the regime was loved. The regime was not loved by many people and many surrounded was not loved. So at this point, the question then becomes what follows there? And I'm hypothesizing, I'm not predicting here that there is a relatively secular army that was never comfortable under the control of Khomeini and Khomeini never trusted them. But that was a major force. It would defend the country. Under these circumstances, there is a force that can take over. And at the same Time when you talk about the stance of the population, well, you can never tell just what percent of the population is dissatisfied with the government, but certainly a lot of people went out demonstrating and a lot of people were killed. So that means that this regime, at the very least, was under internal pressure. And I think the United States decided to provide some external pressure and release the valves that were holding this force in place.

Christian Smith: Would it have been better to do this a month ago when these protests were happening? A lot of criticism came in for the US Particularly when Trump said, oh, help was on the way. I believe it was. And then this is now over a month later. I believe tens of thousands have been killed. The appetite for that protest may be diminished because of the bloodshed.

George Friedman: Well, it may be diminished, it may be celebrated. There was a great deal of bloodshed. And remember, these attacks were not directed against the population. It was directed against the regime that carried these out. But I think what Trump was trying to do is get a negotiation going. And he tried in various ways to reach them, try to explain to the regime that he cannot live with a nuclear Iran. And the regime said, we cannot live without a nuclear Iran. And as much as he intended to negotiate, and I think he did try to negotiate, he thought that between the pressure of the crowds in the streets and the pressure the United States was putting on it, there was some possibility of reaching an understanding. In the last weeks, it became very clear that that understanding could not be reached. Negotiations were held about getting rid of the problem, the nuclear program. The Iranians refused to completely get rid of it because they said they wanted for medical and other research, which was not clear, nor would they agree to constant inspection or anything like that. And at a certain point, it became clear that they could not negotiate this out of the way. So it should be borne in mind, obviously,

civilians were killed in such an attack. That would have to be the case. The focus of this attack was on government buildings, both by the Israelis and the Americans. This was not an attack intended to kill many people, civilians, outside. So I think the reason why he didn't do it months ago, because I think there was an opportunity, he thought, to negotiate that end. But it came down to the fact that the Saudis were. The Iranians were prepared to do many things that we wanted, but not get rid of the one thing that was essential, the nuclear program.

Christian Smith: And so what happens if this doesn't work, then, from the US Perspective? I mean, it depends what work means and how you define that. But let's say the regime simply replaces Harmony and carries on. This is obviously what they're saying they're going to do at the moment. Whether that actually happens or not is a different question. But let's say they do. They have a new supreme leader, they follow essentially similar policies. Could this end up in a cycle of, you know, negotiations, strikes, more negotiations, more strikes? What happens?

George Friedman: Well, first you have to remember that there are divisions within the government as well. So there are people in the government who think that the massacres in the streets were terrible. There are those who think it was necessary. So the emergence of a new regime depends not only on the personality of who comes up, but the ability to form a coherent government that's at peace with itself. If we wind up with a government that is unable to make decisions because it's so deeply divided, well, that's one thing. So it really is a question of how the government evolves. It will obviously not evolve as a friend of the United States. It will not evolve without condemning the United States. The question is, is the new regime prepared to end the nuclear program? And from the standpoint of the new regime, having seen what happened, I think we're gambling that they would rather not have the nuclear program, which they're not going to get anyway, because we'll hit it and simply move on, which would be quite sufficient for the Americans for the region, not so happy. But at the same time, remember, aside from the succession process within the government, the army is out there quietly waiting, following commands as a professional army, but now sort of cut free. So that will be something to look at as well. All sorts of possibilities arise and the American response will follow those evolutions.

Christian Smith: And of course, I don't think we have mentioned that the, the leader of the IRGC was also killed, it seems, as well as potentially Khamenei's son, who was seen as a potential successor to him. But let's, but let's just say though, let's play it out. The U.S. sorry, rather Iran doesn't give up on its nuclear regime. Do you think that the US and Israel may, you know, we may see a cycle where they just continue this for the, you know, foreseeable future

until they do. And what happens if they don't? What happens if they just can, you know, we are talking about religious fundamentalists. If they stay in charge.

