

War Propaganda for Iran Attack Escalates

by Jeffrey Steinberg

July 23—The propaganda for an Israeli or U.S. attack on Iran is escalating at a tremendous pace, and Congressional Republicans, not to be outdone by their Democratic Zionist Lobby competitors, are goading Israel to launch the initial attack, at any moment it deems it “in the national interest.” On July 22, forty-seven House Republicans, led by Rep. Louie Gohmert (Tex.), filed House Resolution 1553, before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, “Expressing support for the State of Israel’s right to defend Israeli sovereignty, to protect the lives and safety of the Israeli people, and to use all means necessary to confront and eliminate nuclear threats posed by the Islamic Republic of Iran, including the use of military force if no other peaceful solution can be found within reasonable time to protect against such an immediate and existential threat to the State of Israel.”

This outright war solicitation was couched in the psychotic rantings of the Christian Zionists, as expressed, for example, in the following: “Whereas with the dawn of modern Zionism, the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, some 150 years ago, the Jewish people determined to return to their homeland in the Land of Israel from the lands of their dispersion.”

The submission of H.R. 1553 precisely fits the roadmap to war, recently spelled out by former President George W. Bush’s United Nations Ambassador John Bolton, who argued that “having visible congressional support in place at the outset will reassure the Israeli government, which is legitimately concerned about Mr. Obama’s likely negative reaction to such an attack.”

Obama’s War

However, not everyone promoting a U.S. or Israeli military attack on Iran is convinced that President Obama is an obstacle. On the contrary, there is growing evidence that Obama—as distinct from his top national security and foreign policy aides—is fully inclined to

launch a preemptive or preventive attack on Iran. It is, in fact, the President’s own narcissism, and increasing psychological desperation, that represents the greatest danger of a war in the near term.

In a July 16 posting on The American Interest Online, Council on Foreign Relations resident scholar Walter Russell Mead asserted that Obama will likely order a military attack on Iran. Under the headline “Nuking Westphalia: Obama’s Deep Convictions Point to War with Iran,” Mead equated Obama with President Woodrow Wilson, and argued that Obama, like Wilson, hates the Westphalian system of sovereign nation-states, and passionately believes in the need to create a Global Union, based on “humanitarian” interventionism. Mead also wrote that Obama believes in total nuclear disarmament, and therefore, cannot allow Iran to obtain a nuclear weapon, and thus, trigger a nuclear arms race in the region.

Mead’s conclusion: Obama would rather bomb Iran than see his utopian vision smashed by a nuclear-armed Iran that reinforces a super-Westphalian system of nuclear-armed states, invulnerable to “treaty-citing busybodies and international lawyers waving documents and babbling about binding accords.

“Those who think that President Obama’s interest in basing his foreign policy on values makes it unlikely that he would go to war haven’t been paying attention. For Iran to get nukes it will have to destroy the world Obama wants to build.

“Will he, can he allow that to happen?

“There’s a possibility that he will flinch or, to put it another way, that his Jeffersonian instincts for restraint will triumph over his Wilsonian ambition to build a better world. But Iran is not just on a collision course with America’s core interests from a realist perspective. It is trying to destroy the world that American idealists want to build. That makes a conflict hard to avoid,” Mead concluded.

Apart from his own hatred of the Westphalian system of sovereign nation-states, which appears prominently in much of his writing, Mead’s identification of Obama with Woodrow Wilson does strike a chord. By most historical accounts, Wilson, the utopian fantasist and reviver of Jim Crow racism—he promoted the pro-slavery film epic, “Birth of a Nation,” from the White House—spent the final years of his Presidency, holed up in the White House, suffering from a mental breakdown.

And that is where the current President is headed,

as well. In Obama's case, his madness, along with his desperation to appease the most fanatical Israeli Lobby interests for the sake of his 2012 reelection, is almost compelling him to adapt to the escalating propaganda drive for a needless and devastating war on Iran.

