

Strategic, Nuclear, and Missile Developments in the Middle East: Facing Armageddon

A Special Report of the Foundation for Middle East Peace

Winter 1999

WASHINGTON PROMOTES NEW DEFENSE INITIATIVE IN THE GULF AND ADVANCES STRATEGIC COOPERATION WITH ISRAEL

The cooling U.S. commitment to the architecture of nuclear arms control, created over decades of painstaking negotiations with the Soviet Union, is no longer in question. Democrats and Republicans alike, driven by the technological innovations heralded in Ronald Reagan's "Star Wars" program and their own concerns about the reliability of the strategy of deterrence, have signaled an intention to move U.S. policy away from nuclear stability based on a policy of mutual assured destruction. In its place, Washington seems poised to move the center of its innovation and strategy in the new millennium toward a reliance on defensive systems—known as

Theater Missile Defense, or TMD—promising to protect not only the U.S. mainland but also the territory of an expanding number of allies against non-conventional missile strikes.

The merits of such a move can be questioned, but the fact that such a shift is well under way cannot be disputed. And in contrast to the era of deterrence, the dawning era of defense against non-conventional weapons has already had a profound effect on U.S. policy in the Middle East and its relations with its core allies, particularly Israel.

U.S. officials have hinted at this striking evolution in policy. At an October 20, 1999, speech before the

Israel Policy Forum, National Security Advisor Sandy Berger explained the connection between the two issues at the top of the U.S. foreign policy agenda—regional stability and nuclear peace.

"Unless we can resolve the festering problems of the [Middle East] peace process," Berger explained, "it will unleash the centrifugal forces in the region, a region increasingly in the possession of more and more sophisticated weapons. The danger of conflict involving weapons of mass destruction is substantial and therefore I believe that it is

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NUCLEAR AND MISSILE DEVELOPMENTS EXPAND THE BOUNDARIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST

Until recently, relationships between countries in the Middle East and their arms suppliers outside the region did not intrude upon the strategic, non-conventional calculations of either buyer or seller. Moscow could sell weapons to Syria or Washington could transfer arms to Israel in discreet, self-contained packages while pursuing, on a separate track altogether, policies of nuclear and missile restraint or expansion.

For more than a decade, the most sought after weapon systems and technologies in the Middle East have been aimed at providing the strategic, non-conventional means to deter, preempt, or defeat similarly armed adversaries. To a far greater degree than in the past, the diffusion of these capabilities has forced a radical recasting of the traditional strategic concepts underlying the military doctrines of countries in the Middle East as well as their foreign suppliers.

Today, the countries in the region not only compete against each other in a race for strategic superiority, they have also become part of elementary strategic calculations in Moscow, New Delhi,

Pyongyang, and Islamabad. In part, as a consequence of these developments, the Middle East finds itself front and center in the primary strategic debate being conducted by the world's preeminent power.

As Henry Kissinger wrote in November 1999, "the conflict between two nuclear superpowers is no longer the overwhelming threat to peace. The threat is, rather, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to countries that reject any common norms and seek nuclear weapons to blackmail the rest of the world"—Iran, Iraq, and North Korea foremost among them.

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On October 31, 1998, a U.S. Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was signed by President Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The agreement is the latest in a series of accords dating from 1975, but it is the first one to be signed by the president of the United States.

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

In view of the long-standing security relationship between the United States and Israel and the long-term commitment by the United States to the maintenance of Israel's qualitative edge, and considering the developing regional threats emanating from the acquisition of ballistic missile capabilities and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the governments of the United States and Israel have decided to work jointly consistent with their long-standing policies towards the attainment of the following objectives:

- Enhancing Israel's defensive and deterrent capabilities.
- Upgrading the framework of the U.S.-Israeli strategic and military relationships, as well as the technological cooperation between them.

The two governments will forthwith designate representatives to a joint strategic planning committee which will formulate specific recommendations on steps that can be implemented as quickly as possible to advance the foregoing objectives.

The United States Government would view with particular gravity direct threats to Israel's security arising from the regional deployment of ballistic missiles of intermediate range or greater. In the event of such a threat, the United States Government would consult promptly with the Government of Israel with respect to what support, diplomatic or otherwise, or assistance, it can lend to Israel.

This Memorandum of Agreement has been done in duplicate in the English language at Washington, D.C. and Jerusalem and will enter into effect when each side has informed the other that it has signed an original. The two sides will exchange the signed originals for completion of the signature process.

