

Cheney Behind New Mideast War Drive: Return of 'Clean Break'

by Jeffrey Steinberg

With very little fanfare, in September David Wurmser moved over from the State Department office of arms control chief and leading war-party agitator John Bolton, to the Old Executive Office Building, working directly under Vice President Dick Cheney and his chief of staff Lewis "Scooter" Libby. Wurmser's move was highly significant, given that the former American Enterprise Institute and Washington Institute for Near East Policy neo-conservative was one of the primary authors of the now-infamous 1996 "A Clean Break" document, which spelled out the current *joint* Mideast war strategy of the Ariel Sharon government in Israel and the Cheney cabal inside the Bush Administration in the United States.

Just days after Wurmser joined the Vice President's "shadow national security council," the Bush Administration—at Cheney's urging—made an abrupt shift in policy towards Syria, a shift that has now brought the entire Mideast region to the brink of war and chaos—worse, even, than the fiasco of the American occupation of Iraq, which military experts are increasingly describing as "our new Vietnam" (see page 67).

At an American Enterprise Institute event on Oct. 7, Leo Strauss acolyte William Kristol, the publisher and editor of the *Weekly Standard*, candidly admitted that he was miffed that the United States had not already moved beyond the Iraq war to the "next regime change" of "the next horrible" Middle East Arab "dictator"—Syrian President Bashar Assad.

'A Clean Break' Revisited

Turn the clock back seven years. On July 8, 1996, Richard Perle, currently a member, and formerly the head of the Defense Policy Board in the Don Rumsfeld Pentagon, delivered a document to the new Israeli Prime Minister, Jabotinskyite Benjamin Netanyahu. Perle, and a team of American neo-

cons, had been tasked by Netanyahu—through the Israeli think tank, the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies (IASPS)—to draft a strategy for abrogating the Oslo Accords and overturning the entire concept of "comprehensive land for peace," in favor of a jackboot policy of U.S.-Israeli-Turkish raw military conquest and occupation.

The short policy memo, which Netanyahu, and his successor-Likud Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, totally adopted as the core strategy of their administrations, spelled out a four-pronged attack on the peace process and the entire Arab world. It has become a self-evident truth that, since the Bush "43" and Sharon governments came into power simultaneously in early 2001, "A Clean Break" has been the guiding strategic doctrine of both—particularly following the irregular warfare attacks on New York and Washington on Sept. 11, 2001.

The Perle-Wurmser policy document demanded: 1) Destroy Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority, blaming them for every act of Palestinian terrorism, including the attacks from Hamas, an organization which Sharon had helped launch during his early 1980s tenure as Minister of Defense. 2) Induce the United States to overthrow the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq. 3) Launch war against Syria after Saddam's regime is disposed of, including striking Syrian military targets in Lebanon, and targets in Syria proper. 4) Parlay the overthrow of the Ba'athist regimes in Baghdad and Damascus into the "democratization" of the entire Arab world, including through further military actions against Iran, Saudi Arabia, and "the ultimate prize," Egypt (see *Documentation* following for the "Clean Break" report).

On Oct. 5, for the first time in 30 years, Israel launched bombing raids against Syria, targetting a purported "Palestinian terrorist camp" inside Syrian territory. The bombing im-

mediately raised fears that Sharon is preparing a nuclear strike, most likely against Iran. A senior Israeli intelligence source told *EIR* that Sharon's action was clearly backed by the "pro-Sharon" crowd in Washington, led by Vice President Dick Cheney and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz: "They continue to be committed to their basic plan: Destroy Iran and Syria, and make Israel the dominant power in the region, and drive the Palestinians across the Jordan River." The source added that there "is obviously an agreement in Washington to do nothing." In a press conference a day after the Israel attack on Syria, President George W. Bush said Sharon had the right to "defend his own people," and then added, "We would be doing the same thing."

'Clean Break' Who's Who

In addition to arch-chicken-hawk Richard Perle, the other participants in the "Clean Break" exercise now constitute the hard core of the neo-con apparatus poisoning the Bush Administration.

