

ISRAEL'S STRATEGIC FUTURE The Final Report of Project Daniel

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FOREWORD by Professor Louis René Beres, Chair

Further to the issuance of **The National Security Strategy of the United States of America** on September 20, 2002, US President George W. Bush launched Operation Iraqi Freedom in March of the following year. The results of that war, still substantially unclear at the time of this writing, derive from a greatly broadened American assertion of the right of unilateral preemption. A conceptual and implemented right, it expands the binding and well-established customary prerogative of "Anticipatory Self-Defense" under international law. Although there have as yet been no subsequent legal codifications of this new American expansion, the new precedent established by the world's only remaining Great Power is certain to impact the actual policy behavior of other states. Not surprisingly, many in the international community have criticized this new policy. Yet history is replete with examples where nations have correctly reserved unto themselves the right of preemption when they have determined that their vital national interests, or very existence, were under threat.

In short, whether or not the presumptively expanded right of striking-first as self-defense will soon become a generally accepted norm of authoritative international law, this right will, in practice, likely acquire enhanced credibility and legitimacy. Even if the broadened idea of anticipatory self-defense does not achieve the status of a peremptory norm as defined at Article 53 of **The Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties**, it will be invoked more often by certain imperiled states. In this connection, the growing spread of weapons of mass destruction throughout the world now exclusively to unstable and undemocratic states fully underscores the broadened doctrine.

Israel's Strategic Future: the Final Report of Project Daniel, was completed in mid-January 2003, several months before commencement of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Nothing associated with America's 2003 war against Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq or the still ongoing conflict within that fragmented country suggests a changed reality for Israel and the Middle East. On the contrary, the "lessons" of Operation Iraqi Freedom demonstrate not only that our Final Report remains valid, but that its validity has been significantly enhanced. Today, more than ever before, the State of Israel - a state so small that it could fit twice into America's Lake Michigan - must include appropriate preemption options in its overall defense strategy. Vastly more vulnerable to catastrophic first-strike aggressions than the United States, Israel must prepare now for existential harms in every available fashion. Consistent with **The National Security Strategy of the United States of America** and the strategic objectives of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Israel has an inherent right to defend itself without first absorbing biological and/or nuclear attacks. This is true irrespective of the cumulative outcome of Operation

Iraqi Freedom or of particular criticisms now directed toward the United States.

Project Daniel began with the assumption that Israel's security environment must be appraised continuously, and that the threat of irrational state and nonstate enemies armed with WMD assets represents the single most urgent danger to the country's survival. Early on in our deliberations, however, we ("The Group") agreed that while the overall impact of this threat was extraordinarily high, its probability was considerably less than that of WMD assaults from rational enemy quarters. Reflecting this judgment, we concluded that Israel's main focus must now be on preventing a coalition of Arab states and/or Iran from coming into possession of weapons of mass destruction. Preferably, we urged this objective be pursued while Israel continues with its present policy of deliberate ambiguity regarding its own nuclear status. We also concluded that the classic paradigm of war between national armies could become less predictive in the developing Middle East, and that an Israeli "paradigm shift" is therefore required. This shift in orientation and resources would place new emphases on short-range threats (terrorism) and long-range threats (ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction). Here we also recommended a corresponding reduction in the resources Israel should now allocate to classical warfighting scenarios. Today, at the end of April 2004 - 15 months after our presentation of **Israel's Strategic Future** to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon - we strongly reaffirm these recommendations.

Our Group notes emphatically that Israel should avoid non-conventional exchanges with enemy states wherever possible. It surely is not in Israel's interest to engage these states in WMD warfare if other options exist, but rather to create conditions wherein such forms of conflict need never take place. **Israel's Strategic Future** does not instruct how to "win" a war in a WMD Middle-East environment. Rather, it describes what we, its authors, consider the necessary, realistic and optimally efficient conditions for nonbelligerence toward Israel in the region. Altogether unchanged by Operation Iraqi Freedom, these conditions include a coherent and comprehensive Israeli doctrine for deterrence, defense, warfighting and preemption. Our precise strategic theses, validated by the 2003 Iraq War and its aftermath, are intended to aid policymakers in bringing stability and predictability to a troubled region.

Following the main body of **Israel's Strategic Future**, which remains exactly as it was completed originally in January 2003, a newly-prepared "Addendum" will bring the reader up-to-date with current circumstances and allow him or her to better understand the Final Report in full and proper historical context. It is strongly suggested, therefore, that the reader consider this brief annex as an integral part of **Israel's Strategic Future**.

