

The Soviet Union and the Middle East

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“ . . . the focal point of the aspirations of the Soviet Union south of Batum and Baku in the general direction of the Persian Gulf.”—Russian-German Negotiations, 1940

“An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”—Carter Doctrine, 1980

I. Introduction

Soviet policy in the Middle East in the decade of the eighties will be determined, as it was in the past, by its interests in a region proximate to its heartland, its past experiences in the area, regional developments, and United States (and Western) actions and reactions. Barring unforeseen fundamental changes in the nature of these elements or in the Soviet leadership, which might lead to altered political decision-making and perhaps dramatic domestic changes, it seems unlikely that basic changes in the Soviet approach will take

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place. In general the Soviet Union sees its past policies as appropriate (just and moral) and successful, and its interests as enduring and deriving from objective conditions that are not likely to undergo substantial alteration. Events in recent years (especially 1979-80) suggest that the Middle East, with its substantial resources and strategic location, is not of marginal concern to the Soviet Union but also do not provide a clear answer to the question of how far it will go in support of its interests. Thus, for example, does the action in Afghanistan suggest a pattern or is it an aberration in policy? Understanding the Soviet position requires consideration of its interests, actions and previous accomplishments.

II. Soviet Interests in the Middle East

The Soviet Union, as Russia before it, has had a longstanding and significant interest in the Middle East which relates directly to the area's location and resources.

Proximity to the Soviet Union⁽¹⁾ and positions astride important transportation and communications links provide central interests. Essentially a landlocked country whose access to the waterways of the world was largely the unnavigable Arctic Ocean, Russia has long sought access to warm water ports and world waterways. Much of Russian history has centered on gaining access to the Baltic Sea in the North and the Black Sea in the South through the Turkish Straits leading to the Mediterranean. The Russians also looked to the Persian Gulf where they hoped to gain an approach to the Indian Ocean. In the 1960's and 1970's the Soviet Union began to search in earnest for facilities, and even bases, in the general region of the Middle East—especially the Red Sea. Egypt became the focal point of Soviet activity and at the end of the 1960's they had an extensive

(1) The proximity of the Middle East to the Soviet Union has been emphasized in recent Soviet Statements and commentaries. Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko in a speech to the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 1979 noted: "We are in favor of a comprehensive and just settlement [of the Middle East problem], of the establishment of durable peace in the Middle East, *a region not far from our borders.*" See also O. Alov, "For a Settlement in the Middle East," *International Affairs* (Moscow), September 1977, page 62.

presence there which included the use of some air bases and naval facilities and a large number of military personnel.⁽²⁾ The concept of protecting Russia's southern flank—i.e., the area of Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan—which was a traditional Russian concern, gained an added dimension with the creation of NATO and later CENTO (originally the Baghdad Pact) and the consequent involvement of the northern tier states in Western defense systems.

There is another geographical (cum demographic) factor to be taken into account. The modern Russian and Soviet states include substantial areas of Central Asia with their sizeable Muslim populations (numbering between 40 and 50 million) which are heavily concentrated in the Soviet Republics of Azerbaijan, Kazakh, Kirghiz, Tadzhik, Turkmen, and Uzbek. The Middle East (especially its northern tier) abuts the predominantly Muslim Soviet southern border. In an ethnic, cultural, religious and geographic sense there is an organic link between the Soviet Union and the Middle East which spurs the Soviet Interests.⁽³⁾

The region's substantial oil reserves and natural gas deposits have become increasingly important for the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc and are likely to continue to increase in significance, although a definitive answer is not yet possible. The oil resources of the Middle East have traditionally been regarded as a negative political-strategic interests. The assumption has been that the denial of this oil could significantly and negatively affect the economic and defense capability of Western Europe and Japan. The Soviet Union was seen as self-sufficient in oil and therefore had little or no direct interest in acquiring access to Middle Eastern oil for its own or its allies use. This view is changing.⁽⁴⁾ The exact past, present and future Soviet and

(2) The value of Egyptian facilities for Soviet naval forces is discussed in Robert G. Weinland, "Land Support for Naval Forces: Egypt and the Soviet Escadria 1962-1976," *Survival* 20:73-79 (March/April 1978).

(3) For further elaboration of this theme see Alexandre Bennigsen, "Soviet Muslims and the World of Islam," *Problems of Communism* 29:38-51 (March-April 1980).

(4) See Central Intelligence Agency, National Foreign Assessment Center, *The World Oil Market in the Years Ahead: A Research Paper*, August 1979 [ER79-10327U]. See also the commentary in Marshall I. Goldman, "Is There a Russian Energy Crisis?," *The Atlantic* 246:55-64 (September 1980).

Soviet bloc need for the oil and gas of the Middle East remains the subject of continued speculation. There is some disagreement concerning the ability of the Soviet Union to rely solely on its own resources. In the decade of the seventies the primary benefit of the region's oil was that the Soviet Union did not have to supply oil to its allies in Eastern Europe permitting it to sell to other areas, especially those who could pay in hard currency. The hard currency sales suggest an economic interest in Middle East oil and gas beyond the strategic-political dimension.

General political factors are an element of interest although imprecise. Soviet leaders still pay homage to Communist ideology and seek to expand their sphere of influence, if only to prove to their rivals (Chinese and other) that they retain the leadership of the Communist world. The Soviet thrust into the Middle East is partly designed to register political gains and bolster prestige. Ideology, it may be argued, is a part of the power struggle, at least as seen by Moscow and there is, at minimum, "ideological rationalization" of much of Soviet policy. Soviet presence in the Middle East is justified by the USSR in terms of the national liberation struggle. In the contest with the United States, the Soviet Union sees the Middle East, and particularly the more radical Arab states, in the context of "world revolutionary movements" waging a struggle against imperialism and feudalism which has transformed the region into one of the centers of the national liberation movement.⁽⁵⁾

The Soviets have also developed an economic interest. There is (and has been) a substantial market for Soviet military equipment and Middle East trade is viewed as potentially lucrative.

III. Main Policy Trends

The Middle East was an area of interest to Russia long before the area's twentieth century strategic location and oil resources were

(5) For further elaboration of this theme see Jaan Pennar, *The USSR and the Arabs: The Ideological Dimension* (London: C. Hurst, 1973).

identified.⁽⁶⁾

Russian interest in the Middle East may be traced to the Byzantine period though only in the seventeenth century (under Peter the Great, 1682-1725) did it begin to assert this interest that included controlling the Turkish Straits to provide access to the Mediterranean, gaining warm-water ports on the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf, and securing its southern borders against hostile domination.

From the late seventeenth century through the eighteenth century, Russia, in its effort to reach the Black Sea, was in contention with the Turks. This struggle culminated in the signing of the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji in 1774, by which Russia gained direct access to the Black Sea, commercial rights in Ottoman territory, religious rights with respect to holy places, and the right to establish a protectorate over the Christian population of Moldavia and Wallachia. Its interest in territorial expansion at the expense of the Ottoman Empire during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries created friction between Russia and other European powers, particularly Britain and France. Attempts by Russia to secure its border with Persia resulted in increasingly poor relations with that empire and eventually brought it into conflict with Great Britain which feared Russian encroachment in India. At the beginning of the twentieth century this confrontation was abated by the jointly perceived German threat, and the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907, which divided Persia into three spheres of influence—a northern Russian sphere, a southwestern neutral zone, and a southeastern British zone. Although Russian interest was concentrated in what is now the northern tier, there was some interest

(6) On the historical background and general nature of the Russian-Soviet role in the Middle East, see: Aaron S. Klieman, *Soviet Russia and the Middle East* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970); Walter Laqueur, *The Struggle for the Middle East: The Soviet Union and the Middle East 1958-70*, Revised Edition (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1972); Walter Laqueur, *The Soviet Union and the Middle East* (New York: Praeger, 1959); George Lenczowski, *Soviet Advances in the Middle East* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1971); Yaacov Ro'i, *From Encroachment to Involvement: A Documentary Study of Soviet Policy in the Middle East, 1945-1973* (New York and Toronto: John Wiley; Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1974); and Oles M. Smolansky, *The Soviet Union and the Arab East Under Khrushchev* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1974).

in the area to the south, and Russia sought control of the holy places in Palestine. An immediate cause of the Crimean War was Franco-Russian rivalry over these holy places.

Soviet interests reflect these traditional Russian concerns but there is the additional factor which derives from its role as a super-power engaged in a cold war with the West and thus the Soviet Union must consider its interests and security in a global context. Soviet policies in support of its interests have not always been active. Indeed, during much of the first half of the twentieth century only occasional attempts were made to secure and maintain a foothold in the area and these generally bore little fruit. These attempts were sporadic and restricted largely to the northern tier, particularly Turkey and Iran.⁽⁷⁾ They involved limited use of diplomatic, military, economic, and/or ideological instruments according to the opportunities of the moment. The first Soviet attempts after the 1917 revolution were both diplomatic and ideological. At the Congress of the Peoples of the East, held in Baku in September 1920 under the auspices of the Communist International, Russia put forward the slogan of liberation of colonial and semicolonial peoples from imperialist domination. The Comintern continuously harped on this theme and at its Sixth Congress (1928) prepared detailed programs dealing with this subject.

Diplomatic actions were synchronized with this ideological offensive. In 1921 the Soviet Union concluded treaties with Turkey,⁽⁸⁾ Iran,⁽⁹⁾ and Afghanistan. These treaties were similar in their opposition to colonialism and in their use of anti-imperialist phraseology. Although new agreements were reached with Turkey and Iran in 1925

(7) One of these was the establishment in Gilan of a Soviet Republic proclaimed in 1920 by a local Persian rebel, Kuchik Khan, but supported by Soviet forces.

(8) "Treaty of Friendship: Turkey and Russia, 16 March 1921," in J.C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East* (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1956), Volume 2, pages 95-97.

(9) "Treaty of Friendship: Persia and Russia, 16 February—12 December 1921," in Hurewitz, pages 90-94. For an evaluation of this document from the vantage point of Iran see Rouhollah K. Ramazani, *The Foreign Policy of Iran: A Developing Nation in World Affairs, 1500-1941* (Charlottesville, Va: University Press of Virginia, 1966); for the Western and Russian views see Nasrollah S. Fatemi,

and 1927 respectively, relations between the Soviet Union and its southern neighbors rapidly declined. By 1937 they had deteriorated to the point where the Saadabad Pact, entered into by Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan, was widely interpreted as being directed against the Soviet Union.⁽¹⁰⁾

During the interwar period the Soviet Union acted primarily through the Comintern and the small, rather inefficient Communist Parties in the Arab states and Palestine in its relations with the Middle East. The official Communist Party line was to favor Arab nationalism and to side with it against Zionism. Zionism, officially described as a capitalist ideology, was considered an instrument of British imperialism and was opposed both in Palestine and Russia. Despite this view, the Soviet Union sponsored a Communist Party among the Jews of Palestine.

