SPECIAL REPORT

THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE SHADOW OF WAR

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GEORGE W. BUSH, WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION AND THE MIDDLE EAST

"The grave threat from nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons has not gone away with the Cold War. It has evolved into many separate threats, some of them harder to see and harder to answer. And the adversaries seeking these tools of terror are less predictable, more diverse. With advanced technology, we must confront the threats that come on a missile. With shared intelligence and enforcement, we must confront the threats that come in a shipping container or in a suitcase."

President George W. Bush spoke these words soon after his election in February 2001. They reflect his interest in fashioning a new paradigm for the conduct of U.S. foreign policies in the twenty-first century. The new international system that former president George Bush promised in the wake of his victory over Saddam Hussein in Kuwait in 1992, George Bush the son intends to deliver.

Bush's new, American-led, world order has a number of distinguishing features of critical importance to countries in the Middle East and western Asia, many of which have become more pronounced in the wake of the ongoing military campaign in Afghanistan.

Also in this issue:

First and foremost, the Bush administration has a keen sense of America's international preeminence—military, technological and economic—and it is determined to relate to states in a manner based upon this reality. There is no other country deemed strong enough to merit the kind of relationship developed with the Soviet Union during the Cold War, for example, to control the expansion of nuclear arsenals. As a consequence, the Bush administration has sought to avoid negotiations on its nuclear posture with outside parties, and the bilateral treaties of the kind that defined the Cold War nuclear standoff are not viewed as the preferred mechanism for establishing an agreed-upon framework for the conduct of nuclear policy. Each of these elements of a now-discarded strategy implies a sense of symmetry between nuclear or military rivals, and if there is one thing that Bush and his advisers are certain of, it is that the United States at the dawn of the twenty-first century need not relate to any country, particularly in the military-strategic realm, as an equal.

This assessment is expressed in practical terms by Washington's decision to withdraw from the ABM treaty, long a cornerstone of U.S.-Soviet nuclear diplomacy, and a change in nuclear doctrine in favor of the creation and deployment of anti-ballistic missile defense systems that such a repudiation symbolizes. It is also reflected in U.S. resistance to negotiating follow-on nuclear weapons treaties with the Soviet Union's nuclear successor, Russia. Washington is determined to reduce the number of deployed nuclear weapons in its arsenal, a long sought but often elusive objective of the arms control community. President Bush has reluctantly agreed to Russian efforts to confirm such reductions by signing a formal agreement.

"During the Cold War," explained Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in a speech at the National Defense University on January 31, "U.S. security demanded our having a nuclear force large enough and diverse enough to survive and to retaliate after a Soviet first strike. Today our adversaries have changed. The terrorists who struck us on September 11th were clearly not deterred by doing so from the massive U.S. nuclear arsenal. In the 21st century, we need to find new ways to deter new adversaries that will most assuredly arise. That's why President Bush is taking a new approach to strategic deterrence, one that will combine deep reductions in offensive nuclear forces with improved conventional capabilities and the development and deployment of missile defenses capable of protecting the U.S. and our friends and forces deployed from limited missile attacks.

"At the same time as we reduce the number of weapons in our nuclear arsenal, we must also refashion the arsenal, developing new conventional offensive and defensive systems more appropriate

NEW WORLD ORDER, *continued on page 2*

NEW WORLD ORDER, *continued from page 1*

for deterring the potential adversaries that we now face."

These new requirements are affecting America's offensive and defensive nuclear capabilities. In each of these dimensions Washington's assessment of the challenges it faces in the Middle East are playing a central role in shaping these considerations.

The 1991 Gulf War was important in precipitating this wave of new thinking about the threats to American interests and the remedies that the United States should pursue to confront them. Since that time, there has been a growing belief among U.S. policymakers that the existence of nuclear and other non-conventional capabilities outside NATO and the former Warsaw bloc comprises the most immediate challenge to American power. This transformation was made complete with the Bush victory, symbolized by the appointment of Rumsfeld, an author of an influential study that highlighted the proliferation of missile and non-conventional capabilities as the foremost threat to American interests, as secretary of defense.

