

December 15, 2006

Editorial

## **Rogues and Fools**

This week's conference in Iran of Holocaust deniers and racists was, predictably, a circus of Holocaust denial and racism argued by discredited scholars and even the former Ku Klux Klan leader, David Duke. But one should never underestimate the political power of these vicious ideas, even among supposedly respectable people across the Middle East and beyond.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran apparently believes his claims that the murder of six million Jews by the Nazis is a myth ginned up to justify the creation of the state of Israel. That is frightening enough. Couple that with his calls to wipe Israel off the map and his government's — so far unrestrained — drive to develop the technology needed to build a nuclear weapon, and you have even more reasons to keep yourself up at night.

What is also frightening is that Mr. Ahmadinejad believes there is political benefit in these hate-filled lies and may well be right.

He is clearly hoping they will divert Iranians' attention away from his failure to rein in corruption and improve the economy. (The conference opened just days before nationwide elections for City Councils.) These lies have already pumped up his standing even in the streets of Sunni-led Arab countries like Egypt, trumping suspicions of Shiite-led Iran's growing regional power.

This week's conference is another reminder as to why the power of rogues and fools should never be underestimated. And why history's truths must never be taken for granted or forgotten.

Copyright 2006

The New York Times Company