Louis Ren Beres, Ph.D.
Professor of International Law
Purdue University
Chair of Project Daniel

ISRAEL'S STRATEGIC FUTURE PROJECT DANIEL

Final Report

*Prepared Especially for Presentation to the Hon. Ariel Sharon
Prime Minister of the State of Israel, January 16, 2003*

Project Daniel is a private and informed effort to identify the overriding existential threats to Israel and their prospective remedies. These remedies must be both plausible (capable of achievement) and productive. With this in mind, the Group met in both Washington DC and New York City on several occasions during 2002. In the periods between meetings, members of the Group regularly exchanged information. The result of this effort is conveyed in the following Final Report: Israel's Strategic Future. The perspectives expressed in this document are those of the individual members, and do not necessarily reflect views of any institution or government. Our hope is that Project Daniel's unique configuration of member background and experience will contribute to the strengthening of US-Israel strategic relations and to the ongoing debate over how Israel should best respond to existential threats to its national security.

The Group is comprised of the following individual members:

Professor Louis René Beres, Chair, USA Naaman Belkind Former Assistant to the Israeli Deputy Minister of Defense for Special Means, Israel

Maj. Gen. (Res.), Israeli Air Force/Professor Isaac Ben-Israel, Israel, Dr. Rand H. Fishbein, Former Professional Staff Member, US Senate Appropriations Committee, President and Special Assistant for National Security Affairs to Senator Daniel K. Inouye, USA

Dr. Adir Pridor, Lt. Col. (Ret.), Israeli Air Force; Former Head of Military Analyses, RAFAEL, Israel

Fmr. MK./Col. (Res.), Israeli Air Force Yoash Tsiddon-Chatto, Israel

Executive Summary

Considering issues of both probability and disutility (harms), the principal existential threat to Israel at the present time is a conventional war mounted against it by a coalition of Arab states and/or Iran. Israel is also endangered (presently or potentially) by Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), nuclear and/or biological weapons that could be used against it either by enemy first-strikes or via escalation from conventional war. Israel's particular vulnerability to such weapons is a consequence of its tiny area, its high population density and its national infrastructure concentrations. We recommend, therefore: Israel do whatever possible to prevent an enemy coalition from being formed and from coming into possession of WMD. This could include pertinent preemptive strikes (conventional) against enemy WMD development, manufacturing, storage, control and deployment centers. This recommendation is consistent both with longstanding international law regarding "anticipatory self-defense" and with the newly-stated defense policy of The United States of America. Israel should continue with present policy of ambiguity regarding its own nuclear status. This would help to prevent any legitimization

of WMD in the Middle East. It is possible, however, that in the future Israel would be well-advised to proceed beyond nuclear ambiguity to certain limited forms of disclosure. This would be the case only if enemy (state and/or non-state) nuclearization had not been prevented.

Israel should provide all constructive support to the United States-led War Against Terror (WAT). It must insist upon aiding the American objective to prevent/eliminate WMD among rogue states and terror groups in the Middle East. There is a clear coincidence of interest between Israel and the United States in matters of security and counter-terrorism.

Israel must do everything within its means to prevent a Middle Eastern rogue state or terror group from attaining WMD status. Irrespective of its policy on nuclear ambiguity vs. disclosure, Israel will not be able to endure unless it continues to maintain a credible, secure and decisive nuclear deterrent alongside a multi-layered anti-missile defense. This recognizable (second-strike) retaliatory force should be fashioned with the capacity to destroy some 15 high-value targets scattered widely over pertinent enemy states in the Middle East. The overriding priority of Israel's nuclear deterrent force must always be that it preserves the country's security without ever having to be fired against any target. The primary point of Israel's nuclear forces must always be deterrence *ex ante*, not revenge *ex post*. If WMD status were attained by any Middle Eastern rogue state or coalition of states, the probability of joint-enemy conventional attack against Israel would be raised considerably. Faced with adversaries who now might believe themselves shielded under a WMD "umbrella", Israel would have to do the following:

Maintain its conventional forces at full war-waging strength and with a decisive qualitative edge. Hopefully this would be accomplished with full material support from the United States, whose interests would be coincident with Israel's interests. Adapt its planning priorities and budgetary requirements to the "paradigm shift" described later in this Report. In this connection, Israel is urged to reduce the priority it assigns to conventional warfighting without impairing its undisputed superiority against any plausible enemy coalition. The Group is aware that many of its strategic recommendations are contingent upon adequate funding. Should the substantial funds needed by Israel to deal with so-called "Low Intensity" and Long-Range WMD threats be sought via increased taxation, it could threaten Israel's economy and (ironically) undermine Israel's security in other ways. To deal purposefully with these threats (threats which are delineated in this Report's following presentation of "paradigm shift"), Israel's government must trim all nonproductive costs and seek to encourage dramatic increases in productivity. The resultant rise in per capita GNP could allow the needed increase for Israel's national defense. The Existential Threat to Israel In an age of Total War, Israel must remain fully aware of threats to its very

continuance as a viable state. With such awareness, Israel has always recognized an imperative to seek peace through negotiation and diplomatic processes wherever possible. This imperative, codified at the United Nations Charter and in multiple authoritative sources of international law, shall always remain the guiding orientation of Israel's foreign policy.

