

## Never Mind the Facts, Let's Have a War...

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A missile test-fired by Iran last week was reported on the BBC World Service as being “capable of striking Israel”.

The choice of words was not unusual. On previous occasions when Iran has test-fired a long-range rocket, the BBC and other western news media dutifully inform us that the said device is “capable of striking Israel”. The well-worn phrase is so reliably heard in these news bulletins that its use betrays a coded script. The not-too-subliminal implications are that Iran is: a) a hostile state; b) doing something illegal in test-firing a long-range missile; and c) gearing up to deliver on its alleged threat to wipe out the state of Israel.

Within hours of these reports last week, the US government weighed in with the pious accusation that the test-firing “undermines Iran’s claims of peaceful intentions”.

This is a propaganda system at work: the choice of words and framework of logic designed to condition people into accepting certain options. In this case, the pre-determined option is a unilateral military strike on Iran either by the US or Israel. In that event, it will of course be reported by the BBC and other western media as a “pre-emptive” military measure to “prevent” Iran from attacking western interests in the region. Reported too, no doubt, will be the “collateral damage” of civilian casualties – unfortunate victims in an otherwise “just cause” to bring a “hardline regime” to abide by “international norms”. This is classic thought engineering that British political essayist George Orwell exposed so brilliantly – the official use of sanitised words to cover the sordid truth.

So let’s rewind and play back the news with some pertinent facts and context that are routinely omitted in western media reporting.

Iran has test-fired a long-range missile – within its sovereign borders. The US and its western allies carry out such weapons testing all the time, as is their sovereign right. One of the US’ allies, Israel, has a stockpile of nuclear weapons in contravention of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. This same ally has previously committed acts of aggression (war crimes) by launching air attacks on neighbouring countries. Israel, with overt approval from Washington, has repeatedly said that it is prepared to militarily strike Iran “soon”, The US itself has warned several times that it reserves the right to use a military option in its relations with Iran. The US is waging illegal wars in three of Iran’s neighbours: Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. A dynamic of fear and distrust between Gulf countries is fuelling a regional arms race. This dynamic is being pushed by the US with, what should be, obvious self-serving interests (massive arms sales, geopolitical influence) that are instead disguised by its bogeyman illusion of Iran, which, unfortunately, Gulf states appear to buy into. All

told, these facts actually do “undermine US claims of peaceful intentions”.

Here are some other facts that the western media curiously underplay. Iran is not at war with any country, although it is routinely accused in the western media, without supporting evidence, of covert subversion across the region. Iran is conducting a nuclear energy programme, which it has repeatedly said is for civilian power supply. After a decade of close monitoring by UN inspectors, which would never be permitted in its territory by the US or its western allies, the inspectors have reiterated that there is no evidence of Iran building a nuclear weapon. Nevertheless, this conclusion does not restrain Washington and London in their dogged assertion that Tehran is building nuclear weapons (cue more arms sales).

Given these facts, the test-firing by Iran of a long-range missile is far from being a quasi-criminal act laden with hostile intentions. It is the action of a country that needs to show it can defend itself amid relentless provocations from proven and much more greatly armed aggressors, whose arsenal also includes a propaganda system that Nazi spinmeister Joseph Goebbels would have marvelled at.

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