Foreign WMD [weapons of mass destruction] procurement managers in countries of concern have responded to Western export controls by seeking dual-use goods largely from entities in Russia, China, North Korea, and Eastern Europe. During the reporting period, China demonstrated improved control of the export of dual-use technologies to certain WMD programs in countries of concern. Russia, however, showed uneven progress, and North Korea has no constraints on sales of ballistic missiles and related technology. European supplier countries have increasingly applied "catch-all" regulations to halt questionable exports, especially following the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests.

Countries determined to maintain WMD programs over the long term have been placing significant emphasis on insulating their programs against interdiction and disruption, trying to reduce their dependence on imports by developing indigenous production capabilities. Although these capabilities may not always be a good substitute for foreign imports—particularly for more advanced technologies—in many cases they may prove to be adequate.

CIA report to Congress on the Acquisition of Technology
Relating to Weapons Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional
Munitions (1 July through 31 December 1998), released July 1999

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BARAK WORKS TO ENHANCE ISRAEL'S STRATEGIC DETERRENT

Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak, in a speech marking the Fall 1999 opening of the Knesset, reaffirmed his intention “to maintain [Israel’s] strategic deterrent capability even in peacetime, for whatever geographical or time range is required.”

All too often the minutiae of negotiations between Israel and its Arab adversaries dominates public perceptions, leaving little room or energy to focus on what most animates policy-makers themselves—the implications of the non-conventional and ballistic balance of power, including non-conventional capabilities, in the region.

To fully comprehend the importance of Barak’s declaration, it is necessary to translate the language first employed in the United States by the high priests of the nuclear age. In the world of the cognoscenti, “strategic deterrent” means a system of weapons, including nuclear weapons and technologies, deployed in order to convince an adversary that the cost of military aggression would be unacceptable. These weapons and technologies are both defensive and offensive.

Israel boasts one of the most sophisticated and wide-ranging strategic deterrents on earth—founded upon the reach and power of its air force and, of course, nuclear weapons. Its arsenal of nuclear weapons has a variety of specialized uses and can be delivered by land-based and sea-based missiles, as well as by airplane.

What does Barak’s pledge to “maintain” this capability mean? First and foremost, it indicates that there will be no “peace dividend” in the event of an agreement between Israel and Syria. Israel currently spends close to 10 percent of GNP—around \$8 billion—on its armed forces.

Second, Barak intends to maintain Israel’s advantage over its neighbors in its ability to aim better and at longer distances, as well as to detect, defend against, and destroy the capabilities of its enemies. The cutting edge of this effort is in detection capabilities that can be used to identify and target enemy installations and, if necessary, to shoot down bomb-laden missiles before they reach Israeli territory.

Neither a peace with Damascus nor certainly with the Palestinians will force a reassessment of this effort. Indeed, Barak views a settling of differences with this “inner circle” of historical adversaries as facilitating the task of deterring the growing capabilities of Iran, Iraq, and even Pakistan. In his July 1999 meeting with U.S. president Bill Clinton, Barak is reported to have devoted a large part of his time discussing the need to confront the emerging non-conventional and missile capabilities of Tehran and Baghdad.

Barak, like his predecessors, looks to Washington as an ally and collaborator in the effort to maintain Israel’s “qualitative superiority” over any combination of adversaries. While there are technologies that Washington continues to deny the Israelis—for example, the ability to “task” U.S. satellite missions and thus facilitate Israeli targeting of enemy installations, for example—the Clinton administration is taking doctrinal, administrative, and practical steps to enhance Israel’s capabilities.

A memorandum of agreement sealed at Wye Plantation in October 1998 between the United States and Israel focuses on the potential threat to Israel posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction in the region. The agreement includes a new mechanism for enhancing cooperation in dealing with this potential threat. Meeting with Barak in July 1999, Clinton declared that strategic cooperation between the two countries

had been raised to a new level. A new consultative framework has been established between the diplomatic and military establishments. Growing collaboration on new antimissile technologies is more and more the rule rather than the exception.

