SOVIET STRATEGY IN THE MIDDLE EAST
Soviet Strategy in the Middle East

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Preface

As a specialist on the USSR, I have long been interested in figuring out what drives Soviet foreign policy. As a political scientist and citizen, I have sought to understand what it would take for the superpowers to cooperate rather than clash with each other. Therefore, as a Soviet specialist interested in crisis prevention and war avoidance, I have been concerned to understand the extent to which Soviet foreign policy orientations might be compatible with superpower cooperation—and on what terms.

The Middle East is a logical arena for studying this question. The region has a history of crises in which the superpowers have been involved. It has evolved into a region in which both the United States and the Soviet Union possess high stakes. As far as Soviet leaders are concerned, the Middle East is a high priority area, not just a distant “Third World” arena. Yet, at the same time, the region is not so central to Soviet national security concerns that it is viewed by Moscow as an exclusive sphere of influence in which bargaining between the superpowers is in some sense inappropriate. For these reasons, and for others relating to American priorities, the Middle East has been an arena of continuing superpower competition, occasional superpower confrontation, and limited, though recurrent, superpower collaboration.

In order to explore further the nature of Soviet stakes in both competition and collaboration in this region I organized a conference on Soviet policy in the Middle East in Berkeley, California, in May 1986. Many of the chapters in this volume were drafted for that conference. Specifically, chapters 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8 were completed in 1986 and were subsequently updated and revised in response to feedback. Chapter 2 is reprinted from my earlier work on this topic. Chapter 9 was commissioned to bring to bear an international relations theory perspective on the topic. Chapters 1 and 10, the introduction and conclusion to this volume, were written most recently, in fall 1988. The Afterword analyzes the implications of Soviet behavior from fall 1988 through spring 1989.
By examining the sources and interaction of competitive and collaborative impulses in Soviet Middle East policy, we hope to transcend the all-too-prevalent tendency to characterize Soviet foreign policy in single-motive terms: expansionist or defensive; ambitious or fearful; antagonistic or cooperative; initiatory or reactive. It is a rare foreign policymaking team that is not possessed of mixed motives. This volume attempts to discern the ways in which competitive and collaborative impulses coexist in Soviet policymaking toward the Middle East, the relative strengths, and the systemic sources.

The Middle East can be defined very broadly as encompassing an area stretching from northwest Africa to Afghanistan. For the purposes of this volume, however, we have chosen to concentrate on the Arab-Israeli conflict, with an additional chapter on the Iran-Iraq War that allows us to compare Soviet behavior in that conflict with Soviet behavior toward the war in Lebanon.

The chapters in part 1 examine Soviet strategy and tactics vis-à-vis conflict in the region. Clearly, our understanding of how Soviet leaders define their goals and pursue their interests is fundamental to understanding their proclivity to undertake competitive or collaborative initiatives, as well as their potential interest in sustained superpower cooperation in the region. If, for example, Moscow's goals are overwhelmingly self-aggrandizing, or if Soviet leaders are pursuing a strategy of "no war, but no peace either," the prospects for superpower collaboration are dim. Similarly, if Soviet commitment to extremist forces in the region is an end in itself, rather than derivative of and contingent on other factors, then the prospects for collaboration are also dim. These are the kinds of issues that are illuminated by the evidence and analysis in chapters 1 through 6.

Part 2 addresses this question: Is Soviet strategy driven by conflict or consensus? This is a very complex matter to investigate. It is extremely difficult to document conflict over Middle East policy at the level of the Politburo, and even more so within the Foreign Ministry and Central Committee, whose officials publish even less about the issue than do Politburo members. It is perforce even more difficult to relate evidence of conflict to the explanation of policy evolution, given our levels of ignorance about the process of decision making. Analyses in chapters 7 and 8 of the present volume, therefore, take a somewhat different tack; they focus on a level just below that of the policymakers—leading journalists and political commentators—and do not attempt to explain specific decisions; rather, they document the relative balance of consensus and conflict about the principles and perspectives underlying Soviet Middle East policy, and the implications of those perspectives for superpower relations in the region.
This exercise, while not conclusive for understanding intra-Politburo coalition building, is nonetheless important to our understanding of Soviet interest in superpower collaboration, or lack thereof. For example, if the dualisms evident in Soviet policy are products of unstable coalitions among representatives of highly divergent views, then the prospects for protracted and consistent superpower coordination of policy are dim. Those prospects are also dim if consensus prevails but that consensus is unalterably antagonistic. On the other hand, if the mix of consensus and dissension is more balanced, we may be justified in treating the Soviet regime, for analytic and predictive purposes, as a unitary actor driven by mixed motives, even though we cannot document and specify the processes of bureaucratic politics through which different actors emphasize one motive more strongly than the other.

Part 3 takes still another approach to the problem. Chapter 9 examines the record of superpower cooperation of two types: crisis management and conflict resolution. It then brings to bear a deductive, systemic theory of international relations to explain that record. The argument and evidence presented in that chapter suggest high hopes for success in superpower crisis management, but very low hope for superpower conflict resolution. In chapter 10, therefore, I address the issues of crisis prevention and conflict management as intermediate forms of superpower cooperation. As the conclusion for this volume, chapter 10 asks whether the evidence of Soviet strategy and tactics displayed in this book provides hope for sustained superpower collaboration of these more modest sorts.

Although some chapters in this volume will evaluate relations between the USSR and her regional allies to explain the evolution of Soviet thinking and behavior, this book does not focus principally on that issue. Some excellent work has been done on the success-to-failure ratio in Soviet Middle East policy, and on the extent to which Moscow does or does not instigate and control events in the region. It is striking to note that many authors who diverge in their assessments of Soviet strategy nonetheless converge in their conclusion that Soviet strategy has been unsuccessful, and Soviet influence over allies' behavior very low (Dawisha 1979; Freedman 1978; Halliday 1981; Ro'i 1979; Rubinstein 1977). To examine once again whether the USSR controls events in the region would be to beat a dead horse.

By now it should be obvious that this book does not provide a comprehensive history of Soviet policy in the Middle East since the 1960s. The purpose of this volume is more limited: it offers new fundamental research and analytic perspectives on the nature and sources of Soviet strategy in the region, and particularly toward the Arab-Israeli conflict.

We would especially like to thank the Carnegie Corporation of New York for the support that made possible both the conference and the research that led to this book. Specifically, Frederic Mosher, Diana Arsenian, and President David Hamburg were willing to bet that support for fundamental research under the auspices of the Berkeley-Stanford Program on Soviet International Behavior would yield genuinely new evidence and new insights relevant to the prospects for superpower cooperation. We hope this volume justifies their faith.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Part I

Interpreting Soviet Strategy
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Chapter 1
On Collaborative Competition

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The Middle East has been a region of constant crisis, local wars, and superpower confrontations for the entire period since World War II. Creation of the State of Israel in 1948 produced the first Arab-Israeli war, from 1948 to 1949. The Suez crisis in 1956 drew in the superpowers. Local instability in the region in 1958 resulted in U.S. Marines landing on the beaches of Lebanon, and British troops landing in Jordan. A bloody civil war, which drew in Egypt and other Arab states, took place in Aden (Yemen) in the early 1960s. In 1967 a brief, but full-scale war between Israel and her immediate neighbors led to mutual threats of superpower intervention. There followed in 1969 and 1970 the so-called "War of Attrition" between Israel, on the one hand, and Egypt and Syria, on the other. A full-scale war broke out again in 1973 between Israel and her neighbors, and resulted again in ever-more-credible threats of superpower confrontation. In 1975 and 1976 a civil war in Lebanon resulted in massive Syrian military intervention and temporary occupation of parts of that country, a civil war and partial occupation that have continued, on and off, to this day. In 1982 that same country—Lebanon—suffered an invasion by Israel that resulted in war between Israel and Syria, along with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), on Lebanese territory. This war drew the Soviet Union ever more deeply into the military defense of Syria and resulted in the temporary introduction of U.S. Marines into Lebanon. In the meantime, Iran and Iraq went to war in September 1980—a war that inflicted over one million deaths during its eight-year duration and introduced the use of both chemical warfare and ballistic missiles into the recent war patterns of the area. Certainly, the Middle East qualifies as the most volatile and potentially escalatory region of the world, given the depth and intractability of the conflicts, the level of armament and war readiness of most large states in the
region, and the depth of superpower commitment, involvement, and antagonism in the area. The spectre of Iran, Iraq, or Libya acquiring nuclear weapons to match those possessed by Israel adds a dimension to the problem that is not only escalatory but apocalyptic.

The Soviet Union was drawn gradually into this turbulent arena (for the history, see Dawisha 1979; Halliday 1981; Klinghoffer 1985; Ra’anan 1969; Rubinstein 1977; Ro’i 1979; Smolanksy 1974). In 1948 it was a supporter of the establishment of the State of Israel, just as it had supported the Jews with military assistance and training in their struggle against the British. For the most part, however, Soviet policy in the region during Stalin’s last years was characterized by lack of engagement. Stalin trusted nothing he could not control directly and chose to focus his attention on the conventional East-West military struggle in Central Europe and the Far East.

After Stalin’s death the political succession struggle in Moscow combined with vigorous Western efforts to “encircle” the USSR with hostile alliances to revive the issue of the Soviet role in the Third World, and resulted in victory for a “forward” strategy in distant regions. The Czech-Egyptian arms deal of 1955, initiated by Moscow, was a concrete expression of that strategy, and constituted a dramatic Soviet entry into the Middle East great-power competition. Although the deal was a direct response to the formation of the anti-Soviet Baghdad Pact, Soviet behavior elsewhere in the Third World during 1954 and the debates in Moscow about alternative strategies to follow in the post-Stalin era suggest that a reversal of Stalin’s arms-length relationship with the Middle East competition might well have taken place even in the absence of the Baghdad Pact.

In subsequent years, however, the most optimistic Soviet expectations about the gains to be had from such competition were tested and partially dashed. The Suez crisis of 1956 and the Western military interventions in Lebanon and Jordan in 1958 revealed the limits of Soviet ability to deter such actions, as well as the limits of Soviet willingness to sign on as a military protector and not just a military supplier of allies in the region. Coups and countercoups within the region, the fiercely independent behavior of Egyptian leader Nasser, and the willingness of erstwhile Soviet allies in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq to repress local Communist parties revealed the limits of Soviet ability to translate presence into influence, much less control.

On the other hand, that same instability and unpredictability prevented the United States and Great Britain from establishing or reestablishing control as well. A coup in Iraq in July 1958 brought down the three-year-old Baghdad Pact. A civil war in Aden during the early 1960s drew in Egyptian troops and Soviet military assistance on the antiroyalist side. All this turmoil saw Soviet involvement tempered
by an urge to avoid overextension and excessively high expectations.

Soviet competitive involvement would subsequently deepen, however, in response to both “defensive” provocations and “offensive” opportunities. In 1963 and 1964, for example, decisions on naval expansion made after the Cuban Missile Crisis combined with the Soviet reaction to U.S. deployment of Polaris submarines in the Eastern Mediterranean (which posed a direct missile threat to the Soviet homeland) to cause a redefinition of Soviet Middle East policy. Moscow came to define competition in the region as increasingly military in character. A fairly high priority would subsequently be accorded to the search for strategic military assets, such as port facilities and basing rights, to neutralize the U.S. threat.

The Syrian revolution of February 1966 constituted an offensive opportunity that further deepened Soviet involvement and commitment in the region. It held out the prospect that the Soviets would acquire basing rights on the Mediterranean Sea with which to counter the presence of the U.S. Sixth Fleet. And it held out the further prospect of Syrian-Egyptian unity, on an anti-imperialist and anti-Israeli basis, under Soviet sponsorship. All of which promised to greatly increase Soviet influence in the region.

But the timing of the radical Ba'athist victory in Syria was unpropitious for advancing another Soviet goal: avoidance of an Arab-Israeli war. Rhetorical and military attacks in the region were escalating in 1966 and 1967. Moscow supported the belligerent Syrian rhetoric and sought to induce Egypt to commit to Syrian defense as a means of deterring Israeli attacks on Syria. The United States and Israel were active in efforts to isolate and destabilize the Ba'athist regime. The United States had intervened in the Dominican Republic in 1965 and was bringing about the escalation of the Vietnam War. Leaders in Moscow were not in agreement on how to gain or protect a new ally without causing a superpower confrontation. In a nonsuccession period the decisions might have been different ones but, as in 1954 and 1955, the interaction between political competition in Moscow and international provocation apparently gave the advantage to leaders who urged a “tough” line. The result was a policy that sought to protect a radical new ally by pushing for Arab unity and Egyptian mobilization as a means of deterring U.S. or Israeli intervention, while simultaneously seeking to avoid escalation into a full-scale war.

The advocates of this relatively high-risk policy rationalized that Israel was too weak or weak-willed to preempt and that Israel could be deterred by Soviet threats. They were wrong. The June 1967 war, therefore, led to another major policy reevaluation, resulting in a strategy of (what I call) “collaborative competition” that has prevailed to this day. According to that strategy, Soviet policy could afford
neither to abandon the competitive struggle in the region nor to ignore the requirement of explicitly coordinating with the United States on a sustained basis and on the basis of compromise, in hopes of finding mutually agreeable terms that would reduce the escalatory potential of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The 1967 war transformed the Soviet Union from a supplier and a diplomatic patron into an ambivalent military protector of allied governments in the region.

That ambivalence stems from the mixed motives and conflicting goals Soviet leaders have pursued in the Middle East since 1967. On the one hand, they have sought to prevent their clients or allies in the region from unleashing wars, to temper the most radical demands of their clients, and to collaborate with the United States in order to defuse the Arab-Israeli conflict through some sort of settlement. On the other hand, they have sought to compete for influence and allies in the region, to prevent the expansion of U.S. influence, to gain Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories, to ensure that their allies do not suffer total military defeat, and to avoid situations in which they could be accused by the Arabs of having sold out to the "imperialists." These are difficult balls to juggle at once. The result has been a dualism in Soviet policy and an ambivalence in Soviet attitudes. One common expression of that ambivalence often has been Soviet willingness to browbeat allies, but never to threaten or pressure them sufficiently to force behavioral changes that would satisfy Washington's and Israel's conditions for settlement.

The years since 1967 have seen so many wars in the region that policymakers in both Washington and Moscow have come to realize the dangers (diplomatic, economic, and military) associated with allowing these conflicts to continue unabated. They have managed to avoid being drawn into a shooting war with each other, which might have triggered an uncontrolled nuclear escalation and have shown mutual restraint and caution at key points in the periodic crises, when the prospect for escalation was greatest. In addition, each side has put forward plans for settling the Arab-Israeli conflict by rooting out the basic causes of the wars.

The first major Soviet plan appeared in December 1968 and called for trading land for peace—Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967 and settlement of the Palestinian problem, in exchange for Arab recognition of Israel's right to exist and an end to the state of war in the region, which would be guaranteed by the great powers. The United States produced, in 1969, a proposal (the Rogers Plan) that was very similar to the Soviet plan in its call for trading land for peace, though it differed in certain important details. For a variety of reasons (principally, mutual superpower ambivalence, opposition to the plan by both Egypt and Israel, divisions within the Nixon administration, and
the escalation of Soviet support for, and involvement in, the Egyptian military effort in 1970), the superpowers never managed to converge in their positions, much less coordinate their policies and pressure their allies to reach a settlement.

After 1970 American policy continued to produce plans for peace, but with an eye primarily toward unilateral U.S. mediation of the settlement process, rather than with an eye toward coordination of positions with the USSR. During Henry Kissinger’s term, first as national security advisor to President Nixon (1969–73), then as secretary of state for Presidents Nixon and Ford (1973–77), the emphasis was on driving a wedge between the USSR and her main ally in the region—Egypt—and on excluding the Soviet Union from the peace process. This strategy yielded tangible successes for American policy: it succeeded in disengaging the warring forces after the 1973 war (Kissinger personally mediated disengagement agreements between Israel and Egypt [1974 and 1975] and between Israel and Syria [1974]); it led Egypt to switch from Soviet to American patronage in the years 1974–76; and it laid the groundwork for both the Camp David agreement of 1978 and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty of 1979 (each mediated by President Carter). What is more, despite the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the lack of real progress in settling the Palestinian problem, Egypt has, to this day, remained on a peace footing vis-à-vis Israel.

In the meantime, successive U.S. administrations have put forth frameworks for reaching a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict that have inched away from previous terms. Increasingly, both President Carter and President Reagan acknowledged the centrality of the Palestinian problem to a solution of the state of unabating conflict that surrounds the Arab-Israeli relationship. Indeed, by December 1988 the Reagan administration had begun formal discussions with the PLO on the terms of a peace settlement. Neither administration, however, proved willing to abandon the commitment to unilateral mediation of the conflict. The United States continues to seek means toward peace that will not increase the status or influence of the Soviet Union, either in the process of settlement or in the outcome of that process, though the U.S. and Israeli determination to exclude the USSR may be weakening.

Predictably, Moscow has reacted with hostility and defiance to this American approach. In response to U.S. efforts to exclude the Soviet Union, Moscow has typically raised the competitive ante by deepening ties with her clients or allies in the region in ways that would obstruct American efforts at unilateral conflict management or resolution (Breslauer 1985). For example, after U.S. exclusionary diplomacy accelerated in 1974 and 1975, Moscow broadened and deepened ties with Libya, Algeria, and the PLO. After Camp David
it deepened ties with the more radical People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

At the same time, Moscow has consistently touted her own terms for peace. In fact, since December 1968 the Soviet negotiating position has been remarkably consistent. With some variations resulting from changing circumstances on the ground and the dynamics of U.S.-Soviet interaction, the Soviet position has consisted of the following desiderata:

1. U.S.-Soviet comediation of the settlement process, either through collusion behind the scenes or through cochairmanship of an international conference, or through some combination of the two;
2. Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied during the June 1967 war;
3. Establishment of a Palestinian homeland of some sort on the West Bank and Gaza Strip (a position not yet included in the 1968 program, which only called for a just resolution of the Palestinian problem); and
4. U.S.-Soviet (and perhaps other great-power) collaboration to provide concrete guarantees of the security of all states in the region, including Israel.

How much flexibility is there in the Soviet negotiating position? The basic terms are broad, vague, and, to some extent, open ended. The Soviet position has vacillated or remained silent regarding details, such as the scope of border adjustments to accompany Israeli withdrawal; the precise size, international status, and governing authority of a Palestinian homeland; the status of Jerusalem; the forms to be taken by superpower guarantees of a settlement; and the possible follow-ups to such a settlement (for example, a mutual embargo of certain types of arms transfers to the region). These are, of course, important details; depending on circumstances, they can make the difference between success and failure in negotiations. The Soviets have zigzagged or remained silent on these issues, at times indicating a willingness to adopt a moderate position, at other times taking a hard line. Typically, the Soviets have toughened their negotiating terms after a competitive setback in the region, whereas they have often softened terms after a U.S. competitive setback.

Many U.S. politicians, and some U.S. specialists on Soviet policy in the Middle East, write off the Soviet negotiating position as self-evidently disingenuous and accuse the Soviets of "doing nothing to encourage an Arab-Israeli settlement" (Rubinstein 1982–83: 21). What is more, they point to the intensification of Soviet competitive behavior
in response to the threat of exclusion and the willingness of the USSR to intervene or threaten to intervene in certain crises as further signs of Soviet adherence to an obstructionist strategy. Indeed, this has been the justification for U.S. exclusionary diplomacy since 1970 when the Soviets took over from Egypt the air defense of the Suez Canal zone, and conspired with Egypt to violate a cease-fire with Israel during summer 1970. The Soviet Union since then has been treated as an unalterable antagonist that would only play an obstructionist role in a settlement process or in the subsequent process of guaranteeing whatever settlement was reached. Other assumptions underlying American policy have been that the United States has the capacity to settle the conflict unilaterally and that the United States has the capacity to settle the conflict in the face of Soviet obstruction of such unilateralism. Since the two sides have never collaborated long enough to determine the extent of flexibility in Soviet bargaining positions (there were brief episodes in December 1973 and October 1977, from which the United States backed off in favor of a unilateral approach), the unalterable antagonism assumption has never been tested in practice.

Much of the Western debate about Soviet intentions and strategy revolves around the meaning of collaborative competition. Those who view the Soviet Union as an unalterable antagonist treat Soviet competitive behavior as indicative of their intentions, make no distinction between competitive and confrontational behavior, and write off Soviet collaborative initiatives as disingenuous. Those who view the Soviet Union as a potentially reliable partner treat Soviet competitive behavior as but one track of their foreign policy, accept Soviet collaborative offerings as negotiable, and view Soviet policy as a product of mixed motives—conflicting but compatible. Those who view the Soviet Union as an unalterable antagonist treat Soviet caution as a product of a genuine concern for war avoidance, but as nothing more than that. Those who view the Soviet Union as a potential partner treat Soviet caution and Soviet collaborative offerings as indicative of a deeper concern to stabilize the region.

Collaborative competition is a strategy, not a goal. It does not inform us about the relative importance of the Middle East to Soviet policymakers, or their perceived stakes in the region. These are matters we must now address.

THE MIDDLE EAST IN SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES

The Soviet state, like any other, seeks to survive as an entity and to ensure the immunity of the homeland against external attack. Beyond
this universal first priority, however, Moscow's foreign policy priorities can be grouped under four world roles that the Soviets (both before Gorbachev and since) ascribe to themselves: superpower, continental power, global power, and leader of the world Communist movement. These terms, of course, are not Soviet in origin, but I believe they express the ways in which Soviet leaders have, since Stalin, defined their roles in the international system.

As a superpower, the USSR has had as a main goal keeping pace with the United States in the strategic nuclear arms race. Affirmation of Soviet superpower status came to be defined as a precondition for adequately playing her other roles in the international system.

The role of continental power constitutes a second, mightily important, level of priority to Soviet leaders. Within this category some goals have been more important than others. Maintenance of control over Eastern Europe has been the number one priority, for Moscow has consistently defined such control as a prerequisite for protecting the homeland from attack—or the state against internal challenges. Competing for second place within this category have been the China and NATO issues. Thereafter, border security along the southern rim of the USSR—the borders with Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan—has been a third-order priority within the role of continental power.

The role of competitive global power, the determination to secure influence and allies in the Third World, is the third role, and one that is of lesser importance than the first two. And within this role both logic and the evidence suggest that the Middle East is probably the Third World arena of highest priority for Soviet leaders.

A number of reasons can be adduced as to why this is so. First, the Middle East is unusually close to Soviet borders. Second, the Middle East is a region in which the United States has deep commitments and a long-standing, large military presence. This military presence so close to Soviet borders provides a constant impetus for Soviet policy to seek to push back or outflank U.S. influence. Third, Soviet diplomatic and military involvement as a patron of Middle East regimes is long standing, representing perhaps the longest and deepest Third World commitment of the post-Stalin era. Fourth, the region has been one of continuing East-West confrontation, due to the periodic Arab-Israeli wars, as a result of which superpower commitments have been broadened and deepened and superpower prestige placed on the line. Soviet clients have typically lost the wars, which has created a conspicuous embarrassment that has deepened Soviet determination not to be driven from the region. Fifth, the Jewish issue is a major domestic political issue in the USSR, and has been since 1948. This lends a special sensitivity to the Arab-Israeli conflict that has no parallel in Soviet relations with other noncontiguous Third World states. Sixth,
Soviet arms sales to certain Middle Eastern countries are paid for in hard currency.

Evidence for the notion that Soviet leaders define the Middle East as different from other Third World arenas can also be found in the patterns of Soviet behavior over time. In 1963 and 1964, for example, Khrushchev sought to advance the cause of détente with the United States and to reduce the Soviet level of commitment in Third World hot spots toward that end. He showed signs of washing his hands of the Laos and Vietnam commitments and came to verbal blows with China, Vietnam, and Cuba on the issue of risk taking in the Third World. Yet, despite all this, Khrushchev did not reduce the Soviet commitment to the Arabs at all; if anything, he deepened it. One could argue that U.S. emplacement of the Polaris submarine in the Mediterranean was a critical factor in this case. The United States, however, was on the counteroffensive elsewhere in the Third World as well, which did not prevent Khrushchev from diminishing commitments there. Perhaps the crucial difference was that in the Mediterranean case the threat was both military and contiguous to the Soviet Union. This would support the notion that the geographic factor makes the Middle East a region that spans the divide between the global-power and continental-power roles.

Similarly, under Gorbachev the Third World has been redefined as an inhospitable arena for superpower competition, and the Soviets have engaged in markedly conciliatory behavior in such areas as Southeast Asia and southern Africa. Whereas there has been some movement in a conciliatory direction in Soviet Middle East policy under Gorbachev (see chapter 6), that movement pales in comparison with Soviet behavior elsewhere in the Third World. Indeed, Golan observes in chapter 3 that the Soviet reassessment of the Third World during the 1980s has not included a fundamental reassessment of relations with the PLO.

We can also point to patterns of trade and aid over time to substantiate the notion that Moscow has treated the Middle East as a special arena. As Halliday (1981: 37–38) notes:

The scale of the Soviet commitment to the Middle East, in economic and military terms, has outstripped that to any other part of the non-communist world. . . . Of the ten major non-communist recipients of Soviet economic aid in the 1954–1976 period, no less than seven were in the Middle East. . . . Of the ten Third World countries with the most trade with the USSR in 1976, six were in the Middle East.

The fourth, and lowest, level of Soviet foreign policy roles is as leader of the world Communist movement. To be sure, Moscow
has proven determined to maintain and advance its status as the primary ideological and organizational referent for ruling and nonruling Communist parties. She has invested a good many foreign policy resources to avoid being supplanted in this role. But under normal circumstances the Soviets appear to place higher priority on securing and advancing their global, continental, and superpower status than on seizing opportunities to advance their status as leader of the world Communist movement. In the Middle East the most dramatic expression of this hierarchy has been Soviet willingness to woo and aggrandize nationalist regimes that imprison and execute members of the indigenous Communist parties.

It is crucial to bear in mind that the Soviets do not define any of these roles as expendable. That is, pursuit of gains in a role of higher priority has never taken place at the expense of abandoning completely a role of lower priority. Where the Soviets have entertained trade-offs has been with respect to goals within and across the roles.

Specifying the hierarchy of Soviet self-ascribed roles does not answer the question of long-term objectives. In playing their roles, are the Soviets primarily out to achieve a position of undisputed hegemony, or are they primarily concerned with consolidating their status as a global power, continental power, superpower, and leader of world Communism? This is a variant of the “offensive versus defensive” choice, to which I have already expressed my objection in the preface. Soviet leaders since Khrushchev (if not Khrushchev as well) have been driven by mixed motives that reflect both offensive and defensive considerations.

Given the reality of nuclear weapons and the highly competitive nature of the international system, Soviet leaders have never felt complacent that their status in these roles was secure or consolidated irreversibly. In an ideal world Soviet leaders would be inclined toward hegemony, given the missionary, universalistic, and optimistic strands of their ideological tradition. In the real world of dangers, constraints, obstacles, and trade-offs the Soviets have long since displayed an awareness that they could never achieve sustainable hegemony on a consolidated base. Hence, much of their behavior has been marked by low-risk efforts to probe Western weaknesses, to outflank or undermine Western challenges, to negotiate with the West when this appears to be a promising means of preventing the undesirable, and to seize low-risk opportunities for competitive gains. This behavior is neither entirely offensive nor entirely defensive, entirely initiatory nor entirely reactive. Thus, an ambivalent strategy of “collaborative competition,” driven by both acquisitive and denial goals, would appear to provide a more apt characterization of Soviet policy in general, and of Soviet policy in the Middle East than would any single-motive conceptualization.
In Chapter 2 I refer to collaborative competition as a mixed-motive strategy that has resulted in "approach-avoidance" behavior on the part of the Soviets. Deutsch (1973: 34) defines such behavior as born of ambivalence: "the individual fears to approach something he desires." For example, the USSR has sought collaboration with the United States over Middle East issues since 1968. But Soviet leaders have learned that they need to fear being "suckered" by the United States or being expelled by their Arab allies for insufficient support. Indeed, in chapter 3 Galia Golan provides many examples of such dilemmas and ambivalence in Soviet relations with the PLO.

One could argue that we are witnessing a carefully calculated, duplicitous strategy, rather than an ambivalent one. But that conclusion would have to assume that Soviet leaders are, and long since have been, confident about their ability to walk the tightrope between war and peace in the region. The evidence of Soviet perceptions, in this volume and others, suggests overwhelmingly that Soviet leaders are not self-confident of their ability to walk such a tightrope. Hence, I would explain the present and past patterns of Soviet behavior in the region since 1967 as products of a dual-track policy, in which Moscow has sought to combine collaborative with competitive premises in ways that would de-escalate the Arab-Israeli conflict without undermining Soviet influence or presence in the region.

THE SOURCES OF COMPETITIVE AND COLLABORATIVE IMPULSES

A strategy of collaborative competition seeks to unite analytically separable impulses in Soviet foreign policy. In order to address the nature of that strategy we must first explore the systemic sources of the competitive and collaborative urges that are being combined.

Let us begin with the competitive. Competition refers to all efforts to curry influence and gain allies through means and within a context that do not contain very high potential for escalation, but that are typically at the expense of competing great powers or their clients. In contrast, confrontation refers to threats or actions that rely on the military instrument in ways that contain high potential for escalation. Thus, arms transfers per se are not necessarily confrontational, unless they are of a sort and in a context that predictably contain high escalation potential. What are the origins of the Soviet determination to compete for influence and allies in distant regions?

In contrast to those analysts who view Soviet behavior as primarily cultural in origin (Pipes 1980), I see a real break in Russian history occurring in 1917 as regards the global power dimension. Whatever
the continuities between Tsarist and Soviet foreign policy behavior (and there are many), this is not one of them. The Tsars viewed Russia as primarily a continental power, with a Slavic protective mission that did not require a global presence. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, embraced an ideology that was global in perspective. To be sure, consolidation of Soviet power on the continent was soon a higher priority for the Bolsheviks than was competitive globalism. But this was a reflection of Soviet weaknesses and vulnerabilities, not of their preferences. Stalin's predilection for concentrating on the home front and on border security issues might have resulted in a more long lasting goal transfer, by which the global mission might have been indefinitely sacrificed to the continental mission. But Stalin was mortal; after his death the universalist strand of the ideology was given new life, and Soviet leaders greatly expanded the resources invested in expanding their roles in the international system.

The victory of Khrushchev's arguments for more vigorously competing globally against imperialism can be partially explained in defensive terms as a response to Western attempts to contain the Soviet Union through encirclement by military pacts. But there was more to it than just a perceived security imperative. For leapfrogging the containment barriers was a policy based on optimism about one's ability to do so both effectively and without triggering nuclear war. That optimism, in turn, was based on a perception of opportunities for competitive gains at relatively low cost and risk. That Stalin did not share such optimism or perceptions, and that Molotov and perhaps Malenkov were also reluctant to endorse the new directions Khrushchev was pushing, further undermines purely defensive or reactive interpretations of Soviet behavior (Ra'anan 1969; Pendill 1971).

Khrushchev's optimism and perceptions then need to be explained, as does the ability of these postures to emerge victorious in Soviet Third World policy. Of course, Khrushchev's personality was well suited to embracing such attitudes and perceptions. But the evidence also suggests that in many realms of policy Khrushchev reached back to elements of the ideological heritage that encouraged and justified such a turn. The missionary universalism of the Marxist-Leninist vision, the expectation of conflict with imperialism, the faith that socialism would emerge victorious in such competition, the injunction to play upon the contradictions within the imperialist camp in order to divide and weaken the adversaries, and the historical sense of responsibility to assist anti-imperialist forces were all features of the heritage that could be tapped.

Indeed, I would argue that it was precisely this ideological connection (which contained both offensive and defensive components)
that made Khrushchev’s argument that the Soviet Union should “get moving again” on the world stage persuasive to elite audiences. And Khrushchev subsequently sought to validate their “faith” by making increasingly optimistic claims about the shifting “correlation of forces” within the international system, and the effects of decolonization on the “final crisis of capitalism” (Zimmerman 1969).

Ideology, then, in my opinion, was a primary source of the Soviet competitive urge, though the forms and timing of competitive initiatives were often shaped by provocative acts by adversaries on the international scene. But once this urge was acted upon, a number of very important reinforcing factors came into play that could have a life of their own, even if the ideology were to be transformed. One such factor was great-power nationalism, which expressed itself in a foreign policy elite that was very status- and prestige-conscious, sensitive to slights, and constantly demanding recognition of the “arrival” of Soviet global power. When denied such recognition, Soviet officials expressed aggrievement that was not readily explicable in ideological terms.

A second reinforcing factor that can take on a life of its own is the geopolitical factor. Global competition is a game or process that has a strong tendency to acquire a zero-sum quality, at least in the eyes of the main actors. Under such circumstances, there is a strong tendency for each side to assume that its failure to develop leverage will lead the other side to acquire that leverage instead, and at the expense of the first side’s security or material interests. The game, then, becomes self-sustaining, regardless of the original motivation for entering into it.

This combination of the ideological, the nationalistic, and the geopolitical provides strong grounds for Soviet leaders’ determination to continue playing the role of competitive global power, even if they remain willing to sacrifice specific goals for the sake of concerns of a higher priority. For these reasons the betting person might wager that the Soviets are in the Middle East to stay.

What are the sources of the collaborative urge? Are they rooted in features of elite identity as well? Not really; collaborative urges have been more circumstantial than systemic in origin. If we refer again to the ideological heritage, we find that Leninism assumed a condition of antagonism between socialism and imperialism that could be mitigated but not eliminated (Leites 1953). Leninism’s perspectives on international relations presumed some sort of apocalyptic conflict between the two systems. When Lenin wrote of the need for peaceful “cohabitation” (sozhitel’stvo), he envisaged a “respite” (peredyshka) in order to allow the new socialist state to get back on its feet. The man who proclaimed the twentieth century to be the era of capitalism’s “final crisis” was not forsaking either that vision or the Soviet responsibility to play a global
role. But the condition of overwhelming weakness in which the country found itself (both absolutely and relative to its adversaries) dictated a pragmatic retreat, during which few nonpropagandistic resources would be directed to geographically distant concerns.

The Leninist heritage thus justified both assertiveness and consolidation, antagonism and conciliation, and pragmatic alliances with nationalist forces at the expense of radical forces, depending on the perception of the existing correlation of forces. Basic normative preferences and philosophical assumptions about the course of history remained thoroughly competitive in nature. But analytical or empirical beliefs about the state of the international order during a given period of time were supposed to dictate current policy choices (Breslauer 1987). Initiatives geared toward collaboration with imperialist powers, then, were justifiable as temporary expedients, with no time limits necessarily preordained. Yet that they were defined as expedients allowed Soviet leaders to manage the dissonance between philosophical assumptions and empirical beliefs. Such management of dissonance in turn allowed them to avoid a genuine goal transfer, in which today's means would become ends in themselves.

The greatest challenge to such dissonance reduction was the nuclear revolution in weapons technology. During the 1950s Khrushchev struggled to reconcile the potential of nuclear weapons to destroy civilization with the philosophical assumption that an apocalyptic clash between socialism and imperialism would usher in the worldwide victory of socialism. In this case, the philosophical assumption was forced to cave in (Zimmerman 1969). To be sure, Soviet foreign policy behavior continued to alternate between periods of competitive assertiveness and "breathing spells" (Fukuyama 1987), but these alternations took place within the context of different assumptions about the character and timing of the transition to a socialist world. Avoidance of a nuclear confrontation with imperialism became a primary concern of Soviet policymakers, even as they maintained their commitment to competing with imperialism for influence and allies.

Both Khrushchev and Brezhnev acknowledged the need for both avoiding a nuclear war and seeking a détente with the United States that would reduce the potential for an unrestrained arms race or a military clash in Europe. But cautious competition, rather than sustained coordination of policies on a cooperative basis (that is, superpower collaboration), was the guiding principle of much of Soviet Third World policy under Khrushchev and Brezhnev. In some areas of the Third World, notably the Middle East, the Soviets under Brezhnev displayed great interest in going beyond mutual avoidance. They pushed for superpower collaboration. The only explanation for this behavior is that after 1967, and with even greater force after 1973, Moscow perceived
the region to be so volatile, the probability of superpower confrontation so high, and the likelihood that Soviet clients would prevail at low risk to the USSR so remote that it integrated a collaborative component into its regional strategy.

The relative strength of the collaborative and competitive impulses, then, hinges on the strength of the perceptions just noted. The ideological heritage sanctions and legitimizes—indeed, urges—competitive behavior as an end in itself, as long as that behavior does not risk undermining the Soviet state. The ideological heritage does not legitimize collaboration with the imperialists as an end in itself; it only justifies such collaboration as an expedient to deflect threats to regime and national security. Nuclear weapons raised the relative importance of sustained collaboration—with no definable time horizon—in Soviet leaders’ eyes, since a postnuclear world appeared to be either a pipe dream (the nuclear genie being out of the bottle) or a vision of devastation. To the extent that the Middle East over time came to be viewed as a region that contained very high potential for an escalation to the nuclear level, the importance of tempering competition with collaboration grew ever greater in Soviet leaders’ eyes. To the extent that Soviet leaders today (in contrast to, say, the 1950s) view the Middle East as “more a problem to be solved than an opportunity to be exploited” (Malcolm 1988: 101), problem solving entails collaboration with the United States.

Thus, geopolitics and the perceived imperatives of survival have come to outweigh components of the ideological heritage that would urge an exclusive priority for competition in the Middle East. In addition, the collaborative urge is strengthened by one dimension of Soviet great-power nationalism: while, for the most part, such nationalism impels Soviet leaders toward competitive behavior, the status-seeking dimension also leads them toward collaboration. The statement uttered by several Soviet Foreign Ministers—“there is no problem anywhere that can be solved without the Soviet Union or in opposition to her”—is certainly a case of wishful thinking. But it is also a statement of their determination to be included in regional problem solving and to be recognized as a global power that has the right to be included. Collaboration with the United States is important, not just as a means of de-escalating the most dangerous conflicts, but also as a means of validating the newfound Soviet status as a competitive global power. This has been an important Soviet concern in Middle East diplomacy as well (Smolansky 1978).

The reference to Soviet strategy as “collaborative competition” tells us nothing about the precise, relative weights of these strands. It only tells us that Soviet policy is driven by an urge to reconcile the two and that the collaborative urge is not defined as merely a temporary expedient or respite to be abandoned at the first opportunity to seize
the competitive initiative and supplant the adversary. If the perception prevails in Moscow that the competition has become too dangerous and is unwinnable without excessive risk, the cognitive conditions exist for legitimizing a genuinely mixed strategy. Such a perception did not exist before 1967; Soviet policy in the Middle East in the years 1955–67, therefore, was based on a mixture of competitive assertiveness and tacit avoidance. After 1967 cognitive conditions changed. Thereafter each new major shock—the 1973 war, the break with Egypt, Israeli nuclearization, Camp David, the war in Lebanon—shifted the specific relative weights of the collaborative and competitive strands, generally increasing the apocalyptic sense in Moscow that this was a conflict that could well trigger World War III, and that this was a conflict that was unwinnable in any case. It remains to be seen whether the specific mix that currently informs Soviet policy under Gorbachev (see chapters 6 and 10) will converge sufficiently with U.S., Israeli, Syrian, and PLO positions to make possible a settlement that will reduce the escalatory potential of the conflict.

Since the Soviet approach to global competition has been rooted in the identity of the regime as an ideological entity, and since this competition finds expression in the very definition of Soviet global roles, I prefer the term “collaborative competition” to “competitive collaboration.” The first term treats collaboration as a factor that offsets the more deeply rooted competitive urge, whereas the second term would incorrectly treat collaboration as the more deeply rooted or presently weightier impulse. But my choice does not preclude circumstances in which situational factors (such as the perceived probability of nuclear war, or the perceived counterproductivity of regional competition) could come to outweigh competitive impulses, and lead to a change in identity. In that case, competitive collaboration would be the more appropriate term to characterize a mixed Soviet strategy. Indeed, a highly optimistic interpretation of changes in Soviet foreign policy perspectives under Gorbachev would suggest that this shifting of weights and redefinition of identity may now be taking place.

Then, too, it would be erroneous to claim that collaborative competition is merely a mix of offensive and defensive considerations that treats offensive considerations as weightier. There are additional types of defensive postures (for example, avoidance of engagement or engagement for the purpose of restraining local actors) that do not necessarily qualify as collaborative. Similarly, there are forms of offensive behavior (for example, military intervention and confrontation) that I do not categorize as competitive. Those who treat Soviet behavior in the Middle East as on balance more defensive than offensive tend to play down Soviet ambitions and to give examples of avoidance behavior,
caution, and collaboration to counter relentlessly expansionist images of Soviet policy (Halliday 1981). And those who treat Soviet regional behavior as on balance more offensive than defensive tend to discount examples of Soviet avoidance behavior and caution, and to conflate Soviet confrontational and competitive acts (Freedman 1978). I do not take a position on the precise balance of offensive and defensive components; nor does my definition of collaborative competition prejudge that issue.

I use the term “collaboration” essentially synonymously with the ways in which theorists use the term “cooperation”: “the active adjustment of states’ policies so that actions can benefit not only the actor but also contribute positively to other states’ goals” (Weber 1988: 662; based on Keohane 1984: 12). This is, however, a tricky definition to work with. In a politicized environment partisans will frequently argue that the adversary’s initiatives are never “sufficient” to contribute positively to “our” goals. At issue is the very definition in practice of “reciprocity” and “equivalent exchange,” which are difficult matters to operationalize (Gouldner 1960; Breslauer 1982).

For example, Western observers disagree about the strength of Soviet commitment to cooperation in the years 1967–72. Golan (chapter 3) argues that a Soviet reevaluation took place only after the 1973 war, as a result of which Moscow became genuinely interested in settling the Arab-Israeli conflict for the first time. The evidence in chapter 2, however, suggests a greater degree of Soviet interest in collaboration, geared toward more than just securing Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories (contrast Saunders 1988: 562). It suggests a Soviet urge to find some way of de-escalating the conflict on a more long-term basis. Now one could argue that Soviet initiatives were often self-serving and were accompanied by competitive measures, but that does not address the issue of whether they would “contribute positively to other states’ goals,” assuming that the United States shared the goal of de-escalating the conflict. A short discussion cannot possibly resolve this problem. Suffice it to note at this point that my definition of collaboration posits that once the USSR displayed a sustained interest in coordinating policies with the United States in order to de-escalate the Arab-Israeli conflict, and in ways that departed from their allies’ positions, their policy qualifies as “collaborative”—even though this was but one track of their policy.

One final point of clarification is needed: collaborative competition is used in this book to characterize a mixed Soviet strategy. The term, however, may also be used to characterize the state of a relationship. For example, I have elsewhere (Breslauer 1982) characterized the U.S.-Soviet détente of the 1970s as a relationship of collaborative competition, just as Brzezinski (1974: 157) referred at the
time to "the appearance of a more mixed U.S.-Soviet relationship in which new cooperative links began somewhat to offset the competitive character of the relationship between the two powers." These general characterizations highlight the relationship as one that is composed of multiple tracks or dimensions that partially offset each other. In this book, though, we are more specifically interested in the ways in which Soviet leaders have sought to interrelate and reconcile the two tracks in their policy toward the Middle East.

For much of this chapter, I have generalized about Soviet orientations, implicitly treating the decision-making elite as a unitary actor. A mixed strategy of collaborative competition may be a product of a unified decision-making elite driven by a mixed goal structure, or it may result from a divided decision-making elite, in which political peace is maintained by pursuing a two-track policy: one track geared toward satisfying the "competitors" in the leadership, and one toward satisfying the "collaborators" in the leadership. This is a controversial issue in the Sovietological literature, but one that we will seek to address in chapters 7 and 8. I will have more to say in the conclusion (chapter 10) about the relative value of unitary versus political models for explaining Soviet Middle East policy.

ENDNOTES

1. I do not use the term, "strategy," in the military sense of "maneuvering forces into the most advantageous position prior to actual engagement with the enemy" (Webster's New World Dictionary, College Edition (1960), s.v. "strategy"). My usage is much broader, connoting an integrated effort to combine diplomacy, deterrence, and struggle. The concepts "collaboration" and "competition" are both relational and interactive. In that sense, my use of the term "strategy" is in the spirit of Schelling's (1963: 3ff) "games of strategy . . . in which the best course of action for each player depends on what the other players do. The term is intended to focus on the interdependence of the adversaries' decisions and on their expectations about each other's behavior" (1963: 3). Scholars uncomfortable with the characterization of collaborative competition as a strategy might prefer to think of it as a boundary framework, connoting the parameters within which diverse, more specific, strategies are formulated.

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Chapter 2

Soviet Policy in the Middle East, 1967–72: Unalterable Antagonism or Collaborative Competition?

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Western literature on Soviet policy in the Middle East during the years 1967–72 is largely in agreement that the Soviet leadership did not want another Middle East war to break out during these years. But that same body of literature is divided over whether the Soviets genuinely wanted a peace settlement in the area. Some authors conclude that Soviet leaders favored the perpetuation of a condition of “no war, no peace” (See Freedman 1978a: 116; Becker et al. 1975: 112–13; Rubinstein 1977: 340; Campbell 1972: 51; Kissinger 1979: Chapters 10, 14, 15, 30; Ramet 1980: 31). In contrast, other authors contend that Soviet diplomats sought to forge a superpower collaborative relationship that might bring about a settlement of the Arab-Israeli confrontation (Whetten 1974; Glassman 1975; Dawisha 1979; Smolansky 1978; Eran 1978). Similarly, some authors contend that the Soviet Union had an “objective” strategic, political, or economic interest in maintaining a condition of “controlled tension” (that is, no war, no peace) in the region.1 Other authors claim that the advancement of Soviet objective interests was better served by the negotiation of a peace settlement and the stabilization of conditions in the region (See Dawisha 1979: 212–13; Eran 1978: 47).

These bodies of literature do not address each other. For the most part the authors make their arguments without rejecting or even examining the premises and methodologies of those with whom they disagree. Accordingly, the purpose of this chapter is to reconstruct Soviet behavior in the region and in superpower diplomatic forums as a means of testing these alternative hypotheses. I will do this by reshuffling the evidence currently available in English-language memoirs and secondary literature (including also Bar-Siman-Tov 1980;
Dismukes 1979; El Shazly 1980; Golan 1980; Freedman 1978b; Heikal 1975, 1978; Kass 1978; Quandt 1977; Ro'i 1974; Sadat 1977; Whetten 1977). The burden of my argument will be that Soviet behavior from 1967 to 1972 indicated intense Soviet interest in a political settlement that would remove the escalatory potential from the conflict—but not at any price; and neither the United States nor Israel was willing to pay the Soviet price.

I will argue that the "no war, no peace" hypothesis is uncon-vincing, but let us first be clear as to what that hypothesis means. First, the claim is that the perpetuation of conflict was a conscious Soviet strategy, not simply an incidental product of the interaction of Soviet, U.S., Egyptian, and Israeli policies. That is, the argument is not that given the existing U.S., Egyptian, and Israeli policies, Soviet policy in effect perpetuated a condition of no war, no peace; rather, the hypothesis claims that such perpetuation was a conscious goal.

Second, the claim is that Soviet policies were relatively coherent and consistent (as strategies are supposed to be). They were the work of a rather unified, consensual, and clearly calculating decision-making elite. The "no war, no peace" viewpoint does not deny that Soviet decision making entails bargaining among competitive elites; nor does it preclude uncertainty and occasional confusion as the explanation for given actions. The hypothesis presumes, however, that bargaining, uncertainty, and confusion come into play only in the determination of tactics. The elite is assumed to be unified in its commitment to a strategy of "no war, no peace."

The hypothesis can be restated in terms of its view of Soviet-preference ordering among the goals being pursued by the USSR's Middle East policy. Let us assume that Soviet policy in the region, from 1967 to 1972, was driven by the following goals (listed in random order): (1) maintenance, consolidation, and expansion of influence in the Arab world, with influence building being an end in itself, for political, ideological, and prestige reasons; (2) geostrategic rivalry with the United States, leading the Soviets to use influence to gain strategic assets (for example, military bases, port facilities, anti-Western allies); (3) economic advantages, such as hard currency from arms sales; (4) avoidance of superpower confrontation, both because of its intrinsic dangers and because (after 1969) of the damage it might do to détente; and (5) maintenance of a dialogue with the United States regarding terms for a peace settlement between the Arabs and the Israelis.

The "no war, no peace" hypothesis views Soviet maintenance of a dialogue with the United States as a purely tactical considera-
tion, geared toward limiting damage to détente, avoiding superpower confrontation, and inducing the United States to pressure Israel to
withdraw from occupied territories without an equivalent Arab concession. Furthermore, the hypothesis views influence building and geostrategic rivalry as Soviet leaders’ primary goals in the region, goals for which they were willing to sacrifice economic benefits (if necessary) and risk superpower confrontation. Finally, a central claim of this perspective is that Soviet leaders believed that a peace settlement in the Middle East would endanger their other goals; a settlement would reduce their opportunities for influence building, for gaining strategic assets, and for earning hard currency from arms sales.

The hypothesis may not be entirely convincing, but it certainly is compelling. First, it is consistent with Soviet behavior before 1967, when first Khrushchev and then Brezhnev and Kosygin indicated little interest in superpower collaboration and very great interest in superpower competition in the Middle East. A second reason the hypothesis compels attention is that it is consistent with a very broad consensus among analysts of Soviet behavior (both moderates and “hard-liners”) about the depth of Soviet commitment under Brezhnev to influence building, geostrategic rivalry, and confrontation avoidance. A third reason for the attractiveness of the hypothesis is that it is consistent with Soviet risk-taking inclinations in the Middle East from 1967 to 1972. Thus, those who argue that Soviet behavior was “irresponsible,” insincere, or the like can point to (1) Soviet failure to prevent or halt Nasser’s War of Attrition (1969–70); (2) Soviet assumption of the air defense of Egypt (1970–72); (3) Soviet collusion with Egypt in violating the cease-fire of the summer of 1970; and (4) Soviet abetting of the Syrian invasion of Jordan in the fall of 1970. Finally, the “no war, no peace” hypothesis is consistent with significant retrogressions in the Soviet bargaining position during the nation’s dialogue with the United States. Thus, those who argue that Soviet negotiating concessions were insincere and merely tactical can point, in particular, to the retrogression of June 1969 and to the December 1969 Soviet rejection of the Rogers Plan.

These qualities of the hypothesis have encouraged most U.S. policymakers, and many U.S. academics, to embrace it. Yet the interpretation is also vulnerable, and therefore it is more compelling than conclusive. Taking stock of its vulnerabilities will help us to build an alternative characterization of Soviet strategy. First, because the Soviets were following such a strategy before 1967 does not mean that they were necessarily following the same strategy between 1967 and 1972. The shock of the Six Day War could well have impressed on Soviet leaders the extent of Arab military weakness and the willingness of Israel to engage in preemptive warfare in the face of provocation. Soviet confidence in the USSR’s ability to prevent war without permitting
peace could well have been shaken, inducing a reevaluation of strategy. Moreover, the rise of détente in the years 1968–70 raised the costs for the Soviets to attempt to pursue a tenuous strategy of “no war, no peace.” There was a constant threat that if the Middle East situation got out of hand, the ensuing crisis could set back negotiations toward Soviet goals of higher priority: arms control, European security, and trade.

A second vulnerability of the hypothesis is the tendency of analysts to take Soviet actions (from risk taking on the ground to retrogressions on the U.S.-Soviet diplomatic track) out of context. This approach makes little sense from a scholarly standpoint. Soviet actions, as indicators of Soviet strategy, can only be interpreted in the context of the definitions of restraint and reciprocity that the superpower patrons brought to the conflict. Moreover, no single relationship can be examined in isolation. How we interpret an escalation of Soviet military commitment to Egypt, for example, depends in part on the Israeli-Egyptian and U.S.-Israeli military relationships at the time. Thus, the Soviets took over the air defense of Egypt only after Israeli deep penetration bombing of that country aimed at toppling the Nasser regime, thereby possibly violating a tacit understanding between the superpowers that allegedly had grown out of the 1967 war (Whetten 1974: 72). Similarly, Soviet diplomatic retrogressions cannot be evaluated without reference to what was happening on the ground at the time. Soviet willingness to collude with the United States at the expense of the superpowers’ respective allies apparently varied, being in part a function of the varying military relationship between Egypt and Israel.

A third vulnerability of the hypothesis is that no analyst, to my knowledge, has grappled with the methodological dilemmas involved in testing the “no war, no peace” claim. How would one convince a skeptical, objective observer of its truth? As things stand, I suspect that a Soviet analyst using the same methodology could as easily make the case that the United States was following a strategy of “no war, no peace” and that the United States did not engage in “responsible” behavior.2

Fourth, and finally, the hypothesis is vulnerable in its imputing to the Soviets an objective interest in avoiding peace. Just as many arguments could be made on behalf of the opposite proposition. Thus, one could argue that the Soviets’ experience in the Middle East from 1955 to 1967 taught them that instability and conflict (both inter-Arab and Arab-Israeli) are endemic to the region and would not be eliminated by an armed peace reached between Israel and her neighbors (Eran 1978: 47). Hence, even a peace settlement would not markedly reduce Soviet opportunities for competitive influence building. Or
one could argue that only some sort of peace settlement would allow the Soviets to garner the prestige and international legitimacy they covet from acting as the recognized partner of the United States in regional conflict amelioration (Smolansky: 1978). Then, too, one could argue that an armed peace guaranteed by the superpowers “would make the Soviet Union less dependent on unstable regimes in the Arab world by providing it with an additional more solid and secure means of participating in the politics of the region” (Eran 1978: 47).

In contrast to the “no war, no peace” hypothesis, the alternative perspective imputes greater Soviet interest in superpower collusion as an end in itself. It also imputes to the Soviets an interest in a particular type of peace settlement in the region—one that amounts to an armed peace within secure and recognized borders, but not one that attempts to eliminate all sources of conflict in the region. The goal of such a settlement would be to remove the escalatory potential from the conflict, not to create peace and harmony between the Arabs and the Jews.

Although the “no war, no peace” hypothesis is vulnerable and unconvincing, one would be mistaken to go too far in the opposite direction and view the Soviets’ commitment to a peace settlement as a priority for which they were willing to sacrifice a great deal. Some synthesis of these two positions would better qualify as the alternative hypothesis to be tested. Such an interpretation would acknowledge the depth of the Soviet commitment to influence building and geostrategic rivalry in the region but would not write off Soviet diplomatic concessions and collaborative offerings as tactical ploys. Instead, it would view the Soviets as driven by mixed motives (neither totally benevolent nor totally duplicitous), seeking to play the competitive game in the Middle East while simultaneously attempting to collaborate with the United States in ways that would nudge the locals toward an armed peace. Such a settlement would defuse the potential for superpower confrontation over the Arab-Israeli conflict while establishing a great power collaborative presence in the region to guarantee the peace. Viewed from the Soviet perspective, peace was neither a condition to avoid at all costs nor an end in itself. The Soviets were not interested in a peace settlement that would reduce their influence in the region; hence, they were less likely to be cooperative when they perceived that the United States was trying to drive a wedge between the USSR and Egypt. In contrast to the “no war, no peace” interpretation, which views the Soviets as a mitigable, but essentially unalterable, antagonist in the Middle East at the time, this interpretation views them as a collaborative competitor.
Before beginning our examination of Soviet policy, let me say a few words about the limitations of the available evidence. Although an enormous amount of evidence is available,⁴ vital information about the extent to which the Soviets pressured their Arab allies either is missing or is based frequently (but not always) on possibly biased testimony by Anwar el-Sadat and Mohamed Heikal. Lawrence Whetten appears to have studied or been exposed to diplomatic correspondence and interviews, but on the matter of Soviet pressure all too often his study leaves us without a footnote.⁵ Obviously, we also lack testimony about Soviet Politburo deliberations. More inside information is available on Soviet-U.S. negotiations, but the content or minutes of private, informal conversations (if they took place) have not come to light; and our knowledge of the content and clarity of Soviet-U.S. understandings regarding restraint and reciprocity remains skimpy. All these limitations notwithstanding, we have a great deal to go on.

FROM THE SIX DAY WAR TO THE WAR OF ATTRITION (JUNE 1967–APRIL 1969)

After the Six Day War the Soviet Union massively resupplied its clients in the Middle East, indicating its continued determination to serve as military and political patron to its clients in the international arena. But patronage is not necessarily warmongering; U.S.-Soviet negotiations began almost immediately to defuse the situation and to prevent another outbreak of hostilities that might have resulted in a superpower confrontation. But the positions of Egypt and Israel were miles apart. Egypt demanded total and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories and compensation to the Arab states for the damage inflicted on them by the war. But Egypt offered nothing in the way of peace, freedom of navigation, or recognition in return. Israel demanded direct negotiations between the local belligerents, looking toward a final peace agreement that would accord recognition and full rights in the region to the State of Israel, coupled with the possibility of some border adjustments. Israel offered no withdrawal from the occupied territories until such terms were worked out.

Both Soviet and U.S. governments saw danger in this situation. The result of months of Soviet-U.S. negotiation after the war was United Nations Resolution 242, which avoided the issue of whether Israel would have to withdraw from all the land it occupied, but basically called for Israeli withdrawal in exchange for Arab negotiations with Israel through a UN mediator, and looked toward a final peace agreement that would ensure the sovereignty, independence, security,
and regional navigation rights of all states in the area. Thus, the resolution, in effect, called for Arab recognition of Israel and an end to the Arab-Israeli state of war in exchange for total, or substantial, Israeli withdrawal from occupied lands. The details could be hammered out once the basic principles were accepted.