The September 2001 attack on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center enabled the Bush administration, after its so far successful change of regime in Kabul and the disruption of al-Qaeda deployments in Afghanistan and elsewhere, to recast its enthusiasm for missile defense and opposition to Iraqi and Iranian missile and non-conventional efforts as "Stage Two" in the highly popular "war against terror."

"The real concern at the present time," explained Rumsfeld on January 31, 2002, "is the nexus between terrorist networks and terrorist states that have weapons of mass destruction. And let there be no doubt, there is that nexus, and it must force people all across this globe to realize that what we're dealing with here is something that is totally different than existed in previous periods, and it poses risks of not thousands of lives, but hundreds of thousands of lives, when one thinks of the power and lethality of those weapons."

What are these threats? Simply put, the capability, however disputable, of countries not only to develop and deploy non-conventional nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons and to create advanced means—particularly ballistic missiles—for their delivery but also to supply such weapons to terror organizations. In the Middle East, Iran since the 1979 revolution has headed the list of nations at odds with the United States that are also pursuing in some measure the creation of non-conventional capabilities and ballistic missiles. Iraqi programs, especially since its ill-fated invasion of Kuwait, have consistently elicited adamant U.S. opposition. In recent month's Iraq's presumed non-conventional programs have emerged as the focal point of the "war against terror."

During the course of the Gulf War, diplomatic and military means were used successfully to deter Iraq's use of its non-conventional arsenal. Since the war, the United States has invoked a series of essentially diplomatic and economic measures, directed against Iraq, and to a lesser extent against Iran, Libya, and Syria. These measures may have slowed progress toward development of such capabilities but they have not compelled any of these nations to "uninvent" such options. At the same time the United States has sought military-technological and doctrinal answers to these indigenous capabilities. Some of these were foreshadowed in the Gulf War. For example, Secretary of State James Baker warned Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz at their Geneva meeting just before war commenced that Iraq's use of non-conventional weapons would be met by a devastating U.S. response that would decapitate the regime. U.S. defense secretary Richard Cheney noted publicly that "were Saddam Hussein foolish enough to use weapons of mass destruction, the U.S. response would be absolutely overwhelming and it would be devastating." In each case, the U.S. threat to employ non-conventional weapons was not explicit, but the Iraqi regime was clearly deterred by the credibility of the U.S. (and Israeli) warnings. In one later example, Defense Secretary William Cohen invoked the possible use of the U.S. nuclear arsenal during a dispute with Libya.

The episodic use of such traditional tools is no longer deemed by the Bush administration sufficient to assure that

NEW WORLD ORDER, *continued on page 3*

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NEW WORLD ORDER, *continued from page 2*

countries hostile to the United States or its interests can be compelled to conform to American dictates. In Washington today, the Bush administration is listening with increasing sympathy to strategists who favor a more formal adoption of doctrine governing a more aggressive invocation of the U.S. nuclear arsenal to deter and if necessary to respond to non-conventional weapons wielded by "rogue nations."

Manning the nuclear policymaking bureaucracy today are voices calling for a fundamental rethinking of the role of nuclear weapons.

J. D. Crouch, assistant undersecretary of defense for international security policy, said that some Bush advisers "believe we have marginalized nuclear weapons too much. We have removed them from extended deterrence too much."

"September 11 really underscores the need to look at a full range of flexible options," noted David Smith, an author of a recent report by the National Institute for Public Policy supporting such a view. "We don't believe that the current arsenal of the United States is persuasively deterrent to all comers." Advocates favor recalibrating nuclear weapons as part of an effort to strengthen deterrence and assure more effective results if such weapons are unleashed against a new range of post-Soviet targets. These new nukes, for example, would be smaller than the silo-busters in favor during the Cold War, and they would be fashioned to hit non-conventional targets located in depots underground or in caves. The Pentagon's Nuclear Posture Review leaked in early March 2002 confirmed the interest of the Bush administration in such new capabilities.

U.S. opposition to proliferation is dominated by a concern that such capabilities not be acquired by countries predisposed to thwart U.S. regional and international objectives. The United States has lent financial and political support for nations such as Israel, whose pursuit of integrated defensive forces is viewed in Washington as inspired by strategic considerations similar to those held in the White House. And in the wake of the war against Afghanistan, the United States suspended a series of sanctions imposed on Pakistan and India to protest their nuclear weapons programs and now lends its indirect assistance to India's expanding missile defense capabilities.