World War II provided an occasion for the Soviet Union to pursue its historic interests in the region. A first opportunity was the Molotov-Ribbentrop negotiations of November 13, 1940 when they discussed a projected agreement between the Axis powers and the Soviet Union on spheres of influence. A memorandum of conversation noted: "The focal points in the territorial aspirations of the Soviet Union would presumably be centered south of the territory of the Soviet Union in the direction of the Indian Ocean."⁽¹¹⁾ Apparently, the Soviets wanted a more precise definition. On November 26, 1940, the Germans were informed that such an accord could be reached subject to certain conditions: "Provided that the area south of Batum and Baku in the general direction of the Persian Gulf is recognized as the center of the aspirations of the Soviet Union."⁽¹²⁾

Diplomatic History of Persia, 1917-1923: Anglo-Russian Power Politics in Iran, (New York: R.F. Moore, 1952). See also George Lenczowski, *Russia and the West in Iran, 1918-1948* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1949).

(10) For the text of the Pact, see Hurewitz, pages 214-16. See also D.C. Watt, "The Sa'dabad Pact of July 8, 1937," *Royal Central Asian J.*, 49:296-306 (Jul/Oct 62) and Abbas Khalatbary, *L'Iran et le Pacte Oriental* (Paris: Editions A. Pedone, 1938). These pour le Doctorat, Université de Paris, Faculté de Droit, 1938.

(11) *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945* (Washington, U.S.G.P.O., 1960), v. XII, page 565.

(12) *Ibid.*, page 715.

Soviet interest in Turkey and the Straits was also highlighted. A second opportunity came when the Russians occupied northern Iran in 1941 and encouraged a separatist movement in Iranian Azerbaijan as a means of extending their influence.

At the end of the War Soviet activity increased. In the general context of the cold war and its competition with the United States, the Soviet Union also sought to extend its influence in the Middle East. Soviet pressures on Turkey to return the provinces of Kars and Ardahan (ceded in 1921) and to agree to a revision of the Montreux Straits Convention were rebuffed. The Soviet Union concentrated troops on the border and strengthened its occupation army in northern Iran. But it had miscalculated. Pressure by the United States (and the articulation of the Truman Doctrine), combined with United Nations interest and Persian diplomacy, proved to be a major factor in frustrating the Soviet effort.⁽¹³⁾

After initial overtures in the northern tier were thwarted, primarily by effective United States counteractions, Moscow concentrated on the southern sector (the Arab East and Israel) and supported Arab independence movements and their demands for withdrawal of Western troops from the area in 1946 and early 1947. In late 1947 and in 1948 Soviet support was given to Zionist aspirations for the establishment and consolidation of a Jewish state in Palestine. In November 1947 the Soviet Union backed the majority plan of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine that called for the partition of Palestine and, in essence, provided for the establishment of the State of Israel. The Soviet Union accorded *de jure* recognition to Israel shortly after its independence and supported its applications for membership in the United Nations.⁽¹⁴⁾ At the same

(13) For further elaboration see Bruce R. Berenson, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East: Great Power Conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey, and Greece* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980).

(14) The reasons for Russia's initial support of Israel as manifested in its vote for partition, its *de jure* recognition, and its support of Israel's two applications for UN membership have been the subject of much speculation. It is probable that the Soviets were hoping to create a power vacuum in the area that it could later fill. The prospects for such an eventuality were good. The Zionists were anti-British and their militant nationalism seemed to offer a better chance than

time the Soviets were increasingly critical of the Arab League, which they described as a British instrument aimed against the national-liberation movements in the Middle East and a "reactionary block." In 1949 Soviet policy began shifting toward the position that its objectives in the Middle East could not be achieved by supporting Israel. From 1949 to 1953 Moscow's position with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict was formally neutral, though characterized by a continuous deterioration in Soviet-Israeli relations and a corresponding improvement in relations with the Arab states. The next two years, 1953 to 1955, saw Moscow shift to a cautious pro-Arab stand that in 1955 became a policy of full diplomatic support for the Arabs in their anti-Israel and anti-West positions.

1955 was an important milestone in Soviet relations with the Middle East for it signaled the beginning of a new approach in Soviet attempts to secure influence in the area. This was made possible by the interaction of several factors, all of which came to the fore at this time. Stalin and the essentially inflexible stalinist approach to foreign affairs were no longer major operating factors affecting Soviet external relations. The Eastern European and Communist Chinese buffers for the Soviet state had apparently been secured. The Soviet economy had recovered significantly from the setbacks resulting from World War II, and the Soviet Union was developing as an industrial state. A comprehensive review of Soviet foreign policy undertaken in April 1955 concluded that previous approaches to the Middle East had been lacking in concrete accomplishment and an obvious corollary was that a new effort was required. At the same time developments in the Middle East contributed to this perspective. Particularly noteworthy were the emergence of Arab nationalism and the creation of the Baghdad Pact. The

Arab nationalism for eliminating British influence. At the same time the creation of a strong Jewish state would intensify the conflicts in the Middle East, creating a situation in which communism could thrive. Soviet strategists took into account the strong ties between the Jewish communities in the US and in Palestine and feared the possibility that the US would supplant Britain in the Middle East, thereby thwarting their plans. If, however, the Soviet Union supported the new state it could reduce American influence and increase its own. Also considered was the Russian or East European origin of many of Israel's

growth of Arab nationalism was not accompanied by Arab unity and was generally characterized by an anti-Western attitude providing fertile ground for Soviet exploitation. Additionally the bitter Arab reaction to the establishment of the Baghdad Pact led to increased resentment against the West, in particular the United States and Great Britain.

The conclusion of the Baghdad Pact seemingly secured the northern tier against Soviet encroachment and led to a change in Soviet tactics centering on the decision to bypass the Pact area and to penetrate the Arab core of the Middle East. This approach was reflected in increased political, military, economic, and cultural ties between the Soviet Bloc and the Arab world. The major emphasis was on a program of aid and trade, which has continued as a main operational technique for the Soviet Union. A significant first step was the conclusion of the Czechoslovakian-Egyptian arms deal in the fall of 1955.

The Soviet aid program has consisted of both grants and credits, with emphasis on the latter, and has been part of a coordinated effort. Offers of development credits, technical assistance, military assistance, and outright grants as well as proposals for increased trade have been combined with political, psychological, propaganda, cultural, military, and subversive activities. These have been supplemented by high-level contacts with political leaders, red-carpet treatment for visiting Arab world dignitaries, the training of students in Soviet bloc universities, and other programs of a similar ilk.

In the period since 1955 Soviet Middle Eastern policy has been based on exploitation of Arab anti-Western feeling, the Arab-Israeli dispute, and various inter-Arab conflicts. This has involved an effort

leaders—a situation that could make Russia's attempts to gain influence a simpler matter. The left-of-center positions of most of Israel's political parties, as reflected in their pre-State political platforms, their adoption of pro-Soviet or neutral foreign policy positions, and the existence of an Israeli Communist Party, seemed to improve Russia's prospects for gaining a foothold in the Middle East. For a somewhat different perspective see Arnold Krammer, *The Forgotten Friendship: Israel and the Soviet Bloc, 1947-53* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974).

to prevent alleviation of tension and armed clashes while engaging in a conscious attempt to avoid escalation of local conflicts to the level of USSR-US confrontation.

The new Soviet approach was begun by and nurtured under Khrushchev and when he fell from power a major question was to what extent there might be changes in the Soviet approach. After Khrushchev's departure in 1964, Brezhnev and Kosygin made no significant changes in the Soviet approach. Innovations in policy were basically emphases, rather than changes, in direction or content. Soviet policy continued to focus on a reduction in Western influence by using aid as an instrument of Soviet policy. At the same time the Soviet Union sought to strengthen its influence in the region by supporting Arab aspirations and goals, especially against Israel, and by providing economic and military assistance to the Arab states in substantial quantity. Underlying all of this was the basic Soviet concern about war which might lead to its involvement in local hostilities or, possibly, a confrontation with the United States. In this period a "no peace, no war" approach seemed to be overwhelming.

Some changes in emphasis became clear in the Brezhnev approach in the mid-1960's. While substantial stress was still placed on Soviet approaches to the southern tier of Arab states (focusing on and utilizing the Arab-Israeli conflict as a vehicle of policy) changes in approach to Iran and Turkey indicated a revived concern in the northern tier. A deliberate effort was the Sultan of Oman in which Dhofar rebels received assistance from the Marxist and Soviet-aided state of South Yemen and the periodic violence involving Yemen and South Yemen. But, at the same time these conservative states (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar) did not always agree on the nature of the security threat and the appropriate response. This discord was exacerbated by regional rivalries and a regional security system could not be devised. The local states (particularly Iran and Saudi Arabia but also the smaller states who looked for guidance from Saudi Arabia) relied ultimately on the American security guarantee but were reluctant to formally align themselves with the United States or the West.

A direct Soviet threat and a United States-Soviet Union clash were not hallmarks of zonal developments but the Soviet Union was seen as an opponent and not part of the essential regional security system. Soviet interests and activities in the Indian Ocean contributed to regional and general concerns about Soviet intentions. Soviet behavior in the Gulf was affected by its Indian Ocean roles. The Soviet position in the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula was represented by footholds in Iraq and South Yemen. At various times the latter acted as an element supporting efforts to destabilize the region, including assistance for the rebellion in Oman and for rebels acting against the Saudi regime and the North Yemen government whose future was of concern to the Saudis. South Yemen had values beyond its role in support of Peninsula and Omani rebels. It was a Marxist, pro-Soviet Arab state and was a convenient staging point for operations in the Horn of Africa. It served made to curry favor and improve relations with those states focusing on changes in the international situation and on their needs (and potential benefits in closer dealings with the Soviet Union) and on their disagreements (particularly on regional issues such as Cyprus and the Persian Gulf) with the United States. The economic sector provided the initial avenue of approach and aid and trade were central to the effort. The Soviet Union improved its relations with these states but the change was circumscribed and both states remained tied to Western political and defense concepts.

