

Dick Cheney Calls for War on Iran

Over a decade of warmongering and only a couple of wars to show for it

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Let's go make war on Iran!" said Republican Dick Cheney in somewhat different words on one of those silly Sunday shows October 26th.

This wasn't the first time Cheney had advocated for war on Iran. Or for torture. Or for assassination by drone. Or for any other war crime for which he is unlikely ever to be held accountable.

But in all fairness to the former vice president, this time he really only implied that war on Iran was inevitable. Looking at the record, however, it's hard to find any war Cheney hasn't found "inevitable," even if he had to lie to get it started, as he did with Iraq.

And Cheney's fondness for "inevitable" wars relies not merely on dishonesty, but more importantly, on personal detachment. Cheney has wanted all these wars to be inevitable for other people, not for anyone in his circle. That's the way it's been for Cheney since he copped out on the war of his generation, getting five deferments from Viet Nam because he had "other priorities" that included cheering on the warmakers who were sending more and more of other people's children to suffer and die in Southeast Asia.

On the other hand, Cheney didn't call for attacking Iran with nuclear weapons the way Republican billionaire Sheldon Adelson did a few days earlier at Yeshiva University. Cheney did not object to nuking Iran either. And he hasn't publicly disagreed with the octogenarian gambling mogul, so one suspects Cheney would be happy enough to see this particular smoking gun turn into a mushroom cloud.

Is nuking the Iranian desert really a smart move?

In fairness to Adelson, who heavily backed Newt Gingrich for president, he didn't call for nuking Tehran right off. He said the U.S. should drop a demo nuke in an Iranian desert and then say: if you don't drop your nuclear weapons development program, then we'll nuke Tehran. Either strike would be a war crime.

But it's far from certain that Iran actually has a nuclear weapons development program. Those who say it is certain are lying, for whatever political purpose they think their lies may serve. The same might be said about those who claim it's certain that Iran does not have a nuclear weapons development program, people who have included the government of Iran and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), as well as Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service (at least according to The New York Times and Ha'aretz).

The reality is that, outside of Iran, no one has any certainty what Iran's long term intentions

are, never ?mind what they might be doing about those intentions at the moment. Too many people, especially people in assorted governments, have a vested interest in not believing that, even if it's true.

They'd rather take a chance on creating an untenable Catch-22 demand for Iran to drop a program it doesn't have - even if it means another war.

Iran is the right's favorite straw man, scapegoat, and imagined existential threat. And Iran, perversely, seems to delight in baiting its declared enemies with hints and innuendoes that feed their greatest fears without providing enough concrete evidence to make those fears demonstrably real. This is like *déjà vu* all over again, a replay of Saddam Hussein's self-defeating posturing in defense of his own nonexistent weapons of mass destruction.

A whole history matters, not just one side of it

You might think Iran had done enough for the American right by holding American hostages long enough in 1979-1980 to elect Ronald Reagan (who later made his own detente-like overtures to Tehran, though he felt the need to do so in secret). But no, Iran has been demonized for more than 30 years by people who refuse to put Iran's actual crimes in the context of the United States' having destroyed Iranian democracy in 1953.

What makes the Cheneys and Adelsons of this world crazier than ever these days is the possibility - the mere possibility - that the Obama administration might somehow restore the slightest normalization with an Islamic nation of 77 million people that hasn't attacked another sovereign state in more than a hundred years under a variety of regimes.

For Iranophobes, more than a century of nonaggression is not enough to offset the fevered dream that Iran might attack somebody, primarily Israel, despite lacking significant means or motivation to do so. Remember Senator John McCain invoking the Beach Boys during his 2008 presidential campaign - "Bomb bomb bomb, bomb bomb Iran?" Did he ever say why, exactly? No, he said he was joking.

Cheney isn't joking. He's talked about bombing Iran for years, so much so that the mystery is that he didn't get President Bush to do it.

Cheney didn't get his war, but at least he prevented peace

The best Cheney could do was to prevent a peaceful relationship from developing with Iran after the U.S. occupied Iraq in 2003. Iran sent a peaceful initiative that Colin Powell, then Secretary of State, wanted to explore. Cheney killed it.

In 2007, Cheney's plan was to persuade Israel to attack Iran's uranium enrichment plant. Then, when Iran presumably retaliated, the U.S. would bomb Iran to bits. Earlier in the year, Cheney's plan to bomb "training camps" in Iran met opposition from the Pentagon and didn't happen.

In 2008, Seymour Hersh reported about another war planning meeting involving Cheney earlier that year:

There was a dozen ideas proffered about how to trigger a war. The one that interested me the most was why don't we build - we in our shipyard - build

four or five boats that look like Iranian PT boats. Put Navy seals on them with a lot of arms. And next time one of our boats goes to the Straits of Hormuz, start a shoot-up. Might cost some lives. And it was rejected because you can't have Americans killing Americans....

"I was probably a bigger advocate of military action than any of my colleagues," Cheney admitted in 2009, expressing the same view Adelson holds now: "I thought that negotiations could not possibly succeed unless the Iranians really believed we were prepared to use military force. And to date, of course, they are still proceeding with their nuclear program and the matter has not yet been resolved."

It doesn't matter so much why you bomb, so long as you bomb

In 2011, after an American drone went down in Iran and the Iranians had it in their possession, Cheney told CNN that the best response would have been to bomb Iran: "The right response to that would have been to go in immediately after it had gone down and destroy it.... You certainly could have gone in and destroyed it on the ground with an airstrike."

On CBS, when asked if that airstrike might not have started a war, Cheney chose not to answer the question, preferring to blame President Obama: "But the administration basically limited itself to saying, 'Please give it back,' and the Iranians said no."

Cheney continues to pimp for war on Iran, most recently on ABC's This Week with George Stephanopoulos, where Cheney first called for Congress to impose more sanctions on Iran, in addition to sanctions that have been in place for years. The Obama administration opposes new sanctions now, wanting to allow recently started talks to play themselves out with as little impediment as possible.

In that context, Stephanopoulos asked Cheney: "Did you think your administration should have taken military action against Iran's nuclear program?"

Cheney didn't answer the question directly, talking instead about Israel bombing a Syrian reactor in September 2007, and expressing regret that the U.S. hadn't done the job instead:

"And if we had taken out the Syrian reactor the way the Israelis did, and they wanted us to do it, we would have sent a clear signal about proliferation. We would have given substance and meaning to our diplomacy. The Iranians would have to look at that and say, these guys are serious about it, they mean business. And we'd be much more effective today negotiating with the Iranians if we'd taken out that Syrian reactor seven years ago."

And then the media-military-industrial complex revealed itself

Stephanopoulos immediately, leadingly, inexplicably asked an unprompted, unprincipled, softball question: "Is military action against Iran inevitable?"

"I have trouble seeing how we're going to achieve our objective short of that. And I doubt very much that the diplomacy will be effective if there's not the prospect that, if diplomacy fails, that we will, in fact, resort to military force," Cheney responded.

"Let's turn to politics," replied Stephanopoulos, as if floating a self-fulfilling prophecy

designed to encourage Congress to improve the chances of pushing the country into another war weren't politics.

Going to war to hold people accountable for crimes they haven't committed - fantasy crimes - really isn't such a good idea. It's a lesson the past decade in Iraq should have taught us all without much ambiguity. So why do any of the mainstream media (like ABC, CBS, and CNN above) continue to give airtime to the warmongering opinions of unindicted war criminals? But that's not a question people like Stephanopoulos and his employers even ask, is it?

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