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AND HIS WILLING
EXECUTIONERS
ON THE DIRE
THREAT
FROM IRAN**

**(WITH TWELVE
PRINCIPLES OF
WAR PROPAGANDA
IN ONGOING
SERVICE)**

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Back at the time of a major Bush-1 “drug war” in 1989, Hodding Carter pointed out that with increasing attention to the newly declared “crisis” by the administration and media, the public’s estimate of the importance of the drug problem rose spectacularly. “Today’s big news is the drug war. The president says so, so television says so, newspapers and magazines say so, and the public says so.” Today’s big news is the possibility that Iran, the Little Satan, might some day acquire a nuclear weapon: the administration says so, the media say so, and now three times as many people regard Iran as the U.S.’s greatest menace than four months ago and 47 percent of the public agrees that Iran should be bombed if needed to prevent its acquiring any nuclear weapon capability.

The system works this mobilization process like a well-oiled propaganda machine – which it is – and it can apparently sell almost anything in the way of justifying external violence to a large fraction of the populace, at least in the short run. The attack on Iraq was a remarkable achievement in this respect, given that it was built on a series of lies about Iraq weapons, links, and threats that were extremely dubious at best, a number clearly false and even quite silly (the mushroom cloud and threat to U.S. national security); and given that the actions taken were in blatant violation of the UN Charter. To put this over required tacit collusion between the administration and mainstream media, with the latter serving as de facto propaganda arms of the war-makers.

We may recall that the justification for NATO’s bombing of the Serb TV broadcasting facilities in 1999 (killing 16 people) was that it was a propaganda arm of the Serb military. On that logic, accepted by respectable opinion and Carla Del Ponte on behalf of the Yugoslavia Tribunal, in a just world, where Bush and company would surely be brought to trial for manifold war crimes in the Iraq

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aggression-occupation, Arthur Hays Sulzberger, Bill Keller, Thomas Friedman, Donald Graham, Leonard Downie, Jr., Richard Cohen, George Will, Rupert Murdoch, Bill O'Reilly, and numerous others would be in the dock alongside them.

The further remarkable thing is that, despite their semi-apologies for betraying the public interest and their readers in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq – at least at the New York Times and Washington Post – the media are going through the same routines of propaganda service in the buildup to a possible attack on Iran. They quite generally avoid mentioning the similarity of the arguments made earlier, or that the administration lied egregiously earlier, or their own earlier hyper-gullibility. A tabula rasa is required if the system calls for serial propaganda service that entails the serial conveying of disinformation and suppression of inconvenient evidence. The “Drumbeat sounds familiar” to Simon Tisdall in the London Guardian (March 7, 2006), but not to the servants of power in the U.S. media.

TWELVE PRINCIPLES OF PROPAGANDA USED IN SETTING THE STAGE FOR WAR: THE IRAN CASE

The first principle in manufacturing propaganda for the U.S. war party is to take it as a given that the United States has the legal and moral right to take the lead in making a case that the international community must act – here to stop Iran's nuclear program. Consider that the United States is in the midst of an occupation in Iraq in which it is daily committing war crimes, all of which follow on a major act of aggression that violated the UN Charter. A lesser power doing this would be declared an international outlaw, and would not be considered a proper leader to guide the international community in the pursuit of villainy. In fact, containing the outlaw would be deemed of primary importance. Furthermore, the United States showed its contempt for the rule of law and for any UN legal procedures in the runup to the Iraq war, when it fabricated a crisis – Iraqi violation of international rules and an Iraqi threat to U.S. national security – and on that basis simply ran roughshod over UN processes and international law.

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Beyond these outrages, the United States has unclean hands as regards the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty that Iran is allegedly violating: as a signatory to the NPT, the United States pledged “to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.” It has not met this pledge, nor the promise not to threaten or use nuclear weapons against signers who agreed to forego developing nuclear weapons. It is even “upgrading” and “modernizing” its nuclear weapons to make them more “practical.” In theory, Iran or any other party could complain to the IAEA that the United States is in clear breach of the NPT, but somehow this doesn’t happen; only possible breaches that the United States sees fit to pursue can be attended to in the New World Order. Furthermore, the United States has given crucial support to Israel, engaged in a massive ethnic cleansing operation in violation of international law, with both superpower and client simply brushing aside a stream of UN rulings and an International Court condemnation of Israel’s apartheid wall. The United States has either aided or given tacit approval to breaches of the NPT by Israel, Pakistan and India. In short, its moral right to challenge Iran is non-existent – it can do so only by virtue of power, bribery and threats, and because the patriotic mainstream media take its moral right as an undiscussible given.

