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And Robert Novak*
**Israeli Aid to Iran
Undermines U.S.**

Secretary of State Alexander Haig recently called the worsening war between Iran and Iraq "perhaps" the most troubling crisis in the Middle East—for the United States, perhaps the most dangerous in the world. But Haig did not mention the oddest feature of a war that the United States cannot afford to see the Ayatollah Khomeini win: Israel, the closest U.S. partner in the Middle East, has been surreptitiously sending millions of dollars worth of military aid to Khomeini. Israel's bedfellows are strange indeed: three of its hated enemies—Libya, Syria and the Soviet Union—working to help Iran defeat Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and overthrow his government.

Haig's brilliant exposition on the dangers of Khomeinism to Arab stability in Iraq and throughout the Persian Gulf showed a lack of follow-through that critics insist must be corrected quickly for the Reagan administration to keep its tenuous control over the threatening Mideast. Instead of stopping Israel's aid to Khomeini, the United States has looked the other way. Israel's help for Khomeini's war is also help for Khomeini's fundamentalist revolution—the sectarian Islamic war he hopes to ignite throughout the Arab world. Such a religious convulsion could transform the

Persian Gulf from a pro-Western bastion to a wholly unstable Soviet dependency. For Israel, the benefit of Arab civil wars would outweigh any losses.

But for the United States, the triumph of Khomeinism would end all hope for Haig's "strategic consensus" between Israel and moderate Arab states such as Saudi Arabia, linked to the United States in defending the Persian Gulf from Soviet penetration. Yet Haig, despite strong pressures from the Pentagon and the CIA, has shown remarkable forbearance about Israel's arms aid for Iran—both as supplier and as world-market buyer. Defense officials strongly agree that this forbearance baffles and outrages Saudi Arabia and other moderate Arab states. But instead of chastising Israel, Haig may now be moving in the direction of rewarding it. The reward will take the form of putting Israel back in good American graces by restoring the military cooperation agreement, called the Memorandum of Understanding. It was suspended by President Reagan when Israel annexed the Syrian Golan Heights. Dusting off that agreement now is linked by cynical Arab leaders to Israel's good behavior in not launching a full-scale invasion of Lebanon.

In fact, restoring Israel to good favor despite the Golan Heights and despite Israel's Iranian operations against U.S. interests makes sense only if Haig is preparing a hard Israeli sell on the Palestinian West Bank issue. But if any such hard sell is in the cards, it is a well-kept secret. Haig intends to push autonomy vigorously on Defense Minister Ariel Sharon and Prime Minister Menachem Begin during their separate visits here soon. But no decision has been made to roll back Israel's settlements and land seizures, which now cover over 30 percent of the West Bank.

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