

Israel's nuclear prowess and peace

THE RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT that Israel and the Palestinians completed a landmark agreement on Palestinian self-government caught many of the participants in the 22-month-long Mid-east talks completely by surprise.

Though the accord seems to have caught many at the State Department off guard, Mid-east experts in the US defence and intelligence communities have long been predicting that shifts in US policies regarding Israel would soon eventually alter the way it conducted its affairs.

"It's a matter of cause and effect," says a Mid-east expert at the State Department. "We weren't all that sure of what the so-called effect would be — perhaps 'change' is a better word for what we hoped for. But we finally realised that the threat of withholding funding was the only tangible influence that we could apply. It's quite possible that Israel's sudden willingness budge a little in the peace negotiations is an indirect product of that influence."

Highly placed sources in the US government are saying fundamental shifts in Israel's stance regarding its foreign policy, its defence policy and Palestinian self-determination were precipitated by new US-Israeli pol-

icies implemented by President Bill Clinton regarding arms proliferation, foreign aid and financial oversight at the US Defence Department's Defence Military Assistance Agency.

Many Mid-east watchers say that the first indication of a significant change in relations between the US and Israel relations came with the announcement last March by Clinton's newly-appointed ambassador to Israel, William Harrop, that "it may prove difficult" for the US to continue to giving foreign aid to Israel, variously estimated at between \$3-6 billion annually.

Coincidental to Harrop's announcement, Clinton reportedly sent an emissary to Israel to inform the government of Yitzhak Rabin that he must shut down Israel's key nuclear weapons production facility at Dimona.

Israel officially denies that it possesses nuclear arms, but foreign policy opinion-makers as diverse as Seymour Hersch at *The New York Times*, author of *The Sampson Option*, and former president Richard Nixon have written much about Israel's enormous atomic weapons programme.

News of Clinton's order for Israel to shut down and dismantle the nuclear reactor at Dimona was first reported

last May in *Inside Israel*, an investigative journal published in Jerusalem. According to sources, Louis Dunn, the former head of the non-proliferation bureau within the State Department's arms control and disarmament agency, was sent to Israel with the presidential order four days after Clinton took the oath of office. Dunn is now a vice president with Science Applications International Corp, a low-profile defence consulting firm based in San Diego, California.

During conversations with Israel nuclear arms officials, Dunn reportedly said: "Close down the Dimona reactor.... We're trying to control (nuclear proliferation in) the whole world, and everyone's asking us, 'what about Israel?'"

Dunn's message reportedly drew little response from the Israelis, but soon after his message was delivered, the US instituted new policies which made it clear to developing countries like Israel that it intended to get serious about controlling the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The opening salvo in the Clinton administration's policy war on arms development programmes in the developing world came in the form of an escalation of tensions surrounding the

TIM KENNEDY

Special to Saudi Gazette from Washington

sanctions and ceasefire arrangements imposed on Iraq following the end of the Coalition war in April, 1991.

Four months after they were virtually forbidden access to several Iraqi defence facilities suspected of contributing to Iraq's nuclear-biological-chemical arms programme, UN inspectors now appear able to freely perform their internationally-sanctioned verification duties.

However, the break last June in the impasse between Iraq and UN weapons inspection teams was the direct result of unrelenting pressure on the part of the White House, and Clinton appears willing to continue applying this pressure on Iraq or any other "rogue regime" which hopes to produce or acquire weapons of mass destruction.

"Rogue regimes" was the very phrase coined by Robert Einhorn, the State Department's deputy assistant secretary for non-proliferation, when he described the target of the Clinton administration new Mid-east arms control policies.

Speaking at a Washington foreign

policy think-tank, Einhorn said the White House plans to "convince major arms suppliers that the continued sale of destabilising military hardware and dual-use technologies to the Mid-east undermines international peace and security".

America's new "get tough" arms sales policy has affected some of the traditional suppliers of sophisticated arms to the developing world — North Korea, China, and the Soviet Union — and is helping the US make headway in efforts to eradicate nuclear weapons in developing countries.

The recent months have seen also US arms control agencies and several client countries break an apparent conspiracy of silence regarding Israel's complicity in a majority of efforts by developing countries to create and export weapons of mass destruction.

This broken silence regarding Israeli arms programmes has produced some startling revelations.

In March this year, South Africa acknowledged that in the late 1970s it created six nuclear bombs with the technical assistance of Israel. South Africa also revealed that it is working with Israel to develop an intermediate-range ballistic missile called the Jericho II. The Jericho II

will have a range of 900 miles, and will be able to deliver a nuclear, biological or chemical warhead.