The second principle, paralleling the U.S. right to do as it pleases, is the absence of the target’s right even to defend itself. The United States and Israel may possess nuclear weapons, the latter refusing to subject itself to the NPT and the former violating it and threatening Iran with “regime change,” but any Iran move to right the balance by acquiring such weapons for itself is a terrible thing that threatens “international peace and security,” as stated in House Concurrent Resolution 341. The United States and Israel have been bringing “peace and security” to the Middle East! It should be noted that in the EU negotiations on Iran’s nuclear activities, the United States has refused to give any security guarantee to Iran as part of the package, making its un-peaceful intentions toward Iran clear, but this still does not give Iran the right to acquire weapons that might reduce that open threat. For the media this is all irrelevant, as its

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leadership says that Iran is a menace and nothing else matters.

A third principle is inflating the menace that would follow from Iran's possession of nuclear weapons. This of course parallels closely the earlier inflation of the Iraq threat, where the Bush administration propagandists were not laughed off the stage for talking about mushroom clouds off New York and other dire threats. Then and now the media have not pointed out that Saddam Hussein had only used chemical weapons in the 1980's against Iran (and Iraqi Kurds) at a time when he was serving U.S. interests – and therefore with tacit U.S. approval – but that he didn't use them at all in the Persian Gulf War when the United States was the opponent and could retaliate in kind and with greater force. By the same token, as the United States and Israel have enormous retaliatory capability, the Iranians could never use nuclear weapons as an offensive tool without committing national suicide. But nuclear weapons would serve as a default weapon if Iran were attacked; that is, it would contribute to self-defense. This line of argument is carefully avoided in the mainstream propaganda flow.

Of course, demons shouldn't have the right of self-defense, and the fourth principle applied in the media's beating the drums of war is unrelenting demonization of the target. This was easy to do with Saddam Hussein, but it can be worked for almost anyone, as there are few political leaders who don't have some unsavory elements in their record or who haven't made indiscreet or wild statements that can be latched onto, taken out of context, and used to suggest irresponsibility and menace. Iran's mullahs have run a fairly repressive state, although its repression has eased up and democratic voices have not been silenced. The newly elected president Mahmoud Ahmandinejad, of course, made an indefensible statement on the Holocaust (a "myth") and a wild statement that Israel should be "wiped off the map." In his recent classic of war propaganda ("Judicious Double Standards," Washington Post, March 7, 2006), Richard Cohen even says that the Iranian leader is a "zealot who has pledged to eradicate Israel," a straightforward lie. Victor David Hanson makes the current scene one of "appeasement" as in the treatment of Hitler in the 1930s, and Iran now a threatening "bully." ("Appeasement 101: dealing with bullies," Chicago Tribune, Feb. 17, 2006). Iran of course has zero nuclear weapons, whereas the United States

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and Israel both have massive numbers and delivery systems, and Iran hasn't once moved beyond its borders, whereas the United States and Israel have done so regularly and are pummeling Middle East populations right now, but Iran is the "bully," and appeasement means failing to make sure by threat or violence that it cannot ever acquire a single nuclear weapon. But lies and inflated rhetoric are par for the course, and in the panicky environment of the pre-war threat buildup there is no cost to lying or comical threat inflation.

A fifth principle is to avoid discussion of any current relationships with governments that might deserve demon status as much or even more than the target (here Iran). Saudi Arabia is more fundamentalist Islamic and more repressive than Iran, and Egypt, Pakistan, Morocco, and Uzbekistan are at least as vulnerable to criticism for undemocratic practice as Iran, but they are U.S. client states, hence relatively free from criticism let alone threat of destabilization or attack. Pakistan even has nuclear weapons, and the United States finds that tolerable.