The Persian Gulf-Arabian Peninsula sector was different.⁽¹⁵⁾ Only in the late 1960's, following the British decision to withdraw from positions "east of Suez", did the superpowers begin to focus more precisely on this portion of the Middle East and the adjoining Indian Ocean and to devise a specific approach to this oil-rich zone. The United States eventually formulated a "two-pillar" policy (based on

(15) For detailed discussion of the Soviet role in this zone see: A. Yodfat and M. Abir, *In The Direction of the Persian Gulf: The Soviet Union and the Persian Gulf* (London: Frank Cass, 1977) and Stephen Page, *The USSR and Arabia: The Development of Soviet Policies and Attitudes Towards the Countries of the Arabian Peninsula 1955-1970* (London: Central Asian Research Centre in association with Candaian Institute of International Affairs, 1971).

Iran and Saudi Arabia) to counter Soviet-supported threats to stability and oil flow since the wealthy oil states of the Gulf, except for Soviet-oriented Iraq, were ruled by conservative regimes worried about the dangers of communism and radicalism. Although these states were not (at the time) concerned with a direct Soviet attack, they tended to see Soviet machinations involved in support of radical regimes and radical movements. Examples included the rebellion against as something of a link between East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula and it was on the shore of the Bab al-Mandab. Soviet support for the South Yemen regime included economic and military aid and the two states signed a treaty of friendship in October 1979.⁽¹⁶⁾

IV. The Soviet Balance Sheet

By 1980 the Soviet Union had been involved in the Middle East in an assertive way for more than three and one-half decades. It began its approach in the northern tier and then moved its focal point to the Arab-Israeli sector and from there to the Persian Gulf-Arabian Peninsula and North African areas. Its programs have been substantial in scope and cost—it has expended billions of dollars in aid and has utilized advisors and military forces in support of its efforts.⁽¹⁷⁾ To what extent has this effort been successful?

There have been tangible results of the Soviet Middle Eastern initiative. There is a genuine military dependence of some of the Arab states on the Soviet bloc. Trade relations of a reasonable level do exist. There have been significant cultural and educational exchanges between the Soviet bloc and the Middle East. In part as a reflection of the value of achievements to date, the aid and trade offensive is

(16) For further elaboration see: Nimrod Novik, *On the Shores of Bab al-Mandab: Soviet Diplomacy and Regional Dynamics* (Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1979) [Monograph Number 26] and David E. Albright, "The Horn of Africa and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," in Robert O. Freedman, Editor, *World Politics and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1979), pages 147-191.

(17) On Soviet military assistance see Jon D. Glassman, *Arms for the Arabs: The Soviet Union and War in the Middle East* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975).

continuing at a substantial level though there have been occasional reductions in the size of the program. For the Middle East, this constant level has meant receiving a major portion of Soviet bloc aid and trade granted to the developing world. (See Tables 1, 2 and 3).

In the political realm Soviet accomplishments have been somewhat less tangible. Communist parties are generally illegal but even where they formally participate in the political process their power is minimal and local communist movements generally have minor political roles.⁽¹⁸⁾ There also has been little real commitment on the part of Middle Eastern states to the Soviet position in the East-West conflict.

In the 1970's the Soviet Union's record in the Middle East was a mixed one. In the early part of the decade it had a strong position in a number of states—particularly in Egypt, Iraq and Syria. But, this position was not a mark of unmixed success despite Treaties of Friendship concluded with both Egypt (1971) and Iraq (1972). Subsequently there was a sharp deterioration in relations with Egypt and Sudan. Syria and Iraq, while maintaining an outwardly friendly attitude, moved away from what was formerly a closer association.⁽¹⁹⁾ In the case of Iraq the relationship cooled considerably and Iraq increasingly turned to the West generally and to the United States. Syria's relations with the Soviet Union improved following the discord concerning Lebanon and Syria later became the most significant major Arab state in close links with the Soviet Union. In an effort to offset some of its losses (including the erosion of Soviet influence) in the Somali Democratic Republic (Somalia), where Saudi money and pressure have been effective countermeasures, the Soviet Union tried to strengthen its ties with Libya and with Ethiopia. A friendship and cooperation treaty was concluded with Ethiopia in November 1978 which led to the infusion of Soviet economic aid.

In early 1979 a number of changes in the Middle East seemed to

(18) For details see the annual *Yearbook on International Communist Affairs* produced by the Hoover Institution.

(19) Syrian disenchantment received a powerful impetus when the Soviet Union opposed Syrian intervention in the Lebanese civil war. In Iraq, the 1975 defeat of the Kurdish nationalists diminished Baghdad's heavy reliance on the U.S.S.R.

Table 1
Soviet Military Relations with Less Developed Countries
(million U.S. dollars)

	Total 1956-78	1956-73	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
Agreements	29655	13040	4225	2035	3375	5215	1765
North Africa	4965	490	1825	535		1800	315
Sub-Saharan Africa	3900	330	365	145	800	1415	845
East Asia	890	890					
Latin America	650	150	NEGL	55	335	110	
Middle East	14960	8860	2020	640	2105	1235	100
South Asia	4290	2320	15	660	135	655	505
Deliveries	25310	11240	2310	1845	2575	3515	3825
North Africa	3875	435	150	380	810	925	1175
Sub-Saharan Africa	2750	275	90	255	325	585	1220
East Asia	880	880					
Latin America	630	10	25	60	80	380	75
Middle East	13800	7760	1780	975	1065	1125	1095
South Asia	3375	1880	265	175	295	500	260

NEGL = Less than \$500,000

Source: Central Intelligence Agency, National Foreign Assessment Center, *Communist Aid Activities in Non-Communist Less Developed Countries 1978: A Research Paper* (September 1979).

Table 2
USSR and Eastern Europe
Economic Credits and Grants
(million U.S. dollars)

	1954-1978			1977			1978		
	Total	USSR	Eastern Europe	Total	USSR	Eastern Europe	Total	USSR	Eastern Europe
Total	26174	17088	9086	799	402	397	5209	3707	1502
Afghanistan	1302	1263	39						
Algeria	1240	716	524						
Cyprus	5		5						
Egypt	2330	1440	890	95		95			
Iran	1851	1165	686						
Iraq	1198	705	493	50		50			
Jordan	26	26	NA						
Lebanon	9		9						
Morocco	2268	2098	170				2089	2000	39
Sudan	305	65	240	NEGL		NEGL			
Syria	1722	768	954				150		150
Tunisia	306	96	210	35		35			
Turkey	2776	2380	396				1285	1200	85
Yemen A.R.	156	143	13				38	38	
PDRY	270	204	66	3		3	96	90	6

NEGL = Less than \$500,000

NA = Value unknown

Source: Central Intelligence Agency, National Foreign Assessment Center, *Communist Aid Activities in Non-communist Less Developed Countries 1978: A Research Paper* (September 1979).

Table 3
USSR Trade with the Middle East
(millions of dollars)
Imports F.O.B.

	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
world	6244	8831	11622	17507	18761	18691	21230
Afghanistan	36*	49*	93*	19*			
Algeria	63*	77*	80*	97*	85*	56*	53 ×
Bahrain							
Cyprus	8*	7*	11*	7*	12*	10*	9*
Egypt	290*	369*	498*	606*	372*	396*	435 ×
Iran							
Iraq	1*						
Jordan							
Kuwait							
Lebanon	3*	5*	8 ×	10 ×	13 ×	15 ×	17 ×
Libya	39*	89 +	139 +		151 +		
Morocco	25*	28*	31*	46*	54*	51 +	56 ×
Oman							
Saudi Arabia							
Sudan	1*		5*	10*	18*	23*	25 ×
Syrian Arab Republic	58*	54*	111*	55*	92*	107*	103 +
Tunisia	9*	8*	10*	9*	7*	4*	4*
Turkey	41*	50*	77*	74*	81*	80*	105*
United Arab Emirates							
Yemen Arab Republic							
PDRY							

*Annual data derived from partner country.

+ Six months or less or reported data, six months or more derived or extrapolated.

× Extrapolated annual data.

Source: International Monetary Fund, *Direction of Trade Yearbook*, 1979

Table 3
USSR Trade with the Middle East
(millions of U.S. dollars)
Exports

	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
World	4668	6896	10975	11317	13086	15231	17006
Afghanistan	39 ×	17*	67*	17*			
Algeria	46*	63*	106*	65*	102*	82*	90 ×
Bahrain					1*	1 +	
Cyprus	8*	10*	14*	18*	15*	29*	24*
Egypt	102*	59*	188*	212*	174*	246*	271 ×
Iran	68 ×	164*	193*	210*	115*	19 ×	21 ×
Iraq	47*	72*	99*	94*	67*	64 +	70 ×
Jordan	2*	2*	3*	4*	5*	7 +	9 +
Kuwait	5*	10*	15*	5*	8*	20*	18 +
Lebanon	14*	16*	17 ×	18 ×	10 ×	21 ×	23 ×
Libya	8*	19*	33*	20*	19*	19*	21 ×
Morocco	28*	41*	53*	67*	61*	68 +	75 ×
Oman			1*	1*			
Saudi Arabia	3*	10*	3*	3*	14*	8*	9 ×
Sudan	14*	24*	6*	4*	16*	56*	6 ×
Syrian Arab Republic	37 +	40*	43*	48*	40*	83*	52 +
Tunisia	5*	7*	14*	5*	14*	10*	13*
Turkey	109*	114*	86*	67*	81*	74*	62*
United Arab Emirates	1*	3*	6*	6*	5*	2*	2 ×
Yemen Arab Republic	3*	3*	8*	8*	6*	9 +	10 ×
PDRY	3 ×	3 ×	4 ×	5 ×	5 ×	6 ×	7 ×

*Annual data derived from partner country.

+ Six months or less of reported data, six months or more derived or extrapolated.

× Extrapolated annual data.