George Friedman: Well, if the religious fundamentalists stay in charge, they understand that the United States has now struck twice, the second time massively to stop them from having a nuclear weapon, that the Israelis also engaged in a 12 day war about this. So you've got two powerful countries, Israel, that doesn't want to have the weapon, the Americans don't want to have the weapon. And most of the other countries in the region are aligned with the Americans on this. So this is not like the United States going into a hostile range. Iran is the problem. It is surrounded by countries that no desert like them. Even the Iraqis, who are fundamentalists in this way, are hostile to them in the Shiite Sunni manner. So there's a very difficult to imagine emergence of a government that would risk its survival based on what it's seen. For now, one thing that is clear is that the American president is prepared to launch very effective weapons against them and not incur massive casualties on the ground. So any new regime will have to take that into account. And also bearing in mind all the pressures that are around them. Okay, so it would seem that they would have a different calculation, but given the power of the United States, the weakness of Iran, this could go on and on. But I don't think it will because again, I'm looking at the demonstrations against the government in the streets, the massacre the government had to do undertake in order to stop the demonstrations, the presence of the army. I think Iran is a very divided country in many ways, both ethnicity, ethnic groups, religion, so forth. I don't think that any government will emerge having any illusions about the United States.

Christian Smith: We could in many ways sort of play out many different scenarios where this could go. I think part of the complication is that as the US and the world learned in Iraq and Afghanistan as well, it's very hard to know where some of these things go depending on, on what happens. There's concern in Europe, I know, about the potential for a wider civil war, in particular in Iran, and the consequences for the Middle east and Europe in terms of refugees as well. Let's look at the region. Just to start off with, I mean, it's, it's interesting. What can we read into the fact that Iran attacked so many other regional countries in response? In many ways it seemed. It was obviously probably planned and targeted, but it seemed a bit of a flail response. Hitting the uae, Saudi Arabia, obviously Qatar got caught in the crossfire. What can we read into that?

George Friedman: Well, first, when we talk about Afghanistan, the other wars, that was very difficult, different. There are people who are going to die, but in the United States, in the army, in the Air Force at the same time, not those ongoing casualties that led us astray. The second

reason that they have it is we have many friends in the region. We have air Force bases in many countries in the region, including one in Saudi Arabia and many in the Persian Gulf states and so on. So this is a very different situation in which the United States has many friends as shown by the fact that that the Iranians were attacking these countries, including some of their hotels, for some reason. Okay, so that gives you, if you take a look at the number of countries that they attacked, it gives you an idea of how much power the US has on the ground and naval power in the region. So unlike going into Afghanistan with no friends around and anything like that, this is a very different game because all of the reasons that they attack these other countries is by and large the US had military bases there, they're welcome there. And so in this region, the Americans have a great deal not only of influence, but of alliances and should clarify

Christian Smith: as well that Qatar itself was not just caught in the crossfire, of course, but hit as well. Looking at the wider region and those at play there. And let's just quickly look at Israel here. I want to ask a question, something that caught my eye. It seems that the CIA got the intelligence of where Khamenei and some of the other leaders would be and then pass it on to Israel who conducted those particular aspects of the strikes. What can we learn from that? Is there any relevance to the fact that Israel conducted those strikes?

George Friedman: Well, there of course is because Israel conducted them. But more important, when the CIA declares that it provided all the intelligence and the Israeli Mossad will say we provided all the intelligence as well as taking out many of the myths. I mean, the job of an intelligence agency is to mislead so that they can operate. So the various claims that are made now greatly. They were evolved and so on. They were certainly. But I don't think they take bows and they're taking a bow. So that could mean anything from my point of view.

Christian Smith: Now, fair enough. Looking at the other two great powers, quote unquote in the region, Russia and China. China has long been a friend, might be too strong of a word, but a country that has supported Iran in ways not in a military way. What does this mean for them?

