

The New York Times and the drive to war against Iran

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The *New York Times* on Sunday published a lengthy article in its weekly magazine that sympathetically and clinically lays out the arguments of Israeli policy makers in favor of a military attack on Iran sometime this year. The article, written by Ronen Bergman, a prominent Israeli journalist who specializes in intelligence matters, features interviews with top current and former Israeli officials, including Defense Minister Ehud Barak, Vice Prime Minister Moshe Ya'alon and former Mossad chief Meir Dagan.

Bergman discusses the extensive military preparations made by Israel for an attack on Iranian nuclear facilities and reviews the covert war being waged by Israel, with US support, which has included deadly explosions at military and nuclear facilities, cyber warfare, and the assassination of five Iranian nuclear scientists since 2007, the latest occurring January 11 in the center of Tehran.

The author concludes the article by stating, “I have come to believe that Israel will indeed strike Iran in 2012.”

Appearing in the context of newly announced US and European sanctions against Iranian oil exports and a buildup of US naval forces in the Persian Gulf, the article serves a definite and sinister purpose: to provide the pretexts and condition public opinion for a preemptive and unprovoked war of aggression that will have catastrophic consequences for the people of Iran and the Middle East and ultimately for the entire world.

It appeared only days after President Obama's belligerent State of the Union address, in which he boasted of isolating and economically crippling Iran and reiterated that he would “take no options off the table” to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. The same day the article was published, US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta appeared on CBS Television's

“60 Minutes” program and baldly asserted that Iran would have a nuclear weapon within a year.

The *Times* article cites both supporters and opponents within the Israeli establishment of a near-term attack on Iran, giving greater weight to the former than the latter. It accepts uncritically the common premise advanced by Israel, the US and the European powers that Iran is embarked on a program to build nuclear weapons and must be prevented from doing so, if necessary by military means. It quotes Moshe Ya'alon, Israel's vice prime minister and minister of strategic affairs, as saying, “Our policy is that in one way or another, Iran's nuclear program must be stopped.”

This statement of Israeli policy underscores the utterly criminal character of the war being prepared against Iran. Israel, a non-signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which illegally maintains a large stockpile of nuclear weapons, declares its right to destroy the nuclear program of Iran, a signatory to the treaty, which insists that its nuclear program is civilian and therefore permitted under international law. Despite the best efforts of the US, Israel and their imperialist allies, the International Atomic Energy Agency has been unable to substantiate their claims that Iran is, in fact, seeking to build nuclear weapons.

The casus belli of Iranian nuclear weapons is no more credible than the claims of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction or the crusade against Al Qaeda used to justify the US imperialist wars and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, or the pretext of “protecting civilians” in the case of the colonial war for regime change in Libya.

The real war aims of the US and Israel in Iran are bound up with Israel's drive to maintain its military dominance in the Middle East and Washington's campaign to monopolize the world's oil resources and

weaken the economic and geopolitical position of its major rivals, among whom China increasingly looms as the target of future military aggression.

The *Times* article demonstrates the degree to which it and the entire US media and political establishment have embraced a foreign policy based on outright criminality—aggressive war, torture, assassinations, abductions, disappearances, etc.

The aim of the “newspaper of record” is to sanitize and justify a war that could cost hundreds of thousands of lives in a country of 74 million people and risk Iranian retaliation not only against Israel, but also against US targets at home and abroad, as well as engulfing Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, the Gulf states, Russia and China. It starkly reveals the internal rot of American democracy and the virtual absence of democratic consciousness within the American ruling elite.

One can imagine similar articles appearing in the German press in the run-up to the Nazi invasion of Poland, calmly laying out the matters of self-defense obliging the Third Reich to subjugate its neighbor to the east.

The erosion of any constituency within the American ruling class for the defense of democratic principles either abroad or at home is an expression of the crisis of American capitalism, revealed first and foremost in the staggering growth of social inequality and the buildup of class tensions.

The eruption of American imperialism internationally goes hand in hand with the destruction of democratic rights and the impoverishment of the working class within the US. The only social force that can halt the slide toward dictatorship and world war is the American and international working class.

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