Source: International Monetary Fund, *Direction of Trade Yearbook*, 1979.

offer important opportunities for the Soviet Union and represented apparent setbacks for the United States. A coup in Afghanistan and a friendship treaty (December 1978) with that state suggested positive benefits for Moscow. Similarly a pro-Soviet faction seemed to have taken hold in South Yemen. The Soviet position in the strategic Horn of Africa was consolidated through a Soviet-Cuban aided victory of Ethiopia over Somalia and rebel forces in Eritrea. The revolution in Iran brought to power a regime far less friendly to the United States than its predecessor and opened the way for potential Soviet inroads. The Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty suggested the possibility of Soviet initiatives to take advantage of the strong anti-Sadat and anti-United States sentiment then prevalent in the Arab world (not only among the more radical and Soviet-oriented states).

* * *

In the late 1960's and the 1970's the Soviet policy of improving and normalizing relations with the states of the northern tier gained momentum. This fit within the context of a general Soviet aim of improving relations with states worldwide. They sought to neutralize the area to their immediate south in an effort to improve their own security situation. This would involve a reduction in the United States military presence and capability in these states. Soviet policy in regard to the northern tier took on a new description—coexistence or *détente*—but, more importantly, had new characteristics—it became less overt and more multifaceted, complex and sophisticated. It focused on state-to-state relationships rather than operating through communist parties or support of other groups seeking to change the regimes in power. It relied less on threats of military action and concentrated on the utilization of diplomatic, political, and economic means instead of military and subversive techniques to achieve its policy objectives. Radio and other propaganda (of a negative nature) was replaced with more positive comment, including praise for economic and social reform and progress. Aspects of Soviet strategy included the settlement of outstanding border disputes, exchanges of high-level officials, provisions of economic aid and technical assist-

ance, and increased trade. Soviet loans and credits became a useful tool. Trade agreements were followed by significant increases in trade between these states and the Soviet Union. Among the more interesting results of the Soviet approach was an agreement for the delivery of Iranian natural gas to the Soviet Union in the 1970's and an arms agreement providing for delivery of Soviet trucks, half-tracks, anti-aircraft guns, and small arms to Iran. Cultural and other similar agreements have been added to the accomplishments.

Among other techniques, the Soviet Union adopted positions more favorable to Turkey vis-à-vis the Cyprus issue and to Iran vis-à-vis the Persian Gulf in an effort to win their favor and sought to demonstrate the inappropriateness of NATO and CENTO in dealing with such regional problems. The policy sought to play on the dissatisfaction of both states with the policies of its allies. And, the Soviet Union did not press for increased and improved access to the Turkish Straits, despite its long-held and probably increased desire to improve its position with regard to that vital waterway.

In the changed environment of improved relationships between the Soviet Union and Turkey and Iran, the significance of CENTO as a political and a military entity deteriorated to unimportance long before its formal demise in the wake of the Iranian revolution. Pakistan had virtually withdrawn in the aftermath of its experiences in connection with the 1965 war with India. Disenchantment in Iran and even Turkey was significant throughout much of the 1970's. Partly this resulted from the fact that the states of the northern tier have been more preoccupied during the decade of the seventies with local problems than with the Soviet menace (in part because the latter seemed less threatening) and CENTO was not oriented toward issues of that ilk. Cyprus, the future of the Persian Gulf, and the Indo-Pakistani dispute were of increased local significance but were not dominant for CENTO. As its defense and political functions seemed to decline, the organization focused on economic, social and technical questions and RCD (Regional Cooperation for Development) emerged as the emphasis of the regional states.

The normalization of relations helped to move Turkey away

from full-scale conformity with American policies and strategies. The Turks saw advantages in détente (especially when their European allies were already involved in the process) and they had questions concerning American policies (such as the withdrawal of missiles from Turkey, decreasing levels of military and economic aid, and an unwillingness to support Turkey's position in the dispute over Cyprus). Despite these factors there is no Soviet-Turkish military aid program and no military cooperation. The Soviet Union does not influence the basic foreign policy of Turkey, which is very much aligned with NATO.

In the case of Iran normalization of relations modified Iran's image of the USSR as a threatening enemy carrying on subversion, and Soviet diplomacy began to have more direct influence in Teheran. But, the Shah was convinced that Iran must play the leading role in the Persian Gulf, and he vigorously asserted Iran's right to do so against outside powers and against Arab states, especially those like Iraq with close ties to the Soviet Union. The Shah's regional aspirations and Iran's role as a stabilizing force tended to thwart Soviet objectives of expanding influence in the region. In addition, the close links of Iranian and American military, the United States role in the supply of equipment to Iran's forces, and the American intelligence presence in Iran (primarily geared for following Soviet activities) continued to grow despite improved Soviet-Iranian bilateral relationships.

Until the mid-1970's, the political alignments of the Horn of Africa were reasonably clear. The U.S.S.R. was maintaining an important presence in Somalia and, to a lesser extent, across the Red Sea in South Yemen, while the United States was backing Ethiopia which for some 25 years, until 1974, had been regarded as one of Washington's staunchest allies in black Africa. The situation changed abruptly with the accession to power in Ethiopia of the self-styled "Marxist-Leninist" leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam. Addis Ababa closed United States military facilities and inaugurated an effort to revamp the socioeconomic structure of the country. In February, 1977 the United States terminated grants of

military assistance to Ethiopia, and Addis Ababa retaliated by ending all military agreements between the two countries. Soviet military and economic assistance replaced that provided by the United States and this seemed to jeopardize the Soviet Union's politically and strategically important position in Somalia. Somalia was the first black African nation to sign a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation (1974), and the Soviets, in exchange for large-scale military and economic assistance, had been granted naval and air facilities at Berbera, important to its naval operations in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean.

As Ethiopia turned to the U.S.S.R. for political and military support, Somalia sought assistance from the Western powers and strengthened its ties with a number of U.S.-leaning Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Sudan. In November, 1977, Somalia unilaterally abrogated its friendship treaty with the Soviet Union, and turned to the West for political, military and economic support. This meant the expulsion of thousands of Russian military and civilian advisers and the denial of the use of Somali strategic air and naval facilities at Berbera on the Indian Ocean to the Soviet armed forces. Ethiopia, which had broken most of its ties with the United States and turned to the Soviet Union had already lost Ogaden province to Somali invaders, was beset with various secessionist movements, and had other problems. The Soviet Union (and Cuba) provided aid to the Ethiopians in the war with Somalia and by 1979 Ethiopian and Cuban troops had recaptured the Ogaden and the Eritrean threat to Ethiopia had been substantially reduced.

Soviet relations with the Sudan underwent dramatic change in the 1970's. Shortly after he assumed power in May 1969 President Ja'far al-Nimeiri tilted Sudan's foreign policy toward the Soviet Union and the bloc states (and recognized the German Democratic Republic). The new regime reaffirmed its desire to retain and enlarge upon existing commercial and military aid ties and to forge closer diplomatic and trade relations with Soviet bloc states. By 1970 an estimated 2000 Soviet and East European technical advisors were in the Sudan. Such important areas as military assistance and economic planning

were mostly provided by Soviet specialists, while internal security affairs were partly in East German hands. This was accompanied by a substantial increase in trade with these countries.

However, after an attempted coup sponsored by the pro-Moscow Sudan Communist Party in 1971, a major reversal of relations took place. The Soviet Union, East Germany and Bulgaria were accused of complicity in the abortive scheme. Relations with the Soviet bloc continued to deteriorate (and charges of further involvement in efforts against Nimeiri were made) and in May 1977 Sudan expelled the remaining Soviet military experts involved with its armed forces. At the same time, Sudan turned to the West and especially the United States for military aid.

In North Africa, on the Mediterranean, the Soviet Union substantially improved its relations with Libya despite significant ideological and political differences between the two states. The improved relations seem to be dated from a December 1976 visit by Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi to the Soviet Union and agreements between the two states concerning technical, economic, cultural, and scientific cooperation. Military equipment worth billions of dollars was also provided. Primarily this was a pragmatic military linkage. It was not based on ideology and Libya was openly antagonistic on socialism/marxism. But Qaddafi's foreign policies often seem to be congruent with Soviet activities and serve as a proxy for Soviet goals by such actions as support for the PLO, training for radical guerilla groups of various stripes and origins and with various targets, and strong opposition to Sadat in Egypt.

The Arab-Israel sector of the Middle East has been the traditional focal point of Soviet activities in the Middle East and it is here that the major accomplishments and failures of Soviet policy have been registered.

Egypt, traditionally seen as the "most important country" and the centerpiece of Soviet policy in the Arab world has continued to reduce the level and extent of its relationship with the Soviet Union and the bloc states.⁽²⁰⁾ The Soviet presence in Egypt, the ex-

(20) The mixed Soviet record of accomplishment and failure in the Middle East is well

tent of economic and military aid, and the linkage of political positions, have all decreased over time as charges and counter-charges have marked the deterioration of ties between the two states. The October War (1973) provided the basis for a significant Egyptian "tilt" toward the United States as the primary power in the peace process and the effort to secure Israeli withdrawal from Egyptian territory. The Egyptian-Israeli agreements of January 1974 and September 1975 exacerbated the problem. The Soviet reaction to the Sinai II Agreement (1975) was clearly negative. The negotiations had excluded the Russians and the agreement provided for an American presence in Sinai. Soviet-Egyptian relations declined further when the Soviets refused to reschedule Egypt's military debts and to provide spare parts. President Sadat also complained that Moscow refused to permit India to send spare aircraft parts or overhaul Egyptian Russian-made aircraft in response to Egypt's request. In something of a symbolic way, the unilateral abrogation in March 1976 by Egyptian President Sadat of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed in May 1971, seemed to mark a turning point of consequence. Relations have deteriorated and numerous charges and suspicions have been identified, but, despite all of this, diplomatic relations have been served and there seems to be a view held in Moscow that the current poor state of relations must be attributed to Sadat and not to the Egyptian people and that there is hope for a reconciliation, especially with a successor regime. There is still a view that Egypt is an important regional state, and something of a key to future developments, which prevents further deterioration.

Egypt has shifted to a closer link with the United States which has involved not only economic and technical aid and increasing

illustrated by its dealings with Egypt. Karen Dawisha has ably summarized this progression as follows: "When the Soviet Union negotiated its first arms deal with Egypt in 1955, its influence in the Middle East and the Third World was practically non-existent. In the fifteen years following that deal, its involvement grew until, by the early 1970's, the Soviet role in the determination of Egypt's domestic and foreign policy was decisive. Now, in the eighth year of President Sadat's rule, the Soviet position in Egypt has been reduced to one of little more than an interested bystander."—Karen Dawisha, *Soviet Foreign Policy Towards Egypt* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), page xi.

quantities and sophistication of military equipment provided by the United States to Egypt but also close cooperation in the Arab-Israeli peace process and in such areas as joint military maneuvers.