Several months prior to the South Africa's nuclear arms disclosure, *The Financial Times* quoted a classified report by the CIA that alleged that since 1985, South Africa has been receiving technical assistance for its medium-range and nuclear capable ballistic missile programmes from Iraq.

Last August, the US imposed trade sanctions against China, claiming it illegally exported M-II medium-range ballistic missiles to Pakistan. The M-II is capable of carrying a 1,100 nuclear warhead to most major population centres in India.

Several news stories and intelligence agencies say China has provided technical expertise and sophisticated equipment to assist nuclear arms programmes in Pakistan, South Africa, Algeria, Iran, and Iraq; and has sold medium — and long-range ballistic missiles to Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Syria, Kuwait.

In early 1992, Robert Gates, then CIA director, informed the media that China had illegally obtained ballistic missile secrets from the US-made Patriot anti-missile defence system. He says Israel is sus-

pected of supplying China with these secrets, thereby confirming suspicions that have circulated in the Pentagon since the allegations of technology theft against Israel were formally raised immediately after the end of the Coalition War.

Revelations about Israel's seemingly ubiquitous role in China's missile export programme has resulted in *The Economist* saying that the "black joke" told among arms proliferation experts is that "Israeli technicians had secretly helped China to improve the...accuracy" of missiles shipped to most of Israel's Arab neighbours.

US disgust with Israel's covert involvement in many arms sales in the Mid-east has prompted Washington to take a hard look at all military and foreign aid given to Israel each year.

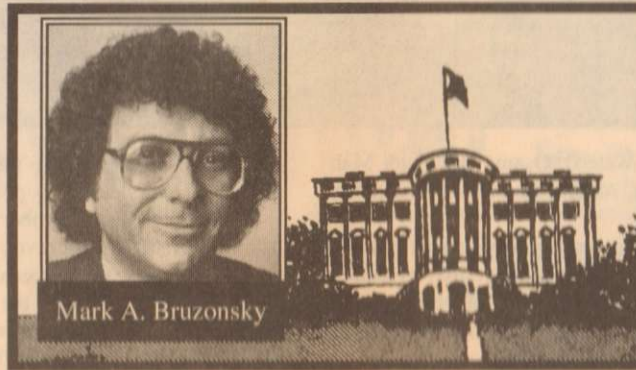
A tangible example of Clinton's reassessment of aid programmes to Israel could be the termination of Israel's Arrow anti-missile programme, a \$10 billion weapons programme that has been largely funded by the United States.

There is every indication that Arrow does not have any friends in the White House, and — all the worse — it does not seem to have many friends in Congress.

T History repeats itself in the Mid-east ... again and again and again ...

Talks

From



Washington

Arafat

THE PALESTINIAN 'PEACE DELEGATION' is back here. Another round of the post-Coalition War "peace talks" is at hand.

History this century has made a ritual of "peace talks" after Mid-east warfare.

After having committed to Arab nationalism, Emir Faisal was sold out at Paris in 1919 in the aftermath of World War I as the British and the French carved the region for their gain using the umbrella of the League of Nations to legitimise their colonialism.

With European war approaching in 1939 and with England still in control of Palestine, the London

talks" seem to be proving no exception to this historical record.

For Yitzhak Rabin — his government teetering in Israel with Netanyahu and Sharon both awaiting their possible moment — there is the imperative to come up with some kind of agreement with the Americans, as well as with the pro-American Arab regime and the Palestinians, that will enable him to keep his Labour coalition in power.

Yasser Arafat — also teetering at the top of the much weakened and increasingly frail PLO structure — is ironically positioned to be Rabin's interlocutor in

THIS IS AN AGE OF INSTANT-ANALYSIS. TELEVISION, MORE THAN print, brings us the news these days.

True, television is usually superficial and always limited in scope. And still it is TV where crucial first impressions are formed; which explains how fast both Israeli and PLO officials have been to appear on every talk and news programme imaginable since the first announcement of the "break-through" agreement.

It's also still vacation time. Indeed, as hard as it is to believe, Arafat's own Jerusalem Press Service in Washington has been shut down for the week! This after earlier pleas for money from subscribers to keep it going.

Whatever, vacation time that it is, let me this week take the easy way out and share my own views of current developments using this transcript from an appearance a few days ago on Canadian television's *Canada AM* programme, a show pretty much like *Good Morning America* or *The Today Show* in the US. This discussion took place on August 31.

Palestinians in the occupied territories are one step closer to self-government. One step. On August 30, the Israeli cabinet agreed to back a plan which would allow Palestinians self-rule, a kind of autonomy, not sovereignty, but something toward it, in Gaza and in the city of Jericho, a city of about 15,000 peo-

talks were designed to keep all the parties in the Mid-east on the side of the European allies. As before and during World War I, all kinds of competing promises were made to all; setting the stage for the conflicts that were to follow.