George Friedman: Well, there's a report out from the Russians stating that the Chinese have re established, moved their satellites into position over Iran and are providing Iran with information on the battle. Two things I wonder about. First is are the Iranians in any position to receive the data or to transmit the data if they get to forces? Because I think one thing the United States did above all else is knock out their communications. And that would include communication with satellites. Now why the Russians said this? Well, the Russians are very worried about US and China reaching an accommodation. It's possible that the Chinese did this. It's unlikely that they were really able to tell Iranians anything useful or get through to

them. I doubt that they would want to take a very hostile stand to the United States at this point in their negotiations with the United States when they can gain a great deal. And I'm not surprised that the Russians would be making this claim because the Russians really do want the United States and China not to get friendly. So there'll be many things said and when you reason through them you'll understand that you don't understand the situation really. But it can't be that.

Christian Smith: Yeah, I mean, what's behind China's support of Iran? Is it just in some ways keeping the U.S. distracted?

George Friedman: Well, I mean if the United States can be tied down anywhere else, okay, it doesn't hurt the Chinese, possibly benefits them. If for example, the US is really worried about Iran and the Iranians can really threaten them, the Chinese can do a favor for the United States helping them in negotiations on the economic side and so on and so forth. So it's a low cost risk for the Chinese in one way. But if they were effective so that the information flowing to the Iranians actually blocked the attack, it would be very bad for the Chinese negotiating position because the Americans would be very tough. So my expectation is that the Chinese in months past, before the negotiations that I think are taking place between the US and China evolved. The President of the United States and President Xi are scheduled to meet in April and there's a lot of discussions going on now and how to accommodate each other. I think back then having an irritant at a low price was worth having for the Chinese. If the Chinese were doing what the Russians say they were doing, one I think would be a very bad indicator on US Chinese relationships and secondly, very useless because the Iranians in no position to imbibe the intelligence and take measures based on that and even if they could reach it. So in my mind it's interesting that this report came out of Russia who does not want to see the US and China getting at all friendly. And there we go.

Christian Smith: Does this further isolate Russia do you think?

George Friedman: I think Russia is pretty much isolated itself in the sense that as a military force, given its showing in Ukraine, given the exhaustion of its forces, that they're now drafting 50 year old men, that they're recruiting mercenaries in Africa to fight with them, they're taking students out of college to join the army. They are not in a position to launch a major offensive in the Middle East. Okay. And as such, this is a situation the Russians are not comfortable with. Remember that many of the countries that were hostile to Iran were in the South Caucasus countries like Azerbaijan. And remember, the large part of Iran is occupied by citizens Zeri ethnic groups, so a very large part of the north. So when you look around the situation, I think

the Russians are just trying to score a point or two and not appear to be helpless. But given the collapse of the Soviet Union that Central Asia has pulled out of. The Soviet Union is not part of Russia. The south caucuses have pulled out of the Soviet Union. It's not part of Russia. This is a greatly weakened country and it wants to play the great power, but certainly doesn't have any military capability of intervening here. But when you can't intervene, make speeches.

Christian Smith: Very true. I mean, in respect, could this impact their. Their supply line, say, of drones? If the Iranian regime changes, if the oil markets change and Iranian oil comes more online than it has been, could this affect Russia's income as well?

George Friedman: Well, the first thing is one of the things that could happen is the Iranian oil is somehow cut off. I don't think the United States would be attacking the tubes carrying the oil. Okay. The pipes carrying the oils, I should say, but it's possible. And of course, the war, that the Iranian oil will stop flowing. That will make Saudi Arabia very happy, which they don't want to do because it'll drive the price of oil up. So for the American point of view, driving the price of oil up right now is not a very good idea. I don't think they're going to be hitting Iran's oil capability, but it's possible that the Iranians themselves might want to take a shot at raising the price of oil to see the pressure could be put on them. Raising the price of oil would make Russia very happy. But then, remember, it's lost many of its markets during this war.

Christian Smith: George, let's leave it there. Thank you very much as always for that. Thank you out there for listening to this podcast from Geopolitical Futures. You can find out everything that you might want to know about what's going on in Iran@geopoliticalfutures.com we'll be back again soon with another podcast, but until then, you take care and goodbye.

George Friedman: Goodbye.

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George Friedman: Sam.