The problems in the Egyptian-Soviet relationship have generated increased emphasis on closer Soviet ties with Syria, and, to a lesser extent, Iraq as alternative major powers in the Arab world. Both have served as focal points of sub-regional activity and have been major recipients of Soviet economic-technical and military aid. But, while the relationships have been, at times, extensive and significant they have not been trouble-free.

Relations between the Soviet Union and Syria had not, by 1980, reached the levels of Soviet ties with Egypt. During the second half of the decade of the seventies they deteriorated as a result of different approaches to the problems posed by the civil war in Lebanon and Syria's approach to control of the "eastern front" against Israel.⁽²¹⁾ The Lebanese crisis pitted Syria against the PLO and led to a serious crisis in relations between Syria and the Soviet Union whose sympathies were on the side of the PLO. Syrian president Assad sought to have the Palestinians under his control and the Kremlin questioned and criticized this view (in part because it was seen as a means of strengthening Assad's position even vis-à-vis the Soviet Union). Soviet displeasure with Assad's actions manifested itself in several ways, including the halting of arms shipments. There were the problems associated with the Syrian demands for arms which were greater than Soviet willingness to supply. Various efforts were made to resolve the problems at issue and in part this was achieved through visits of Assad to Moscow and important Soviet missions to Damascus.

During the 1970's President Assad consistently refused to sign a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union, as Egypt did in 1971 and Iraq did in 1972, to demonstrate his independence of Moscow's influence. But on October 8, 1980 Syria and the Soviet Union signed an agreement similar but not identical to

(21) For further details see Galia Golan, "Syria and the Soviet Union Since the Yom Kippur War," *Orbis* 21:777-801 (Winter 1978).

other such treaties, in Moscow. It reflected (rather than inaugurated) the close military, economic and political ties between the two states. Assad seemed motivated by a need for support for his regime (which faced increasing opposition at home) and for military aid to develop and anti-Sadat front on the Arab-Israeli issue and to challenge Iraq's quest for Arab world leadership.

Soviet relations with Iraq began somewhat later than with Egypt and Syria, since their inauguration had to await the 1958 revolution which ousted the King, but have shown similar variations over time. The Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies established themselves as Iraq's main partners in trade and did shortly after the revolution and have remained in that role since. Political relationships have been affected by the strength and influence of the local communists, which have varied widely, and by the Kurdish question.

Although a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was signed in 1972 and Soviet economic and military aid to Baghdad has been substantial in subsequent years, the relationship has not always remained at the same level of cordiality and concord. Iraq's dependence on the Soviet Union has declined during the decade of the seventies, in part because of increasing oil revenues, and the Iraqi ruling Ba'th party has feuded with the communist party throughout much of this period. Although the Soviet Union and Iraq have both opposed the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty of 1979 they do not necessarily agree on appropriate next steps to be followed nor on goals to be achieved in that regard. They also disagreed on approaches to problems of the Persian Gulf and the nature and extent of an appropriate Soviet role in that zone. Soviet-Iraqi differences on various issues have surfaced from time to time as Iraq has shown increasing inclinations toward the West, particularly France, especially in trade links. There have also been some purchases of military equipment from non-Soviet states, particularly France, and the latter has also aided Iraq in efforts to develop a nuclear potential. Among other recent actions, the Baghdad regime criticized the Soviet action in Afghanistan and acted against the communists in Iraq.

More recently Iraq has been concerned about the Soviet Union's

apparent courting of Iran and its Shii Islamic leadership and its peculiar role in the Iraq-Iran War. In a toast honoring Syrian President Assad in October 1980 Soviet President Brezhnev noted: "We are not going to intervene in the conflict between Iran and Iraq. We stand for its earliest political settlement by the efforts of the two sides. And we resolutely say to others: hands off these events."⁽²²⁾ This seemed to suggest that the Soviet Union sought to gain a foothold in dealing with Iran while avoiding a split with Iraq. But the Soviet decision not to get involved was to Iraq's disadvantage since its military forces primarily were Soviet equipped. The Soviet-Syrian Treaty further exacerbated the relationship given the long-standing Iraqi-Syrian animosity.

Although much of the Soviet effort in the Middle East has been state-to-state in nature, recently the Soviet Union has sought to upgrade its relationship with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) beyond its previous posture of providing support for the PLO's political stance.⁽²³⁾ In April 1977 PLO leader Yasser Arafat met with Brezhnev. Previous political support and occasional military assistance was now supplemented by significant and increasing visits of Arafat to Moscow and other forms of cooperation between the Soviet Union and the PLO, somewhat reflecting the fact that the two actors "need" each other.⁽²⁴⁾ But, the Soviet relationship with the PLO has definite constraints including the fact that it is not as stable as the Arab states nor does it command effective control over any given position or force. At the same time while there are similarities in policy there are real and potentially significant differences between them concerning the nature of a settlement of the Arab-Israeli con-

(22) Quoted in *New York Times*, October 9, 1980.

(23) Although denied by the Soviet Union, a substantial number of reports have linked terrorism (especially that of the P.L.O.) with Soviet policy. This usually takes the form of training of terrorists in the Soviet Union. See, for example, Robert Moss, "Terror: A Soviet Export," *New York Times Magazine*, November 2, 1980, pages 42ff., and the *New York Times*, October 31, 1980.

(24) In an interview with *Monday Morning* (Beirut), July 2-8, 1979, Yevgeni Primakov, director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Soviet Union's Academy of Sciences, noted: "The Soviet Union pursues a firm and consistent line of giving support to the Palestinian Arabs' struggle for self-determination, up to and including the creation of a national state. This support has a variety

flict. Significant is the Soviet acceptance of the primary United Nations resolutions (242 and 338) and the Soviet willingness to accept as a permanent element the right of Israel to exist—two points on which the PLO has refused to give ground. The Soviet proposals for resolution of the conflict do not comport with the PLO position.

* * *

The central issue of the Middle East for more than three decades has been the conflict between Israel and the Arab states. That dispute has been an element of regional instability, a source of local conflict, a vehicle for Soviet overtures to the Arab world, and a conflict pregnant with possibilities of war between the superpowers. Moscow has seen the conflict as one fraught with danger and opportunity—the former resulting from hostilities, and the latter primarily from “no-war, no peace” situations.⁽²⁵⁾

The Soviet role in the wars which have erupted on five occasions (1948-49, 1956, 1967, 1969-70, 1973) has been, on balance, a cautious one, carefully avoiding direct participation in conflict (with the exception of the War of Attrition). But, each war has also provided some opportunity for a Soviet effort to further improve its position in the region, often through judicious use of political pronouncement and aid.

In the 1956 war the Soviet Union lined up solidly behind Egypt against Israel, England and France and denounced Israel's attack in Sinai. Later it announced that “volunteers” were prepared to fight for Egypt and threatened the use of force against Israel, England and

of forms and encompasses different spheres, and the PLO speaks highly of the character, scope and level of its cooperation with the Soviet Union . . . We advocate a cardinal and just Middle East settlement to be achieved on the basis of efforts by all the parties concerned, including the Palestine Liberation Organization as the only legitimate representative of the Arab people of Palestine.” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 9:161-164 (Autumn 1979). See also Moshe Ma'oz, *Soviet and Chinese Relations with the Palestinian Guerrialla Organizations* (Jerusalem, 1974) [Jerusalem Papers on Peace Problems, No 4], and Galia Golan, *The Soviet Union and the PLO* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1976). [Adelphi Papers, No. 131].

(25) A detailed examination of the conflict from a Soviet perspective is available in Y.M. Primakov, *Anatomy of the Middle East Conflict* (Moscow: “Nauka” Publishing House, Central Department of Oriental Literature, 1979).

France. They also proposed joint United States-Soviet military action to ensure peace. No Soviet actions were actually taken but the substantial political pronouncement and threat seemed intended to give the impression that Moscow was prepared to act, and that they forced the three aggressor states to withdraw.

The 1967 June War is more interesting for clearly the Soviet Union was active in provoking the crisis and the conflict which followed by spreading inaccurate information concerning Israeli intentions and actions.⁽²⁶⁾ This led to the mobilization of the Egyptian army and other actions which helped to precipitate conflict. When the war had ended in a disastrous situation for Egypt and the other Arab participants (with substantial losses of equipment, manpower and territory) the Soviet Union sought to recoup its position with political and military-economic commitments to the Arab states, especially Egypt. It made the decision to replace Egypt's lost military equipment and help rebuild its military forces and thus gained as Egypt became increasingly dependent on the Soviet Union as a supplier of advanced modern weaponry. But, it also gained facilities in Egypt and earned the gratitude of the Arab world as the public defender of Egypt in the political-diplomatic arena. The Arab loss of 1967 proved to be something of a boon for Soviet policy and its approach to the Arab world.⁽²⁷⁾

The War of Attrition between Israel and Egypt along the Suez Canal in 1969 and 1970 posed a somewhat different problem. After Israel began launching deep-penetration raids with its new Phantom F-4 aircraft into the heartland of Egypt and Nasser asked for more Soviet aid, an unprecedented decision was made and the Soviet Union

(26) For further details see Bernard Reich, *Background of the June War* (McLean, Virginia: Research Analysis Corporation, 1968).

