

NYT's Bret Stephens Blasted for 'Escalate in Iran' Column

A critic said the Times let Stephens advocate for war with Iran "without even asking him to include a paragraph explaining how such a war would go, what the human toll would be, or how he thinks it would end."

By EDWARD CARVER · Oct 03, 2024

24

Critics denounced *New York Times* opinion writer Bret Stephens for advocating for escalation in Iran in a Tuesday [column](#) and argued the newspaper shouldn't give him a platform for such "dangerous" rhetoric.

Citing Iran's nuclear capabilities, Stephens, a neoconservative, called for a "direct and unmistakable American response" to the "utterly intolerable threat" posed by Iran. He wrote that the U.S. should, at a minimum, destroy an Iranian missile complex, and should not try to "rein in" [Israel](#) as its leaders consider how to respond to a barrage of nearly 200 missiles fired by Iran on Tuesday.

"Incredibly the [*Times*] editors let Bret Stephens publish an article advocating war with Iran, without even asking him to include a paragraph explaining how such a war would go, what the human toll would be, or how he thinks it would end," Nathan J. Robinson, editor of *Current Affairs*, a left-wing magazine, [wrote](#) on social media.

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR FREE NEWSLETTER

Daily news & progressive opinion—funded by the people, not the corporations—delivered straight to your inbox.

Enter your email address


Follow Us

...named a repeat offender, arguing that Stephens is a "race-war monger" who relishes in promoting war that kills innocent Muslims and people of color."




SUBSCRIBE TO OUR FREE NEWSLETTER

Daily news & progressive opinion—funded by the people, not the corporations—delivered straight to your inbox.

Follow Us



9:30 AM · Oct 3, 2024 ⓘ

 **271**  **Reply**  **Copy link**

[Read 5 replies](#)

Iran said Tuesday's strikes, which were [targeted](#) at Israeli military facilities and were mostly intercepted by Israeli and U.S. forces, were retaliation for recent Israeli assassinations, including of Hassan Nasrallah, who was the leader of Hezbollah, an Iran-backed militia in Lebanon. Israel [bombed](#) a residential area last week to assassinate Nasrallah, killing six others in the process, and, earlier on Tuesday, had [launched](#) a ground incursion into southern Lebanon.

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR FREE NEWSLETTER

Daily news & progressive opinion—funded by the people, not the corporations—delivered straight to your inbox.

Follow Us

himself was among the many to push the idea that Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein posed a such a threat.

"Saddam may unveil, to an astonished world, the Arab world's first nuclear bomb," Stephens [wrote](#) in *The Jerusalem Post* in November 2002, echoing the arguments for war of then-U.S. President George W. Bush.

This prediction turned out to be flatly wrong—no weapons of mass destruction were ever found. Andre Damon, a journalist at World Socialist Web Site, said Stephens is now repeating old tricks in trying to justify a war with Iran.

"Twenty years on, it's the same script," Damon [wrote](#) on social media.

Stephens didn't join the *Times* until 2017, but the newspaper's coverage in the lead-up to the 2003 invasion has been widely [critiqued](#) for parroting the Bush administration's [dubious assertions](#).

Reporting from The New York Times in September 2002. (Photo: Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting)

In 2014, Margaret Sullivan, then the *Times*' public editor, [wrote](#) that "the lead-up to the war in Iraq in 2003 was not the *Times*' finest hour."

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR FREE NEWSLETTER

Daily news & progressive opinion—funded by the people, not the corporations—delivered straight to your inbox.

Follow Us

Stephens [attended](#) boarding school in Massachusetts and has degrees from the University of Chicago and London School of Economics and Political Science. He became the editor of *The Jerusalem Post* at age 28, where he named Paul Wolfowitz, an architect of the Iraq War, the newspaper's "Man of the Year." Stephens also worked at *The Wall Street Journal* for many years before joining the *Times*.

Critics have long assailed Stephen's judgment and called for the *Times* to fire him. In 2019, he [received](#) criticism for suggesting that Ashkenazi Jews were smarter than other people. In 2021, Stephens [wrote](#) a piece titled "Eric Adams Is Going to Save New York," referring to the then mayoral candidate whose actual mayoralty of the U.S.' biggest city has been [riddled](#) with scandal.

The criticism hasn't stopped Stephens from doubling down on his positions and using absolutist language. Last year, he wrote that he [didn't regret](#) his support for the Iraq War. And in his Tuesday column, he pushed for Israel's total victory over its foes.

"Wars, once entered, need to be fought through to an unequivocal victory," he wrote.