

Israel's new axis

Haig and Begin have manipulated the White House into scuttling the Arab moderates and sealing a military pact, writes Nancy Coker.

Secretary of State Alexander Haig is pushing President Reagan to heed Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin's longstanding demand for a qualitative upgrading of U.S.-Israeli military relations, during Begin's Sept. 8-15 visit to the United States.

In an interview on the eve of Begin's arrival in Washington, Haig stated, "There's been a lot of rhetoric in the past, and I think both sides are interested in putting some meat on the bone of that rhetoric with respect to our bilateral strategic relationship."

What Haig and Begin are counting on is their ability to play upon Reagan's ignorance of Middle East affairs and manipulate him into becoming the first American President to formalize military ties with Israel. To ensure Reagan's cooperation, Haig and Begin are stressing the need for "concrete military and security guarantees" for Israel if Israel is to take the "great risk" of making concessions to the Arabs.

An outright military alliance with Israel would above all commit the United States to a "limited nuclear war" policy against the Soviet Union in the Middle East—a strategy that could result either in the strategic humiliation of the United States or a third world war.

Four-point plan

The militarization scheme that Haig and Begin are pushing revolves around four points:

- The establishment of a U.S. military presence in Israel through joint Israeli-U.S. military exercises, and the use of Israeli territory for future U.S. military maneuvers.
- Logistical cooperation between the United States and Israel, including the use of Israeli facilities for repairing American naval and air force equipment in the Middle East.
- Increased sharing of intelligence information, including data from U.S. satellites.
- The use of Israeli territory as a launching pad for the Rapid Deployment Force in the event of an emergency in the region.

The consolidation of such an alliance in the current post-Camp David period is to be made at the expense of the rest of the Arab world, including Egypt, as Israel is built up as a beachhead for military operations in the

region and as the bastion of Haig's ill-conceived "strategic consensus" against Moscow.

Israel's obsession with becoming a strategic ally of the United States, combined with Haig's eagerness to accommodate Begin and his military exploits, has unsettled a number of factions in the U.S. intelligence and military communities, who are fearful about the dangers of such a militarization policy.

It is also alienating Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, who knows full well that Egypt will not only be locked out of the militarization deal by Israel and the United States, but has been designated a target country for the imposition of the Global 2000 policy of economic contraction and depopulation. Fearful of a possible domestic insurrection against him because his erstwhile ally Israel has turned on him and because "peace" did not bring "prosperity" to Egypt as promised, Sadat last week cracked down on his entire opposition, arresting 1,500 Copts, Muslim Brotherhood adherents, and others. The Israelis immediately seized upon the incident as "proof" that Egypt is unstable and Israel is the only ally in the region which Washington can really rely upon.

Handling Reagan

Despite Begin's and Haig's "strategic consensus" with one another, whether or not Begin leaves Washington with the military deal that he is seeking is still unclear.

Washington Post columnist Philip Geyelin, commenting on Israel's response to the U.S. AWACs deal with Saudi Arabia, said, "As a matter of tactics . . . there is something to be said . . . for Begin to find a discreet way to go out and lose this one. . . . This would leave him in a stronger position to turn the AWACS argument upside down—to ask, as an offset for the AWACS, for even more American weapons and financial relief."

To help out Begin—whose bigoted fanaticism makes him a public relations man's nightmare—on this track, Begin has been "programmed" by a team of American Jewish leaders. In a series of visits to Israel, these leaders, who are part of the Wall Street and Canadian Zionist clique led by Edgar Bronfman and

New York Post lawyer Howard Squadron, have given Begin expert advice on how to handle Reagan.

According to Washington intelligence sources, Begin was told that Secretary of State Haig must be allowed to handle all the details of the U.S.-Israeli relationship, while Begin should avoid alienating Reagan and concentrate on "making friends" with the White House. Defense Minister Ariel Sharon was to play a key role in smoothing any rough edges and attend to the "details," working with Haig.

These sources also report that Presidential Counselor Edwin Meese, whom some believe to be advocating caution in dealing with Israel, is considered a "problem" by Washington backers of Begin. "Meese is very dumb when it comes to the Middle East," said one insider. "But his wife recently got back from Israel, and she was brainwashed there. We hope she'll have some impact on Meese."

Tough talk

Begin's paramount goal is to undermine U.S. ties with the moderate Arabs in order to ensure that U.S.-Arab relations are kept subordinate to U.S.-Israeli ties.

In an interview after arriving in New York, Israeli Foreign Minister Shamir attacked the Reagan administration for wrongly believing that Saudi Arabia is a moderate country. "Saudi Arabia," said Shamir, "is not moderate and did not bring about the Lebanon ceasefire." Both Begin and Shamir reiterated their attacks on Reagan's proposal to sell AWACS to Saudi Arabia.

The upgrading of U.S.-Israeli military relations gives Begin license to pursue a new round of military adventurism in Lebanon. Last week, Begin warned that Israel had received intelligence that the Palestine Liberation Organization is being heavily rearmed in southern Lebanon by Syria and Libya. The Israeli charges were meant to renew the threat of an Israeli attack on southern Lebanon to restart the conflict in that country, which has been calmed by the July ceasefire.

"Israel must invade Lebanon, clean up what is there, and then withdraw," an Israeli foreign ministry official stated baldly.

Columnist Jack Anderson published an inflammatory report on Sept. 8 that the Soviets are funneling arms to the PLO in Lebanon "to see that the PLO is strong enough to hold its own if and when the bitter factional fighting resumes in Lebanon—as most experts gloomily predict it will eventually."

At the same time, Israeli intelligence is spreading the word that it is prepared to condone the overthrow of Jordan's King Hussein by radical Palestinians, as part of a deal with Syrian President Hafez Assad. In part, the threats are meant to compel Hussein into giving up his reluctance to cooperation with Begin's—and Haig's—regional designs.

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