The December 14, 2001, remarks of Iran's former president and current head of the Expediency Council Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani are important in this context because they fit, or were made to fit, into the prevailing paradigm now popular in Washington and Israel.

During his Friday sermon, which focused on Palestine, Rafsanjani remarked that the Western powers "have supplied vast quantities of weapons of mass destruction and unconventional weapons to Israel. They have permitted it to have them and they have shut their eyes to what is going on. They have nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and long-range missiles and such.

"If one day, the Islamic world is also equipped with weapons like those that Israel possesses now, then the imperialists' strategy will reach a standstill because the use of even one nuclear bomb inside Israel will destroy everything. However, it will only harm the Islamic world. It is not irrational to contemplate such an eventuality. Of course, you can see that the Americans have kept their eyes peeled and they are carefully looking for even the slightest hint that technological advances are being made by an independent Islamic country. If an independent Islamic country is thinking about acquiring other kinds of weaponry, then they will do their utmost to prevent it from acquiring them."

Rafsanjani was stating the obvious. In a nuclearized Middle East, the failure of deterrence would mean that Israel would be far less able to survive a nuclear attack than most of its Muslim neighbors.

Rafsanjani's clumsy and superfluous suggestion that a balance of terror in the Middle East would not work in Israel's favor was seconded by Iran's defense minister, Admiral Ali Shamkhani, who warned on February 4, 2002, "If Israel carries out any military action against Iran, it will face a response that will be unimaginable to any Israeli politician."

Israel's chief of staff, Gen. Shaul Mofaz, in turn, warned that Israel's arsenal not only includes conventional arms but also unspecified "other capabilities." Former Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu responded that Israel should establish a national command structure to assure that Israel retains a "second-strike" capability in the event of an Iranian attack. While Israel has not formally abrogated its policy of nuclear ambiguity, Netanyahu's suggestion is one of many indications that Israel has embarked on the creation of a second-strike capability.

This dance of nuclear threat and counterthreat was to some degree prompted and emboldened by American policy statements, but it is important to recognize that the reality of non-conventional deterrence and missile research, deployment, and strategy in the Middle East has a dynamic independent of, and largely immune to, bellicose statements from Washington.

Shamkhani's attempt to assert Iran's deterrent credibility was made in the context of a question about Iran's response to an Israeli attack on the nuclear power station under construction near Bushehr. The issue of "preemption"—destroying a facility of potential value to a nuclear weapons program—has been on the agenda since Israel's destruction of Iraq's Osiraq nuclear reactor in June 1981. The Bush administration, in its new military-strategic initiative now underway, has revived consideration of this instrument as one of its central non-proliferation strategies.

"Defending the U.S. requires prevention, self-defense and sometimes preemption," explained Rumsfeld on January 31, 2002. "Defending against terrorism and other emerging 21st-century threats may well require that we take the war to the

NEW WORLD ORDER, *continued on page 7*

THE BUMPY ROAD TO DAMASCUS

In August 2001, David Satterfield, a former U.S. ambassador to Lebanon who is now deputy assistant secretary for Middle East affairs, described his talks with Syrian foreign minister Faruk al-Sharaa as "excellent." Satterfield promised a "maximum" U.S. effort to "stop the terrible suffering" in Israel and Palestine and reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to the principle of "land for peace" on the Syrian-Israeli front.

After September 11, no one is describing relations between the Bush administration and Damascus as "excellent." The state of U.S.-Syrian affairs today is more ambiguous. U.S. policy swings across a broad pendulum—from Syria's place on Washington's short list of potential targets of U.S. nuclear weapons, to the quiet, practical, and unprecedented cooperation between Syrian and U.S. intelligence agencies, which have been a constant presence in the country in the aftermath of the destruction of the World Trade Center. This state of affairs has relevance far beyond the axis between Damascus and Washington, as it offers revealing insights into the still-evolving U.S. campaign to defeat "terror with a global reach" and countries like Syria, where this policy carries dangers and rewards.