(27) This is a particularly interesting result since the massive Israeli victory took place against Soviet equipped, trained and guided Arab forces and seemed to be a substantial blow to a program which had begun more than a decade earlier. It raised questions about the utility of the Arab-Soviet connection on both the Arab and the Soviet sides. Within months Soviet fortunes improved. They benefited from the increased radicalization of the region and the substantial Arab displeasure with the United States (perceived as an ally of Israel). Six Arab States broke diplomatic relations with the United States and substantially reduced their contacts with it. Pro-American forces were reduced in number and

stationed missile crews and combat pilots in Egypt. Although some were later shot down in encounters with Israeli pilots, the Soviet Union generated much respect in the Arab world with its willingness to aid Egypt. It also created concern on the part of the United States which led then Presidential national security advisor Henry Kissinger to suggest that the Soviets had to be "expelled" from Egypt. The cease-fire of August 1970 which followed this conflict was violated by Soviet-Egyptian complicity in the movement of missiles in the stand-still zone along the Canal.⁽²⁸⁾

The October War (1973)⁽²⁹⁾ provided opportunities for a Soviet display of support for the Arab position with condemnation of Israel and the United States, approval of the use of the Arab oil weapon, provision of military equipment during the conflict to Arab belligerents, and securing (with the United States) of the cease-fire essential to prevent further humiliating Arab losses. The war also provided the basis and context for a significant effort to achieve a settlement of the conflict and the peace process has also been seen by the Soviet Union as a mechanism for increased efforts to enhance its prestige in the region. But, despite this perception, after the October War the Soviet Union was not able to capitalize on the changed situation and the effort to achieve peace. Indeed, it was the United States that took advantage of the postwar situation to bring about agreements between Israel and Egypt and Syria that stabilized the cease-fire, achieved disengagement of forces and established new armistice lines and security arrangements, and laid the foundation for negotiation for a real peace. The Soviet Union was formally involved as a

influence. The Palestinians began to grow in influence and activity in the region. The polarization of the region was given further impetus over the next few years as an initially leftist military regime took over in Sudan (1969); as the western oriented regime of King Idris in Libya was replaced by that of Gaddafi; and as the British positions in Aden were reduced and a radical regime was installed in South Yemen.

(28) For further details see Bernard Reich, *Quest for Peace: United States-Israel Relations and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1977), especially pages 114-171.

(29) For a detailed discussion of the Soviet position and role in the October War see: William B. Quandt, "Soviet Policy in the October Middle East War" *International Affairs* 53:377-389 (July 1977) and 53:587-603 (October 1977); Galia

co-sponsor of the appropriate United Nations Security Council resolutions and as cochairman of the Geneva conference, but its actual role was far less, since it had become clear to the Arab states that only the United States could deal effectively with Israel. The virtual exclusion of the Soviets from the peacemaking process led them to challenge the United States' role and to work to undermine it, they continued to call for the convening of the Geneva conference, where they could have an equal role and reestablish their position as chief patron and defender of the Arab cause, isolating the United States on the side of Israel and revitalizing the policy of polarization pursued after the 1967 war. They moved closer to those Arab states which were rejecting the idea of negotiating with Israel, such as Iraq and Libya, and stepped up shipments of arms to them. They gave more support, political and material, to the PLO. But these were peripheral areas and they did not have the ability to change things fundamentally.

Partly to remain the picture Brezhnev delivered a major policy statement on the conflict on March 21, 1977. In an address to the Sixteenth Congress of Soviet Trade Unions, Brezhnev noted that both superpowers had a responsibility for dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict, and that the Soviet role in the peace-making process should be equal to that of the United States. He then provided details of the Soviet view of a settlement. Brezhnev stated that peace should be codified in a document formalizing Israeli withdrawal from all the territories occupied in 1967. In his comments he also noted that the "appropriate border lines" should be clearly defined, suggesting the possibility of minor border changes. Once completed (in several stages and in accord with a precise timetable), the evacuation would signal the termination of war and the arrival of peace. Within this context, the parties to the conflict would undertake to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of all states in the area. The final agreement would also recognize the right of the Palestine Arab

Golan, Yom Kippur and After: *The Soviet Union and the Middle East Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); and Galia Golan, *The Soviet Union and the Arab-Israeli War of October 1973* (Jerusalem, 1974). [Jerusalem Papers on Peace Problems, No. 7].

people to form their own state. The former antagonists could be separated by demilitarized zones on both sides of the border and the general settlement would be guaranteed by the Security Council and/or the major powers. The region's major international waterways, the Suez Canal, the Gulf of Aqaba, and the Straits of Tiran, would be open to ships of all countries. This Soviet view has been restated on a number of subsequent occasions, including the October 1, 1977 United States-Soviet Joint Communiqué on the Middle East.⁽³⁰⁾

The Soviet approach to a solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict was rearticulated in detail by Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko in the United Nations General Assembly in September 1979.⁽³¹⁾ The content of the solution paralleled that spelled out earlier by Brezhnev, with some additions to reflect updating of policy and changed circumstances. The restatement of policy also reflected the Soviet opposition to the Camp David accords and the Egypt-Israel peace treaty of March 1979.

Consistent Soviet opposition to the Camp David and autonomy talks process has been based on a number of factors including its view that it "is a direct outgrowth of American Middle East policy" and "the product of a sustained effort to secure the imperialist interests of the U.S. and its ally—Israel."⁽³²⁾ The Soviet Union has criticized the "separate deal" between Egypt and Israel as one which does not conform to Arab interests and as "an act best suited to the interests of Israel's expansionist policy."⁽³³⁾ It does not meet the needs of the Palestinians and their "just cause"—including the creation of a state. Sadat has been accused of being an accomplice of those seeking to obstruct a settlement.⁽³⁴⁾ Soviet observers continue to focus on the

(30) For the text of the joint United States-Soviet Union statement see *Department of State Bulletin*, November 7, 1977, pages 639-640. See also O. Alov, "For a Settlement in the Middle East," *International Affairs* (Moscow), September 1977, pages 61-70.

(31) In a speech to the United Nations General Assembly on September 25, 1979, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko detailed Soviet policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict in these terms: "Like all peace-loving peoples Soviet people are gravely concerned over the situation in the Middle East—one of the "hottest" spots on earth from where emanates a serious threat to peace. The Middle East problems, if divested of the immaterial, boils down to the following—either the conse-

national rights of the Arab people of Palestine, including their right to form their own state.

The Soviet view is that "the separate deal" between Israel and Egypt solved nothing and that as co-chairman of the Geneva Conference their role was essential. Their readiness to participate has been consistently restated. Soviet spokesmen have characterized their policy as "a constant, consistent and steadfast policy aimed at securing a fair and durable peace in the Middle East." In the Soviet perspective the United States did not adhere to the October Communiqué but instead tried to oust the Soviet Union from the Middle East by the Camp David accords. To improve United States-Soviet Union relations a departure from the Camp David formula and a return to the mutually agreed position contained in the October Communiqué is necessary.

quences of the aggression against the Arab states and peoples are eliminated or the invaders get a reward by appropriating lands that belong to others. A just settlement and the establishment of durable peace in the Middle East require that Israel should end its occupation of all the Arab lands it seized in 1967, that the legitimate rights of the Arab people of Palestine including the right to create their own state be safeguarded and that the right of all states in the Middle East, including Israel, to independent existence under conditions of peace be effectively guaranteed. The separate deal between Egypt and Israel resolves nothing. It is a means designed to lull the vigilance of peoples. It is a way of piling up on a still greater scale explosive material capable of producing a new conflagration in the Middle East. Moreover, added to the tense political atmosphere in this and the adjacent areas is the heavy smell of oil. It is high time that all states represented in the United Nations realized how vast is the tragedy of the Arab people of Palestine. What is the worth of declarations in defence of humanism and human rights—whether for refugees or not—if before the eyes of the entire world the inalienable rights of an entire people driven from its land and deprived of a livelihood are grossly trampled upon? The Soviet policy with respect to the Middle East problem is one of principle. We are in favour of a comprehensive and just settlement, of the establishment of durable peace in the Middle East, a region not far from our borders. The Soviet Union sides firmly with Arab peoples who resolutely reject deals at the expense of their legitimate interests."

- (32) Y. Primakov, "A Dead-End Middle East Settlement," *International Affairs* (Moscow), February 1979, page 38.
- (33) See, for example, *ibid.*, especially pages 42ff. See also Y. Glukhov, "Arab Interests Betrayed," *International Affairs* (Moscow), June 1979, pages 82-86 and A. Ustyugov, "The Egyptian-Israeli Deal: A Dangerous Step," *International Affairs* (Moscow), July 1979, pages 53-59 which articulate clearly the perspectives identified by the author during lengthy discussions with Middle East specialists in October-November 1978 and March-April 1980 in Moscow.
- (34) See, for example, V. Konstantinov, "The Palestinian Problem and the Middle East Settlement," *International Affairs* (Moscow), July 1980, pages 49-56.

V. Prospects for the Future

1979 may well become a watershed in Soviet and American policy in the Middle East. Three events of consequence affected the great powers and their roles in the region and beyond: The Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty, the Revolution in Iran, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Each event is central to the region and to the policies and interaction of the superpowers there. The major lessons and consequences of these events provide a framework for the policies of the powers in the 1980's.

The Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty further demonstrated the centrality of the United States in the Arab-Israeli peace process and the absence of the Soviet Union from any role, let alone a significant one.⁽³⁵⁾ At the same time the direction of the peace process and the consummation of the treaty allowed the Soviet Union to further ally itself with the opponents of the process and to link itself with the more radical Arab states and the PLO, although tension with some of these states were still evident and, in some instances, exacerbated.

The Arab-Israeli conflict will continue to elicit Soviet concern and involvement, as it has in the past. Two main avenues are open to Soviet policy: Either to help to bring about and make an effective settlement or to exploit the conditions created by the absence of a settlement and the continuation of the conflict. The developments which have characterized the dispute since the visit of President Sadat of Egypt to Jerusalem in November 1977 and especially since the March 1979 Peace Treaty between Israel and Egypt provided some new opportunities for Soviet policy given their championing of a position supported by a wide-ranging and diverse group of Arab States—including a number traditionally hostile to the Soviet position and posture in the region. The Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty was a

(35) For a detailed discussion of the United States role in the Arab-Israeli peace process see Bernard Reich, *Quest for Peace: United States-Israel Relations and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1977); Bernard Reich, "The Continued Quest for Peace: The United States and the Middle East," in Colin Legum and Haim Shaked, Editors, *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, Volume One, 1976-77 (New York and London: Holmes and Meier, 1978), pages 21-33; and Bernard Reich, "United States Middle East Policy," *Current History* 76:6-8, 41-42 (January 1979).

setback for the Soviet Union in a number of respects. It tended to lend some credence to the position of President Sadat of Egypt that while the Soviet Union can provide arms and training for war with Israel, only the United States can ensure peace on terms of some value to the Arabs by securing Israeli withdrawals from Arab territory. In a sense, therefore, the Egypt-Israel treaty provides something of a precedent for other states, particularly Jordan, who might see this as an alternative way to achieve goals that seem unlikely if they continued to adhere to the Soviet-inspired notion of a comprehensive settlement involving Soviet and PLO participation.

