

Israel's nuclear program began in 1959. In 1958, Israel secretly initiated work at what was to become the Dimona nuclear research site. In 1961, the CIA estimated that Israel could produce nuclear weapons within the decade.

The discovery presented a difficult challenge for US policymakers. The Kennedy and Johnson administrations fashioned a complex scheme of annual visits to Dimona to ensure that Israel would not develop nuclear weapons. But the Israelis were adept at concealing their activities. By late 1966, Israel had reached the nuclear threshold, although it decided not to conduct an atomic test.

By the fall of 1969, Assistant Defense Secretary Paul Warnke concluded that Israel had already acquired the bomb when Israeli Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin explained to him how he interpreted Israel's pledge not to be the first country to introduce nuclear weapons into the region. According to Rabin, for nuclear weapons to be introduced, they needed to be tested and publicly declared. Implicitly, then, Israel could possess the bomb without "introducing" it.

The question of what to do about the Israeli bomb would fall to Nixon. Though Nixon and his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger may have been inclined to accommodate Israel's nuclear ambitions, they would have to manage senior State Department and Pentagon officials whose perspectives differed. Documents prepared between February and April 1969 reveal a great sense of urgency and alarm among senior officials about Israel's nuclear program.

Apparently prompted by those high-level concerns, Kissinger issued NSSM (National Security Study Memorandum) 40—titled Israeli Nuclear Weapons Program—on April 11, 1969. In it he asked the national security bureaucracy for a review of policy options toward Israel's nuclear program.

In the weeks that followed, the issue was taken up by a senior review group (SRG), chaired by Kissinger, that included CIA Director Richard Helms, Undersecretary of

# Israel's Bomb The Untold Story



A partial view of Israel's Dimona Nuclear Power Plant in the southern Negev Desert. (AFP File Photo)

State Elliot Richardson, Deputy Defense Secretary David Packard and Joint Chiefs Chairman Earle Wheeler.

The one available report of an SRG meeting on NSSM 40 suggests that the bureaucracy was interested in pressuring

Israel to halt its nuclear program. When Richardson and Packard summoned Rabin on July 29 to discuss the nuclear issue, Richardson posed three issues for Rabin to respond to: The status of Israel's NPT deliberations; assurances that

"non-introduction" meant "non-possession" of nuclear weapons; and assurances that Israel would not produce or deploy the Jericho ballistic missile. Rabin, however, was unresponsive except to say that the NPT was still "under study."

Nixon and Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir would have to address the nuclear issue when they met in late September 1969. Perhaps the most fateful event of this tale was Nixon's one-on-one meeting with Meir in the Oval Office on Sept. 26, 1969.

In later years, Meir never discussed the substance of her private conversation with Nixon, saying only, "I could not quote him then, and I will not quote him now."

Even without the record of this meeting, informed speculation is possible. It is likely that Nixon started with a plea for openness. Meir, in turn, probably acknowledged—tacitly or explicitly—that Israel had reached a weapons capability, but probably pledged extreme caution. On Feb. 23, 1970, Rabin told Kissinger privately that he wanted the president to know that, in light of the Meir-Nixon conversation, "Israel has no intention to sign the NPT."

Kissinger informed Nixon that he told Rabin that he would notify the president. And with that, the decade-long US effort to curb Israel's nuclear program ended.

That so little is known today about the tale of NSSM 40 is not surprising. Yet, even as Nixon and Kissinger enabled Israel to flout the NPT, NSSM 40 allowed them to create a defensible record. As was his typical modus operandi, Kissinger used NSSM 40 to maintain control over key officials who wanted to take action on the problem.

Yet set against contemporary values of transparency and accountability, the Nixon-Meir deal of 1969 now stands as a striking and burdensome anomaly. Israel's nuclear posture is inconsistent with the tenets of a modern liberal democracy. The deal is also burdensome for the United States, provoking claims about double standards in US nuclear non-proliferation policy.

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## Comrade Cheney Vs President Putin

Busy. Busy. Busy. When it comes to conjuring new enemies, this administration never sleeps. If you thought taking on the non-Israeli portion of the Middle East is a lot to put on our plate, then you haven't got a clue as to the appetites of the Bush regime. Not only do they want to start a new cold war with the Muslim world, they want to re-ignite the old cold war with Russia.

Viktor Yushchenko at the helm, and the Russians over the price of oil and natural gas.

So what is this "blackmail" Cheney is talking about? It is the Russians abandoning the doctrine of socialist internationalism and putting good old capitalist theory into practice. Instead of continuing to offer oil and natural gas to Ukraine at below-market prices, they insist on charging the price set by the international market. To Cheney, this is "blackmail": an economist would call it capitalism.