Beyond this resolution, in the course of bargaining with the United States Soviet negotiators made several other concessions: they agreed to drop their condemnations of Israel and their demands for refugee compensation from drafts put forward at the United Nations. They agreed with the United States that a peace agreement should result in a superpower arms embargo of the region (Whetten 1974: 47, 54). Soviet leaders, as a result, had a selling job to do among their Arab allies, for UN Resolution 242 and the additional Soviet concessions diverged sharply from the maximal Arab position. When Soviet leaders tried to justify their program to Arab officials, the result was allegedly "stormy" sessions (Whetten 1974: 46). Indeed, the Soviet effort was unsuccessful. At the Khartoum Conference of August 1967 Arab heads of state lined up behind an intransigent posture of "no concessions" (Whetten 1974: 50; Rubinstein 1977: 38; Dawisha 1979: 49–50).

During 1968 Egypt's Nasser was getting impatient to recover the occupied territories. In the course of the year he reached the conclusion that if the territories were not recoverable by purely military means, they would have to be recovered by a combination of military and political pressure on Israel. Egyptian artillery barrages across the Suez Canal were meant to keep the pressure on Israel while simultaneously keeping the conflict on a high flame, thereby inducing the United States and the USSR to collude at the expense of Israel in order to avoid another war. Great-power pressure on Israel would then force that country out of the occupied territories, even without a peace settlement (Bar-Siman-Tov 1980: 43–45, 50–52; Rubinstein 1977: 66–67).

If this was Nasser's plan, he received little encouragement from the United States. The Johnson administration had decided to keep supplying Israel's military needs and to wait out the Arabs until they were ready to negotiate with Israel on more moderate terms. Moreover, although there was sentiment welling up within the U.S. State Department for pressuring Israel to make concessions, the Johnson administration would not consider such a step in an election year (Quandt 1977: 66–68).

The Soviets did not give blanket endorsement to Nasser's change in tactics. In July 1968 Nasser visited Moscow for what the Soviet press referred to as "frank" discussions. According to insiders, Soviet leaders were unambiguous in conveying to Nasser the following points: (1) the
USSR placed highest priority on avoiding a direct clash with the United States in the Middle East; (2) Nasser was engaging in "daydreams" if he thought that a military solution was possible in the foreseeable future; (3) the Soviet Union would not meet Nasser's request for a long list of the most advanced, offensive military weaponry; and (4) Nasser would be better advised to moderate his demands and seek a political solution to the conflict (Whetten 1974: 67–68; Rubinstein 1977: 59–63; Bar-Siman-Tov 1980: 46–47). The Soviets did sweeten the pill by increasing military assistance to Egypt, but the nature of that assistance, and the nature of these "frank" discussions, suggest that Soviet leaders neither endorsed nor encouraged Nasser's argument that direct military pressure on Israel was a necessary supplement to the diplomatic bargaining process. Soviet fears of uncontrolled escalation won out in Moscow's calculations.

On the diplomatic track during 1968 neither Nasser nor the government of Israel moderated their demands. Both UN mediator Gunnar Jarring's mission and the deliberations during the fall 1968 General Assembly meetings failed to make substantive progress toward reducing the gap. According to Heikal, Moscow did not conceal its disappointment, communicating to Nasser that it had hoped Johnson would be more willing to pressure Israel during his lame duck period (April–December 1968). At the same time, the Soviets tried to placate Nasser with predictions that the Nixon administration would be more forthcoming (Heikal 1978: 193).

After the election, however, Soviet leaders got to work immediately to influence the incoming Nixon administration in the direction of a superpower collaborative relationship in the Middle East. Both insiders' accounts and the evolution of formal Soviet negotiating positions indicate seriousness of intent. Thus, in December 1968 Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko visited Cairo, where he asked Egyptian Foreign Minister Riad what Riad would think of formal U.S.-Soviet negotiations as a substitute for the UN-sponsored Jarring mission. Riad inquired as to what was wrong with Jarring. Gromyko replied: "He has no navies in the sea and no missiles in the air" (Heikal 1975: 56–57). Apparently, Gromyko believed that only superpower collusion of some sort could generate enough pressure on local actors to make progress.

In order to interest the United States in such collaboration the Soviet government came forth in the same month, December 1968, with its "first comprehensive plan for a peace settlement" (Whetten 1974: 68), which incorporated a number of additional divergences from the maximal Arab position, on both substantive and procedural matters. The Soviet plan echoed the letter of the Arab demand for total withdrawal, but with enough ambiguities and new wrinkles to violate
the spirit of that demand as well as the spirit and letter of other Arab demands. The plan has been summarized as follows:

The plan envisioned the full implementation of 242 according to a prescribed timetable, beginning with formal confirmation by the belligerent states that they intended to carry out the provisions of the resolution. This would have been followed with proclamations by all belligerents that they were prepared to reach a peaceful settlement and by Israel that it was prepared to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories before a fixed date. Negotiations or "contacts" between the belligerents would then be used to reach an agreement on secure and recognized borders, freedom of navigation in international waterways, a just solution of the refugee problem, and the territorial integrity and political independence of each state. Following an initial, partial Israeli withdrawal, Egypt would begin to clear the Suez Canal. At a later date to be agreed upon, Israel would complete its withdrawal to the pre-June 1967 borders, and Arab military and political control would be reestablished over the occupied territories. At the same time, UN forces might return to the Sinai Peninsula and the situation of May 1967 might be restored. . . . The Security Council would guarantee freedom of passage through the Tiran Straits and the Gulf of Aqaba. Agreed-upon borders would be guaranteed by the four big powers and might include demilitarized zones between Israel and its neighbors. (Whetten 1974: 68–69)

That Soviet leaders considered this a serious proposal (though perhaps only an initial bargaining position) was further indicated by their not advertising its contents. They conveyed the plan to the U.S. government in a formal diplomatic note.

Nixon’s national security advisor, Henry Kissinger, apparently was not impressed. Immersed in the details of learning his new job, preoccupied with Vietnam and preparations for Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties (SALT) negotiations, convinced that there had been no change in the pre-1967 Soviet strategy of "no war, no peace" in the Middle East, adhering to a global strategy of containing the expansion of Soviet influence, and believing that at the time, a Middle East stalemate served U.S. interests, Kissinger dismissed the Soviet proposal out of hand (Kissinger 1979: 347, 349). Israel also denounced the plan. The United States then countered with a twelve-point plan of its own, which Egypt promptly denounced.

But there were forces within the U.S. government that did not share Kissinger’s burdens, beliefs, or perspectives. Secretary of State William Rogers and Assistant Secretary Joseph Sisco sought to begin serious discussions with Soviet diplomats to explore areas of possible compromise. Their interest was fueled further by Soviet Ambassador Anatolyi Dobrynin’s approach to Kissinger on March 3,
1969, in which the ambassador further moderated the Soviet provision about the timing of Israeli withdrawal—now allowing for such withdrawal after other features of the settlement were executed. Moreover, Dobrynin indicated “a preference to discuss some of the more delicate subjects, such as frontiers, in the White House Channel” rather than in more public forums—an additional indication of Soviet willingness to consider territorial compromise that might come under attack from the USSR’s allies (Kissinger 1979: 354–55). From the Soviet standpoint, one might surmise, prior publicity about such discussions would incur the wrath of the USSR’s allies before the Soviet negotiators could be sure that the United States would make analogous concessions.

Rogers and Sisco, though not Kissinger, were eager to follow up on Dobrynin’s offer. Talks between Sisco and Dobrynin took place frequently during March and April 1969. Sisco was offering near-total Israeli withdrawal in exchange for a peace settlement that would accord Israel full diplomatic recognition and guaranteed secure borders. Dobrynin was interested, wanting to explore and further specify the terms of such a deal. On April 14 Dobrynin approached Kissinger about the possibility of a joint U.S.-Soviet proposal that would specify in more detail the final borders to which Israel might eventually withdraw. And on April 11 Nasser’s aide, M. Fawzi, informed Kissinger that the Soviet Union was “pressing” Egypt “in the direction of peace” (Kissinger 1979: 355–63).

During March and April 1969, however, events on the ground were beginning to outpace diplomatic movement behind closed doors. Fighting escalated between Egypt and Israel, between Israel and the fedayeen (guerrillas), and among forces within Lebanon. Perhaps in response to this escalation, or possibly because of fears of superpower collusion at his expense, Nasser launched his War of Attrition along the Suez Canal in early April 1969.

Before turning to the War of Attrition, let us review the period from the Six Day War (June 1967) to April 1969 for lessons that might bear on the alternative hypotheses being tested in this chapter. Both hypotheses accept the notion that the Soviets were in favor of no war at this time. The important question is whether the Soviets were also in favor of no peace (in line with the theory that they were unalterable antagonists) or favored pushing local actors toward a peace settlement (in accordance with the image of them as collaborative competitors); and if they favored the latter policy, what kind of peace settlement did they want?

Three indicators have emerged from our analysis to suggest that the Soviets were pushing for a peace settlement during these years. The first such indicator was the extent of the Soviets’ willingness to
dissociate themselves from maximal Arab demands. The most important of their concessions related to issues of frontier adjustment, the negotiating process, and the timing of Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories. The Soviets repeatedly indicated their willingness to sanction border adjustments and demilitarized zones, and their interest in great-power guarantees of border security after a settlement had been implemented. The Soviets also supported indirect Arab-Israeli negotiations. And the Soviets conceded that Israeli withdrawal could be postponed until other components of the peace settlement had been executed.

A second indicator of Soviet seriousness about the peacemaking process was the USSR's eagerness to collude with the United States behind closed doors. Such collusion was aimed at specifying border adjustments out of the view of Soviet Arab allies and helping mobilize U.S. pressure on Israel to withdraw to those borders.

A third indicator of Soviet intentions was insider testimony about Soviet efforts to convince the Arabs in general, and Nasser in particular, of the need to seek a political solution to the problem. Mohamed Heikal's testimony about the content of Soviet statements during Nasser's July 1968 trip to Moscow squared with the tone of the communiqué issued after that visit. These indicators, in turn, squared with Fawzi's remark to Kissinger as well as with the allegedly tempestuous nature of the sessions between Soviet and Arab officials in the summer of 1967.

Yet there were definite limits to the willingness of the Soviets to pressure their allies. Soviet behavior was that of a collaborative competitor with the United States in the Middle East, not that of a benevolent partner. Soviet military resupply of the Arabs after the Six Day War implied a commitment not to force the Arabs to negotiate with Israel from a position of military prostration. Moreover, the Soviet pledge to use superpower collaboration to get the occupied territories returned to Arab sovereignty also indicated limits on Soviet dissociation from the Arab position. What these factors added up to was a Soviet effort to work with the United States to forge a peace settlement that would maintain or expand Soviet influence in the region, a settlement that would basically trade peace for territory, with the "armed peace" guaranteed by the great powers. Toward this end the Soviets were willing to diverge from the Arab position and to apply limited forms of pressure on Nasser to be accommodative. But they were not willing to push so strongly as to force their allies to comply, partly because such action might induce a backlash against them in the Arab world, and partly because there was no evidence at the time that the United States was twisting the arms of the Israelis to induce the Israeli government to moderate its position. Indeed, these two motivations reinforced
each other. Soviet eagerness to collude with the United States in private indicates a fear that significant Soviet pressure on the Arabs in the absence of simultaneous and equivalent U.S. pressure on Israel might be interpreted as betrayal in the Arab world. The Soviets were interested in a peace settlement, but not at the price of their influence in the Arab world. Thus, they behaved like collaborative competitors, not consensual partners or unalterable antagonists.


From a military standpoint Nasser’s War of Attrition initially had considerable success. During the spring and early summer of 1969 Israel suffered greater casualties along the Suez Canal than the nation could afford to bear over an extended period. Israeli policymakers concluded that decisive action was needed to reverse the tide, and on July 20, 1969, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) began heavy bombing and strafing of Egyptian positions along the canal. By the end of the summer Israel was inflicting disproportionate casualties and damage on the Egyptians. By September and October 1969 the Egyptian SAM-2 antiaircraft defense system along the canal had been destroyed, a development that gave Israel uncontested dominance of the airspace over the canal zone. The IAF was able to pound Egyptian positions almost at will.

Beginning in the end of July (that is, after the IAF entered the War of Attrition) Soviet military assistance to Egypt grew rapidly. Expanded arms deliveries and an influx of Soviet military advisors have been traced back to this period (Bar-Siman-Tov 1980: 146, 233 nn.3–4). At some time in the fall of 1969, when Egyptian defenses collapsed, the Soviet leadership made another decision. They apparently decided in principle that direct Soviet military intervention would be required to reestablish Egyptian defenses and to prevent another humiliating military defeat. The decision, however, was not implemented until several months later, perhaps because the Soviets first wanted to see whether the United States would restrain Israel from pushing the Israeli military advantage still further (Bar-Siman-Tov 1980: 145–47).

No such restraint was forthcoming. In January 1970 Israel extended its bombing campaign inland to urban areas of the Nile Valley and Nile Delta. The announced goal of such bombing was to force Nasser to call off the War of Attrition (Egyptian artillery fire across the canal intensified in December 1969), but Israeli politicians also spoke of their intention to bring Egypt to its knees and to topple the Nasser regime (Bar-Siman-Tov 1980: 104–5, 121–25; Quandt 1977: 95; Rubinstein 1977: 108). Egypt was helpless to stop the raids, short
of giving in to Israeli terms for a settlement; and this Nasser was not willing to do.

Nor were the Soviets willing to force him to do so. The Israeli bombing campaign, instead, triggered execution of the earlier Soviet decision to defend Egypt against Israeli saturation bombing (Bar-Siman-Tov 1980: 147–51). The consequence was an incremental but steady expansion of the Soviet military commitment to Egypt from February to July 1970 (Bar-Siman-Tov 1980: 159–60; Dismukes 1979; Glassman 1975: 70–78). First, SAM-3 antiaircraft missiles run by Soviet personnel were supplied to defend Egyptian urban centers and the Aswan Dam. Then Soviet planes and pilots were deployed over the inland areas to challenge Israeli jets. Once these missions were accomplished, the observable Soviet military commitment deepened still further. From May 1970 onward the number of Soviet pilots, missile personnel, SAM-3s, airplanes, and air bases rose sharply. In addition, during the night of June 29 SAM-3 batteries were advanced to within thirty kilometers of the Suez Canal. Broadly defined, this movement indicated that the Soviets had enlarged their goals from stopping Israeli deep penetration raids to neutralizing Israeli air superiority in the canal zone. Soviet pilots extended their air cover to include the canal zone itself, thus neutralizing the advanced technology that the United States had given to Israel to knock out the SAM-3s. By the summer of 1970 there were ten to twenty thousand Soviet military personnel in Egypt.

The escalation did not end at this point. Soviet and Israeli pilots engaged each other at several points during the summer of 1970. And after the cease-fire went into effect on August 8, the Soviets and Egyptians decided to defy international opinion and to ignore the possible costs to the negotiating process by using the cover of the Egyptian-Israeli cease-fire to construct a massive, and nearly impregnable, air defense system along the Suez Canal.

This pattern of steadily increasing Soviet military involvement in the War of Attrition provides considerable evidence for the view that Soviet behavior was duplicitous or even reckless. Yet there were real limits to Soviet involvement that must be recorded if we are to arrive at an accurate characterization of Soviet strategy during this period. The Soviets neither instigated nor encouraged Nasser's launching of the War of Attrition. According to Heikal, in May 1969 Soviet leaders "begged Nasser to use every effort to halt the 'war of attrition' across the Suez Canal." Reportedly, Soviet leaders conjured up dire images of what might happen if Egypt miscalculated or if things escalated beyond Egyptian control. Moreover, "they suggested a whole series of ingenious formulas, worked out by them, which they thought might succeed in stopping the fighting" (1978: 193; see also Sadat 1977: 196; Kass 1978 81–82; Rubinstein 1977: 80–85). Heikal does not reveal whether
the Soviets made any concrete threats to punish Egypt if that nation refused to heed Soviet urgings. But Jon Glassman does note that Soviet arms shipments were not such as to "assure [the] success" of the War of Attrition.7

Even after Israel had turned the tide in the War of Attrition, the Soviet government placed real limits on the depth of its military commitment to Egypt. On December 9, 1969, Anwar Sadat led a delegation to Moscow, where he requested Soviet delivery of improved MIG-21s capable of challenging Israeli air superiority over the canal zone. The Soviets refused (Bar-Siman-Tov 1980: 114, 137). On January 22, 1970, some two weeks after the start of Israeli deep penetration raids on Egypt, President Nasser journeyed to Moscow to request a Soviet air defense system, as well as a long list of advanced offensive weaponry capable of taking the war to Israeli urban centers. The Soviets met the first request, as we have seen, but with hesitation, and only after Nasser threatened to resign in favor of a pro-United States government. But the Soviets categorically refused to entertain the request for advanced offensive weaponry (Glassman 1975: 75, 109; Whetten 1974: 90–91; Bar-Siman-Tov 1980: 138; Rubinstein 1977: 107ff.).

These limits remained in place even after May 1970, when the Soviets expanded their defense of Egyptian airspace and their overall military involvement in Egypt. Thus, in June 1970 the Soviets refused Nasser's request for air cover over the canal zone. Egyptian goals had escalated as the defense of Egypt became more secure; Nasser was eager to take the offensive against Israel, hoping to cross the canal. From all accounts, the Soviets wanted no part of such an adventure. Indeed, in late June 1970 Nasser traveled again to the Soviet Union, where Soviet leaders persuaded him to postpone indefinitely his goal of crossing the canal in favor of consolidating military parity in the canal zone, under the cover of which operation the Soviet Union would press the United States to force greater Israeli flexibility on withdrawal terms (Glassman 1975: 80; Whetten 1974: 103; Bar-Siman-Tov 1980: 164–65; Sadat 1977: 198).

This evidence supports the notion that the Soviets wanted no war in the region at the time. They were willing to deepen their military commitment, but they sought to prevent that commitment from resulting in an expanded war. If anything, they sought to force the war back to the canal zone rather than let it spread—either eastward (toward the Sinai and Tel Aviv) or westward (toward Cairo). In itself, however, this evidence does not controvert the "no war, no peace" hypothesis, which also presumes a Soviet strategy of preventing the situation from getting out of control. That hypothesis claims that the Soviets seek to keep the pot boiling but also seek to prevent it from
boiling over. Furthermore, the "no war, no peace" hypothesis has the virtue of highlighting that in restricting the War of Attrition to the canal zone the Soviets were compressing it into the one area in which the Egyptians had tactical superiority in artillery exchanges, once Israeli air superiority had been neutralized by Egypt's Soviet patrons.

Yet, on balance, the "no war, no peace" characterization of Soviet strategy at this time is a weak one. We will have occasion to examine Soviet peace proposals later in this chapter. For the moment, however, we can look at two other indicators of Soviet intentions that bear on the hypothesis. First, the hypothesis presumes Soviet self-confidence about Moscow's ability to control escalation and manage a duplicitous strategy. The evidence from Heikal (cited above) instead portrays a Soviet leadership that was intensely nervous about the War of Attrition and that "begged" Nasser to call it off. Second, the hypothesis presumes that the Soviets lack a genuine sense of aggrievement in making decisions to escalate their involvement.

Yet there is plentiful evidence to suggest that the Soviets felt aggrieved by U.S. and Israeli policies and that they viewed Soviet involvement as a response to actions that violated the USSR's conception of the superpowers' responsibility for reciprocity and restraint in their relationship. Of course, each superpower accepted the legitimacy of its client's basic grievances; and it is worth bearing in mind that Egypt started the War of Attrition. We are not seeking morally to evaluate each side's position in the escalating conflict. But if we wish to define the Soviet strategy during these years, we need to understand their conceptions of restraint and reciprocity between the superpowers, as those powers interacted in the Middle East.

Once the Israelis had turned the tide in the War of Attrition (late summer 1969), they pressed their advantage, destroyed the Egyptian air defense system along the canal, and throughout the fall of 1969 pounded Egyptian positions at will. The Egyptian military position had virtually collapsed. These successes were facilitated (if not condoned) in September 1969, when Israel received Phantom jets from the United States, jets that would ensure long-term, total Israeli air superiority. In light of the timing, the delivery of those jets sent the Arab diplomatic world into a furor (Quandt 1977: 88). Egyptian leaders sensed a U.S.-Israeli conspiracy to pound Egypt into submission. There is also substantial, though indirect, evidence to suggest that the Soviets reached a similar conclusion. Many analysts focusing on different indicators of Soviet perspectives identify a fundamental change in Soviet definitions of the situation during the fall of 1969—after the delivery of the Phantoms, and after Israel had destroyed Egyptian air defenses (Kass 1978: 89ff.; Rubinstein 1977: 103-5; Becker et al. 1975: 86-87; Ro'i 1974: 514-15).
It was at this time (fall 1969) that the Soviets seem to have made the decision in principle to restore Egyptian defenses, with their own personnel if need be. But they were apparently not anxious to act on that commitment. Instead, they looked for signs that the United States was exerting pressure on Israel to exercise restraint. No such signs of real pressure were forthcoming. Israeli officials consulted with U.S. officials during December 1969, probably in evasive terms, and drew the conclusion that the United States would condone a further escalation of Israeli bombing (Bar-Siman-Tov 1980: 130–31; Whetten 1977: 17–18). Though there is no direct evidence, it is unlikely that the Soviets were unaware of such consultations; and it is likely that when deep penetration raids began on January 7, 1970, the Soviets, prone to accept conspiracy theories anyway, sensed U.S.-Israeli collusion. Even after Nasser’s visit to Moscow in late January 1970 the Soviets apparently stalled for a month before acting on their specific commitment to take over Egyptian air defense. During that interval Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin sent a letter to Nixon (with similar communications to British Prime Minister Harold Wilson and French President Georges Pompidou) in which Kosygin warned that if Israeli air attacks continued, “the Soviet Union will be forced to see to it that the Arab states have the means at their disposal, with the help of which a due rebuff to the arrogant aggressors could be made.”

It is unclear whether this note was an attempt to cover for an irreversible decision already made, or whether Soviet leaders would have been willing to reverse their decision had the United States induced Israel to call off their deep penetration raids. The historical sequence does not allow us to test Soviet intentions, for Nixon rejected the Soviet grievance as illegitimate, and Israel further escalated the bombing in February.

Kissinger was incensed by the steadily deepening Soviet military commitment to Egypt (Kissinger 1979: 569–73). He viewed it as a geopolitical challenge that could not go unanswered. It was not, in his eyes, a logical Soviet response to Israeli escalation (though others in the U.S. government, less influential than Kissinger, viewed it as such) (Bar-Siman-Tov 1980: 157, 236 nn.44–46). Kissinger saw Israeli escalation as a reasonable and legitimate response to Nasser’s War of Attrition; therefore, Soviet behavior had now taken the escalation one step further and had additionally introduced a superpower military presence that was unacceptable. Hence, in Kissinger’s opinion, the Soviet Union had changed the name of the game and the Soviet Union needed to be faced down.

Moscow worked with a different definition of geopolitics. After the Israelis took the war to the Egyptian heartland and threatened to topple the Nasser regime, the Soviet leadership defined the game as
a geopolitical challenge to which *they* had to respond if they were to maintain their credibility as patrons in the international system. When Kissinger criticized Soviet involvement at a press conference, defining the proper military balance in the region as a condition of Israeli military superiority, one frustrated Soviet diplomat exclaimed, "Doesn't he realize that our commitment to Egyptian defense is every bit as firm as the American commitment to Israeli security?" The Soviets had been denying Nasser the means to take the war into the Sinai or into the heart of Israel. The United States, the Soviets thought, was not preventing the Israelis from broadening the war. The argument that the Soviets genuinely felt aggrieved is not all that implausible.

Within this context of escalation and counterescalation still another source of Soviet aggrievement arose. To the Soviets U.S. toleration of Israeli actions from the fall of 1969 onward looked like an effort to pound Nasser into submitting to Israeli settlement terms. This would call into question the credibility of the Soviet commitment to protect Egypt from military collapse. But beyond matters of credibility, there were also implications for the future of superpower collaboration in the Middle East and the Soviet role in forging and enforcing a settlement in the region. For, to the Soviets, it has been argued, Israeli bombing looked like an effort encouraged by the U.S. government to convince Nasser that he no longer had a military option, that his hope of keeping military pressure on Israel—while the United States and the USSR colluded at Israel’s expense—was a dream (Eran 1978: 35–36; Rubinstein 1977: 101). By logical extension, the suspicious Soviets would then conclude that the United States was trying to drive a wedge between Egypt and the USSR by convincing Nasser that the road to the realization of any of his goals lay through Washington, and Washington alone.

The Soviets did not base this conclusion solely on conjecture. Since coming into office in January 1969, Kissinger had been much cooler to the idea of superpower collaboration in the Middle East than had William Rogers or Joseph Sisco (Quandt 1977: chapter 3; Kissinger 1979: chapter 10). As a result, exploratory initiatives by Rogers and Sisco rarely had the full backing of the White House. And although Rogers and Sisco indicated sympathy for the Soviet dilemma in response to Israeli deep penetration raids, Kissinger did not; and Israel showed no signs of being under real, severe pressure to exercise restraint. As a result, Nasser’s threat to resign in late January 1970 in favor of a pro-United States government struck a sensitive chord in Soviet leaders.

Soviet fears that the United States had turned from superpower collaboration to unilateralism were heightened during the spring and summer of 1970. From April 10 to April 14 Joseph Sisco was in Cairo,
where part of his mission was to persuade Nasser to turn toward Washington for peace. Nasser was receptive, as he indicated publicly in a speech on May 1 (Bar-Siman-Tov 1980: 165–66). The American commitment to unilateralism was deepened thereafter. From April 29 through early June 1970 Kissinger and the National Security Council undertook a reappraisal of U.S. policy in the Middle East, concluding that the direction of Middle East policy should be transferred from the State Department to the White House and that the basic mission of that policy should be an end to the War of Attrition under unilateral U.S. auspices, geared ultimately toward undermining Soviet influence in the region (Bar-Siman-Tov 1980: 172, 239 nn.97–98). On June 19, 1970, the United States offered a cease-fire plan and a proposal for the renewal of peace talks through UN mediator Gunnar Jarring. In an unprecedented move the United States chose not to seek prior Soviet agreement to the initiative (Bar-Siman-Tov 1980: 172). Credit for a cease-fire, if one materialized, would be granted entirely to the United States.

The Soviets were aware of what was happening, though they could not be certain of its consequences. We may assume that their emotional reactions ranged from apprehension to hostility. More concretely, though, it is quite plausible to interpret the escalation of Soviet commitment to Egyptian defense as partially a reaction to fears of exclusion. The main source of Soviet influence in Egypt, and in the rest of the Arab world, was military assistance. The Soviets could provide economic aid for industrial development and political patronage in international forums. But what counted most to the Arabs was military assistance to recover from the 1967 debacle and to create a military instrument sufficiently credible to prevent Israel from dictating terms. The Israeli military escalation coupled with the U.S. turn toward unilateralism looked to the Soviets like a calculated effort to convince the Arabs that the Arab world did not have a military instrument and that their only hope for a settlement on tolerable terms lay through Washington, which, of the two superpowers, was the only one capable of pressuring Israel. In short, these developments looked like an effort to convince the Arabs (Egypt in particular) that the Soviets had little to offer (Heikal 1975: 95; Heikal 1978: 202; Kissinger 1979: 579; Sadat 1977: 198).

There are more than simply insiders' descriptions available to suggest that a sense of aggrievement on this score contributed to the pattern of Soviet involvement. The timing of Soviet counterescalations also frequently coincided with an enhanced perception of political exclusion. For instance, in November 1969 Nasser floated a trial balloon to encourage U.S. unilateral initiatives (Rubinstein 1977: 99, 101). Several weeks later the Soviets indicated to Sadat their willingness in principle to restore the Egyptian defense system. In January 1970,
when Nasser threatened the Soviets that he would resign in favor of a pro-United States government, the Soviet leadership discarded previous hesitations and agreed to let the Soviet armed forces take over Egyptian air defenses. Soviet military involvement increased sharply once again in May 1970, shortly after Sisco's visit to Cairo and Nasser's expressed receptivity to U.S. feelers. Finally, after the U.S.-sponsored cease-fire-and-negotiation plan went into effect the Soviets willingly conspired with the Egyptians to violate the cease-fire by surreptitiously moving a wall of SAM-3s up to the canal. It was as if the Soviets, in response to the drift of events (both military and diplomatic), sought ways to demonstrate to the Egyptians that the Soviets still had a great deal to offer—specifically, control of the military option, without which the Israelis and the U.S. leaders would seek to impose their terms on an isolated and/or militarily vulnerable Egypt.

In sum, it is too simplistic to point to Soviet military involvement in Egypt as proof that the USSR was following a strategy of keeping the pot boiling during the War of Attrition. Considering Soviet definitions of reciprocity and restraint on the part of the superpower patrons of the conflict, escalated Soviet military involvement need not be interpreted as incompatible with a peace-seeking strategy. To explore this point further, we need to turn our attention to the diplomatic track.

After Nasser launched the War of Attrition, the "pace of diplomacy quickened" (Quandt 1977: 85). During May and June 1969, according to most sources, discussions between Sisco or Rogers on the U.S. side and Dobrynin or Gromyko on the Soviet side made progress in narrowing the gap between the formal diplomatic positions of the superpowers. Specifically, in exchange for a tacit U.S. commitment to pressure Israel to withdraw from occupied territories (with the issue of the extent of withdrawal remaining unsettled) the Soviet Union accepted the idea of a package settlement of the conflict, including a lasting peace agreement, Arab recognition of Israel, and a negotiating process based on indirect talks between the belligerents through a UN mediator (Whetten 1974: 71–75; Kissinger 1979: 366–67; Quandt 1977: 86–87). This acceptance represented an unprecedented degree of Soviet dissociation from the maximal Arab position.

There is considerable and mutually reinforcing evidence that Soviet leaders tried to sell this new formula to their Arab allies. First, Mohamed Heikal reports that at the June 1969 Moscow conference of world Communist parties Gromyko approached Arab delegations with

yet another proposal for a Middle East settlement which bore remarkable similarities to the American proposal for a settlement. . . . They both
seemed to commit the Arabs to such things as direct negotiations with Israel, joint Arab-Israeli patrolling of the frontier areas, and so on, all of which were quite unacceptable at that time. (1978: 195)

Second, before the end of that conference Gromyko flew to Cairo for reportedly “frank” (that is, blunt and conflictual) talks, in which the Soviet foreign minister tried to convince Nasser to accept the new formula. But Nasser was intransigent, apparently angered that the Soviets would embrace a forthcoming negotiating position at a time when Egypt was doing so well on the military front. The result of these talks was that the Soviets backed down, as was reflected in a Soviet-Egyptian communique that acceded to the Egyptian position and in a Soviet note to the U.S. government that withdrew previous Soviet concessions. The Soviets had given “grudging support” to the intransigence of their client.12

Kissinger’s claim that the Soviets were not really interested in peace in the Middle East had apparently been vindicated by the Soviet retrogression. But Sisco and Rogers were prepared to persevere. Sisco went to Moscow in July with a new U.S. proposal that built upon and subsumed earlier Soviet concessions (Quandt 1977: 88). He was to be disappointed, for the Soviets were no longer in a bargaining mood.

By late summer 1969, however, the Soviet bargaining position began to soften, though it is unclear whether this change was first cleared with Egypt (Whetten 1974: 74–75). Intense negotiations between U.S. and Soviet diplomats began shortly thereafter, resulting in a brief of October 28, 1969. The brief called for indirect Israeli-Egyptian negotiations through Gunnar Jarring, attempting to establish peace and normalization of relations in exchange for the occupied territories, with the timing of Israeli withdrawal left unspecified and the possibility of minor border adjustments left open (Whetten 1974: 75–76). In its general contours, then, the brief restored the progress that had been made during May 1969, before the Soviet retrogression.

This brief became known as the first Rogers Plan. Although the Soviets helped to negotiate its terms, they declined to cosponsor it. Instead, they let Rogers offer it to the local actors as a U.S. initiative. Nasser rejected it emphatically on November 6; Israel denounced it on December 21. On December 23, 1969, the Soviet government followed suit, delivering to the United States a formal rejection of the Rogers Plan.

Because of Soviet diplomatic backtracking and the subsequent escalation of Soviet military involvement in Egypt, U.S. leaders turned away from the superpower collaborative approach and explored ways of striking a deal with Cairo, independent of the Soviet Union (Whetten

Diplomatic efforts got back on track, however, in June 1970, as a result of initiatives by Secretary of State Rogers. As a sign of goodwill, Rogers gained substantive concessions from the U.S.-Israeli side, which he expected to be reciprocated; the United States had been holding up Israel's arms package for that year since March 1970. Moreover, Israel reaffirmed its commitment to UN Resolution 242 as a basis for negotiations and agreed to indirect talks rather than direct ones (Quandt 1977: 99).

The Soviet Union was receptive. On June 2 Dobrynin informed Sisco that his government had secured two important concessions from Nasser: a commitment to restrain the fedayeen in territories under Egyptian control during a cease-fire, and a promise that with the signing of a peace agreement with Israel the state of war would come immediately to an end, even if the agreement was implemented in stages (Quandt 1977: 99). At a meeting on June 24 the Soviets went still further, calling for "an indefinite extension of a ceasefire into a 'formalized state of peace,' similar to the arrangement that existed between the Soviet Union and Japan" (Whetten 1974: 104). Moreover, a week later Soviet leaders met with Nasser in Moscow and pressured him to accept a negotiation process geared toward "a settlement based on Resolution 242 'with due account for the legitimate rights and interests of all peoples in the area,' including Israel." This proposal was interpreted in an authoritative Soviet periodical several days later to mean that the pace of Israeli withdrawals would be commensurate with the pace of negotiations, that once Israel went back to the borders of pre-June 1967 those borders would be demilitarized and patrolled, and that all states would have to recognize the sovereignty, independence, and legitimacy of Israel (Whetten 1974: 103-7).

This set of concessions was the most forthcoming Soviet position in a year. Nasser was ostensibly forced to accept them as preconditions for Soviet defense of his airspace, despite the threat that accepting them would alienate him from most radical Arab forces (Whetten 1974: 106-7; Bar-Siman-Tov 1980: 164-65, 237 n.74, 238 n.76).

The diplomatic momentum did not stop there. In mid-July 1970 Sisco brought forth another peace bid that further dissociated the U.S. position from Israeli demands. That bid implied a U.S. commitment to the pre-June 1967 borders of Israel, allowing for only the most minimal border adjustments, if any, and it sought to include concern for the "rights and claims" of the Palestinians in peace negotiations. Within two weeks the Soviet Union, Egypt, and Jordan accepted the offering whereas Syria, Iraq, and the Palestinians rejected it. The Soviets reciprocated with further negotiating concessions of their
own, conceding that (1) no Israeli withdrawal would be required before a detailed package was signed; (2) the package would include the provisions outlined in the first days of July (discussed in the preceding paragraphs), and would be jointly guaranteed by the superpowers; and (3) a peace settlement would not require refugee resettlement in Israel. The Soviets then pressured their Arab clients to line up behind this plan, though they did not succeed in breaking the intransigence of Algeria, Iraq, and the Palestinians (Whetten 1974: 112–17).

The United States was not forthcoming with a response to these latest collaborative offerings. According to William Quandt, Nixon was by this time more intrigued by the prospect of a separate deal with Nasser: “The American response was to ignore the Soviet bid for a joint initiative and to press forward instead with its own unilateral call for a ceasefire and renewed talks” (1977: 99).

Soviet-Egyptian cease-fire violations incensed both Israeli and U.S. leaders. Thereafter Israel refused to participate in the indirect talks being mediated by Gunnar Jarring; the superpower (“two-power”) talks were formally suspended; and the United States delivered to Israel substantially more than the arms package that had been held up since March in the interest of negotiations (Kissinger 1979: 586ff.; Whetten 1974: 128–29). Kissinger’s skepticism about Soviet intentions appeared to have been vindicated once again—at least in the eyes of U.S. government leaders, Rogers and Sisco among them.

Were the Soviets following a “no war, no peace” strategy during the War of Attrition? The diplomatic track provides some strong support for an affirmative answer. The Soviet retrogression of June 1969 and the rejection of the Rogers Plan in December 1969 are properly cited as indications that the Soviets backed off when real progress toward a settlement formula was being made. Hence, the argument goes, they could not have been really interested in a settlement.

Yet there are other ways of reading the evidence. These interpretations require that one view Soviet actions not in a vacuum, but relative to the military situation on the ground and relative to the state of U.S.-Israeli relations. For the Soviets were hardly interested in peace at any price: they would not pressure their clients more than the United States was visibly inclined to pressure Israel; they would not support a settlement for which they and the United States would not receive equal credit, and in which the two superpowers would not have an equal enforcement role; and they would not force their clients to negotiate from a position of military prostration.

In 1969 and 1970 Soviet willingness to collaborate meaningfully was greatest under conditions of rough parity or stalemate on the military front. Such was the case during the first five months of 1969; it was again the case during the spring and summer of 1970.
U.S. and Soviet negotiating positions converged to the greatest extent at those times. Soviet rejection of the Rogers Plan in December 1969 was galling to U.S. policymakers. But that action may well be explicable in terms of the military situation at the time. Israel was scoring tremendous successes in the war along the canal. Nothing in Israeli military behavior, in the Israeli diplomatic position, or in the pace of U.S. arms deliveries to Israel gave hope of Israeli flexibility or signaled U.S. willingness to pressure Israel sufficiently to force such flexibility. Nasser was desperate. The Soviets accepted his insistence that Egypt not be asked to negotiate from a prone position (Whetten 1974: 82).

Would the Soviets have accepted the Rogers Plan if Nasser had been willing to accept it? Probably they would have. The issue for the Soviets was not the justice or injustice of the substantive terms. They themselves had espoused much the same terms earlier that year and had helped to negotiate the Rogers Plan itself. The issue for them was both the intransigence of their client and that Nasser's intransigence was a product of military desperation. The USSR had regularly demonstrated that it was unwilling to risk its influence in the Arab world by being the only superpower to coerce its clients. In contrast, during the spring and summer of 1970, when the United States was holding up Israel's arms package, the Soviets threatened to withdraw their defense of Egyptian airspace if Nasser did not accept the converging U.S.-Soviet terms for a settlement.

Indeed, after the Soviets rejected the Rogers Plan, they continued diplomatic efforts to sell it to Nasser. The selling point they brought to those efforts was their willingness to restore Egyptian defenses so that Egypt would not be negotiating from a position of abject weakness. Thus, at the January 1970 meeting in Moscow, according to Nadav Safran, "In exchange for their support the Soviets demanded from Nasser that once Egypt's bargaining position was sufficiently restored, he would make an earnest effort to seek a political solution on terms akin to those of the Rogers Plan." Similarly, according to Quandt, "In a secret meeting with Rogers on May 11, Ambassador Dobrynin stated that the Soviet Union had managed to obtain political concessions from Nasser in return for the new arms shipments that were just beginning to Egypt" (1977: 79). In light of Soviet pressure on Nasser that summer it seems plausible to conclude that the Soviet strategy during 1970 involved a commitment to achieving military stalemate in the War of Attrition as a precondition for negotiations based on some variant of the Rogers Plan of October 1969. That plan would accord the Soviets a coequal sponsoring and enforcement role while delivering on the Soviet commitment to the Arabs to secure return of occupied territories through superpower collaboration.
One major event during the War of Attrition is not so easily explained in these terms, however: the June 1969 diplomatic retrogression. This development took place at a time when Egypt was not prostrate militarily; on the contrary, the Arab side was doing very well in the war. If the Soviets had colluded with the United States at this time, putting forth a joint program for cease-fire and settlement (as Rogers and Sisco were suggesting), the Egyptian bargaining position would not have been a weak one. Yet the Soviets backed off. Why?

As we have seen, the Soviet retrogression was not self-initiated; the Soviets were not uncomfortable with the substance of the terms being offered by Sisco. Gromyko tried to sell the proposal at the meeting of world Communist parties in Moscow in June 1969. Both Brezhnev and Gromyko urged Nasser to accept it. What was at issue once again was Soviet unwillingness to twist arms very hard to bring their client into line. Nasser was emotional about the issue. He had long been trying to convince the Soviets to accept and support his tactic of combining military with political pressure on Israel. The Soviets had balked. He initiated the War of Attrition on his own, and at some risk. Now that the effort was paying dividends, he was not about to let the Soviets prevent him from pressing his advantage and securing the best possible bargaining position. In light of the depth of Nasser's feelings the Soviets grudgingly chose not to bully him.14

Why did they make that choice? There are several possibilities, and more research on the events of this month is needed. One possibility, of course, is that the Soviet commitment to a peace settlement was very low or nonexistent. The June 1969 retrogression is perhaps the single most compelling bit of diplomatic evidence in support of the "no war, no peace" hypothesis. But that events of this month stand alone in not being easily explained on other terms undermines the hypothesis. For if the Soviets were following such a strategy, we would expect a series of such anomalies.

A second possibility is that a hard-line coalition suddenly emerged ascendant in Moscow's Middle East policy in June 1969. We know that 1969 was a year of change in Soviet foreign and domestic policy more generally (Horn 1976; Breslauer 1982: chapters 11 and 15). We also know that 1969 was the year in which Brezhnev pushed to the forefront, forging a dominant coalition based on his priorities in budgetary, administrative, and participatory policy, as well as on Soviet policy toward arms control, West Germany, and Eastern Europe (Breslauer 1982: chapter 11; Volten 1977). Still, the problems with this hypothesis prevent us from readily accepting it. Analysts who identify a hard-line turn in Soviet published definitions of the Middle East situation trace its onset to the period of September to November 1969—three to five months after the diplomatic retrogression of June.
The evidence of Gromyko's efforts to persuade Nasser in June further erodes the argument. Finally, the coalition-shift theory—ostensibly a shift away from collaboration toward intransigence—cannot explain the resurgence of the Soviet collaborative urge and Soviet willingness to pressure Nasser, some nine to twelve months later.

A third possibility, which I find most plausible, is that the Soviets were simply not willing to bully Nasser when things were finally going well for him and when he, along with other Arab leaders, was adamant about pressing his advantage. Since the 1967 war Soviet leaders had been rather consistent on this score. They had dealt with Arab leaders most coercively (by withholding the most advanced weaponry) when attempting to prevent them from going to war. Little coercion appears to have been used (until the summer of 1970) in pressing Nasser or other Arab leaders to be more forthcoming about settlement terms. This tendency reflected more than just Soviet identification with the Arab cause. It also reflected (1) the severe limits on the USSR's ability to control its clients (who were neither satellites nor choiceless dependents); (2) the asymmetry of patron-client relationships in the Middle East—the Egyptians could turn to the United States if frustrated by Soviet pressure, whereas Israel would not turn to Moscow; (3) the intense Soviet desire to maintain and consolidate the USSR's influence in Egypt; and (4) that Israel was not under obvious pressure to be publicly forthcoming about settlement terms. All four of these considerations bore on the Soviet commitment to competitive influence building, a commitment that was always higher in the Soviet scale of preferences than was the search for a peace settlement. Thus, the June 1969 retrogression, although deserving of more research, appears explicable in terms of an image of the Soviets acting as collaborative competitors rather than unalterable antagonists.

FROM THE DEATH OF NASSER TO THE EXPULSION OF SOVIET MILITARY PERSONNEL FROM EGYPT, SEPTEMBER 1970–JULY 1972

During the period from the death of Nasser through the expulsion of Soviet military personnel from Egypt the general Soviet vision of combining collaboration and competition did not change. What did change was the Soviet estimation of U.S. sincerity about superpower collaboration and Egypt's reliability as an ally. The consequence was a change in Soviet tactics in the Arab world, but within the context of a continuing Soviet commitment both to prevent war and to advance the prospects for a peace settlement, based upon an armed peace guaranteed by the great powers.
There is plenty of evidence during these years to support an image of the Soviets as unalterable antagonists. Most of the evidence concerns patterns of Soviet military assistance to the Arab world (Glassman 1975: 83–87; Heikal 1978: 224; Whetten 1974: 162–66, 188). Thus, after the Jordanian crisis (fall 1970), Soviet arms deliveries to Egypt increased suddenly and markedly. From January to March 1971 the Soviets extended their air defense of Egypt to cover the entire country, delivered large inventories of MIG-21s, and sent Egypt highly advanced defensive weaponry that had never before been deployed outside the Soviet Union. Moreover, throughout 1971 there was a marked escalation of Soviet promises about arms deliveries: in May, July, and October 1971 Soviet leaders promised Sadat the MIG-23s and SCUD missiles (weaponry that could allow Egypt to extend a war to the Israeli heartland) that Sadat and Nasser had long been demanding.

During this period the Soviets also undertook a major effort to diversify and solidify their bases of influence in the region as a whole (Glassman 1975: 83, 96; Whetten 1974: 215–16; Freedman 1978b: 47–95). After the Jordanian crisis the Soviets sealed a large arms deal with Syria. During 1971 they used a variety of means to upgrade their ties with South Yemen, Morocco, and Algeria, while simultaneously offering economic assistance to the conservative monarchies in the region. During the first half of 1972 the Soviets stepped up arms deliveries to Syria (now including SAM-3 antiaircraft missiles in the package), strengthened their ties with Libya and Algeria, and signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Iraq. Moreover, they encouraged Iraq to nationalize Western oil interests and accorded Baghdad large sums of money to develop, refine, and transport oil itself instead of relying on Western multinationals. In sum, the trend is unambiguous. Throughout this period Moscow escalated military and political competition in the region.

Although the Soviets stepped up their military stake, it would be a mistake to confuse this escalation with an intent to encourage Arab belief in a military solution to the conflict with Israel. The available evidence regarding diplomatic interactions and arms transfers suggests that the Soviets remained consistent in their “no war” stance. After the Jordanian crisis, Marshal Zakharov, Premier Kosygin, and President Podgorny all urged Sadat to extend the cease-fire, to exercise caution, and to refrain from resuming the War of Attrition. They urged him to agree in principle to put off plans for going to war with Israel until all Soviet military personnel had been replaced by properly trained Egyptian personnel (a distant goal at the time) (Heikal 1975: 112, 117; Heikal 1978: 217; Whetten 1974: 154). Indeed, the Soviets were so insistent on caution that they reportedly “shocked” their Egyptian hosts (Freedman 1978b: 49). The same persuasive efforts
characterized the consistent Soviet opposition to Sadat's "year of decision" announcement—that 1971 would be marked either by a peace settlement or by renewed warfare. And lest these urgings be written off as a subterfuge, we are also privy to the transcript of secret discussions between Soviet Politburo members and a delegation of Syrian Communists in May 1971. The Soviets insisted that a military solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict was not "realistic" because the Arabs would surely lose.\(^{15}\)

Beyond persuasion and urgings, the Soviets also used coercion—specifically, denial of materiel—to communicate the same point. According to Whetten, Podgorny informed Sadat in January 1971 that he would not receive Soviet support for a resumption of the War of Attrition.\(^{16}\) In March 1971 Brezhnev informed Sadat that the Soviets would deliver missile-launching Ilyushin bombers only on the conditions that they be manned by Soviet crews and that the decision to use them be made by Moscow: "If we don’t give you all the arms you ask for," Brezhnev explained, "it’s not because we’re afraid but because we think that each armament should be related to the appropriate stage of the struggle" (Heikal 1978: 224). And the Soviets were determined to maintain control over the definition of just what "stage of the struggle" the Egyptians had reached. Similarly, in December 1971 (the last month of Sadat’s year of decision), the Soviets suddenly removed their "missile crews, aircraft, and air defense equipment from the Aswan Dam area" (Rubinstein 1977: 163). This action may have been prompted by the Soviet decision to assist India in its war with Pakistan; or it may have been part of an effort to prevent Sadat from taking rash action against Israel.

Still another indication that the Soviets were attempting to combine political-military competition with the avoidance of confrontation was that during the entire period they never delivered the oft-promised advanced weaponry (MIG-23s, TU-22 fighter bombers, and surface-to-surface SCUD missiles) that might embolden Sadat to launch an all-out war on Israel.\(^{17}\) The gap between Soviet pledges and Soviet deliveries actually widened during this period. That gap cannot be attributed to specific intervening conditions at a point or two in time, for the Soviets repeatedly promised and repeatedly reneged.\(^{18}\) The most likely explanation is that the Soviets were hoping through their pledges both to stall Sadat and to pressure the United States and Israel to moderate their bargaining positions.

Advocates of the "no war, no peace" interpretation need not disagree with this view of Soviet intentions, for such theorists concede a Soviet commitment to confrontation avoidance. They can point, however, to expanded Soviet military and political competition during this period as evidence that the Soviets were trying to prevent peace
by keeping the pot boiling. But there are several problems with this conclusion. First, the Soviet commitment to competitive influence building was an end in itself; it need not be interpreted as an instrumental means of frustrating progress on the diplomatic track. Second, Soviet actions were not taking place in a vacuum; rather, they were taking place in a context of military escalation on both sides. After the cease-fire of August 1970 the Nixon administration rewarded Israel with accelerated delivery of A-4s and F-4s, as well as an unusually large arms package. In December 1971 the United States released for delivery to Israel still more F-4 fighter planes that had been held up since March at the insistence of William Rogers (Quandt 1977: 147); and in February 1972 the United States agreed to a long-term arms deal for Israel that would deliver 42 F-4s and 82 A-4s (Quandt 1977: 147), an unprecedented deal that prompted Sadat to complain to Soviet leaders that the United States had bought Israel a new air force (Heikal 1978: 252). One cannot say that Soviet arms deliveries to Egypt and Syria were simply reactions to U.S. arms transfers to Israel. The sequencing of decisions is too irregular to support such a conclusion. But U.S. arms transfers were not simply reactive either. Governmental decisions on both sides appear to have been decisively influenced by an effort to keep pace with the escalating demands of both nations' unmanageable clients.

Yet the expansion and deepening of Soviet commitments was reactive in one very important sense. Given the independence of the USSR's clients, and given the U.S. effort to drive a wedge between the Soviet Union and Egypt, Soviet commitments frequently deepened precisely in order to increase Arab dependence on the Soviets.

Throughout the first year of Sadat's rule in Egypt, Soviet leaders received unambiguous signs and signals that the new Egyptian leader distrusted them more than Nasser had. Direct comments by Sadat and his aides communicated the message that he was using the Soviet connection for tactical and temporary purposes (Heikal 1975: 120, 173; Heikal 1978: 226). Sadat was also highly receptive to unilateral U.S. diplomatic efforts to arrange an interim settlement along the Suez Canal (Rubinstein 1977: 135, 137, 140–44, 148). He purged the allegedly pro-Soviet "Sabry group" from the Egyptian leadership and reversed Nasser's socializing drift by wooing both domestic and foreign capitalists to improve the performance of the Egyptian economy. He initiated an entente with Saudi Arabia and sought Saudi financial assistance in diversifying his sources of arms. When President Jaafar Numeiri slaughtered most of the Communist party membership in the Sudan (after an abortive coup attempt in which the Soviet Union had a hand), Sadat praised and assisted Numeiri, even as the Soviet Union was denouncing and seeking to isolate him.
The Soviet government was also receiving clear signs and signals that the United States had abandoned superpower collaboration in favor of the Kissingerian strategy of going it alone in the Middle East, driving a wedge between the Soviet Union and Egypt, and securing a settlement only when Egypt and the moderate Arab regimes accepted U.S. premises about the shape of a settlement and the importance of excluding and reducing Soviet presence in the region. Top Soviet leaders were informed directly of the new U.S. strategy by Egyptian and Saudi leaders (Heikal 1975: 146; Heikal 1978: 235). Moreover, U.S. behavior seemed to confirm the truth of the warnings. Not only were Rogers and Sisco seeking to negotiate such a unilateral interim settlement, but Kissinger was simultaneously communicating to Sadat that expulsion of the Soviet military presence was a prerequisite for Israeli flexibility (Quandt 1977: 138-45). And through it all the U.S. government refrained from the routine consultations with Soviet leaders that had previously accompanied most U.S. diplomatic efforts (Whetten 1974: 194).

Soviet leaders were deeply worried about Sadat’s shows of independence and U.S. efforts to exploit and extend them (Heikal 1975: 173; Heikal 1978: 219, 237; Sadat 1977: 222; Rubinstein 1977: 158; Whetten 1974: 198–99). In private conversations the Soviets warned Sadat of U.S. motives and Israeli intransigence, urging him not to forget that the road to realization of his goals (that is, return of the occupied territories) lay through Moscow, not Washington. When Sadat ignored such warnings, Soviet leaders criticized him for perfidy and warned him that the Soviet Union might have to reevaluate its support for Egypt. But rather than withdraw support, the Soviets deepened it.

The escalation of Soviet competition for influence in the region does not follow exactly the escalation of U.S. military support for Israel, but it does correlate rather strikingly with the growing perception that Sadat was unreliable as an ally and that the United States was eager to exploit that unreliability to Soviet disadvantage. The Syrians’ backing down in Jordan (fall 1970) was followed by a surge of arms deliveries to Egypt and a large arms deal with Syria—as if to demonstrate that the Syrian actions should not cast doubt on Soviet dependability as a patron. The Soviet escalation of arms deliveries and promises during 1971 proceeded apace with Sadat’s growing signs of independence. The upgrading of ties with South Yemen, Morocco, and Algeria during 1971 also appears to have been insurance against Egyptian unreliability. Finally, after Sadat gave still greater signs of independence in early 1972, the Soviets increased arms deliveries to Syria and deepened ties with Libya, Algeria, and Iraq (Glassman 1975: 83, 96; Whetten 1974: 215–16; Freedman 1978b: 47–95).
Thus, it would be more than dubious to argue that the escalation of Soviet competition in the region proves Soviet insincerity about furthering the prospects for peace. The escalation only supports the conclusion that the Soviets were not interested in a peace that would diminish their influence in the region.

Indeed, when we turn to the diplomatic track, we find that the Soviets apparently perceived no fundamental incompatibility between their commitments to superpower competition and superpower collaboration. During this period they continued earlier efforts to induce the United States to pressure Israel, to restore the collusive approach to a peace settlement, and to moderate Arab demands in order to facilitate the search for armed peace. In the fall of 1970 they reiterated their flexible negotiating position of July 1970 while they urged Sadat to pay more attention to a diplomatic solution to the conflict (Heikal 1978: 217; Whetten 1974: 136).

But the U.S. government was not of a mind to listen to Soviet signals or to interpret Soviet motives generously. After the Jordanian crisis, U.S. leaders made up their minds to proceed alone. The months of February to August 1971 were dominated by a unilateral effort to pry Sadat away from the Soviet Union and to negotiate an interim accord between him and the Israelis. The Soviets complained frequently about U.S. unilateralism and rejected the idea of an interim agreement unlinked to a comprehensive settlement plan (Kissinger 1979: 1285–88). Behind this rejection was the Soviet view that formal superpower collusion was the only way to ensure that an interim agreement not be used as a lever to drive a wedge between the USSR and Egypt.

As it was, the U.S. unilateral effort failed (Quandt 1977: 138–43). At that point (August 5, 1971), Nixon sent a letter to Brezhnev suggesting a return to superpower collaboration. According to Kissinger, the letter was a smoke screen, calculated to make the Soviets believe that the United States was sincere about collaboration so that Moscow would continue to pressure its allies to refrain from going back to war. The assumption was that, with time, Soviet allies would become so disenchanted with Moscow’s caution that they would forsake the USSR and turn westward once again (Kissinger 1979: 1285–86, 1288–89).

The strategy worked in that Brezhnev’s reply reaffirmed Soviet interest in collaboration and Soviet dismaya with earlier U.S. efforts to work unilaterally (Kissinger 1979: 1286). At the end of September 1971 Gromyko spoke at length with Kissinger and Nixon about the furtherance of the peace process in language that indicated Soviet flexibility on the terms of final settlement but also indicated Soviet insistence that negotiations look toward a final settlement, not interim accords. Gromyko suggested that Middle East discussions be put into the special White House channel, that interim agreement “be
linked specifically and in detail to a final settlement,” and that after Israeli withdrawal and the implementation of a peace settlement, the Soviet Union would withdraw all its forces from the Middle East, join in an arms embargo of the area, and participate in the process of guaranteeing the settlement (Kissinger 1979: 1286–88). These proposals were essentially the terms that Soviet leaders urged their allies to accept during visits to Moscow by various Arab leaders (Rubinstein 1977: 157–59; Whetten 1974: 210–11).

Yet there were few signs that the United States was willing or able to pressure Israel. In response to the War of Attrition, Israeli demands had escalated to include substantial border modifications (Rubinstein 1977: 137). In addition, the ascendancy of the Nixon-Kissinger team over the Rogers-Sisco team in Middle East policymaking ushered in a sharp reduction in the United States’ willingness to dissociate itself from Israeli maximal demands (Kissinger 1979: chapters 14 and 30; Rubinstein 1977: 138). Soviet-Egyptian military actions in June and July 1970 also led Nixon to assure Israel that the United States would never pressure the Israelis to return all the occupied territories (Bar-Siman-Tov 1980: 182). And in February 1972 talks between Joseph Sisco and Israeli ambassador Yitzhak Rabin, the results of which were reported in the New York Times, wedded the United States to the Israeli position in negotiations on all procedural and substantive matters (Quandt 1977: 147; Whetten 1974: 204).