The treaty might have other implications for Soviet policy. It would allow Egypt to divert some of its military spending to economic development, the Suez Canal cities could be rebuilt, and a more favorable climate for international investment would result. Sadat's Open Door policy which seeks to attract Western aid and investment, and which is dependent on the conclusion of a peace treaty with Israel with all that it implies, would benefit and this would, in turn, improve conditions in Egypt and reduce the attractiveness of Soviet aid. The conclusion of the treaty and the concomitant strengthening of Egypt's ties with the United States constitute a challenge to Soviet interests in the area. A further major effect of the treaty is to reduce significantly the possibility of Egypt making any major contribution to future military operations against Israel and this to reduce the probability of such conflict. The chances for a large-scale Arab-Israeli conflict which might lead to a United States-Soviet Union confrontation and conflict are reduced.

The Soviet Union has been effectively shut out of the process since the 1973 war and the initial meeting in December 1973 of the Geneva Conference of which it is a co-chairman. This has been due to a number of factors, not the least of which is the United States apparent ability to "deliver" Israel while the Soviet Union faces the dilemma of having no relations with Israel and no ability to pressure it. Also, none of the three central parties to the peace process—the United States, Egypt or Israel—has regarded a Soviet role as necessary or desirable (except for the brief United States flirtation with the

October 1, 1977 Joint Communiqué). But, failure of the process initiated by the United States or a decision of other parties to join in the process may well engender a Soviet role or participation, with unknown consequences—although the Soviet position on the conflict and its solution is relatively clear.

The revolution in Iran marked an important turning point in the politics of that country and in its regional and international roles.⁽³⁶⁾ It also affected superpower relations in a number of significant ways. The revolution had some short term negative effects on the Soviet Union, but also some benefits and probably will prove to be of positive advantage. The immediate negative impact must be seen in terms of the losses to the Soviet Union and its bloc partners of energy supplies from Iran and of a carefully-nurtured positive relationship with the Shah's regime. But there were also some benefits. The revolution eliminated United States influence from a powerful country on the periphery of the Soviet Union. CENTO, which was essentially moribund, was formally terminated. The Shah's anti-Soviet stabilizing role in the Persian Gulf was ended. The revolution generated substantial rethinking in the region about the role of the United States as an ally and the intelligence and military capability of the United States. It also tended to foster some instability in the Gulf sector with the potential for long-range problems and suggested the possibility of long-term Soviet-Iranian relations on a closer level than prior to the revolution. Although Iran appeared vulnerable to Soviet meddling and some predicted establishment of a pro-Soviet regime, the Islamic Republic initially seemed less friendly than the Shah's regime had been. In the short run the Soviet role seems likely to continue to suffer from some disabilities—including the strongly religious orientation of the Iranian government and its opposition to atheistic communism and the Soviet inability to get along with Khomeini as shown by its denunciation of him in the fall of 1979.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of 1979 represents

(36) For a detailed analysis of the revolution and its regional and international effects see U.S. Congress, Joint Economic Committee, *Economic Consequences of the Revolution in Iran: A Compendium of Papers* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980).

a bold and a typical Soviet approach which has not been previously utilized in this sector (or, indeed, outside of Eastern Europe) since World War II. this is the first time since 1945 that Soviet troops have invaded a country which is not a member of the Warsaw Pact. Previously proxy armies had served its causes in the third world. It may well suggest a reconsideration of Soviet goals and tactics in this strategic area of the world. It may, as some have argued, foreshadow a bolder approach in the Middle East in which military force and related methods might figure prominently.⁽³⁷⁾ It may, on the other hand, be an aberration in policy. The invasion represented the latest Soviet move. Earlier Soviet concerns was evidenced by the conclusion of a Treaty of Friendship, Goodneighbourliness and Cooperation with Afghanistan in December 1978. but developments since then apparently had raised concerns in Moscow that its position was not as solid as it had thought.

The Soviet position on its move into Afghanistan has been stated on numerous occasions and, because of its significance, often by Leonid Brezhnev himself. In a speech in Moscow on February 22, 1980 he offered a number of explanations of the Afghanistan move. “. . . there has been no Russian ‘intervention’ in Afghanistan. The USSR acted on the basis of the Soviet-Afghan treaty of friendship. Three successive Afghan governments pressed us to give assistance in defending that country from invasion from outside by forces of counter-revolution.” This was identified as intervention from Pakistani territory directed by the Americans and the Chinese and

(37) Hedrick Smith, a keen observer of Soviet affairs has characterized the Kremlin's decision in these terms: “But the narrow circle of the Soviet Politburo, unburdened by a prying press, a contentious Congress or other encumbrances of democracy, has met in secret and decided, according to the cold calculus of power politics, to strike when it felt vital Soviet interests were at stake, no matter what the costs elsewhere. And the Russians have rather shrewdly judged in the past that while the West might react furiously in the short run, Moscow can repair East-West relations when it wants to in the long run. It is the Soviet style, moreover, to move with sudden stealth and to move massively for the shock effect, throwing adversaries on their heels with little recourse but to protest and accept the *fait accompli*. At home, the Soviet citizenry, fed belated and distorted versions of events by a controlled press, has historically taken patriotic pride in the power of the motherland.” Hedrick Smith, “Russia's Power Strategy” *New York Times Magazine*, January 27, 1980, page 27.

others "which has created a serious threat to the Afghan revolution and also to the security of our southern border." The interference in the affairs of Afghanistan prompts the Soviet role which can be terminated when the threat ends. "I wish to state this very definitely: we will be ready to commence withdrawing our troops as soon as all forms of outside interference directed against the government and people of Afghanistan fully cease."⁽³⁸⁾

Chaos, with an ineffective government and a deteriorating military capability, suggested a need for Soviet involvement on a massive scale to prevent collapse of the pro-Soviet system in Afghanistan and consequent political instability of a Soviet border state. The Soviets could not accept the loss of a friendly regime in a strategic position on the Soviet southern flank (the element of geographic proximity clearly coming into play). This was a reflection of the historic fear of encirclement by hostile forces. Instability, rebellion, and changes in leadership appeared to be elements involved in the formulation of the decision to send sizeable Soviet forces to Kabul in December 1979.

The Soviet decision to intervene in Afghanistan was a result of a number of considerations beyond this overarching factor. The Soviets were clearly disturbed by the prospect of a bordering state with a sizeable Muslim population (that is, ethnic affinity of peoples on both sides of the Soviet-Afghan border) exercising increased independence and providing some form of "lesson" for Muslims in Soviet Central Asia and for protectorate states which might seek greater freedom of operation vis-à-vis the Soviet leadership. The Soviet Union also seemed to see a need to reassure its allies of its willingness to act forcefully in situations of import to the Soviet leadership. There was a need for the Soviet Union to be responsive to the call for assistance from a government claiming to be socialist (particularly a state joined by treaty of friendship) and to de-

(38) Speech by Leonid Brezhnev, "Our Course is Peaceful Construction," at an election meeting with voters of the Baumansky constituency in Moscow, February 22, 1980." (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1980), pages 12-13. See also Y. Volkov, K. Gevorkyan, I. Mikhailenko, A. Polonsky and V. Svetozarov, Compilers, *The Truth About Afghanistan: Documents, Facts, Eyewitness Reports* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1980).

monstrate once again Soviet leadership of the Socialist world.

This would not only be in contrast to United States actions (nonactions) in the case of the Iranian Revolution for which it had been widely criticized but also in contrast to the lack of Soviet response to the Vietnamese need in the conflict with the Chinese which had elicited criticism of the Soviets. Overall a decisive reaction to events and an effective use of force would seem to be important to the Soviets.

The Soviet invasion raised questions about Soviet intentions in Iran and the Persian Gulf. The main question was whether this action should be seen as a prelude to aggressive action elsewhere or as a special case. The reaction varied. It raised the ire of local states, such as Saudi Arabia, but also generated a strong United States reaction which was subsumed under the broad rubric of the "Carter Doctrine."⁽³⁹⁾ This was a dramatic statement of United States Middle East policy, although its specifics and the ability of the United States to implement it were uncertain, which portended a new superpower relationship in the Middle East in the coming years. If, as Professor Galia Golan has argued, "the major Soviet foreign policy preoccupation in the 1970's has been détente,"⁽⁴⁰⁾ the decade of the 1980's suggests a different relationship between the Soviet Union and the outside world, particularly the United States and especially in connection with the Middle East. This new relationship is directly related to the

(39) In an address to the nation on January 4, 1980 President Carter noted that "massive Soviet military forces have invaded the small non-aligned sovereign nation of Afghanistan, which had hitherto not been an occupied satellite of the Soviet Union." He suggested further that: "A Soviet-occupied Afghanistan threatens both Iran and Pakistan and is a stepping stone to possible control over much of the world's oil supplies." In his State of the Union Address to the Congress on January 23, 1980 Carter noted that the Soviet move in Afghanistan threatened a region of great strategic importance which contains more than two-thirds of the world's exportable oil. He suggested the United States response (dubbed the Carter Doctrine) in these terms: "An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force,"—*Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, January 28, 1980, page 197.

(40) Galia Golan, *Yom Kippur and After: The Soviet Union and the Middle East Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), page 1.

Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the United States (and other states) reaction to it. If, as it seems probable given the nature of the situation, there is likely to be an indefinite presence of substantial Soviet forces in Afghanistan this may well prove costly in political terms as this move is opposed by the Third World, particularly the Middle East, and by the United States and much of the Western World.

The fact that the superpower relationship would be different was foreshadowed by an interview with Carter in which he suggested that he had, during the first three years of his administration, misjudged Soviet intentions and interests and the actions that were likely to flow from them and that he had learned more about the Soviet Union in a few weeks than in three years in the White House.⁽⁴¹⁾ This admission by President Carter appeared to suggest that the judgment of some analysts of United States policy was accurate. A central critique of United States policy, particularly with regard to the Middle East, had focused on the incoherence of United States policy with regard to the Soviet Union. The administration appeared to have no clear policy toward the Soviet Union and thus many of its actions suffered from the lack of an appropriate context or framework in which to place them. A consensus on this point had not existed within the administration and thus the nature of the United States approach to the Soviet Union and its policy with regard to US-USSR relations remained incomplete. This, in turn, affected its ability to formulate regional policies in which a precise Soviet role or non-role could be identified.