Even more important, however, is the sense that the United States now views the development of Israel’s strategic deterrent, with its nuclear arsenal at the forefront, not only as a positive factor in the regional balance of power, but also as one that it should support and enhance. ♦

“All the states of the Middle East, with the sole exception of Israel, have acceded to the [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty] NPT and the international regime for the inspection of nuclear facilities. This constitutes a source of constant tension. It negates to a large degree the effectiveness of the international instruments on non-proliferation and arms control. It will lead to an arms race. It is illogical to give a special privilege or a certain exception to only one state in as vast and sensitive a region as the Middle East under flimsy contexts. Sound logic necessitates that an end be put to this exception, and to call firmly for Israel’s accession to the NPT. This subject will force itself on the 2000 first review conference of the NPT.”

Amre Moussa
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the
Arab Republic of Egypt at the
General Assembly of the United Nations
September 23, 1999

ISRAEL-U.S. STRATEGIC COOPERATION: REAFFIRMED AND REINVIGORATED

Israel and the United States are well on their way toward cementing relations meant to assure Israel's military-strategic preeminence throughout a nuclearized Middle East.

The creation of a mutually beneficial rationale for a dynamic post-Cold War strategic partnership has been high on the Israeli list of priorities since the demise of the Soviet Union as a super-power factor in the region. Indeed, it could be argued that the Madrid process was but one element, albeit an important one, in Israel's effort to establish a politically sustainable rationale for continuing the flow of massive U.S. military and technological assistance in an era when threat from Russia is far diminished and the cache of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty is wearing thin.

MOA Signed

A milestone in this effort was reached on the last day of October 1998, but it was crowded out of the limelight by the far less important but more photogenic signing of the Wye agreement. A joint statement by President Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu noted a new memorandum of agreement (MOA) "on the potential threat to Israel posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction in the region." The agreement includes a "new mechanism for enhancing cooperation in dealing with this potential threat."

The agreement itself reaffirms the "long term commitment of the U.S. to maintain Israel's qualitative edge" and commits the U.S. to enhance Israel's "defensive and deterrent capabilities."

The agreement's finalization at Wye suggests that it was one of the carrots held out by President Clinton to a reluctant Israeli prime minister to commit himself to redeploy from 13 percent of the West Bank.

The enduring significance of the memorandum, however, was not for a

minute lost upon the Israelis, and it raised the eyebrows of some in the Arab world as well.

As the Middle East enters a new century, Israel's defense planners view the prospect of a general war with the Arabs—long the animating feature of Israeli defense planning—as less likely than the problem of confronting terror. The greatest threat to Israel, however, according to its defense experts, is the threat posed by ballistic missiles armed with non-conventional payloads. These capabilities have now been identified as a threat to the U.S. as well. A recently released National Intelligence Estimate, combining the wisdom of Washington's myriad intelligence agencies, identifies the nonconventionally armed ballistic missile intentions of Iran and Iraq as a threat to U.S. security.

Netanyahu Affirms Policy

Prime Minister Netanyahu, responding soon before his defeat in May 1999 to a question about the strain in ties with the U.S. during his tenure, rebutted, "For the first time, the United States committed itself to assist Israel in finding answers to ballistic and other dangers that threaten us. Also, the United States is committed to enhancing Israel's deterrence. That was never said in the past."

Netanyahu was correct. A U.S. commitment to enhancing Israel's deterrent capability in an environment characterized by nuclear and other non-conventional weapons has never been a formal part of Washington's strategic relationship with Israel—and for good reason.

Israel's "deterrent capabilities" have long been another way of saying Israel's nuclear capabilities, capabilities that the United States has formally opposed as an element of regional instability. And while the wording of the memorandum of agreement does not declare outright U.S. support for enhancing Israel's nuclear deterrent, its purposeful ambiguity gives proponents of such a nuclear

partnership plenty of ammunition. And it marks a clear recognition by the United States of the value of Israel's non-conventional capabilities as a stabilizing force in the region.

Egypt Voices Concern

In an interview with the *Settlement Report*, Egypt's well-regarded ambassador in Washington, Ahmed Mayer al-Sayed, described the agreement as "a very serious matter. If you read the memorandum it does warrant this interpretation."

It was for good reason, then, that Netanyahu pointed to this achievement as the highpoint of his relationship with Washington.

"We were very worried about it," al-Sayed continued, "but we received assurances that the MOA would not change anything. But whatever assurances we received from the Americans, they have not allayed our concern about the hidden meanings found in the memorandum. We did express our views, and we are watching. The whole matter of Israel's nuclear arsenal and the U.S. relationship to this arsenal is of great importance to us."