The principal author of "Clean Break" and a series of follow-on IASPS strategy papers elaborating the new balance of power schema for the Middle East, was David Wurmser, now in the Office of Vice President Cheney. Wurmser's wife, Meyrav Wurmser, another of the "Clean Break" authors, is the head of Middle East policy at the Hudson Institute, a neo-con hotbed, heavily financed by Lord Conrad Black, owner of the Hollinger Corporation and sugar-daddy to Richard Perle, who was installed by Black on the Hudson Institute board as soon as the London-based publisher poured a pile of cash into the think tank at the start of the Bush "43" Presidency. Meyrav Wurmser received her doctorate at George Washington University, by researching the life and works of Vladimir Jabotinsky, the founder of Revisionist Zionism and a self-professed fascist. Before coming to Hudson, she headed the Washington office of the Middle East Research and Investigation Project (MERIP), of Col. Yigal Carmon, a retired Israeli Army Intelligence careerist, who is hard-wired into the U.S.A. neo-con gang.

Meyrav Wurmser has taken the point in promoting the overthrow of the House of Saud and the American military occupation of the Saudi Arabian oil fields, through a string of Hudson Institute policy papers, commentaries, and seminars.

Hudson has also played a pivotal role in the drive for war against Syria and Lebanon, as spelled out in "Clean Break." On March 7, 2003, Hudson sponsored a forum addressed by Gen. Michel Aoun, who was Prime Minister of Lebanon from 1988-1990, and who is pushing a military action against Syria, right out of the pages of "Clean Break."

Other authors of the 1996 war scheme were: Douglas Feith, now Assistant Secretary of Defense for Policy, and the overseer of the Office of Special Plans "information warfare" unit, which was instrumental in the black propaganda campaign to sell President Bush and the U.S. Congress on the Iraq war; and Charles Fairbanks, Jr., a longtime friend and disciple

of Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, dating back to their graduate studies under Leo Strauss at the University of Chicago. Fairbanks is now at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies.

From Words to Warfare

On Sept. 16, just as David Wurmser was going to Cheney's office to replace Eric Edelman, a longtime Wolfowitz protégé now tapped to be the new U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, the Syria war drive was seriously launched. Chief arms control provocateur John Bolton was given the green light to testify before a House International Relations subcommittee hearing on Syria and Lebanon. That testimony had been held up for several months, as the result of a direct intervention by the Central Intelligence Agency, which issued a highly unusual white paper challenging many of Bolton's planned allegations of Syrian current involvement in terrorist operations and pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.

The fact that Bolton was given the go-ahead to Capitol Hill signalled that Cheney had scored a tactical victory over those in the Bush Administration who were promoting a dialogue with Damascus. In fact, Bolton's provocative testimony undercut quiet efforts, then under way, to establish fresh channels of cooperation between the United States and the Assad government.

The day after Bolton's appearance, the same House subcommittee continued the anti-Damascus rant, by hosting General Aoun and rabid chicken-hawk Daniel Pipes, who demanded an immediate confrontation with Syria.

This public display of venom in Washington was all the signal that Ariel Sharon needed. On Oct. 5, Israeli Air Force jets bombed a Palestinian camp deep inside Syrian territory, ostensibly in retaliation for an Islamic Jihad suicide bombing in Haifa the day before. However, the Sharon war cabinet had approved a Syrian bombing six weeks earlier. The Bolton appearance and the promotion of Wurmser into Cheney's inner sanctum just served as the green light.

To make the linkage between the Israeli actions and the Cheney-led Bush Administration tilt even even more transparent, on Oct. 8 the White House announced that it would no longer oppose Congressional passage of the Syrian Accountability and Restoration of Lebanese Sovereignty Act, the equivalent to the 1998 Iraq Liberation Act which set in motion the drive towards war against Saddam Hussein.

This time, Sharon and Cheney do not intend to wait five years to get their war. Unless they are stopped, their timetable is to have Israel launch war on Syria by November 2003. And heaven help the American GIs in Iraq if Sharon and Cheney get their way. As Lyndon LaRouche has demanded, "Beastman" Cheney needs to be dumped from power within the next 30 days; and, along with him, the entire neo-con cabal. As Bush "41" and Karl Rove must understand by now, Cheney and his gang of "Clean Break" fanatics are the albatross around George W. Bush's neck, and time is running out.

