

The Middle East: an arc of crisis or a zone of stability?

by Robert Dreyfuss

With the Carter administration era drawing to a merciful close on Jan. 20, Ronald Reagan will face a Middle East in which the two most troublesome and problematic regimes in the region are on the verge of collapse. Menachem Begin's Israel and the Iran of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini are both living out the last days of their existence, with Begin confronting the prospect of early elections against a resurgent Labour Party and Khomeini likely to be knocked out of power by a military coup d'état in the period ahead.

Since 1977, Carter and Zbigniew Brzezinski have pursued a deliberate policy of fostering instability across what Brzezinski was fond of calling "the arc of crisis." In May 1977, with help from Washington, Begin came to power in Israel, hailing his long-time friend Brzezinski; then in 1978, Carter and Brzezinski pulled the rug out from under the shah and helped the Muslim Brotherhood secret society and the Ayatollah Khomeini to come to power in Iran. By manipulating both Begin and Khomeini, the Carter-Brzezinski regime maintained a permanent state of tension in the area that enabled Washington and London to undermine the Franco-German bloc in Western Europe.

Now, with the departure of Carter, it is fitting that both Begin and Khomeini are approaching the end of the line. Their efficient removal will permit the Reagan administration to clear the decks in the Middle East for a policy which veteran observers of the area are calling an "arc of stability" approach.

Last month, during a visit to India, Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev issued a proposal for the establishment of a neutral Persian Gulf, free of foreign military bases and rival navies, and the guarantee of a steady flow of oil to customers in the industrial West and key nations of the developing world. According to intelligence sources, Brezhnev's idea reflects the attitude of some in the leadership of the U.S.S.R. who seek a gentlemen's agreement with the new U.S. administration on a stability policy for the region. Part of that, Iranian sources say, includes a

Soviet willingness to cooperate in the elimination of Khomeini's mullahs in Iran.

The most well-publicized effort to dissuade the Reagan team from reversing President Carter's Middle East policy was Henry Kissinger—though it failed miserably. Having left the United States for the Middle East amid tremendous media hype—regarding which the role of CBS and its chairman William Paley, who sponsored and paid for the Kissinger mission, played no small part—Kissinger gathered around himself the appearance of an official Reagan envoy and fact-finder.

But, during his voyage, Kissinger was publicly disavowed by both Reagan and his designated National Security Adviser Richard Allen and then bitterly attacked and snubbed by the Arab states.

Jordan's King Hussein flatly refused to receive Kissinger in Amman and would not grant him a visa to enter the country. Saudi Arabia, though it did not cancel the visit, gave its press free reign to insult Kissinger and refused to allow him to make any public statements while in the country. Only Egypt, Israel, and lonely Oman welcomed him.

Kissinger's policy recommendations, for a U.S. military buildup in the region, including bases and a direct U.S. troop presence, were echoed later by Secretary of State nominee Alexander Haig, however. Haig's advocacy of a sharp increase in U.S. involvement in the Persian Gulf, in direct opposition to Brezhnev's initiative, provoked a strong reaction from Reagan loyalists and among many on the State Department transition group, according to Washington sources.

Enter the British

More subtle than Kissinger's unsuccessful effort to steer Reagan onto a Middle East confrontation pattern was the deployment of several leading British officials into the area. No fewer than five separate major British delegations were in the Middle East in the first two weeks of January, including the British Foreign Secre-

tary Lord Carrington, former prime minister Edward Heath, the British energy minister, the British undersecretary Douglas Hurd, and a mission of the Conservative Friends of Israel; together, they visited virtually every Arab country and Israel.

Following Kissinger into Cairo by days, Carrington praised PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and hinted that London might support an independent Palestinian state.

The Carrington remarks, intended to capitalize on the impression that Kissinger's truculent pro-NATO line reflects Reagan administration policy, signaled a last-ditch British effort to salvage their position in the Middle East by increasing London's leverage in the Arab world.

But observers report that what the British really fear is that the departure of Begin and Khomeini, in combination with renewed signs of a push into the Middle East by Paris and Bonn, may provide a crucial impetus for Reagan to join with them in taking up the Brezhnev offer.

Israeli elections: new regional strategy?

by Mark Burdman

Will Israel's upcoming election season usher in new possibilities of peace and stability in the Middle East? Or will these elections, on the contrary, initiate the second phase of the geopolitical Egypt-Israel axis brought under the auspices of the Carter administration's Camp David treaty?

These questions have become of first-order importance during the past days.

On the one hand, the government of Prime Minister Menachim Begin is on its last legs and is likely to cave in at any moment to the overwhelming consensus in Israel favoring elections in the May-June period at the latest.

On the other hand, the advent of Reagan's administration raises the potential that the United States can look at the Middle East from a relatively fresh perspective, unencumbered by the messy legacy of the Carterites.

The potentially positive side of the ledger in Israel resides in the fact that the Israeli Labour Party, in the view of most reputable opinion polls and analysts, could win a majority of the seats in a fair election and thus could become the first party in Israel's history to rule without resorting to Byzantine political deals that drain the capability for effective action.

Given that Labour itself is a mass-based organization and will receive a substantial backing from the Histadrut national labor confederation, a solid showing in a fair

election could give the Labour Party's candidate for prime minister, Shimon Peres, the political foundations to act boldly, commensurate with Israel's interests as a nation-state, rather than be forced to comply with the pressures and the black propaganda from the Zbigniew Brzezinskis of the world and certain not-so-kosher Zionist organizations abroad.

The potential of Peres's hooking up with Reagan in the United States has so disturbed the British families who ruled much of the Middle East for the past 150 years that they have activated two operations against the Labour Party.

One involves the City of London's top assets inside Israel—such as Moshe Dyan, Ezer Weizman, and Ariel Sharon—launching both new synthetic "centrist" parties and anti-Arab provocations on the West Bank. In combination, these actions are aimed at siphoning off Labour's voter support base and manufacturing a political crisis to box in Peres.

The second centers in Egypt. A certain faction in Egypt, personified by Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Butros-Ghali, is trying to build a new NATO-extension geopolitical-military pact in the Middle East and extending into southern Africa. This Egyptian faction, allied to Henry Kissinger and Alexander Haig, is trying to foreclose Peres's (and Reagan's) options by creating a geopolitical fait accompli as Israel's election period gets under way.

The constitutional crisis faction

The anti-Labour sabotage actions of the Dayan-Weizman-Sharon London-allied cabal are right out in the open, and were telegraphed in a Jan. 11 *Sunday Times* of London feature on Israel, highlighting the efforts afoot to deny Labour a working majority.

On one side of the coin, Weizman has been spearheading efforts to form a new "centrist" party, with Dayan as its suggested head. This party has no natural base inside Israel and is a synthetic creation of the same sort as the 1976-1977 Democratic Movement for Change in Israel, which siphoned off enough votes from Labour to help usher in Begin.

At the time, the DMC was a special project of the Trilateral Commission elite that brought Carter into power. Weizman is also a product of the dope-trafficking and banking elites and strategic lunatics that ran Carter.

Weizman was an avid Carter backer during the American election campaign. Now, his campaign orchestrators in Israel claim that he will run a "neoconservative" campaign à la Reagan to capture the mood of the moment.

Weizman's main buddy in the U.S. is Leon Charney, a Carter administration confidant whom the Israeli paper *Yediot Aharonot* has labeled a "mobster lawyer."