Israel's nuclear arsenal, complete with a range of warheads and delivery systems, already puts it in the super-power class of nuclear powers. As Prime Minister Ehud Barak noted in an August 11, 1999, speech, the July delivery of the first of three German-made Dolphin-class submarines, at a unit cost of \$300 million, "adds an important component to Israel's long arm." The submarines, like Israel's missiles and new long range F-15s, enhance its ability to project power from Pakistan to Morocco and the Gulf. The submarines, in particular, also add another layer of deterrence—a second strike capability—against the non-conventional capabilities, both real and anticipated, of Israel's strategic antagonists in the Arab world, south Asia, and even in Eurasia. ♦

CLINTON AND BARAK BUILD UPON STRATEGIC ALLIANCE

In August 1999, Brig. Gen Amos Gilad, chief of Israel's Military Intelligence, submitted a briefing on MI's multi-year assessment of the regional strategic environment over the next five years to Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak. According to Israeli reports, Gilad reaffirmed the current view that the main threat facing Israel will not be a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, nor a surprise attack across the Golan plateau by Syria, but rather the possession of nuclear weapons by the leaders in Baghdad and Tehran.

Iran's nuclear capability, noted one report, is at least five years distant. The report highlighted the development of the Shihab-3 intermediate range (1,300 km) ballistic missile and the longer range (4,000 km) Kosar, which, if deployed, will extend Iran's strategic arm to Europe. Iraq, which has been free from intrusive monitoring for almost a year, and which has exhibited a demonstrated nuclear infrastructure and capability, was not discounted as a nuclear-capable opponent. The non-conventional threat from Damascus was also noted, particularly growing stocks of nerve gas, along with a new generation of missiles.

Nuclear Defense

Israel has been searching for at least a decade for reliable responses to the development of the non-conventional and long-range missile capabilities of its competitors for regional influence. The use of non-conventional arsenals by Israel and Iraq was avoided during the Gulf War, even as Israel failed to deter Iraq's use of long-range, but conventionally armed missiles. "The [nuclear] threat," explained deputy chief of staff Uzi Dayan recently, "is real. It's a threat we must treat very seriously. It definitely adds another dimension to our security thinking.

"The answer to surface-to-surface missiles and the nuclear threat requires taking an active interest in developments and building different layers of

response. We have first prevention and frustration of the threat in advance, by assembling an international front against it. Beyond that lies the dimension of deterrence and then the possibility of utilizing our very long reach for a preventative strike if deterrence fails. Then comes the possibility of bringing down missiles using the Arrow system."

Despite the variety of capabilities Israel is developing, the issues put in stark relief by the Gulf War—the need for strategic deterrence and Israel's failure to deter Iraq's use of missiles—continue to drive Israel's strategic thinking.

Inadequate Options

According to former minister of defense Moshe Arens, "The options made available to the political leaders in the event of Israel facing surface-to-surface missile attack are still insufficient."

Strengthening Israel's array of strategic and missile deterrents are at the top of Barak's agenda. Iraqi capabilities were highlighted during a July 1999 visit to Washington by a top official in Israel's military intelligence. Henry Shelton, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, discussed it with Barak during an August trip to Israel.

Barak himself was unsuccessful in winning Russian agreement to end support for Iran's missile program.

"I think that the Russians will continue to assist the Iranian effort to manufacture nuclear weapons and ground-to-ground missiles," Barak admitted after July 1999 discussions in Moscow.

Barak's disappointment in Moscow, however, stood in contrast to his successful visit to the United States, where he built upon the memorandum of agreement on strategic cooperation reached between his predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu, and President Bill Clinton at the Wye Plantation.

"President Clinton and Prime Minister Barak," noted the statement issued at the end of their July 19 meeting, "have reached a broad new understanding that significantly enhances the

already unique bilateral relations between the United States and Israel, and raises their friendship and cooperation to an even higher level of strategic partnership.

"President Clinton reiterated the steadfast commitment of the United States to Israel's security, to maintain its qualitative edge, and to strengthen Israel's ability to deter and defend itself, by itself, against any threat or a possible combination of threats."

This statement is, by any measure, an extraordinary reassertion of U.S. support for Israel's deterrent power in an age that is set to be dominated by nuclear and missile capabilities. Support for the maintenance of Israel's "qualitative edge" in a nuclear world is itself qualitatively different than assuring such domination in a conventional environment.