Cheney, however, was just getting started. Russia, he insisted, harbors dreams of revenge. "No one can justify actions that undermine the territorial integrity of a neighbor." Coming from Cheney, these words must have struck at the heart of every Russian nationalist, including those in the Kremlin, cutting them to the quick. Because there quick Russian President Vladimir



Dick Cheney



Vladimir Putin

Putin sits amid the ruins of a shattered empire, like a quadruple-amputee victim of a major car accident with the shards still lodged in the bleeding sides of his torso. Cheney's words rubbed salt in some pretty sore wounds: That this was his intention is hard not to believe. The reference to Russia's alleged subversion of its neighbors' "territorial integrity" is code for the disputes over separatism that have broken out in the nations ruled by Cheney's

audience. The president of Georgia, Mikhail Saakashvili, was present and must have smiled (albeit inwardly) as he recalled his brutal suppression of pro-Russian ethnic minorities in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, who seek independence from their ethnic Georgian overlords. In Kosovo, the Albanian Kosovars were supported by the U.S. in their struggle to achieve de facto independence, but in Georgia separatism is opposed. The one

consistent strain in this policy is to oppose Slavic interests wherever they may dare raise their heads: there is to be no quarter in the civilizational war with the (now vastly diminished) Byzantine East, just as there is to be no retreat in the global war on Islam. The American strategy is a simple one: regime change all 'round!

The series of "peaceful" regime changes effected in Russia's "near abroad"—Ukraine, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova—were all bought and paid for by the U.S., and now, in the cases of Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, we are seeing some blowback, a nationalistic reaction to the overweening arrogance of the American hegemon. An effort to pull off a self-styled "denim revolution" in Belarus failed miserably, in part on account of the disunity (and sheer dishonesty) of the "democratic" opposition, but mostly because Eastern Europeans are wising up to the Americans' game. Having only just recently left one Warsaw Pact, they are no longer quite so eager to join another.

Anyone seeking a principled consistency in American foreign policy is bound to be disappointed: separatism is good for the Kosovars and the southern Sudanese, but bad for the South Ossetians and the Russian-speakers of Moldova and the Baltics. Nukes are good in the hands of the Israelis and the Pakistanis, not to mention the Indians, but bad if they're acquired by the Iranians, who have no right to deter nuclear blackmail. No nation may invade or occupy the territory of another— not because it is an act of unprovoked aggression, but because such acts are privileges reserved for the exclusive enjoyment of American government officials.

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## Bolivia Takes Control Of Its Energy Industry

After winning Bolivia's presidential election in December 2005, leftist leader Evo Morales pledged to fulfill his campaign promise of taking control of Bolivia's large gas reserves from multinational energy corporations; these international companies had invested in Bolivia for the past 20 years during pro-U.S. administrations in La Paz.

Morales, like fellow leftist Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, pursues an ideology that is opposed to Washington's neoliberal market model and instead encourages what PINR analyst Dr. Michael A. Weinstein has labeled "cooperative socialism and regional integration." Morales, an indigenous Aymara, won power based upon his promises to cater to the poor and indigenous community. Bolivia remains South America's poorest country.

On April 30, Morales fulfilled this campaign promise and nationalized the country's hydrocarbon resources, ordering Bolivia's armed forces to occupy 56 oil and gas installations. The decision was expected, but nevertheless surprised international investors due to the boldness of the action.

On May 1, La Paz announced its terms, stating that oil companies will have six months to negotiate new contracts that will be more favorable to Bolivia; in the interim period, La Paz will raise the tax and royalty rate given to the Bolivian government from 50 percent to 82 percent. The May 1 decree also secures La Paz a majority stake in 67 energy fields. If the multinational energy companies do not agree to the terms, then the government, according to the decree, will order them out of the country.

In December 2005, PINR warned of this outcome, and stated that when Morales moves on the energy industry, "the foreign hydrocarbon companies will probably acquiesce in more favorable contract terms for Bolivia, as they have in Venezuela, but they are likely to litigate if they are pushed against the wall and might diminish their rate of investments." This December 2005 statement is still accurate today, and it is likely that multinationals will meet Bolivia's demands since neoliberal policies throughout South America are on the wane due to successive elections that have placed leftist leaders in power, in countries such as Brazil, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia and to a lesser degree Chile, and a populist leadership in Peru.

Foreign oil companies will have to adapt to these developments since they are occurring throughout the continent. In Venezuela, for instance, Caracas forced multinational oil companies to renegotiate their contracts and placed retroactive tax hikes on them, actions that the multinational oil companies largely accepted.

Nevertheless, Bolivia's actions sparked an interesting development in South America. Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva proposed an emergency meeting to discuss possible solutions to the crisis sparked by Bolivia's actions. Brasilia has important energy interests in Bolivia; for instance, Brazilian major Petrobras has invested \$1.5 billion in Bolivia's natural gas sector and \$2 billion in a projected gas pipeline to convey the gas to Brazil. Indeed, Bolivia supplies approximately 50 percent of Brazil's total gas needs.