After World War II and the Palestinian civil war that followed, the new United Nations was the chosen instrument to facilitate what became "truce talks" between the new Israeli state and the various Arab parties.

Then after each war that was to follow Israel's creation — major outbreaks in '56, '67, '73, '82 — "peace talks" of one kind or another were always arranged in one way or another.

As American dominance over the Mid-east increased during these decades, it was the United States which supplanted the former European colonial powers as both regional strongman and "peace talks" convener.

In the generation of the cold war the Americans gradually took over from the United Nations inventing such concepts as "shuttle diplomacy" and the "step-by-step approach" and then orchestrating the "Camp David accords" — all pursued more on behalf of the Israelis, which had gradually become America's "strategic partner" in the region, than of the Arabs. The very notion of American "even-handedness" has always been sheer nonsense.

One plan after another thus emanated from the American capital. There was the Johnson plan, Nixonian "even-handedness", the Ford-Kissinger "reassessment", the aborted Carter "Palestinian homeland" concept that degenerated into "Camp David", and the "Reagan plan" which kept the lid on after the 1982 war.

This, very briefly of course, is the historical record of postwar "peace talks" — diplomatic undertakings always sponsored by the very same Western powers that were primarily engaged in the wars that preceded.

Furthermore, so far at least, each of the agreements reached in this seemingly endless series of "peace talks" didn't bring the always proclaimed "real and lasting" peace.

Indeed, none of these "peace talks" so far, including those taking place today, have really grappled with the basic underlying reasons for the existing conflicts. In most cases, in fact, the perceived injustices resulting from the "peace talks" themselves have spawned new regional tensions and unleashed new forces that have in turn resulted in another future conflict.

Time after time, throughout this entire century, the much-touted "historic" talks of each era have in retrospect become part of an ongoing ritual of patching the dike with deceptive political deals.

Rather than actually tackling the fundamental causes of the various conflicts politicians of the moment have usually taken the easy way out, accepted "political realities" — so we were told — and made deals that could be portrayed as short-term success but which over the long term either proved inadequate or actually unravelled.

And thus time after time, the basic issues have always been left unresolved, the roots of conflict have never been extricated, and the seeds of future explosions have always been sown in the very name of "peace" agreements.

Time after time, in retrospect, agreements that were heavily promoted when made as major breakthroughs have instead turned out to be more akin to short-term deals that politicians of that day felt impelled to promote, or to grudgingly accept, usually as a way of trying to keep themselves in power.

Today, more and more it appears, the deals being worked out in these post-Coalition War "peace

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Arafat Mandela or Buthelezi?

● **Canada TV:** Some people are calling this an unbelievable breakthrough, a major change in the way the Middle East is functioning now. Would you agree that that is so, or is it problematic?

■ **Bruzonsky:** Well, you know, every time there's a diplomatic deal it's always called a major breakthrough. That's what the politicians who make the deals feel they have to say. They're really...the Israelis are doing pretty much what they've said they would always do. The talk of giving up Gaza, the talk of autonomy, the talk of giving back some of the territories for local rule has been something the Israelis have talked about for a long time.

The change that you're witnessing is that Yasser Arafat, pressured as he is, losing his grip as he has been, without financial resources, finding himself cornered and without anywhere to go, has agreed to things that heretofore the Palestinian movement has always said it would never agree to.

Now, there's no doubt that there's a major bend in the road ahead. Whether it's going to lead to a stable and just peace, to be very frank, I'm quite sceptical.

● **Well, as you say, this is a kind of limited autonomy. There's no independence per se here, and Yasser Arafat will not be able to move his operations to the West Bank and set up headquarters there, will he?**

■ Well, I think, you know, the details — and in the end it will all be in the details — have yet to be thrashed out. In fact, there's no guarantee they can be thrashed out. There's tremendous dissension within the Palestinian world.

● **There sure...well, on both sides. You see a lot of demonstrations by Israelis who are very unhappy about this, and yet, as you say, the Israeli side really got what it wanted much more than the Palestinian side did. Why is Arafat**

in such a weak position that he had to capitulate to this kind of a deal?

■ Let's call it straight. The Palestinian people have been beaten into submission now for a generation. They're destitute. They've been living under military occupation, their economy is in shambles, their institutions are in shambles. All along they've had the hope for eventual independence in their own state. That's what the PLO was set up to achieve.