In Barak's world of the "armed peace" that will follow in the wake of the closure of the circle of peace opened at Camp David, and renewed at Madrid and Oslo, Clinton's commitment to increase Israel's indigenous defense and deterrence capabilities against any threat or possible combination of threats is welcome news indeed. This is particularly so because such an American commitment has been made without constraining Israel, whose power Barak wants to be free to exercise independent of the United States and with a degree of freedom unencumbered by formal treaty restraints.

Barak and Clinton seconded national security advisor David Ivri, a veteran of Israel's strategic brain trust, and the State Department's Martin Indyk to head the Strategic Policy Planning Group created at Wye. The group met twice during Netanyahu's last months in office, focusing on Iran and Iraq. It will report to Clinton and Barak every four months. As ambassadors in their respective capitals from January 2000, Indyk and Ivri are well-placed to enhance bilateral cooperation. The Pentagon and Israel's defense ministry are expected to establish a similar forum. ♦

a vital interest to the United States to see the peace process succeed.”

Secretary of Defense William Cohen made a similar point when he noted that the \$1.2 billion in security aid for Israel accompanying the signing of the Wye accord and a U.S.-Israeli strategic cooperation agreement last year “should not be viewed as some kind of humanitarian gesture. A comprehensive peace agreement in the Middle East is fundamental to American security interests as well.” Two-thirds of the package, or \$800 million, has nothing remotely to do with Israel’s military redeployment in the occupied territories, but rather is for Israel’s growing strategic military programs.

Gulf Defense

American support for enhancing Israel’s strategic defense capabilities was only one facet of a policy promoted by Cohen during his tour of the region in late October 1999. After persistent U.S. efforts, Egypt announced its intention to purchase two improved Patriot batteries to defend against incoming missiles. In the Gulf and in meetings with Saudi officials in Washington in early November, Cohen promoted the Cooperative Defense Initiative—a region-wide early-warning system against missile threats. This network is based on a rapid exchange of information and communications between the Gulf countries and the Pentagon.

At a November 2 Pentagon press conference with the Saudi defense minister, Prince Sultan Bin Abd al-Aziz al Saud, Cohen stressed that the top issue under discussion, as in his just-completed trip to the Gulf, was the new defense initiative.

“We focused on improving ways to work together to counter weapons of mass destruction,” he explained. “We discussed the Cooperative Defense Initiative, and Prince Sultan received a briefing on Shared Early Warning from the Joint Staff in our National Military Command Center. Shared Early Warning, the development of active and

passive defenses to deal with chemical and biological weapons, and methods for dealing with the potential consequences of a chemical or biological attack, are all very important parts of the Cooperative Defense Initiative that we are developing with the Gulf states. In view of the fact that many countries are developing chemical and biological weapons and the means to deliver them, we think that this is a matter of importance; it’s the reason why I spent nine days traveling throughout the Gulf region to talk to each of the countries who also share the concern about the development of these weapons of mass destruction and missile technology that is proliferating.

What we discussed today were ways in which, indeed, the United States could in fact cooperate and work together with Saudi Arabia to help protect, certainly, its territory and our interest in the region as well, and that has to do with the technology of Shared Early Warning, of being able to detect missile launches, share that information with Saudi Arabia in order to understand what kind of a missile, where it is, what consequence would result should it hit Saudi territory.”

This evolving program to defend against missile attack succeeds the introduction of the early-warning AWACS planes during the 1980s.

The Reagan administration’s decision to supply AWACS to Saudi Arabia unleashed an epic battle on Capitol Hill, pitting the pro-Israel lobby against proponents of the sale. The government of Menachem Begin, however, had quietly made its peace with the transfer, in return for a significant enhancement of Israel’s own military capabilities.

This latest U.S. effort to arm the Gulf is part of a strategy to build a region-wide network to provide real time intelligence and, eventually, defense against missile strikes.

Arrow 2

Israel is at the center of these efforts. During a February 1999 visit to Israel, Brig. Gen. Daniel L. Montgomery, program executive officer for the

U.S. Army’s Air and Missile Defense, was reported by the *Jerusalem Post* to have said that Israel and the United States envision interoperability between Israel’s latest TMD system, the Arrow 2, and U.S. units in the area. Gen. Montgomery said that a team is working on developing an electronic translation interface known as the Arrow Link 16 upgrade capability. Israel and the United States are also working closely to link Arrow 2 with Patriot antiballistic missile systems so that any batteries deployed in the region would be able to share data. The United States and Israel are also working on ways to share real-time information on missile defense and link the Arrow 2 antiballistic missile to U.S. radar systems.