Israel of course has a sizable nuclear arsenal, which the United States helped Israel develop and which the United States accepts as reasonable. Richard Cohen explains that this is part of the judicious double standard because "Israel has not threatened to blow Iran off the map; because it is vastly outnumbered in a tough, belligerent neighborhood; and because it is the lone real democracy in a region run mostly by thugs." But Israel has threatened to bomb Iran, and made this threat long before Ahmadinejad's pugnacious statements, which have never been as specific or realistic as Israel's threats; and Israel has regularly invaded its neighbors, which Iran has not done (although it was invaded by Iraq, which was helped in this by the United States). Cohen fails to mention that the "thugs" in the neighborhood are mainly U.S. client states, whose thuggery is accepted because they are used only against their own citizenry. Israel is "outnumbered" in people but not in tanks, modern aircraft, missiles, and nuclear arms, and it has the full backing of the United States, so that it threatens and beats up others, but remains invulnerable. It is not a true democracy – it is a racist democracy, and it is the world's only state that is free to occupy another people's land and ethnically cleanse them over many years in violation of international law and accepted

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standards of morality, from which it is exempt by virtue of its and its patron's military power. In short, this "judicious double standard" is built on racism, lies, and Orwellian thought, now institutionalized (see my "Ethnic Cleansing and the Moral Instinct," published separately in this issue of ColdType.net).

A sixth and closely related principle is the need to keep under the rug any awkward past actions or relationships with the target that might show both hypocrisy and the fraudulence of the claimed threat. This was dramatically so in the case of Saddam Hussein, aided and protected by U.S. (and British) officials in the 1980s when he was actually using the dread "weapons of mass destruction," although he was using them on a U.S.-approved target (Iran) as well as on some of his own citizens. In the case of Iran, the United States actually promoted that country's development of nuclear energy when the Shah of Iran was in power. He was far more oppressive of his people than the mullahs are today – his torture chambers were state-of-art, with U.S. and Israeli aid – but he took orders, so using Cohen's "judicious double standards" it was reasonable that he should be encouraged to go nuclear. The media's ability to forget these inconvenient facts and to dredge up long neglected "principles" now applied to Iran with the utmost seriousness is a reminder of the principles of Newspeak (Ingsoc) described in Orwell's 1984.

A seventh principle is keeping under that (rapidly bulging) rug any current actions of the United States that might appear incompatible with its harsh stand opposing Iran's pursuing any nuclear program. Most obvious today is the new agreement with India just signed by U.S. president George Bush and Indian president Manmohan Singh, that offers U.S. nuclear aid to India for its civilian uses of nuclear energy, but which therefore frees India's ongoing processing of nuclear fuel for use in its nuclear weapons program. The mainstream media have not buried the fact of this agreement, but they have done an outstanding job of avoiding any stress on its violation of principles: India, a country that has avoided joining the NPT and instead built nuclear weapons, instead of being penalized for this evasion and contribution to nuclear proliferation is accepted as a nuclear weapons power and helped to enhance its nuclear status, civilian and military; whereas Iran, which did sign that treaty and allowed itself to be subjected to

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IAEA inspections, and which has no nuclear weapons, is denied even the right to civilian uses of nuclear energy and is threatened with sanctions and even attack.

An eighth principle is that the United States not only has a right to ignore the NPT as it applies to itself, it can also alter the terms of the NPT as it applies to its target. In this case, the NPT gives Iran the “inalienable right to develop, research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes” (Art. IV.1). But the U.S. Ambassador to the UN has asserted that “no enrichment in Iran is permissible” because it “could give Iran the possibility of mastering the technical difficulties it’s currently encountering in its program,” and having done that it could use these processes elsewhere. Once again, the law is irrelevant, and the violator of the UN Charter in the Iraq aggression is once again threatening aggression because it deems Iran to be a menace. Of course all the serious threats are emanating from the United States and Israel, and there is no hard evidence that Iran is going beyond its perfectly legal rights under the NPT, but these considerations can be disregarded as the biggest and strongest has spoken.

A ninth principle is that if the target cannot prove a negative, the severity of the threat to U.S. “national security” requires that Iran be bombed and that there be a change in regime to one that can be trusted (like that of the Shah of Iran, or Sharon, or Musharraf). This of course parallels the course of events in Iraq in 2002-March 2003, where the inspectors found nothing, despite very extensive searching (including searches in all places that U.S.-British intelligence had suggested as promising), but on this principle an invasion was required because the negative was not (and could not be) proved. We may see the same process in the Iran case.