On the other hand, in the wake of the Coalition War, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the American government really is in control in the Mid-east with client regimes. Under these circumstances, the Palestinian PLO has been squeezed to a point where its institutions were beginning to come apart...

● **It can't pay its people anymore, for one thing.**

■ It wasn't able to pay even the minimum amounts that went to various newspapers, that went to martyrs, that went to families. The truth of the matter is that what you're witnessing today is a very uncomfortable deal between long-time enemies. Yitzhak Rabin, who leads a shaky coalition government in Israel; Yasser Arafat, who's hold over the PLO has been whittled away by Hamas and by the disintegration of the PLO.

So you're witnessing an accommodation that these two parties are making. And when politicians have been negotiating for a number of years, placing people's hopes in the forefront, they don't like to come forward and sway, "we failed".

You'll remember a few months ago the negotiations were said to have failed. Nothing had been achieved. People were talking about resigning. Well, if you're Arafat and Rabin, saying that you failed is your ticket to maybe losing power.

● **That's right. And I suppose from Rabin's point-of-view if he didn't strike some**

game that he was desperately trying to manipulate in order to claim at least partial victory rather than being forced to acknowledge total defeat. As well, Arafat desperately needs to replenish his much-diminished financial intake — the main internal weapon he has used for decades to keep himself ascendant

ple. But the toughest part has yet to come. The Mid-east peace talks resume today and the two sides must now figure out how to implement this deal.



kind of a deal with Arafat he would soon not have Arafat to deal with and Hamas would be much more difficult.

■ Well, absolutely. But what you're witnessing now is the kind of tension that unleashes other forces. Now in the last 20 years since I got out school I've been to the Mid-east maybe 200 times, and I was there during the Camp David period, knew Sadat, had dinner with Arafat. So I've met these people, know them personally. I think nobody knows what this initial agreement, this initial "breakthrough" agreement, is going to lead to. But I think it's very fair to say that there will be tremendous tensions placed on agreement, and it's very difficult to see right now how the agreement is going to be really implemented because one side from day one is going to say statehood, flag, Palestinian independence, return of the Palestinian exiles; the other side is going to say, oh no no, autonomy, limited self-rule, five year trial period, doesn't go beyond this one city and Gaza. It's going to be an extremely unstable and fragile arrangement, but it will keep — probably will keep — the current political leaders in their jobs, because they will all be able to say that we are the leaders that started this process,

we're making progress, give us more time, we know what we're doing, even if in fact they don't have the slightest idea where this is going to take them.

● **Exactly. But as you say you know the situation on the ground pretty well and you've been to those areas. The question is whether or not the people who live there — whether they're associated with the PLO directly or with Hamas or whoever — will the Palestinians be able to accept the notion that they can have a kind of limited autonomy in the specific areas for a period of years, God knows how long, and maybe someday get what they eventually have wanted all along?**

■ The Palestinian society is already in the midst of a low-grade civil war. You've got Hamas and the PLO and various factions in the PLO. You've even had major resignations of major personalities already from the PLO executive committee. Mahmud Darwish, Shafik Al-Hout. These are long-time Arafat comrades and stalwarts. It's similar to what happened at Camp David when people forget that ... Sadat's foreign minister and friend of 40 years, Ibrahim Kamel, resigned the night before the Camp David

agreement was made.

And look at Egypt today. Egypt today is far more violent, far more tense.... Now it wasn't just Camp David that brought this about, but it was the atmosphere created by that kind of agreement.... And the Palestinian society, in the beginning I think, will look at this agreement and say, well, if it's really a step on the road to our independence and statehood, okay. Maybe. But they'll be very sceptical and I suspect within a very short time there will be all kinds of signs that it's not a step on the road to independence.

If you listened to Abba Eban last night he made it very clear. He said, "let's come back to reality" after Hanan Ashrawi started talking about eventual independence

● **Well, but one would think that if the Israelis really want this deal to work in order to be dealing with a moderate group as opposed to a violent one, that they would be trying pretty hard to make it appear that eventual independence is something that can be achieved.**

■ No, there I think you're wrong. I think when you say if the Israelis want the agreement to work... The Israelis want recognition, they want the Palestinians.... What they really want, they won't say it, is they want the Palestinians on reservations, on Bantustans. They want to be able to control the territory. They want to be able to economically move within the Mid-east. They want to be able to make peace agreements with the pro-American Arab regimes that are being pressed tremendously by the United States to make agreements. They don't want Palestinian independence, and they will do everything they can to prevent Palestinian independence.

● **And Arafat in this case is certainly not acting like Mandela, is he?**

■ Well, Arafat is acting more like Buthelezi than he is like Mandela.

Next week: The PLO in crisis — time for Arafat to step aside?