“I am very impressed with the Israeli effort,” Montgomery said. “They are the one nation which has really stepped out in its effort to develop the tactical missile shield. Every [other] nation is always reluctant to provide technical work that they do, but there is great sharing between U.S. and Israel.”

Israel’s championship of this technology puts it on the leading edge of TMD worldwide. In the aftermath of a test of the Arrow system deemed successful in November 1999, Israel is now set to become the first country to deploy such a system.

Regardless of substantive questions about both its effectiveness and strategic message, TMD has nonetheless captivated war planners around the world. Israel thus finds itself at ground zero in what promises to be one of the most sought-after military technologies in the post-Cold War world. Turkey, the Netherlands, and Taiwan are said to be interested in the Arrow. Israel’s transfer of TMD-related technology to Taiwan’s nemesis, China, is one of the most combustible aspects of U.S.-Israeli relations. As a price for its military ties with Israel, China has agreed not to make new sales of surface-to-surface missiles in the Middle East.

As the NSC’s Berger pointed out, Israel also finds itself at the intersection

An Era Ends

The formal architecture of nuclear arms control established during the Cold War is increasingly under assault, from the failure of the Non-Proliferation Treaty to prevent the creation of new nuclear powers to U.S. rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, to an impending U.S. “breakout” of restrictions placed on the development of an antiballistic missile system.

Seen through this prism, which now has captured policy-makers in Washington, the relationship between Israel and the United States is being transformed into a truly strategic partnership. At the heart of Israel’s elevation in U.S. eyes is its arsenal of non-conventional weapons and varied means of delivering them—the fruits of decades of national effort on Israel’s part. While Israel’s capabilities in this sphere have long complicated U.S. regional strategy and international arms control initiatives, the dynamic driving U.S. policy today is an acknowledgment of the positive value of Israel’s non-conventional arsenals, the enhancement of select war-fighting capabilities at the leading edge of technological innovation, and Israel’s growing integration, both conceptually and practically, into Washington’s global nuclear strategy.

From this perspective, nations such as Iran and Iraq, seeking to challenge either Israel’s regional preeminence or Washington’s global reach, are transformed from regional into strategic opponents, and their links with other “rogue” states, namely North Korea, have been identified as the defining strategic challenge of the post-Cold War world.

Middle Eastern countries on the periphery of this contest, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria, are in a real strategic dilemma that will only grow even more complicated in the future. As countries without an advanced non-conventional or missile infrastructure, Riyadh and Cairo must weigh the merits of a distinctly junior

partnership with the United States, at the heart of which, now more than ever, is Washington’s strategic relationship with Israel. Syria finds itself in an inferior strategic partnership with Iran and their suppliers in the Far East and to a lesser extent Russia. This partnership is far more autarchic and technologically and militarily backward than the alignment championed by Washington. A Syrian orientation away from Tehran and, with it, a change in the regional and international balance in Washington’s favor (and Israel’s) will be part of the price for rapprochement with Israel—a consideration at the heart of both Israeli and U.S. calculations.

This linkage between Arab-Israeli peace and the need to confront the nuclearization of the region by antagonists of Washington is the meaning of the recent reformulation of U.S. policy toward resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict as a “vital national interest.”

Regional Considerations

Israel was the first country in the region to understand the strategic implications of the capabilities and technologies driving the international non-conventional arms race. In the early 1980s, Defense Minister Ariel Sharon made what was then viewed as a remarkable declaration—that Israel’s strategic perimeter stretched as far as Pakistan, the Gulf, and west to North Africa. Developments since then have confirmed the globalization of the Middle East’s strategic domain.

Iraqi non-conventional capabilities developed in the 1980s became a central factor not only in regional but in U.S. calculations during the 1991 Gulf War and precipitated the dramatic change in post-war strategic thinking. In the aftermath of Iraq’s defeat and the imposition of a monitoring regime, attention, initially by Israel and later by the United States, shifted to Iranian efforts to enter the club of nations boasting integrated non-conventional and missile capabilities.

The global environment beyond the Middle East influences Iranian strategy on numerous levels. Its strategic con-

cerns necessarily extend east to Pakistan, whose nuclear intentions Tehran cannot ignore. Anticipated technological developments will bring missiles whose reach extends to Israel, Turkey, and the subcontinent into Iran’s now primitive arsenal.