In the days and weeks following the al-Qaeda attack on U.S. targets, the dangerous implications of U.S. policy for the Assad regime were readily apparent. Syria shed no tears for Osama Bin Laden, but it coupled this attitude with the insistent refrain that a distinction must be made between terror and national liberation. Its continued hosting of Palestinian rejectionist groups and its refusal to disavow support for Lebanon's Hizballah were evidence of the deep divide that, in U.S. eyes, undermines prospects for an improvement in relations. Deputy Secretary of State Armitage offered the most militant assessment, suggesting that U.S. policy toward Syria "will be according to what the coalition [against terror] will find proper, ranging from isolation, to economic investigation, even to military actions."

Shortly afterward President George W. Bush declared that Washington was evaluating Syrian promises to assist in the global effort led by Washington.

"We take [the Syrian declarations] seriously," said the U.S. president, "and intend to give them a chance to prove it."

In the months since October 2001, a wary equilibrium has been established between the United States and Syria. The Assad regime has accommodated Washington's immediate objectives, which center around destroying al-Qaeda's international operation and keeping the confrontation between Israel and the Lebanese organization Hizballah on ice. Washington has, however, yet to translate its broader objectives into new policy demands for an end to Syrian support for groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad or place these concerns in the context of specific inducements or threats that await countries like Syria that comply with or defy Washington's directives.

As long as the West does not insist upon Syria punishing Hamas, Hizballah, and Islamic Jihad, the Syrians will help the United States against Osama Bin Laden, noted a visitor to Damascus. "America accepts the Syrian view."

Damascus is working more closely than ever with U.S., British, and Canadian intelligence. "The FBI and CIA are there long term," explained a well-informed source.

Syria has reason to support this effort, noted a State Department official. "Syria might not have the same list [as Washington]. The al-Qaeda people, after all, are related to the people at Hama," a reference to the government's bloody assault on anti-regime Islamists in the early 1980s in which thousands were killed. "They don't need our encouragement."

Indeed, anxious to exhibit Syria's charter membership in the fight against terror, Bashar Assad has taken to championing his father's assault on Hama to American visitors who tour the Syrian capital. In Syrian eyes, Washington's assault on Afghanistan places their destruction of the city of Hama in a new, more internationally acceptable light.

"He is very proud of it," observed one recent visitor.

The Bush administration has yet to embark in earnest on the anticipated "Stage Two" of its anti-terror campaign.

Syria offers an inviting arena for such an effort, if it materializes. It is enjoying an explosion in unmonitored sanctions-busting trade with Iraq, fueled by 250,000 barrels of Iraqi oil per day. The country is already on the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism, principally because it offers refuge to numerous Palestinian rejectionist and Islamist groups. Damascus has always maintained that a distinction must be made between terror of the sort practiced by al-Qaeda and Syria's domestic Islamist opposition and the struggle for national liberation as conducted by Hizballah and a range of religious and secular Palestinian organizations. Most recently, it has made this claim from the UN Security Council, where it sits as a non-permanent member. Syria may have prevailed upon Hizballah to maintain relative quiet on Israel's northern border. But it shows no interest in conforming to Washington's long-standing requests to force the organization to abandon the military dimension of its activities or any interest in making life difficult for the Palestinians conducting business in Damascus.

On these issues, acknowledges a State Department official, "we might as well be talking to a wall. We are always looking for levers to make our requests more effective. There are constant [internal] debates on what penalties should be exacted."

"What should we do," asked a U.S. official rhetorically, "send in the Blackhawks? There are people at DOD [the Pentagon] who talk about it," the official added. Syria is "one of nineteen countries on the list, but even the White House thinks that this would be crazy."

The world may have not changed as much after September 11 as conventional wisdom in the United States believes. In countries like Syria, the United States has yet to conjure a set

DAMASCUS, *continued on page 7*

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION AND THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

The Bush administration presides at a time when the "promise of Madrid" has been rendered hollow. The United States, together with Israel and much of the Arab world, proved unable to realize the vision inspiring the Madrid process—a comprehensive peace between Israel and its neighbors, the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with its capital in East Jerusalem, and the construction of a regional alliance against anti-American political Islam and the creation and deployment of weapons of mass destruction by Iraq and Iran. They also were unable to perpetuate an interminable Oslo-process promising less than an "end to the conflict."