Despite this evidence, the Soviets made further concessions on the diplomatic track—though it is unclear whether they still entertained hopes of furthering a peace formula in the Middle East or were largely seeking to further the cause of détente in general. In April 1972 Gromyko conceded the possibility of decoupling an interim agreement from a final settlement, as long as he and Kissinger “simultaneously reached a secret understanding on the terms of a comprehensive settlement, which would be surfaced and implemented immediately after [the] Presidential election” (Kissinger 1979: 1292).

The most far-reaching concession, however, came at the May 1972 summit. There, Kissinger and Gromyko worked out and signed a set of “general working principles” for an overall Middle East settlement. Those principles were weaker and vaguer than UN Resolution 242, were ambiguous about the extent of Israeli withdrawal, and allowed for substantial border modifications by leaving out the usual caveat that only “minor” border rectifications could be considered (Kissinger 1979: 1293–94; Quandt 1977: 150–51). In other words, the Soviets were now willing to an unprecedented extent to hedge their long-standing promise to their Arab allies. And Kissinger was genuinely surprised that the Soviets were dissociating themselves from what he had always defined as the “maximum Arab program.” “I have never understood
why Gromyko accepted them," he notes (Kissinger 1979: 1294). But it was too late for him to reevaluate his beliefs about Soviet intentions in the Middle East, Soviet interest in a settlement, or the Soviet role in his geopolitical vision. He simply wrote Gromyko's acceptance off as either a fluke or a sign that Israeli intransigence had paid off (that is, as showing that the Soviets were either overtired or desperate) (Kissinger 1979: 1294, 1297). Either way, he could deny the implications for the possible resurrection of superpower collaboration in the region.

Sadat did not deny those implications, however. He added the May summit to his list of grievances against the USSR and decided that it was time for a bold stroke. In July 1972 he demanded the immediate withdrawal of Soviet military personnel from his country.

CONCLUSION

The argument that Soviet leaders were involved in a calculated effort to maintain a condition of "no war, no peace" in the Middle East from 1967 to 1972 is difficult to sustain in light of the evidence presented in this chapter. It is true that certain ambiguities have not been resolved by reshuffling the available evidence; but that is the case with almost any historical study. The crucial consideration is not whether the "no war, no peace" hypothesis has been definitely disproved; such a conclusion would be almost impossible in the absence of candid memoirs by Soviet leaders. The more important consideration is whether Soviet behavior along various military and political tracks is more plausibly explained by an alternative characterization of Soviet strategy. Characterizing the Soviet Union as a collaborative competitor, driven by mixed motives (neither completely benevolent nor completely duplicitous), appears to do a better job of explaining the evolution of Soviet behavior during the years in question.

My argument can be summarized as follows. From mid-1967 through mid-1972 the Soviet leadership sought a peace settlement based on superpower collaboration that would simultaneously reduce the probability of military confrontation with the United States in the Middle East, advance the cause of détente, and create a more stable base of influence for the USSR in Middle Eastern affairs. The Soviets sought to bring about an armed peace based on Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories, Arab recognition of and normalization of formal relations with Israel, and the Soviet Union maintaining a coequal superpower role in enforcing the peace. Soviet behavior during these years indicates a belief that such settlement terms would work to the advantage of Soviet interests—both regional and global.
But Soviet behavior also indicates a determination that the peace-making process must not threaten Soviet influence in the region by forcing the USSR to pressure the Arabs significantly more than the United States was pressuring Israel. To some extent, this belief left the USSR hostage to the emotionalism of Arab leaders, to the escalating military conflict on the ground, and to the U.S. commitment to maintaining Israeli military superiority. For under these conditions it became very difficult to specify what constituted equivalent pressure by the superpowers on their clients. The tension between Soviet commitment to a peace settlement and Soviet fear of overpressuring the Arabs appears to have shaped Moscow’s approach to U.S.-Soviet collaboration. The Soviets appear to have concluded that some form of undercover U.S.-Soviet collusion was desirable and necessary. This decision would appear to explain their occasional willingness to make concessions on Arab territorial demands and their repeated efforts to put U.S.-Soviet negotiations into a secret forum—the White House channel. This method of negotiating would allow them to make verbal concessions that would not become public until it was clear that the United States was willing to reciprocate with equivalent pressure on Israel. Joint U.S.-Soviet pressure on local actors would remove the possibility that Egypt would turn westward if alienated by unilateral Soviet pressure. Lack of prior publicity was crucial. The maintenance of Soviet regional influence was the highest Soviet priority, but the commitment to a peace settlement of the kind just outlined was real nonetheless.

Many of the zigs and zags of Soviet policy—and many of the apparent contradictions between Soviet behavior on different tracks—can be explained in terms of this mixed goal structure. For the Soviets were caught up in what game theorists might call “a multiple actor game of approach-avoidance.” They genuinely sought to collaborate with the United States but simultaneously they sought to compete with Washington for influence in the region. Hence, they would approach the United States to further the cause of collaboration while avoiding taking positions that would give the appearance of selling out their clients. Similarly, they would support Egypt in order to consolidate their influence and advance their competitive standing but try not to change conditions enough to provoke an Israeli preemptive strike or an Egyptian military offensive. They would urge the Egyptians to moderate their military and political behavior, but they would shy away from coercing too severely for fear of compromising their influence in Egypt and in the Arab world in general.

Soviet calculations regarding the tactics most likely to advance the USSR’s goals were complicated by the uncertainties inherent in this game of approach-avoidance. The boundaries between effective
pressure and excessive pressure, between competition and possible confrontation, and between collaboration with the United States and the appearance of selling out the Arabs were never clear and were constantly shifting. The Soviets were often feeling their way.\(^{19}\)

Calculation was complicated further by the fact that they were trying to collaborate with a U.S. government that was divided internally with respect to both strategy and tactics, that was frequently hostage to Israeli actions, and that was also engaged in a game of approach-avoidance toward the Soviets, the Israelis, and the Egyptians. William Rogers and Joseph Sisco often advanced negotiating positions that received little support from the White House. U.S. denial of Israeli demands never matched Soviet denial of Egyptian demands. Kissinger and Nixon adhered to a strategic conception that was incompatible with the Soviet image of the settlement and peacemaking process. Specifically, (1) they rejected any approach that required substantial and sustained U.S. pressure on Israel; (2) they accepted the notion that Israeli military superiority was a necessary condition for avoiding another war and convincing the Arabs to accept Israeli conditions for peace; (3) they rejected as illegitimate Soviet efforts to use the peacemaking process as a means of consolidating or expanding the USSR’s influence with Arab clients; and (4) they viewed as both desirable and possible a separate peace mediated by the United States that would result in a significant reduction of Soviet influence in the region.

Given the very different priorities and perspectives of the Kremlin and the White House, it was most probable that each side would embrace a very different definition of superpower restraint and reciprocity in their relationship. The incompatibility of their respective definitions was constantly demonstrated by their responses to the escalating military conflict in the region during the War of Attrition. Under these conditions it would have been remarkable had the collaborative relationship succeeded in advancing the cause of peace.

Before closing, let me emphasize the limits of the claims I am making. Even if the result of our analysis is the discrediting of the “no war, no peace” hypothesis in favor of the “collaborative competitor” interpretation, it would not necessarily follow that (1) greater U.S. receptivity to Soviet collaborative offerings would have headed off the 1973 war; (2) U.S. interests (however these might be defined) would have been better served by drawing the Soviet Union into a collaborative relationship; (3) the United States ought to have abandoned Camp David in favor of U.S.-Soviet collaboration to settle the Palestinian problem; or (4) the Soviet collaborative streak is necessarily as strong today as it was from 1967 to 1972. Any of these propositions may be correct, but none of them can be resolved through the evidence presented.
in this chapter. The purpose of this study has been more limited: to advance a reasonably persuasive explanation of Soviet behavior from 1967 to 1972. Yet, surely, that is a necessary component of any effort to address the broader questions responsibly.

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ENDNOTES

1. For example, Rubinstein (1977). Indeed, this position has become conventional wisdom among politicians in Washington. In the wake of the decline of détente, it has also been generalized as a characterization of Brezhnev’s “interests” in the Third World. See, for example, Bialer (1980: 265).

2. Indeed, one proponent of the hypothesis admits the shaky ground on which it stands by adding: “Needless to say, some might likewise charge the United States with not really wanting a settlement because of its partiality to Israel” (Campbell 1972: 51).


4. In addition to the prodigious research in Soviet published sources that went into many of the books used here, the works by Kissinger, El Shazly, Heikal, and Sadat are memoirs by insiders who interacted with the Soviets; the book by Bar-Siman-Tov taps memoirs by Israeli leaders and interviews with Israeli officials; and the book by Quandt is based in part on personal experience within the U.S. government.

5. In response to my query about the sources for certain claims, Whetten assured me that “in most cases, [my statements] came from my personal knowledge while I served as the senior political analyst for Headquarters USAFE [United States Air Force in Europe]. To my knowledge, all the points were unclassified at the time I wrote the book” (personal communication, 19 June 1981).

6. In contrast, Eran (1978: 33) claims that the Soviets did indeed accept Nasser’s premise in spring-summer 1968. He bases that conclusion largely on changes in Soviet published commentary about guerrilla operations at the time. But Eran’s interpretation receives little support elsewhere. Golan (1980: 44–46) uses the same sources but emphasizes the limits of Soviet change in doctrine, concluding that it was simply a sop to Nasser, who had undertaken a rapprochement with Fatah, rather than a change in Soviet perspectives


10. Indeed, Heikal (1978: 197) argues that, by the end of 1969 "the Russians were beginning to appreciate . . . the unrewarding nature of negoti- 


12. Rubinstein (1977: 85–86, 85 n.62) and Whetten (1974: 73). The term "grudging support" is Rubinstein's. He cites British journalists in Cairo at the time as his source regarding a clash between Nasser and Gromyko. Rubinstein feels these journalists exaggerate the intensity of the clash, but he does not deny its existence.


15. The transcript was published in a Lebanese journal and is discussed in most secondary literature on the period. For example, see Glassman (1975: 
88).


tion for this claim.

17. On Soviet unwillingness to deliver these advanced weapons, the secondary literature is in agreement. Even political adversaries such as Sadat and El Shazly are in agreement on these facts, despite their different evaluations of Soviet commitment to the Egyptian cause. See Sadat (1977: 185–87, 198, 212, 219, 220–21, 225–28) and El Shazly (1980: 28, 29, 102, 106, 141, 157–58, 160,
161–62). The Western literature, however, is split over how much importance to attach to these facts as signs of Soviet "moderation." See, for example, Rubinstein (1977: 192 ff.).

18. For example, the Indo-Pakistani war of November–December 1971 is occasionally cited to explain the USSR's failure to deliver on its promises of October 1971.

19. The reader will note that this characterization treats the Soviet leadership as a relatively unified actor with respect to overall strategy, though with a mixed goal structure. I find this a more persuasive approach than that used by Kass (1978), who ascribes changes in Soviet behavior to coalition shifts within the leadership. The striking continuity in Soviet priorities and settlement terms across the three subperiods investigated in this study undermines the coalition-shift theory.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Chapter 3
The Soviet Union and the Palestinian Issue

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BASIC SOVIET POSITIONS

As in the case of national liberation movements in general, the PLO fits into a number of categories in Soviet foreign policy, from the most specific, that of the movement itself, to the broader regional context, all the way up to the global context. Thus, three sets of parameters determine the Soviet attitude and relations with the movement, with global considerations, that is, the superpower relationship, taking priority over all others. Given that the PLO or the Palestinian issue is part of a regional conflict in which the superpowers are both heavily involved, the global element has increasingly guided the Soviet position on a given issue at a given time, with regional considerations often operating as merely a function of these global considerations and the particular PLO factor reduced in many instances to nothing more than a tactical vehicle for the pursuit of broader, ultimately globally related objectives. This is not to say that developments within the PLO—the positions and policies of the organization itself—do not play a role in Soviet thinking; but the measure of Soviet decision making in this regard would appear to be primarily determined by the broader categories of considerations. Yet if the Soviet attitude toward the PLO is delineated by and subordinate to other, broader categories of considerations, it may also be said that this very link between the movement and Soviet global concerns has created a situation wherein the PLO has assumed an importance far beyond its actual power and far beyond the importance normally ascribed by Soviet policy to national liberation movements—eliciting far greater Soviet interest and apparent commitment than might normally be the case.

The evolution of the Soviet-PLO relationship clearly reflects this multidimensional aspect of Soviet policy and, in a sense, the evolution of Soviet tactics regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict itself.
Initially rebuffed by the Soviet Union, the PLO, from its inception in 1964 until Arafat's inclusion in an Egyptian delegation to the Soviet Union in 1968, was not even regarded as a genuine national liberation movement (Golan 1980: chapter 1). Prior to and immediately after the 1967 Six Day War the Soviets still perceived the Arab-Israeli conflict as a regional conflict between states (Israel and its Arab neighbors). The Palestinian problem, insofar as it was even acknowledged by Moscow, was seen purely as a refugee problem. Prior to the Six Day War the Soviets perceived their own role in the conflict as one of competition with the West, particularly the United States, in the classic arenas of military and economic assistance and political support. American support of Israel was Washington's Achilles heel in this competition, according to Soviet propaganda and policy. Following the Six Day War Moscow would appear to have expanded this tactic by seizing upon the issue of the territories acquired by Israel in the course of the brief war. Whether the Soviets in fact believed that they could obtain the return of the lands to the Arab states is probably something we may never know, but the Israeli-occupied territories did become the focal point of Soviet efforts on the Arabs' behalf, because it was the area of the greatest American vulnerability given U.S. support of Israel.1

While the Soviet perception of the Arab-Israeli conflict remained the same, that is, a conflict between states, Moscow's attitude toward the Palestinians, in the form of the PLO, did begin to undergo a change in 1968. By way of explanation, one might argue that the Soviets were impressed by the attention the PLO was attracting in its terrorist operations inside and outside Israel, or they may have been encouraged by internal personnel and organizational changes taking place within the movement (the ascendancy of Fatah, under Arafat), or they may have been spurred by Chinese support for the PLO (although that had been something of a constant since 1964). Some or all of these factors may indeed have provoked a Soviet reassessment, but inasmuch as it was not so much a reassessment that took place (the Soviets continued to belittle the importance of the movement and of the Palestinian problem) but rather a change in tactics, the motivating factor would appear to have been simply a change in attitude by the Arab states themselves. As these states, particularly Egypt, increasingly emphasized the Palestinian issue and the PLO, the Soviets provided the corresponding support—in the form of contacts, arms, training and greater political attention. This materialized, however, without a change in the Soviets' basic perception of the conflict, without a call for the Palestinians' national rights or a Palestinian state, and without acknowledging the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. All of these more significant changes were to come only later, in the 1970s.
Somewhere around the time of the Yom Kippur War—in the year preceding it and as it was drawing to a close—there were signs that the Soviets were indeed beginning a reassessment of their attitude toward the Palestinian issue and possibly toward the Arab-Israeli conflict itself.\(^2\) The most immediate cause was most likely the expulsion of Soviet advisors from Egypt in the summer of 1972 and the general deterioration in Soviet-Egyptian relations. Egypt had been the cornerstone of Soviet policy in the Middle East—indeed to some degree in the Third World. The failure there was a serious blow to Soviet policymakers and as such occasioned much discussion and rethinking altogether. In the Arab-Israeli context, it led to a public emphasis on the more radical forces in the area, and with this, an increase in Soviet support for the PLO (Golan 1977: chapter 2). In the wake of the Yom Kippur War, if not prior to it, the Soviets may well have come to the conclusion that the Americans were becoming a more significant factor—one that might well prove effective in obtaining the return of the Arabs’ lands and achieving a settlement. The Palestinians, then, could become the outstanding issue, the one that would provide the Soviets with an “in,” not only in the talks concerning Jordan (which was an American client), but also in the peace process in general. As events unfolded, and particularly in the years that followed, the Palestinians’ rights issue, rather than the return of the Arab states’ territories, was the one on which the Americans might be the most vulnerable, most restricted and most frustrated, as well as the issue that, at least publicly, united the Arab world.

This was a period in which the Soviets had begun to reassess their attitude toward the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole, directing their efforts toward participation in a settlement that might provide them with an internationally sanctioned permanent presence as guarantor of the peace, lower the risk of superpower confrontation, and release them for the pursuit of interests of higher priority in the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area. It cannot be ruled out, therefore, that the altered attitude towards the PLO was also prompted by a realization that the Palestinian issue was central to any settlement and demanded greater Soviet attention. This might explain Soviet queries to the three PLO leaders, Arafat, Habash, and Hawatmeh at the end of October 1973, asking just what was meant by the demand for Palestinian “national rights.”\(^3\) These queries were accompanied by a Soviet recommendation for a moderate—what they called a “realistic”—policy, for if the Soviets were to focus on their cause, the Palestinians were going to have to be restrained somewhat. Thus, in 1973 the Soviets pressed the PLO, particularly Fatah, to abandon the use of terror, and even armed struggle altogether. (They were much less successful with Habash, with whom the Soviets remained at loggerheads for some
years concerning the issue, among others, of terror), and they urged
upon Arafat the more limited demand for a mini-Palestinian state,
on the West Bank and Gaza, as distinct from urging the destruc-
tion of Israel (that is, a democratic secular state in all of Pales-
tine) or even a return to the 1947 Partition Plan lines. They also
urged acceptance of UN Security Council Resolution 242, with its
recognition of Israel's right to exist within secure borders, as a
means of initiating negotiations to which Moscow would be a party.

All of these issues—terror, armed struggle, the ministate, rec-
ognition of Israel, resolution 242 and negotiations, as well as other
issues such as the lack of organizational, ideological, and compositional
unity within the PLO, PLO activities in and from Lebanon, and from
the PLO point of view, Soviet military assistance, the emigration of
Soviet Jews, Soviet policy regarding Eritrea, and other issues—re-
mained stumbling blocks in the Soviet-PLO relationship over the years.

On the issue of methods of struggle, for example, the Soviets have
generally been reticent, or at least ambivalent, concerning the use of
armed struggle. In their dealings with the PLO as well as with other
national liberation movements and in their theoretical literature on the
subject they have clearly expressed their preference for political over
armed means. Aside from ideological reasons, which can be traced
back to the early Bolsheviks, the major reason for this stance has
been the very pragmatic concern over the escalation of local conflicts
and the possibility of superpower confrontation. While there have
been signs of debate and disagreement within the Soviet Union over
this matter (Barth Urban 1976: 1361–65; Hough 1981: 131–32; Ramet
Volkogonov et al. 1977: 249–50; Volkogonov 1984a: 3; Volkogonov
1984b: 55; Malinovskii 1974: 97), the inevitability of escalation and
the undesirability of armed struggle being questioned by some, the
dominant Soviet position has remained one of preferring political over

Recognizing, however, that movements themselves have opted
and will continue to opt for armed struggle, regardless of Soviet advice,
the Soviets have pressed for what they call a combination of the two
methods. Rather than remain on the sidelines or abandon the possibility
of gaining either influence over these movements or good relations with
these movements, the Soviets have provided the wherewithal for the
use of both methods—within limits. These limits are connected with
Soviet preferences in the realm of armed struggle itself. Guerrilla warfare
and conventional warfare (regular forces) are the two types of armed
struggle worthy of consideration by the Soviets. Sabotage and terror are
considered offshoots of guerrilla warfare, the former acceptable and to
some degree useful; the latter, terror, is considered counterproductive
and adventuristic (Tiagunenko et al. 1974: 43–46, 54–56, 301–2, 332, 337–38, 350–56, 361, 364; Malinovskii 1974: 94; Sobolev 1980: 49–50; Fedorov 1983: 13; Kim 1971: 4; Tarabrin 1979: 45; Dolgopolov 1980: 61–62). Indeed, even guerrilla warfare is viewed with some misgivings, acceptable basically only as a prelude to or an adjunct of conventional warfare. Thus, the Soviets have been critical of the PLO’s use of terror over the years, condemning most operations, particularly those of an international character (to which the Soviets probably feel vulnerable themselves [Freedman 1976: 115–47]), or depicting them as sabotage, rather than as terrorist actions, directed against military targets and soldiers rather than civilians.5 There is no doubt that Moscow and its allies provide arms and training for what they would term sabotage and are clearly aware of the ultimate character of the operations for which these facilities will be used. Even as they presumably seek to manipulate the uses to which their training and equipment will be put, they nevertheless have continued to attempt to channel the actions of the PLO into the more acceptable lines of sabotage and guerrilla warfare. Indeed, even this has been secondary to the more significant Soviet effort to shift the armed activities of the PLO away from terror and even from guerrilla to conventional warfare by means of regular units. This effort, similar to Soviet policies regarding other national liberation movements such as the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) was clearly evident in the documents confiscated in the Lebanese war (while the war itself demonstrated the folly of the Soviets’ preference, at least judging by the level to which the conversion of the PLO into a regular army had progressed by that time [Israeli 1983: 33–177]).

The Soviets have been no more successful in controlling the PLO on the substantive issues than on the methodological issues. In this sphere, the Soviets’ task has been complicated by the fact that a substantively more moderate PLO is also a PLO more acceptable to the United States. Although at one point this was not abhorrent to the Soviet Union (when it was seeking PLO participation in a Geneva Conference in 1977 for example), acceptability in the eyes of the Americans has subsequently come to constitute a risk of PLO betrayal vis-à-vis Moscow and a shift of ties to Washington, as we shall see below. On the substantive side, however, the Soviets (at least since 1974) have been willing to offer something the Americans have not—support for the creation of an independent Palestinian state. The problem for the PLO has been that the Soviets, for what they term reasons of “realism,” view this as a state that will exist side by side with Israel, not instead of Israel, and along the lines of the 1949–1967 borders. This is no small matter, given the traditional Soviet position that recognized only the lines of the 1947 Partition Plan, which can be
found to this day on Soviet maps. But Moscow has explicitly stated a change in this position (claiming that this is an opportunity for Israel to gain what Moscow claims to be an Arab concession on the matter), and the official Soviet peace plans call for a Palestinian state only in the territory of the West Bank and Gaza, with recognized borders for all, including Israel.6

While they eventually have come around (since 1977) to endorsing the PLO demand for the return of Palestinian refugees (or compensation), the Soviets apparently envisage this return as limited to the area of the Palestinian state that will be founded, as per the pertinent UN Resolution (194), which asserts return (to Israel proper) for those “willing to live in peace with their neighbors” (the Jews). Similarly, they have eventually come around to the PLO demand that Jerusalem—according to the Soviets, only East Jerusalem—be part of the Palestinian state. The Soviets do not, however, use the Arab formula that calls for a Palestinian state under PLO leadership, with Jerusalem as its capital. The idea of a confederation between the Palestinian state and Jordan is not in itself totally repugnant to the Soviets. The problem with the idea is not the arrangement itself, but the context in which the idea is raised and is to be realized. The Soviets have carefully cultivated their relations with Jordan over the years, even to the point of supplying air defense systems, and they have not abandoned the idea of a more neutral Jordan. During 1985 and 1986, however, the confederation idea was a measure designed to pave the way for U.S.-PLO contacts and to provide the PLO a means for accommodating the United States’ opposition to a fully independent Palestinian state. The Soviets, therefore, could not fully endorse it, and challenged it, rather, as a substitute for an independent Palestinian state.

It follows from their preference for political rather than armed action and their substantive position regarding Israel that the Soviets have urged PLO acceptance of UN Resolution 242, which is the condition for negotiations toward a settlement. The major reason, at least in the past, for Soviet pressures on the PLO to accept 242 and negotiations has been the Soviets’ own interest in the reconvening of the Geneva Conference or some form of Soviet-involved multilateral negotiations. Such a forum represents the only means by which the Soviets can themselves remain in the picture and prevent exclusive American mediation and a pax Americana. They have proposed variations to 242 in hopes of attracting the PLO; one such proposal was a draft UN resolution calling for mutual Israeli-PLO recognition; another was the joint U.S.-Soviet communiqué, which reiterated the clauses of 242 with the addition of the Palestinians’ “legitimate rights.”7 While the Soviets designed both of these proposals to accommodate the PLO’s objection to the absence of the Palestinians’ national rights from UN
Resolution 242, neither of the proposals met with any success. Aside from Israeli rejection, there was opposition from the PLO to any formula that acknowledged Israel's right to exist. In fact, the movement was split three ways over the various Soviet peace plans—between those who totally rejected them in part because of their acceptance of Israel's right to exist, those who saw this acceptance as a problem but believed the proposals to be nonetheless helpful, and those who believed that the proposals were helpful but unacceptable because of the acknowledgment of Israel. The failure to convince the PLO may have had something to do with the Soviets not being the party that could offer sufficient incentive for a change in the PLO's position on 242, with its implications for the recognition of Israel and the idea of negotiations rather than terror. Only the Americans were in at least a potential position to provide such an incentive, that is, they could apply pressure on Israel to recognize the Palestinians' right of self-determination, although it took some time for the circumstances to develop that might make even this incentive worthwhile as well as expedient for the PLO leadership.

One of the major problems in this regard has been that such a change in the PLO position on UN Resolution 242, with all its implications, would clearly split the PLO apart—a consequence that highlighted another of Moscow's problems with the organization: the lack of unity. This lack of unity exists at all levels and in all dimensions, from purely organizational matters to ideological features and social composition. Thus, the Soviets have been faced not only with the problem of a certain instability regarding leadership positions and decisions (and therefore greater difficulty in achieving a measure of outside control), but also with nationalist, even to some degree religious (and occasionally anticommunist) rather than socialist orientations, as well as a predominantly bourgeois class character. This has always been further complicated by the involvement of various, often rival Arab countries with specific member organizations, frequently seeking control, creating disorder, or at least contributing to the general lack of unity. The Soviets have been critical of all of these aspects of the PLO, although in internal aspects the PLO has differed little from the character of most national liberation movements and, as such, has been tolerated by Soviet policymakers. This is not to say that there have not been some critics in the Soviet Union who were unhappy, particularly over the ideological and social nature of most national liberation movements. There may even have been some official Soviet rethinking on the Third World in general in the 1980s, following certain debates amongst Soviet theoreticians in the late 1970s. We shall examine below the possible effects of this rethinking on Soviet-PLO relations, but insofar as can be determined, the PLO
as such has not been singled out in any way in these debates and reassessments.

The particular dilemma for the Soviet Union on the issue of PLO unity has been that the two Marxist components of the PLO, Nayif Hawatmeh’s Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and George Habash’s Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), while important politically, have never been militarily or numerically strong enough to rule the organization. Moreover, at least in the case of the PFLP, the movement’s totally rejectionist positions have been too radical and too negative to accommodate Soviet interests. Aside from an early association with the Chinese and a dedication to the use of terrorism, the PFLP polemicized with the Soviets in the 1970s over the issue of the two-state (or ministate) solution, recognition of Israel, negotiations, and UN Resolution 242 (as well as armed struggle). The mutual hostility only came to an end after the 1978 Camp David accords, since which Soviet-PFLP cooperation has developed to fairly significant dimensions. Such cooperation notwithstanding, Habash’s rejectionist position cannot provide the Soviets with any entrée into Middle East peace talks, and hardly serves to promote the Soviets’ main vehicle for participation: an international conference. Hawatmeh, for his part, has been much closer to the Soviet Union and many of the Soviets’ positions, and the DFLP, by Hawatmeh’s own admission, increasingly resembles a pro-Soviet Communist organization. Unlike the Soviets, however, he accepts the two-state solution only as a step on the way toward the ultimate solution, which is a democratic secular state in all of Palestine, and he has been at odds with Moscow on the issue of terrorism. Whatever the degree of agreement, Hawatmeh, like Habash, and even together with him, does not command enough strength to provide an alternative leadership for the PLO.

The one organization that has possessed sufficient strength, overwhelming strength in comparison with the other components of the PLO, is Fatah, under the leadership of Arafat. And Fatah, with its partly Islamic origins, is a clearly bourgeois nationalist organization, closely aligned with Saudi Arabia. It was not only—albeit perhaps mainly—its strength that elicited the Soviets’ support. Fatah has also been relatively close to Moscow’s positions, even if it has been hesitant to espouse all of them officially and publicly. Arafat’s preference for what is termed the political path, his flirtation with the Israeli left, and his gradual evolution toward negotiation, have all made him more amenable from the Soviet point of view. Unfortunately, for the Soviets, however, these are the very characteristics that may render him more amenable to the Americans, and therein lies the risk from the Soviet point of view: there is no ideological or class bond with which to
tie Fatah to Soviet patronage. Indeed, Arafat has been consistently resistant with regard to Communist inroads into the PLO. Every Soviet attempt to gain some control or influence over the PLO by means of the creation of its own organization has met with failure. Al Ansar, created by the Arab Communist parties in 1970, died a natural death in 1972, unable to gain entry into the PLO executive because of its opposition to the idea of armed struggle (particularly terror) and its acceptance of Israel's right to exist (UN Resolution 242) (Cooley 1973: 159; O'Neil 1978: 114; Quandt et al. 1973: 67). The second, partially Arab Communist creation, the Palestine National Front, founded on the West Bank in 1973, was destroyed by Israeli deportation, although it espoused the more moderate Soviet positions favoring a ministate and negotiations—and attracted more than Communist support. (It was replaced by the more radical National Guidance Committee, which was dominated by rejectionists and non-Communist supporters.) The Palestine Communist party was officially created in 1981, having grown out of the Palestine Communist Organization, which was the West Bank branch of the Jordanian Communist party. The creation of this party was probably not, at least primarily, an attempt by the Soviets to gain an organizational foothold within the PLO. Rather, its independence from the Jordanian Communist party was probably deemed expedient and ideologically necessary in view of the distinction being made between Jordan and what was proposed as a Palestinian state that would be born on the West Bank and Gaza. Nonetheless, this party sought—and was refused until 1987—representation in the PLO executive, and suffered from the PLO's desire to maintain its independence and the concern of many over the Communists' pressures for political over military struggle. The road of the Communists amongst the Palestinians (particularly Palestinians on the West Bank, as distinct from those living abroad) has been a most complicated one that has included numerous temporary alliances even with the rejectionists and also problems with the politically closer Fatah. These problems have been similar to those that the Soviet Union itself has had in reconciling its political agreement with Fatah with its affinity for the Marxists and its opposition to particular steps taken by Arafat. Whatever the twists and turns of the Palestinian Communists, however, they have yet to provide a significant channel for Soviet control and influence. If anything, they have added to, rather than helped to solve, the Soviets' dilemmas over the lack of unity within the PLO, although they have assumed a larger role in the post-Lebanon situation, as we shall see below.

Another problem that caused serious difficulties between the Soviet Union and the PLO was the Lebanese Civil War in the 1970s, and, indeed, the Palestinian presence in Lebanon up to the war of 1982. While this was a matter limited in time, it left wounds and
highlighted problems that have had a bearing on the relationship during and following the 1982 war. During the Lebanese Civil War of 1975-76, the Soviet Union actively opposed the Syrian invasion of Lebanon and condemned Syria's direct (even military) support for the Christians against the Palestinians and Lebanese left (Golan 1980: 184–87). Thus, although Syria was a state of great interest to the Soviet Union, and the PLO merely a national liberation movement, clearly lower on the scale of Soviet commitments, Moscow opposed the former and supported the latter. Yet the reason the Soviets did so was not because of an affinity for or loyalty to the PLO but rather because of acute concern that the Syrian move coincided with American interests and might even have been coordinated with the Americans, or at the least might lead to such coordination. The Syrian role in Lebanon contributed to Syrian independence vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, which had been jealously guarded by Assad for many years, and it also ran the risk of provoking an Israeli response that might lead to war, with all its complications and risks for superpower relations. Because Soviet opposition to the Syrian invasion was motivated by anti-Syrian rather than pro-PLO considerations, Soviet assistance to the Palestinians was far from what the PLO sought or believed necessary. In fact, a deterioration in Soviet-PLO relations resulted; Arafat refused to travel to Moscow in 1976 and for many years after harbored the repeatedly reinforced grievance that the Soviets were not providing the PLO with sufficient (qualitatively more than quantitatively) arms or aid. The persistent Soviet interest sought quiet in southern Lebanon, presumably to avoid provoking a full-scale Israeli attack, explained perhaps by the Soviet-inspired ongoing conversion of PLO forces from a guerrilla army to a regular army. And again in anger over Soviet miserliness, Arafat postponed a visit to the Soviet Union in 1980.

These and other problems notwithstanding, the Soviet position towards the Palestinians from 1968, and particularly after 1973, until the Lebanese war of 1982 was one of steady and ever-increasing support of virtually every kind. After the reassessment of 1973 it was probably a matter of course for the Soviets to begin (in the fall of 1974) to champion the Palestinians' call for an independent state. Yet this highly significant Soviet move toward the PLO was most likely precipitated not by the PLO itself but by global and regional considerations: (1) American inroads into the area through successful mediation, which resulted in the Israeli-Egyptian disengagement, the Israeli-Syrian disengagement, and, almost, an Israeli-Jordanian disengagement; and (2) the then imminent Rabat conference of Arab leaders, which would approve the idea of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza (as well as recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people). In 1976 the Soviets finally approved the opening
of the PLO offices in Moscow (agreed on in 1974), just days before the arrival of King Hussein in the Soviet Union. In 1977 the Soviets added the issue of the Palestinian refugees to their usual list of demands for a settlement, just a few weeks after President Carter referred publicly to the Palestinians' right to a homeland. The PLO did request that the Soviets (and the Egyptians) make this "step up" in their support by adding the demand for the right of refugees to return, as well as demands regarding Jerusalem; but in the case of Jerusalem, at least, the Soviets made no change until other circumstances warranted it. In the latter case, it was Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and the official declaration of all of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel that actually brought the additional demand into Soviet rhetoric. And, finally, fourteen years after its establishment, and four years after the Arab states had done so, the Soviet Union officially recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. This did not come in response to anything the PLO had or had not done, but rather in direct response to the Camp David Accords, signed just a few weeks prior to the Soviet move.

Such correspondence between these (and other) increments in Soviet support and Soviet regional/global considerations illustrates the tactical quality of the Soviets' perception of the Palestinian issue. The tactical nature of the relationship was also demonstrated in the opposite direction in the Soviets' agreement in 1977 to reconvene the Geneva Conference without official and separate PLO representation from the outset. (The Soviets agreed that the issue of PLO participation could be settled at the conference itself once it had reconvened.) It was, and most likely still is, the case that while the Soviets see the Palestinian issue as the one through which they can challenge the Americans and gain entry into the peace process, they are not likely to let this issue stand in the way of achieving their own goals should the PLO become a liability rather than an asset. What is true of PLO-Palestinian participation is probably also true of the idea of a Palestinian state in Soviet thinking. It is true that such a state must be envisaged by the Soviets as a potential additional ally in the Third World. There must, however, also be some doubts, given the costs that would be involved in maintaining that ally, the highly dubious ideological nature of the regime, and the continuous possibility of defection to the West (particularly due to a search for economic aid), or simply nationalist-inspired independence. All of these have been repeated problems in Soviet relations with other national liberation movements that have come to power. Given the tactical nature of the Soviet position regarding a Palestinian state, at the moment central to the Soviet-U.S. competition and Arab demands, the ultimate position that will be taken by the Soviets will depend upon the degree to which a given peace
proposal will or will not serve the Soviets' interest in maintaining a presence in the area. As such, as an ally a Palestinian state may be no more secure or stable than was Egypt or Iraq or even Syria. A settlement negotiated with Soviet participation and subject to Soviet (and others') guarantees, blocking or limiting American hegemony, may be sufficiently important to the Soviets to justify compromise on the Palestinian issue. The Soviets cannot be expected to prefer such a compromise; an independent Palestinian state still offers them at least a potential for the future. But the Palestinian state may not be as "strategic" or basic a Soviet interest as Moscow would have the Palestinians (and the West) believe.

POST-LEBANON

At no time since the 1970 civil war in Jordan was the tactical and ephemeral nature of the Soviet commitment to the Palestinians and the PLO as apparent as in the days and months of the Palestinians' struggle in Lebanon. Given the past record of Soviet aid—or more accurately lack of aid—accorded the Palestinians in the Jordanian Civil War, in the Lebanese Civil War, and the tactical nature of the Soviet-PLO relationship for both sides, it should not have been surprising that the Soviets did virtually nothing to assist the Palestinians during the 1982 Lebanese war. Moreover, the type of aid sought or needed by the PLO, such as Soviet naval activity to challenge the Israeli blockade, the dispatch of some sort of Soviet military force (even advisors), or even the threat of such intervention, or an airlift of needed arms and equipment, have never been provided a national liberation movement engaged in combat prior to that movement assuming state power. To say that the Soviet Union could not have been expected to do more than the Arab states, as the Soviets have implicitly claimed, and that the lack of Arab unity was the reason rather than the excuse for Soviet inaction (as some Western observers have claimed [Dawisha 1982–83: 441–43]) is to misunderstand the determinants of Soviet behavior in this area.

The primary concern of the Soviets during the first days of the Israeli invasion was that an all-out Israeli-Syrian war should not ensue. Having done the minimum necessary diplomatically to prevent that, and remaining confident that the Syrian regime was not directly in jeopardy, the Soviets were not about to run the risks involved—including the danger of escalation and superpower confrontation—in providing direct assistance even to the Syrians (Dawisha 1982–83; Golan 1982–83: 7–16). What they were willing to risk even for a state, and one formally allied with Moscow, they were certainly unwilling to risk for a national
liberation movement—whatever the actions, or lack of actions, of the Arab states. Even assuming that the Soviets might have assisted a state willing to help the Palestinians, the involvement of the superpowers in the Arab-Israeli conflict significantly—and prohibitively—raised the stakes of such an action. And, indeed, neither the Palestinian nor the Syrian presence in Lebanon was deemed essential to the maintenance of the Soviet position in the Middle East, as past actions had already demonstrated.

The Palestinians clearly expressed their disappointment with the Soviets during the war. Despite Gromyko’s public assurances that the Soviet Union was helping “with deeds” and not only with words, PLO officials such as Political Department Chief Faruk Qaddumi and Fatah’s number two man, Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyyad), were explicit in their criticism. The latter expressed incomprehension over what he called the Soviets’ “silence and sluggishness,” their purely “symbolic encouragement” and “passiveness,” concluding that although the Soviets could “tell the United States to stop this massacre . . . it seems we are not included within the framework of the red line.” Even Hawatmeh, who had drawn exceedingly close to the Soviets over the years, publicly complained that Moscow was satisfying itself with diplomatic and political pressure, the effect of which was “limited, if not to zero.” Arafat reportedly ceased all contacts with the Soviet ambassador in Beirut at one point, although he avoided any public expression of his anger over Soviet inaction.

The dissatisfaction during the war continued prior to and during the sixteenth session of the Palestine National Council (PNC), held in Algiers in February 1983, precipitating a debate within the PLO over the nature of the alliance with the Soviet Union. According to PNC member Ibrahim Abu Lughod, there was considerable discussion . . . about the sincerity of the alliance with the USSR, and about the correctness of the PLO’s policy during the previous period. While the leadership in Beirut conveyed its appreciation for the Soviet position, there was growing skepticism among some individual leaders. (1983: 33)

As Abu Lughod explained, the raising of the issue itself “assumed that ‘strategic allies’ and especially the Soviet Union, could have played a more symbolically and materially active role in rendering military assistance.” According to Ahmed Sidqi al-Dadjani, at the time a member of the PLO executive committee, there were two schools of thought regarding the alliance with the Soviet Union: those who saw the Soviets as a “strategic ally” and those who saw them “as our friends, but this friendship is subordinate to their position as a world
power.\textsuperscript{21} The second position was illustrated by Khalid al-Hassan, who was responsible for overseas contacts for the PLO, when he said that the meaning of the alliance with the Soviet Union "is a tie of friendship . . . they support our goal but our friendship with them is limited to their interests."\textsuperscript{22} Vadim Zagladin, first deputy chairman of the Soviet party Central Committee Department for International Relations—the department most directly involved in the delineation of Soviet foreign policy and relations with national liberation movements—unwittingly confirmed this view in an interview with an Italian paper. Defending the Soviet Union from the accusation of inaction during the Lebanese war, he said:

\begin{quote}
We shun publicity. But I can assure you that our activity during the Lebanese war was very intensive. It is no coincidence that our friend Arafat has said that the USSR did all it could \textit{except for that which could have led to an armed conflict with the West}. (emphasis added)\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

There were those in the PLO, however, who explicitly or implicitly defended the Soviet Union's inaction on the grounds that the lack of Arab help or unity was the main culprit, that is, the Soviet Union could hardly be expected nor could it be pressured to do more than the Arab states.\textsuperscript{24} Hani al-Hassan, a close political advisor to Arafat, rejected this excuse, however, saying that

\begin{quote}
the Soviet Union must understand that we will not agree to a theory which says: "we cannot help you except by means of another Arab state—that is what happened in Lebanon—or we will give you aid, but via another Arab state." That is because no one can force upon [the PLO] Arab guardianship. We will establish a dialogue with our Soviet allies and they must deal with us directly.\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

According to Abu Lughod's account of the sixteenth PNC session, "the PFLP, the DFLP and [Ahmed Jibril's radical] PFLP-General Command continued to view the Soviet Union as a strategic ally," the implication of this statement being perhaps that Fatah no longer shared this view (1983: 33). Abu Lughod went on to say that Shafik al-Hut, the former representative in Lebanon, "accurately pointed out that the Soviet Union had not stated that it viewed the PLO as a strategic ally, as demonstrated in the siege of Beirut and afterwards." According to Abu Lughod, however, the PNC decision to continue a dual diplomatic and militant (armed struggle) policy meant that collaboration would have to be maintained with the Soviet Union "as the power . . . uniquely able to render the PLO more capable in pursuing its militant strategy" (1983: 40).
The major debate at the 1983 PNC, and the one that would ultimately most affect Soviet-PLO relations, was not the one directly connected with the alliance, but rather the debate over future PLO policies concerning Jordan and the Reagan initiative. Had the two issues not been linked, it might have been easier for the Soviets to cope with the ensuing developments, for a PLO link with Jordan was not, in itself, a totally negative prospect in Soviet eyes. In the post-Lebanese context, however, the perspective on this link was clearly connected with the acceptability to the Americans of Jordan as a go-between with the Palestinians and therefore it appeared to be a means of achieving another American negotiated peace agreement in the Middle East. Egypt, too, fit into the picture in a similar way: as Arafat improved his relations with that country as well, the embryo of what might become an Egyptian-Jordanian-PLO (and Iraqi) axis in the Middle East would be formed. Given Soviet interests in improving its own relations with Jordan and even Egypt, Moscow was publicly careful always to distinguish between Arafat’s contacts with Hussein and Mubarak on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the issue of the Reagan plan, which would, of course, be totally rejected.

Thus, despite bitter Syrian criticism of any and every Arafat contact with Hussein and especially Mubarak, the Soviets, who were also concerned, nevertheless merely reported these events succinctly and factually, without comment but also without criticism. They did express their concern privately to the Palestinians on both the Egyptian and Jordanian contacts, however. Yet at a meeting with Israeli and Palestinian communists at the end of 1982 Soviet Central Committee officials reportedly spoke in favor of a PLO-Jordanian alliance. Even if this report is not founded—the same source spoke of anti-Jordanian communist clashes with Fatah over the issue—the Soviets were clearly unwilling to alienate Jordan publicly (especially as their relations were progressing along the lines of arms deals, in 1982 and 1984). It was presumably this consideration for Hussein that prompted Andropov in his first official meeting with an Arafat delegation in January 1983 to express Soviet “understanding of the position of the PLO leadership” favoring a confederation between an independent Palestinian state and Jordan. This reference to the position of the “leadership” may have been a Soviet hint that Moscow knew that Arafat did not have full backing for his ideas. Indeed, the next day a Soviet broadcast in Arabic claimed that Arafat had told a press conference that the idea of confederation would be decided by the Palestinians in a referendum, not by the leaders alone, and that the Soviets would support the solution chosen by the Palestinians themselves. An Agence France Presse report of the press conference quoted Arafat as saying only that
Andropov offered Soviet support "for anything that is in the interests of the Palestinian people." Where the Soviets got the idea of a referendum is not clear; it had not appeared in any of the published documents or discussions of the PLO, although it probably had been informally discussed internally. What the Soviets did emphasize in the communiqué with Arafat and in subsequent statements and propaganda were the two points that, though anti-Jordanian by implication, underlined the main distinctions between the Soviet position and that of the Reagan plan: the PLO would act as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians, permitting no one else to represent them in negotiations; and the Palestinians had the right to their own independent state, prior to, and independently of, any later confederation agreement.

More directly, the Soviets sought to convince the public, and perhaps themselves, that the PLO would have nothing to do with the Reagan plan. This involved a certain amount of misrepresentation with regard to the 1983 PNC decisions, which had criticized the Reagan plan but had left the door open for Arafat to continue his joint efforts with Hussein to find a way to approach the Americans. Ignoring this in most of their reports on the PNC, the Soviets changed the PLO's labelling of the Reagan plan as "unsuitable" to a resolution more categorically "rejecting" the plan. Presumably unable to find suitable statements from Arafat, the Soviets also gave more than usual attention to a speech by Habash, to comments by both Habash and Hawatmeh, and to the statements of Khalid al-Fahum, all of them rejecting the Reagan plan. Moscow continued to attack the Reagan plan specifically on the Palestinian state-PLO representation points. Pressing the idea of an international conference, and their own Brezhnev plan, or even the Fez plan, that is, anything but the Reagan plan, the Soviets clearly remained justifiably fearful of the PLO-Jordanian effort to accommodate the Americans.

Inasmuch as the early post-Lebanese war period—that of the sixteenth PNC and acute concern over the Reagan plan—was also the beginning of the brief Andropov period in the Kremlin, signs of any change in the Soviet attitude toward the PLO were of particular significance. In the past Andropov had been associated with a less than enthusiastic position regarding Soviet involvement in the Third World or, at least, a lack of optimism regarding the potential for socialism (or pro-Sovietism) amongst Third World national liberation movements and new states. Moreover, his accession to supreme power in the Soviet Union came at a time when Soviet theoreticians and even leaders appeared to be having second thoughts about the type of involvement in the Third World that the Soviets had experienced in the 1970s, the dangers versus the benefits associated with
such an involvement.\textsuperscript{36} During his brief period of power, leadership declarations, particularly from Andropov himself, indeed took on a more restrained tone with regard to the Third World.\textsuperscript{37} The rearming of Syria, and, in particular, the decision to significantly augment the Soviet commitment to and presence in Syria, indicated that there was no blanket withdrawal from Third World involvement. Andropov apparently believed that the Syrian alliance was sufficiently important to the Soviets in the Middle East, vis-à-vis the Americans, to warrant such compensation to the Syrians for Soviet inaction (and Syrian anger) during the war. Similarly, the Soviets may have assisted in the renewal of Palestinian training in the Syrian-held areas of Lebanon.

Yet there were signs that a Soviet reassessment might again be taking place with regard to the Palestinians. Such a sign, possibly, was the affront to Arafat in the reporting of the Brezhnev funeral ceremonies; Arafat was listed \textit{last} of all the named participants—after other national liberation movements and nongovernmental participants.\textsuperscript{38} Additionally, in talks with a delegation of Arab leaders shortly after coming to power, Andropov, according to an answer given by Arafat to an Egyptian interviewer, skeptically asked if the Arabs genuinely wanted a Palestinian state.\textsuperscript{39} It is difficult to know if this was in fact asked skeptically, as if to challenge the validity of proposals such as the Palestinian-Jordanian confederation, or if it was a genuine query, similar to Brezhnev’s October 1973 question on national rights, which was designed to guide in some way the future Soviet position regarding the creation of a Palestinian state. Whether or not there was something of a reassessment, or merely a response to the Reagan plan’s specific rejection of the idea, Soviet media and officials subsequently provided even greater attention to the demand for an independent Palestinian state. By means of this tactic, the Soviets argued—as did many in the PLO itself—that anyone accepting the Reagan plan was forfeiting the idea of an independent Palestinian state, opting instead for cooperation with Jordan to the point of allocating to the Jordanians primary responsibility for the Palestinians’ future. Thus, the outspoken but apparently authoritative \textit{Izvestiia} journalist (and then CPSU Auditing Committee member) Aleksandr Bovin said in a television program with Central Committee Middle East Chief Karen Brutents that the Reagan plan was being considered by some who were close to Arafat and who had become disheartened about the possibility of creating a Palestinian state and therefore were opting for American pressures on Israel to return the West Bank to Jordan and then would try for some future solution for the Palestinians.\textsuperscript{40} Bovin also said, though, that the rejectionists were lacking in realism. Gromyko reportedly told PLO Political Department Chief Faruk Qaddumi in November 1983 that
rumors have reached us that the leadership of the PLO and of Fatah are exercising tolerance towards the American plan; that the PLO is not taking a firm stand against the Reagan plan and that in a conversation between King Hussein and the PLO leadership, the leadership suggested reaching a solution via autonomy, and is not sticking to the establishment of a Palestinian state. When we attempted to clarify what the significance of the rumors were, we were answered that in the future Palestinian entity, Jordan would be responsible.41

If the Soviets actually believed this or not is difficult to determine. Certainly, this was an interpretation current in the Arab world. The journal *Middle East* wrote that this was the conclusion of a paper circulated in Fatah after the PNC meeting; and the noted French journalist and Palestine expert Eric Rouleau wrote that there had been such an agreement between Hussein and Arafat.42 Referring to this interpretation, Salah Khalaf spoke about information that had reached Moscow “which distorted our position,” leading to a virtual freeze in relations.43

The second element in the Soviet tactic, in addition to the emphasis on Palestinian statehood, was the emphasis on the PLO itself, as distinct from Jordan and the Reagan plan’s exclusion of the organization. It was probably in this context that an unusual article appeared in the Soviet monthly *Aziiia i Afrika segodnia* that for the first time aligned the Soviet position more closely with that of the Arabs on the role of the PLO in the future. Going well beyond the Soviets’ customary demand for or elucidation of the Palestinians’ right to a state, this article explicitly called for PLO control of such a state (Notin and Alekseev 1983: 11–14). It went into great detail regarding the groundwork already laid by the PLO for the creation of a state. Thus, the various PLO organs were likened to state organs (cabinet, parliament, ministries), the Palestine National Liberation Army to “national armed forces,” and the existence of PLO embassies and legations abroad, plus mass organizations, such as trade unions and services, were also noted, while it was claimed that there was the economic potential in the West Bank and Gaza necessary for a national economy, the PLO budget being comparable to many developing countries. The PLO was said to have virtually all the prerequisites for a state except possession of the territory itself. Not only did this article present statehood as a feasible and viable option, which could be rapidly established, but for the first time it directly linked the PLO and its organs with the running of such a state. It even went so far as to outline the political tenets espoused by Arafat for ruling such a state (for example, secret ballot, neutrality in foreign policy, public and private sector in the economy, with foreign, mainly Arab, investment,
and so forth). Acknowledging the proposal for the confederation with Jordan, the article reiterated the Fez formulation (which was not the customary Soviet one) that Palestinian self-determination must be led by the PLO. It concluded that the two necessary but not sufficient conditions existed for statehood: existence of the political structures and agreement by the Arab states. The only obstacle was the Reagan plan (that is, American policy and the U.S.-Israeli strategic alliance).

Whether this was indicative of Andropov’s intention to pursue a more radical line is not at all clear; it was not repeated elsewhere, nor was it reflected in official statements; nor was it repeated in the even briefer Chernenko period. The July 1984 Soviet peace plan, for example, differed little from its predecessors, particularly the Brezhnev plan presented on September 15, 1982. Aside from a detailed proposal for an international conference (with PLO representation on an equal basis and as the sole representative of the Palestinians), the only significant additions were (1) reference of the September 1982 Fez plan regarding UN control over the West Bank and Gaza during the “several months” transition period prior to Palestinian statehood; and (2) a nod to the confederation idea in a clause that said, “After the creation of an independent state, it will, naturally, itself, by virtue of the sovereign rights inherent in any state, determine the character of its relations with the neighbor countries, including the possibility of forming a confederation.” More broadly, the Chernenko period saw, for example, the continued pursuit of improved relations with Jordan and Egypt. If anything, there was an even greater effort to broaden Soviet contacts: Soviet-Egyptian relations were finally returned to the full diplomatic level, a second arms deal was signed with Jordan, and relations were steadily improved with Iraq. These moves clearly angered the Syrians, but the Soviets did not permit their alliance with Syria to interfere with what was decidedly a policy of public tolerance and restraint, designed generally to block the Americans and specifically to gain from Jordan and others commitments to Soviet participation in the peace process by means of an international conference.

This restraint, aimed as it was at the Arab states, would not, however, affect the Soviets’ persistent concern over the direction that the PLO—or Arafat—appeared to be taking. If, as Salah Khalaf described it, there was “a sort of freeze” in Soviet-PLO relations, the split within the PLO and Fatah, supported by Syria, further complicated the situation for the Soviets. Far from providing clear-cut choices such as an opportunity simply to divest themselves of Arafat (and with him the risk of a PLO defection to the West), the internal PLO battle presented the Soviets with additional dilemmas of great complexity. The background to the split was the same internal disunity and outside involvement of Arab states that had haunted the PLO for years. If the siege of the
PLO in Beirut led to internal disagreements over the PLO’s allies, Arab as well as Soviet, it also brought into full focus the debate between those who favored armed struggle and those who had long pressed for greater weight to be given to political efforts. The former could now argue that Arafat’s political endeavors had led to naught. Despite the American-negotiated cease-fire of 1981, successfully enforced by Arafat, Israel, it could now be argued, had demonstrated its continued reliance on the use of force. Thus, the radical, rejectionist wing of the movement was strengthened by the war and became more suspicious than ever of American-sponsored political solutions.

The moderates, as Issam Sartawi tried to tell the sixteenth PNC, read the situation differently. For them the siege and their isolation, as well as the destruction of the PLO base in Lebanon and the dispersal of PLO members throughout the Arab world, demonstrated the futility of a continued battle and the necessity to seize at least the political points the PLO had gained in the world at large vis-à-vis Israel and to parlay this to a suitable solution. Beyond these old divisions, there were apparently differences of approach between those who had experienced the siege in Beirut and those who had been outside, many of the latter and possibly some of the former viewing Arafat’s decisions in those conditions as dictatorial and arbitrary (Abu Lughod 1983: 31–33). Given the general concern over PLO dependency upon any Arab state, especially a state that had brutally suppressed the PLO in the past, it is not surprising that as it later became clear, not all of Arafat’s supporters favored the move toward the Americans via King Hussein. The main disagreements, however, were between what could be called moderates and the extremists (rejectionists), joined by those members of Arafat’s own Fatah organization who were dissatisfied with Arafat’s leadership—on methodological as well as ideological grounds. To all this was added Syria, which in the wake of Lebanon resumed its almost customary efforts to take over the PLO, this time by supporting those who sought to unseat Arafat.

The sixteenth PNC was only barely able to keep the movement together under Arafat, with concessions to the rejectionists over such things as Sartawi addressing the forum, and the reelection of the pro-Syrian speaker of the PNC (Khalid al-Fahum) balancing the compromise resolution that only moderately ruled out the Reagan plan, acknowledging the necessity of both political and armed struggle, while allowing Arafat to continue his contacts with King Hussein. Nonetheless, a few months later the inner tensions erupted into a full-scale mutiny within Fatah and bloody civil war, aided militarily by Syrian forces in Lebanon. Once again Arafat and his forces were under siege, this time in Tripoli, and once again he had to be evacuated with Western assistance. He was determined, however, to maintain his
leadership of an independent PLO pursuing a basically political path.

Thus, it was not just the substantive issues that evoked a Soviet response but also the emergence of a genuine dilemma for the Soviets as personalities, states, policies, and methods—what some Arab Communists preferred to call classes and ideologies (Ashaab 1984: 26)—became mixed into a conflict that almost defied any solution compatible with Soviet interests. As in the case of the Lebanese Civil War in 1976, the Soviets were faced with confrontations between two allies, Syria and the PLO. And as in 1976, it was not simply a question of choosing the state over the movement as the party that could best accommodate Soviet requirements.

The reasons were numerous. For although the Soviets had increased their commitment to Syria in the wake of the war, to a large degree as compensation for the lack of assistance during the war, the Soviets were not interested in augmenting Syrian independence. Syria, theoretically dependent on Moscow, had repeatedly in the past demonstrated its unwillingness to subordinate itself to Moscow’s orders or restrain its own ambitions at the Soviets’ behest (Golan 1978: 794–801). No less than in the past, the Soviets ran the risk that Syria would provoke a war with Israel and involve the Soviets in a confrontation with the United States—a risk deemed all the more probable given the presence of both American and Soviet military personnel in Lebanon, the former as part of the peacekeeping force, the latter as advisors to the Syrians (Jansen 1984b: 13–14). Not only did the Soviets view with some ambivalence the augmentation of Syrian strength through control of the PLO, but they were most likely also aware of the opposition within the Arab world to these Syrian moves. The Syrian battle against Arafat was aimed at opposing Arafat’s contacts with Egypt and Jordan—states with which, as we have seen, Moscow sought improved relations. Given Syria’s past record of independent—and risky—decision making, as well as the instability and unpopularity of the Assad regime, the Soviets’ response to Syrian isolation in the Arab world was not to try to bolster the regime politically but to seek allies elsewhere, broadening Soviet options in the area. Moreover, Syrian control over the PLO would eliminate or narrow Moscow’s own channels to the organization, contracting still further the number of actors in the area with whom the Soviets could deal. Indeed, a Syrian takeover would virtually take the PLO out of the picture as an actor in the Middle East conflict, melt it into the rejectionist position of Syria itself, and provide the Soviets with no entree or independent levers in the evolving peace process.