The supply relationships that Iran has developed with North Korea and Russia create a strategic umbilical chord supplying technology, know-how and materiel that challenge the United States and Israel. Efforts to limit Iranian capabilities have brought U.S. and Israeli officials to Moscow, Beijing, and Pyongyang on a regular basis, but with limited success, since the beginning of the decade.

During the early 1990s for example, Israel made an unprecedented attempt to “buy” a North Korean agreement to end missile sales to Iran in return for a \$1 billion investment in the North Korean economy. U.S. intervention forced Israel to abort its own efforts in favor of U.S. diplomacy. Yet Israel remains disappointed that the United States has failed to win an end to North Korean transfers of missile technology to Iran and Syria. The U.S. maintains that the agreement to suspend North Korean long-range missile tests negotiated by envoy William Perry is a necessary first step in a rapprochement, which if it materializes, will stop such transfers. Israelis must content themselves with the fact that the most immediate beneficiaries of Perry’s diplomacy to stop testing of the Taepodong missile are to be found in Japan and the United States itself.

For North Korea and Russia, the maintenance of such relationships with Iran, and to a lesser extent Syria, are part of national strategies adopted to promote their interests and to confront Washington.

These ties, however, while important and vital to the countries involved, occur at a level far below the kind of technological and military interaction and political consultation that exists between Israel and the United States.

of the two, now related issues at the heart of U.S. foreign policy concerns at the dawn of the twenty-first century—the establishment of a regional peace and the construction of a security and intelligence architecture to protect against missile launches from “rogue” regimes based in places like Baghdad and Tehran. Israel’s efforts to establish both the intellectual, policy, and practical foundations for this new strategic partnership are well advanced. Unlike U.S. efforts elsewhere in the region, the heart of the U.S.-Israeli relationship is the shared creation, development, and deployment of a TMD system that is meant to drive the doctrine, technology, and budgets of both respective defense establishments for the foreseeable future. This collaboration is far more complex and multi-faceted than a sim-

ple commercial or military-supply relationship, and it dramatically enhances Israel’s partnership with Washington, marking Israel’s successful transition from Cold War ally to strategic ally, a feat that many did not consider possible a decade ago.

In a November 20, 1999 speech, Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak offered his most explicit overview of the threats, and the remedies, that form the basis for this strategic partnership.

“The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction,” Barak explained, “the nuclear programs of extremist regimes, and the spread of state-sponsored terrorism, are threats directed at Israel, at the United States, indeed at all democracies around the world.

“It is therefore the responsibility of the international community to develop effective security cooperation to confront these threats together.

“There is no finer example than the close strategic ties and intelligence cooperation that flourishes between the United States and Israel. We can look to the recent successful testing of the Arrow missile just weeks ago. The Arrow was developed by our two countries to counter the ground-to-ground missiles that are in the hands of rogue and extremist regimes.

“Our friends in Washington know that support for Israel is in the American national interest. Ours is a partnership united by a common understanding of the existing threats and dangers to our way of life.”

Barak may be embellishing the identity of interests at the heart of this new era of strategic collaboration. But if he is, it is an error of degree only, sparked by a soldier’s appreciation of the quality of the partnership over which he, and the U.S. president, preside. ♦

STRATEGIC, continued from page 7

Pakistan and Israel have been conducting a discreet strategic dialogue for some time, as each country attempts to factor the other’s capabilities into its strategic calculations. Israel has longstanding concerns about the transfer of Pakistan’s know-how to other states in the region. It is closely watching Washington’s policies in the aftermath of Pakistan’s decision to bring its bomb

“out of the basement,” foregoing a policy of nuclear ambiguity that has long been championed by Israel.

Within days of assuming power, General Pervaz Musharraf, Pakistan’s new military leader, is reported to have reassured Israel about his intentions, particularly his plan to continue a hard line against international arms control efforts, a policy Israel has also followed.

Pakistan, according to well-informed U.S. sources, is also interested in estab-

lishing links with Israel because of the Israeli technology it has found in weapon systems purchased from China.

Pakistan is also concerned about the burgeoning defense and technology ties that Israel has established with its regional nuclear rival, India. Among other systems, Israel has sold India radar for detecting ballistic missiles, and Pakistan suspects cooperation may extend to missile technology and strategic cooperation. ♦

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