The Bush administration has inherited a far different world than that inhabited by the architects of the Madrid and Oslo diplomatic frameworks. For the latter final status talks were a future objective. For George W. Bush they are a historical failure. His administration is determined not to make the errors of its predecessor—to become so consumed by the process of Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy that the most frequent visitor to the White House is Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Intent upon revolutionizing the international strategic environment by consigning the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty to the diplomatic scrap yard, Bush strategists have found a willing partner in the Sharon government and also in Turkey and India. U.S. concerns about defending against the non-conventional and missile capabilities of Iran and Iraq are today more than ever at the leading edge of the Pentagon's weapon, doctrine, and technology efforts. With the demise of the Madrid assumptions about the effectiveness of an Israeli-Arab regional alliance, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has an avid interest in participating in this effort and sharing its fruits.

Leading members of the Bush administration—from the vice president's office to the highest political echelons in the Pentagon—view Israel as first and foremost a strategic ally, a principal partner in confronting what U.S. strategists have identified as the most pressing contemporary challenge to U.S. interests, not just in the Middle East but internationally—"rogue nations" wielding missiles aimed against the United States and its allies.

"We are without a so-called peer competitor in the world," explained Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld recently. "We're not without threats or worries or concerns or risks in the world. We know it's still a dangerous and untidy world, the weapons are more powerful. The weapons of mass destruction are more widely disbursed. And they're in the hands of people who are different than the people who had them 25 years ago. So that's a big change.

"Therefore, one has to ask the question, in the 21st century, given the changed nature of the world, and the evolving threat that exists, what are the deterrents that would be most helpful? What are the things that will help this country be best able to contribute to peace and stability in the world?"

Sharon, who was one of the first Israeli leaders to publicly declare that Israel's strategic interests ranged from Morocco to Pakistan, has found a receptive audience in George W. Bush's Washington. Vice President Richard Cheney has spoken favorably toward Israel's destruction of Iraq's Osiraq reactor, and Paul Wolfowitz, a top Pentagon appointee, is an Israeli partisan who was dispatched to the Jewish state in order to keep Israel out of the Gulf War. Rumsfeld has pointedly endorsed Israel's Arrow missile defense system. The Republican enthusiasm for missile defense against Iran and Iraq—Rumsfeld authored the most influential study on missile defense—will no doubt increase the political impetus to enhance strategic cooperation with Israel.

Top foreign policy advisers to the Bush administration have an intimate familiarity with the Middle East. Rumsfeld served as a special Middle East envoy under Ronald Reagan. When they look at a map of the Middle East, however, their eyes are drawn to the Gulf and the Mashriq. Only reluctantly have they been compelled to focus on Palestine and its interminably warring parties, not because they have any hopes for rapprochement between Sharon and Arafat but because of their concern that the violence between Israel and the Palestinians will "spill over" to Israel's eastern front, engaging Iraq and Jordan as well as Syria and Lebanon and complicating a U.S. strike against Baghdad. For them the Arab-Israeli conflict is not amenable to American power. Rather it is a black hole of frustrated expectations that the Bush administration has, without success, attempted to avoid.

Since coming to power, the Bush administration has fashioned a view of the Palestinian dimension of the conflict based upon these impressions. Its principled intention not to take a leading role, however, has not resulted in a lower American profile and less high level attention devoted to the issue. Instead the continuing intifada has forced itself upon the reluctant attentions of top foreign policy officials in Washington, most notably Secretary of State Colin Powell, and CIA director George Tenet and more recently special envoy Anthony Zinni and Vice President Richard Cheney. Their involvement, however, has been characterized by crisis management of increasing intimacy rather than by any sense of strategic policy direction. If there is such a dimension to current U.S. actions it can best be characterized by increasing calls for the Palestinian Authority to force an end to the Palestinian rebellion, by forces under its nominal control as well as those fielded by opposition elements.

As Powell explained on May 22, 2001, when he was officially presented with the report of the international commission headed by former U.S. senator George Mitchell, appointed in October 2000 by President Bill Clinton, "I don't think that our policy has changed. It remains in the same sequence.