By the same token, Soviet support for Arafat’s opponents (which occasionally but not always included the DFLP and the PFLP) meant strengthening the rejectionist-armed struggle position against the more
moderate substantive views held by the Soviets themselves regarding a negotiated settlement through an international conference. Finally, such support would only assist in splitting the PLO apart formally and irrevocably, spelling the end of the PLO as a factor—even a tactical one—in the Middle East conflict. A splintered, weakened PLO, two or more organizations competing to speak for the Palestinians, would be of little use to the Soviets or probably anyone else. As much as the Soviets were genuinely concerned over Arafat’s flirtation with the West, his strength and independence, even his substantive positions, all factors ruled against supporting an attempt to replace him.

Yet the Syrians, who were Soviet allies (indeed Moscow’s only ally among the confrontation states, and its strategic foothold in the area) and opposed Arafat on anti-Western (anti-imperialist, “progressive”) grounds, could not be fully rebuffed either. The rebels’ points were clearly well taken insofar as they opposed any shift toward the Americans, even if the Soviets could not agree with the more fully rejectionist thrust of the rebels’ position. Moreover, it was far from clear just how the internecine Arab and Palestinian struggle would come out, regardless of Soviet preferences or assistance. The result was a policy that sought to satisfy all but pleased none, a policy that sought to support no one and therefore alienated all, similar in some degree to Soviet behavior regarding the Lebanese Civil War and, at various periods, the Iran-Iraq War. It was probably the only policy the Soviets could pursue under the circumstances, designed to promote a unified PLO still under Arafat, but an Arafat willing to work with the Syrians and limit his political path to initiatives acceptable to the Soviet Union.

There was much evidence of this policy in Soviet dealings with both the Syrians and Arafat (and the rebels), particularly during the period of outright fighting. There were conflicting rumors and claims regarding Soviet support for the Fatah rebels under Said Musa Muragh (Abu Musa) and Mohammed Saleh Nim (Abu Saleh), who themselves expressed contradictory comments regarding the Soviet position. This confusion was compounded by contradictory positions taken by Palestinian Communists—some of those abroad actually sided with the rebels while most of those on the West Bank and Gaza sided with Arafat. Some of these contradictions were apparent even among Soviet Middle East specialists themselves. For example, Igor Beliaev, an old Middle East hand, now writing for Literaturnaia gazeta, spoke objectively of the rebels to the point of explaining Abu Musa’s position as one of opposition to the possibility of Arafat accepting the Reagan plan. The more senior Evgenii Primakov, then head of the Academy of Sciences’ Oriental Institute, described the rebels more pejoratively, however, as a small group threatening to split the movement.
There were reports of Soviet efforts, for example those of the Soviet ambassador in Damascus, to mediate between the rebels and Arafat, but on the whole there does not appear to be any evidence that the Soviet Union involved itself, at least not to the point of actually supporting the rebel groups. On the other hand, there was no clear-cut opposition to the rebels or, contrary to occasional Fatah claims, declarations of unequivocal Soviet support for Arafat. Moscow apparently repeatedly refused several attempts by Arafat supporters to elicit explicit, clear, and public Soviet support or pressure on the Syrians during the various trips to Moscow by Faruk Qaddumi and Salah Khalaf in 1983. Indeed, it was rumored that a scheduled Arafat trip was postponed by the PLO leader because he was led to believe that no such support or Soviet action would be forthcoming. Khalaf travelled to Moscow in May 1984 again, reportedly to prepare the still-pending Arafat visit. From the Arafat camp there were varying accounts that saw the Soviets role as ranging from one of total inaction to one of attempting mediation. In no case, however, was there satisfaction with the Soviet position. Following a Qaddumi trip to Moscow in which he asked Gromyko to send an envoy to Syria to end the fighting, Khalaf explained in an interview that the Soviets had "strategic ties with Syria," and although he would prefer the Soviets to take "a stronger stance," this would not be forthcoming.

Soviet unwillingness clearly to condemn the rebels or the Syrians (or even publicly acknowledge Syrian involvement), much less intervene on Arafat's behalf, did not, however, indicate total support for the Syrian takeover attempt. In fact, the Soviets did intervene during the battle of Tripoli, at least in the form of a warning delivered by Gromyko to visiting Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam in November 1983 (shortly before the Qaddumi visit). Gromyko specifically warned against the continued conflict and pressed the Syrians to end the bloodshed in Tripoli. His statement,

We regard as highly important and urgent the need for overcoming strife and restoring unity within the ranks of the liberation movement of the Arab peoples of Palestine, which must continue to function as an active and effective factor in the anti-imperialist struggle in the Middle East,

was singled out and repeated in the Soviet media, lest it be lost in the general rhetoric of Gromyko's address. Also repeating Gromyko's warning, an unsigned Pravda article on November 19, 1983, spoke of the "seriousness" of the battle at Tripoli and hinted at Syria when it said, "It is no accident that the discord amongst the Palestinians is being explained in the framework of the anti-Syrian campaign unleashed by imperialist circles." Boris Ponomarev, then head of the CPSU Central
Committee International Department, took up this theme in *Kommunist* when he too expressed "concern" over armed clashes in the area of Tripoli . . . [which] weaken[s] the cause of the Palestinians as well as of the national patriotic forces of Lebanon and the cause of all Arabs. Everything possible must be done to stop this fratricidal collision. From this conflict, both sides will lose and only the rulers of Israel and the United States will benefit. (Ponomarev 1983: 13)

Gromyko informed Faruk Qaddumi in their talks shortly after the Khaddam visit that Andropov had pressed Syria "to find a common language with the PLO." According to Qaddumi, however, the Soviets urged Arafat to take the initiative regarding reconciliation with the Syrians.

The pattern of Soviet behavior to all sides concerned in the fighting was maintained even after Arafat's evacuation from Tripoli (and his trip to Egypt). While Palestinian accounts claim that mutual recriminations between the Soviet Union and the PLO persisted at a harsh level for many months, Moscow appears to have taken a more active role by restraining Syria in 1984. Whether this was the result of Chernenko replacing Andropov or simply an intensification of measures already initiated by Andropov is difficult to determine. The pressures put on Syria during the Khaddam visit occurred under Andropov, and the trip to Syria by the Andropov-appointed Politburo member Aliev was in fact scheduled for February 1984, and was postponed until March only because of Andropov's death. During this trip and a subsequent one by Brutents in April 1984, the Soviets reportedly did apply pressure on the Syrians, as apparently they did with the Syrian vice-president, Assad's brother Rif'at Assad in June 1984. The disagreement between the Syrians and Moscow on this matter was discernible in the different versions of the talks that were published by the Syrians and the Soviets.

At the same time, a Fatah delegation to Moscow, just one week before Rif'at Assad's visit, apparently elicited a more understanding attitude. Various reports of this visit, led by Salah Khalaf, suggest that the Soviets eventually conceded most of the points raised by the Palestinians: the primacy of Fatah and Arafat, the convening of a PNC meeting (designed to confirm this primacy), the PLO connection with Egypt (reportedly aimed at encouraging gradual Egyptian disassociation from the Camp David accords), and the idea of cooperation with Jordan. The two Soviet caveats appeared to be the necessity of reconciliation with Syria even as the PLO remained independent and cooperation with Jordan only on the basis of creating an independent
Palestinian state (even if this was followed by confederation). From these it could be discerned that although the more active Soviet mediation led to an improvement in Soviet-PLO relations, it did not suffice fully to bridge the gap between the two, mainly because the major source of Soviet concern had not been eliminated: the possibility that Arafat might find his way to the Americans.

PLO optimism over the accomplishments of the May visit may have been strengthened by the accord reached between Fatah and at least some of Arafat’s opponents in July 1984. The Democratic Alliance, which had formed in the course of the post-Lebanon war split, composed of Hawatmeh’s DFLP, Habash’s PFLP, the Palestine Communist Party (PCP), and the Palestine Liberation Front, had never fully joined the opposition to Arafat, but it had wavered from time to time in its positions regarding him. It is difficult to know if the Soviet influence with this group was sufficient to have played a role in the accord the group reached with Fatah in Algiers in July. At the very least, Moscow received the accord warmly, noting, of course, that it stipulated rejection of the Reagan plan (although in fact it explicitly affirmed the policies outlined by the sixteenth PNC). This Soviet approval notwithstanding, Moscow remained relatively aloof from Arafat, failing to invite him to Moscow throughout 1984 (aside from the occasion of Andropov’s funeral). Instead, Arafat met with Gromyko in East Berlin, at Arafat’s request according to Moscow. These talks, of which virtually nothing was made public, preceded a visit to Moscow by Syrian President Assad in October 1984. On this trip, possibly in response to Arafat’s position in the talks with Gromyko, Moscow apparently again pressured the Syrians to make some accommodation with Arafat. This was apparent from the communiqué issued at the close of the talks, which said that an “in depth exchange of opinions” had taken place on the internal situation of the Palestinian movement. The Palestinian issue was not the only source of disagreement, however, insofar as the Soviets were involved at the time in improving relations with Syrian enemies such as Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan, as well as Kuwait.

If Soviet-Syrian relations were strained and Soviet-PLO relations only partially restored, severe trials were to come in the form of Arafat’s decision to hold the PNC meeting in Amman and, a few months later, the conclusion of the Arafat-Hussein agreement for a Middle East peace. Problems might have been averted if Algeria had not reneged on its agreement to host the meeting, but Arafat’s subsequent decision to accept the only offer open to him, that of Jordan, indicated a decision to take a stand. Holding the PNC in Jordan meant a clear affront to Syria, in a sense a cutting of losses in favor of a clearly Jordanian-based strategy. This meant not only the abandonment of reconciliation with
Syria but also a showdown within the PLO itself. Arafat appeared to be willing to run the risk of a formal, irrevocable split in the movement, opting finally for majority rule rather than consensus so as to both affirm his leadership and to proceed with his Jordan-centered political option preferences. Understanding the implications, the Soviets cannot have been happy about the decision, although a few months earlier both they and the Democratic Alliance had agreed in principle to the necessity of convening the PNC.69

Nonetheless, Moscow exhibited extraordinary tolerance and restraint with regard to the PNC, obviously still hoping to avoid a formal split or irrevocable break. There were reports that the Soviets tried to persuade the Democratic Alliance to attend the meeting, despite the opposition of Hawatmeh and Habash (Jansen 1984: 405). The Soviets did invite the leaders of the Alliance to Moscow on November 19–23, and apparently did work out an agreement with them barring the creation of any rival or alternative Palestinian organization, refusing participation in any attempt to organize a parallel PNC in Syria, and avoiding any contact with Palestinian factions opposing unification talks within the PLO.70 Just who was pressing whom, however, is not clear, but all, including the Soviets, agreed not to attend the PNC, without condemning it. Thus, Soviet reporting of the PNC meeting was brief and objective, implying criticism only in its pithy reference to the failure of some Palestinian organizations to participate because of the timing and locale.71 Pravda even added an appeal for the achievement of unity without outside interference, implying that Syria should not take any retaliatory action.72 Soviet media spoke of the Algiers accord as a basis for settling internal PLO difficulties, thereby indicating that there was still a chance for Fatah-Democratic Alliance cooperation, despite the holding of the PNC.73 And in keeping with the accord reached in Moscow, the Soviets reportedly later opposed the Democratic Alliance’s adherence to the newly created pro-Syrian Salvation Front. All but Habash reportedly acquiesced to this Soviet position.74

Similar Soviet restraint was exercised, at least briefly, a few months later when Arafat and Hussein signed a joint plan for the pursuit of a Middle East settlement. This initial restraint may have been motivated by a belief that Arafat still spoke for the PLO and that internal unification was still possible. Moscow may also have believed that Jordanian-PLO steps might not, inevitably, lead to the exclusion of the Soviet Union from the negotiating process, particularly if Soviet-Jordanian relations could continue to improve. Thus, the Soviet media refrained from directly criticizing the accord, limiting themselves to reports of criticism by others, including opposition even within Arafat’s own Fatah forces,75 as well as other PLO organizations and figures.76 In
time, however, the Soviets expressed their own opposition, probably because of concern over the progress toward an agreed upon (by America and Israel as well as the PLO) Jordanian-Palestinian delegation for negotiations that the new accord seemed to be generating. This Soviet concern was evident not only in the increasingly harsh criticism of the plan—and the continued refusal to invite Arafat to visit the Soviet Union—but also in what could be gradually perceived as the cessation of direct Soviet aid or training to Fatah, as distinct from other PLO groups.77 Brutents, the Central Committee’s chief Middle East specialist, promoted under Gorbachev to the position of First Deputy Head of the Central Committee’s International Department, went so far as to tell a Kuwait seminar that Moscow did not view Arafat and the PLO as necessarily synonymous, Moscow’s bond being to the PLO, not to the person of Arafat.78

Soviet objections to the accord, as expressed privately to Fatah personalities and publicly in the Soviet press, were summed up in a declaration by a meeting of Arab Communist parties, reported in Pravda, which claimed that the Arafat-Hussein agreement would open the way for stronger U.S. and Israeli influence in the area and lead to separate, direct talks of the Camp David variety.79 This mention of direct talks was a reference to the Mubarak proposal for the United States to sponsor talks between Israel and a (non-PLO) Palestinian-Jordanian delegation. This proposal was more directly criticized by the Soviets, obviously because of the exclusive American role. The usual tactic was employed, emphasizing the PLO as the only organization able to speak for the Palestinians, adding the element that American sponsorship would push Jordan into accepting a “capitulation” solution, similar to the Israeli-Lebanese agreement.80 The major criticism, however, was that separate, direct talks might supplant the idea of an international conference—which was Moscow’s vehicle for inclusion in the whole process. In fact, it was not the mechanism or structure of initial negotiations (separate, direct talks) that actually concerned Moscow, but rather the exclusive American sponsorship or organization of the process. For, in fact, the position conveyed to Washington, and in time made public by the Soviets, called for an international conference to be preceded (and according to the July 1984 Soviet peace plan, accompanied) by bilateral talks between the various parties, including the superpowers.81 In the summer of 1986, when Moscow was engaged in a broad campaign to rally support for an international conference, it presented the idea of a preparatory committee (to include the permanent members of the UN Security Council as well as the parties in the conflict), which might conduct direct bilateral contacts in preparation for the negotiations to take place at an international conference.82

The Soviets’ relative restraint over the various peace initiatives
underway in 1985 may have been due to a belief that the plans would not progress very far in any case, or that by avoiding alienation of Arafat and Jordan Moscow could find its way into the talks. In this sense, Gorbachev appeared to be continuing the more tolerant attitude evident in Soviet Middle East policy since the Andropov period. This included an effort to avoid disputes with the more pro-Western states—Egypt, Jordan, even Saudi Arabia—presumably in hopes of broadening Soviet options in the area. Insofar as this policy conflicted with Syrian interests and wishes, it was clear that the Soviets were setting their sights on the broader, more long-term perspective that was clearly to be greatly influenced by the Americans. It might be argued that the Soviets were merely taking advantage of Arab disappointment with the Americans after the latter’s failure in Lebanon (Perera 1984: 13–16); yet it seems likely that Moscow appreciated the potential the Americans now had for organizing a Palestinian-Jordanian-Israeli settlement, given the desperation of the first two parties and the changing mood—and in time, ruling party—in Israel.

Moreover, what may have been a tactic in response to American efforts in the post-Lebanon period developed into a policy under Gorbachev. The new Soviet party program, approved at the 1986 CPSU Congress, called for improved relations with capitalist states in the Third World, providing the ideological basis for the broadening of Soviet options that was already underway in the Middle East. The more or less simultaneous breakdown of the Arafat-Hussein accord did not, therefore, greatly alter Soviet moves, including the efforts to convene an international conference. The urgency of such a conference may have been reduced by the collapse of the Arafat-Hussein agreement, and by the October 1986 “rotation” of the Israeli government, which brought the right-wing Likud back to the premiership in Israel. Nonetheless, the Soviets were presumably no less wary of the potential for a future Arafat turn back in the direction of the United States. Signs of this could be seen in that the Soviets made no public mention (even in Moscow) of the meeting between Gorbachev and Arafat at the East German Party Congress in April 1986, nor of the subsequent Soviet-sponsored reconciliation meetings among the Palestinians. Similarly, there was the continued failure to issue the PLO leader an invitation to Moscow. According to one account, Gorbachev said that he would be pleased to receive Arafat after PLO unity was once again achieved! In October 1986 Pravda even described one PLO operation as an act of terrorism—a particularly surprising characterization insofar as the operation in question was the one incident to date in which an Israeli military target could legitimately have been said to have been involved. A few months earlier Pravda had described Palestinian terrorism as “politically immature.” Such comments were presumably related to Moscow’s
more general, condemnatory position regarding terrorism, evidenced by Gorbachev's expansion on this issue at the CPSU Congress and prompted perhaps by the kidnapping of Soviet personnel in Beirut.

While the collapse of the Arafat-Hussein accord did not occasion a full Soviet rapprochement with Arafat, it did lead to Soviet willingness to initiate and host reconciliation talks amongst the Palestinian factions. This certainly accorded with the Soviets' consistent preference for PLO unity, but the new elements were not only Moscow's role as mediator (for which it was criticized by the pro-Syrian Ahmed Jibril PFLP-GC), but also the reported effort to persuade Assad to take a more flexible position. Gorbachev reportedly made such overtures to Assad on condition that Arafat formally abrogate his accord with Hussein. On Moscow's initiative Algeria issued a formal invitation for such talks, which were preceded by meetings in such places as Prague and Moscow, in the summer and fall of 1986. Agreement was apparently reached between Fatah and the two pro-Soviet factions (Hawatmeh's DFLP and the PCP) in September 1986 in Prague. Further talks in Moscow brought Habash into the agreement, which, according to the Czechoslovak party paper, included the following points: (1) no substitute would be acceptable for the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians; (2) compromise solutions, such as Camp David, the Reagan initiative, administrative autonomy and UN Resolution 242 were unacceptable; (3) there should be an international conference for an overall solution with participation of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians; (4) PLO-Syrian relations would be based on mutual aims, that is, the struggle against imperialism and Zionism, as well as solidarity, equality, and mutual respect; and (5) the Amman accord ceased to be the basis of PLO policy and this matter should be the subject of further discussions at different Palestinian forums including the PNC.

Ironically, for many years the Soviets had sought to persuade the PLO—and thought that they had succeeded with Arafat—to accept UN Resolution 242 as a more realistic position that could facilitate bringing the PLO into a Middle East settlement, particularly an international conference. In the mid-1980s, however, acceptance of UN Resolution 242 was viewed as an American demand intended to pave the way for exclusively American mediation. Moscow itself did not actually reverse its position on UN Resolution 242. From the Soviet point of view the operative clauses in the PLO agreement were an abrogation of the Arafat-Hussein accord and the idea of an international conference. Formal PLO acceptance of these points was achieved at the PNC session that was finally held in Algiers in April 1987, with the aid of Soviet mediation. It was at this session that the reunification of at least the major elements of the PLO was accomplished.
Perhaps in recognition of Moscow’s assistance in achieving this reunification, or in response to Soviet demands, a communist was finally added to the PNC executive. Arafat in his opening speech thanked “especially our great friend the USSR led by Gorbachev” and most importantly, the PNC session officially abrogated the Arafat-Hussein agreement. Moscow was unsuccessful, however, in persuading Assad to accept the reunification. Indeed this was but one of several sources of discord that could be discerned in the Soviet-Syrian relationship during Assad’s visit to Moscow, also in April 1987.

Nonetheless, the PNC’s decision paved the way for a rapprochement between Moscow and Arafat. Soviet arming and training of Fatah forces were apparently resumed, and Arafat visited the Soviet Union not only for the seventieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution in November 1987, but also as the head of a PLO delegation holding official talks with Gorbachev in April 1988. Yet a certain lack of enthusiasm has been evident on the Soviet side. Even while championing PLO rights and authority in anything that has to do with the Arab-Israeli conflict, Moscow has expressed a certain flexibility as to the nature and timing of actual PLO participation in the hoped for international conference. This albeit subtle coolness may be the result of a certain reticence detectable in Gorbachev, as in his mentor Andropov, regarding national liberation struggles. It may well be the result of Soviet mistrust of Arafat following his near defection to the United States. In any case, Gorbachev, like his predecessors, does not appear to be willing to permit the PLO to stand in the way of Soviet efforts to enter the Middle East peace process. By the time of Arafat’s visit these efforts had begun to bear fruit, as the United States indicated some willingness to cooperate with the Soviet Union on the idea of an international conference. Gorbachev, therefore, publicly pressured Arafat—as Brezhnev had done privately—to moderate the PLO’s positions by recognizing Israel’s right to secure existence and to accept negotiations rather than armed force for resolving the conflict. Balancing this with a call for Israeli recognition of Palestinian self-determination, Gorbachev was striving to remove the obstacles to negotiations. Thus he spoke of an international conference based on UN Resolution 242 and the Palestinians’ rights to self-determination. On the whole he brought Soviet-PLO relations full circle, returning, now that reconciliation has been achieved, to the former pressures for moderation of the PLO’s positions as well as the acknowledgment of the necessary adjustment of UN Resolution 242. The new element was the public form of Soviet pressure, and the coupling of this with a more forthcoming (what Gorbachev called “balanced”) view of Israel’s positions. These were both signs of greater Soviet interest under Gorbachev to participate in a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and, therefore, greater willingness to meet certain
U.S.-Israeli demands. Even in these circumstances, perhaps because of them, the instrumental or tactical approach of the Soviets with regard to the PLO has persisted, Soviet global interests outweighing and, as in the past, determining the parameters of the Soviet relationship with the PLO.

ENDNOTES

1. In the post-1973 period, oil was undoubtedly the area of greatest American vulnerability, but the Soviets had little leverage over the oil-producing states and could do little more than encourage the use of the oil weapon (although they did temporarily provide a market for Iraqi oil after the latter's 1972 nationalization of oil production). Moreover, the oil weapon alone was not sufficient for the Soviets to remain a factor in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

2. These signs included the initiation of direct arms supplies to the PLO, the creation of the Palestinian National Front with a position advocating a Palestinian state, notes to the PLO leaders at the close of the Yom Kippur War querying them on their actual demands, references to Palestinian “national” rights following the war, and other measures we will discuss below.


7. See criticism of the Soviets by Habash on this point in an-Nahar (Lebanon), 15 May 1975 and al-Hadaf, 17 May 1975; see also as-Siyassah (Lebanon), 12 January 1976 on Soviet draft proposal; New York Times, 10 May 1977 and as-Siyassah, 7 May 1977 on Soviet pressures; MEMA, 2 October 1977 and Baghdad radio 6–7 October 1977 on opposition to the Soviet-U.S. agreement.


9. For frequent Soviet references to the PLO lack of unity, see Golan 1980: 14–145; or, for example, Pravda, 25 August 1983 (Demchenko).


12. Namely, Assad's refusal for almost ten years, until 1980, to sign a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union.


14. The Soviets carefully point out that this type of assistance rendered the MPLA in Angola came only after the state was declared. They claim the same regarding the Cubans although the Cubans did arrive prior to independence, after the South African invasion. See, for example, Tarabin 1980: 72-74. See also *Izvestiia*, 10 October 1978 (A. Voronov) or *Sel'skaia Zhizn’*, 28 November 1979 (F. Voloshin).


16. One exception was the transporting of South Yemeni troops by Soviet ships to aid the Dhofar rebellion in Oman in 1973.


19. Reuters, 26 June 1982; Agence France Presse (AFP), 26 June 1982; for still stronger criticism by Hawatmeh, see AFP, 15 July 1982.


25. *Al-Qabas* (Kuwait), 10 September 1982. Later this complaint became more acute when the Soviets continued to insist that the PLO receive its arms through Syria, despite (or as an incentive to patch up) the Syrian-PLO split, as we shall see below (Radio Monte Carlo, 21 January 1983 on Arafat-Andropov talks).


31. AFP, 13 January 1983.
33. TASS, 22 February 1983, had “unacceptable” but another TASS summary of the same day and on 19 February 1983 had “rejection” (Reichert 1984; Abu Lughod 1983). Pravda, 20 February 1983, spoke of “absolute refusal,” quoting the resolution, but al-Fahum and Soviet television emphasized and amplified on what it called the PNC’s decision to “reject” the Reagan plan.
34. Pravda, 5, 19, 20 February 1983.
35. See Andropov speech, Pravda, 23 April 1976 when he had nothing more than “our sympathies” to offer national liberation movements.
36. Brezhnev’s proposal for rules of conduct (April 1981) may have been a sign of the leadership rethinking; even more so his proposal in the fall of 1982 that both NATO and the Warsaw Pact limit their activities in the Third World. (TASS, 27 April 1981; 20 September 1982). For the theoreticians, see Golan (1988), chapter 5.
37. Andropov tended to ignore movements in the Third World altogether, expressing skepticism about their potential for socialism (Pravda, 23 November 1982, 16 June 1983). See also TASS, 5 October 1983 (Gromyko); Pravda, 30 July 1983 (Zimianin); Izvestiia, 29 October 1983 (Aliev). Stephen Sestanovich was the first to point out the changes in the leadership’s position, Washington Post, 20 May 1984.
38. This despite the fact that a year earlier the PLO office in Moscow was granted embassy status. By contrast, at Andropov’s funeral fifteen months later Arafat was listed in a more respectable place, just after the official government representatives, before other national liberation movements and nongovernmental representatives.
41. Al-Khalij (United Arab Emirates), 18 December 1983.
42. Middle East (March 1984): 13; Rouleau (1983: 151).
44. There was a TASS commentary 13 June 1984 attacking Israel, which included the phrase “an independent Palestinian state under PLO leadership,” but this is the only such repetition that I have found, except in quotations of Arab statements.
45. Pravda, 30 July 1984. An article in International Affairs (Ustyugov 1984: 73) explained this as a confederation unifying two independent states “which of course has nothing in common with the intention of some well known quarters to sidestep, with the aid of different stratagem, the issue of the need to create an independent Palestinian state.”
46. There was also an arms deal signed with Kuwait. Soviet-Iraqi relations were connected with the deterioration in Soviet-Iranian relations but, nonetheless, probably also reflected Soviet concern over the emerging Egyptian-Jordanian-Iraqi axis. The Soviet media were remarkably restrained when Iraq renewed full diplomatic relations with the United States in 1984.
49. Although it was also rumored at one point that one of the purposes in opposing Arafat was to prove to the Americans that Syria could control the PLO factor and therefore was a suitable partner for American efforts. If true, that would have been all the more reason for Soviet opposition, but there is little likelihood that this was the case (Jansen 1983a; Murarka 1983: 7–8).
52. Soviet television (Roundtable), 17 July 1983; Literaturnaia gazeta, 6 July 1983.
54. Voice of Beirut, 7 August 1983. The Cubans also attempted to mediate according to Qaddumi (al-Khalij, 18 December 1983).
58. Arafat spoke of the Soviets trying to balance (al-Watan (Kuwait), 13 October 1983) or of taking no role at all (al-Majalla, 23–29 July 1983). Khalaf also spoke of Soviet mediation (Falastin al-Thawra, 9 June 1984), but he also revealed that the Soviets were unwilling to supply Arafat with arms and that letters sent by Andropov to all concerned in June 1983 had arrived only after Assad had decided to throw Arafat out, that is, too late to make a difference (al-Watan al-Arabi (Lebanon), 15 July 1983).
61. Al-Khalij, 18 December 1983. Christian Science Monitor, 17 November 1983, said this was contained in a note sent by Andropov to Assad, which noted the Soviets’ interest in “safeguarding the unity of the PLO.”
64. The Syrian account omitted any reference to the Soviets’ comments on the need for Palestinian unity (Damascus radio, 29 May 1984 as compared with TASS, 28 May 1984).
66. Izvestiia, 14 July 1984 carried the details.
69. Izvestiia, 14 July 1984; Khalaf, Falastin al-Thawra, 9 June 1984; Habash had subsequently withdrawn from this agreement and met with the Syrians (Israel and Palestine, no. 108, (October 1984): 6).
71. For example, Pravda, 16, 29 November 1984. Moscow television, 23 November 1984 went a little further, mentioning that some Arab leaders also opposed the meeting.
75. Pravda, 20, 27 February 1985. Not mentioned by the Soviets was the report that after Qaddumi and Khalaf expressed opposition to the accord (reportedly because of the danger of dependence on Jordan), the Soviets invited the two would-be dissenters to Moscow, but Chernenko's death intervened and Arafat attended the funeral.
76. Pravda, 2, 7 March 1985.
77. Al-Qabas, 2 June 1985 (Khalaf). Khalaf spoke of an Arafat request for an invitation and then said that "a man of honor does not ask twice." Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad) spoke of a "period of stagnation" in relations (Sh'un Falastiniyyah, November-December 1985), just as Qaddumi was speaking of an improvement (al-Dastour, 2 December 1985).
78. Al-Watan, 4 January 1986. All of this despite the fact that Arafat apparently assisted in gaining the release of Soviet hostages in Beirut. There were reports of such aid (for example, Jerusalem Post, 20 June 1986) and Arafat may have been referring to it when, in his congratulatory telegram for the 1985 anniversary of the October revolution, he said he was happy that "relying on comradely cooperation, as a result of great efforts, you succeeded in solving problems connected with the kidnapping of three Soviet citizens in Beirut." (Pravda, 26 November 1985).
82. Ibid. and Pravda, 24 September 1986.
83. Al-Qabas, 22 April 1986. Khalaf claims that when the PLO was invited to the 1986 CPSU Congress they asked, and Moscow agreed, that Arafat lead the delegation (al-Qabas, 17-19 April 1986). In fact Qaddumi led the delegation, as he had in past congresses.
84. Pravda, 17 October 1986. The Palestinian attack was on a group of soldiers and their families, following a swearing-in ceremony in Jerusalem. A subsequent account in Pravda 20 October 1986 used the more customary term "guerrilla" (partizan).

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One of the challenges that any observer of the Soviet scene faces is determining how we know what the Soviets value. In a region like the Middle East it is not difficult to outline important Soviet objectives: developing a strategic preserve, limiting that of the United States, avoiding confrontation, becoming a recognized arbiter of events in the area, and establishing meaningful and enduring influence.

While outlining broad objectives is easy, how do we know what is most important to the Soviets? Which objectives are they prepared to run risks to achieve? Which objectives have been enduring and what, in sum, really matters to Soviet leaders?

We will probably never be able to answer these questions without some qualification, but looking at Soviet behavior during regional conflicts is likely to offer important insights. At a minimum, the Soviets are likely to be confronted with the need to make choices in these circumstances. Do they support their client? What are the dangers of providing such support or the likely costs of not doing so? If there is a conflict between two Soviet clients or at least one between important regional states that are not friendly to the United States, whom should the Soviets support?

When the Soviet leadership reaches such choices, it tells us something about the hierarchy of its values in an area. It may also reveal something about its risk-taking propensities and its overall operating style. Indeed, the more we see changes in Soviet behavior vis-à-vis a conflict or a client, the more we are likely to have interesting data points for assessing why certain choices were made.

That is certainly true in the two cases to be reviewed in the next two chapters: Soviet response to the Lebanon-Israel-Syria conflict of 1982–84 and Soviet behavior toward the Iran-Iraq War, 1980–87.
case we will see vacillations in Soviet behavior, periods of passivity and activism, and points at which the Soviet leadership makes clear choices. Though four different Soviet leaders held power over the course of these conflicts, certain enduring values seem to have guided Soviet policy and operating style. It is too soon to say what Gorbachev's *perestroika* will mean for Soviet behavior in the Middle East, but it is safe to say that Soviet policy toward the Iran-Iraq War under Gorbachev was marked more by signs of continuity than by signs of change.

Before reviewing the Lebanon case, a few observations are in order. At the outset, it should be noted that there is far more Western and Soviet reporting and commentary on the war in Lebanon—beginning with the Israeli invasion in June 1982 and continuing through the withdrawal of U.S. Marines in February 1984—than there is on the Iran-Iraq War. There are several reasons for this. First, the war in Lebanon was more accessible and received far greater coverage in the West, largely because Israeli and U.S. journalists were there in large numbers and felt it essential to be reporting on every aspect of the war. Second, the direct U.S. involvement and the initial defeat of important Soviet clients—the PLO and Syria—created great interest in the war, both in the United States and in the Soviet Union. Third, the ongoing nature of U.S. participation and the continuing tension with the Syrians helped to rivet U.S. and Soviet attention on the war.

By the same token, the lack of U.S. involvement in the Iran-Iraq War, at least until the summer of 1987, tended to limit not only Western coverage of this war, but also Soviet coverage and commentary. Thus, much as in the Western case, the Soviet press focused far more on the war in Lebanon—and the various internal and external actors in it—than on the Iran-Iraq War. This is important not only because of what it may reveal about what goes into the Soviet media and why, but also because in general there is far more information to draw on in the Lebanon case. The analysis will reflect this and the discussion of the Soviet responses to the war in Lebanon, 1982–84, will be more detailed as a result.

At the outset, a general observation about Soviet publications and commentaries is in order. In these two cases Soviet writing and commentaries provide a good reflection of change in the Soviet orientation and mood. When the Soviets were prone to be more involved in Lebanon or inclined to tilt toward Iraq, or when they were upbeat, hopeful, on the defensive, or frustrated (as has certainly been true in the Iran-Iraq case), one can see it in their writings. In that sense, the writings provide an interesting mirror on Soviet attitudes and perceptions at given points.

At the same time, certain important issues, actions, and developments are *not* revealed in the writings. The Soviet-Syria tension in the summer of 1982 does not emerge from the writings; the Soviet
assumption of responsibility for Syrian air defense and provision of SAM-5s is never mentioned in the Soviet media (for reasons that are not hard to explain); the neutrality of early Soviet commentary on the Gulf war masks the rush of aid offers to Iran and the cutoff of military shipments to Iraq initiated at that time.

In short, one learns much from the Soviet writings, especially when they are scrutinized over time. But looking at reports and commentary in isolation leaves one with a distorted view of actual Soviet policy. In the Lebanon and Iran-Iraq wars the writings were most useful as general indicators of Soviet satisfaction or frustration with the course of events, not as indicators of where overall policy was or where it was actually headed. For this we must turn to actual Soviet behavior in the region.

THE LEBANON WAR AND THE SOVIET–SYRIAN RELATIONSHIP, 1982–84

The Period of Soviet Passivity, June–November 1982

The period following the Israeli invasion, the defeat of Syrian forces in the Bekaa Valley, and the subsequent siege of the PLO in Beirut during the summer of 1982 was one of Soviet passivity and low profile. Apart from providing the Syrians a limited amount of resupply—after the Israeli-Syrian cease-fire had gone into effect—the Soviets did very little. Former Secretary of State Alexander Haig notes that the Soviets did use the “hot line” at the outset of the Israeli siege of Beirut, but the message was seen as being low-key and far less threatening than previous Soviet messages conveyed during other Middle East wars (Haig 1984: 339). Indeed, what the Soviets conveyed privately over the “hot line” was apparently repeated several weeks later in a public statement released by the Soviet news agency TASS, which urged the United States to control the Israelis and avert any danger of escalation; it also warned that the introduction of U.S. “peacekeeping” troops into Lebanon would require the Soviet Union “to construct its policy taking this fact into account.”

While the Soviet statement and the use of the “hot line” evidenced concern, there was no real Soviet threat of intervention. On the contrary, the Soviet warning was vague and the plea to the United States to control the Israelis was an indication that the Soviets could not and would not do much to stop them. That particular public posture was also consistent with what the Soviets were privately telling the Palestinians and the Arabs more generally. In response to the pleas of one Arab delegation for the Soviet Union to intervene, or at least carry out some demonstration of its determination to stop the Israelis,
Gromyko reportedly said that was "out of the question" and that the Soviet Union "would not budge one inch from its present Middle East policy" (Dawisha 1982: 439).

At the same time, Soviet-Syrian relations were marked by recrimination and tension. The Syrians, too, wanted the Soviets to do more, particularly to provide them with far more advanced equipment, avionics, and electronic countermeasures to offset Israeli military advantages. Though showing keen interest in learning the military lessons of the war (for example, then Chief of Staff Ogarkov and Deputy Chief of the Air Defense Forces [PVO] Kutakhov quietly made several trips to investigate what had happened to Soviet-made SAMs and other equipment in the Bekaa Valley), the Soviets were apparently loathe to do much more for the Syrians and told them—much as they had told the Egyptians after 1967—that there was nothing wrong with Soviet equipment; the Syrians were simply incapable of using it. For the Syrians—who claimed that they could handle the equipment but that it was grossly inferior to the American-made military weaponry the Israelis had—this was hardly likely to inspire confidence in the support they could expect from the Soviets.

And support and commitment was something the Syrians needed (or at least believed they needed) at this time. That should not have been surprising, since the Syrians were facing a triumphant Israel, an Israeli defense minister who knew no bounds and was seemingly unrestrained by the Israeli cabinet, and an Israeli army poised in Lebanon 15 miles from Damascus, with its artillery trained on the Syrian capital. What is more, the Syrians viewed their own air-defense capability as limited and incapable of combatting Israeli air power.

What the Syrians wanted or felt they needed at this point the Soviets were unwilling to provide. Not surprisingly, the Syrians began reaching out elsewhere for ways to restrain the Israelis. Then-Foreign Minister Khaddam made two trips as part of small Arab delegations to meet with President Reagan at the White House. Similarly, Rif'at Assad made a trip to Washington, D.C., ostensibly to buy a house, but, according to press reports, to signal the U.S. administration of Syrian interest in a basic improvement in relations. Syrian dealings with Egypt increased and the Syrians put out the word through the Egyptians that they were prepared to sign a treaty of nonbelligerency with Israel. (This message was undoubtedly designed to give the Israelis a stake in restraint and to give the United States more of a reason to pressure the Israelis to exercise restraint.)

At this time the Syrians apparently saw Moscow as the place to lodge their complaints; Washington, on the other hand, was the place one went if help was needed. If one were only reading the Soviet press, however, one would have seen little, if any, Soviet
problem with the Syrians. While there was an indication of Soviet defensiveness about the performance of Soviet weaponry, the thrust of the Soviet written commentary was geared toward condemning the United States and Israel.

The Soviets accused the United States of backing Israeli genocide in order to use Lebanon as a “platform” to further aggression and to force the Arab states to submit one by one to the “strategy of Camp David.” The United States was charged with trying to destroy the PLO and using Lebanon as a testing ground for American weaponry. U.S. aid to Israel made Israel’s crimes possible—and these crimes would stop if American aid stopped. While the United States and Israel were characterized as “acting out a united, jointly formulated plan,” the United States was said to be able to stop Israel if it wanted to, through sanctions or other means of opposition.

Though the latter point was part of the Soviet campaign to hold the United States responsible for everything that was happening in Lebanon, it was a vivid reminder of who had power to affect the situation and who did not. It was not an accident that Khaddam and Saudi Prince Faisal were traveling to Washington and not to Moscow. The Soviets were on the sidelines—and their commentary reflected this.

Soviet commentators blamed the Arabs’ predicament on their own lack of unity—not a lack of Soviet support—and stated that only Arab unity could pressure the United States and force it to rein in Israel. Soviet writings were clearly defensive about the defeat of the PLO and its forced withdrawal from Beirut and sought to put the best face on it. Pavel Demchenko, for example, quoted the “foreign press” as saying that it was hard to tell who had won in Lebanon; he went on to argue that the PLO had gained in stature and Israel had lost face in world opinion. Vitalyi Korionov went so far as to say that the PLO left Beirut “with honor, dignity, having put an end to the myth of the invincibility of the Israeli military.”

Putting the best face on the PLO withdrawal was essential not only because a Soviet client had been defeated but also because it was the United States that had negotiated the PLO’s removal from Beirut and the United States and its NATO allies that had presided over it. The Soviet Union was left out and seemingly irrelevant in all of this—not a particularly happy prospect for a country and a leadership that had claimed that no important question anywhere in the world could be decided without due regard for the Soviets and their participation.

This added to the sense of defensiveness seen in Soviet commentary at the time. While Soviet commentators on the Middle East like Yuri Glukhov sought to put the United States on the defensive after the Sabra and Shatilla massacres, the tone of Soviet commentary in the
fall of 1982 remained generally pessimistic. Soviet writers now spoke of Israeli occupation of Lebanon as being long and difficult to end; they also spoke of the surge of U.S. activity in the region—no doubt having to account for it—as one that was very hard to stop, particularly because the Arabs were divided and, in effect, “under the gun” of the imperialists.

The first positive sign that was noted almost parenthetically by one well-known Soviet Middle East watcher in the fall of 1982 was that Israeli policies were generating increasing disquiet and opposition in Israel. But this potential change in the Israeli mood and its implications for Israeli behavior were not taken seriously until later, and a pessimistic tone remained dominant in Soviet writings at this time. The character and tone of Soviet writings offered no real hints that Soviet policy might change or become more active or assertive. Indeed, the image that emerges from Soviet newspaper and journal articles at the time is that the Soviets could not do much to change or stop the current U.S. surge, that responsibility must be incurred in the first instance by the Arabs.

Yet, a decision was apparently made in late October to change, or at least set the stage for a possible Soviet change. President Assad of Syria made an unpublicized trip to Moscow and at that point the Soviet leadership reportedly made the decision to provide the Syrians with SAM-5s and to upgrade Syrian air-defense capabilities significantly. Capabilities that the Syrians had long sought and been denied would now be provided—and as we would see in January 1983, would mean the introduction of an additional 5,000 Soviet advisors to assume responsibility for Syrian air defense.

The SAM-5s had never been provided outside the Soviet bloc before; they covered Israeli airspace and thus created a very real danger of Israeli preemption, particularly given the Israeli leadership at the time; if manned by the Soviets, their deployment could put the Soviets in the middle of a situation that could easily escalate but could not so easily be controlled.

Such a decision represented a major change from the position of passivity of the summer and early fall. Why was this decision made? Probably because the Soviets feared “losing” Syria otherwise. Much as the Soviets had acted to assume responsibility for Egyptian air defense in 1970 when Nasser said that he might fall or have to go to the Americans to stop the Israeli deep penetration bombing raids, so now when they feared the possible loss of Syria they made the decision to take responsibility for Syrian air defense. The Khaddam trips to the White House, the Rif’at Assad trip to Washington, the maneuvering with the Egyptians, and the increasing spate of rumors that Hafez al-Assad might turn to the Americans provided the backdrop to the
Assad trip to Moscow in October and might have made whatever “ultimatums” he had presented seem credible.

As noted above, however, the coverage and tone of the Soviet media gave little or no indication of any such change. In retrospect, there was one article that might have reflected the psychology of the Soviet leadership and the reasons for the decision. Interestingly, it was written by a Soviet official and not by a journalist or academician. Karen Brutents, the deputy chief of the International Department of the Central Committee, emphasized in a long article in Pravda the zero-sum nature of competition with the United States in the Middle East, Washington’s determination to “use the Middle East as an arena of confrontation with the Soviet Union,” and its increasing efforts “to separate” the Arab nations from the USSR. The conviction that this could not be permitted to happen—and the fear that rumors of a Syrian switch indicated that it might be happening—might well have led to the Soviet decision.

That explains why the Soviets chose to get more active and accept the risks of the SAM-5 decision. It does not explain why they were so passive earlier. How does one explain Soviet passivity in the summer and early fall?

Some Western observers have explained Soviet passivity as being driven by deep despair about the region and a general disinclination to get involved with it. As Karen Dawisha put it:

Soviet immobilism over Lebanon can be attributed not only to a lack of opportunities provided by Arab states for greater Soviet participation, it can also be put down to a marked Soviet disinclination to get involved. And this disinclination extends beyond the confines of the Lebanese conflict to encompass a more general malaise in Soviet policy toward the region. (1982: 446)

Dawisha, in particular, drew these conclusions not only from her perception of how circumstances had changed within the region but also from her discussions in Moscow in the summer of 1982 with leading Soviet academicians and specialists on the Middle East. Their general pessimism mirrored the tone of what one saw in the Soviet media. According to Dawisha, their views on the “variable-sum” basis of the U.S.-Soviet competition in the area, frustration with inter-Arab conflict, and the unpredictability and unreliability of the Arabs generally produced this increasing Soviet disinclination to be involved (1982: 443–44).

What Dawisha observed was not necessarily wrong. The summer was a period of relative Soviet pessimism: Soviet clients were being defeated; the superiority of U.S. weaponry was being demonstrated;
the United States, for all its verbal battles with Israel, was in the center of the action and the Soviet Union was not; and the United States, contrary to previous Soviet claims about a shift in the correlation of forces that ruled out U.S. interventions of the sort seen in Lebanon in 1958, was again putting troops into Lebanon.

These circumstances certainly gave the Soviets grounds for pessimism, but apparently not sufficient grounds to be more active until later in the fall. The academicians and specialists Dawisha was interviewing reflected the pessimism of the moment, but apparently did not understand, share, or convey the continuing and real Soviet stakes in the region that were embraced by the Soviet leadership.

Still, those stakes did not motivate action in the summer, even though the Soviet image was taking a beating. In part, the basic character of the Soviet relationship with the PLO ruled out any real Soviet action on the PLO’s behalf. As Galia Golan has pointed out, the kind of military aid or military demonstration the PLO sought in the summer of 1982 has never been “provided to any national liberation movement engaged in combat prior to a movement’s assumption of state power” (Golan 1986: 287). Moreover, in the specific case of the PLO the Soviets have never intervened to bail them out—not in 1970 in Jordan during “Black September,” not in 1976 when the Syrians moved into Lebanon and smashed PLO positions and strongholds, and not in 1978 when the Israelis launched “operation Litani” and pushed the PLO beyond the Litani River in southern Lebanon. Thus, in this respect, not intervening in the summer of 1982 was in keeping with past acts of Soviet passivity during previous periods of military siege of the PLO.

Passivity vis-à-vis the Syrians might be viewed differently except for one reason: the Soviets had opposed the Syrian intervention in Lebanon and the Syrian attack on the PLO in 1976. Under these circumstances, protecting Syrian stakes in Lebanon was not a high priority; protecting their own in Syria was another matter.

Two other factors may also explain general Soviet passivity during the summer and early fall: the lack of good military options in the area and the character of the Soviet leadership at the time.

The former reflected the Soviets’ relative military disadvantage in the Eastern Mediterranean, given U.S. and Israeli capabilities in the area. Certainly, in the summer of 1982 the Israelis had demonstrated their local superiority; the Soviets could have done little to alter the situation. Indeed, Vadim Zagladin seemed to reveal as much in responding to a question on why the Soviet Union had “permitted” the Israelis to do so much:

What do you have in mind with this ‘permitted or not permitted’? Well, what has happened? There is a war between Israel and one of
the Arab countries, aggression against one Arab country. Under these circumstances, what should the Soviet Union do? Should it attack Israel? This is a rather impossible situation.18

Perhaps any real military intervention was impossible. But what about posturing forces in a demonstrative way, without necessarily committing themselves? What about a more rapid resupply of Syria and demonstrative statements about defense of Syria at this point?

The reluctance to take steps that could have raised the possibility of superpower confrontation over the PLO and over Syrian stakes in Lebanon explains the Soviet determination to limit its involvement. But it does not necessarily account for the extent of Soviet passivity. A leadership more capable of imagination and dynamism might have done more at least to lessen the image of Soviet irrelevancy and to reassure the Syrians. But the Brezhnev leadership at this point was not dynamic, was muddling through, and was under siege by Andropov while the maneuvering on succession was in full swing. That this leadership was able to make the decision to provide the SAM-5s in October probably reveals less about the character of the ruling Brezhnev coalition at this time and much more about the deep-seated consensus among Soviet leaders that they must preserve their position in the Middle East. The rumors about Syria and the Assad visit must have made them aware that their position in the area was in jeopardy.

**Soviet Passivity Turns to Assertiveness, Winter–Spring 1983**

The signs of change in Soviet behavior began to emerge in December. Andropov, employing a style not seen in Brezhnev’s waning years, threatened King Hussein during the king’s visit to Moscow in December 1982. He warned Hussein of the consequences of supporting the Reagan peace plan, telling him the USSR would “oppose the Reagan plan, and . . . use all [its] resources to oppose it. With due respect, all the weight will be on your shoulders and they are not broad enough to bear it.”19

In January the Soviets made good their decision to provide the Syrians the SAM-5s, an advanced integrated air-defense network, and the Soviet advisors, technicians, and manpower to run it. Although the decision had been made earlier, its rapid implementation in January and the scope and responsibility of the Soviet advisory presence may have reflected the style of the new Soviet leadership.

Even if it did, however, the Andropov leadership remained very much aware of the risks they were running by providing the Syrians the SAM-5s and assuming general responsibility for Syrian air defense.

The best measure of this were the signals the Soviets sent to the United States and the Israelis. Both public and private signaling were
designed to manage the risks and avert the possibility of conflict. Though the Soviets did not forewarn either the United States or the Israelis, once it became clear that they were readying SAM-5 deployments in Syria, the Soviets reportedly told the United States and the Israelis that the SAM-5s were only for defense of Syrian airspace, would not be directed against targets outside of Syria, and would only be used for defensive—not offensive—purposes. In addition, the Soviets passed the word to both the United States and Israel that they wanted no trouble.

The extent of the Soviet concern over the potential risks may have been revealed by a message the Soviets passed through an American journalist who was well known for his contacts with senior American and Israeli officials in both Washington and Tel Aviv. In this message a visiting Soviet official drew a distinction between the possible Soviet responses to different kinds of Israeli military strikes against Soviet-manned positions in Syria. While saying that the Soviet Union would have no choice but to respond to a direct and premeditated strike against Soviet sites in Syria, the Soviet official pointed out that attacks against the Soviet position that occurred in the "fog-of-war" would not require any Soviet reaction. In other words, if in a war with Syria the Israelis happened to hit the Soviet-manned sites, that would be tolerable; a preemptive strike would not. In effect, the Soviets may have attempted to tell the United States and the Israelis that as long as it did not look like Israel was deliberately challenging the Soviets the USSR could live with Israeli attacks on its positions in Syria.

Laying down the gauntlet of a challenge would force the Soviets to respond, presumably, because their standing as a superpower might be in question otherwise. Anything short of that—indeed, anything that was deniable—would not require a response.

If this was a serious message, it certainly suggests that the Soviet leadership took the threat of Israeli preemption against their sites in Syria very seriously. (At the time this threat was taken very seriously in Washington.) It also reveals something about how the Soviets seek to manage risks when they run them. In this case they may have sought to manage the risk by both reassuring the Israelis and by laying down what they thought the Israelis would regard as a credible threat—thereby, creating a credible "red-line" which the Israelis would not cross.

Although the Andropov leadership went ahead and ran the risk of deploying the SAM-5s and assuming responsibility for Syrian air defense in January and early February of 1983, it did not necessarily feel particularly confident in doing so. The Soviet mood and degree of confidence began to change, however, soon thereafter. Here, the reason for the change in Soviet confidence was the pronounced change in the mood of Israel. Pavel Demchenko had already noted
that demonstrations had taken place in Israel against the government's policies in the fall of 1982. But so long as Sharon remained defense minister the Soviets seemed to believe that little could be done to inhibit the Israeli use of force. With the publication of the Kahan Commission report on the responsibility of selected Israeli officials in the Sabra and Shatilla massacres and the forced resignation of Sharon as defense minister, the Soviets became far more confident.

Soviet discussion of the Kahan Commission report indicated that the Soviets were aware of the change of mood in Israel—though a fuller explanation of how much the mood in Israel had changed and how "this long war" had affected Israeli attitudes would not appear until a number of articles by Igor Beliaev were published later in the spring and summer of 1983.

In any case, the Soviets soon demonstrated that (like the Syrians) they were far more confident, convinced that the Israelis now had no interest in a war with Syria and had no stomach for further military adventures. Soviet confidence was manifested by a series of bellicose steps—steps that seemed designed at least in part to counter the image of Soviet weakness that had developed following the events of the previous summer.

One of the first signs that the Soviets were going to become more assertive came with a public warning to the Israelis issued on March 30, 1983. In the name of the Soviet government, the Israelis were warned about their "criminal designs" and told that it was "time to stop playing with fire." Soon thereafter, when a visiting group of Israeli parliamentarians was in Moscow, they were told that if Israel launched a military venture against Syria, there would be 52,000 Soviet soldiers on the Israeli border within 24 hours.

The signs of greater Soviet assertiveness were not restricted to words. Later in April Soviet-manned and operated SAM radars in Syria reportedly "locked-on" to Israeli aircraft flying in Lebanese airspace and forced the aircraft to take evasive maneuvers. (While these were not SAM-5s and the Soviets did not launch any missiles, directing the radars against Israeli aircraft operating outside of Syrian airspace must have raised some questions in Israeli eyes about Soviet assurances on the SAM-5s.) A short time later downlinks for direct communications with the Soviet General Staff in Moscow were reportedly activated and the Soviet General Staff took a direct part in a series of provocative Syrian exercises. The Israelis were, in fact, so alarmed by the character of the Syrian exercises—and the mobilization they entailed—that Israeli forces were mobilized and put on a high state of readiness in anticipation of a possible Syrian attack in the Golan.

Clearly, the Soviet posture had changed. This change was reflected in Soviet commentary at the time, which now had a distinctly different...
tone. Soviet commentaries were characterized by confidence and assertiveness. More than anything else, this confidence seemed the result of the difficulties the United States was experiencing. The United States was getting nowhere in Lebanon and tensions were high in the U.S. relationship with Israel. Pavel Demchenko spoke of the unprecedented U.S. "loss of face" and the U.S. desire to separate itself from Israeli actions, given Arab perceptions and U.S. oil needs.30 (One saw little of such commentary the previous summer, at a time when there was also some tension in the U.S.-Israeli relationship.) This sense of U.S. loss and the image that things were no longer going America's way was made stronger by King Hussein's rejection of the Reagan plan in March 1983, which led one Soviet commentator to take note of the pessimism found in U.S. and Western press discussions about U.S. policy in the Middle East.31

At the same time that Soviet commentary was showing signs of greater confidence (at least about the U.S. predicament and setbacks), it was also playing up other themes: (1) the United States was trying to build a string of military bases throughout the area32; (2) Syrian-Soviet ties were very close and the Syrians were not alone33 and; (3) there was a serious danger of war because of the Israeli aggressors.34

Besides helping to justify the Soviet shipment of SAM-5s and the Soviet assumption of responsibility for Syrian air defense (something that was being openly discussed in Western media but not mentioned explicitly in the Soviet media), two other points about these themes are worth noting. First, the stress on the closeness of Soviet-Syrian ties is basically a new one at this point and stands in sharp contrast to what was being said in the preceding period. By emphasizing the closeness of Syrian-Soviet ties at this time the Soviets could signal that they were again engaged and determined to protect their regional interests. Stressing close Syrian-Soviet ties also made it possible for the Soviets to create the image that Syrian successes in blocking Israeli and/or U.S. designs in Lebanon and elsewhere were made possible by Soviet support.

Second, the Soviets, in stressing the war danger, chose a time when there was good reason to believe there would be no war; the Israelis simply had no interest in fighting the Syrians at this time. Thus, it was relatively safe to emphasize the danger of war, and in doing so the Soviets could highlight the value of their support as a patron and an ally and also project an image of toughness. One prominent Soviet specialist on the Middle East did precisely this in quoting the Israeli chief of staff's words about Israeli readiness for war, noting that "M. Levi, for his part, should not exclude the possibility of a rebuff of the IAF," particularly because as the Soviet government has stated, the "Syrian people are not alone."35
Whereas the Syrians had had to stand alone the previous summer, now they had the clear support of the Soviets. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the Soviets were tough and assertive when it was safe to be. The tone of their published commentary reflected that they were more confident and less nervous about the consequences of being tough and assertive. Their seemingly provocative behavior seems to have been driven by (1) the belief that the risk of war was low given the domestic and psychological changes in Israel, and (2) the Soviet need to rebuild their image in the area after the events of the previous summer. In that respect, the more assertive style coupled with an increase of Soviet support after a war in which the Soviets had done little for their clients—and seemingly had suffered a setback—fits a pattern seen before in the area. While Andropov might have been more able to project a different, more activist style than did Brezhnev, the actual character of Soviet behavior at this point certainly was consistent with Soviet responses after previous Middle East wars.

Soviet Confidence Declines and the Soviets Distance Themselves from Syria, Fall 1983–84

Following the Israeli mobilization, Soviet provocative behavior ceased and Soviet commentaries about war in the area also diminished. The Soviets, again, began to assume a somewhat lower profile, and the focus of their efforts and commentary seemed to be geared toward the May 17th agreement between Israel and Lebanon, and Syrian efforts to subvert it. While the Soviets seemed to be doing very little during the summer of 1983, they were at least supporting the Syrian line on the May 17th agreement. Indeed, at times Soviet commentators seemed to be trying to explain why the Syrians opposed the May 17th agreement and just what the Syrian position was: “The occupiers [Israel] should leave without any conditions, and then Syria and Lebanon will be able to decide their problems according to mutual agreement—this is how the Syrian government puts the issue.”