It is possible that a moderate left, represented by the Brazilian and Argentinian governments, will try to put pressure on more socialist- and populist-oriented leaderships, such as those of Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales, in order to limit their strong economic nationalism; additionally, the moderate left may call for more coordinated energy policies for the whole Latin American continent. Similar to the European Union, energy security is perceived by Latin American decision-makers as a regional issue and one that needs consistent regional policies.

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The elevators in the New York Hilton followed CNN on a small screen you could not avoid watching. Iraq was top of the news; pronouncements about a "civil war" and "sectarian violence" were repeated incessantly. It was as if the U.S. invasion had never happened and the killing of tens of thousands of civilians by the Americans was a surreal fiction. The Iraqis were mindless Arabs, haunted by religion, ethnic strife, and the need to blow themselves up. And when you left the lift, this followed you to your room, to the hotel gym, the airport, the next airport, and the next country. Such is the power of America's corporate propaganda, which, as Edward Said pointed out in Culture and Imperialism, "penetrates electronically" with its equivalent of a party line.

and that only a fraction of the "insurgents" followed al-Qaeda.

For the Americans, Zarqawi's role was to distract attention from the thing that almost all Iraqis oppose: the brutal Anglo-American occupation of their country.

Now that Zarqawi has been replaced by "sectarian violence" and "civil war," the big news is the attacks by Sunnis on Shia mosques and bazaars. The real news, which is not reported in the CNN "mainstream," is that the "Salvador Option" has been invoked in Iraq. This is the campaign of terror by death squads armed and trained by the U.S., which

## Return of Death Squads

By John Pilger

attack Sunnis and Shias alike. The goal is the incitement of a real civil war and the breakup of Iraq, the original war aim of Bush's administration.

The Ministry of the Interior in Baghdad, which is run by the CIA, directs the principal death squads. Their members are not exclusively Shia, as the myth goes. The most brutal are the Sunni-led Special Police Commandos, headed by former senior officers in Saddam's Ba'ath Party. This was formed and trained by CIA "counter-insurgency

day to fund a lethal counter-insurgency campaign. ... All told, U.S. allies in Central America during Reagan's two terms killed over 300,000 people, tortured hundreds of thousands, and drove millions into exile."

According to the investigative writer Max Fuller (National Review online), the key CIA manager of the Interior Ministry death squads "cut his teeth in Vietnam before moving on to direct the U.S. military mission in El Salvador."

Professor Grandin names another Central America veteran whose job now is to "train a ruthless counter-insurgent force made up of

ex-Ba'athist thugs." Another, says Fuller, is well-known for his production of death lists. "A secret militia run by the Americans is the Facilities Protection Service, which has been responsible for bombings."

"The British and U.S. Special Forces," concludes Fuller, "in conjunction with the [U.S.-created] intelligence services at the Iraqi Defense Ministry, are fabricating insurgent bombings of Shias."

On March 16, Reuters reported the arrest of an American "security contractor," who was found with weapons and explosives in his car. Last year, two Britons disguised as Arabs were caught with a car full of weapons and explosives; British forces bulldozed the Basra prison to rescue them. The Boston Globe recently reported: "The FBI's counter-terrorism unit has launched a broad investigation of U.S.-based theft rings after discovering that some of the vehicles used in deadly car bombings in Iraq, including attacks that killed U.S. troops and Iraqi civilians, were probably stolen in the United States, according to senior government officials."

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## War Crimes Serbia Pays a Price

Kostunica simply does not have the power to arrest Mladic, or fears the political repercussions. Mladic has been a fugitive for 10 years, probably with help from Serbia's security apparatus, and he has remained a symbol of defiance for reactionary nationalists. At the funeral of Slobodan Milosevic, the nationalist former president who died in March while on trial at The Hague, one of the chants of his supporters was, "We will never give up Mladic." But Kostunica must understand the damage to Serbia of further lessening its credibility abroad. Excising this malignant tumor is critical for his country to regain its health and vitality.

Association Agreement, the first step toward membership in the union.

It is not clear whether IHT.COM

Handing over a manifest war criminal would seem a small price to pay for Serbia and Montenegro to continue moving closer to the European Union. After the breakup of Yugoslavia and the terrible conflicts that followed, there should be no question in any Serb's mind that the most promising future for the country is to find acceptance within Europe.

Yet Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica has failed on his most recent pledge to deliver Ratko Mladic, the former commander of the Bosnian Serb Army who is wanted by the United Nations court in The Hague for his role in the siege of Sarajevo and in the massacre of 8,000 Muslims in Srebrenica in 1995. After the latest deadline passed on Monday without Mladic's arrest, the European Union rightly suspended negotiations on a Stabilization and