BUSH ADMINISTRATION, *continued on page 6*

BUSH ADMINISTRATION, *continued from page 5*

The United States is not putting forward a peace plan today; the United States is not convening a meeting for the purpose of going over various final status issues. What we are doing today is very simple and very direct, calling once again for an unconditional end to the violence."

The Bush administration has yet to articulate its own strategic direction on the next stage of Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy. Possible parameters of such intervention, however, have been most clearly articulated by Edward Djerejian, an administration intimate who remains in the private sector and who does not speak formally for Washington. Djerejian's long and continuing association with James Baker, his continuing access to top administration officials, and his presence "at the creation" of the Madrid era lend a particular prominence to his views.

Djerejian, in a speech on April 12, 2001, offered the most comprehensive "Republican" look at the post-Oslo era. U.S. leadership of the kind exhibited by the Nixon White House after the October 1973 war, by the Carter administration at Camp David, and by George Bush at Madrid remain the preferable paradigm for U.S. leadership, Djerejian argued. His call to "reassess U.S. policy towards the region as a whole" cannot but have set off alarm bells in Israel, where memories have yet to fade of Henry Kissinger's "agonizing reassessment" of U.S. policy included the temporary embargo on some arms transfers and forced Israel into an second disengagement agreement with Egypt in 1975.

The Bush administration has inherited a far different world than that inhabited by the architects of the Madrid and Oslo diplomatic frameworks. For the latter, final status talks were a future objective. For George W. Bush they are a historical failure. His administration is determined not to make the errors of its predecessor—to become so consumed by the process of Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy that the most frequent visitor to the White House is Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Djerejian observed that the power of "pan-Arab nationalism as a united front against Israel" is enjoying a political renaissance despite the "decisive setback" this idea suffered by the creation of the coalition against Iraq in the Gulf War. He criticized the Oslo process, with its focus on interim agreements, as "too protracted, without enough tangible results on the ground." In contrast to the failed experiences of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, Djerejian noted that Hizballah's success in forcing an Israeli evacuation from Lebanon has fired the popular Palestinian imagination, "including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and even groups within Fateh, such as the Tanzim, who see violence and confrontation as a necessary concomitant to negotiations." He noted that Israel's Jewish majority, as a consequence of the intifada and the unrest among Israel's Arab minority in October 2000, now feels threatened "both from within its borders and from outside."

As befitting one of the architects of Madrid, Djerejian lamented the failure to reach an Israeli-Syrian agreement, which "would have had important strategic implications for the region as a whole and could have enhanced the prospects for a final status agreement between the Palestinians and the Israelis." Djerejian pointed to this track—"the forgotten agenda of the Madrid peace process"—as ripe for success, if the political will in Israel, Syria, and the United States can be mustered. In March 2002, Djerejian announced that he will lead a "Track Two" U.S.-Syrian dialogue.

On the Palestinian track, Djerejian noted that the intifada has not altered the basic equation governing relations between the parties—Israel must accommodate the Palestinians "as a distinct national and political entity." Palestinians require Israeli consent to achieve their national and political goals. He advised "making haste slowly" in contrast to former Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak's attempt to end the conflict. "This failed effort altered the very process at the heart of the Oslo agreement—trying to obtain what is obtainable as interim goals."

Djerejian supports disaggregating the basket of final status issues—for example, reaching partial agreements on land (including the consolidation of major settlements), water, security, and economic relations, while placing the end of the conflict, refugees, and Jerusalem in "separate but continuing negotiating tracks to explore compromise solutions."

Such a process, he believes, would accommodate the creation of a Palestinian state not as an expression of a final status agreement that would end the conflict but rather as an indication of the renewed vitality of incremental progress toward a comprehensive agreement.

The mission of Anthony Zinni is to establish the security basis (through the Tenet and Mitchell plans) for an as yet to be agreed upon political dialogue. But if the Bush administration decides, or is compelled, to focus upon a U.S. plan to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Djerejian's views offer as informed a view as any as to what it might comprise. ◆

NEW WORLD ORDER, *continued from page 3*

enemy. The best, and in some cases, the only defense, is a good offense."