Other Soviet commentators explained (much as the Syrians were also doing at the time) that the Syrians should not be treated like the Israelis in Lebanon because they “were invited by the Lebanese government.” Similarly, some said that it was natural for the Syrians to oppose the U.S. and Israeli position.

Basically, during the summer of 1983 the Soviets were politically and rhetorically supporting the Syrian opposition to the Israeli-Lebanese agreement. Already, however, one can detect a slight softening in the Soviet position and a certain willingness to put the Syrians out in front on this issue.

The tendency to withdraw more into the background and to take a lower profile again, became far more pronounced in the fall of 1983.
and eventually led to active Soviet distancing from the Syrians when the risk of conflict and confrontation with the United States became a real possibility. The escalatory dangers began to take shape in late August as the Israelis withdrew from the Chouf Mountains in Lebanon and fighting broke out between the Druze and Phalange-Christian forces. As the Druze pushed the Phalangist elements out of the Chouf, the fighting expanded, Palestinian forces joined the Druze, were backed by Syrian logistic and artillery support, and the Lebanese army garrison at Suq al Gharb was soon under siege. President Gemayel of Lebanon urged U.S. intervention to save the Lebanese army position at Suq al Gharb, claiming that if it fell, the Lebanese Army would collapse and his government would fall. At this point, in early September, the United States changed its rules of engagement, linked the Lebanese army position at Suq al Gharb to the security of the Marine compound and, using naval gunfire, came to the defense of the Lebanese garrison.

Three weeks of intensive shelling ensued, with the U.S. presidential envoy, Robert McFarlane, working with the Saudis to negotiate a cease-fire. Despite the active involvement of Syrian artillery in the shelling, the Syrians claimed they were not a party to the fighting and could not take part in a cease-fire. Notwithstanding this claim, the arrival of the U.S. battleship New Jersey, with its 16-inch guns, off the coast of Beirut and the reengagement of Israeli forces in response to Palestinian activity in the Chouf led to a Syrian change of heart, and President Assad decided to accept the cease-fire.

After the bombing of the Marine compound in late October, the Soviets went beyond urging caution and began to distance themselves from the Syrians—making it clear in effect that if the Syrians provoked the United States, they would be on their own. The earliest sign of distancing came in an interview with Vadim Zagladin in the French paper Le Monde. The interview took place after the bombing (which some in the West were blaming on the Syrians) and after the U.S. invasion of Grenada. In response to questions on the developments in Lebanon, Zagladin said:

We have no responsibility in all that is going on there. . . . As far as our aid to Syria is concerned, it is defensive aid. We have never done anything to provide Syria with an attacking force. . . . In providing aid, we always stress, in all conversations with the Syrian leaders, that we are in favor of a peaceful solution.  

In effect, Zagladin seemed to be saying that the Soviets urged the Syrians to be cautious, but that the Syrians did not always listen. The Soviets were not responsible for Syrian behavior and by implica-
tion were not about to defend it. That certainly seemed to distance the Soviets from the Syrians at a time when the Syrians sought as much protection as the Soviet relationship might provide. But Soviet distancing from the Syrians was to take other forms as well.

First, when Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam met with Andrei Gromyko in Moscow in November—hoping, no doubt, to cement the image of the Syrian-Soviet alliance—the Soviets signaled the limits of their commitment to the Syrians in a number of ways. Note, for example, that when Khaddam made his toast to Gromyko, he made several references to the Soviet commitment to the defense of Syria. All such references were dropped from the TASS and Pravda versions of the toast, and this could hardly have been an accident. Moreover, the TASS report on the talks revealed that there had been differences of view and not a meeting of the minds: for example, rather than saying that the sides agreed on various points—a standard Soviet formula—the Soviets described the talks as involving “a thorough exchange of opinions on the issues concerning the situation in Lebanon.” Even more important, the TASS report called attention to the situation in Tripoli (where Syrian-backed forces had Yasir Arafat’s forces under siege, in a conflict that the Soviets had been publicly ignoring until this time). By suddenly calling attention to the situation in Tripoli, by using the same formula (a “thorough exchange of opinions”) to describe talks on this subject, and by then noting that the Soviet side, alone, had “stressed the pressing, urgent need to overcome strife and restore unity in the ranks of the Palestinian resistance movement,” the Soviets were signaling that they had important disagreements with the Syrians.

In a sense, calling attention to the issue of Tripoli was useful for it gave the Soviets a basis on which to dissociate themselves from the Syrians without necessarily looking weak in the process. After all, opposition to the Syrian siege of Arafat in Tripoli seemed to be a view shared by many in the Arab world; that the Soviets should hold this view might seem legitimate in a Middle Eastern context and might not seem to be the product of a particular Soviet desire to establish some distance from the Syrians in order to minimize any perceived commitment to the Assad regime at this time.

In any case, to be sure that no one missed the Soviet distancing on this issue, Gromyko, ten days after the meeting with Khaddam, met with Tariq Aziz, the foreign minister of Iraq, and a communiqué was issued saying, “the sides declared their support for the PLO . . . and called for the urgent overcoming of the strife and restoration of unity in the Palestinian resistance movement.” The significance of such a meeting of the minds could not be missed. Iraq was the bitter enemy of Syria and was embroiled in a war with the Iranians that was their main preoccupation. Yet the Soviets and Iraqis were meeting and agreeing on
the need to support the PLO and to stop the fighting in Tripoli. This could hardly have been a reassuring sign to the Syrians.

Soviet commentary in the fall of 1983 again provided a fairly good mirror of the downturn in the Soviet mood and their gradual inclination to distance themselves from Syria. The tone of the commentary changed; there were no more warnings or threats against the Israelis; there was no emphasis on Soviet-Syrian ties, but rather a stated willingness to “continue to support the struggle of the Syrians, Lebanese, Palestinians, and other Arab peoples.” In other words, the Syrians were no longer singled out for special support as they had been before. There was again an emerging sense in Soviet statements that Moscow was on the sidelines—and was a somewhat irrelevant player. As the situation on the ground became more dangerous, Soviet commentators were seemingly left to condemn the United States and claim that it betrayed its promise to introduce the Marines only for a short time and even then in a peacekeeping and not a combatant role.

There was a clear sense of relief when the cease-fire was concluded and the escalating fighting at the end of September was stopped. And yet, while acknowledging that the “news of the truce is worth cheering,” one Soviet writer made an interesting admission about the role U.S. power and pressure played in bringing about the cease-fire:

The new truce differs from the old one in one very important aspect. It has been instituted beneath the barrels of American guns that roared for three weeks in September, blowing up the Lebanese land with their shells. Moreover, the truce came into being virtually at the very moment that the powerful American battleship “New Jersey” approached Lebanon’s shores. Its monster 16-inch guns, which fire shells weighing 1-1/2 tons, tripled the power of American naval artillery aimed at Lebanon. Along with the American Marines on shore and on ships off shore, it is the guarantee that the Lebanese truce will not be detrimental to Washington’s interests.

Throughout the fall Soviet media commentary revealed distancing from the Syrians indirectly—that is, there was a clear decline in the image of direct support for the Syrians. For several weeks the Soviet media remained mute on the Syrian siege of Tripoli and then called attention to the need to stop fighting there only after the communiqué on the Gromyko-Khaddam meeting. Interestingly, the day before the Gromyko-Tariq Aziz meeting, Aleksandr Bovin, in a commentary on Moscow television, specified what was going on in Tripoli. He also recounted the Syrian charges against Arafat (he is “trying to destroy the cause of the Palestinian revolution”) and Arafat’s charges against Syria (“the Syrians and Libyans are trying to destroy the PLO politically
and militarily. Using some Palestinians as agents, they drove our soldiers from the al-Biqa Valley and are now trying to chase us out of Tripoli”).44

While not affixing blame, Bovin was at least lending credence to the PLO charges by acknowledging them. Against the backdrop of official Soviet calls for recognizing and supporting the PLO as the leaders of the Palestinians, calling for an end to the fighting at Tripoli, and identifying with the Iraqis on this same issue, Bovin’s commentary should be seen as another sign of displeasure with the Syrians. The reluctance to be seen in an open dispute with an ally or client may account for the subtlety with which the issue of distancing themselves from the Syrians was handled in the Soviet media.

What was not subtle in this period was the war-scare theme and the tone of pessimism and helplessness that again pervaded the Soviet media. Two points are noteworthy here. First, as Soviet writers emphasized the danger of an imminent strike against Syria (it is not a question of “if” a strike will occur, but “when”),45 there seemed to be nothing the Soviet Union could or would do about this. Against the massive U.S. firepower that was arrayed against Syria and that was constantly recounted in great detail in the Soviet media, the world community or the Arabs or the UN were urged to do something. Nothing was said about the Soviets having any special responsibility or doing anything to help the Syrians.46

That leads to a second point, namely, that in circumstances where the Soviets may truly fear a military strike, and where they have put some distance between themselves and their client, the stress on a war threat in their media may be designed to convince their client to calm the environment and avoid steps that could lead to conflict. After all, if the client (in this case the Syrians) cannot count on Soviet help and is facing an imminent military danger, it would seem to make sense to take steps to defuse the situation to ensure that the situation does not get out of hand.

How does one account for Soviet behavior during this period? Put simply, the Soviets wanted no part of a confrontation with the United States. They did not want to be drawn into a confrontation as the United States was getting more engaged. American threats against Syria put the Soviets in an uncomfortable position, but led to a certain distancing from the Syrians that was designed to give the Syrians a reason to be less provocative and to provide the Soviets with a basis for avoiding being drawn into a potential U.S.-Syrian confrontation. The Soviets certainly did not want to appear weak; on the other hand, they were not about to risk a confrontation with the United States over what continued to be Syrian stakes in Lebanon.
The United States Withdraws and Soviet Confidence Is Restored, Winter–Spring 1984

Soviet nervousness and distancing from the Syrians remained constant until the United States pulled its Marines out of Lebanon in early February 1984. With the clear image of a U.S. setback—and a Syrian victory—the Soviets quickly began to raise the level of their political profile in the area. After having adopted such a low profile through much of the period of American involvement in Lebanon—rarely sending Soviet emissaries or officials around the region as U.S. presidential envoys crisscrossed the area—suddenly Soviet officials and activity seemed to shift into high gear.

Numerous Soviet emissaries started to visit the area, ministers from Arab countries began to visit Moscow, a significant new arms deal was arranged with Kuwait, rumors were rife about a pending deal with Jordan, diplomatic ties were restored with Egypt, and the Soviets tilted toward the Iraqis, providing major new economic credits and arms that had been previously denied.

This activity began in the spring and extended into the summer and fall of 1984. What makes the activity striking is that it not only took place before and after Chernenko's advent to power, but it also occurred at a time when the Soviets had generally adopted a position of defiance toward the outside world: Sino-Soviet relations were put on hold after some earlier signs of thaw; Soviet-European ties deteriorated; the Soviets were tougher on their East European allies; and U.S.-Soviet relations were in a deep freeze, with the Soviets emphasizing the increasing danger of war.

Everywhere else Soviet policy was not in an active phase, but in the Middle East it was. Moreover, in the Middle East the Soviets were actually reaching out to the Western-oriented Arab states. The best explanation for this seeming anomaly is that the United States had suffered a major defeat in the area and this had created an opportunity for the Soviets to make gains and insinuate themselves into the area. If the Soviets needed to be convinced of this, moderate Arab distancing from the United States soon provided the proof. Barely a month after the U.S. withdrawal from Lebanon, King Hussein criticized the United States and called for an international peace conference on the Middle East that would include the Soviets. (The timing of the Hussein speech seemed to indicate a desire to hedge bets, to let a triumphant Assad know that he did not need to worry about Hussein, and perhaps to give the Soviets a reason to ensure that Syria did not pressure Jordan at this point.) In addition, the Saudis and other peninsula states turned a cold shoulder toward U.S. offers of help as the Iran-Iraq War escalated with attacks on tankers in the Persian Gulf.
America’s Arab friends in the region seemed shaken and this seemed to create a sense of opportunity in Soviet eyes—thus triggering greater Soviet activism. That sense of opportunity and newfound confidence was again mirrored in the Soviet commentary on the area. Beginning with the Hussein speech, Soviet commentary began to focus much more on how U.S. friends in the area were turning away from America, given the lessons of Lebanon. When the war escalated in the Gulf, Soviet journalists drew attention to the Saudi refusal to accept U.S. help, saying that despite having “very close relations with the Americans, [Saudi Arabia] realizes in spite of everything in the present situation the political cost of this American help would outweigh the possible, so to speak, strategic advantages.” And journalists saw this refusal as having an effect on the American view of how it was doing and what its options in the area were. In this regard, Konstantin Geivandov went so far as to say that the United States,

learning from experience . . . is now striving toward greater caution. Especially as even those Arab leaders who consider themselves friends of Washington have shown during the latest aggravation of the Iran-Iraq conflict that after Lebanon, they prefer to keep their distance from America.

That America’s friends were keeping their distance, that some—notably Hussein—might be interested in hedging their bets, and that the United States itself now showed a reluctance to intervene unilaterally in the Gulf, after having so forcefully declared it a vital interest, all seemed to suggest that things were not going America’s way in the region. Even for the Chernenko leadership, this created a sense of opportunity and argued for increased Soviet activity in the region as a whole.

Once again, the circumstances had changed in the Lebanon-Syria-Israel triangle. An American setback had occurred; it had effects that were felt well beyond the Fertile Crescent; and the Soviets reacted to it, seeing an opportunity and becoming generally more optimistic about the course of events in the region.

CONCLUSION

The Soviets had, of course, done little to contribute to the American failure in Lebanon; they merely hoped to exploit it after the fact. That proved difficult in practice.
Lebanon remained as difficult to manage as ever. Syria, having demonstrated its ability to undermine any deal it opposed in Lebanon, proved incapable of imposing an arrangement that served its interests. Moreover, the Soviet ability to ride Syria’s “coattails” and cash in on the Syrian defeat of the United States in Lebanon was limited by Syrian self-absorption in the spring of 1984.

Others in the region, like King Hussein of Jordan, might have felt the need to signal the high-flying Syrians that their neighbors would cause them no trouble, but internal power struggles in Syria soon undercut Syrian leverage in the region and thereby limited the Soviet ability to exploit the Syrian victory. Indeed, the U.S. loss in Lebanon might have had more severe consequences had Assad’s illness and the anticipation of his imminent death by the Syrian elite not triggered open battling in and around Damascus.

In the end, the United States escaped from Lebanon. Soviet vacillations during the period from 1982 to 1984 revealed their determination to avoid undue risks, manage the risks they ran, protect their own stakes, if not those of others in the area, and ensure a continuing presence in the region.

Soviet levels of activity seemed driven primarily by their perception of risk, a perception that was not simply a function of direct U.S. behavior but also seemed to be influenced by what Israel seemed prepared to do. When risks were perceived to be low, the Soviets became more active—even bellicose—perhaps, in part, to compensate for earlier periods of passivity.

Although the following chapter describes Soviet behavior toward a fundamentally different regional war, there are consistencies worth noting in the Soviet policies that followed. While it would be too much to argue that these common threads form a general model for Soviet foreign policy, they do signify a consistent approach to Middle Eastern conflicts, which tells us a great deal about the region’s significance in Soviet foreign and security policies. As in Lebanon, the Iran-Iraq case highlights some interesting differences between U.S. and Soviet approaches to regional conflicts—differences based on comparative location, power projection capabilities, the importance of ideology (greater in U.S. policy), the hierarchy of regional values, and the propensity for risk taking. What is particularly noteworthy as we move to the Iran-Iraq case is that despite the momentous changes occurring within the Soviet leadership from 1982 to 1985 with the succession from Brezhnev to Andropov to Chernenko, and finally to Gorbachev, Soviet behavior—as in the Lebanon case—continues to exhibit low-risk opportunism and a tendency to view events in the region in rather narrow zero-sum terms. Thus, our findings indicate that the importance of individual leaders in Soviet foreign policy may be considerably less
than previously thought by some authors, and that analysts should look for patterns of change based on tactical adjustment to events on the ground, rather than elite political maneuvers within the Kremlin.

ENDNOTES

1. TASS, 8 July 1982.
2. Ibid.
22. This discussion was conveyed to the author by the journalist who was approached by the Soviet official.
25. TASS, 30 March 1983.
29. Ibid.
39. TASS, 11 November 1983. The differences between the TASS and Pravda versions are noteworthy; in Pravda, on 13 November 1983, one sees all sorts of omissions from TASS’s account in English, most of which would imply a Soviet responsibility to Syria. In Syria’s version of the toast, reprinted in Al-Bar and Tishrin, Khaddam’s references to the Soviet commitments to Syrian defense are plain to see.
40. TASS, 21 November 1983.
44. A. Bovin, Moscow Domestic Service. FBIS, 22 November 1983.
47. See comments by A. Bovin and P. Demchenko, Moscow Domestic Service. FBIS, 29 May 1984, p. cc5,6.
49. Ibid.

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The Iran-Iraq War marked a very different conflict from that in Lebanon, especially in the relationship between the regional participants and the two superpowers. Whereas in Lebanon the United States and Soviet Union provided large, direct shipments of arms to their regional allies, Iran and Iraq received only sporadic and indirect deliveries. Part of the reason lay in the largely territorial, religious, and personal (Hussein-Khomeini) nature of the Gulf war, which served the broader aims of neither superpower. More importantly, the greater size, population, and resources of Iran and Iraq meant that neither country was in the dependency position of a superpower “client.” Therefore they could exercise greater independence from outside influences than could the countries of the Fertile Crescent.

Diplomatically, while the United States still has no official relations with Iran and reestablished ties with Iraq only in 1984, the Soviets enjoyed full relations with both countries throughout the war and maintained a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Iraq. Yet these relations did not give the Soviets much leverage with either of the regional combatants, and, indeed, neither superpower showed much ability to bring pressure on Iran or Iraq to end the war. That an Arab-Israeli war could have gone on for as long a time without superpower intervention to stop it is inconceivable. In terms of the themes of this book, what the Iran-Iraq War highlights most of all are the sheer limits of Soviet influence in the region. Short of involving themselves directly in the conflict—an option that we
have no evidence Moscow ever considered seriously—the Soviets were forced to the realization that global military power does not automatically equate with regional influence, even in an area so close to their borders. Compared to their relatively significant sway in Damascus, for example, the Soviet position in Tehran and Baghdad remained very limited; and Moscow proved unable to capitalize on the virtual crisis in U.S.-Iranian relations during the last decade to cement meaningful gains for themselves with the Khomeini regime. The Soviet role in both capitals, if anything, worsened over the course of the conflict, due to political changes in the region, the war, and their own policies.

Yet despite these significant differences in relative Soviet influence in the Lebanon and Iran-Iraq cases, Soviet behavior in the course of the Gulf war proved remarkably similar to the policies followed in Lebanon. Largely, the Soviets followed a policy of restraint, particularly in terms of military policy. This seems to indicate that there is a general Soviet approach to the Middle East as a special strategic region. Unlike Europe, the Middle East has been viewed as an unstable area due to its lack of recognized boundaries of U.S. and Soviet influence, its frequent wars, conflicting national claims, and shifting alliances. Thus, the possibility of inadvertent superpower conflict in this region—close to the southwestern borders of the Soviet Union—appeared high. At the same time, the Soviets claim significant political, economic, and strategic interests in the region. Thus, as George Breslauer argues (see chapter 1 in this volume), the Soviets are pursuing a “mixed motive” strategy. This calculus resulted in Soviet policies characterized—not by boldness and a revolutionary line—but rather by caution and realpolitik opportunism. Movements to end the war were limited, at best. But this does not mean that Soviet policy was static. As in the case of Lebanon, there was considerable movement in Soviet policy toward the Gulf war at different stages, and even a changing of sides.

Before discussing the different phases in Soviet policy toward the Iran-Iraq War, it is worth taking a brief look at the initial Soviet reaction to the Iranian revolution—an upheaval whose fiercely nationalistic and Islamic character caused Moscow unexpected foreign policy difficulties.

THE SOVIETS AND THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION

The Soviet Union embraced the Iranian revolution belatedly in January 1979, when it became clear that the Shah would indeed fall. After having been a major trading partner and cordial friend of the monarchy, the Brezhnev leadership coolly abandoned the old regime. Even if it had had a choice—which was clearly not the case, given the extent
of upheaval in Iran—the Soviet leadership at the time was bound to embrace an Iranian movement determined to remove American presence and influence from Iran. To Moscow the revolution meant the dissolution of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and the shattering of the whole U.S. strategic plan for the region. This elaborate structure had come tumbling down, all without a fight. So long as Iran remained hostile to the United States, Iran could not be a springboard for attack in wartime or a strategic military benefit to America in peacetime. Not surprisingly, Soviet forecasts made much of this favorable turn of events.

In the press a flurry of articles appeared praising the revolution and highlighting a conveniently edited version of the history of Soviet-Iranian relations, especially in the area of trade. Notably, these accounts deleted mention of the Soviet occupation of northern Iran during World War II and its attempts in 1920 and 1921, and again in 1945 and 1946, to annex parts of Iranian territory under puppet governments. Reports from Iran exuded optimism about the course of recent events and attempted to explain this mass-based, clergy-led upheaval by quoting Lenin on the “unique character” of Third World revolutions.

The Soviets seemed to believe that they could rush into the vacuum created by the U.S. expulsion, but the Iranians had other ideas. Despite the possibility of countercoups and Moscow’s warnings of U.S. intervention, the new regime resisted Soviet efforts to improve ties and expand economic projects. Iranian propaganda equated Soviet communism with American “imperialism” in the face of Moscow’s (short-sighted) postrevolutionary increase in aid to the antigovernment Kurdish rebels and its heavy-handed attempts to reaffirm a 1921 treaty granting it the right to intervene in certain situations (Rubinstein 1982: 103–4). The Soviet press emphasized the threat of invasion by the “imperialist” United States, drawing on the history of U.S. reaction to events in Iran in 1953 and in Chile in 1973. Within the limits of available evidence, it appears that the Brezhnev leadership truly expected the United States to intervene to save the Shah. The Soviets, like most observers, did not believe that the reactionary Ayatollah Khomeini could consolidate his power base and take over the government. Thus, they took the safe bet of increasing their support for an existing client (the Kurdish separatists). As the months passed, it became clear that the Soviets understood Iranian political dynamics no better than they did those in Washington. By early summer there had been no invasion. Instead, the Iranians had adopted an Islamic Constitution and approved other institutional changes that only increased the clergy’s hold on state power. A new current of pessimism about the evolving course of events in Iran began to be seen in the Soviet press.
Although the hostage crisis in November 1979 cemented a situation of hostility in U.S.-Iranian relations, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late December damaged whatever chances might have existed for improved Soviet-Iranian ties. By moving against Afghanistan's Moslem rebels the Soviets forcefully confirmed Iranian suspicions about Moscow's intentions in the region and its hostility to Islam.

In early 1980 the Iranians ordered a shutdown of their Soviet-built natural gas pipeline after Moscow rejected a fivefold price increase up to existing world levels. This move caused considerable hardship in the Soviet Caucasian republics, whose industries had relied heavily on Iranian exports (Bethkenhagen 1985: 10). Yet the Soviets doggedly pursued Iranian favor, opening trade routes through Soviet territory to free other Iranian products bound for Western Europe that had been stopped by the U.S. blockade. In addition, the Soviet press bent over backwards to accommodate Khomeini politically. It continued the line of routinely blaming repressions of the communist Tudeh not on the government but on unnamed "rightists" in Iran.7 One author, writing in Pravda, even went so far as to claim that the students holding the American hostages were committed to solving U.S.-Iranian disputes "by peaceful means, in accordance with international norms."8 Very little that Moscow did or offered to do created any resonance in Iran, however. Nevertheless, and notwithstanding their Treaty of Friendship with Iraq, the Soviets proceeded to tilt toward Iran at the outset of the Iran-Iraq War in the fall of 1980.

The Iran-Iraq War: The Soviets Lean toward Iran, 1980 to Early 1982

In early September the sporadic fighting that had been going on for weeks escalated with the heavy Iranian shelling of the Iraqi border towns Khanaquin, Mandali, Zurbatia, and the oil facility at Naft Khaneh. (Iraq argues to this day that this Iranian attack constituted the beginning of the war). Soon after, the Baghdad government set into motion plans for what it viewed as a preemptive invasion of Iranian-held land in the Shatt al-Arab, which it believed would ultimately bring about the overthrow of the Islamic regime by the incitement of "oppressed" Arabs and other national minorities in Iran.

For Moscow, the news of September 22 that Iraqi armored divisions were sweeping into Khuzistan was potentially a problem. If Iran faltered under Iraqi attack, there would be an opportunity for pro-U.S. factions (especially in the Iranian Air Force) to stage a countercoup under the guise of "saving" Iran. In fact, it was not certain that Khomeini himself might not request U.S. aid. Despite the frustrations
the Islamic regime had caused for Moscow, the revolution—which
Brezhnev called at the 26th Party Congress a “signal event” of the
latter half of the twentieth century—constituted a major strategic gain
with great geopolitical consequences. The last thing the Soviets wanted
to see was the strategic clock turned back. That was the danger.

But there was also an opportunity. The outbreak of the war
gave the Soviets hope for an improvement in their relations with
the Khomeini regime. In the context of the Iraqi threat and the
possibility of a U.S.-backed countercoup, the Soviet leadership also
saw a possible opening to exploit Iranian vulnerability. They pursued
this line in spite of their ties with Iraq and their avowed opposition
to this war between two anti-American regional powers. In doing so,
the Soviets again revealed their traditional brand of opportunism and
their willingness to alter their policy tactically to exploit the situation
for maximum benefit.

While Moscow was not about to give up all it had invested in Iraq,
the Soviet leadership calculated that it was worth risking a short-term
worsening of Soviet-Iraqi relations in order to build influence with the
new Iranian regime, especially if that might prevent a reintroduction
of U.S. influence. But the Soviets did not feel compelled to make
an outright choice between the two and initially sought to have it
both ways.

Perhaps because of the nature of Soviet analysis, the Brezhnev
leadership underestimated the strength of personal, nationalistic, and
ideological antagonism at work between Iraq’s Saddam Hussein and
Iran’s Khomeini. Early on the Soviets had tried to unite these two regional
powers under the banners of anti-Zionism and anti-Americanism. But,
in fact, relations between Khomeini and Hussein had been worsening
ever since October 1978, when Iraq agreed to the Shah’s request that
Khomeini be ousted from his 14-year exile there. Not surprisingly, after
the Iranian revolution Khomeini scorned Hussein’s friendly letter of
recognition, and a period of “cold war” relations fell upon the two
neighbors. The summer of 1980 found each side backing rebel groups
in the other’s territory, as well as propagandizing the treachery and
moral bankruptcy of the other’s regime. Thus, only a little more than a
year after their unexpected windfall in Iran, Soviet hopes for a new cordon
sanitaire against U.S. interests in the Gulf seemed bound for failure.

The Soviet attempt to have it both ways in the war led it into
some public gymnastics. The Soviet press sought to blame the war
on the United States and flatly ignored the actual Iraqi attack, thus
hoping to assuage Hussein. At the same time, the Brezhnev leadership
took a number of concrete measures to show its displeasure with
the Iraqi action and its support for Iran. It sent back a convoy of
Soviet ships—already in the Persian Gulf—which had been headed

Concurrently, Iranian sources report that the Soviets began offering arms and economic support to Iran (Farhang 1985: 670). As the Iranian army fell back, Moscow sought to present itself as the protector of the Iranian revolution, hoping to reap the political benefits of having come to Iran's aid in its time of need.

If this was the case, then why did the Soviet press fail to blame Iraq for the war? At the risk of insulting Iran, the Soviets saw no use in alienating Iraq completely, and the press provided a low-cost means of assuaging Hussein. The major Soviet dailies refused to condemn the Iraqi attack, or even to report the initial Iraqi offensive at all for two months. When they finally did report it in November, the account was purely descriptive. The emerging Soviet line sought first to shift blame for the war to the United States and the other imperialist powers, including especially those involved in drawing up the Iran-Iraq border decades ago. Naturally, it followed that the war must be ended.

In political terms the conflict was a big embarrassment, a "fratricidal" war between two "progressive" states. In military terms, the Soviets saw a potential threat, particularly if a disgruntled U.S. government decided to intervene on behalf of its hostages. Furthermore, expert opinion put little stake in the Iranian army's ability to fight. It had been purged twice since the revolution and was rent with conflicting clergy and professional chains of command. Units at the front followed different leaders, and there appeared to be little, if any, coordination among various forces.

If an Iranian defeat appeared imminent, why did the Soviets not simply back the Iraqis? Three reasons may account for the Soviet decision to lean toward Iran. First, the Soviets saw Iran—twice as big as Iraq, with over three times its population—as the most important country in the region. It was the country that bordered the Soviet Union and physically separated it from the Gulf—and was by definition of greater strategic importance. Second, the risk the Soviets took in backing Islamic Iran was probably seen as minimal compared to the costs of seeing the United States reemerge in Iran and the possible benefits of putting the USSR in a position to gain a foothold if Tehran saw Soviet aid as important. Third, in case they were wrong, they assumed they would in time be able to recoup their position with a victorious Iraq, perhaps because they saw Ba'athist Iraq as hostile to the West and because they hoped their public posture on the war (one that did not blame Iraq) might mitigate possible Iraqi anger toward them.
Had they backed Iraq fully and continued arms shipments, they would have increased the risk of U.S. intervention and a countercoup. Had they backed Iran publicly and overtly, they would have alienated most of the Arab world, while gaining uncertain advantages from an obviously unpredictable Iranian regime. Thus, the Soviets pursued a “hedging” strategy, with a tilt toward Iran in deed but not in words. The war would have to be managed, but the fall of Iran to Iraq or hostile domestic forces would have to be avoided since it might usher the United States right back into the area. As Ponomarev explained in Kommunist, “Conflicts between new governments in the zone of the national liberation struggle, and especially military clashes, are the best gift to imperialism” (1980: 35). Such a gift could not be permitted. As a result, not only did the Soviets offer arms directly and indirectly, they also tried to cultivate the Iranians with offers of economic protection and help. Besides vetoing economic sanctions in the UN, the Soviets offered markets and cooperative construction projects to Iran. For its part, the Tehran government accepted the trade routes and continued a limited number of existing cooperative ventures. In addition, the loss of the U.S. market induced it to sell oil to the USSR, and Soviet imports of the commodity jumped from zero to 2.3 million tons during the next year (Bethkenhagen 1985: table 6). But contrary to Soviet hopes and even expectations, Iran was far from agreeing to any sort of general trade arrangement with the Soviets.

Soviet plans for improved ties as a result of their attempted generosity and the expected disruptive effects of the war did not materialize. Initially, the war fused rather than divided Iranian society, and Khomeini managed to exercise an even higher degree of independence from secular leaders. Iranian patriotism and Shi’a Islam combined to inspire even some antigovernment groups to unite with the Tehran government against the Iraqi attack. Also, the context of the foreign threat provided an ideal environment for a further purging of political opponents. Along with their continued repression of the large Islamic socialist movement Mujahidin-i Khalq, Pasdaran and clergy forces began to move concertedly against Iranian Communists. In mid-1981 officials shut down the Tudeh daily, Mardom, for good and also announced the closure of Iranian universities—long a stronghold of Tudeh support. Finally, the government militarized all major factories—citing the demands of the war effort—which stripped numerous communist-led workers councils of their power, leaving the Tudeh disarmed even in the industrial workplace. Probably responding to Soviet pressure, the Tudeh did nothing in response, still hoping to ride out the attacks by reemphasizing its continued support for the regime. (The Soviets have urged such a policy on Communist parties elsewhere in the Third World, with remarkably similar negative
consequences for these parties.) Tudeh General Secretary Nureddin Kianuri, even with his press and headquarters taken away, hung onto the view that something could be salvaged by a strategy of continued infiltration of the Iranian Revolutionary Party (IRP) and the army. In one apparent concession to Moscow, the Tehran regime continued to allow the Tudeh—alone on the Left—the status of a "legal" party.

On the military front Iranian forces had begun to hold as early as a few months after the Iraqi attack. Subsequently, a long period of attrition warfare ensued. Although the Iraqis finally took Abadan and Khorramshahr, the will of the Iranian resistance seemed to have chastened Hussein, who now failed to push his attack, particularly due to his fear of taking high Iraqi casualties. In January 1981 President Bani-Sadr lost out to the IRP in his struggle to control the Iranian military. The failure of his Dezful offensive allowed Khomeini to "pack" the newly formed Supreme Defense Council (SDC) with senior clergymen. In addition, Khomeini instituted a system of direct SDC representation at the front, effectively supplanting the secular command chain running from the president down. Aided by the drop in Iraqi momentum and this newly consolidated command structure, Iranian forces began to move successfully on Iraqi positions. By summer the Bostan offensive had given Iran its first victory, and in September Iranian troops broke through Iraqi forces around Abadan. New tactics, such as the use of religiously inspired Pasdaran units to clear Iraqi mine-fields, thoroughly disrupted the morale of enemy soldiers, even while regular Iranian Army forces continued to do the bulk of the fighting. Finally, in May 1982 Iranian troops forced the Iraqis across the border, thus beginning a new phase in the diplomatic arena—with Iraq suddenly interested in peace—and helping to nurture a new Soviet policy towards the two participants.

Notably, the turn in the war's tide seemed only to embolden Iran in its relations with the USSR. During the spring of 1982 the Soviet press complained about the Iranian diktat on reducing the size of the Soviet embassy staff in Tehran, the regime's closure of the consulate in Rasht, its refusal to grant entry permits to Soviet journalists, and its decision to shut the doors of the Iranian Society of Cultural Ties with the USSR, which had offered courses in the Russian language. Soviet conciliation and support had won little favor in Iran and was being repaid by the Iranians with increasingly strong and open signs of hostility. In the face of Iranian attitudes and the changing trends in the war, now that Iraq—a Treaty of Friendship signatory—was on the defensive, it is not surprising that the Soviet tilt toward Iran ended.
THE SOVIETS ADOPT A NEUTRAL STANCE ON THE WAR, MID-1982 TO LATE 1983

The shifting of the war from Iranian to Iraqi soil had a significant effect on the Soviet outlook on the conflict. Iran had chosen not to stop at the Iraqi border, and Khomeini had enunciated his plans for a Shi'ite revolution in Iraq and the overthrow of Hussein. Suddenly the Soviets began to fear that the Iraqis might be defeated and that Iranian-style Islamic fundamentalism might spread along the Soviets' southwestern border. In the late spring the Soviets resumed their arms shipments, ending the embargo on the major systems—aircraft, tanks, artillery, armored personnel carriers—that the Iraqis had already bought, but had been prevented from receiving. The Soviets were not promising major new deals for the future but at least they were no longer blocking shipments that had previously been agreed to.

But it was not only the change in the war that accounted for the reopening of the arms pipeline to Iraq. As noted above, events within Iran had changed to the Soviets' disadvantage. At this point, the Soviet press commentaries no longer disguised this unfortunate fact. Soviet press discussion of the domestic situation in Iran took on a harsher tone. There was blunt condemnation of the Islamization of the Iranian economy, combined with warnings about its dangers, specifically, that the strength of rightist, pro-United States groups within Iran was growing as a result and would subvert the revolution. The late Brezhnev and early Andropov leadership were forced to respond to a new wave of anti-Sovietism being propagated by the Khomeini regime and the increasing crackdown on the Tudeh within Iran.

It seems that the IRP had waited until the Iraqi threat had been beaten back to begin the Tudeh's repression, just in case Soviet aid had been necessary (Khalilzad 1984). By mid-1982, however, when the more powerful Iranian leftist parties had already been suppressed, the arrest and imprisonment of members of Tudeh began to grow. The Tudeh's position had also been seriously hurt due to the untimely defection during the summer of the Soviet KGB operative in Iran, Vladimir Khuzichkin, who made public damaging information regarding Soviet-Tudeh collaboration and the depth of Tudeh infiltration into the government apparatus (Yodfat 1984). This only fueled—but did not start—the crackdown already under way.

In the early months of 1983 the IRP arrested more than a thousand members of the Tudeh, among them Iranian Navy Commander Bahram Afzali Khashk-Bejari and General Secretary Kianuri. Yet a description of these events in Pravda, appearing without authorship (an apparent indication of its "official" origins), still expressed the "collaborative" elements in Soviet policy. The article urged the Iranian regime to stop...
its repression of the Tudeh, raising the threat of a U.S.-backed coup by "rightists" and giving Khomeini a way out by blaming these other factions:

Reactionary circles are carrying out a subversion of Soviet-Iranian relations, despite the fact that these relations, without a doubt, are in the national interests of Iran and help it to resist imperialist pressure.10

Clearly, there was still hope of salvaging relations with the Khomeini regime, and there were concerns about the possible dangers of a serious split. The Soviets could not remain silent in the face of Iranian "provocations" and apparently sought to find a way to convince the Khomeini leadership that it was treading on dangerous ground—without, at the same time, fomenting a crisis in Soviet-Iranian relations.

Despite Soviet warnings, the Iranians proceeded in the prosecution of Tudeh party members. After obtaining forced confessions in classic "Soviet" fashion, the Khomeini regime staged show trials in April, replete with televised confessions of guilt. For some twenty top leaders execution followed, while the rest received prison terms. Soviet strategy regarding the Tudeh had suffered a devastating defeat, and a pall settled over the already limited Soviet press commentary on Iranian domestic affairs.

Soon after, the Soviets began highlighting the more positive attitude of the Iraqi government toward talks on ending the war. Iran, by contrast, was reported to be at fault for the continued fighting, due to its rejection of Iraqi overtures. This more candid and fault-finding journalism went hand in hand with the new tone in Soviet commentary pieces, such as Ul'ianovskii's article in Literaturnaia Gazeta that described the Khomeini regime as one of "Islamic despotism."11 Yet this was not, by any means, a full-blown anti-Iranian line, as the relative silence of the August–October period indicated. At the end of the year, however, an article in Pravda accused Iran of having forgotten the lessons of the revolution.12 Concurrently, the Soviet press for the first time began to condemn the Iranians for their unwillingness to discuss peace initiatives, while it praised the Iraqi position.13

The meeting of Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz with Gromyko on November 21 in Moscow was followed by press coverage indicating Aziz's particular satisfaction with the talks.14 The Soviets also announced in late November the signing of an agreement for further economic and technological cooperation with Iraq. And following the accord a Soviet economic delegation left for Iraq for further discussions. One further sign of the coming shift in Soviet policy was the increased flow of oil coming from Iraq to the USSR, which jumped from 0.1 million tons in 1982 to 2.2 million in 1983.15
THE SOVIETS LEAN TOWARD IRAQ,
EARLY 1984 TO LATE 1985

At the beginning of 1984 the Soviets considerably expanded military, economic, and political ties with the Iraqis. High-level delegations were traveling back and forth between Moscow and Baghdad; the public commentary on both sides revealed a fundamental warming in relations. Indeed, Iraqi Prime Minister Ramadan highlighted the changed Soviet posture by saying that Moscow had come around from its "inexact viewpoint" and was now living up to the spirit of the 1972 friendship treaty.  

Why did the Soviets begin to favor Iraq at this point? Part of the reason was the turn in the war: the Iraqis now were clearly on the defensive. The Treaty of Friendship with Iraq may not have been a sufficient reason to prevent the initial Soviet tilt toward Iran, but it was a powerful argument at this point for taking steps to ensure that Iraq was not defeated in the war. Having a signatory defeated would hardly be a testimonial to the value of Treaties of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union.  

But there may be an even more important reason for the Soviet tilt to Iraq in 1984: Iran had to be taught a lesson. The Iranians needed to learn that there was a price to be paid for hostility to the Soviet Union. The Soviets had endured much in the first few years after the Iranian revolution. Almost all Soviet commentaries on Iran from 1982 onward revealed basic frustration with Iran. Its leaders had turned Soviet overtures aside and had taken Soviet support and even "protection" from U.S. threats of intervention for granted. In return, they had insulted the Soviet Union, equating it with the United States and persecuting its progressive friends.  

That may have been frustrating, but it remained tolerable. When the Iranians spiced their anti-Sovietism with show trials, however, and, worse, began increasing their aid to the mujahidin in Afghanistan toward the end of 1983, the Iranians probably went too far.  

While the Soviet press primarily used reprints of Tudeh or wire service reports to deal with the new trials and executions of Tudeh party officials in January and February, it condemned with great vehemence the Iranian regime for its support of Afghan rebels at this point. Pravda praised Iraqi overtures on the issue of scheduling talks on the Gulf war under a UN format, which Iran had rejected. Once again, Soviet authors stressed the need for a settlement of the war and the threat of further U.S. intervention in the Gulf.  

In the spring of 1984 Soviet press commentary on the Gulf focused great attention again on how the United States was using the war as a pretext to build up its military strength in the area. Some commentators saw this as a natural U.S. response to its failure in Lebanon. Others took
heart in Saudi and other Arab rejections of U.S. entreaties on access and offers of help. All saw the war as being used by the United States to expand its local military presence, calling particular attention to the U.S. use of Diego Garcia and the development of a U.S. base in Oman.

In this period the tilt toward Iraq featured the major Soviet resupply of the Iraqi military. While limited arms shipments had been sent as early as 1982, the new agreements involved qualitatively superior and quantitatively larger amounts of weapons designed to maintain and support Iraq's firepower advantage against Iran. The Soviets took a much more active role now in seeing that Iraq did not lose, which suddenly appeared to be a real possibility. In addition, they initiated a series of agreements for cooperation in the areas of water supply, energy, and other economic sectors, with Soviet technical expertise exchanged for Iraqi raw materials, especially oil and gas. Predictably, when the United States decided to allow the sale of "dual use" equipment—previously banned—to Iran, TASS launched a vehement protest. Ironically, in this period the Soviets themselves continued to conduct third-party sales of military hardware to the Iranians, through such conduits as North Korea, Libya, and Syria. But Iranian opinion was not moved by this act of Soviet "generosity" and continued its line of equating the USSR with its other "imperialist" enemy, the United States. The Soviets responded to Iranian hostility with their first direct criticism of an Iranian ally: the group Islamic Jihad—active in Lebanon—was branded in Pravda as an "extremist Moslem group" after its bombing of the U.S. embassy building.

Reports of chemical weapons use by the Iraqis in early 1985 provided another insight into the Soviet tilt toward Iraq. Without reporting any of the Western evidence of chemical attacks, such as the burned Iranian soldiers sent to West Germany for treatment, the Soviet press printed an Iraqi commander's denial of foreign charges of chemical weapons use against Iranian forces.

At the same time a long and highly critical article on the Iranian revolution appeared in the Soviet academic press. With uncommon candor its author presented a critical reevaluation of the previous pro-Iranian Soviet policy (Agaev 1985). He stated that mistakes had been made in the Soviet evaluation of the religious right and hinted that other leftist groups in Iran (presumably the Mujahidin-i Khalq) had been more perceptive than the Tudeh in their assessment of Khomeini. The article contained a frank statement of the Tudeh's mistakes and argued—perhaps for domestic Iranian consumption—that the correct line was held by those who had opposed the reactionary clergy from the start. This was the harshest criticism yet of the Khomeini regime and was consistent with other behavior and public statements that tilted toward Iraq.
Yet Gorbachev's succession to power in the spring of 1985 was soon followed by a short flurry of Soviet diplomatic activity and press attention toward Iran with the obvious aim of bettering Soviet-Iranian relations. Although it is unclear whether Gorbachev's assumption of power was responsible for this "testing of the waters," the campaign bore unmistakable signs of having been "orchestrated" from above. After two years of dreary and scant coverage of Iran-Iraq affairs—but coverage that made clear that Iran was to blame for the continuation of the war—Pravda suddenly printed a series of strictly neutral articles on the war,25 and the academic press published a historical commentary on the mutual benefits of early Soviet-Iranian economic ties (Makeev 1985). A full justification for the Soviet presence in Afghanistan was presented in an effort to overcome what the Soviets recognized as the major impediment to closer state-to-state relations with Iran.26

The effort to test the waters and win over Iranian opinion seems to have peaked and then ebbed with the visit of the Iranian deputy foreign minister to Moscow in the first week of April. At the political level his meeting with Gromyko appeared to have gone poorly, for the Soviet press reported no progress and reiterated differences in viewpoint on the war.27 Still, there was movement in economic talks occurring at the same time, highlighting a tactical convergence of interests.28 This new Iranian pragmatism was one result of the increasing economic burdens of the war, as the price of oil on world markets began to decline.

THE SOVIETS PLAY TO THE MIDDLE, 1986–88

Following the overt tilt toward Iraq, the Soviets adopted a more balanced approach towards the two antagonists after 1985. The Soviets were not eager for Iran to overrun Iraq, with whom they had a long-time and more stable relationship. Thus, this approach was punctuated by swings in mood toward Iran, as influenced (negatively) by Iranian military offensives or (positively) by perceived opportunities presented by U.S.-Iranian military confrontations in the Gulf. After Iraq's recapture of the Faw Peninsula in fighting in the spring and summer of 1988, the Soviets seemed more content with the Gulf situation, viewing an equitable, negotiated settlement as more likely.

In keeping with the style and character of the Gorbachev period, both the pace of diplomatic activity and the political profile of official visits increased. But the optimism or pessimism of the Soviet orientation toward Iran seemed to be driven—much as before—by perceived strategic opportunities or concerns.
In early 1986 Soviet commentary on Iran held to a neutral line, with the scathing anti-Iranian pieces disappearing. Coupled with the changed commentary, the Soviets and Iranians began to exchange visits of technological and political delegations that were both more frequent and included higher-level officials. In February Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister G. M. Kornienko led a delegation to Tehran that included trade representatives and perhaps some military personnel. Soviet commentary on this trip was low key and devoted primarily to improvement in bilateral economic ties. Reportedly, these ties included an agreement to resume direct Moscow-Tehran air service and to reestablish regular meetings of the joint Soviet-Iranian economic council (Spiegel et al. 1988: 276).

But these tentative moves toward the Iranians were tempered almost immediately by the hostile Soviet reaction to the Iranian offensive over the marshes at the mouth of the Shatt al-Arab, which succeeded in seizing the tip of the Faw Peninsula, securing for Iran an important strategic foothold inside Iraq. The Soviets quickly condemned the attack and warned Iran of the dangers the further expansion of the war, particularly the possibility of American (notably, not Soviet) intervention. Again, Iraqi willingness to accept a return to the prewar status quo received Soviet attention and praise. The Soviets may have feared that not only Iraq, but also Kuwait, the one nonaligned Arabian Peninsula state, might fall before the Iranian onslaught. Iraqi forces held, however, and a stalemate ensued in the new positions.

Soviet military support for Iraq remained high, with an increasingly significant share of all Soviet arms to the Middle East going to Iraq (Chubin 1987: 733-35). In addition, new accords signed in May of that year set out a range of contracts and new construction projects inside Iraq to be achieved with Soviet assistance in the period from 1986 to 1990. With an eye toward the future and the postwar era, the Soviets may well have been trying to further institutionalize their economic ties with Baghdad and build the Iraqi interest in good relations.

At least in the area of bilateral economic ties, the Soviets seemed to be trying to do the same with Iran. Soviet behavior from August through December seemed geared toward a low-key but deliberate effort to upgrade economic ties with the Iranians. Talks of economic cooperation in the Caspian Sea, in the area of energy generation, and in the expansion of trade went forward and culminated in a meeting of the Soviet-Iranian Standing Commission for Economic Cooperation—the first such meeting of this commission in six years.

The low-key treatment of the mission by K. Katushev (chairman of the State Committee for Foreign Economic Ties) for this meeting in Tehran probably reflected Soviet uncertainty and suspicion over the revelations of U.S.-Iranian arms deals that were appearing at this time.
An “observer” article in Pravda on November 12 rather sarcastically rejected Iran’s claims that no Iranian leader had met with Robert McFarlane, noting that “obviously someone was waiting for him and that people in authority” must have intended to meet with him, for his trip would have been “inconceivable” otherwise. Igor Beliaev probably came closest to expressing the official Soviet understanding of the McFarlane meeting with Iranian officials when he stated that it had been prompted by “strategic considerations.”

Soviet leadership concerns about the McFarlane trip may have increased Moscow’s interest in going ahead with the Katushev mission in December, but the expectations were low. The trip did result in the formal reestablishment of contact at the ministerial level and in the signing of an economic protocol increasing bilateral trade. But political agreement again proved unobtainable, despite meetings with Iranian President Khamenei and Speaker of the Majlis (Parliament) Rafsanjani. Already by January and February of 1987 themes of Soviet unease and criticism of Iran and identity of views with Iraq regarding the war reappeared. At this point the Soviets were reacting to the new Iranian offensive against Basra, Iraq’s second largest city.

In early January the Soviets issued an official statement on the Iran-Iraq War and proposed equitable means by which to settle it; the terms it used closely paralleled Saddam Hussein’s August 1986 proposal for ending the war. Soon thereafter Soviet Ambassador to Iraq Aleksandr Belonogov acknowledged in a press conference that the Soviet Union had supplied Iraq with arms and was opposed to Iran’s new offensive launched at Basra. The secret U.S. arms deal with Iran thus became a convenient scapegoat, as the Soviet press proclaimed that American weapons were a key factor in the Iranian ability to launch the attack.

Soviet criticism of Iran again reappeared in February during Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati’s visit to Moscow. The visit itself was another demonstration of the level of diplomatic contact between the Soviet Union and Iran; Velayati was the most prominent Iranian official to visit the Soviet Union since the Iranian revolution. But the act of meeting did not signify agreement. While the Soviets were not averse to creating the impression that more could be done to build bilateral relations—with Pravda noting the USSR’s “positive” evaluation of Iranian proposals for expanded economic cooperation—the Soviets publicly scolded the Iranians on the war and on Afghanistan. In addition, the recent Iranian execution of a number of hunger-striking Tudeh party political prisoners soured the Soviet mood, encouraging them to take a hard line at the meetings. Izvestiia reported that Gromyko bluntly told Velayati that Soviet and Iranian views on the war “do not agree”; that “common sense” argues for Iran to devote
its energies to “the future and not the past, to ways of ending the war”; and that it was not in the interests of Iran for “the number of graveyards filled with dead to increase.”

It may well be that Gromyko had been designated to issue a harsh criticism to Iran. While his talks as a whole were not portrayed in a positive light by the Soviets, the Shevardnadze and Ryzhkov meetings with Velayati were characterized in more ambiguous and milder terms, with Shevardnadze quoted on the Iran-Iraq War as calling for “immediate establishment of peace” and on Afghanistan as saying that regional states “would be wise to support” Kabul’s national reconciliation efforts.

Gromyko had already been quoted in a tough vein back in October 1986, when he charged in a meeting with the Iranian Ambassador to Moscow that the “whipping up of anti-Soviet propaganda” in Iran “does not meet the interests of developing normal relations” between the two countries.

In March the Soviets responded to the Kuwaiti request for the protection of its oil tankers by being the first country to lease them new tankers. Clearly, this move did not endear the Soviets to the Tehran government. In early May Iranian gunboats in the Persian Gulf fired upon the Soviet freighter Ivan Koroteev. Soon after, one of three Soviet tankers leased to Kuwait—the Marshal Chuykov—hit an Iranian mine and sustained considerable damage. Yet despite these Iranian provocations, the Soviets took a notably soft-line approach by reporting the damage in their press without an accompanying accusation against Iran.43 On the other hand, Soviet commentary and public statements in May became sharply anti-Iranian in rebuttals to Tehran’s charges regarding Soviet leasing of tankers.44 An Izvestia article sharply criticized Iran for its position in blocking progress toward a cease-fire in the Gulf war and for its anti-Soviet statements.

By July of 1987 Gromyko’s tone had changed dramatically when in a meeting with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammed Larijani he “stressed that the Soviet Union has already and continues to consistently support good neighborly relations with Iran. . . . As neighbors, the Soviet Union and Iran should always live in peace and friendship.”

What accounts for the change? Put simply, the Soviet posture toward Iran changed as a result of opportunities presented by the Iranian reaction to the increasing U.S. presence in the Gulf. As the United States was preparing to engage in the reflagging and protection of Kuwaiti oil tankers, Iran became more concerned about the U.S. “threat” and saw the virtue of a tactical accommodation with the Soviets. The Soviets responded.

The Iraqi attack on the USS Stark in late May may have helped to initiate a change in the Soviet approach. The Soviet
press made much of the new U.S. orders to fire against any aircraft or naval vessels exhibiting "hostile intentions" and argued that the event was being used as a "pretext" for increasing U.S. intervention in the Gulf. One author even compared the attack on the USS Stark to the Tonkin Gulf incident, which the Americans had used to increase their presence in Vietnam two decades before.

In a way that seemed to justify Soviet predictions, subsequent American plans for reflagging went forward hand in hand with a U.S. naval buildup, designed to ensure safe escort for reflagged tankers. The Soviets responded in their press commentary by drawing a new distinction between their response to the Kuwaiti request for protection from Iranian attack on its tankers and the response of the United States. Their actions were simply due to commercial concerns, while the actions of the United States were a pretext to expand the U.S. military presence in the region.

The theme that the U.S. military presence in the Gulf—and not Iranian attacks on neutral shipping—was the source of increasing tensions in the area became commonplace. This theme was also reflected in the Soviet proposal to have "all warships of states not situated in the region be shortly withdrawn from the Gulf" and in the public statements associated with the exchange of high-level Soviet and Iranian visits—visits that began in mid-June with Deputy Foreign Minister Vorontsov's trip to Tehran.

The Vorontsov trip marked a clear change in the public Soviet tone toward Iran. Moscow dropped its earlier criticism of Iran for its continued pursuit of the war; the TASS report on the Vorontsov visit made no reference to Afghanistan.

For their part, the Iranians, too, suddenly took a more favorable line vis-à-vis the Soviets. The Iranians portrayed the Vorontsov meetings positively; and Prime Minister Musavi stressed that Iran was seeking "clear-cut and friendly relations" with the Soviet Union. He even expressed the hope that Tehran and Moscow could coordinate their policies at the regional and international levels. Rafsanjani echoed these sentiments at the conclusion of the Vorontsov visit, noting that if the two countries were "to make an effort" they could achieve "more cooperation than ever before." This, barely a month after Rafsanjani and other Iranian officials heaped scorn on the Soviets for acting in effect to help insulate Kuwaiti oil trade from attack.

From an Iranian standpoint, it was not as if the Soviets had been transformed and had therefore become acceptable partners; the United States was the stronger threat to Iran's interests and a turn to the Soviet Union made sense tactically. At a minimum, the Iranians probably hoped the shift would make the United States think twice about any possible attack; beyond this, they may have reasoned,
particularly in the light of the McFarlane-North trip to Tehran and U.S. concerns about the Soviets, that a tilt toward the Soviets would sober America and make Washington rethink its policies.

What specifically could the Soviets have hoped to gain by accepting this move? Improved Soviet-Iranian ties could have been used to demonstrate and to build the Soviet role as an arbiter on the war and in the area more generally. The Soviet Foreign Ministry implied such a role in describing the Vorontsov mission as indicating that the USSR "not only supports" but also "strives in practice" to promote an end to the war and the "settlement of the crisis situation in the Persian Gulf." Being able to talk to both warring sides—much as the United States has done in the Arab-Israeli context—was an important advantage the Soviets might have been able to capitalize upon in order to acquire greater status in the area. While the Soviets had obviously been able to talk to the Iranians—as well as the Iraqis—for some time, the Iranian desire to cultivate an image of improving ties gave the Soviets a new opportunity to position themselves as an arbiter.

The growing U.S. military presence gave the Soviets an increased "need" to do so. If there was one consistent Soviet theme throughout the course of the Iran-Iraq War, it was that the war and the threat of its expansion had been used by the United States as a pretext to build its military presence in the area. The rapid expansion of the U.S. naval preserve in and around the Gulf in advance of the reflagging of Kuwaiti tankers gave the Soviets a reason to become more active; it gave them common cause with the Iranians, and, in fact, led the Soviets to adopt a posture that was opposed by Iraq—namely, to call, without reference to a cease-fire on land, for a cessation of attacks on shipping in the Gulf. The Iraqis saw such a plan as doing little to stop the Iranians but doing much to restrict the Iraqi ability to bring pressure to bear on Iran's capacity to continue to finance the war through its oil trade.

While the Iraqis may not have liked it, the Soviets obviously believed that a cessation in the Gulf shipping war was needed to bring about a reduced U.S. presence. Strategically, this goal held a higher priority than Iraqi concerns. The more Moscow focused on trying to reduce the U.S. presence, and the more it pushed a plan favorable to the Iranians, the more the Soviets had a chance of developing better bilateral ties with Tehran. To this end, two themes reemerged in Soviet commentaries—the threat the United States posed to Iran and the war-scare theme—in a way that implied a Soviet protective role. (Such themes had been prominent after the Iranian revolution and throughout the hostage crisis.)

In any event, with Vorontsov and Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Larijani meeting four times in Moscow and Tehran in a six-week period in the summer of 1987, and with rumors being floated from Eastern
European sources that the Soviet Union would be concluding a treaty of friendship with Iran, the possibility of exploiting the rising tensions in the Gulf to develop ties with Iran may have seemed real.

Just as the original tilt toward Iran in the war had reflected its greater strategic weight, so, too, in the summer of 1987 did the Soviets again see virtues in drawing closer to the Iranians—regardless of the effect on the Iraqis. That is not to say that the Soviets were indifferent to the possible effects on the Iraqis.