At the same time regional and Soviet assessments of United

(41) In an interview with Frank Reynolds of ABC News, President Carter, in response to a question concerning his changed perceptions of the Russians, noted: "My opinion of the Russians has changed most drastically in the last week than even the previous two and a half years before that. It's only now dawning on the world the magnitude of the action that the Soviets undertook in invading Afghanistan. This is a circumstance that I think is now causing even former close friends and allies of the Soviet Union to re-examine their opinion of what the Soviets might have in mind. . . . But to repeat myself, this action of the Soviets has made a more dramatic change in my own opinion of what the Soviets' ultimate goals are than anything they've done in the previous time I've been in office."—Text in *New York Times*, January 1, 1980.

States policy played a role in Soviet policy formulation and regional responses. The Middle Eastern assessment of United States intelligence and policy failures and a lack of United States capability, resolve and will seemed to strike a responsive cord within the Kremlin's policy-making hierarchy. The United States response to developments in Iran, in particular, seemed to suggest that it had encountered some defeats which would exacerbate the trends already identified. Clearly, in the Soviet perspective, while the United States might possess the power to act it lacked other elements in the equation and therefore could not or would not act. This assessment provided not only a framework for the Soviet decision to move into Afghanistan but also a yardstick for measuring the United States responses to the invasion.

Meanwhile, the substantial opposition to Soviet actions displayed at the United Nations by a host of Asian, African, European and Latin American countries seemed to support the Carter (and Reagan) position and to suggest difficulties for Soviet policy.

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Since the arms deal with Egypt in 1955, Soviet decision-makers have sought to establish the Soviet Union as the dominant power in the Middle East. The main objective of their strategy has been to eject the Western powers from their positions of political, military and economic influence in the region and to promote the growth of Soviet positions of influence in their place. To accomplish these ends the Soviet Union has relied on the supply of military equipment, and, more generally, military assistance, including advisors, economic and technical assistance, trade deals, treaties of friendship,⁽⁴²⁾ and diplo-

(42) In the Middle East the Soviet Union has concluded Treaties of Friendship and Cooperation with Syria (October 8, 1980); Egypt (May 27, 1971, terminated by Egypt in 1976); India (August 9, 1971); Iraq (April 9, 1972); Somalia (July 11, 1974, terminated in 1977); Afghanistan (December 5, 1978); South Yemen (October 25, 1979); and Ethiopia (1978). It should be noted that these treaties usually do not take the form of alliances with automatic obligations to take military action. They provide for consultation or coordination of policy in the event of threats or acts of aggression.

matic and political support in addition to ideological activity⁽⁴³⁾ and efforts to manipulate local communist and anti-western groups and support of national liberation movements. These techniques are likely to remain the central thrusts of Soviet policy and will continue to pose significant problems in the region for the Soviet Union as has been apparent in its past relations with the Middle East. These include such matters as the need to choose sides in the continuing inter-Arab conflicts and issues of the region,⁽⁴⁴⁾ the problem of the status of the local communist parties and their relationships to the ruling regime, and the conflict between atheistic communism and Islam (highly competitive ideologies both of which seek to regulate all aspects of human behavior and societal organization). But, of course, local conflicts will continue to offer opportunities for both super-powers who will continue to spar for advantage and influence in the region while working to avoid major conflict.

In the Arab-Israeli sector the Soviet role seems limited in the peace process and will continue to be as long as it focuses on Egypt-Israel. The Soviet role may well increase when the process expands to include such states as Syria and such groups as the Palestinians. Ultimately, a Soviet role is indispensable if a lasting and comprehensive peace is the goal. Soviet abilities to thwart a comprehensive peace in effect argue for inclusion in the peace process.

In a less-than-full-peace situation the Soviet role in the broader Arab world will continue to focus on past themes and programs and these are likely to continue to have limited success. Close ties with such states as South Yemen and Syria as a result of economic and military linkages seem likely to continue. In the broader Persian Gulf-Arabian Peninsula area Soviet inroads may well be limited to such

(43) Soviet tactics in the Middle East fit within the framework of its general approach to the Third World which was given its ideological underpinning by Lenin who suggested that Communist systems should support anti-colonialist revolutions in developing Third World states. Subsequent Soviet leaders have altered and modified the Lenin view but Soviet interest in the developing states has grown rather than abated.

(44) They have faced this problem before and have not always been successful in making appropriate choices. Among the more salient examples are the Syria-Iraq clashes, the Egypt-Libya-Sudan triangle, and the civil war in Lebanon.

states as Iraq (where Soviet influence is circumscribed despite the Friendship Treaty) unless regional turmoil and revolutionary movements succeed in ousting the current Western-oriented and anti-communist regimes in such states as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.⁽⁴⁵⁾

In North Africa and the Horn of Africa, Soviet roles remain subject to local vicissitudes as demonstrated by the on-again off-again relationship with Somalia and Ethiopia and the peculiar relationship with Libya. Past failures in Sudan and Egypt may well contribute to this process.

In the northern tier Soviet interests may well be more readily accommodated. The internal instability of Turkey and the major problems of governmental control and ethnic-minority dissension in Iran suggested increasingly fertile ground for Soviet machinations—particularly in Iran.

The Soviet Union is a Middle Eastern power and seeks to continue to be one. Its geopolitical interests in the region are clear and obvious. The region helps to provide both for the defense of the Soviet heartland from external threats and for the extension of Soviet power and influence beyond its borders. If the Soviet Union has pretensions of being a global or imperial power access to the region and its resources is essential. Calculations concerning the political and strategic future of the region cannot be made without including Soviet interests and intentions in the equations. This will continue

(45) Over the past few years there has been an identified increased Soviet interest in Saudi Arabia and its role in the region. Soviet statements and assessments have been increasingly positive in tone and content and it appears that the Soviet Union wishes to improve its relationship with this state. Yevgeni Primakov, a significant Soviet commentator, noted in July 1979: “. . . diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Saudi Arabia have been in existence since 1926. Moreover, the Soviet Union was the first country to recognize the independence of the Saudi state and establish diplomatic relations with it. As far as I know, neither side has severed them. True, these relations were not duly developed, but that’s quite another matter and requires a special discussion. Personally I at present see no reasons which would be an insurmountable obstacle to the development of normal Soviet-Saudi relations. . . . Promoting normal ties . . . could undoubtedly serve the growth and cohesion of all those forces which are interested in achieving a just peace in the Middle East.”—Interview in *Monday Morning* (Beirut, July 2-8, 1979), reprinted in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Autumn 1979, page 162.

to be the case in the decade of the eighties, although the precise scope and nature of the Soviet posture remains somewhat uncertain and its ability to influence regional events and decision-making varies depending on both the issues in question and the timing of events.

This fact of Soviet power projections in the region is the latest stage in a centuries old Russian and later Soviet interest in this area and a result of some twenty five years of concerted effort to court the Arab states after initial failures in the northern tier (Iran and Turkey) and Greece. The Soviet Union has become a Middle Eastern power although its involvement in the region has not always been translated into influence in bilateral relationships. It must be consulted, involved, or taken into account in all regional efforts and policies.

The Arab-Israeli conflict is one area where the Soviet role has become quite obvious and significant. Partly this is a result of legal arrangements—United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 which provide the “terms of settlement” of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Partly it is a logical outcome of regional political-military realities.

The Soviet-American hotline has been resorted to on a number of occasions, including during the 1967 and 1973 wars. United States-Soviet negotiations have been involved in settlement efforts beginning after the 1967 conflict and increasing in two-power and four-power talks in 1969 and 1970. Summit meetings between the superpowers have focused on this region and in the waning days of the 1973 war Kissinger went to Moscow to meet with Brezhnev to discuss the conflict and a ceasefire. Subsequently the Soviet Union became co-chairman of the Geneva Peace Conference.

Despite these and other developments which have helped to create and identify the Soviet Union as a Middle Eastern power, its role has not been overwhelming and it has been left out of the Arab-Israeli negotiating process utilized by the United States under Kissinger and even under Carter (despite the October 1, 1977 joint communiqué). But, ultimately its role will have to be considered as either participant or spoiler.

Despite its success in being identified, if not always recognized, as a Middle Eastern power the Soviet Union has obviously not achieved the displacement of the United States nor even matched its accomplishments in the region. The United States is still the more significant power and its close involvement in regional issues, especially the Arab-Israeli conflict, is a strong limiting factor for Soviet policy. There is the superpower global relationship which acts as a brake, but there is also the potential danger of superpower conflict in or over the region which affects Soviet (and American) calculations. Nuclear confrontation is not a desirable outcome of the policies of either superpower. Soviet policy in the region is affected by the global superpower relationship and this seems increasingly likely to affect its position in the decade of the eighties.

United States policy and capability remain a central element in Soviet calculations concerning the Middle East. The degree of Soviet involvement is intricately connected with estimates concerning the possibility of United States involvement for an overwhelming concern appears to be the avoidance of direct armed confrontation with the United States. The risk of such conflict is far too great to be acceptable to the Soviet Union's leadership almost no matter what the prize and conflict avoidance remains a major factor in United States calculations. But, it is always possible that the United States and the Soviet Union will miscalculate the other power's interest and willingness to act in various situations.

Superpower rivalry has been a basic and central feature of the Middle Eastern scene since World War II. The United States has resisted Soviet expansionist activity in the Middle East in an effort to ensure its own interests and to enhance the security of its friends and allies in the region. It has also sought to reduce the ability of the Soviet Union to destabilize the region. However, and despite Kissinger's assertion to the contrary in 1970, it has recognized that the Soviet is in the Middle East to stay and cannot be excluded or "expelled" from the region. It has also recognized that the Soviet Union cannot be ignored—indeed it has kept Soviet activity under close surveillance and has analyzed its actions with great care. In its

struggle for mastery in the region the Soviet Union has consistently faced obstacles placed in its way by American policy and power as it has sought to contain or control the Soviet role. This trend which has characterized the region for more than three decades seems likely to be a main theme of the superpowers interaction in the Middle East in the decade of the eighties. Indeed, this was clearly symbolized by the recent Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and its actions concerning Iran and the United States reaction to these policies.

Jimmy Carter's recognition of the nature of the Soviet threat (and his self-admitted previous misunderstanding of Soviet intentions) portended that, at minimum, the decade would begin with a more public United States response to a Soviet threat in the Middle East/Southwest Asia. The United States presidential election—particularly the victory of Ronald Reagan and a more conservative group of Senators and Congressmen—seemed to suggest an even more aggressive response to Soviet actions in the Middle East in the 1980's.