Rumsfeld and Vice President Cheney have publicly applauded Israel's destruction of the Iraqi reactor. Cheney's comments were made when he was defense secretary at the height of the Gulf War. Rumsfeld made his remarks as George W. Bush's secretary of defense.

The renewed, public attention to preemption takes place in the context of the American-led campaign to oust Saddam Hussein and U.S. intelligence assessments projecting an Iranian nuclear weapons capability by the end of the decade. Israel's guess is that it will occur even sooner.

Israeli defense minister Benjamin ben Eliezer told an Israeli audience in early January 2002 that he sees "a gradual move from the threat of conventional warfare to non-conventional warfare, which is turning realistic, worrisome and significant."

Comments such as these are all of a piece. In Washington they are part of a continuing effort to mobilize domestic support in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks for what is in many respects a radical departure in doctrine, deployment, and expenditure from current defense policies. In Israel, the intention is to reaffirm the sentiment and the mechanisms of a strategic partnership with Washington based upon a common perception of threats originating in countries where terror and non-conventional weapons meet.

With discussion of a U.S.-directed "regime change" in Iraq proceding apace, a strategy of preemption has moved to the center of U.S. considerations. Together with missile defense, pre-emption lies at the heart of the Bush administration's efforts to create a strategic bulwark against all comers. The attempt by the Bush administration to make a seamless transition from its battle against the ill-equipped Taliban and al-Qaeda to the charter members of the "axis of evil" is being made in the context of an effort to build domestic and international support for a controversial program intended to assure American strategic hegemony in the twenty-first century.

Israel plays an important role doctrinally, politically, and technically in this project. For many years it has sought to win Washington over to its perception of the non-conventional threats looming in the region. The Madrid process was understood as a means of isolating Iran and Iraq to form a regional consensus under U.S. leadership reaching from Morocco to Syria and the Arabian Gulf. Today the promise of Madrid has exhausted itself. A regional peace is no longer seen as probable, nor is the consolidation of an Arab-Israeli entente against "Islamic fundamentalism wielding nuclear weapons" that according to Israeli leader Shimon Peres was to result from it. Neither Washington nor Israel now view an Arab-Israeli peace as the gateway to a more effective confrontation with Iraq or Iran. Indeed, the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is viewed by many in the Bush administration as a distraction, strategically unimportant. During the Cheney visit to the region in March 2002, the Bush administration was forced to confront Arab views opposed to this assessment.

Israel and Turkey, as well as India, are destined to play an enhanced operational role in the contemporary U.S. effort. A central vehicle for this cooperation is missile defense, particularly the Arrow anti-ballistic missile (ATBM) system that Israel has created in cooperation with Washington over the last decade. Turkey and India are interested in obtaining the system, which its proponents claim is the first operational ATBM system to be deployed. In recent years, Washington has looked with increasing benevolence upon an explosion in Israeli-Indian military ties, which include India's interest in all aspects of the Arrow and Green Pine radar systems. The United States, which killed an Israeli sale of the Phalcon battle management AWACs aircraft to China last year, is expected to approve the sale of the same plane to India.

India's and Pakistan's rehabilitation in American eyes owes much, but not all, to the Bush administration's reaction to September 11. In the wake of their copy cat nuclear tests during May 1998, India and Pakistan ignored international efforts to win their adherence to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and CTBT and suffered a series of wide-ranging sanctions imposed by the Clinton administration. Many of these sanctions were lifted gradually during 1998–2000. All remaining penalties were removed within days of the September 11 attacks.

New Delhi and Karachi alike could not help but notice Washington's muted reaction to a January 2002 test firing of India's Agni surface-to-surface missile. Secretary of State Colin Powell's response was more a lament than a criticism, the plaintive call of a friend rather than the harsh remonstration of an overbearing opponent.