Each of Vorontsov's trips to Tehran was followed by stops in Baghdad. In addition, the Soviet leadership may have felt it could manage the Iraqi reaction with its arms supply relationship. Since 1984 nearly two-thirds of all Soviet arms going into the Middle East had gone to Iraq. The flood gates had opened up and Iraq was receiving advanced weaponry—including fighter aircraft like the MiG-29—before any other Soviet client in the area (Chubin 1987: 734–35). While the arms sales reflected the Soviet decision to tilt toward the Iraqis in 1984, it continued under Gorbachev. Though the Iraqis, at least indirectly, criticized Soviet policies in July of 1987, their dependence (and the experience of having been cut off earlier in the war) seems to have restricted their options and tempered their reaction.

After the upsurge in U.S. activity in the Gulf in 1987, there were an increasing number of direct U.S.-Iranian clashes. These included the U.S. destruction of an Iranian oil platform in April 1988 and the mistaken downing in July of an Iranian civilian aircraft—killing all 290 aboard—in the midst of a U.S. naval engagement with Iranian speedboats. Yet despite these apparent openings for the Soviets, Moscow was not able to achieve much more than it did through late 1987. This amounted to a growth in trade and a normalization of diplomatic meetings, but not the expansion of Soviet influence in Tehran.

Changes in the Iranian power structure weakened Khomeini’s role and strengthened the position of the more moderate and Western-oriented Rafsanjani. The elevation of Rafsanjani to head of the armed forces did nothing to reverse Iran’s failing fortunes in the last stages of the war, and yet it seemed to increase his power. Rafsanjani’s emphasis on a limited response to the U.S. Navy’s destruction of the Iranian airliner marked something new in Iranian revolutionary politics and provided evidence of a growing Iranian desire for “normalism” in the region, including an end to the war. Moves by Iranian leaders to mend bridges with the United States, through third parties in Geneva, began to be made in the summer of 1988. By comparison, Rafsanjani seemed to have a somewhat more dubious view of the future of Soviet-Iranian relations, despite changes under Gorbachev aimed at settling Soviet-Iranian sore points. Oddly, the remarkable shift in Soviet policy that brought about the agreement for the withdrawal
of its military forces from Afghanistan did not change Iranian views on the desirability of closer ties with Moscow.

On July 18 the Iranian decision to agree to UN Resolution 598—calling for an immediate cease-fire in the war—brought praise from both Washington and Moscow. Yet it was not the superpowers but UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar who led the negotiations that resulted in the cease-fire of August 20. Due to its proximity, the Soviet Union will likely be the source of economic deals with both countries for assistance in rebuilding the war-damaged Iranian and Iraqi economies. But politics will be another story, at least in Tehran. Moscow's main hope after the war lies in the unforeseeable changes going on within the Iranian power structure, which may accrue to their benefit. Short of a complete undoing of the Islamic framework set up under Khomeini, however, the likelihood of a significant improvement in ties to Moscow—in the near term—appear very low indeed.

The Soviets saw sufficient opportunity in the tactical convergence of their interests with Iran beginning in the summer of 1987 to try to exploit it. Their goal of removing or at least reducing the U.S. military presence in the Gulf (a Soviet "denial" goal) clearly represented a strong motivation for new Soviet activism. Their goal of establishing themselves as a credible arbiter (a Soviet "acquisitive" goal) constituted another such motivation.

If Soviet behavior in recent years is any indication, we can count on the Soviets to move quickly if they see opportunity in the post-Khomeini period. The concept of "new thinking" enunciated by Gorbachev clearly does not preclude impulses to exploit perceived opportunities that seem to enhance the Soviet position at U.S. expense. Old habits die hard. Progress, however, will depend on Tehran; and the speed of change—regardless of who succeeds Khomeini—will be slow. In the experience to date, the Iranians have proven far more capable of manipulating others than being manipulated by them.

CONCLUSION

The leadership consensus formed during the Brezhnev years on the simultaneous importance and volatility of the Middle East continues to this day. Gorbachev, for all his stimulation of new ideas in the press, is only beginning to make his mark on Middle East policy. While making significant new overtures to Israel and initiating a historic withdrawal from Afghanistan, he made no such progress toward playing a role in the ending of the Gulf war. In fairness, the Iran-Iraq conflict was clearly not a problem for which a unilateral Soviet solution was
possible. As a formula for foreign policy, "new thinking" is only beginning to move from the academic blackboard into practice. But the evidence from the Lebanon and Iran-Iraq cases shows that even if "new thinking" does become an active part of Soviet foreign policy doctrine—bringing a reevaluation of traditional enemies and allies—it is unlikely to affect Soviet security policy or force deployments in Middle Eastern wars. These conflicts—characterized by a high escalatory potential and geographic proximity to Soviet borders—elicit cautious Soviet responses based on how best to halt potential spillover and limit direct involvement, while preventing U.S. gains. Judging from the Lebanon and Iran-Iraq cases, the Soviets no longer see wars in the region as a useful means of pursuing local gains. This is particularly true in this region where combined U.S.-NATO and allied forces far overwhelm those of the Soviet Union.

Soviet behavior in these two cases reveals that the leadership perceives high stakes in the area. This is not only because of the borders the Soviets share with Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan and concern over the domestic implications of the evolving political character of the Middle East, but also because of the perceived importance of regional events in the broader superpower competition. Overall, there are several salient points worth noting about Soviet policy and priorities in the region that come out of the two cases. Taken together, these findings might help other analysts interpret past Soviet behavior and predict future Soviet policies toward regional conflicts.

(1) As we have seen in the Lebanon and Iran-Iraq cases, the Soviets are not about to "opt out" of the Middle East, as some analysts claimed after their "loss" of Egypt in the early 1970s. Subsequent events have shown that they will act to preserve their position in the region, and will run risks if necessary to do so. Indeed, it is a measure of the leadership consensus on this issue that the Soviets were willing to make the SAM-5 decision—and run the risks associated with it—even at a point when maneuvering over the succession in Moscow was in full swing. If nothing else, that suggests that there has been a basic agreement on the fundamentals of Middle East policy within the Soviet leadership. Soviet maneuvering in the Gulf since the summer of 1987 suggests that there has been little change to date under Gorbachev, at least with regard to tactics for pursuing a continued Soviet presence and influence in the region.63

The recent expansion of Soviet power-projection capabilities in the 1960s and 1970s has only increased their determination to play an active role in Middle Eastern developments. But, as with the countervailing force of British interests in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the active participation of the United States in the region has served as a hedge against a more assertive Soviet position.
(2) Appropriately, the Soviets have shown a keen awareness of the need to avoid confrontation with the United States, and, for that matter, with Israel as well. Clearly, there is a basic tension between the Soviet determination to preserve their position in the region and their desire to prevent a direct U.S.-Soviet encounter, much as there is in U.S. policy. That tension may account for a particular pattern in Soviet behavior that has emerged in the area, namely, showing passivity during regional conflicts when the danger of escalation is high and then compensating afterwards. (Compensation in this sense may mean not only increasing support for their client but sometimes also taking on a more assertive or aggressive posture.)

(3) The Soviet tendency to stress the danger of war at various points in each of the two conflicts may reveal something about Soviet goals in dealing with local clients. What came out of the Lebanon case study is a Soviet use of this theme for different purposes: in the spring of 1983, when there was little risk of war, the Soviets used it to demonstrate their toughness and value as a patron; later, in the fall of 1983, they used it as a device to restrain their client. The only problem with using the war-danger theme (which presumably can also be used to get the United States to pressure or restrain Israel) is that it can foster misperceptions in the area and lead to miscalculation. The Soviets found this to be the case in 1967. Notwithstanding, the Soviets have continued to use the war-threat theme as an instrument of policy, and this remains true under Gorbachev. In the summer of 1987 it was used as a basis to argue for reducing the U.S. military presence in the Gulf and for highlighting the value of Soviet friendship to Iran. Each objective may be important to the Soviets, but—much as in 1967—the use of this theme can have unintended consequences. Unfortunately, even the Gorbachev leadership does not seem to have learned this lesson yet.

(4) Throughout the Lebanon and Iran-Iraq developments, the Soviets exhibited a tendency to perceive events in superpower terms. Soviet optimism and pessimism in the Lebanon case seem to be very much a function of what was happening to the United States and its ally. When the United States or Israel were active or seemed to be playing a major role in shaping events, the Soviets were pessimistic. Conversely, when either the United States or its ally were suffering setbacks or exhibiting self-doubt, the Soviets were much more optimistic. This applies very much in the case of the Iranian revolution as well. Though initially hesitant in their response to the turmoil in Iran in 1978, when they saw the evolving anti-American cast of the revolution and the resulting dissociation from the United States after February 1979, the Soviets became almost euphoric in their description of the significance of the event. This was not just a setback for the United States, it was
an event of strategic proportions that allegedly meant a windfall for the Soviet position in Iran.

That misperception—along with Soviet ideological explanations of the "progressive" nature of the Iranian revolution—apparently colored Soviet expectations about how their relations with the new Iranian leadership would evolve. They were clearly disappointed on this score. With the evolution of the Afghan settlement, however, we may expect some changes in Soviet reputation and room for maneuver.

(5) Soviet behavior in both cases exhibited an almost singular fixation on tactical opportunism over Marxist-Leninist ideological concerns. Part of the reason for this has been the traditional weakness of Communist parties in the region—a trend that has become even more prevalent in recent years, given the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. As a result, the Soviets have shown a far greater willingness than the United States to abandon ideological allies in the face of changing political circumstances. For example, Soviet strategic priorities during their shift toward the Iraqi position on the war in 1984 ruled out any significant protests against Hussein's concurrent repression of the Iraqi Communist party. Similarly, in early 1987 the Iranian execution of numerous Tudeh party prisoners did not prevent the bettering of Soviet-Iranian relations after U.S.-Iranian hostilities flared up in the spring. The priority of broader strategic concerns in Soviet calculations is also seen in their willingness to adopt as clients movements and states espousing philosophical perspectives that directly contradict their own ideology. With Iran this has meant accommodating even avowedly anticommunist regimes, such as that of the Shah. But, if maintaining influence means abandoning these governments, the Soviets have proved themselves willing to make even radical adjustments across philosophical lines. Indeed, only a few weeks marked the Soviet shift from a pro-Shah policy in late 1978 to a prerevolution policy in early 1979.

Ironically, this trend of Soviet opportunism comes at a time when Middle Eastern states are increasingly concerned with the reliability of their superpower allies. Yet, the Soviets seem oblivious to the consequences of their shifting ideological position in terms of whom they are backing. For example, beginning in early 1979 and continuing throughout the 1980s, Soviet writings on Soviet-Iranian economic ties have highlighted the successful cooperation that occurred under the Shah as a positive example, despite the seemingly obvious fact that the Tehran government must see such relations as tantamount to support of the monarchy. This Soviet ignorance of the true costs of their own opportunism may hurt them considerably in the long run, as it has with Iran to this day. Their past efforts to accommodate themselves with the Islamic leadership may place them in a poor
position to negotiate with any Iranian opposition leaders who may come to power after Khomeini's death, and has already cost them favor in the Arab world. The Soviet failure to make choices between regional adversaries, such as Iraq and Iran, has hurt them in other areas of the world as well. Just as the two-tracked Soviet position on the Ogaden War cost them their relations with Somalia, Soviet attempts to accommodate both Baghdad and Tehran—an impossible task—created an opening for the improvement of U.S.-Iraqi ties. In this sense, the relatively consistent opposition by the United States to radical Islam has put it in a better position in its relations with the Arab nations—including Iraq—and with more moderate Iranian leaders. Thus, the greater U.S. concern with ideological consistency allows it to make choices among regional groups, whereas Soviet opportunism in the region makes accepting short-run losses in order to make lasting, stable friendships and, thereby, attain long-term influence difficult for Moscow.

Overall, we see signs of lessons not being learned by the Soviets. Despite the earlier disappointments with the Iranians, the Soviets decided to cultivate Soviet-Iranian ties at a point when U.S. reflagging and escort operations created a tactical convergence of interest. In this sense, the Gorbachev leadership showed itself to be just as quick as its predecessors in responding to perceived opportunities and potential U.S. difficulties. So long as the Soviets continue along this course, Soviet claims of seeing Third World competition in non-zero-sum terms are unlikely to be compelling. Yet only when the Soviets begin to show an understanding of other than strategic concerns will they find the basis for lasting ties with the more powerful states in the region: Israel, Egypt, and Iran.

The Afghanistan settlement of spring 1988 is evidence of a changing definition of Soviet security requirements on its southern border, which may affect their overall policy in the Middle East region as well. The negative repercussions of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan apparently caused enough concern among "new-thinking" members of the Gorbachev Politburo to bring about a change in policy. If these sensitivities become an established part of Soviet Middle Eastern policy, Moscow may prove to be a more capable and more respected regional actor in the coming years.

ENDNOTES

1. N. Yakubov, "Two Approaches, Iran and the Problems of Economic Cooperation." Pravda, 13 March 1979, p. 4; Pavel Demchenko, "USSR-Iran: Horizons of Cooperation." Pravda, 6 April 1979, p. 4; and V. Ivaneneko,
4. For example, see A. Pavlov, “Iran: The Threat of a Military Dictatorship.” *Pravda*, 20 January 1979, p. 5.
5. Aryeh Yodfat also makes this point, writing of the period:

“The Soviets genuinely believed that American intervention was imminent. They expected this and prepared their own population for it. There were no statements or even hints as to what the USSR would do if the USA did indeed intervene. In all probability the Soviets would have protested, published statements and condemnations, but no more.” (1983:70).


22. See TASS statement in Pravda, 8 August 1984, p. 5.


38. TASS, “Negotiations of the Ministers.” Izvestiia, 16 February 1987, p. 3.


40. TASS, “Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium Receives Iranian Minister.” Izvestiia, 15 February 1987. The utter lack of a common language at the meeting is indicated by the sheer generality of “points of agreement” listed in the subsequent press report:

“During an exchange of views on topical international problems, the closeness and coincidence of the positions of the USSR and the Islamic Republic of Iran was affirmed in such key current issues as the setting up of an all-embracing system of international security, the prevention of the arms race, freeing the world from nuclear weapons, maintaining peace in space [!], and ending nuclear tests.”

(See footnote 38 for citation.)
41. TASS, 16 February 1987 (see footnote 38).
42. TASS, "Meeting with Iranian Ambassador." Pravda, 9 October 1986, p. 4.
44. See A. Kapralov, "Fantasies and Facts." Izvestiia, 1 May 1987, p. 4.
46. TASS, "Iranian Representative Meets in Kremlin." Izvestiia, 19 July 1987, p. 4.
49. See, for example, P. Demchenko, "Sparks of Fire over an Oily Sea." Pravda, 20 July 1987, p. 6.
54. Ibid.
61. One newspaper report—citing an Iranian source—indicated that Tehran's decision to agree to UN Resolution 598 may have been the result of a meeting between American and Iranian officials in Amsterdam some two weeks earlier. See "Iran Agrees to Cease-fire in Gulf War." Manchester Guardian Weekly, 24 July 1988; v. 1, 139, no. 4, p. 1.
62. Of course, this does not bode well for a great improvement in U.S.-Iranian relations either.
63. Though not the subject of this essay, the Soviet approach to an international conference on the Arab-Israeli conflict also indicates continuing Soviet determination to play a major role in the region. At a minimum, the Soviets are insisting that the conference be authoritative and ongoing, ensuring a long-term role for themselves.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


In April 1987 General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev declared that the absence of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Israel "cannot be considered normal." This comment reflects a growing belief among Soviet policymakers that the rupture in Soviet-Israeli relations, dating from the Six Day War of twenty years ago, should at last be repaired. And, to give it more significance, the remark was uttered in the presence of Moscow's oldest Middle Eastern ally—and Israel's most implacable adversary—Syrian President Hafez al-Assad.

Three months later, in July, an official Soviet consular delegation arrived in Jerusalem. Carrying Gorbachev's air of glasnost with them as they traveled, the Russian visitors set about attending a series of cordial and well-publicized meetings with various Israelis at all levels of society.

These tentative moves toward an opening to Israel marked a new direction in Soviet policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict, a deliberate effort by the Gorbachev leadership to broaden Soviet options in the Middle East. Gradually but consistently Moscow has been showing greater willingness to make practical and ideological concessions to improve relations with Middle Eastern states from Egypt and Israel to the Persian Gulf.

The primary Soviet objective, to set up limitations on the military and political influence of the United States, remained unchanged. Both in the Gulf and the Arab-Israeli theater this objective now dictates a policy of conflict avoidance, possibly even conflict resolution, to eliminate pretexts for American military engagement. Thus, the Soviet Union has been taking a constructive stance in mediation moves at the United Nations to bring about a cease-fire in the seven-year-old Iran-Iraq War.
After nearly two decades without significant official contact between Israel and the Soviet Union, Gorbachev has seized the initiative. But the process was slow in getting under way.

**OVERTURES TOWARD ISRAEL**

The first visible step was an informal meeting in Paris in July 1985 between Soviet and Israeli ambassadors to France. Substantive reports of this meeting were leaked to the Israeli media and denied by the Soviets, but Moscow did not deny that a meeting had taken place. Then came various contacts between Israeli and East European diplomats at different levels, resulting in an agreement in principle on the establishment of Polish and Israeli "interest sections" (diplomatic offices without diplomatic relations) in the two respective countries. At the same time Soviet spokesmen, official and unofficial, offered numerous comments to the effect that it had been a mistake to sever relations with Israel in 1967; some even suggested that Moscow wished to put an end to this situation, thus anticipating Gorbachev's own remark.

Less tangible hints also appeared, such as the publication in the Soviet press of Israel's message to Moscow on the occasion of the anniversary of the Allied victory over Nazi Germany; the occasional easing of entry restrictions for Israeli tourists to Eastern Europe; the Bulgarian government's invitation to visit Sofia that was extended to the Bulgarian-born wife of Israel's then foreign minister (and soon to be prime minister), Yitzhak Shamir; and the gradual reduction of the virulent anti-Zionist propaganda that had become standard fare in the Soviet press in the last few years. Interspersed were the periodic grants of permission for individual Soviet Jews to emigrate to Israel, most notably Anatolyi Shcharanski.

Finally, in August 1986 the announcement came that Moscow and Jerusalem were to hold talks in Helsinki on consular matters, possibly to be followed by a Soviet delegation visit to Israel. The Soviets had selected the lowest level possible in diplomatic relations. Indeed, they even ruled out an official consular relationship or reciprocity in the form of an Israeli consular delegation, scrupulously limiting the Helsinki meeting to the issue of the Soviet delegation's visit.1 (Apparently Moscow would have preferred simply to dispatch its delegation, but Israel had requested the Helsinki meeting to clarify Soviet plans for the visit.) The Helsinki meeting concluded abruptly and the Soviet request to send a delegation was withdrawn, which led to speculation that Jerusalem had misread the signs and had exaggerated Soviet intentions. Yet the process continued.
Prime Minister Shimon Peres held a meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze at the United Nations in September 1986, and in the ensuing months contacts between Soviet and Israeli officials continued. Perhaps the most significant contact occurred in Rome in April 1987 between Peres, by then foreign minister, and two of Moscow's top advisors on the Middle East, Karen Brutents and Aleksandr Zotov. This was followed by a meeting between Peres and Soviet Ambassador to Washington Yuri Dubinin and, subsequently, the renewal of the Soviet request to send a consular delegation. Reciprocity, however, was ruled out.

The Soviets also broke their cultural boycott of 20 years and sent two performing arts troupes to Israel. A senior Soviet journalist, Izvestiia's Middle East expert and political commentator Konstantin Geivandov, joined a delegation to Israel, publishing a surprisingly positive and variegated picture of Israeli society upon his return. In the summer of 1987 the Soviet consular delegation arrived, repeatedly renewing its visas to the point that it appeared that they planned to stay on a semipermanent basis. Israeli-Polish and Israeli-Hungarian interest sections were subsequently opened, and in February 1988 Moscow agreed to the dispatch of an Israeli consular delegation to the Soviet Union. This delegation arrived in Moscow in July 1988. The improvement of relations with Israel was accompanied by the release of all of the Soviet Jews imprisoned for Jewish activism, and by an increase in the number of Jews permitted to leave the country—the number reaching the rate of 1000 per month by late spring in 1988.

All of this activity produced rumors of an imminent Peres-Gorbachev meeting, as well as speculation regarding free emigration of Soviet Jewry and the resumption of full diplomatic relations with Israel. At the very least this activity raised tantalizing questions regarding Soviet intentions.

**SOVIET MOTIVATIONS**

Soviet calculations about resuming diplomatic relations with Israel involve several factors, most notably the effect on Moscow's relations with the Arab world. A second factor, however, is global, that is, the impact of such a move on the Soviet competition with the United States in the Middle East and, possibly, on Soviet-American relations in general.

The decision to break relations during the 1967 war happened to be a Yugoslav—not a Soviet—initiative, clearly intended to create an impact on the Arab world. At the time the Soviets were under Arab attack for their relative inaction during the war, including their refusal to quickly
supply any kind of aid or arms; they were also blamed by some for trying
to restrain Egypt from attacking first, and for the poor performance
of Soviet-manufactured arms. To mollify its Arab allies Moscow took
what seemed a no-risk step of severing relations with Israel (in addi-
tion to delivering a warning to Israel to hold its fire against Syria).2

The move was an anomaly; Moscow had no tradition of breaking
relations with states whose policies it condemned. In subsequent years
Moscow resisted Arab pressure to withdraw recognition of Israel,
asserting even to the Palestinians the Soviet Union's acceptance of
Israel's right to exist.

Moreover, Moscow found itself at a disadvantage due to the
absence of formal relations with Jerusalem; the United States was now
better equipped to mediate between the Arab and the Israeli sides. The
USSR used this point to argue with the Arabs in favor of renewing its
relations with Israel; during the Lebanese war a Soviet official reportedly
explained his country's impassiveness by commenting that the lack
of Soviet-Israeli relations was an obstacle that prevented Moscow
from acting effectively as a negotiator.3 Nonetheless, declining Soviet
fortunes in the Arab world in the 1970s rendered Moscow too vulnerable
to risk a renewal of relations with Israel.

The Soviets have set various conditions for renewal of relations.
At the 1973 Geneva Conference Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko
indicated to Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban that relations might be
forthcoming if there were "significant progress" in the peace process
(Golan 1977: 165-66). Later, the Soviets spoke of Israeli withdrawal
from the occupied territories, and more recently they demanded Israeli
abrogation of its "strategic understanding" with Washington. During
the more recent years of hints and meetings the Soviets only referred
to the precondition that Israel withdraw from the territories or end
"its aggressive policies." In time Moscow returned to the less exacting
formula for "renewing relations within the framework of a settlement,"
and even in the course of progress toward a settlement, such as
restoring relations once Israel begins participation in an international
conference.

For all the risks, or cost, to the Soviets in the Arab world, Moscow
has one compelling reason to consider renewed relations: the desire
to break Washington's monopoly on the Middle East peace process.
Moscow's efforts to convene an international conference on the Middle
East—a renewal of something like the 1973 Geneva framework—have
been directed at just this goal.

Moscow's interest in such a conference had fluctuated somewhat
throughout the 1970s and 1980s, primarily in direct relation to American
successes or failures (its interest being high in times of apparent U.S.
progress in the region, lower when American mediation was clearly
unsuccessful, for example, in the spring of 1975). Interestingly, such fluctuations in the Soviet position have shown no correlation with the degree of Arab unity on the matter at any given time.

Soviet gestures to Israel appeared to come at those times when Moscow was pressing hardest for an international conference or believed such a forum to be within reach. The intention was clear: to overcome Israeli opposition to Soviet participation by demonstrating that Moscow would not be a totally hostile party in the talks. At these times the Soviets went out of their way to specify that Israel was one of the states in the region whose security, territorial integrity, independence, and sovereignty were to be guaranteed by a Middle East settlement.

On these occasions the Soviets explicitly spoke of Israel's frontiers as those of June 4, 1967, that is, the 1949-67 armistice lines rather than the more restricted lines of the 1947 Partition Plan—the only borders formally accepted by Moscow. In this more moderate stand on borders, the proposed Palestinian state would be limited to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as distinct from (and in opposition to) the PLO's pre-1974 demand and general aspiration for a "democratic secular state" in all of Palestine (replacing the State of Israel).\(^4\) Gorbachev's gesture to Israel has included acknowledgment of Israel's need for assurances regarding its security, in addition, of course, to the actual improvement of relations between Moscow and Jerusalem.\(^5\)

**THE ISRAELI STANCE ON AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

In 1974 there was no Israeli demand for Moscow to renew full diplomatic relations with Israel in order to attend (or cochair) such a conference. Recently, however, Israel has posed such a condition. When he was prime minister (1984-86), Peres declared publicly that he could envisage a role for the Soviet Union in the Middle East peace process if Moscow were to renew relations with Israel. Later he spoke of Soviet participation in an "international forum" and, finally, in August 1986 he spoke of Soviet participation in an international conference, provided there were diplomatic relations.

Peres's concession on an international conference was primarily a response to the demand of King Hussein of Jordan for such a negotiating framework, an insulation against Arab criticism of Jordanian "direct negotiations" with Israel. Inasmuch as negotiation with Jordan has been of the highest priority for the Labor Party, in or out of power, Peres was willing to accept the Russians, if Hussein set that condition, but only at a price to Moscow.
To Shamir, Israel's prime minister after October 1986, this price is virtually irrelevant, for he has rejected outright the idea of an international conference. Shamir added Jewish emigration from the USSR to the conditions for Soviet inclusion in the peace process; Peres himself on various occasions substituted demands for Jewish emigration for those of diplomatic relations as the condition for Soviet participation.

SOVIET JEWS AND THE JEWISH EMIGRATION ISSUE

The Jewish emigration issue is complex for the Kremlin. Given his priorities for improving the Soviet economy, Gorbachev, even more than Brezhnev, is interested in détente and cooperative business ventures with Western firms. He has used the emigration issue to further these interests, repeatedly promising North American Jewish leaders that emigration would be forthcoming. Unlike Brezhnev, however, Gorbachev at first pursued a minimalist policy, permitting only very limited, almost purely symbolic emigration of individual Jews, usually the more celebrated cases.

In time, however, this approach underwent a transformation—in part because of its failure to satisfy Americans, but perhaps also because Gorbachev, unlike his predecessors, appeared to accept Israel's linkage of emigration with an international conference. Just as he sought to meet Peres's preconditions for a conference, at least partially, by gradually improving Soviet-Israeli relations, even if not yet to the level of full diplomatic relations, so, too, has Gorbachev altered his position on Soviet Jews. He has by no means gone so far as to permit full and free emigration, or even the departure of Jews at anything near the rate reached during the Brezhnev era. This he apparently perceives as having been a Soviet concession that failed to bring the promised U.S. trade and credit. He has, however, agreed to the emigration of the "refuseniks," believed to number between 10,000 and 12,000. Since then Gorbachev has claimed that the new Soviet emigration laws will permit some sort of continuing emigration for other Soviet Jews in the future, although the new laws are in fact quite restrictive. At the same time, Moscow has gradually released persons incarcerated for Jewish activities and greatly reduced official anti-Semitism, as if to offer a better life for those eschewing emigration.

There is also, however, an Israeli domestic political side to the Soviet Jews issue. In itself, the issue of renewed diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union has not been one of great significance for any Israeli government over the years. Prime Minister Shamir's Likud, while not averse to improved relations with Moscow, is opposed to
an international conference and less interested than Labor in opening a path to King Hussein; it therefore feels no pressing need to compromise with the Soviets. This has made it much easier for Likud to woo Soviet émigré voters within Israel (to some degree a natural constituency for the right-wing nationalist parties), thereby appearing as the “real” champion of Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union.

Thus Likud’s Moshe Arens, as minister without portfolio, sought to make Jewish emigration a condition even for holding the Helsinki meeting, demanding an Israeli cabinet-level discussion of relations with the Soviet Union prior to the talks, and calling for the departure of the delegation when Moscow announced that it had no intention of discussing the Jewish issue. Labor, of course, has presented its policy in terms no less supportive of Soviet Jewry, but the issue of emigration has the potential for becoming a domestic political football that could complicate any change in Soviet-Israeli relations.

GORBACHEV: BROADENING SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

While Peres may have impressed the Soviets as more promising regarding relations with the Soviet Union, it was the change in the Kremlin itself—the emergence of Gorbachev—that brought about the growing Soviet interest in an opening to Israel. Such a departure was consistent with a broad effort to increase Soviet foreign policy, particularly as part of an effort to increase Soviet options in the Middle East by reaching beyond Moscow’s usual clients.

Gorbachev’s first years in office have seen a flurry of Soviet diplomatic activity in the Middle East, such as the significant improvement of relations with Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, North Yemen, Jordan, and Egypt, as well as attempts to improve relations with Saudi Arabia. Moscow reached an agreement with the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), negotiations for which involved a visit to Moscow by Saudi Petroleum Minister Hisham Nazer in January 1987. This was accompanied by a renewed effort to patch up relations with Iran. Indeed, some of these actions, particularly the efforts to improve relations with Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq, seemed in conflict with Moscow’s ties to Syria—yet the Soviets were not deterred.

The new Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union provided an ideological basis for this activity. It added an element, not present in official documents during the Brezhnev era, advocating good relations with Third World countries following the capitalist path of development. This point had crept into Soviet theoretical literature
in the early 1980s, but it was new for a policy document and quite different from the ideologically more orthodox search for radical Third World partners that was characteristic of the late 1970s.

In the Arab world this policy marks Soviet abandonment of the former, unsuccessful effort to forge a radical bloc, and a turn toward establishing relationships with conservative and moderate Arab states as well as with the radicals. From the Soviet point of view this new approach has met with surprising success. Whether as a result of disappointment with the United States, fear of the spread of the Iran-Iraq War and Iranian power, or simply a willingness to broaden their own foreign policy options, the Gulf states have responded positively to Soviet overtures.

Moscow has been able to collect demands for the convening of an international conference on the Arab-Israeli dispute from the Gulf as well as from Egypt and Jordan. One might even speculate that this improved Soviet position in the Arab world may have provided Moscow with the confidence to make its overtures to Israel, in the belief that Soviet-Arab relations are strong enough today to withstand such a test. Indeed, the Arab states, including Syria, did not respond particularly vehemently to the limited steps Moscow initiated with Israel—and Egypt and Jordan even urged the Soviets to renew these relations so as to facilitate the convening of an international conference.

Gorbachev’s flexibility has been strikingly evident in his improvement of relations with Egypt. Ever since the expulsion of Soviet military advisors in 1972 and President Anwar al-Sadat’s abrogation of the Soviet-Egyptian Friendship Treaty in 1976, Moscow has sought to repair relations; the return of a Soviet ambassador to Cairo in 1985 was a sign of some Egyptian receptiveness.

The breakthrough appears to have come with the Soviet agreement, more than 15 years after the original Egyptian request, to reschedule Egypt’s military debts (believed to total approximately $3 billion, to be paid now over a 25-year period). This paved the way for new bilateral economic agreements and rumors, at least, of a renewal of Soviet deliveries of military spare parts and possibly even arms.

These developments do not spell a reorientation of Egypt away from the United States, however. Indeed, the rumored arms agreement may be partially designed by the Egyptians to gain some leverage in their military arrangements with Washington. Yet from Moscow’s point of view these moves have at least brought the Soviet Union back to a potentially competitive position vis-à-vis Washington in the Middle East.

With regard to Jordan the Soviets may have somewhat more limited ambitions. New arms deals, including those for the provision of air-defense systems and even a small number of Soviet advisors,
have not produced any change in Jordan’s attitude toward the United States. Moreover, Soviet-Jordanian relations were greatly strained by the arrest of leading Jordanian Communists in the spring of 1986 and by King Hussein’s efforts to bring about talks between the PLO and the United States, a negotiating track clearly opposed by Moscow.7

Yet the Soviets were surprisingly cautious in their responses, condemning the Hussein-Arafat accord for possible negotiations with Israel when it was in effect, but nonetheless claiming confidence that Hussein would not capitulate to an American deal. Similarly, although Moscow was outwardly indifferent to Hussein’s attempts at rapprochement with Syria, it welcomed and cooperated with the king’s efforts to mediate between Syria and Iraq.

The major Soviet gain from Jordan, however, was the king’s insistence on convening an international conference with Soviet participation. Whether a condition of the arms deal or merely the result of Hussein’s desire for a broader umbrella to protect himself in agreeing to negotiate with Israel, the king’s commitment to an international conference is a significant achievement for Moscow. Coupled with the abrogation of the Hussein-Arafat accord in April 1987, an event that served to scuttle U.S. mediation efforts, it is as valuable to Soviet policy as the normalization of relations with Egypt and the progress made with the Gulf states.

PLO abrogation of the Hussein-Arafat accord was very much the result of Soviet efforts, and was a condition set by Moscow as it successfully mediated the reunification of the three major components of the PLO. A reunited Palestinian movement, categorically rejecting any plans that might lead to or through Washington, was a Soviet gain, and was even a slight boost for the Communists in the PLO. Moscow remained no less wary of Arafat, however. The Soviets are hopeful rather than certain that Arafat’s disappointment with the United States, as well as with the limits placed on him by his former opponents in the PLO, will keep him from looking westward again.

One Soviet disappointment with the PLO reunification, however, has been the failure to gain Syria’s prompt approval and the inclusion of some of the Syrian-backed factions of the PLO. Gorbachev, like his predecessors, has been unwilling to countenance a Syrian takeover of the Palestinian movement, and he reportedly views Assad’s refusal to accept anything less than Syrian dominance as an affront to the Soviet-mediated reunification effort.

This is not the only difficulty Gorbachev has had with the problematic Syrians. Gorbachev seemed to seek good relations with the Syrians, as evidenced by the communiqué after the May 1986 talks between the Soviet leader and visiting Syrian Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam, which referred to the “trust between the
leadership of the two countries." Yet many of Moscow's moves in the region—be they with regard to Iraq, Egypt, Arafat's Fatah wing of the PLO, or even Israel—have displeased the Syrians. And many of the old points of conflict have remained: Syria's ambitions in Lebanon, its demands for "strategic parity" with Israel, and its fundamental hostility to Israel.

The Soviets do not acknowledge Syrian control over Lebanon. They seek instead to maintain independent channels to the Lebanese government and various factions in the country, occasionally even snubbing the senior Syrian representatives there. With regard to strategic parity versus Israel, the Soviets have maintained a steady stream of improved military hardware to Damascus, but continue to balk at providing the full quantities requested and meeting certain qualitative demands from the Syrians.

Concerning Syria's conflict with Israel, Gorbachev has repeatedly and pointedly referred to the need to solve international disputes by political means. His remark to Assad in Moscow in April 1987 that "the reliance on military force has completely lost its credibility as a way of solving the Middle East conflict" suggests a difference of opinion between the two and possible Soviet concern over Syrian interest in military moves.

Given Gorbachev's willingness to ignore Assad's demands and Syrian discomfort over various matters, including Soviet-Egyptian relations, it is most unlikely that Moscow would abandon the idea of an international conference simply to please the Syrians. Efforts to achieve Syrian acquiescence are secondary, however, to the need to induce the United States and Israel to agree to such a forum. Some degree of coordination between Moscow and Washington on the issue has been the subject of Soviet-American contacts, particularly in the wake of the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories. Moscow's response to U.S. Secretary of State Shultz's initiative for negotiations was simply more pressing demands for the convening of an international conference. This was in keeping with the basic Soviet interest in such a conference and possibly even in a successful outcome of such a conference. To this end the Soviets have shown some, albeit not total, flexibility regarding the procedures and Palestinian participation in such a conference.

What Moscow clearly seems to appreciate is that the absence of some sort of settlement or negotiating process involving the Soviets might ultimately spell the return of exclusive American influence or another Arab-Israeli war.

Iran presents special problems for the Soviet Union, but through small, careful steps the relationship seems to have improved. Following a Moscow visit by Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, there
were reports that the Soviet-Iranian gas pipeline was to begin working again, that Soviet technicians had returned to the sites of steelworks under construction at Isfahan and elsewhere, and that the Soviet-Iranian Chamber of Commerce had reopened in Moscow. In August 1987 Moscow announced that a visit to Tehran by Deputy Foreign Minister Yuli Vorontsov had resulted in agreements for “large-scale projects of mutually beneficial economic cooperation.”

This has not, however, marked a genuine Iranian opening toward the Soviet Union; and Moscow has exhibited very little optimism about these relations. In the early years of the Iranian regime of the Ayatollah Khomeini, and of the war with Iraq, Soviet hopes for nourishing a pro-Soviet Iranian foreign policy outweighed any qualms Moscow may have had about the dangers of Khomeinism; they also overshadowed Moscow’s faltering treaty with Iraq, prompting what was in effect a pro-Iranian position on the war. As Moscow’s hopes for Iranian friendship were dashed, the Soviets tilted back to Iraq, steadily increasing their support, resuming arms deliveries in 1982, and supporting Iraq’s call for negotiations. Gorbachev’s recent attempts to improve relations with Iran have not altered this basic position. In fact, negative references to Iran or Islamic fundamentalism have continued to appear in important Soviet commentaries.

Soviet propaganda, in its condemnation of the Gulf war as a diversion from the Arab peoples’ more important struggle against “Western imperialism” and “Israeli aggression,” probably reflects Gorbachev’s genuine interest in an end to the conflict. Theoretically, of course, continuation of the war could render Iraq ever more dependent on Moscow or, conversely, drive Iran toward Moscow as Iranian relations with the United States worsen. It could even be speculated that American military moves against Iran could serve as pretext for a Soviet move into northern Iran. Yet none of these hypothetical scenarios appears to be either believable or worthwhile in Moscow’s eyes when weighed against the risks involved.

For Iraq could as credibly turn closer to the United States, in search of the aid needed to maintain its war effort. The general softening of Iraq’s position toward Egypt, despite the Egyptian peace treaty with Israel, and particularly its friendship with Jordan are examples of such a war-generated albeit slight shift in Iraqi orientation.

Moreover, Iraq might actually be defeated by the force of Iranian arms, bringing discredit to the years of Soviet military assistance to Baghdad and, worse, permitting the spread of Khomeinism along the Soviet frontier. This could be most threatening to Soviet interests, particularly to Moscow’s control over the Soviet Muslim population, a concern increasingly discussed openly among Soviet policymakers. An approaching defeat might also drive Iraq to make further rash
strikes against Gulf shipping, now protected by both Moscow and Washington.

The most important consequence of the continued conflict thus far is a significant increase in the U.S. military presence in the area, precisely the circumstance that Gorbachev's Middle Eastern initiatives aim to prevent. There is increasing risk of direct superpower military involvement, if not actual confrontation. Such an entanglement runs counter to Gorbachev's search for détente with the United States, an international climate that would enable him to concentrate on his domestic program. Much as a pro-Soviet Iran would be a highly prized trophy for Gorbachev, Moscow has shown no signs of altering its estimation that no such outcome is likely while Iran is ruled by Khomeini.

For all these reasons, Soviet representatives have played a supportive role in UN efforts to bring about an end to the conflict. Both superpowers now seem to display a greater sense of urgency in the various moves to end the war, given their joint military presence in the Gulf and the prospect of American-Iranian conflict.

Supporting the decisions calling for a cease-fire, Moscow nonetheless repeatedly procrastinated in agreeing to the imposition of sanctions to enforce this decision. This delaying position may simply be an effort to exploit the deterioration that occurred in U.S.-Iranian relations in the wake of the Iran-Contra affair. The improved Soviet-Iranian relationship that resulted, however, began to show some cracks when angry anti-Soviet demonstrations were organized in Tehran in March 1988, after Iraqi missile attacks on Iranian cities. The precarious nature of this relationship and Soviet skepticism over its future may lead the Soviets finally to agree to sanctions. In any case, they have been engaged in efforts to bring the Iran-Iraq War to an end, while seeking a UN substitute for the American military presence produced by the war.

The efforts of the Gorbachev regime to broaden Soviet options in the Middle East and to pursue relations with conservatives as well as radicals, seeking new friends even as it seeks to unite its older partners, represent a change in Soviet tactics. There are signs that these steps are also part of a shift in Soviet objectives and policies with regard to the conflicts in the area. Such a shift has found theoretical expression in Gorbachev's comments on the interdependence of interests and needs in the world as well as the importance of resolving regional conflicts because of their threat to international stability. The most significant practical application of this theory has been the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.

One might argue that Gorbachev wants to free Soviet resources and energies, and bolster morale, for the domestic economic tasks at
hand.\textsuperscript{11} Whatever the specific reasons, however, the significance of such a policy reversal, the admission of failure and virtual abandonment of a Soviet puppet regime involved in a civil war should not be underestimated.

A similar, though less costly (to the Soviets), interest in the cessation of conflict has become apparent with regard to the Iran-Iraq War, as we have seen. This does not necessarily represent a policy change on the part of Gorbachev insofar as Moscow has for some time favored resolution of that conflict. The same might be said of the Lebanese conflict, which in any case had rarely been of direct interest to the Soviet Union in the past (except during the Israeli invasion in 1982). While the Soviets have not lessened their propaganda support for the leftist forces in Lebanon, they have also not undertaken any significant new actions there. Various comments over the past year have suggested Soviet uneasiness over the violence of Syrian- and Iranian-backed groups; and Moscow has generally sought an end to the internecine conflict. While they deplore the fracturing of Lebanon, the Soviets have nonetheless been reluctant to support the efforts of Damascus to consolidate the Lebanese political scene under its own control.

Gorbachev, no less than his predecessors, is concerned about Syria's overextension in Lebanon, with the strains it places on Syrian resources and negative repercussions it causes in the Arab world. In addition, there remains the ever-present risk of Israeli-Syrian hostilities, which could be triggered by events in southern Lebanon. Thus, when Soviet propaganda declares, in the Lebanese as well as the Iran-Iraq context, that continued warfare merely aids the "imperialists," diverting and dividing the Arab world from the primary struggle (against Zionism), it probably reflects a genuine Soviet interest in the restoration of stability.

\textbf{CONCLUSION}

With regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the clear change in Soviet tactics, primarily in the form of improving relations with Israel, has spelled a greater willingness on the part of Gorbachev than was ever apparent among his predecessors to bring about peace talks, including Moscow. Certain changes in the formulation of Moscow's positions suggest that Gorbachev is actually interested in a resolution of the conflict, presumably as part of his general interest in international and regional stability. Thus, while the overall positions regarding Israeli withdrawal and Palestinian statehood have not changed significantly, Gorbachev has stated that the Soviet Union will accept any plan
acceptable to the parties to the conflict. He also publicly urged the sides to pursue balanced demands (a term Gorbachev employs more generally regarding foreign policy), recognizing Israel’s security needs as well as the Palestinians’ rights to self-determination. Despite the effort to reduce the gap between the Soviet and American blueprints for an international conference, however, there has been little urgency in Soviet moves on the Arab-Israeli conflict. This could be simply a realistic response to the lack of priority accorded the issue by the Reagan administration, particularly in an election year, or to the intransigence of the Shamir government, also facing elections. It may also be due, however, to the fact that Gorbachev, even more than his predecessors, has concentrated his foreign policy efforts on the world’s major powers. The Third World in general, the Middle East in particular, would appear to be clearly subordinate to this main concentration.

Gorbachev’s extreme cautiousness in his response to the American attack on Libya in April 1986 was perhaps demonstrative of these priorities. It is true that no Soviet leader has regarded Muammar el-Qaddafi as a reliable, stable ally; Moscow has refrained from signing a friendship treaty with Tripoli despite recurrent rumors that a draft has long been ready. Thus Soviet caution with regard to Libya should not be taken as an indication of Gorbachev’s likely behavior in the case of a threat to Syria, for example.

Yet Gorbachev’s willingness, apparently, to assist in the release of the TWA hostages in Lebanon in June 1985, his resistance to Assad’s demands for strategic parity with Israel, and his general warnings to Syria to avoid military solutions all indicate that he is no less cautious than Brezhnev was in the Middle East. Indeed, his general reserve toward regional and local conflicts suggests he may be even more cautious.

What remains to be seen is whether Gorbachev’s new tactics and possibly policies will be more successful than those of previous Soviet leaders. The attempt to broaden Soviet options, as distinct from the past unsuccessful effort to build a radical bloc in the area, offers some promise for a Soviet challenge to American predominance. The decline in the power of the oil-producing states offers new opportunities insofar as it may render these states and their Arab allies less independent. American intransigence on the Palestinian issues makes the Soviets, by comparison, appear more forthcoming in the eyes of the Arabs. And an Israel somewhat more open to the Soviet Union might improve Moscow’s chances for playing a role.

Yet the Soviets still have several serious problems, whatever their tactics. The lack of unity and stability in the area continues to expose conflicting loyalties and hinder Moscow’s attempts to transform
success with one country into success in the region as a whole. More important, aside from their poor record in Arab eyes regarding the provision of assistance in time of crisis, the Soviets must prove that they can "deliver" something in times of peace. Arms deliveries have not in the past proved sufficient to ensure the loyalty of an Arab ally, nor has arms blackmail succeeded in forcing Moscow's Arab clients to abide by its preferences.

The Arab states may not be pleased with American policies in the region, but because of its relationship with Israel, the United States still holds the key to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Soviet answer to this in the past, be it through arms deliveries or propaganda, has been to seek to portray itself as indispensable to the Arabs, as the only country able to press Washington into forcing Israel to make concessions and/or deter an Israeli attack; and to the Americans, as the only party able to restrain the Arabs and, possibly, bring them to the negotiating table. Whether Gorbachev will have a better answer, with his more flexible, multifaceted tactics, is not yet clear.

ENDNOTES

1. TASS, 19 August 1986.
2. Tunis Radio, 12 April 1974, reported Arab anger over Soviet efforts in May and June 1967 to prevent Egypt from attacking.
4. See Gorbachev's comments to Arafat during the latter's visit to Moscow (Pravda, 10 April 1988).
6. The Begin government tended toward a cold-war position against the USSR. Shamir, whose history lies in a different faction (the Stern Gang/Lehi wing of the old Herut party, which was interested in good relations with the Soviets), pursued a somewhat less anti-Soviet policy when in power.
7. Pravda, 20,30 May 1986, criticizing arrests; Pravda, 18 June 1986, on the release of the first secretary of the Jordanian Communist party.
11. A frank account of such problems may be found, for example, in Komsomolskaia Pravda, 8 January 1986.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Part II

The Sources of Soviet Strategy: Consensus and Conflict
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In chapter 2 of this volume, I explored Soviet behavior during the period 1967–72, testing alternative interpretations of Soviet strategy vis-à-vis the Arab-Israeli conflict. That analysis led me to reject a characterization called “unalterable antagonism” in favor of one called “collaborative competition.” In chapter 1 and in another publication I have argued that “collaborative competition” well describes Soviet strategy in this region throughout the remainder of the Brezhnev administration, even though confrontational behavior and avoidance behavior were also part of the Soviet repertoire of tactics (1985: 131–58). In those works, I was, for analytic purposes, treating the Soviet regime as a unitary actor possessed of mixed motives: the desire to compete for influence and allies in the region, and the desire to collaborate with would-be adversaries in order to control the escalatory potential inherent in the regional conflicts. This general strategy can encompass a variety of policy options, however. The relative priority to be placed on the collaborative versus the competitive tracks can shift with time and circumstances, as can the form and intensity of competition, or the terms of collaboration.

That leaves plenty of room for political conflict over the policies to be pursued in the name of collaborative competition. Hence, in this chapter I abandon the unitary actor assumption and explore instead the diversity of perspectives on the Arab-Israeli conflict within the upper reaches of the Soviet journalistic and academic establishments from 1971 to 1987. Rather than trying to interpret (or overinterpret) the laconic statements of Politburo members, I have chosen to focus on five individuals whose positions and connections make it probable that
they either affect or reflect the views of an important constituency for Soviet Middle East policy. In addition, to be included in this study the individuals had to publish newspaper or journal articles fairly frequently during the years under review. Both the diversity of perspectives and the level of consensus reflected in their writings allow us to explore the nature of Soviet consensual and conflictual thinking about the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the impact of ideology on Soviet thinking. The five men whose writings I have examined are:

1. V. Kudriavtsev, correspondent and political observer for Izvestiia. Until his retirement in 1984 he was also deputy chairman of the Soviet Committee for Solidarity with the Peoples of Asia and Africa, and a deputy of the USSR Supreme Soviet.
2. P. Demchenko, correspondent and, recently, political observer for Pravda. As Pravda's leading writer on the Middle East during the years under review, he was clearly charged with expressing the official line on the Arab-Israeli conflict at any point in time.
3. I. Beliaev, correspondent and political observer for the weekly Literaturnaia gazeta. He served as deputy director of the Oriental Studies Institute of the USSR Academy of Sciences in the early 1970s, and has performed occasional diplomatic functions for the authorities during visits to the Middle East. He is the son-in-law of former KGB Chairman, and current Politburo member, Viktor Chebrikov.
4. A. Bovin, political observer for Izvestiia, an extremely visible journalist who writes on all foreign policy topics. He had close ties to Yuri Andropov, and is purported to be an advisor to Gorbachev. He was a speechwriter for Leonid Brezhnev, and a member of the Central Committee's Auditing Commission until 1986.
5. E. Primakov, longtime director of the Oriental Studies Institute. He was appointed director of the prestigious and influential Institute of the World Economy and International Relations in 1985, and full member of the Central Committee in 1989. He is an advisor to Gorbachev, and has performed diplomatic functions for the authorities during visits to the Middle East.

I am only secondarily interested in these men per se. I take their publications as expressions of an opinion tendency echoed or expressed within the upper reaches of the political establishment.1 What is important is what they publish, not what they "really" believe or think (though the latter may be very important for other research
purposes). As for frequency of publication, the appendix to this chapter provides citations for the following number of usable articles by each spokesman:

1. V. Kudriavtsev 64
2. P. Demchenko 125
3. I. Beliaev 55
4. A. Bovin 23
5. E. Primakov 29

The aim of this chapter is to specify the consensual core of beliefs and perspectives that all five spokesmen hold in common; to identify the three distinct types (here called "militants," "moderates," and "centrists") within that consensus; to examine the conflicting perspectives from 1971 to 1977 (that is, before the Camp David accords of 1978 and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty of March 1979); to examine the evolution of those perspectives after Camp David, 1978–84; to document the evolution of perspectives after Gorbachev came to power in 1985; and to conclude the discussion of the implications of our findings with a look into the nature and role of ideology in Soviet policy.

The use of Camp David as the breaking point in my periodization is somewhat arbitrary. It is based on the supposition that Soviet influence-building fortunes in the area of the Arab-Israeli conflict were greater from 1971 to 1977 than they were from 1978 to 1984. This is not to deny that Soviet setbacks were real during the earlier years, or that there were advances during the later years. Rather, I view Camp David and the peace treaty as the culmination of a prolonged process during which the Soviets ultimately "lost" Egypt and found themselves decisively locked out of the settlement process. Three years thereafter Israel invaded Lebanon, routed the PLO from Beirut, and defeated Syria in the Bekaa Valley. Cumulatively, these constituted a pattern of frustration of Soviet ambitions before which the setbacks of 1971–77 pale in comparison. Hence, we will be interested in seeing the impact of these setbacks on the positions and stated views of leading Soviet spokesmen. Nor did Soviet fortunes improve greatly after Gorbachev came to power. Hence, continuity and change in Soviet perspectives after 1985 will provide a test of the relative impact of political change versus external realities on published Soviet perspectives.

THE CONSENSUAL CORE AND DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICT

Although we will differentiate among militants, moderates, and centrists in the sample of spokesmen studied, we must first define the
consensual core, if any, within which differentiation takes place. For a moderate in one context may not appear so moderate in another. The first major similarity is normative: none of the parties displays affection for the U.S. and Israeli positions in the Middle East conflict. All five of them express a normative preference for U.S.-Israeli acquiescence in Palestinian autonomy and self-determination. Second, at the philosophical level, all five spokesmen tend toward a long-term optimism that the West will eventually have to come to terms with certain realities of the region, in particular, the inability through force to prevent a mobilized, organized people (be it the Palestinians or the Arabs more generally) from making life increasingly miserable for their occupiers. The third point of similarity lies at the more empirical level wherein the goals of the adversary are defined. All five men see U.S. regional policy as driven by strategic and economic goals that are geared toward maintaining a preexisting position of hegemony (military, political, or economic) in the region. All five men express the faith that these goals will ‘eventually prove to be unrealizable. Finally, we should add that these points of consensus are observable to varying degrees over the entire time period under examination.

These are powerful points of convergence. To the extent that they are generalizable to the policymaking elite, they probably facilitate consensual decision making on many basic questions about the Soviet posture in the Middle East. When consensus exists at the normative and philosophical levels of an ideological system (for example, a faith in the eventual inevitability of the desirable), falsifying beliefs and building a political coalition on behalf of fundamental reevaluation can prove nearly impossible. When that consensus, in turn, is reinforced by agreement on an important feature of the image of the adversary, it can prove still more difficult to make the case for a fundamental change in strategy (Breslauer 1987: 429–48). We will return to this issue in the concluding section of the chapter.

Yet the points of divergence among these men are also significant, for they touch upon empirical beliefs and tactical preferences that can be crucial considerations at times of decision about what specific policies to adopt. To the extent that polarization occurs at these levels of a belief system, it can begin to erode attachment to beliefs at the normative and philosophical levels, by causing these to become ritualized legitimating devices, rather than guides to actual policy. Four dimensions of thought about the Arab-Israeli conflict were the basis for differentiating among the perspectives and attitudes of these men. Two such dimensions tapped the author’s relative preference for collaboration or competition:
1. Faith in diplomacy as a means of dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict;
2. Enthusiasm for varied forms of struggle as the means of advancing Soviet goals in the region.

Two other dimensions tapped the author’s perceptions of the situation facing the Soviet Union in the region:

1. The image of the adversary, his goals, and the U.S.-Israeli relationship;
2. Optimism or pessimism that the indigenous course of events in the region would favor the advancement of Soviet goals.

The positions of our spokesmen varied over the years, reflecting changing clusters of perspectives along these dimensions. Nonetheless, one can aggregate their clusters, and place the individuals along a spectrum. For more detail, the reader may wish to skip briefly to the summary paragraphs and tables that introduce the conclusion of this chapter. For the present, our spokesmen may be located in their relative positions in Table 7.1.

**TABLE 7.1**

**Positions of the Spokesmen**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Militants</th>
<th>Centrists</th>
<th>Moderates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kudriavtsev</td>
<td>Beliaev</td>
<td>Bovin</td>
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<td>Demchenko</td>
<td>Primakov</td>
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As we shall see, discussion among militants, centrists, and moderates is really a debate about strategies of collaborative competition. Militants place little faith in the collaborative track and high faith in the competitive. They argue that one can only afford to negotiate with the imperialists from a position of great strength, which will bring the adversary to his knees and foster concessionary behavior on his part. Moderates place great faith in the collaborative process, and relatively low faith in the competitive. They fear that escalation control will fail in the event of too vigorous a competitive effort, and prefer therefore to compete for influence by means that have very low escalatory potential, and only as an adjunct to a higher priority negotiating process. Moderates are committed primarily to crisis prevention. Thus, militants and moderates are advocates of highly unbalanced strategies of collaborative competition. Centrists, in turn,
struggle continuously to fashion a balanced strategy of collaborative competition that will work in the real world. They seek to have it both ways—a vigorous effort to compete for influence and allies in the region and an equally vigorous effort to negotiate with the adversary toward either the maximal goal of a peace settlement based on Soviet terms or the minimal goal of crisis prevention. Centrists, then, seek to combine radical or pragmatic activism with crisis-prevention.²

YEARS OF DÉTENTE, 1971–77

The Militant Extreme: V. Kudriavtsev

The militant extreme places very little faith in diplomacy and very high faith in struggle as the best means of advancing Soviet interests in the region. It supports these preferences by adhering to a highly stereotyped image of the adversary, which implies that one could not do business with that adversary anyway. In like manner, it displays high optimism that indigenous trends in the region will converge with, validate, and reinforce a Soviet policy of struggle. V. Kudriavtsev is an example of this polar type.

Kudriavtsev has no use for diplomacy (be it superpower collaboration or Arab-Israeli negotiation) as a means of settling, or even de-escalating, the Arab-Israeli conflict. Thus, he follows the May 1972 U.S.-USSR summit with an article that is quick to make clear that superpower détente will in no way or degree lessen Soviet commitment to fight for national liberation in the Middle East or Third World more generally.³ One month later, he denigrates those who support solving the Middle East conflict through superpower collaboration, arguing that such a process is being exploited by those who are actually trying to attract the Arabs from the Soviet to the U.S. side.⁴ In articles following the October 1973 war he makes no mention of the Geneva Conference on the Middle East, which was cochaired by the superpowers during its short-lived existence. That conference is finally mentioned (and headlined) by Kudriavtsev in December 1974, but only in order to point out that the goal of the imperialists had been to use it as a forum within which to foster separate deals between Israel and individual Arab states, thereby breaking Arab unity and freeing Israel's hands to wage war against Lebanon, the Palestinians, and the Syrians.⁵

Only in February 1977 did Kudriavtsev display any positive affect toward the diplomatic process. This was in response to the new Carter administration's apparent acceptance of the centrality of the Palestinian problem in the region.⁶ Yet even that positive reference was qualified by warnings about imperialist tricks; what is more, it was
fleeting. In subsequent articles during 1977 no further mention of the Geneva Conference appeared in Kudriavtsev’s articles; no article even mentioned the October 1, 1977, joint Soviet-American declaration on the Middle East.

