

U.S. lists “unstable nations”, preparing for intervention

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Bush’s administration denies that hostility to the U.S. in the ME is because of its policies.

According to a report published by the Financial Times, U.S. intelligence experts are currently preparing a list that includes 25 states deemed unstable and, thus, candidates for intervention.

The National Intelligence Council, a State Department office that gathers needed intelligence for strategic planning, will prepare the secret list and revise it every six months, the Financial Times reported on Tuesday.

Carlos Pascual, a former ambassador, and now the head of the newly formed office of “reconstruction and stabilisation”, said that The National Intelligence Council would identify countries of “greatest instability and risk” to clarify priorities and allocate resources.

Pascual said that among his goals is to prepare to react quickly when the U.S. military had to intervene. Post-conflict work would focus on creating laws and institutions of a “market democracy”, he said.

Planning, he says, includes forming a “reserve corps” of specialist civilian teams and devising reconstruction contracts in advance with private companies and NGOs.

On the other hand, the U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has given an alarm to several reformist Arabs, with comments suggesting a new U.S. approach that promotes rapid political change without regard for internal stability.

In an interview with the Washington Post last week, the Secretary of State claimed that the Middle East region was not stable, adding that she doubts it would be stable soon, hinting at further U.S. intervention in the Arab states’ political affairs.

Washington would speak out for “freedom” without offering a model or knowing what the outcome would be, she said.

Rice, moreover, said that Washington is willing to take a gamble on “democratic institutions” having a “moderating influence” in the region.

“Can we be certain of that? No. But do I think there’s a strong certainty that the Middle East was not going to stay stable anyway? Yes. And when you know that the status quo is no

longer defensible, then you have to be willing to move in another direction," she said.

Commenting on Rice's remarks, Hassan Nafaa, a professor of political science at Cairo University and an advocate of gradual change said that "this a very dangerous scheme. Anarchy will be out of control".

"They seem to be supporting chaos and instability as a pretext for bringing democracy. But people would rather live under undemocratic rule than in the chaotic atmosphere of Iraq, for example, which the Americans tout as a model," said a liberal Arab diplomat, who demanded anonymity.

Mohamed el-Sayed Said, a liberal who has challenged Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak over authoritarian government, says that the Arab societies are not prepared for rapid and unchecked change, referring to the kind of reforms Rice suggested.

He warned that the Arab states could collapse completely.

"We can hardly take the great risks that Dr. Rice suggests. We are determined to keep domestic peace as well as external peace as far as we can, but not to the point of stifling change," added Said, who is deputy director of the al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo.

Said also linked Rice's approach to the trend in right-wing Israeli thinking that favors destabilising Arab governments and societies.

"We see an emphasis on destruction and we see that Israel is willing to push Arab societies to the abyss without caring for stability. We suspect these ideas came from Israel," he added.

Bush's administration claims that current hostility to the United States in the Middle East is a result of internal repression, and not because of the U.S. foreign policies and its support to Israel, which is deepening the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the main Arab grievance.

And this is the main argument of the U.S. President George W. Bush's campaign for political change in Arab countries.

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