When Israel's search for peaceful settlement of disputes is not reciprocated, however, it must be prepared to deal with a wide range of existential threats. Taken literally, the idea of an existential threat implies harms that portend complete annihilation or the disappearance of the state. The Group feels, however, that certain forms of both conventional and unconventional attack against large Israeli civilian concentrations would constitute an existential threat. Although such forms of aggression are clearly criminalized by longstanding rules of Humanitarian International Law, Israel must: Acknowledge that these rules have often been ignored by certain Middle Eastern adversaries; and Take appropriate protective steps involving deterrence, active defenses, passive defenses, and preemption.

Regarding preemption, international law has long allowed for states to initiate forceful measures when there exists "imminent danger" of aggression. This norm of "anticipatory self-defense" has been expanded and strongly reinforced by President Bush's recent issuance of The National Security Strategy of the United States of America. Released on September 20, 2002, this document asserts, inter alia, that traditional concepts of deterrence will not work against an enemy "whose avowed tactics are wanton destruction and the targeting of innocents...", and that "We must adapt the concept of imminent threat to the capabilities and objectives of today's adversaries." This "adaptation" means nothing less than striking first where an emergent threat to the United States is judged to be sufficiently unacceptable. As Israel is substantially less defensible and more vulnerable than the United States of America, its particular right to resort to anticipatory self-defense under threat of identifiable existential harm is beyond legal question. Moreover, as Israel's ties to the United States are strong and unambiguous, so too are the strategic interests of the two countries tightly interwoven. Certain WMD attacks upon Israeli cities could be genuinely existential. For example, biological or nuclear attacks upon Tel Aviv that would kill many thousands of Israeli citizens could have profound and dire consequences on the continued viability of the country. A recent report by the Washington-based Heritage Foundation examined the effects of an Iraqi WMD attack on Tel Aviv. In one scenario, a single Iraqi missile carrying 500 kilograms of botulinum would kill approximately 50,000 individuals. In another scenario, an Iraqi missile fitted with 450 kilograms of VX nerve gas would kill 43,000 people. If left to develop nuclear warheads, Iraqi missiles could kill hundreds of thousands of Israelis. The Group notes three distinct but interrelated existential threats: Biological/Nuclear (BN) threats from states; BN threats from terror organizations; and BN threats from combined efforts of states and terror organizations. To the extent that certain Arab states and Iran are allowed to develop WMD capabilities, Israel may have to deal with an anonymous attack

scenario; that is, a situation wherein the attacking state does not identify itself and where Israeli identification of the perpetrator is problematic. Overall, there is a "force multiplier" issue for Israel to face, a situation in which multiple attacks upon Israel from various configurations of state and non-state adversaries create a pattern of harms that is greater than the sum of its parts. Regarding effective deterrence of such situations, the Group feels that Israel must identify explicitly, and early on, all enemy Arab states and Iran, as subject to massive Israeli reprisal in the event of BN attacks upon Israel. In doing so, the Israeli deterrent posture would closely mirror that of the United States towards the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

Since the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, the US has made it clear that it reserves the right to use all available weapons in response to any attack upon its soil by an adversary using Weapons of Mass Destruction. (The Bush Administration told Congress, on December 11, 2002, that it is now the policy of the United States to use "overwhelming force", including nuclear weapons, if chemical or biological weapons are used against America or its military forces. The threats are contained in a six-page document identified as National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction). Israel, in our view, should follow a similar policy. Existential threats to Israel may be exacerbated further by Arab/Iranian leaders whose actions, by Western standards, might be deemed irrational. Faced with enemy leaders who do not value national and/or personal self-preservation more highly than any other preference or combination of preferences, Israeli deterrence could be immobilized and security could be based largely upon the success or lack of success of prior preemption efforts.

Under such circumstances, a policy of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) which was once obtained between the United States and the Soviet Union would not work between Israel and its Arab/Iranian adversaries. Rather, the Group understands that Israel must prevent its enemies from acquiring BN status and that any notion of BN "parity" between Israel and its enemies would be intolerable. The ratios of physical size 800:1, population 55:1, and political clout 22:1 UN votes between Israel and its enemies, and some of the latter's utterly zero-sum concept of conflict with Israel (a concept currently allowing for no possibility of compromise and reconciliation) means that Israel's survival is contingent upon avoiding parity at all costs. With this in mind, we strongly believe that Israel immediately adopt - with highest priority - a policy of preemption with respect to enemy existential threats. Such a policy could also enhance Israeli deterrence to the extent that it would reveal the country's expressed willingness and resolve to act as needed. Recognizing the close partnership and overlapping interests between Israel and the United States, the Group fully supports the ongoing American War Against Terror. In this connection we urge full cooperation and mutuality between Jerusalem and Washington regarding communication of intentions. If for any reason the United States should decide against exercising preemption options against certain developing weapons of mass destruction, Israel must reserve for itself the unhindered prerogative to undertake its own anticipatory self-defense operations.