Israel Acting On Cheney Gang's Policy From 1996

Excerpts from "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm," the 1996 strategy for Likud party leader Benjamin Netanyahu's Israeli government, written by a team led by Richard Perle, and including other current Bush Administration officials Douglas Feith and David Wurmser, and Hudson Institute official Meyrav Wurmser. The auspices were the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies in Jerusalem.

Netanyahu, who was supposed to carry out—and draw the United States into—this war strategy to which the neocons could not hope to win over President Bill Clinton, lost power in 1998 to Labor Party Prime Minister Ehud Barak. Netanyahu is now Finance Minister in the government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon which is carrying out the "Clean Break" strategy.

Benjamin Netanyahu's government comes in with a new set of ideas. While there are those who will counsel continuity, Israel has the opportunity to make a *clean break*; it can force a peace process and strategy based on an entirely *new intellectual foundation*, one that restores strategic initiative and provides the nation the room to engage every possible energy on rebuilding Zionism, the starting point of which must be economic reform. To secure the nation's streets and borders in the immediate future, Israel can:

- Work closely with Turkey and Jordan to contain, destabilize, and roll back some of its [Israel's] most dangerous threats. This implies a clean break from the slogan "comprehensive peace" to a traditional concept of strategy based on balance of power.
- Change the nature of its relations with the Palestinians, including upholding the *right of hot pursuit* for self-defense into all Palestinian areas and nurturing alternatives to Arafat's exclusive grip on Palestinian society.
- Forge a new basis for relations with the United States—stressing self-reliance, maturity, strategic cooperation on areas of mutual concern, and furthering values inherent to the West. . . .

Securing the Northern Border

Syria challenges Israel on Lebanese soil. An effective approach, and one with which America can sympathize, would be if Israel seized the strategic initiative along its northern borders by engaging Hezbollah, Syria, and Iran, as the principal agents of aggression in Lebanon, including by:

- Striking Syria's drug-money and counterfeiting infra-

structure in Lebanon, all of which focuses on Razi Qanan.

- Paralleling Syria's behavior by establishing the precedent that Syrian territory is not immune to attacks emanating from Lebanon by Israeli proxy forces.
- Striking Syrian military targets in Lebanon, and should that prove insufficient, *striking at select targets in Syria proper.*

Given the nature of the regime in Damascus, it is both natural and moral that Israel abandon the slogan "comprehensive peace" and move to *contain* Syria, drawing attention to its weapons of mass destruction program, and rejecting "land for peace" deals on the Golan Heights.

Moving to a Traditional Balance of Power Strategy

Israel can shape its strategic environment, in cooperation with Turkey and Jordan, by weakening, containing, and even rolling back Syria. This effort can focus on removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq—an important strategic objective in its own right—as a means of foiling Syria's regional ambitions. Jordan has challenged Syria's regional ambitions recently by suggesting the restoration of the Hashemites in Iraq. . . . Syria recently signaled that it and Iran might prefer a weak, but barely surviving Saddam, if only to undermine and humiliate Jordan in its efforts to remove Saddam.

Most importantly, it is understandable that Israel has an interest in supporting diplomatically, militarily, and operationally Turkey's and Jordan's actions against Syria. . . .

Changing the Nature of Relations With the Palestinians

Israel has a chance to forge a new relationship between itself and the Palestinians. First and foremost, Israel's efforts to secure its streets may require hot pursuit into Palestinian-controlled areas, a justifiable practice with which Americans can sympathize. . . .

We believe that the Palestinian Authority must be held to the same minimal standards of accountability as other recipients of U.S. foreign aid. A firm peace cannot tolerate repression and injustice. A regime that cannot fulfill the most rudimentary obligations to its own people cannot be counted upon to fulfill its obligations to its neighbors.

Israel has no obligations under the Oslo agreements if the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] does not fulfill its obligations. If the PLO cannot comply with these minimal standards, then it can be neither a hope for the future nor a proper interlocutor for the present. To prepare for this, Israel may want to cultivate alternatives to Arafat's base of power.

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