

## ‘Economist’ Announces: A Big Mideast War Coming in 2011

by Jeffrey Steinberg and Michele Steinberg

Jan. 15—The *Economist*, mouthpiece for the City of London financier oligarchy, prominently announced on Dec. 30, 2010, that this will be the year for a very big Middle East war: “Unless remedial action is taken, 2011 might see the most destructive [Middle East] war for many years,” it proclaimed. “Every time an attempt at Arab-Israel peacemaking fails, as Barack Obama’s did shortly before Christmas,” the magazine gloated, “the peace becomes a little more fragile and the danger of war increases. Sadly, there is reason to believe that unless remedial action is taken, 2011 might see the most destructive such war for many years.”

According to the *Economist*, the military balance has been radically altered, since the time of Israel’s 2006 Lebanon War, and its 2008 Gaza invasion, by a large infusion of advanced and longer-range rockets to Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza. Claiming that Iran and Syria have covertly supplied the two groups with more than 50,000 missiles and rockets, the *Economist* concluded, “For the first time a radical non-state actor has the power to kill thousands of civilians in Israel’s cities more or less at the press of a button.” Israel, consequently, is prepared to strike back with vastly greater fire-power, and, therefore, “a war of this sort could easily draw in Syria, and perhaps Iran.”

The *Economist* says that all this could be avoided,

were President Obama to step in and, effectively, dictate the terms of peace to Israel and the Palestinians. Yet, its editors know very well, that British agent Obama will do no such thing, if his London masters want a new and bigger Middle East war, particularly as the disintegration of the global financial system jeopardizes the power of the City of London and its offshore financial centers.

The only true remedy, as spelled out, repeatedly, by Lyndon LaRouche, is for Obama to be kicked out of office, through invocation of the 25th Amendment, Section 4, which calls for the removal of the President when he is found to be physically or mentally incapable of serving. That is what you call real war-avoidance.

### The Immediate Crisis

Right on cue, the Lebanon and Gaza situations began to blow up, setting the stage for just the “big war” that some in London are pushing.

On Jan. 11, as Lebanon’s Prime Minister Saad Hariri was meeting Obama in the Oval Office, the March 8th Coalition members in Hariri’s cabinet, led by Hezbollah and Gen. Michel Aoun (ret.), resigned from the government, along with an independent minister, forcing a government crisis. The action by the 11 ministers was taken in response to a U.S. and Israeli veto of an agreement among Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Lebanon to postpone the release of the United Nations tribunal report

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# Please, not again

The threat of war in  
the Middle East



on the Feb. 14, 2005 assassination of then-Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri (father of the present Prime Minister). The UN report is widely rumored to name several leading current and former Hezbollah officials as complicit in the car bombing that killed Hariri and 22 others. Recent Israeli leaks claim that Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei will also be named as the author of the assassination plot in the UN draft indictment.

Hezbollah has systematically denied any involvement in the Rafiq Hariri assassination, pointing the figure at Israel, instead; and the majority of political factions in Lebanon, aware of the fragility of the political and economic situation in the country, concurred that the release of UN tribunal report should be post-

poned, to avoid the political explosion its release will certainly provoke.

According to U.S. and Arab intelligence sources, one of the leading Obama Administration figures who pressed for the early release of the UN indictments, was Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs Jeffrey Feltman. Feltman was Ambassador to Lebanon, and was part of the hard-line faction inside the George W. Bush Administration, pressing for a showdown with Hezbollah and its allies.

During his brief meeting with Hariri, Obama emphasized “the importance of the work of the STL [Special UN Tribunal on Lebanon] as a means to help end the era of political assassinations with impunity in Lebanon,” a provocation that could have contributed to the March 8th Coalition decision to bring down the government.

In a two-page analysis released on Jan. 13, by the Council on Foreign Relations, another former Bush Administration neocon, Elliott Abrams, floated the idea of a two-front attack on Hezbollah by the Israeli Defense Forces (from the south) and the regular Lebanese Army (from the north). While no one in their right mind would take the Abrams scheme seriously, least of all the commanders of the Lebanese Army, his article revealed the state of war-readiness by leading neo-conservatives in the U.S.

According to one senior U.S. intelligence official who spoke to *EIR* on condition of anonymity, an Israeli attack on southern Lebanon and/or Gaza would win the support of a majority of Israelis, who are otherwise growing more and more unhappy with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his right-wing coalition government—particularly over the lack of any economic development of the country, and over Netanyahu's flagrant and successful sabotage of the peace talks with the Palestinian Authority.

