

The New York Times and “liberal” warmongering against Iran

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In an editorial headlined “Iran, Israel and the United States” published Tuesday, the *New York Times* sought to achieve a happy medium between Israel’s threats of imminent military strikes against Iran and the Obama administration’s tactical argument for allowing a “window” for crippling economic sanctions to force Tehran into submission before launching a shooting war.

Written in the context of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s visit to Washington and the rising crescendo of war drums that has accompanied his presence at the White House and appearances before the right-wing Zionist lobby, the *Times* editorial provides a model of “liberal” warmongering.

Among the editors’ principal concerns is the defense of President Barack Obama’s reputation against any doubts about his “commitment to Israel’s security.” The underlying thesis is that Washington’s interests and those of Tel Aviv are seamless, and that in arguing for a “window” before bombing, Obama is “speaking for American and Israeli interests.”

At the same time, the editorial fully legitimizes Israel’s demand for a speedy, unprovoked war on Iran, and even credits it with positively shaping the policy of the US and other major Western powers. “Israel’s threats of unilateral action have finally focused the world’s attention on the danger” supposedly posed by Iran.

For the *Times* this danger is not subject to debate. “Iran’s nuclear appetites are undeniable, as is its malign intent toward Israel, toward America, toward its Arab neighbors and its own people.”

Undeniable? Says who? The Iranian government has consistently denied that it is building a nuclear weapon and insisted that it is engaged in the use of nuclear power solely for peaceful purposes. US intelligence agencies since 2007 have repeatedly concluded that Iran has no active nuclear weapons program, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)—despite the goading of Washington and the other Western powers—has been unable to uncover any evidence that one exists.

“Israelis have every right to be fearful and frustrated,” the editorial continues. “For too long the world ignored Iran’s misdeeds and shrugged off Israel’s alarms.”

Here reality is turned upside down. What Iranian misdeeds the world has ignored, the *Times* does not bother to specify. The reader must accept them as given, along with Israel’s “right” to be fearful, frustrated and alarmed.

One would never suppose that it is Israel that has stockpiled hundreds of nuclear weapons in complete defiance of the international nuclear regulatory system. Unlike Iran, Tel Aviv has refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and has never allowed IAEA inspectors access to Israeli nuclear sites.

As for the world ignoring misdeeds, it is Israel that has waged war against every one of its neighbors, slaughtering thousands of civilians, most recently in its invasion of Lebanon in 2006 and the siege of the Gaza Strip in 2008-2009. It continues its illegal occupation of the West Bank, subjecting its Palestinian population to

relentless repression. Israel's principal concern in confronting Iran is to preserve its regional monopoly on nuclear weapons, which has played no small role in allowing it to attack with impunity.

While counseling a modicum of patience in pursuing what amounts to an economic blockade designed to pressure Tehran by destroying the living standards of average Iranians, the *Times* assures its readers that Obama and the newspaper itself will not shy from launching yet another war of aggression.

"What if sanctions and diplomacy are not enough?" the editorial reads. "Mr. Obama has long said that all options are on the table. In recent days his language has become more pointed—urged on, undoubtedly, by Israel's threats to act alone." Neither Israel nor Iran, it adds, should "doubt this president's mettle."

If anyone should experience a sense of déjà vu in the face of such rhetoric—which combines assertions of an "undeniable" foreign threat with militarist bluster—it is for good reason.

The *Times* is reprising the role it played a decade ago in the run-up to the US war on Iraq, when it made the case for an "undeniable" threat posed by Baghdad's "weapons of mass destruction," which proved non-existent.

The stench from that journalistic travesty has still not left the offices of the *Times*. Judith Miller, a senior *Times* correspondent, produced article after article citing unnamed US intelligence and military officials supposedly verifying that Baghdad was pursuing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programs. The Bush administration in turn quoted these "scoops" as justification for its policy.

Meanwhile, the *Times* foreign affairs columnist, Thomas Friedman, penned numerous columns embracing what he acknowledged as a "war of choice" against Iraq, justifying such an act of aggression in the name of human rights, democracy and oil.

The coverage by this "newspaper of record" set the tone for the entire US media, thereby saturating the

American public with false propaganda and providing indispensable assistance to the Bush administration in launching a war based upon lies.

Then, as now, the newspaper provided not a hint that the war could involve motives other than the lies repeated by the administration and amplified by the *Times* itself.

Having waged two wars over the past decade in Afghanistan and Iraq, the countries on Iran's eastern and western flanks, US imperialism is now preparing for war against Iran itself. Washington's principal war aim is to assert US hegemony over the energy rich and geo-strategically critical regions of the Persian Gulf and Central Asia. Once again, it invokes "weapons of mass destruction" and "terrorism" as pretexts, and once again the *Times* acts as a faithful organ of war propaganda.

The *Times* editorial admits that the "costs would still be high" if the US attacks Iran. However, it does not begin to prepare its readers for the implications of a war with this country of 74 million people, whose casualties could quickly dwarf the horrific toll of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars combined and whose shock waves would extend internationally, including to the US itself.



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