A tenth principle is to use the mechanisms of international regulation linked to the UN to serve the war and goal of regime change: by pushing for ever more intensive inspections and ultimatums; by denigrating the adequacy of inspections; by taking any absence of proof of the negative and any target country foot-dragging on cooperation with increasingly intrusive inspections to demonstrate its nefarious character and virtual proof of its secret operations; and by getting the UN and Security Council to make concessions appeasing the aggressor that give his aggression an aura of semi-legality. The UN and France

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and Germany took a lot of flak in the runup to the Iraq aggression for failing to give the United States carte blanche, although they all bent over backwards to placate the aggressor (and eventually gave their sanction to his illegal and murderous occupation). In the runup to the attack on Iran, the United States has kept intense pressure on the IAEA and EU to condemn Iran for its “concealment” and lack of “transparency,” pressing the IAEA to inspect frequently and intensively (it has put up 17 written and four oral reports on its inspections of Iran to its board since March 17, 2003), possibly hoping that Iran will be provoked into withdrawing from the NPT and giving the aggressor his casus belli. Again, this is being pressed by an aggressor who has still not digested his last meal and that is himself in gross violation of the NPT.

An eleventh principle is to pretend that all the frenzy and activity of the Great Powers to deal with the Iran threat is based on a universal worry, and does not reflect U.S. power and the attempts to appease that power. The EU has cooperated with the Bush administration even more willingly than they did before the attack on Iraq, going along with publicizing and condemning Iran’s supposed misbehavior, and pressing the IAEA to go after Iran more aggressively – while of course ignoring completely the U.S. violations of the NPT, its open threats directed to Iran and openly announced programs of intervention and destabilization, threats that once again violate the UN Charter. So the “international community” is actively cooperating in a planned and threatened further U.S. aggression.

A twelfth principle is to disregard any hidden agenda the U.S. may have in going after Iran. In fact, as the explicit agenda of removing a threat to U.S. national security is as fraudulent as the threat to U.S. security posed by Iraq, and as the United States refuses to give Iran a security guarantee as part of a weapons control package, the failure to examine the real reasons for the U.S. program is the height of “international community” and journalistic irresponsibility. Is it a simple projection of power by an imperial state, as urged by many Bush officials in the Project for a New American Century, “Rebuilding America’s Defenses” (2000) and spelled out in the “National Security Strategy of the United States” (2002)? Is it part of a quest for domination of oil supplies, which may call for a

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controlled client state in Iran as well as Iraq? Is it to prevent the rise of an oil bourse in Iran and potential diminution of the role of the dollar as a dominant currency? Is it to prevent an energy-based power alignment between Iran, China, and other Asian countries? Is it to help Israel retain its dominance in the Middle East and its ability to continue the ethnic cleansing of the West Bank and East Jerusalem without any interference? Some combination of these undoubtedly underlies the U.S. bullying and threats. A democratic media and a responsibility international community would be debating these and drawing the proper conclusions.

CONCLUSIONS

Uncle Chutzpah and his willing executioners – the media, UN and coalition of the cowardly and bribed – have isolated Iran and set her up for possible destabilization and aggression. One wouldn't think this possible given the remarkable parallels in argument and (phony) evidence in this case and that of the failed aggression in Iraq, but the power of the aggressor and subservience of the media and international community are apparently boundless.

It is certainly not assured that Iran will be attacked, and if it is attacked that is most likely to be by bombs only, but it can well happen. The stage is being set, and the folks likely to make those decisions are proven killers, torturers and law violators, confident in their military superiority and invulnerability to prosecution for criminal behavior and with a great capacity for righteous self-deception. And the international community is not only doing nothing to stop them, it is helping them prepare the "(im)moral" and quasi-legal groundwork. The leaders of the aggressor state are also politically astute, and recognize the political value of war as a means of retrieving political fortunes. They may be failures at home as well as abroad, but their service to the business community has been far-reaching, and those successes have protected and sustained them. To continue them, as they damage the great majority, may require forcible action. As Thorstein Veblen pointed out a hundred years ago, "The direct cultural value of a warlike business policy is unequivocal. It makes for a conservative animus on the part of the populace ... At the same stroke, it directs popular interest to other, nobler,

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institutionally less hazardous matters than the unequal distribution of wealth” (The Theory of Business Enterprise [1904], pp. 391-3). When each day you are adding to your service to the rich and damaging the majority, war can come in handy to get folks to turn again to the “nobler, institutionally less hazardous” matters like stopping the dire threat of an Iranian bomb.



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