Neocons Prod Obama

The pile-up of war propaganda from the "usual suspects" is also continuing, unabated, with the latest psycho-babble coming from CIA field agent-turned-neocon fanatic, Reuel Marc Gerecht, who wrote, on July 26, in the *Weekly Standard*: "Should Israel Bomb Iran? Better safe than sorry."

Journalist Leon T. Hadar, a research fellow with the Cato Institute, and blogger for the *Huffington Post*, also wrote, "Is Obama Set on an Iran Strike?" and answered, "Yes," citing a sea-change in attitude at the White House, since the Obama-Netanyahu summit meeting, and increasing pressure to attack, from the Washington War Party. "As the evolution of his Afghanistan policies has demonstrated," Hadar concluded, "Obama seems to lack the power and the will to resist the pressure from the War Party in Washington and has probably concluded that if you cannot beat them, joining them is the next best option."

The July 15 *Time* magazine prominently featured a story by Joe Klein, headlined "An Attack on Iran: Back on the Table," in which it was reported that the Pentagon, for the first time, considers military action against Iran's nuclear program to be both feasible and possibly necessary. "Intelligence sources say that the U.S. Army's Central Command, which is in charge of organizing military operations in the Middle East, has made some real progress in planning targeted air strikes—aided, in large part, by vastly improved human-intelligence operations in the region," Klein wrote.

He then quoted an Israeli military source who told him, "There really wasn't a military option a year ago. But they've gotten serious about the planning and the option is now real." The source reported that the Israeli military has been consulted on the war planning, because the Obama Administration does not want Israel to act on its own, in attacking Iran. Klein added, "One other factor has brought the military option to a low boil: Iran's Sunni neighbors really want the U.S. to do it.... Senior American officials who travel to the Gulf frequently say the Saudis, in particular, raise the issue

with surprising ardor."

On July 15, the same day that the Klein story was posted, the German weekly *Spiegel* online published a similar story under the headline, "A Quiet Axis Forms Against Iran in the Middle East," by Alexander Smoltczyk and Bernhard Zand. The authors cited a strong push from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, for an attack by the United States on Iran, regardless of the blowback. *Spiegel* noted the recent speech by U.A.E. Ambassador to the United States Yousef Al Otaiba, at an Aspen, Colo. forum, in which he aggressively promoted American military action to knock out Iran's nuclear capabilities. "A military attack on Iran by whomever would be a disaster," the ambassador said, "but Iran with a nuclear weapon would be a bigger disaster." While acknowledging that there would undoubtedly be a severe backlash, "If you ask me, am I willing to live with that, versus living with a nuclear Iran, my answer is still the same. We cannot live with a nuclear Iran. I am willing to absorb that [it] takes place at the expense of the security of the U.A.E."

Even Arnaud de Borchgrave, an editor at the *Washington Times*, and an advisor to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, who was a harsh critic of the Bush-Cheney preventive wars, and an opponent of military strikes on Iran, wrote on July 13 that, "Global Sentiment Builds To Attack Iran." Citing the same Saudi and U.A.E. statements that were reported by *Time* and *Spiegel*, de Borchgrave concluded: "The temptation for Obama to double down on Iran will grow rapidly as he concludes that Afghanistan will remain a festering sore as far as anyone can peer into a murky future, hardly a recipe for success at the polls in November. With a war in Afghanistan that is bound to get worse and a military theater in Iraq replete with sectarian violence, the bombing of Iran may give Obama a three-front war and a chance to retain both houses of Congress."

A senior U.S. diplomat with decades of experience in the Persian Gulf, however, cautioned against believing the claims that the Sunni Arabs want a military confrontation with Iran. They want strong diplomacy to curb the possibility of Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon and shifting the entire balance in the region, he observed, but no Arab government wants a military action. "This is more of the war propaganda coming from the usual circles, and it must be strongly rebuffed," he warned.