Kudriavtsev’s hostility toward diplomacy was consistent with his prescriptive enthusiasm for struggle as the main means of settling the Arab-Israeli conflict. Imperialism must be brought to its senses by concrete demonstration that it will face ever-rising costs if it continues to pursue its goals of domination in the region. And given the nature of the era, a continued emphasis on radical struggle on the ground by the Palestinians and their state-allies in the region and elsewhere should be sufficient to tip the balance and ensure eventual capitulation on the part of imperialism. "Arab unity" on an “anti-imperialist basis” is Kudriavtsev’s rallying cry.

Kudriavtsev’s preference for struggle over diplomacy is consistent with his image of the adversary, which he views as a largely unalterable antagonist (the term “unalterable antagonist” is from Spechler 1979). There is little scope for moderating its goals, given the essential character of the social system involved. Moreover, Kudriavtsev sees Israeli behavior as largely derivative of U.S. strategy, which in turn reflects the diabolical intentions of imperialism and “International Zionism.” As part of its global strategy, U.S. imperialism seeks to dominate the Middle East; Israel is a willing ally in this game, but hardly ever gets to act independently, or in ways that are dissynchronous with U.S. goals or interests. Israeli aggression, to be sure, is condemned by Kudriavtsev for what it allegedly is. But it is always described as encouraged or supported by the United States; and Israel is often characterized as a U.S. "accomplice."

Occasionally, Kudriavtsev attempts a somewhat more complex explanation of U.S. behavior, but even in those cases he offers an essentialist interpretation, that is, one that treats U.S. policy as directly derivative of the essential nature of its social system (for more on “essentialism,” see Welch 1970). Change in U.S. policy is possible within this perspective, but only as a result of defeat—only when the costs of the policy become so exhorbitant that even U.S. imperialism changes its cost-benefit calculus. Yet, given the nature of imperialism, it will require a tremendous amount of pain before U.S. leaders undertake such reevaluation.

Changes in the situation on the ground do not alter Kudriavtsev’s exclusive preference for struggle. When things are going well in the region, he celebrates the apparent speeding up of history and the quickening decline of imperialism. When things are going poorly, or when imperialism is failing to draw the appropriate lessons from events (as, for example, during 1975 and 1976—Sinai II, decimation of
the PLO in Lebanon, Sadat's abrogation of the Soviet-Egyptian Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation), he becomes ever more venomous in attacking U.S.-Israeli policy ("genocidal," "barbaric," "racist," "terroristic"), emphasizes the virtue of maximal Soviet negotiating terms, and places ever-greater stress on the Palestinians and the PLO as the heroic force whose unrelenting struggle will eventually drive the imperialists to their knees.¹⁰

**A Less Extreme Militant: I. Beliaev**

Kudriavtsev's attitudes and beliefs were consistent and monolithic, converging on one conclusion: struggle. Beliaev's attitudes were militant during the years of détente also, but not as extreme as those of his colleague. Beliaev appears to have had a greater propensity for toleration of diplomacy, though only if those negotiations were from a position of Soviet strength and on the basis of very tough terms.

Prior to the October 1973 war there was little to distinguish Beliaev's writings from those of Kudriavtsev. Beliaev displayed no faith in diplomacy. He disparaged U.S. and Israeli motives in negotiating forums, adhered to an essentialist image of the adversary, and in July 1973 explicitly argued that it was too early to avoid negotiating from weakness. It followed, therefore, that Beliaev emphasized the need for struggle instead. But in contrast to Kudriavtsev's stress on the Palestinians and radical social movements, Beliaev extolled state-to-state alliances. He defined struggle as an alliance between progressive regimes and the USSR, with heavy industrial assistance, state building, and increased military-defense capacity as the main tasks to be tackled. He saw these as necessary to be able eventually to negotiate from strength, adding: "skeptics [after the 1967 war] spoke of inevitable capitulation."¹¹

Thus, Beliaev did not define détente as especially relevant, one way or the other, to the victory of the progressive cause in the Middle East. In the short run, he was pessimistic about the chances for either a military victory or a productive negotiating process. In the long run, he argued that a powerful Egypt, closely allied to the Soviet Union, could change the correlation of forces in the region and create conditions for either a decisive military victory or a productive negotiation between the progressive camp and the imperialists.

In contrast to Kudriavtsev, though, the October 1973 war made an impression on Beliaev, increasing his receptivity to a negotiating process. Thus, in December 1973, reflecting on the lessons of the war, he argued that the demonstrated military might of the Arabs had created new realities in the region. Israel was demoralized; her philosophy of force had collapsed. Arab unity had worked: "not long ago, some people considered such unity impossible." Further
Israeli intransigence could be “suicidal”; the next war “could be fatal to her.” Beliaev did not advocate a further Arab military push to finish her off, though. Instead, he averred that the sides must now turn to the task of political settlement, which he described as “extraordinarily complex” and requiring “a great deal of work.” But since the adversary was reeling, he would be willing to give away a great deal. Hence, Beliaev upped the ante on settlement terms, becoming the first Soviet spokesman to mention the role of the PLO as central to the resolution of the Palestinian problem. (He would also be the first authoritative Soviet spokesman to write of an independent Palestinian state as a possible outcome of a settlement [Golan 1977: 233].)

This article was written before the collapse of the December 1973 Geneva Conference, before Kissinger’s unilateral diplomacy in the region during 1974 and 1975, and before the adverse regional events of 1975 and 1976. In the face of those setbacks, Beliaev backtracked, reendorsing the militant perspectives of 1971–73: the need to increase the military capacity of Soviet allies in the Middle East;12 the need for maximal negotiating terms.13 Struggle was again ascendant over diplomacy, competition over collaboration.

But in contrast to his earlier militancy, and in contrast to Kudriavtsev at this time, Beliaev held open the possibility that the adversary might come around. He continued to trumpet the need to return to Geneva. And his analyses of American politics held open the possibility that a struggle among tendencies, rather than the essential character of the system, might determine the future of U.S. policy in the region.14 Beliaev’s desire not to close the door on negotiations was conditioned as well by his perception of the increasingly adverse correlation of forces within the region. Whereas in December 1973 he had announced that Israeli intransigence would be suicidal, in July 1974 he only said that there would be “no more easy victories” for Israel. In May 1975 he expressed apprehension that Cairo might be wavering in its commitment to the Palestinians, apprehension that underlay a lengthier article, in July 1975, depicting the class forces within Egyptian society that were supporting Sadat’s move to the right on both domestic and foreign policy.

Thus, after the October war Beliaev diverged from the militant extreme, perceiving an opportunity for collaboration from a position of strength, which would see the imperialists concede to maximal Soviet negotiating terms. When that perspective proved illusory, he moved back toward the militant extreme, reemphasizing struggle, but holding open the possibility that the United States might come around. Should it do so, the USSR must be ready to negotiate, albeit from strength.
The Moderate Extreme: A. Bovin

Within the consensual core noted earlier a spectrum of positions can be identified. Kudriavtsev's writings defined the militant extreme of that spectrum. A. Bovin's writings defined the moderate extreme. Despite the paucity of articles on this topic by Bovin in the years 1971–77, the few articles published were sufficiently different from those of the other four spokesmen and sufficiently predictive of Bovin's later perspectives that they warrant close attention.

Bovin's single article after the October 1973 war was devoted entirely to a justification of the Soviet cease-fire resolution during the war. In contrast to Kudriavtsev, he engaged in no condemnations of imperialism or other demonic forces. In contrast to Beliaev, he did not celebrate the results of the war. His sole concern was crisis de-escalation and, in contrast to the militants, he extolled détente for facilitating the realization of this goal.

An analogous set of differences between militant and moderate positions can be documented in the wake of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) oil embargo. Kudriavtsev celebrated the embargo, depicting it as both a reflection and a stimulant of the rapid decline of U.S. power vis-à-vis Europe, Japan, and the Third World. In contrast, Bovin, while acknowledging the existence of a crisis in North-South and Atlantic relations, treated the issue in dispassionate terms, avoiding references to "imperialism," "ever-deepening contradictions," and the like. Moreover, he did not treat the outcome of the crisis as self-evident. Indeed, he signaled his dissociation from militant analyses quite explicitly: "Another question arises: can one escape this vicious circle without going beyond the limits of capitalist society? For the moment we will leave this question without an answer." Then, too, Bovin did not even mention opportunities for the advance of socialism created by America's crisis of hegemony.

We can also compare Kudriavtsev and Bovin in their reactions to the events of 1977, when preparations were under way for a return to the Geneva Conference format. Kudriavtsev, we have seen, became very temporarily less negative about the prospects for fruitful negotiations. Bovin's enthusiasm was less qualified and lasted longer. He was optimistic about the prospects for crisis prevention and smooth readjustment. Thus, on April 14, 1977, he published a factual, nonpolemical statement of the positions of each of the actors in the conflict. He employed no condemnatory terminology and engaged in no exhortatory rhetoric about "struggle." Indeed, he failed even to associate himself with the partisan Soviet positions on the conflict and avoided bravado about the likely failure of U.S. policy. His message was that compromise is a virtue that must be embraced by all sides of the conflict.
After Likud came to power, Bovin published a profound analysis of the social bases of Israeli politics. And while he was less optimistic about the prospects for a smooth readjustment within the region than he had been before Likud’s victory, he attributed Israeli intransigence primarily to fear, not ambition, thereby implying that reassurance, not Arab might, could foster compromise. In like manner, he portrayed Washington as trying to convince Tel Aviv to give up the occupied territories, and did not deny that the United States might be successful. For Bovin then went on to state a theory of political behavior that held out hope for moderation of the Israeli position:

It happens none-too-rarely that slogans of opposition, transformed into state policy, are somewhat restrained, lose their sharp edge. And life undoubtedly will pressure Likud in precisely this direction. It is symptomatic that in recent days Begin is trying to reduce the extremism of his positions. . . . It is still difficult to say what turn events will take. Much will depend on the composition of the ruling coalition. Much on international factors.

Thus, although Bovin adheres to the consensual core of Soviet policy toward the Arab-Israel conflict, he shares relatively little else with the militant extreme, or even with Beliaev. He places high faith in diplomacy for dealing with the potential for confrontation in the region; he devotes little or no attention to struggle, of whatever form; he never embraces an essentialist image of the adversary; and he treats both regional and U.S. politics as an open process, out of which almost anything can happen.

Dilemmas of Centrism: P. Demchenko

Bovin and Kudriavtsev had one characteristic in common, over and above their adherence to the consensual core: they both adhered to a consistent set of attitudes and beliefs. Neither of them was wrestling with the dilemma of trying to reconcile contradictory beliefs and attitudes. Centrists, however, did not enjoy that luxury.

In the early years of détente, before the October 1973 war, Pavel Demchenko’s published perspectives bore important similarities to those of the militant Igor Beliaev. They shared with Beliaev the view that the U.S.-Israeli relationship was one of consensual allies, in which “imperialism” and “Zionism” conspired to support Israeli expansionism and imperialist hegemony in the Middle East. The two men also shared a definition of struggle that emphasized exclusive state-to-state relations with Egypt, a Soviet role as defender of Egypt against those who threaten her, and a preference for expanding the anti-imperialist coalition of states in the region.
Yet, in contrast to the militants, Demchenko was concerned primarily to *balance* the collaborative and the competitive tracks of the U.S.-Soviet relationship in the region. This was reflected in his approach to struggle. He was far more concerned than Beliaev about the potential escalatory risks associated with vigorous competition. Whereas Demchenko made much of the Soviet role as protector and defender of Arab states, he made reference to Soviet augmentation of the “defense capacity” of those states in only one article during the years 1971–73—thus suggesting a preference for Soviet control over the war option.\(^{19}\) Similarly, in the few articles in which he wrote at length about the Palestinian resistance movement, he criticized them for counterproductive adventurism (“the policy of all-or-nothing does not serve the interests of the people”).\(^{20}\) In like manner, during 1973 the dilemmas of trying to reconcile vigorous competition with crisis prevention and superpower collaboration were in evidence in the coexistence within Demchenko’s articles of endorsements of the Arab right to get back their territories “by whatever means”\(^{21}\) and unusually explicit warnings that a war was due to break out in the region.\(^{22}\)

Perhaps because of this fear of escalation, Demchenko in the years 1971–73 also placed far greater positive stress than did Beliaev or Kudriavtsev on the need for a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Thus, he frequently inserted in his articles the call for settlement or mitigation of the conflict by *political* means, and occasionally linked this to détente, explaining that the general lessening of international tension had created conditions facilitating the search for ways of defusing regional conflict.\(^{23}\) Indeed, in all nine articles published in 1973, but before the October war, Demchenko dropped explicit criticism of the United States (even as he pilloried Israel and an unspecified “imperialism”). In contrast to the militants, Demchenko clung to the hope that the United States was now sufficiently impressed by its relative decline globally and by the growing might of Arab states regionally that it might be ready to strike a deal. Indeed, he wrote in February 1973 that the Paris Peace Talks that brought a cease-fire to Vietnam could provide a model to emulate.\(^{24}\)

The opinion tendency articulated by Demchenko represented a delicate—indeed, tense—balance of conflicting predispositions. It reasoned by analogy with the Vietnam War, although the United States was being driven militarily from Vietnam, while the Israelis had not yet lost a war. The opinion tendency feared adventurism, yet it acquiesced in Arab states’ military buildsups, even as it sought to control the war option. The tensions within both Kudriavtsev’s and Beliaev’s perspectives from 1971 to 1973 must have been far fewer, for they would not advocate negotiation until it had been clearly demonstrated to the imperialists that the Arabs were dealing from a
position of undeniable strength. Demchenko, it would appear, hoped to reap the benefits of perceived strength without having to incur the risks of demonstrating it on the battlefield.

Demchenko's response to the October 1973 war bore the marks of these tensions, which determined both the similarities and differences between his and Beliaev's responses. Like Beliaev, Demchenko celebrated the results of the war, proclaiming that: (1) Israel is now more isolated, morally and politically, than ever before; (2) "the myth of Arab military incompetence has been exploded"; (3) Israel can no longer maintain military superiority; any effort to do so will lead, sooner or later, to catastrophe, for time is not on Israel's side; and (4) Arab solidarity was a decisive determinant of the outcome, which made this war a turning point in the history of the Middle East. Like Beliaev, Demchenko signaled greater hope for fruitful negotiations to defuse the Arab-Israeli conflict (on desirable terms) by dropping essentialist terminology ("imperialism" and "Zionism") from characterizations of Israel and the United States. And like Beliaev, Demchenko explicitly called for negotiations to resolve the crisis.

But unlike Beliaev, and more like Bovin, Demchenko was willing to compromise to see those negotiations succeed. No mention of the PLO appeared in Demchenko's articles following the October war. And whereas Beliaev had averred that the task of political settlement would be "extraordinarily complex" and require "a great deal of work," Demchenko instead proclaimed that "despite the complexity of the situation, there now exist more favorable conditions than ever before for resolving the Middle East crisis." In a similar vein, and more like Bovin than Beliaev, Demchenko argued that U.S.-Soviet crisis prevention had already proved its potential during the war: "The last war outbreak would have undoubtedly been much more dangerous if the international climate had not warmed up and there had not been positive movement in Soviet-American relations."27

Demchenko's hopes for bilateral superpower mediation of the settlement process were, of course, dashed in the years 1974–76. His response to that shock was to reiterate his commitment to superpower collaboration by continuously trumpeting the need for a return to Geneva. At the same time, however, he upped the ante on negotiating terms by underscoring the need for Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories (emphasis in original)28, and argued that, in the context of a peace conference, Soviet-Egyptian relations should be marked by "tight coordination of action . . . at all stages of the struggle." Indeed, growing militancy about the terms of competition also marked Demchenko's writings during these years. By 1976 he had embraced Syria as the bulwark of the Soviet alliance system in the region, leading the struggle against "imperialism, Zionism, and reaction."30
Yet this growing militancy along both the collaborative and the competitive tracks may have been a frustrated initial reaction to the realization that the United States had no intention of including the Soviet Union in the process. The increase in militancy masked a continuing sense of urgency about the need for collaboration. That urgency was reflected in Demchenko’s very positive reaction to the first year of the Carter administration (1977). His image of the adversary reverted back to an explicitly political, not essentialist, image, and his image of the U.S.-Israeli relationship was conflictual, rather than consensual or hierarchical. His postmortem on the October 1, 1977, joint Soviet-American declaration blamed the reversal on Israel, and ended on a curiously hopeful note: “[N]ow, despite the maneuvers of Tel Aviv and the forces that support her, conditions have been created that are more congenial than before for achieving [a comprehensive] peace.”31 Indeed, even after Sadat’s journey to Jerusalem Demchenko placed the blame on Israel, and called again for a return to a comprehensive approach, rather than “separate deals.”32

Demchenko’s tortured effort to maintain a balance between competition and collaboration was conditioned not only by a greater commitment to diplomacy than that held by the militants, but also by a pessimistic perception of the regional course of events. In the face of setbacks Kudriavtsev had simply elongated his time perspective and continued the bravado about imperialism’s eventual inability to consolidate its gains. Demchenko, in contrast, feared that imperialism might in fact succeed. Thus, in February 1975, in an article entitled “Time is Running Out,” he expressed fear that separate deals could lead to “permanent” Israeli occupation, and declared that partial measures must not be allowed to lead to a “freezing of the situation.” In October 1975 he expressed concern that the civil war in Lebanon might cause “irreversible” damage. Throughout 1975 and 1976, Demchenko expressed fear that in the absence of movement toward resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict an uncontrollable outbreak (“explosion”) could occur at any time.33 And in December 1977, after Sadat went to Jerusalem, Demchenko was simply dumbfounded. The decision, he admitted, was unexpected and inexplicable. He had no answer to his fears of the consequences:

Is it possible that these people will accept neocolonialism in Israeli packaging, under which is hidden as well the interests of American monopolies? . . . Is it in the interests of the Israeli people to live under the constant threat of an explosion, in the midst of hatred and damnation?

Demchenko offered no answers to his questions.
Thus, in the months and years following the October 1973 war Beliaev proved to be less militant than Kudriavtsev, whereas Demchenko proved to be less militant than Beliaev. Demchenko was more flexible about negotiating terms than was Beliaev, both after the "victory" of October 1973 and in the face of U.S. exclusionary diplomacy in the years 1974–76. He did not echo his associate’s calls for increasing the defense capacity of Soviet allies. And his evaluation of indigenous trends in the region was noticeably more pessimistic than was that of Beliaev. For these reasons I have classified Demchenko as a "centrist" in the years 1974–77, and Beliaev as an "ambivalent militant" (see summary, Table 7.3).

**Ambivalent Moderate: E. Primakov**

If Demchenko was less militant than Beliaev, then Primakov was less militant than Demchenko. On balance, we find that his publications combine elements of Demchenko’s analysis with elements of Bovin’s. Hence, I have placed him on our spectrum at a point midway between the moderate extreme and centrism. Primakov, it seems, was also searching for a workable strategy of collaborative competition, one that would balance the two tracks and defend Soviet interests along each. But the positions he adopted were more moderate than all the other spokesmen except Bovin.

From 1971 to 1973 Primakov’s views on the need for negotiations stood in sharp contrast to those of Beliaev (who feared premature reconciliation), and bore resemblance to Demchenko’s expressed concern to collaborate for the sake of escalation control and confrontation avoidance. But Primakov, in addition to calling for a political solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, was more explicitly flexible than Demchenko about negotiating terms. Thus, in January 1972 he outlined Soviet terms for a settlement, and then emphasized that beyond certain broad basics the Soviet position on specifics was flexible—and he offered several examples of "give" in the position. This was followed by a statement that lauded in principle the goal of convergence of positions through compromise—a most unusual statement for a Soviet publication. Similarly, in May 1972 he argued that peace in the Middle East could lead to the desirable goal of "stabilizing global economic ties," a concept that is discordant with the traditional Soviet emphases on conflict and change that we found in both Beliaev and Demchenko.

Consistent with this more forthcoming posture was Primakov’s stated perception that the United States would be receptive to Soviet overtures. From 1971 to 1973 both Beliaev and Demchenko treated the United States and Israel as consensual allies, the essential character of which determined their foreign policy consensus. In contrast,
Primakov entertained a more differentiated image of both the U.S.-Israeli relationship (that is, conflictual allies, in which Israel is the evil partner) and the nature of politics within the United States. Even though he occasionally inserted essentialist terminology ("imperialism," "Zionism") into his articles, his analyses in effect denied the essentialist implications of the terms. Indeed, like Bovin, Primakov at one point defined the main U.S. goal in the region as a defensive one: protection of access to oil resources. He also argued that the main U.S. strategy would likely be political, not military: the United States "needs more and more to consider the Arab countries."34

Where Primakov differed from the moderate extreme, though, was in his approach to the competitive track. Like Beliaev and Demchenko, he emphasized the desirability and necessity of exclusive, state-to-state relations between the Soviet Union and Egypt, with the Soviets performing a crucial defender role, and with the common goal being to expand the anti-imperialist coalition under Egyptian leadership. Thus, Primakov, like Demchenko, advocated a balance between the competitive and the collaborative tracks during the years 1971-73, but based on more flexible negotiating terms than were being offered by Demchenko.

How did Primakov respond to the opportunities of October 1973 and the frustrations of 1974-76? In fact, we find very little change of perspective. We discover the same differentiated analyses found in 1971-73, and a perspective on change in the region that counsels neither euphoria nor despair. Thus, in February 1974 Primakov echoed none of the euphoria found in Beliaev's and Demchenko's first post-October publications. Instead, he argued that whereas the short-term impact of the oil shock would be to heighten difficulties in the capitalist world, the more long-term impact would be to foster countertendencies: increased self-sufficiency due to diversification and conservation; increased political integration within Western Europe; greater West European dependence on U.S. advanced technology; a greater regulatory role for the state within capitalist countries; and growing contradictions within the Third World.

In response to the setbacks of 1974-76, Primakov did not display Demchenko's sense of urgency that the Americans and the Israelis might succeed in freezing the situation in the region. Yet his articles did note the dangers of continuing conflict, pointing to the difficulties of containing the conflict to the local level if an explosion should occur, and noting the possibly deleterious impact of such conflict on both the process of détente and the stability of global economic relations. Since Primakov did not give equal attention to exhortation on behalf of "struggle" against the Israelis and the Americans (on which point he is closer to Bovin than to Demchenko), it seems that his position was
that should the Americans prove flexible, diplomatic efforts to defuse the conflict must be pressed.

He also argued that the Americans might well prove to be flexible. His four articles of October 1976–January 1977 painted an explicitly political portrait of U.S. decision making, claimed that U.S. policy in the region had been more balanced since 1971, and allowed for the possibility that the United States would decide to put decisive pressure on Israel to moderate its positions.

Thus, while both Demchenko and Primakov were searching for a workable strategy of collaborative competition in the years 1974–76, Demchenko sought to reconcile militancy on the competitive track with some, but not much, flexibility on the collaborative track. Primakov, in contrast, appeared to subordinate militancy on the competitive track to the requirements of flexibility on the collaborative track. In this respect, he came very close to converging with the positions articulated by Bovin, though Primakov continued to use essentialist terminology (but not analyses) to characterize the adversary, a practice that suggested a greater commitment to competing for influence in the region than that displayed by Bovin.

RESPONSES TO CAMP DAVID, 1978–84

Kudriavtsev: “I Told You So!”

Following Camp David, Kudriavtsev's writings became a magnified version of the militant extreme expressed from 1971 to 1977. Yet there now entered a note of “I told you so,” probably directed at others in the Soviet establishment who had hoped for collaborative competition or had expected smooth readjustment by imperialists to the new reality. Thus, on July 22, 1978, after asserting that U.S. support for Israel was total, he added that “only blind people can fail to see this, or call this simply politeness.”35 Similarly, after the 1982 war in Lebanon, and when another U.S.-Israeli falling-out was taking place, he castigated those in the Arab world who were still waiting for a change in U.S. policy; he insisted that these people had not yet understood that “imperialism will always be imperialism.”36

Kudriavtsev's lack of faith in diplomacy was, of course, only reinforced and seemingly vindicated by the exclusionary character of the Camp David negotiating process. Yet, while other Soviet commentators looked constantly for hope that the United States would soften its exclusionary approach or that West European governments would undermine that approach, Kudriavtsev advocated instead burying hope and abandoning the effort. Thus, in almost all of the cases in which Kudriavtsev took note of U.S.-West European differences, he did so
in order to disparage European intentions and to minimize the extent to which they presumably had dissociated themselves from the U.S. position. Similarly, after the Arab summit in Fez in 1982, Kudriavtsev cautioned the Arabs repeatedly against falling for imperialist proposals for compromise.

Indeed, Kudriavtsev’s depiction of U.S. goals became increasingly militant during these years. In 1978 the stress was on U.S. economic and military domination of the Middle East. In 1980 he began to allege a goal that would become a persistent theme in his writings: the United States was seeking military platforms in the region for direct use against the southern borders of the USSR. There was no doing business with such an adversary.

Kudriavtsev’s enthusiasm for struggle on behalf of the Palestinian cause became ever greater during these years. Almost every article published in his name pointed to the Palestinian struggle as the key to the Middle East conflict—both the key to resolving the conflict and the main obstacle to the realization of imperialist-Zionist domination of the region (“this is an axiom that does not require evidence”). A state’s attitude toward the Palestinian struggle was presented as the litmus test of its adherence to the all-Arab versus imperialist camp.

One might think that given the manifold setbacks to Soviet policy in the region during these years, a certain measure of reevaluation of perspectives would be in evidence. But, in the case of Kudriavtsev, that was not to be. His was a perfect example of the “closed mind” (see Rokeach 1960). Closure was easily attainable because of two features of his belief set: (1) an apparent obliviousness to the prospect of crisis escalation; and (2) acceptance of the unfalsifiable Leninist philosophical assumption that, in the long run, the good guys would win, that time is on the side of progressive forces, and that the imperialists would eventually be forced to capitulate. Thus, whatever notes of momentary doubt, disappointment, or setback entered Kudriavtsev’s surveys during this period, they did not shake his basic perspective. He consistently trumpeted the theme that efforts to deny national self-determination in the contemporary era were doomed to failure. He argued confidently that the imperialist resort to escalation in response to frustration would only deepen the contradictions facing imperialism. And he frequently argued that the United States would fail in her efforts to lure other states into the Camp David process.

Hence, it is understandable that Kudriavtsev would also draw large conclusions from the occasional setbacks to U.S. policy. After the international outcry following the invasion of Grenada, and after the loss of the U.S. Marines in Beirut, Kudriavtsev declared that the United States was experiencing a resurgence of the “Vietnam syndrome.”
Imperialist pain was rising; a bright future awaited those who kept on struggling.

I. Beliaev: Convergence with the Militant Extreme

In response to the setbacks of 1978–82 I. Beliaev abandoned the ambivalence displayed from 1974 to 1976. He converged entirely with Kudriavtsev, reverting to a diabolical image of the adversary, toughening his negotiating terms, calling for intensified struggle, and justifying all this with highly optimistic scenarios for blocking imperialist gains in the near-term and rolling them back in the unspecified future. He fell back, then, to the perspectives and preferences that informed his most militant publications in the period before the October 1973 war.

Although Beliaev ritualistically repeated Soviet negotiating terms and called for a return to an international conference, he also persistently upped the collaborative ante. This was not new. We noted earlier that his article in December 1973 represented the first authoritative Soviet statement that negotiations must include the PLO. That took place when the Soviets considered themselves to be dealing from strength. Now, from a position of objective weakness, Beliaev did the same. Thus, beginning in December 1979 he included East Jerusalem in discussions of Soviet negotiating terms—with an endorsement of Arab claims, even as he acknowledged the difficulties and complexities of the issue.45 In July 1983 (repeated in August 1983) he suddenly included the right for the Palestinians to return to their homeland or to have compensation among the nonnegotiables.46 Little wonder, then, that he later concluded that a negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict faced “impenetrable obstacles.”47

Beliaev justified intransigence on the collaborative track by arguing that the United States was not an adversary with which one could do business. From March 1980 onwards, he repeatedly emphasized the global and confrontational character of U.S. aspirations and calculations.48 As he explained in July 1982, U.S. policy in the Middle East, to be properly understood, must be explained as deriving from the regional and global anti-Soviet goals of the United States: “I emphasize, not on the regional, but on the global plane.”

Collaboration with such an adversary is not possible until he is sobered up by struggle. Hence, during these years we also find an escalation of Beliaev’s depictions of the forms and degrees of desirable competition in the region. In September 1980 he invited the reader to imagine “what a blow to the global capitalist economy” it would be should another oil embargo or a withdrawal of petrodollars invested in the West by Arab oil producers take place. In a series of articles on Israel published between July 1981 and August, 1984,49 he depicted
that country as being in dire straits ("the crisis of Israel has begun!" "I have never met anything like this in any country of the region"; the situation in Israel "has never been worse"), and noted that continued Arab military resistance would be a precondition for eventual Israeli collapse. And throughout these years, he stressed the importance of Middle East governments creating exclusive military alliances with the USSR.

A. Bovin: The Moderate Extreme Maintained

The setbacks of 1978–82 elicited a defiant response from Kudriavtsev and Beliaev, reaffirming or resulting in extreme militant perspectives. In contrast, Bovin's commitment to extreme moderate perspectives was not shaken by these events.

Bovin's faith in diplomacy remained, as did his apparent distaste for struggle. No exhortatory emphasis on struggle or calls for Arab unity entered his writings. A continuing stress on the virtues of compromise remained, manifested in his distinctive tendency to lay out, factually and dispassionately, the positions of each side in the controversy, often without questioning their sincerity or proclaiming their hidden motives. Throughout these years he remained more interested in exploring the possibilities for further evolution than in simply extolling the correctness of the Soviet line or tarring imperialists.

A decline in optimism about the probability of successful, far-reaching collaboration did become evident in Bovin's articles over time, however. Indeed, in a discussion published in Literaturnaia gazeta in January 1981, he admitted that he had been overly optimistic in earlier, détente years about the smoothness of the adjustment the U.S. would make to its loss of hegemony. This decline in optimism, however, did not result in a loss of faith in diplomacy; rather, it resulted in a lowering of sights as to the scope of superpower collaboration. Crisis prevention, norms of mutual restraint, and avoidance of overreaction to frustration now became the centerpiece of Bovin's preferred approach to collaboration. Since the Third World would be such a dangerous place, in which both sides could pay the price for failing to control their allies, it was better to concentrate on ways to avoid challenges to each others' vital interests and to develop understandings that would foster restraint. Indeed, he pointed out that the USSR understood the U.S. need for access to oil and would respect it.

Bovin justified his continued priority for superpower collaboration by maintaining a moderate image of the adversary. To be sure, after Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and the Camp David process, he increased his criticism of Western policy. But he never adopted a monolithic image of the U.S.-Israeli relationship, never depicted their behavior as a product
of the essential character of their social systems, and never explained Israeli behavior as a product of U.S. dictation. Indeed, he typically described the Israelis as manipulating the Americans by creating faits accomplis that frustrated U.S. policymakers. The “tail-wags-dog” imagery pervaded his depictions of the U.S.-Israeli relationship, even in the worst of times.50

In like manner, Bovin characterized U.S. goals in the region as primarily defensive—preventing the spread of Soviet influence and ensuring Western access to oil. He continued to portray U.S. policymaking in political, not essentialist, terms. In analyzing specific situations he emphasized contingency and the decisive role of leaders’ perceptions and definitions of national interest. And he dealt with the task of prediction in probabilistic, not deterministic terms. Indeed, at one point Bovin stated his view of history-as-contingent in straightforward terms:

All three powers [the United States, France, West Germany] belong to one socio-economic system, participate in the same political alliance. This explains the common features of their approach to fundamental, core problems of world development, their solidarity in defense of so-called “Western values.” However [odnako], the concrete political course taken in a concrete political situation cannot be explained by such general considerations. Between the social and class foundation of any policy and concrete political decisions is located a complex system of intermediate links. . . . the combined impact of these . . . [intermediate] factors individualizes the foreign policy of each state and creates disparate reactions to this or that situation.51

Although Bovin stressed contingency in analyzing specific situations, he embraced larger beliefs about the course of contemporary history that allowed him to stay within the prevailing consensus among our authors. That is, he appeared confident that U.S. policy could not work; that failure to give the Palestinians a state of their own would force ever-growing costs upon the U.S.-Israeli relationship and upon Israeli society. But, in contrast to Kudriavtsev and Beliaev, this confidence did not lead to the conclusion that collaboration would represent premature conciliation and that struggle would force the imperialists to capitulate. Rather, given Bovin’s fear of inadvertent crisis escalation, he envisaged a situation in which local realities would frustrate U.S. and Israeli policy and lead them to moderate their terms. He felt it was terribly important that the USSR be ready to reciprocate that moderation when it appeared, and that in the meantime the USSR should avoid actions that could result in unwanted superpower confrontation.
P. Demchenko: Deepening Dilemmas of Centrism

In contrast to Kudriavtsev, Beliaev, and Bovin, Demchenko had sought a relatively balanced definition of collaborative competition with the United States in the Middle East during the years 1971–77. The dilemmas involved in such a definition deepened in response to the frustrations of Camp David and the war in Lebanon. Demchenko’s response would be to move in the direction of militancy. In contrast to Beliaev, however, he would not go all the way, maintaining an ambivalence that appeared to reflect a fear of the consequences of abandoning hope.

Demchenko was groping for an altered intermediate position regarding the utility of diplomacy as a means of confrontation avoidance, escalation control, and influence consolidation. He continued, therefore, to tout an international conference as the only desirable and feasible alternative to Camp David. He continued to trumpet Soviet settlement terms (in contrast to Kudriavtsev), and did not magnify Soviet negotiating terms (in contrast to Beliaev). What is more, in terms reminiscent of his earlier notions of the need for compromise (1977), he explicitly acknowledged the legitimacy of the U.S. interest in access to oil.52

Demchenko’s earlier faith in diplomacy had been, at least in part, a product of his sense of urgency about confrontation avoidance. Part of the intellectual crisis faced by those who had hoped for collaborative competition was that fear of superpower confrontation remained even after faith in diplomacy had been shaken. Indeed, to some extent that fear was deepened. Thus, from 1971 to 1977 Demchenko had defined the fear of war as arising largely from crisis escalation and Palestinian adventurism. From 1978 to 1984, however, two other sources of war were also featured in Demchenko’s analyses: U.S. recklessness in response to the frustration of her efforts to prevail,53 and nuclearization of the Middle East conflict.54

Yet for all his expressed fears, Demchenko was not advocating abdication or capitulation. In contrast to the moderates, for Demchenko the determination to compete remained at least as strong as the determination to collaborate. Hence, in response to the loss of Egypt Demchenko would eventually come to find a substitute in an exclusive Soviet-Syrian relationship. He came to define Syria as the key to Soviet goals in the region, and as the bulwark of Arab forces.55

As much as Demchenko struggled to maintain a balance between the competitive and the collaborative tracks of the East-West relationship in the Middle East, his image of the adversary and of indigenous trends in the region indicated a decisive shift in the direction of militancy. Thus, by late 1978 to early 1979, he was embracing imagery that he had studiously avoided during most of 1971–77. Israeli behavior now came to be depicted as derivative of U.S. wishes.56
were now increasingly depicted as a product of the anti-Soviet, global strategy of American imperialism that, in league with international Zionism, was attempting to reestablish military and political dominance in the region. Demchenko’s image of the adversary, then, came to converge to a great extent with that of Kudriavtsev and Beliaev. True, his imagery at times was less demonological than the others’, and he held open the possibility that contradictions within the U.S.-West European relationship might force a change in U.S. policy. These caveats reflected Demchenko’s fear of abandoning hope for a serviceable collaborative track, but they were set within the context of a basically militant view of the adversary.

Demchenko’s perception of indigenous trends also supported both his advocacy of anti-imperialist struggle and a willingness to be forthcoming about the prospects for collaboration. Kudriavtsev and Beliaev had maintained their militant commitments to competition without collaboration by arguing that the policy of the imperialists would only deepen alienation in the region, raise the price of occupation, and eventually lead to imperialist abdication of positions. Demchenko, in contrast, displayed pessimism about the likelihood that Soviet acquisitive goals would be realized, that is, that Soviet settlement terms would become the basis for multilateral negotiations, that Soviet influence in the region would come to be consolidated and further expanded, or that Egypt would abandon Camp David and turn back to the USSR. Demchenko justified a militant Soviet competitive posture, however, by displaying optimism about the realizability of Soviet denial goals: the frustration of U.S. efforts to expand Camp David to include other countries, or to drive a further wedge between the Soviet Union and her allies.

In sum, Demchenko’s centrism of earlier years gave way to ambivalent militancy following the frustrations of 1978–79. But he continued to avoid the militant extreme as he searched for a way to justify retention of a workable combination of competition and collaboration.

E. Primakov: Further Dilemmas of Collaborative Competition

During the earlier period we found that Primakov’s definition of collaborative competition combined elements of Demchenko’s centrism and Bovin’s moderation. What impact did the events of 1978–84 have on Primakov’s perspectives? Interestingly, they initially had very little impact. While Beliaev and Demchenko moved toward greater militancy and Bovin stuck to his moderate guns, Primakov also stood his ground, maintaining the earlier mix of moderate and centrist premises. But in 1983 and 1984, he finally moved in the direction of greater militancy, though without approaching the militant extreme.
Between 1978 and 1982 Primakov’s faith in diplomacy remained high. He rarely dealt with struggle at all, and when he did so, his definition of struggle was neither militant nor defiant. He frequently reiterated basic Soviet negotiating terms for a Middle East settlement and exhorted the United States and Israel to accept them. Unlike the militants, he did not up the collaborative ante.

Primakov justified his policy advocacy by refusing to adopt a militant image of the adversary. Although he continued to occasionally use essentialist terminology to depict the U.S.-Israeli relationship, his basic image of U.S. politics remained a contingent one, and his image of the U.S.-Israeli relationship stressed confluence of interests and perspectives, rather than U.S. dictation or even instigation. His definition of U.S. goals in the region also remained limited. He argued that whatever the U.S. “military-strategic, political, and economic interests” in the region might be, these interests were derivative of the main U.S. goal of ensuring “unimpeded access to Middle Eastern oil.” In seeking to explain U.S. thinking on Lebanon after the invasion, he contradicted Beliaev by insisting that the goals of the invasion were local, not global. He was even willing to trace U.S. remilitarization after 1980 to reactive, rather than essentialist or even political, considerations: it was, he alleged, partly a reaction to losses in Angola, Ethiopia, and Iran. The implication of these perspectives, of course, was that despite the frustrations, this was still an adversary with which a nation could hope to do business.

Similarly, Primakov justified his skepticism about the payoff to be gained from intensified competition by displaying even less optimism about indigenous trends in the region than did Demchenko, much less Beliaev or Kudriavtsev. He praised the Arab boycott of Camp David, but was not optimistic that the boycott would stick. He allowed that Israeli colonization of the West Bank might prove irreversible and that the peace process might prove to be frozen. Primakov was much more pessimistic than the militants about the ability of the energy crisis to force a change in U.S. negotiating positions.

Thus, despite the frustrations of Camp David, Primakov’s perspectives of 1978–82 did not harden as did Demchenko’s and Beliaev’s during the same period. But in the beginning of 1983 things changed. Interestingly, Primakov did not change his policy advocacy. His faith in diplomacy remained intact; indeed, at one point he called for a “balanced compromise” and argued that whereas U.S. policy was making a settlement more difficult, “tomorrow it will be more difficult than today. Time does not wait.” What is more, Primakov’s apprehension of intensified competition also remained intact. His articles of February 1983 through July 1984 devoted very little attention to “struggle” of any form, be it Palestinian resistance, Syrian defiance,
or military alliance with the USSR. Indeed, the notion of Soviet military protection of Arab states was conspicuous for its absence.

What changed was Primakov's image of the adversary and his perception of local trends. Suddenly, his perceptions were fundamentally inconsistent with his policy prescriptions. Although he was calling for "balanced compromise," he did not articulate an image of an adversary with which such a compromise could be forged. He began formally to revise his earlier positions on the sources of U.S. behavior and the nature of U.S. goals. He dissociated himself from "tail-wags-dog" imagery of the U.S.-Israeli relationship: "I do not think that everything is reducible to the inability of the USA to exercise real influence on her client."74 He disowned his previous claims that the United States and Israel were not in agreement over the scope of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.75 Calling the U.S. Marine detachment in Lebanon "the advanced detachment of its Rapid Deployment Force," he suddenly adopted the militants' perspective on the globalist sources of U.S. thinking about the Middle East. U.S. policies in the region, he argued, are "all components of a general imperial policy of the United States," geared toward confrontation with the Soviet Union.76

How could Primakov justify his continued faith in diplomacy in light of this pessimistic image of the adversary? The answer may lie in Primakov's sense of urgency about the need for collaboration. His depiction of the dangers inherent in the local situation was especially vivid during these years. In February 1983 he referred to the Middle East as "the most dangerous and prolonged international crisis in the postwar period." In February 1984 he argued that the destructive influence of U.S. policy in the region could "put general peace in peril." It may well be, then, that even though Primakov did not hold out much hope that the "imperialists" would be willing to negotiate in good faith, he considered it too dangerous to "give up" on the adversary. He seemed to be advocating continued efforts to engage the United States in talks geared toward crisis prevention, at a minimum, or talks geared toward removing the escalatory potential from the Arab-Israeli conflict, at a maximum.

This interpretation is reinforced by an examination of Primakov's perception of local trends. Whereas during 1978–82 Primakov had been relatively pessimistic about the prospects for frustrating U.S. policy in the region, during 1983-84 he expressed greater optimism on this score. He discussed the contradictions inherent in the U.S. need to protect Israel and to curry favor with conservative Arab regimes.77 He argued that the U.S.-Israeli strategic cooperation agreement "obviously reduces Washington's room for maneuver in the Arab world, even in countries with so-called conservative regimes."78 In April 1984 he went still further, arguing that the U.S. defeat in Lebanon had changed the
field of play in the Middle East: Jordan no longer viewed the United States as an honest broker; the Reagan initiative was dead; and the U.S. failure to sell arms to Jordan and Saudi Arabia had caused other Persian Gulf countries to lose faith in the United States as a protector, even of conservative Arab regimes.79

In sum, Primakov appears to have gained confidence that U.S. policy was doomed to frustration and to have implied in his writings that when the United States recognized that such was the case, the Soviet Union must be ready to negotiate a balanced compromise in order to avoid a dangerously escalatory situation. In this respect, Primakov's published views converged substantially with those of Demchenko. Both men adopted militant views of U.S. intentions, but resisted the temptation to abandon hope, at least in part due to fear that such abandonment could lead to uncontrolled crises. Neither man exhibited Beliaev's apparent complacency on this score. One difference between Demchenko and Primakov, however, remained salient: Demchenko placed much greater emphasis than Primakov on struggle. In practice, then, Demchenko's reaction to the crisis of collaborative competition was more defiant than was Primakov's.

THE GORBACHEV EFFECT, 1985–87

Up to this point, we have been examining the impact of changes in the international environment of policy on Soviet perspectives. All but two of the years under review took place during the Brezhnev administration, which allows us to "hold constant" this internal political factor. Both Andropov and Chernenko were in power for too short a period of time to foster any major redirection of Soviet policy in the Middle East. The Gorbachev era is another matter, though, and it allows us to explore the impact of a major political succession on Soviet policy and perspectives at a time when the international environment of Soviet policy (Reaganism, exclusionary U.S. diplomacy, inter-Arab acrimony, Israeli military hegemony) remained relatively constant.

Part of our sample of authors drops out during these years, though. Kudriavtsev retired in 1984; Bovin stopped publishing on the Arab-Israeli conflict after 1984. The loss represented by this circumstance may not be so large, however. It is difficult to believe that Kudriavtsev, who retired at the age of 81, and whose publications on the Middle East did not change despite the rise and fall of détente, would have publicly changed his perspectives as a result of a political change at the top. It is also difficult to believe that Bovin's views have changed substantially, given that the fall of détente and the frustrations of Camp David and Lebanon did not alter his moderation. Indeed,
the few articles he has published that are tangential to the conflict reflect his continued moderation. The question, then, is whether since 1985 Messrs. Beliaev, Demchenko, and Primakov are singing different tunes that are in harmony with Gorbachev's reevaluative, more flexible approach to collaborative competition.

Beliaev, during 1985-87, has not changed at all. As before, he has no use for diplomacy as the means of dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict. Instead, he constantly calls for unrelenting struggle. He justifies this by arguing that Israel is defeated, on the run, and must be pressed further. He ups the negotiating ante once again, explicitly rejecting UN Resolution 242 and referring with favor to the UN Resolution of 1947. Several times he mentions the idea of restoring Soviet-Israeli diplomatic relations, but only in order to disparage the notion as a trick of the imperialists. He rejects the notion that the Geneva Summit between Reagan and Gorbachev, at which regional issues were discussed, might lead to a softening of the Soviet negotiating position on the Middle East. Instead, he disparages the workability of collaboration by arguing that the U.S. and Soviet positions are "essentially opposites." In general, one finds in Beliaev a continued preference for regional polarization, apparently in the belief that given U.S. and Israeli policies, Soviet interests will be advanced by leading the Arab struggle against the policies of those diabolical and unalterable antagonists.

One change is discernible in Beliaev's articles, but it is consistent with the perspectives just noted. During the first half of 1986 we suddenly find a large number of positive references to the prospects for expanded Soviet ties with conservative Arab regimes. This squares with changes in Soviet policy at the time. But it also squares with Beliaev's geopolitical perspectives. He views the Middle East as an arena for confrontation between imperialist and anti-imperialist forces. For the most part, the anti-imperialists highlighted and headlined in his articles are the PLO, Syria, and Libya. They are variously characterized as Soviet partners or allies in the region who are deserving of Soviet protection against imperialist attacks. They are typically praised for their close ties to the USSR, rather than for their internal ideological orientations.

In Beliaev's articles the moderate or conservative regimes in the region, however, suddenly appear as potential targets for competitive gains at the expense of U.S. diplomacy. The militant Soviet commentator does not suggest Soviet protection for them, but he does suggest that a broader anti-imperialist coalition might now be possible, in light of the widespread alienation in the region resulting from counterproductive U.S. and Israeli policies. Thus, Beliaev advocates a combination of radical and pragmatic activism, based on both zero-sum premises
regarding the U.S.-Soviet competitive relationship and disparagement of the desirability, necessity, or feasibility of superpower collaboration.

Primakov, in contrast to Beliaev, became more moderate after Gorbachev came to power. He expressed a heightened sense of urgency about the need to take the initiative in order to create conditions conducive to superpower collaboration. Thus, in a major article in Izvestiia (October 28, 1985), he warned that the danger of an explosion in the Middle East was greater today than it was yesterday. Indeed, nuclearization of the conflict makes it unprecedentedly dangerous, for while Israel already possesses nuclear weapons, “it is difficult to believe that historically it will prove possible to maintain a regional monopoly in this area.” Moreover, he argued, the Middle East conflict increases global terrorism and prevents a return to superpower détente, which he defined as the only guarantee against terrorism. Thus, he concludes, “there are more than enough reasons to use all available means and possibilities for normalization of the situation in the Middle East.” In contrast to Beliaev, Primakov was also willing to advocate a softening of Soviet negotiating terms in hopes of inducing U.S. and Israeli participation in a comprehensive settlement process. And, in contrast to his earlier (1983–84) pessimism about the prospects for U.S. and Israeli receptivity, he now held out the hope that politics in the two countries might change to the advantage of more enlightened forces:

However, within Israel there are undoubtedly forces (true, they are now not numerous) that recognize the dangerous consequences of Israeli nihilism regarding a general settlement. Well, years will pass, and no one knows how the correlation of forces in the Middle East will evolve . . .

One can hope that, in the United States too, those politicians have not been decisively pushed into the background who understand that, in the national interests of the USA, and of other states too, one must liquidate the constant danger of destabilization of the regional and global situation that is inherent in the development of events in the Middle East.86

Shortly after this article was published, Primakov was appointed director of the Institute on the World Economy and International Relations. Thereafter, he stopped publishing articles on the Middle East per se. Having been promoted to a very prestigious and politically influential position, he now publishes on more general matters: U.S.-Soviet relations in the nuclear age, principles of peaceful coexistence, and so on. His articles on those topics, however, include discussions of
principles of superpower interaction in regional conflicts and confirm that the metamorphosis displayed in October 1985 was no fluke. For his subsequent articles reflect a sense of urgency about the need for joint U.S.-Soviet efforts to defuse regional conflicts that possess high escalatory potential. Indeed, Primakov has turned into a consistent and forceful advocate of a Soviet-American crisis-prevention regime in the Third World.

This is not to say that he is highly optimistic. Indeed, he insists that arms control not be held hostage to the success of such efforts. And he cautions against expecting immediate radical improvements in relations with the United States. He argues, however, that the struggle for improvements must begin immediately, based upon the "need to recognize the existence of objective interests of various countries, to search for areas of overlap of those interests, and then to act in ways that reduce the gap between interests."87 In sum, after Gorbachev's rise to power Primakov shifted squarely back to the Bovin camp of moderation.

As for Demchenko, he too shifted in a more moderate direction, though not to the same extent as did Primakov. Whereas Demchenko had become an ambivalent militant after Camp David, he reverted back to his centrism of 1971–77 after Gorbachev came to power. This meant that he continued to search for a combination of collaboration and competition that would both avoid confrontation and consolidate Soviet influence in the region. He continued to tout the need for an international conference and a comprehensive settlement, while extolling support for Syria as the key progressive state in the region.

Along two dimensions—faith in diplomacy and perception of indigenous trends—he expressed and justified the need for greater moderation than he was willing to advocate in the years 1978–84. Thus, along the first dimension, Demchenko's writings of 1986 strike a more conciliatory posture on Soviet negotiating terms. A new formulation appears, more general and less restrictive than the standard Soviet position. The demand is now for:

restoration of justice in the region, rejection of the policy of force, and consideration of the interests of both the Arab and the Israeli sides . . . [to] convene a representative international conference . . . [and] create a preparatory committee for the conference composed of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.88

Demchenko justified intensified efforts along the collaborative track by altering his perception of local trends. From 1978 to 1984 he had expressed optimism that the United States would not succeed in broadening the Camp David process or in driving a wedge between
the Soviet Union and Syria or the PLO. Yet beginning in June 1985
Demchenko reversed course. He became unusually graphic in his
depiction of the complete shambles into which the Arab world had
fallen.89 And he now admitted that the current state of extreme dis-
unity might actually facilitate U.S. efforts to expand the Camp David
process.90

In sum, Demchenko moved after Gorbachev from a position
of ambivalent militancy back to a centrist position, at a time when
Beliaev was reiterating and even strengthening his militant extreme,
and Primakov was moving decisively toward the moderate end of the
spectrum. Since we are not studying the universe of Soviet writings
on the Middle East, we cannot yet determine whether this reflects an
aggregate shift in a moderate direction in the Gorbachev era (though I
strongly suspect it does). One step in the direction of testing this idea,
however, is to analyze the writings of the man who has apparently
"succeeded" Kudriavtsev as Izvestiia's most frequent commentator on
Middle East affairs—Konstantin Geivandov. Specifically, I have studied
36 articles by Geivandov, as published in Izvestiia between March 1985
and March 1987 (see appendix).

Geivandov shares the consensus that unites all our commentators.
He also shares many of the militant perspectives on U.S. and Israeli
motives that inform analyses by Kudriavtsev and Beliaev. On the
issue of diplomacy, however, he parts ways with the militants. He
consistently calls for an international conference to settle the conflict.
He cites Gorbachev on the need for collective settlement of regional
conflicts in the Middle East, Central America, and South Africa. He
proposes collective settlement as the remedy for troubles in Cambodia,
Afghanistan, Korea, Cyprus, and the Middle East.91

Perhaps this is because Geivandov is not overly optimistic about
Soviet chances for success in the Middle East. While he is confident that
the United States will not be able to get away with ignoring Palestinian
rights forever, he expresses great fear of the consequences of "separate
peaces," which could "castrate the battle for national liberation."92 While
he asserts that Israel will eventually have to withdraw from Lebanon, he
admits to the danger that Israel and America will resolve the Lebanese
and Palestinian situations to their liking.93

Geivandov's terms for achieving a negotiated settlement are
less militant than Beliaev's, but less moderate than Primakov's or
Demchenko's. He consistently demands that a settlement restore to
Arab control all lands seized by Israel in 1967.94 And he never
mentions settlement without reiterating the demand that the PLO
participate as the sole legal representative of the Palestinian peo-
ple.95 Indeed, he sees Palestinian self-determination as impossible
without the PLO and expresses anger at proposals to exclude them.96
As for preferable means of struggle, Geivandov is also more restrained than the militants, but more combative than the moderates. He urges Arab unity and the continuation of national liberation struggles, but he assiduously avoids mention of concrete Soviet support and never mentions Soviet military support for any Middle East state. Unlike Demchenko, he never discusses the Soviet-Syrian alliance.97

Overall, then, Geivandov appears to share the middle of the spectrum with Demchenko during the Gorbachev era. He is struggling to have it both ways—vigorously competition for influence and serious, but tough, negotiations to defuse the conflict. If Geivandov is indeed intended to be Kudriavtsev’s successor at Izvestiia (although he worked there and published articles before Kudriavtsev’s retirement—articles I have not examined), this would be one more sign of a possible aggregate shift away from militancy in the balance of commentary during the Gorbachev era.

IDEOLOGY, POLITICS, AND CHANGE

Before exploring the implications of this analysis, let us summarize the findings with two tables. Table 7.2 outlines the main indicators of militancy and moderation, though the first lines of the table also indicate the points of consensus within which these spectral extremes are located. To avoid confusion, I do not list here the operational indicators of centrist positions, since, as we have seen, those clusters took several forms. Table 7.3 indicates the positions on this spectrum adopted by our five main spokesmen during the periods of the sixteen years under study.

It is difficult to read and categorize these authors without gaining an appreciation for the continuing influence of the Soviet ideological tradition on elite interpretation of the situation in the Middle East. Within the consensual core the belief that self-determination for the Palestinian people will prove either undeniable or deniable only at an extraordinary price, and that such self-determination would be a good thing, is easily sustained by both Leninist conceptions of national liberation, and normative and philosophical dimensions of the traditional ideology (see MacFarlane 1985; Breslauer 1987). Similarly, the consensual image of the adversary as hegemony oriented is certainly reinforced and sustained by Leninist precepts about the nature of imperialism. Either of these beliefs can be adhered to by non-Leninists or non-Marxists. But in Soviet elite political culture it is easy, intellectually and politically, to reach, defend, and “sell” these conclusions.

Other attitudes and beliefs are shared by all those consistently located on the spectrum from the centrist position to the militant
TABLE 7.2
The Main Indicators of Militancy, Moderation, and Consensus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of Attitude and Perception</th>
<th>Militants</th>
<th>Moderates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Points of consensus:</td>
<td>Long-term optimism that Palestinian self-determination cannot be denied at acceptable cost; normative preference for Western acquiescence to this &quot;reality&quot;; United States seeks to maintain her hegemony in the region</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith in diplomacy</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred intensity of struggle</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image of U.S.-Israeli relationship</td>
<td>Consensual or hierarchical</td>
<td>Conflictual allies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image of U.S.-Israeli goals</td>
<td>Global confrontation</td>
<td>Israeli security and U.S. oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimism about long-term acquisitive goals</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conception of international political order</td>
<td>Zero-sum competition; zero-sum collaboration</td>
<td>Negative-sum competition; positive-sum collaboration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

extreme; and these additional cognitions also resonate within the traditional elite political culture. First, these types view the world in bifurcated terms, seeing in international relations a natural tendency toward a largely irreconcilable polarization between progressive forces and imperialist or reactionary forces. All these types approve of this tendency as an expression of the predictable course of history, though the less militant may be ambivalent about the loss of escalation control resulting from such confrontation. Second, all these types display a preference for exclusive relationships between the Soviet Union and progressive or radical forces in the Third World that undertake social transformations or struggles that lend confidence that the ally will choose to remain in the Soviet camp (on this preference of the Brezhnev regime,
TABLE 7.3
Positions of the Spokesmen, by Periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spokesman</th>
<th>Periods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kudriavtsev</td>
<td>Militant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliaev</td>
<td>Militant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demchenko</td>
<td>Centrist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primakov</td>
<td>Ambivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bovin</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geivandov</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

see Jowitt 1987). Third, by cementing relationships with exclusive allies and assisting their efforts to undo past wrongs, all these types display a commitment to struggle for advantage in the Middle East.

Fourth, militants through centrists may differ in their attitude toward superpower collaboration, but they share one core assumption about the nature of superpower competition: they view such competition as essentially zero-sum in character. Given the first three beliefs just noted, this characterization should come as no surprise. A zero-sum view of the competitive track means that one side's gains represent a commensurate loss for the other side. That zero-sum perspective appears to have had a determining impact on the direction of change in postures in the late 1970s and early 1980s. When Camp David and U.S. exclusionary diplomacy were the dominant factors in U.S. diplomacy by the end of the 1970s, the superpower competitive track became more salient than the collaborative track for Soviet centrists and militants—if only because prospects for progress along the collaborative track had dimmed greatly, and U.S. diplomatic efforts appeared to be concentrated on reducing Soviet influence in the region. Those who had embraced zero-sum perspectives on the competition immediately became equally or more militant in response.

