

Return of the War Party

by *Patrick Buchanan*

"Real men go to Tehran!" brayed the neoconservatives, after the success of their propaganda campaign to have America march on Baghdad and into an unnecessary war that has forfeited all the fruits of our Cold War victory.

Now they are back, in pursuit of what has always been their great goal: an American war on Iran. It would be a mistake to believe they and their collaborators cannot succeed a second time. Consider:

On being chosen by Israel's President Shimon Peres to form the new regime, Likud's "Bibi" Netanyahu declared, "Iran is seeking to obtain a nuclear weapon and constitutes the gravest threat to our existence since the war of independence."

Echoing Netanyahu, headlines last week screamed of a startling new nuclear breakthrough by the mullahs. "Iran ready to build nuclear weapon, analysts say," said CNN. "Iran has enough uranium to make a bomb," said the Los Angeles Times. Armageddon appeared imminent.

Asked about Iran's nukes in his confirmation testimony, CIA Director Leon Panetta blurted, "From all the information I've seen, I think there is no question that they are seeking that capability."

Tuesday, Dennis Ross of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a front spawned by the Israeli lobby AIPAC, was given the Iranian portfolio. AIPAC's top agenda item? A U.S. collision with Iran.

In the neocon *Weekly Standard*, Elliot Abrams of the Bush White House parrots Netanyahu, urging Obama to put any land-for-peace deals with the Palestinians on a back burner. Why?

"The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is now part of a broader struggle in the region over Iranian extremism and power. Israeli withdrawals now risk opening the door not only to Palestinian terrorists but to Iranian proxies."

The campaign to conflate Hamas, Hezbollah and Syria as a new axis of evil, a terrorist cartel led by Iranian mullahs hell-bent on building a nuclear bomb and using it on Israel and America, has begun. The full-page ads and syndicated columns calling on Obama to eradicate this mortal peril before it destroys us all cannot be far off.

But before we let ourselves be stampeded into another unnecessary war, let us review a few facts that seem to contradict the war propaganda.

First, last week's acknowledgement that Iran has enough enriched uranium for one atom bomb does not mean Iran is building an atom bomb.

To construct a nuclear device, the ton of low-enriched uranium at Natanz would have to be run through a second cascade of high-speed centrifuges to produce 55 pounds of highly enriched uranium (HUE).

There is no evidence Iran has either created the cascade of high-speed centrifuges necessary to produce HUE or that Iran has diverted any of the low-enriched uranium from Natanz. And the International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors retain full access to Natanz.

And rather than accelerating production of low-enriched uranium, only 4,000 of the Natanz centrifuges are operating. Some 1,000 are idle. Why?

Dr. Mohamed El-Baradei, head of the IAEA, believes this is a signal that Tehran wishes to negotiate with the United States, but without yielding any of its rights to enrich uranium and operate nuclear power plants.

For, unlike Israel, Pakistan and India, none of which signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and all of which ran clandestine programs and built atom bombs, Iran signed the NPT and has abided by its Safeguards Agreement. What it refuses to accept are the broader demands of the U.N. Security Council because these go beyond the NPT and sanction Iran for doing what it has a legal right to do.

Moreover, Adm. Dennis Blair, who heads U.S. intelligence, has just restated the consensus of the 2007 National Intelligence Estimate that Iran does not now possess and is not now pursuing a nuclear weapons program.

Bottom line: Neither the United States nor the IAEA has conclusive evidence that Iran either has the fissile material for a bomb or an active program to build a bomb. It has never tested a nuclear device and has never demonstrated a capacity to weaponize a nuclear device, if it had one.

Why, then, the hype, the hysteria, the clamor for "Action This Day!"? It is to divert America from her true national interests and stampede her into embracing as her own the alien agenda of a renascent War Party.

None of this is to suggest the Iranians are saintly souls seeking only peace and progress. Like South Korea, Japan and other nations with nuclear power plants, they may well want the ability to break out of the NPT, should it be necessary to deter, defend against or defeat enemies.

But that is no threat to us to justify war. For decades, we lived under the threat that hundreds of Russian warheads could rain down upon us in hours, ending our national existence. If deterrence worked with Stalin and Mao, it can work with an Iran that has not launched an offensive war against any nation within the memory of any living American.

Can we Americans say the same?

Patrick Buchanan is the author of the new book "Churchill, Hitler and 'The Unnecessary War.'" Copyright 2009 Creators Syndicate, Inc.

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