The attitude of the world's sole superpower toward the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the means for their delivery has, once again, accommodated realpolitik. This lesson has been learned in Jerusalem, Islamabad, and New Delhi. Baghdad and Tehran might take note as well. ◆

DAMASCUS, *continued from page 4*

of instruments that will compel the Assad regime to act according to an American script. In Washington, the fight against terror may seem self-evident, but in Damascus, as elsewhere, cooperation with the American agenda, against Palestinian or Lebanese Islamists or Saddam Hussein, carries a price measured in an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

When Washington sets its sights beyond Osama Bin Laden, it will be challenged to factor this long-standing reality into its policy equation. ◆

SHARON AND JORDAN

"Israelis don't understand," Ami Ayalon, the recently retired head of Israel's internal security service—Shabak—counseled his fellow citizens, "that all of the Palestinians are afraid of being thrown across the [Jordan] River."

He might well have added that this nightmare scenario is also resonating among Jordanians on the East Bank, even more so since Ariel Sharon's election as prime minister.

Jordan's policy toward Israel since the beginning of the Oslo process has been based on an assumption that Palestinian sovereignty on the West Bank was an attainable objective. During the last decade, progress by Israel and the Palestinians along this track and the march of Israeli-Jordanian peace was intimate and, as far as the Jordanian's have been concerned, critically interdependent. Without Oslo it is certain that there would be no formal Israeli-Jordanian peace.

Prime Minister Sharon's historical views of Jordan are, to say the least, troubling to those who rule in Amman today. How can it be forgotten that for many years Sharon was the most prominent voice in Israel favoring the proposition that "Jordan is Palestine." During Black September he sought unsuccessfully to win the government of Golda Meir to this view, advocating that Israel withdraw its support for King Hussein in his life and death battle against the PLO. In 1982, as minister of defense in the government of Menachem Begin, Sharon's star-crossed strategy in Lebanon included the relocation of Lebanon's Palestinian population, en masse, to Jordan.

Now, as prime minister, what is Sharon's attitude toward his neighbor across the Jordan? In an interview in the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, he offered a reappraisal of his views, which has not stilled concerns in the Hashemite kingdom.

"I have not changed my [ideological] viewpoint. The only thing that has changed is my opinion about Jordan as Palestine. And even that simply because a fact was created. You know, I never intended for there to be two Palestinian states. That is the only change in my positions."

Jordanians remain wary of Sharon's intentions.

"I am not so sure that he is sincere," explained a well-informed Jordanian observer. "If he is, it suggests that Jordan's role as a buffer between Israel and Iraq is more important to Sharon than Jordan as Palestine. Jordan does not mind being viewed by Israel and America as a good buffer, because we will benefit. Sharon's view of Jordan's role is flawed however. Jordan's regional role and the creation of a Palestinian state"—a piece which remains absent in Sharon's regional puzzle—"should proceed in tandem. Jordan cannot accommodate the combination of Palestinian anger and Iraqi disaffection. If he is serious—that Jordan is not Palestine—he must be clear in his support of a Palestinian state."

The declining prospects of Palestinian sovereignty on the West Bank that have accompanied Sharon's election necessarily fuel the concerns of Jordanian nationalists about the role of Palestinians in Jordan itself. Sharon's declaration "did not assuage the fears of Jordanian nationalists about the future," explained another Jordanian.

"What concerns Jordan most," explained an experienced Jordanian observer, "is the faltering hope of a Palestinian state, which might prompt the trans-Jordanian elite, whose thinking is very important, to consider how to defend Jordan against the Palestinians."

Perhaps, suggested one Jordanian, Sharon's comment was not meant to reassure Amman at all, but rather to prompt Jordanian pressure on Palestinian Authority chairman Yasser Arafat to submit to Sharon's West Bank agenda. "Sharon knows of the concerns of Jordanians. Perhaps he wanted to exploit the fears of Jordan to compel Jordan to pressure Arafat."

How can Sharon remain committed to the ideological puzzle he has constructed over a lifetime while managing to fit in a pro-Hashemite Jordanian piece instead of the one marked "Jordan is Palestine?" Jordan remains committed and, indeed is anxious to increase its partnership in regional strategic alliances championed by the Bush administration. Sharon has already signaled that he supports Jordan's role, and he has used his good offices in Washington to that end. Yet his effort to frustrate Palestinian and Arab expectations of independence throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip increases the domestic and regional risks to the monarchy and complicates Washington's attempt to enlist Jordan in an effort to isolate Iraq and Iran. ◆

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