Ironically, this official acknowledged, it is the “pragmatism” of the leadership of Hezbollah and Hamas that is the biggest road block, for the moment, to a new Mid-

east war. Despite the political gamble by Hezbollah in laving Hariri's cabinet, both organizations are committed to avoiding another confrontation with Israel, and are putting pressure on the radical elements in their midst, to prevent any attacks on Israel that would give Netanyahu just the pretext he is looking for. Unfortunately, such efforts at restraint have never deterred Israeli attacks in the past, when military action served the needs of an Israeli war cabinet.

Indeed, recent statements by Netanyahu, and leaks from Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) hardliners, indicate that Israel is contemplating new military actions. DEBKA, an online intelligence leaksheet for the most hard-line Israeli factions, claims that rocket fire from Gaza has intensified in recent weeks, and that Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps engineers have been in Gaza, secretly building command bunkers for Hamas fighters.

On Jan. 12, the IDF issued a news release, quoting Col. Dan Zussman, from the Homefront Command, warning that in the next confrontation with Hamas and Hezbollah, "Missiles and rockets from all fronts will reach Tel Aviv. Tens of missiles of various kinds will hit the city likely causing hundreds of casualties, damage to buildings and infrastructure."

Another leading voice of the right-wing Israeli Lobby in the United States, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), which was co-founded by Obama's top White House Middle East advisor, Dennis Ross, posted a disinformation report on Jan. 4, claiming that Hamas had intensified rocket attacks on southern Israel from within the Gaza Strip during December 2010, and the "deterrent" effects of Israel's December 2008 Gaza invasion have now run their course, greatly increasing the need for, and likelihood of, an Israeli preemptive strike on Gaza.

### **AIPAC's Man at the White House**

The WINEP propaganda report, which flies in the face of recent Hamas crackdowns on radical elements in Gaza who sporadically launch rockets into southern Israel, is part of the growing clout of the Israeli Lobby within the Obama Administration, as the President launches his reelection campaign.

Senior U.S. intelligence sources have confirmed that a recent quid pro quo between the White House and Israel was brokered by AIPAC's man Dennis Ross. The U.S. abandoned its demands for an Israeli settle-

ment freeze in the West Bank and Jerusalem, and, in return, Israel pulled back from its propaganda campaign for an early military attack on Iran's nuclear facilities.

Within days of the Obama Administration's announcement that it was abandoning the demand for a settlement freeze, the outgoing head of the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad, Meir Dagan, gave a widely publicized interview, in which he said that, as the result of covert sabotage operations and other factors, Iran's pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability was set back, until at least 2015, thus giving the P5+1 (UN Security Council Permanent 5 plus Germany) greater maneuvering room for a negotiated agreement with Iran. However, days later, Netanyahu refuted the Dagan remarks, insisting that a serious threat of military action against Iran was key to any negotiated settlement of the nuclear issue.

The *Forward*, a progressive U.S. Jewish weekly, reported on Jan. 12 that the Obama Administration's special peace envoy in the Middle East, former Sen. George Mitchell, is increasingly at odds with Ross, and is losing ground to AIPAC's point man.

Sources close to the Obama camp had reported in the early days of the Administration that, in December 2008, Presidential advisor David Axelrod had held a series of meetings in New York City with top AIPAC officials, who demanded that Ross be given a prominent place on the incoming Administration's Middle East team. After spending months in a dead-end posting at the State Department, Ross moved over to the White House, and has since emerged as AIPAC's ace in the hole, wrecking any meaningful movement by Mitchell and others toward a genuine two-state solution.

With Obama now singularly focused on his 2012 reelection campaign, Ross has virtual carte blanche to keep Israel and the Lobby satisfied that they have a veto over any U.S. efforts to achieve a breakthrough.

The *Forward's* Nathan Guttman all but wrote the political epitaph for special envoy Mitchell, who has now been forced to take a back seat to Ross. Ross has been traveling back and forth to the Middle East, meeting exclusively with Israeli officials.

Under these circumstances, the *Economist's* "forecast" of a "big Middle East war" has to be seen for what it is: A proactive move by London to put all the pieces in place for a near-term war in Southwest Asia.