Aleksandr Bovin, our consistent moderate, had been in agreement with the centrist Demchenko that collaboration could be a positive-sum game in which both sides stood to gain from conflict reduction and confrontation avoidance. But he had disagreed as to the nature of the
competitive relationship, defining it as (symmetrically) negative-sum in character: both sides stood to lose from continued or intensified competition; and neither side stood much to gain from unilaterally intensified competition. Hence, when the competitive track became more salient in 1978 and 1979, Bovin's suspicion that nobody stood to gain from such a turn of events came to the fore. The evolution of his published perspectives, therefore, went in directions different from those of his colleagues. He remained a moderate.

Under Gorbachev, Demchenko moved somewhat back toward the middle of the spectrum, Primakov swung decisively in the direction of moderation, and Geivandov's centrism replaced Kudriavtsov's militancy on the pages of Izvestiia. Assuming for the moment that these shifts reflect a larger shift in perspective within the political establishment and the Party leadership, the question arises: What do these shifts suggest about the changing weight of the traditional elite political culture in foreign policy formulation regarding the Middle East?

One possibility is that a major reevaluation has taken place, in the sense that previous beliefs about the long-term productivity of shared militant-centrist assumptions about superpower competition have come under question. This could mean that zero-sum conceptions, accompanied by a preference for regional polarization and struggle, based on exclusive relationships with allies, have simply lost their credibility. The normative attachment to these values may remain strong and, for some observers (Beliaev?), may determine policy advocacy regardless of their realizability. But for other observers the normative attachment may be losing its control over policy advocacy, short-circuited by pessimism about the realizability of such values at acceptable cost and risk. From this perspective the impact of the traditional elite culture has been attenuated, such that in the eyes of former Soviet militants and centrists “the Middle East now represents more a problem to be solved than an opportunity to be exploited” (Malcolm 1988: 101). The thrust of this explanation, then, is cognitive—learning has taken place, such that militants and centrists have reevaluated previous perspectives.

Although learning may indeed have taken place within the political establishment or Party leadership, the evidence of this study does not support an "individual learning" explanation for the change. The evidence of continuity over time in the basic perspectives of our commentators is overwhelming, especially when we bifurcate the spectrum into militants-centrists and moderates. Bovin began and finished as a moderate. Kudriavtsev began and finished as a militant. Beliaev diverged only slightly from a consistent militancy. Demchenko wavered only between centrism and ambivalent militancy as he tried
to reconcile the traditional approach to competition in the Middle East with a perceived imperative for crisis prevention in the region.

This means that, whatever their shifts in perspective between given subperiods (see Table 7.3), four of our five commentators have not engaged in fundamental reevaluation of their strategies during the years in question. Primakov is, in this respect, a partial exception. What might explain his swings of the 1980s?

One possibility is that Primakov's thought processes evolved. Having embraced a mix of moderate and centrist perspectives throughout the 1970s and early 1980s despite the setbacks to Soviet policy during those years, Primakov might have reached his threshold of tolerance with the events of 1982 and 1983. The war in Lebanon, the massacres at Sabra and Shatilla, and the dispatching of U.S. troops to Lebanon might have angered and disillusioned him. This might explain his militant swing in 1983 and 1984.98 Thereafter, the rising tensions and threats in the region could have triggered in Primakov long-standing fears of crisis escalation. Hence, when the course of events turned against the United States and Israel in Lebanon in 1984 and 1985, Primakov might have embraced a moderate alternative that did not threaten capitulation. That embrace would have been facilitated by the fact that Primakov's views of the 1970s had contained moderate perspectives that challenged traditionalist conceptions of the international order.

I find more plausible, however, a political, rather than an "individual learning," interpretation of the changes in Primakov's writings. It is likely that Primakov's continued adherence to a relatively moderate position after Camp David placed him on the political defensive after Lebanon; others could imply that he was "soft on imperialism." The militant swing of 1983 and 1984 would then have been a response to the political heat, once U.S. and Israeli policy escalated further. Such an interpretation is reinforced by the circumstance that our extreme moderate, Bovin, did not publish any articles in Izvestiia on the Arab-Israeli conflict during June 1982 through March 1984, suggesting that he might have been "lying low," or forced to lie low.99 This interpretation is also reinforced by the fact that in 1983 and 1984 Primakov's policy advocacy did not change; only his declared perception of the motivation and effectiveness of Western policy changed. This might have been a calculated way of covering himself against charges of naiveté without abandoning his commitment to negotiation or his skepticism about the wisdom of intensified struggle.

According to a political interpretation, Primakov's moderate swing of 1985 resulted from Gorbachev's coming to power, the new Soviet leader's advocacy of a reevaluation of foreign policy assumptions, and Primakov's upward political mobility at this time. All of
which provided him the political space to reiterate and elaborate his relatively moderate perspectives.

If we accept this explanation, we are left with the conclusion that none of our main five spokesmen has engaged in fundamental reevaluation. Militants of the 1970s remained militants in the 1980s. Moderates remained moderates. And our centrist, struggling to reconcile the Brezhnevite definitions of collaboration and competition, continued in that box through the 1980s. To be sure, there was a demonstrable aggregate shift toward greater moderation under Gorbachev but at the individual level, the spokesmen continued to live off their basic approaches of earlier years.

If an individual learning perspective does not appear persuasive (or sufficient), perhaps a political explanation is superior: new elites have come to power whose opinions on the Middle East were shaped more recently by the flow of events in the region and/or by discussions with advisors who were always closer to the moderate than the militant end of our spectrum. Both the recent political succession in Moscow and the personnel changes in the foreign policy establishment have raised the status of individuals who have long been associated with a crisis-prevention bias, and at the same time they have diminished the status or retired on pension many individuals who have long been associated with militant biases. The list of such changes is a long one, but we can mention the rise in status of Primakov as a foreign policy advisor and the visibility of Bovin as a leading advocate of perestroika.

But even if we are witnessing a political change, how far reaching can we expect the changes to be? One major impediment to further change is the consensus that appears to span the militant-moderate divide: the shared belief that Palestinian nationalism is an irresistible force, destined to achieve national liberation by some means, and that Israeli efforts to deny some form of self-determination to the Palestinians will ultimately prove futile or too costly. Thus, while the level of normative dedication to the Palestinian cause may indeed vary among Soviet policy influencers, they are likely to find substantial consensus among themselves at the level of philosophical beliefs about the intrinsic infeasibility of U.S. and Israeli policy. It is true that there are soft spots in this consensus. We have seen, for example, that both Demchenko and Primakov—the two members of our sample who struggled most valiantly to reconcile collaboration and competition—displayed concern that Israeli use of force or U.S. use of its diplomatic leverage might “freeze the situation” or create realities that would prove “irreversible.” But this ambivalence notwithstanding, the consensus that such a “freeze” would occur at rising, and eventually intolerable, cost to the aggressor is a fairly strong one. The Palestinian
uprising since 1987 could only reinforce these beliefs, as well as the confidence that, if a war can be avoided, time is not on the side of the Israeli hard-line position. Given these points of consensus, abandonment of the basic Soviet commitment to Palestinian self-determination of some sort, or abandonment of the Soviet alliance with Arab states, is very unlikely.

Another reason to wonder how far a Soviet reevaluation might go is that the Soviet ideological tradition is dualistic. The traditionalist perspectives noted above are central to the competitive dimension of the tradition. Admittedly, the competitive dimension is powerful, and perhaps central to the orientation of Soviet elite political culture toward the outside world. Another more collaborative dimension, however, can be traced back to 1921, and finds regular expression throughout Soviet history. Interaction between the competitive and the collaborative dimensions has resulted in alternating phases of assertion and conciliation (or avoidance), alternating emphasis on support for radical and nationalist forces abroad, and a constant concern to avoid both adventurism and capitulation. Because, traditionally, the collaborative dimension has been defined as a tactical adjustment along the path toward ultimate realization of competitive goals, major shifts in policy (indeed, even an alliance with Hitler) could be justified without challenging the actor to reevaluate core precepts of the ideological tradition.

Assimilation of the impact of nuclear weapons on international politics had a profound effect on Soviet thinking about the relative weights of the competitive and collaborative dimensions of the tradition. By discrediting the apocalyptic view of history (see Zimmerman 1969), the collaborative dimension was raised to the status of near-equal partner; that is, superpower collaboration could no longer be viewed as simply instrumental—that was too dangerous in the nuclear age. Initially, this fundamental reevaluation (which can be traced to 1956) coincided with high optimism about the natural course of events in the world. Hence, assumptions about imperialism’s final crisis, global polarization, and the prospects for exclusive relationships with radical allies could coexist with this new view of the role of war in the historical process. Over time, though, the unpredictability and uncontrollability of events—in the Middle East and in the Third World more generally—have led to declining expectations about the realizability of acquisitive goals (see Breslauer 1987). Meanwhile, the realities of superpower confrontations in the Middle East and elsewhere, along with the impact of crises in the Third World on the rise and fall of détente, have invited Soviet leaders to reevaluate once again the relative weights of the competitive and collaborative tracks, and the interrelationship between them.
Soviet policymakers on the Middle East, especially since 1968, have generally struggled to reconcile traditionalist thinking about competition with a growing concern for crisis prevention and stabilization of the situation. Although the Kudriavtsevs and the Beliaevs usually counseled against doing business with the adversary, their advice has apparently not been heeded. The regime has followed a strategy of collaborative competition. But since this mixed policy entailed subtle shifts of emphasis over time, depending on changes in circumstances, it erected some genuine barriers to fundamental reevaluation of traditionalist assumptions about the international and regional political orders. Many mixes would have to be attempted and be judged failures for the right reasons before those assumptions could be discredited as unproductive or counterproductive.

The Gorbachev regime has thus far displayed a preference for rethinking the Brezhnevite mix. Brezhnev’s emphasis on building a united front of rejectionist radical Arab states has given way to a stress on competing pragmatically for influence, and less ambitious goals, among all states in the region (see Golan, chapter 6 in this volume). In response to frustration, Brezhnev upped the competitive ante, whereas the Gorbachev leadership has sought to de-escalate situations and maintain its positions. Brezhnev’s negotiating terms have been marginally softened, though to what extent remains unclear. Brezhnev’s traditionalist assumptions have been replaced at the doctrinal level by something called the “new thinking,” which emphasizes global interdependence rather than bifurcation, fluid relationships rather than exclusive relationships, political competition rather than military competition, and struggle as a negative-sum rather than a zero-sum game. Yet, even in its purist form, the new thinking does not entail abandonment of a competitive global role for the USSR. As applied to the Middle East, it would retain the commitment to compete for influence as a regional power. Given the dynamics of the situation on the ground, given the Soviet commitment not to abandon its allies, and given its commitment to the Arab cause, there are severe limits to the extent to which Soviet leaders are likely to reevaluate their position on the Arab-Israeli conflict. What we have witnessed since Brezhnev is a redefinition of collaborative competition to constitute more of a mix of moderate and centrist premises. I will reflect further on the possible implications of this redefinition in chapter 10.

ENDNOTES

1. I chose these five men because they appear to be the most important and authoritative spokesmen writing on the Middle East during the 1970s
and 1980s. Also, a brief review of their writings correctly revealed that they represented a range of opinion. I opted not to include another prominent spokesman, Dimitri Vol'skii, because a brief review of some of his writings suggested that they would add little further differentiation to a sample that already included Demchenko, Beliaev, and Kudriavtsev. I have excluded writings by Karen Brutents because he has written very few full articles on the Middle East per se. Finally, I have analyzed these individuals' newspaper and journal articles only. My assumption is that to the extent that their books (if any) differ in perspective from what they publish in the mass media, those differing perspectives are less likely to be reflected within the policymaking circles. For an analysis of some of Primakov's book-length treatments of the Arab-Israeli conflict, see the chapter by Yaacov Ro'i in this volume.

2. For more on these concepts and how they correspond to alternative Soviet orientations toward globalism, see George W. Breslauer, "All Gorbachev's Men," The National Interest (Summer 1988): 1-10. A fourth orientation is more isolationist—"Russia-first"—but does not find expression in the six individuals studied in the present chapter.

5. Izvestiia, 21 December 1974; see also Izvestiia, 20 September 1974.

7. Support for this observation can be found in any number of articles by Kudriavtsev in this period. Since the appendix provides a complete listing of articles, organized chronologically by author, I will not overburden the footnotes with unnecessary citation. I will, however, provide enough citation for the reader to identify the article or articles on the basis of which a generalization is advanced. Often the text will refer to a month and year in which an article was published by a given author. If there is only one such article in the appendix, I will forego a footnote entirely.

8. See, for example, Izvestiia, 24 November 1972.
12. Izvestiia, 8 July 1974; Azia i Afrika segodnia, July 1975.
14. Izvestiia, 8 July 1974; 28 May 1975; and SShA, March 1976, where he even suggested that the United States might abandon Israel the way it did Taiwan.
20. Pravda, 29 August 1972; also Pravda, 1 June 1973.
7 June 1973.
24. _Pravda_, 22 February 1973; see also _Pravda_, 7 June 1973; and contrast these with Kudriavtsev, in _Izvestiia_, 2 June 1973.
34. _Pravda_, 5 June 1971.
35. See also _Izvestiia_, 6 January 1979; 12 August 1981.
40. _Izvestiia_, 6 June 1980.
42. _Izvestiia_, 6 January 1979; 8 May 1981.
44. _Izvestiia_, 7 December 1983; 9 December 1983.
47. _Literaturnaia gazeta_, 22 August 1984.

56. This began in Pravda, 13 October 1978.


62. Ibid.; Kommunist, no. 9, 1980; Sovetskaia Rossiia, 27 February 1983.


64. Pravda, 26 July 1978; 15 December 1978; Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn', January 1979; Literaturnaia gazeta, 7 July 1982; Sovetskaia Rossiia, 27 February 1983; see also Literaturnaia gazeta, 7 July 1982 where he clashed directly with Beliaev on this point.


66. Literaturnaia gazeta, 7 July 1982.

67. Kommunist, no. 9, 1980.


69. Ibid.

70. Literaturnaia gazeta, 12 March 1980.

71. Kommunist, no. 9, 1980.


74. Sovetskaia Rossiia, 4 September 1983.

75. Contrast Sovetskaia Rossiia, 4 September 1983 with Literaturnaia gazeta, 7 July 1982.

76. Sovetskaia Rossiia, 4 September 1983. For further evidence of a hardening of Primakov's image of the adversary, contrast Pravda, 26 July 1978 or Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn', January 1979 with Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn', February 1984, regarding reasons for the U.S. withdrawal from the October 1, 1977 declaration; also contrast his position in February 1984 regarding U.S. relations with the People's Republic of China with that previously articulated in Literaturnaia gazeta, 12 March 1980. Finally, see Izvestiia, 1 April 1984; 27 July 1984.

77. Sovetskaia Rossiia, 4 September 1983; Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn', February 1984.

78. Ibid.

79. Izvestiia, 1 April 1984.


86. Specifically, and in contrast to Beliaev, he reiterated the new Soviet negotiating formula of July 1984, which added to the standard negotiating terms the following new elements: "after the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state, that state has the right to define the character of its relations with neighboring countries, including the possibility of creating a federation"; "Soviet proposals foresee a rather flexible structure for the working organs of a conference: along with commissions organized by problem-area, in case of need the creation of groups and the continuation of contacts within the conference on a bilateral basis" (Izvestiia, 28 October 1985).
98. What is more, these were years of confrontation in U.S.-Soviet relations more generally, or at least of acrimony and mutual defiance.
99. Bovin did, however, appear on Soviet television and radio during this period and commented on Middle East developments, thereby clouding the interpretation of his silence in Izvestiia articles.

APPENDIX

V. Kudriavtsev

Izvestiia

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Pravda
5 June 1971
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Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn'
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Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniiia (MEIMO)
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January 1979
Literaturnaia gazeta
12 March 1980
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(9) 1980
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7 July 1982
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Chapter 8

The Soviet View of the U.S.-Israeli Partnership

Yaacov Ro'i
Tel Aviv University

The U.S.-Israeli partnership has been a central theme of Soviet writings on the Middle East for some decades. Indeed, prior to the June 1967 Six Day War this partnership was already one of the axioms of Soviet discussions on the area that were apparently intended to facilitate the USSR's own rapprochement with the Arab world on the basis of the need for the Arab countries to align themselves with and receive support from the superpower that was not linked with their common enemy. This outwardly simplistic approach, which neatly divided the forces at work into two camps, each comprising a local factor and an external power (the Arabs and the USSR, on the one hand, and Israel and the United States, on the other), continued to be one of the fulcrums of Soviet policy in the late 1960s and early 1970s as the USSR presented itself as representative and delegate of the Arab countries, victims of "the Israeli aggression," at first in the two- and four-power talks and later within the framework of détente summitry. It was, however, upset by Egypt's defection from the Soviet fold following the October 1973 Yom Kippur War, which demonstrated the fallacy of Soviet arguments concerning the "natural" character of the Soviet-Arab partnership. This chapter will survey the Soviet conception of the U.S.-Israeli relationship in the post-Camp David period, that is, following the culmination of Sadat's tendency toward substituting Washington for Moscow in the accords of September 1978 and the subsequent Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty of March 1979.

While fully aware that differences of opinion in the Soviet establishment have been given relatively open expression since Khrushchev, the author will a priori attempt to synthesize the various views of the U.S.-Israeli partnership, because they seem to be based on a number of generally accepted premises—that the two countries necessarily have to cooperate in the Middle East and outside the region, having similar if not identical interests, which are both practical, that is, on the military-strategic and political-diplomatic plane, and conceptual.
As this common ground permeates discussion of the U.S.-Israeli partnership, it seems on the whole tenable to talk of the Soviet view thereof as a meaningful concept. True, within this general view there are discrepancies, but some of these at least probably convey the naturally different emphases of the interest groups involved.

Our analysis of selected Soviet publications of the years 1979-86 will focus on the following questions:

1. How central is the U.S.-Israeli partnership to American Middle East policy? Or, stated otherwise, is the U.S. commitment to, and friendship for, the moderate Arab states meaningful, or merely a tactical posture intended to weaken and split the Arab world?
2. What are the global implications—political, strategic, and ideological—of the U.S.-Israeli relationship?
3. Is the U.S.-Israeli partnership primarily a military or a political relationship?
4. Is the U.S.-Israeli partnership strong or fragile? Are altercations between Washington and Jerusalem liable to upset the relationship?
5. To what extent is Israel a mere instrument of U.S. policy? Does Israel respond to U.S. dictates, or does it force the Americans to accept its actions and objectives?
6. What benefits or liabilities accrue to the United States as a result of its partnership with Israel?

Some differences can be found among Soviet commentators in their answers to these questions. In particular, nuances of difference appear regarding both the extent to which Israel is a pawn of the United States and the price paid by the United States for maintenance of the partnership. Elements of consensus by far outweigh elements of discord among Soviet analysts of the U.S.-Israeli partnership, however. Analysts agree that the partnership is central to American Middle East policy, that it has increasingly become a military, not just a political, relationship, and that it has global implications that are threatening to the USSR. They also agree that despite occasional differences of opinion and the diminished popularity of Israel in American public opinion, and despite the U.S. effort to bring "moderate" or "conservative" Arab states into the American orbit, the basic U.S.-Israeli partnership has not been adversely affected, nor is it in danger of suffering any serious setback.
THE U.S.-ISRAELI PARTNERSHIP IN AMERICAN MIDDLE EAST POLICY

For decades Moscow has stressed the United States' close association with the "villain" of the Middle East, accusing Washington of enabling and encouraging Israel to pursue its "policy of aggression" against the Arabs. U.S. efforts to woo "moderate" Arab governments are denounced as entirely tactical, in no way compromising the U.S. commitment to Israel. Accordingly, the Soviets have emphasized the unreliability of the United States as sole mediator between Israel and the Arabs.

One distinctive feature of the Soviet view of the U.S.-Israeli partnership is that it insists that Israel's role is a major factor in the American military-strategic buildup in the Middle East. Another feature, and one that is inseparably linked to this, is the highlighting of the Arab-Israeli conflict as part of the American offensive against the Arab national liberation movement, which means that there is a basic coincidence of interests between the United States and Israel. In this way, since U.S. strategic gains in the Middle East are clearly a reflection of U.S. military power and have meaning for the U.S. stature throughout the world, and since an all-out offensive against the Arab national liberation movement must be interpreted as a negative phenomenon by the entire Third World, the international-diplomatic and military-strategic aspects of the U.S.-Israeli partnership have simultaneously regional, that is, Middle Eastern, and global implications and significance.

The USSR's senior commentator on the Middle Eastern scene, academician Evgenii Primakov (at the time, director of the All-Union Academy of Sciences Institute of Oriental Studies and since appointed director of the even more prestigious Institute of International Relations and World Economy), is very explicit regarding the centrality of Israel in the Middle Eastern policy of the United States. In a study of the Arab-Israeli conflict made in the late 1970s, following Sadat's repudiation of his connections with the USSR and his entry into negotiations with Israel—both direct and with U.S. mediation—Primakov wrote:

The conflict's external causes . . . include the policy of the imperialist states after the Second World War, primarily of the United States of America which has directly backed Israel's policy of expansion and is using the Middle East conflict in its struggle against the region's national liberation forces and world socialism. . . . The two opposing social and political systems [socialism and capitalism] are interested in different outcomes of the conflict because of their class character. Class positions determine which countries directly engaged in the conflict receive aid from the leading countries of the two systems:
the USSR supports the Arab national liberation movement and Arab peoples which are the target of Israel's expansionist policy; the USA backs Israel's rulers, who are pursuing an overall Middle East policy coordinated with world imperialism. (Primakov 1979: 5–6)

True, this purports to be a historical review, yet Soviet historiography is known to reflect the opinions of at least a section of the Soviet establishment at the period of writing (in this case, 1979), while all Soviet publications express attitudes designed to serve current political positions and objectives. The importance of the various research institutes, or even occasionally of certain senior academicians and “scientific workers,” is determined by the standing of the party or governmental bodies to which, and leaders to whom, they are assigned and by which, or whom, their research is initiated. Unquestionably Primakov has the highest party backing, which makes his analysis or interpretation particularly valuable.

Pavel Demchenko, also an old hand in observing and interpreting the Middle Eastern scene, noted in Pravda that Israeli policies coincided with and were a link in Washington's plans for increasing and consolidating its presence in the area. Although it had bases in Egypt, Oman, and Somalia, the United States could not consider these countries "either permanent or long-term" allies because of "socio-political shifts." For this reason, "whatever military agreements it concluded with developing countries," Israel remained for Washington "not simply its main ally but its chief governmental buttress and base in the Near East." This position of superiority in its relationship vis-à-vis the United States enabled Israel both to receive huge amounts of American aid and to undertake adventures against the Arabs.2 Demchenko, in other words, seems to be sticking to the traditional Soviet stance of the inevitable alliance system of the United States and Israel versus the USSR and the Arabs, viewing any apparent movement within it as necessarily temporary and unsatisfactory for all actors. For him there appears to be no real value in trying to assess the advantages or disadvantages, since the array of forces is almost preordained by the socioeconomic and political systems involved.

Another source, a pamphlet published by Znanie, the "public organization" responsible for disseminating political information within the USSR for purposes of oral propaganda, is equally unequivocal regarding the centrality of the U.S.-Israeli partnership in Middle Eastern developments, although Znanie's clearly defined goals almost necessitate the laying of different emphases. (The specific objectives of a given publication as well as its presumed audience seem to provide important guidance to understanding differences of approach between
different sources.) The pamphlet, written by one Eduard Batumin in 1985, states:

Israel has been and remains the main instrument for implementing the USA's aggressive policy in the Near East. It plays the role of imperialism's shock force in the struggle against the Arab national liberation movement. Therefore, Washington helps to strengthen Israel's military power in every possible way and encourages Israel's ruling circles to unleash new military provocations and adventures against the Arab states.

Israel's significance as an American bridgehead, according to this source, had grown "in recent years in connection with the increase in American imperialism's expansion in the region." By the time of the fall 1981 Memorandum of Understanding for Strategic Cooperation, the Israeli government committed itself to letting the Pentagon use military bases and airfields on Israeli territory and to installing arms and equipment designed for the U.S. Rapid Deployment Force. In this way Israel became an American base "directed against the Soviet Union and all those countries of the Near East, the Persian Gulf and Africa which do not march in the course of Washington's policies." Similar comment appeared in the Soviet media at the time of the conclusion of the memorandum. For instance, an article on this event and its implications by one of the most senior of the old hands observing the Middle East scene, Igor Beliaev, was significantly entitled: "Israel: Setting Hopes on War against the Soviet Union."

In other words, cooperation between Washington and Jerusalem is the inevitable outcome of the two basic "directions" of American Middle East policy, "one directed against the Soviet Union and the other aimed at confining and eliminating the Arab national liberation movement" (Primakov 1979: 144). This dual goal of the U.S.-Israeli partnership characterized both the pre- and the post-Camp David period.

Following Sadat's November 1977 trip to Jerusalem, there was a great deal of talk in the United States of "balancing' the American position," but Primakov insisted this in no way entailed an impartial approach to Israel. Both the administration and the press "continued to accent the 'special' relations." The "Egyptian-Israeli deal" worked out at Camp David, including the peace treaty, provided "maximum satisfaction to Israeli expansionist policy" (Primakov 1979: 282-83, 288).

In an article under the heading "Anatomy of Treachery," Izvestiia commentator Aleksandr Bovin insisted that American Middle East policy was motivated by the conviction that the region was important
for the United States from at least two points of view: the geopolitical, that is, the proximity to the Soviet Union, and the economic, namely oil. Therefore, the United States sought to limit Soviet influence as much as possible and to control the sources of the area’s oil. In the opinion of Washington’s strategists, the continuation of the Middle East conflict was fraught with danger from both perspectives, and so it was necessary to stabilize the situation in a way that would answer U.S. interests. This was the general strategic setting. The tactics consisted of putting out feelers toward the weak link in the chain of the Arab states opposing Israel, namely Egypt. Coming to an understanding with Sadat, the Americans killed two birds with one stone: they created the appearance of a balanced position between Israel and the Arabs and enabled Israel to break through the ring of isolation that surrounded it. For the United States the Egyptian-Israeli settlement was a first step toward forming an axis of “moderate” pro-Western states in the Middle East and its periphery, as compensation for the loss of Iran and the disintegration of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO).5

Writing toward the end of Reagan’s first administration in a book entitled History of a Deal: The USA’s Middle Eastern Policy in the 1970s and Early 1980s, the head of the Institute of Oriental Studies continued to describe the U.S.-Israeli relationship in a similar vein. Despite the United States’ apparent evenhandedness between Egypt and Israel, its basic orientation remained pro-Israel (Primakov 1985: 137, 141). The entire Camp David “deal” was a ruse intended primarily to strengthen the American position in the Middle East without changing the rudiments of U.S. policy in the region. The United States consistently undermined initiatives that might lead to a settlement on a comprehensive basis and that took into consideration the interests of all the peoples of the area, including the Palestinians. Washington devised a formula for a quasi solution to the Palestinian problem that deprived the Palestinian people of the right of self-determination and the right of establishing a sovereign national state.

The “new model” the United States sought to elaborate for the “coexistence” of the Palestinians and Israel stood in sharp contrast to the Palestinians’ own constructive line toward a settlement. While the Arab plan for a settlement was adopted “unanimously” at the Fez conference of heads of Arab states in September 1982 (at which Egypt and Libya were not present), the United States proceeded with the Reagan plan.6 Washington’s strategic approach became clear with the refusal to pressure Israel, which, simultaneously, presented to the Arab states and the Palestinians a virtual ultimatum to the effect that they either accept the Reagan plan or agree to Israel’s annexation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In condoning this ultimatum the United States was giving concrete expression to its desire not to let the
Arab world unite around the common platform of a just settlement of the Middle Eastern conflict (Primakov 1985: 291), or, in the words of Batumin in the above-mentioned Znanie pamphlet:

The further increase in American aid to Israel and the continuing rapprochement of American imperialism and Zionism delay even further the just settlement of the Near East conflict and help activate the expansionist foreign policy of Tel Aviv’s ruling circles. (1985: 4)

The conclusion of a U.S.-Israeli agreement of “strategic cooperation” in December 1983 demonstrated finally, in Primakov’s view, that the garb of “impartiality” with which U.S. Middle Eastern policy had adorned itself for the past decade had been discarded. The 1981 Memorandum of Agreement had been frozen upon Israel’s decision to annex the Golan Heights, not because Washington “dissociated itself morally’ from Israel’s undisguised expansionism” but because the United States was apprehensive that an association with Israel in “such a tense period when hopes existed for a success of U.S. policy in the Arab world would unhinge its ‘game’.” By late 1983 the international community had digested the annexation, and it was no longer considered an obstacle to “formalizing the closest military ties with Israel” (Primakov 1985: 141–43).

As a result of the apparent differences between Washington and Jerusalem and the resultant tactical American attempt to extend its influence in the Arab world, U.S. policy was often characterized by “hypocrisy.” Thus Washington at one and the same time sought to impose a capitulatory peace agreement on Lebanon (and to achieve this endeavored to persuade President Gemayel that it would attain an Israeli troop withdrawal within three months), and signed a secret agreement with Israel that any measures the latter might take to ensure its security beyond its borders would not evoke American dissatisfaction. An American official clarified that Israel could retain troops in Lebanon as long as Syrian and PLO troops were not withdrawn; the administration announced that it was lifting its embargo on 75 F-16 fighter planes, which was supposed to have continued until the final withdrawal of Israeli troops, supplying new technology for the production of the Lavi, and increasing economic aid (Batumin 1985: 56–57).

The strategic alliance of American imperialism and Zionism led to measures that exceeded the limits of bilateral relations in the narrow sense, but were, rather, directly anti-Arab. V. Viktorov in International Affairs saw in the coordinated “military operations against the Arabs” proof that the U.S.-Israeli strategic cooperation had been “raised to a qualitatively new level” (Viktorov 1985: 102–6).
In view of Israel’s inability to carry on large-scale military activity on a number of fronts, Batumin wrote that the United States, and the other imperialist powers, helped to broaden differences of opinion within and among the Arab countries. Both the Camp David “deal” and the Lebanese events, in which Israel supported reactionary, rightist Christian forces in their struggle against the PLO and the local national liberation movement, were striking examples of this argument (1985: 24).

The American disposition to undermine Arab unity was, unquestionably, the corollary of the declared Soviet position of protagonist of a united Arab world. In 1979 the Arab world had, at least verbally, unanimously condemned the Camp David deal, and Egypt was isolated after signing the peace treaty with Israel, A. Kislov wrote in SShA. Yet this united front was breached to such an extent in the ensuing period that the Arab world was unable to overcome its internal dissensions even during the heroic defense of Western Beirut by the Palestinians and the Lebanese national patriotic forces. The main cause for this cleavage, according to Kislov, was the Iran-Iraq War which, indeed, the United States had put considerable effort into unleashing; his cleavage received expression in two main contexts. (1) During the Arab-Israeli conflict not only did Iraq stop participating in the anti-Israel front, but also the attention of other Arab states, especially in the Persian Gulf, was diverted first and foremost to the Gulf war, and the task of resisting the Israeli aggression and supporting the just cause of the Arab people of Palestine moved into the background; and (2) Regarding divergent Arab attitudes toward Camp David and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty, Iraq, which had played a central part in the opposition to Camp David in 1978 and 1979, now propagated a rapprochement with Egypt on Cairo’s terms, that is, on a platform of a factual rejection of real opposition to Camp David or, at least, its Egyptian-Israeli part, and was joined in this by the conservative Arab regimes. (It is surely noteworthy that Kislov, like Primakov, makes a distinction between the two parts of the Camp David agreements, shows a willingness to come to terms with their Egyptian-Israeli aspect, and reserves opposition to the issue of Palestinian rights, as will be discussed below.) Washington, according to Kislov, welcomed the serious split in the Arab world as it had long been directed toward isolating Arab progressive forces in order to undermine them (1983: 18–26).

Thus, Soviet observers as divergent in their functions as Primakov, Bovin, Batumin, and others converge during the years under review in their view that Israel is central to achieving U.S. goals in the Middle East, and in their view that American relations with “moderate” Arab regimes are tactical, not strategic.
GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

Primakov and others who deal with the practical aspects of Middle Eastern developments are less concerned with ideological bombast. Many other commentators, however, emphasize precisely the ostensibly global implications of the U.S.-Israeli partnership, often by coupling U.S. imperialism and international Zionism as two of the USSR's—and humanity's—most persistent and intractable adversaries. This is characteristic of the Znanie pamphlet by Batumin, designed for party propagandists who are supposed to explain Soviet policies to the Soviet public. It can also be found in an article by Lev Korneev, who writes in the daily newspaper of the Ministry of Defense:

International Zionism has become the most dangerous weapon of world reaction and above all, of US imperialism. Its aggressive, misanthropic essence, and its ideological and political practice, represent a real threat not only to the Arab peoples but to all humanity.7

A book entitled Zionism—The Enemy of Peace and Social Progress describes that ideology as one of racism and hatred toward all nations, and goes on to describe how the geopolitical plans of expansion that permeate the legislative and political-diplomatic practices of the State of Israel turned it into an outpost of international imperialism and an instrument of aggression, apartheid, and genocide. Zionism faced the court of history as an "anti-communist, chauvinist and racist doctrine and a criminal policy, both of which are doomed" (Berenshtein 1984).

The totality of the ideological convergence was manifest in the international arena as a whole. According to B. Iamilinets in his article entitled "The Special Traits of the Development of Capitalism in Israel":

The significance of the State of Israel in the development of the contemporary international situation and its role in the Near East [has] no correlation to the dimensions of its territory, the size of its population and resources. This arose, first from the close bond of Israel's ruling circles with the leading imperialist powers, and secondly from the specific place which its government fills in the general imperialist system. Political factors, and most importantly the inclusion of Israel in the global politics of American imperialism, have been decisive in the rise and development of Israel. The essence of the policy of its ruling circles and of international Zionism as two parts of a single entity have become manifestly apparent in anti-Sovietism and neocolonialism and the struggle, including armed conflict, against the national-liberation movements of the peoples of the Near and Middle East. . . . Israel
actively safeguards imperialist interests in the developing countries. . . . Relying on the consistent and ever-increasing aid of American imperialism, and of other imperialist powers, Israel is, at the same time, like the small capitalist countries, part of the imperialist section of the world. The special connection with the United States, on the one hand, and with international Zionism, on the other, determined the expansionist, militarist, racist and discriminatory nature of Israel's policies, and enabled its government to give priority to politics over economics to a degree which no other state is able to do. (Iamilinets 1980: 125–35)

The ideological proximity, or identity, led to Israel's participation in the United States propaganda warfare against the Soviet Union. According to K. Geivandov, Washington decided to activate Israel increasingly in its ideological struggle against the USSR. In this context Reagan had approached Peres personally to agree to setting up powerful transmitter stations for the Voice of America and Radio Liberty, which was a project of major significance. Geivandov noted Communications Minister Amnon Rubinstein’s comment that Israel’s economic position was such that it could not reply negatively to any concrete request from Washington.8 V. Bol’shakov, commenting in Pravda on Israel's consenting to locate Voice of America transmitters on Israeli territory, said that such cooperation had a long history. Israel had already in the past supplied “disinformation” to Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe; moreover, it spread lies through the Voice of Israel about the “persecution of Jews” in the USSR.9

D. Volsky, at the time one of the associate editors of New Times, insists that “U.S.-Israeli expansion, the alliance of imperialism and Zionism, and the neocolonial designs” were in fact the cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict and points out that Israel’s “ruling bourgeoisie . . . is closely connected with Western and above all American monopoly capital.”10 A book on Israel that discusses the “fusion” of U.S. and Israeli “military complexes and their common entry into the system of death monopolies” noted that Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, “controlled by the financial pillar of Zionism, the bank of the Lazars,” was the most “vivid embodiment” of this view (Stefankin 1984: 37).

V. Bol’shakov writes in Pravda, in an article called “The Protectors of the Terrorists: How the U.S.-Israeli Axis Operates,” that one of the real reasons for the United States' “uncompromising support” of Israeli aggression is that the interests of American imperialism and international Zionism (in whose system, as is known, the State of Israel became firmly integrated from the moment of its foundation) are closely interlaced. The millionaires of
Jewish origin who, as a rule, both head the Zionist organizations in the USA and comprise the leadership of the central organs of international Zionism, occupy a strong position in the American military-industrial complex and in banking as well as controlling much of the media and, as has been clearly shown, the economy of Israel. In the interests of international Zionism and in its own, Zionist capital has created a global network of influence on political, government and public bodies in the USA and other capitalist countries. Thus, the leading detachment of the Zionist lobby, the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), disposes of more than 250,000 permanent and temporary “pushers.” Under AIPAC’s aegis are seventy-five committees of political activity, specific lobby organizations, which are occupied in influencing U.S. congressmen, government institutions and political parties. . . . This lobby forces official Washington invariably to stand at the side of the Israeli aggressors even when their actions were directly opposed to the U.S. national interest.11

Soviet ideologists give examples of how Israel facilitates aggressive U.S. policy in different regions of the Third World. Thus, Washington is said to be using Israel to supply weapons to those reactionary regimes in Latin America that it deems impossible to equip directly because of public protest (Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile, Paraguay).12 Both the Znanie pamphlet and I. Devin, writing in International Affairs, suggest that in this way the United States helps Israel expand its own arms market. According to Devin, Israel “is given pride of place” in the imperialist strategy of suppressing national liberation movements in Central America, where Washington uses it as a “cat’s paw in its venturesome acts of aggression.”13 Israel’s role is not necessarily limited to the supply of arms; it includes other fields as well, such as setting up and training security forces in Honduras.14 The spread of Israeli influence in Africa, specifically, again, in the realm of building up national armies and security forces (in Somalia, Zaire, and the Republic of South Africa), is likewise linked by a Soviet commentator to the United States.15

POLITICAL OR MILITARY PARTNERSHIP?

As to our question of whether the U.S.-Israeli partnership is seen in the Soviet Union as primarily a political or a military one, the general tendency seems to be to see it as basically political, but as having acquired under Reagan a major military dimension. Along with the U.S. departure from détente in the late 1970s, American Middle East policy was said to have become increasingly militarized. From the time of his advent to power President Reagan stirred up the Arab-Israeli
conflict, among others, by "globalizing" it. Not only had the United States sought to set aside all those issues, however burning, which were unacceptable to Israel—such as the Palestinian question, without the solution of which any settlement or stabilization of the Middle Eastern situation was "unthinkable"—but Washington also accompanied its political activity in the region by measures to build up its own military strength there (Primakov 1985: 122–37, 141–43).

The American administration's declaration that it was accommodating its Middle Eastern policy to the requirements of its general, universal confrontation with the Soviet Union, Primakov argues, was, among other things, a diversionary tactic in that it was used to "explain" to the Arab states that they had nothing to fear from the agreement with Israel, which was aimed not against them but against the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, together with its anti-Soviet essence, the U.S.-Israeli strategic alliance comprised a powerful stimulus for activating Israel's anti-Arab and particularly anti-Syrian plans.16

The proof of this argumentation was the invasion of Lebanon in June 1982, the Peace-for-Galilee operation. As of the summer of the previous year Soviet sources said Israel's actions against Lebanon were taken in conjunction with the United States. The Soviet press censured the Americans for alleged complicity in bombing Beirut in July 1981, Washington, in the words of Sovetskaia Rossiia's Gennadii Musaelian, being "the godfather of contemporary international terrorism."17 Or, in the words of Krasnaia zvezda, "the advent to the White House of the new boss, who has adopted a policy of open confrontation and of exacerbating the situation on a global scale, has allowed the Israeli leadership to intensify further its brigandage on a global scale."18

A TASS statement published on June 9, 1982, declared that the new Israeli aggression was undoubtedly undertaken with the agreement and support of Washington which has armed Israel to the teeth and in its policy instigates it to the conduct of criminal anti-Arab actions. The attack on Lebanon is a direct result of the Camp David deal and the American-Israeli strategic co-operation.19

A. Kislov of the Institute of the USA and Canada, like Primakov, insisted that "the roots of the Lebanese tragedy" lay in the Camp David accords. Washington had given Israel the "green light," in his words, because (1) Washington appreciated that in view of the splintering of the Arab world and the surplus of oil in the world market, there was no fear of any anti-Israeli, let alone anti-imperialist, reaction in the Arab countries (such as had been demonstrated by the 1973 oil boycott); (2) with the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai, which completed the implementation of that part of the Camp David
agreements that concerned Egyptian-Israeli relations and neutralized Egypt, everything that was important to the United States had been wrung from the agreements. The part of the Camp David accords that involves Palestinian autonomy on U.S.-Israeli conditions lacked any serious prospects for progress and so Washington decided to try to solve the problem unilaterally with Israel's help; and (3) in untying Israel's hands and simultaneously creating a crisis situation in the Middle East, Washington hoped to become chief arbiter in attempts to achieve a political settlement on American terms (Kislov 1983).

In this way, Soviet commentators generally agreed that Washington bore full responsibility for the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the "genocide" committed there by the "Israeli warmachine." This was not an indirect or limited responsibility emanating merely from the supply of the material basis that made the invasion possible, in that the United States "armed Israel to the teeth"; Israel's "crimes" against the Lebanese and Palestinian population were actually discussed and agreed upon in a series of meetings with American leaders and officials. Nor was this direct American responsibility in any way mitigated by the President's dismissal of Secretary Alexander Haig or by Washington's reservations regarding the occupation of Beirut, as was shown by the pattern of American voting at the UN Security Council. The U.S. delegation not only vetoed a proposal for a cease-fire; but also an analysis of U.S. behavior in the international arena left no doubt that U.S. policy sought to give freedom of action to the aggressor (Kislov 1983; Primakov 1985: 215–16, 267–69).

Other Soviet sources emphasized different aspects of American support for Israel in this same general context, but their sense was basically similar. Batumin, for instance, noted Washington's support for the "insolent demands" of its "strategic ally" concerning the creation of a security zone in southern Lebanon, the withdrawal of Syrian troops from that country, and the liquidation of the PLO infrastructure in areas under Israeli control. Washington's emissaries, who began to make frequent visits to the Middle East, as it were for mediating, peacemaking missions, sought to apply pressure on the Lebanese authorities and the PLO leadership to capitulate to the Israelis (Batumin 1985: 53–56).

One of the major features of the military aspect of U.S. activity in connection with Lebanon was the landing of U.S. Marines in Lebanon, for which various reasons were given. According to some commentators, including Primakov, it was motivated by the desire to tie Lebanon to a separate peace treaty with Israel, as happened in May 1983 (Primakov 1985: 302). An unsigned editorial article in Pravda suggested that the United States, which had hitherto refrained from becoming so actively and directly involved in an armed conflict
in the region, together with Zionism in this way sought to implement
its extensive plot to split the Arab world, to deepen its differences of
opinion, in order to dominate the area.\textsuperscript{20}

On the issue of U.S. military supplies to Israel, Batumin wrote that
by agreements between the two countries on the exchange of “scientific
technological information necessary for elaborating and modernizing
the entire complex of military systems” (including control systems,
radio electronics, and air-to-air and ground-to-ground missiles), Israel
received everything it needed without limitation—at a time when
Washington, “out of considerations of military secrecy,” imposed
restricting provisos on its NATO allies in the field of transmitting
sophisticated technology (1985: 4).

Kislov, too, talked of Lebanon becoming an arena for trying out the
most up-to-date American weaponry, with which Israel was equipped,
in conditions of actual war: electronic devices, planes, control systems,
rockets, and other instruments of “mass annihilation.” He also stressed
what he considered no less dangerous—the introduction into Lebanon
of the so-called multinational force that was in fact a subdivision of the
armies of the NATO countries, in which the U.S. Marines played the
role of first fiddle. This would turn Lebanon into a NATO base with
all the implications of such a development (1983).

The coordination of U.S.-Israeli policy was said to include the
actual fusion of the two systems and cooperation in the field of nuclear
weaponry. Reacting to the 1981 Memorandum of Understanding, Soviet
commentators noted “new and dangerous” elements. They said that
the agreement envisioned “military integration” and contained secret
clauses.\textsuperscript{21} The Soviet media noted the frequent visits to Israel of the
U.S. nuclear physicist Edward Teller.\textsuperscript{22} One senior commentator on the
Middle East, Igor Beliaev, pointed out that the United States turned
a blind eye on Israel’s dubious methods of developing its nuclear
capacity. In his view Israel’s possession of a nuclear arsenal, which
he called a main instrument for achieving an “American peace” in the
Middle East, was a danger not only to the Arab world but also to the
Soviet Union and world peace.\textsuperscript{23}

The Soviet reaction to Israel’s acceptance of Washington’s invi-
tation to participate in research connected with its Strategic Defense
Initiative (SDI) program was similarly sharp. Already, prior to any
official acquiescence by the Israeli government, Soviet comment con-
strued Prime Minister Peres’s October 1985 visit to the United States
as indicating compliance with the American proposition.\textsuperscript{24} Once
Israel published its positive decision, in March 1986, it was pointed
out by V. Lashkul in Izvestiia that Israel’s inclusion in the pro-
ject would give Israel a “‘cosmic shield’ against any ‘missile
threat’” from its Arab neighbors.\textsuperscript{25} According to Colonel F. Nikolaev
in the Ministry of Defense newspaper, *Krasnaia zvezda*, the Reagan administration hoped by inviting Israeli participation to win the support for SDI of "international Zionist capital" and Israel's friends in the United States, particularly in Congress and in the Jewish community. He pointed out that Israel's participation would give Israel access to the latest American technological achievements and strengthen its defense capability. Eventually, in May, the Finnish Foreign Ministry transmitted an official Soviet government statement condemning the move as aggravating world tension and further removing chances for a Middle East settlement. Having explained Israel's response as emanating from a desire to obtain a supplementary military budget, to increase U.S.-Israeli strategic cooperation, and to improve "the Zionist state's" military potential so as to be able to continue its aggressive policy against the Arabs, Moscow's Radio Peace and Progress remarked in one of its Arabic broadcasts that the areas situated close to the control and surveillance centers of space weaponry, which, it seemed, would be situated in either Israel or the Indian Ocean, would be subject to a nuclear counterstrike. Only when discussing Israel's participation in SDI did the Soviet media mention the possibility of the outbreak of "all-out" war and a resultant nuclear catastrophe.

The Soviet media were invariably quick to react to American grants of military aid to Israel. Visits to the United States of senior Israeli military and defense ministry officials were always the subject of media extrapolation. One correspondent, writing in *Izvestiia*, said that whereas Arab countries had to pay for U.S. weaponry, Israel received arms free of charge. This, he insisted, meant that Arabs who purchased American arms helped finance the increase in the military power of Washington's strategic ally in the region.

Nor was Israel's military cooperation with the United States restricted to the purchase of arms or scientific research, or in fact to the Middle Eastern heartland arena; according to some, it included active participation in American naval and military exercises in preparation for scenarios involving U.S. intervention. Among other roles, Israel was said to be playing a role in the activities of the U.S. Rapid Deployment Force (RDF), together with a number of Arab states (Egypt, Somalia, Oman). As tension mounted in late 1985 and early 1986 between the United States and Libya, the Soviets stressed Israel's synchronization of maneuvers to coincide with U.S. threats against President Qaddafi. In January 1986 a TASS statement on U.S. threats and preparations for military action condemned the "American and Israeli anti-Libya campaign"; the Israelis were widely said to have welcomed the American invitation to strike at Libya. A few comments actually suggested that the attacks at airports in
Vienna and Rome in late December 1985 were provocations designed to provide the United States and Israel with an excuse to "whip up" terrorism against Libya, the traces of which, indeed, led to the CIA and the Mossad. These two intelligence services were also said to have cooperated in "Operation Moses," which illegally transported to Israel "Ethiopians of the Jewish religion." After the actual attacks on Libya in March and April, Israel was said to have furnished the Americans with a considerable part of the requisite intelligence information; and once more it was suggested that the Americans and Israelis were planning terrorist acts in Europe that would be ascribed to Libya and would offer a pretext for a further attack.

American-Israeli collaboration in the field of intelligence had a number of important ramifications. According to Soviet commentators, the Americans unquestionably knew of Israel's preparations for the raid against the Iraqi nuclear reactor in June 1981, because the extremely close relations between the two states included "the special services." Moreover, the Americans were already operating the first batch of Airborne Warning & Control System (AWACS) intelligence aircraft given to Saudi Arabia and therefore they must have detected the F-15s and F-16s as they flew over that country. Yet no Americans anywhere took any steps whatsoever to intercept their flight. Admittedly, when the Arabs, including some of the United States' friends, together with other members of the international community, reacted negatively to the "piratical attack," Washington joined the chorus of critics and the president demonstratively suspended the supply of fighter planes to Israel. But "the dust quickly let up," the planes were delivered, and no more was heard of any collision on this score.

In 1985, again, when Israeli planes attacked PLO targets in Tunisia, the Soviet media had no doubts about American collusion. The sophisticated radar-tracking system of the Sixth Fleet must have been aware that the planes were passing overhead en route to Tunisia. U.S. capabilities in shadowing aircraft were not in doubt. (This was obviously a reference to the interception of the Egyptian plane carrying the Achille Lauro hijackers.) If, therefore, the Israelis were not hindered, this pointed to U.S. complicity in the raid.

This cooperation between the two countries was also said to be at the root of the deteriorating Syrian-Israeli situation in the late spring of 1986. A well-known commentator, T. Kolesnichenko, said in Pravda that the United States was the chief force behind the mounting tensions between Israel and its northern neighbor. Yet, while U.S. and NATO intervention was not to be ruled out if the situation required it, Israel would be the strike force. The purpose of this activity was to bring about a change in Syria's leadership and overturn the country's political structure. The United States did not wish to risk
losses such as it had incurred when it attacked the Syrian army in Lebanon (in late 1983) or to damage its position in the Arab world. Israel, with nothing to lose in the latter arena, was the obvious choice for Washington.43

HOW STRONG IS THE PARTNERSHIP?

Concerning the degree to which U.S. and Israeli interests were identical, the general tendency of Soviet commentators is, in fact, to see the interests of the two nations as extremely close. On the level of ideology two topics seem especially relevant. One topic concerns the nature of the regimes involved, that is, the proximity of the sociopolitical worldview of the USSR and the Arab countries, on the one hand, and of the United States and Israel, on the other, to which we have already referred. The other topic is Soviet Jewry. In particular, the ideological connection between the United States and Israel brought the two countries into direct confrontation with the USSR over the issue of Soviet Jewish emigration—although the gates were virtually closed between 1981 and 1986—which was the direct or indirect topic of a plethora of Soviet media items. The journal of the Main Political Administration (MPA), (the CPSU Central Committee department responsible for party activity and political indoctrination in the armed forces), in 1985 dwelt on the great “appetite” of the CIA whose “local intelligence organs” asked “former Soviet citizens of Jewish nationality who have emigrated to the USA or Israel to fill in a long questionnaire,” in which over 150 questions were “assigned solely to information on the USSR’s armed forces.”44 Many other articles in a host of newspapers described Zionist attempts to entice Soviet Jews into leaving their Soviet motherland against their better interest. (These articles have been discussed elsewhere and cannot be examined here.)45

On the more practical level, many of Israel’s goals in Lebanon were described by both Kislov and Primakov as identical to U.S. goals:

1. Both countries sought to destroy the PLO, which had created a serious problem for U.S. policy, since on the one hand, it had strengthened its international position specifically among the Americans’ “leading partner-rivals,” Japan and Western Europe, and, on the other hand, the “certain relations” the United States itself had with the PLO had become a hindrance to the strategic alliance with Israel and created domestic political difficulties for the administration;
2. Both sought to weaken Syria, which was playing an increasingly active role in the struggle against Israeli expansionism and American interference in the affairs of Middle Eastern states;

3. The United States and Israel aspired to "stabilize" the Lebanese situation under Phalangist leadership and neutralize the force of the Palestinian opposition and of the Syrians in Lebanon;

4. Both countries were interested in "creating conditions for extending the frontiers of the permanent American military presence in the region." After American airborne troops became the backbone of the international force in the Sinai in accordance with the Camp David agreements, Southern Lebanon could be designated as the next zone for billeting American military units (Israel would be interested in substituting American troops for UN troops); and

5. The two countries wanted to continue the Camp David process. Israel considered Lebanon the second Arab state that, after some domestic changes, would be ready to sign a separate treaty with Israel (Primakov 1985: 256–57; Kislov 1983).

Writing at the time of the Lausanne Conference in the spring of 1984, Aleksandr Bovin stated that "both for Tel Aviv and Washington a stable Lebanon is acceptable only if it is pro-Israeli and pro-American. If not, then chaos, confusion and civil war are preferable." These three conditions would make it simpler to consolidate their positions and remain in occupied Lebanese territory, and to find reasons for intervention.46

True, there were interests that did not coincide. Primakov, who mentioned differences between Israel and the United States in an earlier context (see above), made clear that regarding Lebanon, these differences were not the result of a negative American position on the Israeli aggression, but of Washington's desire for a broader role in the Middle East in order to strengthen its standing in the Arab world and put an end to disagreement with its West European allies who were likewise maneuvering in the area. Specifically, the divergent interests centered on Israeli plans for (1) carrying out a "final solution" to the Palestinian problem by ousting all Palestinians from Lebanon and preparing a blow against Jordan along lines similar to that conducted against Lebanon, and (2) annexing southern Lebanon. There were also differences of opinion on "the extent of the Israeli operation," notably on the occupation of Beirut, yet these were the
result of tactical, not strategic, discords. The differing interests were not sufficiently meaningful to bring about a collision between the United States and Israel, nor did they predominate in the American-Israeli relationship; they were overcome whenever it was necessary to rescue Israel from the criticism of world opinion or to neutralize attempts to organize sanctions against Israel (Primakov 1985: 259, 261).

Of those writing at the time of the Peace-for-Galilee operation, Bovin also dwelt upon the different U.S. and Israeli positions.

In principle, the Americans would like to reconcile Israel with the so-called ‘moderate’ states, probably on an anti-Soviet basis—Washington therefore opposes Begin’s extreme militancy which alienates the Arabs from Israel and confuses the entire anti-Soviet game.47

Other commentators also noted that both sides sometimes took steps that were manifestly not welcomed by the other. Izvestiia’s political observer, S. Kondrashov, for instance, wrote in an article called “Lessons of Sabra and Shatila” that Begin and Sharon took their “American tutors” less and less into account, believing that “with the intercession of the very powerful Zionist lobby they can get away with it.”48 B. Iamilinets, writing two years earlier in Narody Azii i Afriki, tended rather to envisage the difficulties between the two partners as originating in a basic problem in the American conception of its foreign policy goals, specifically that the Western bourgeois monopolies were “more interested in the capacious markets of the Arab countries” and in Arab oil than in the Israeli market (1980: 125–35). In fact, the disparity between Bovin and Primakov hardly seems crucial, since both attribute differences to mere tactics. This is all the truer when their opinions are seen against the analysis of the last two commentators who consider divergences infinitely more fundamental.

There were other examples of discrepancies between the two partners that could not be ignored by Soviet observers of the Middle East scene. On the whole, however, they were not taken seriously. We have seen Primakov’s explanation of the freezing of the 1981 Memorandum of Agreement. An unsigned article, that is, an editorial in Pravda, described the negative Israeli reaction to the Reagan plan similarly, as “a crude game of the aggressor and his patron.”49 Two commentators writing in Pravda, A. Vasil’ev and Iu. Glukhov, likewise spoke of Washington’s farcical disapproval of the annexation of the Golan Heights.50 Similarly, discussion of the Pollard spy scandal was virtually unanimous in the view that the scandal would not be allowed to disturb the U.S.-Israeli relationship. V. Gan, in Pravda in December 1985, wrote that the administration was endeavoring to distract public
opinion from Pollard by whipping up an anti-Soviet campaign (the allusion is presumably to the Soviet spy stories that shook the United States at this time). V. Vinogradov in the Ministry of Defense organ, Krasnaia zvezda, noted that after an investigative team visited Israel, the two countries resumed normal relations including cooperation in the field of intelligence.

In sum, the nuanced differences in perceptions of the identity of U.S. and Israeli interests did not overshadow the basic consensus that the U.S.-Israeli partnership was likely to remain stable and strong.

HOW HIERARCHICAL IS THE RELATIONSHIP?

Our fifth question is one on which, indeed, there are two opposing views in Soviet publications. The issue concerns the extent to which Israeli policy is the fulfillment of American diktat or, alternatively, actually influences U.S. policy. Some commentators see U.S.-Israeli military cooperation in the Middle East as a product of U.S. diktat. As we have seen, too, several observers who discuss Israeli assistance to U.S. military policy in Latin America and Africa likewise see Israel as basically an American tool (see above).

Israel’s importance in fulfilling U.S. policy assignments, and in particular its position as a U.S. bridgehead in the Middle East, meant that Washington had a very fundamental interest that Israel be strong both currently and in the future. This presupposed, in addition to military prowess, economic viability, which was the reason the Americans had a commitment to supplying their regional ally with large-scale economic, as well as military, assistance (Batumin 1985: 11). The media periodically reported U.S. promises to increase financial aid to Israel. According to one source, V. Viktorov writing in International Affairs, this economic assistance was designed to help Israel “carry out its gendarme functions in the fight against the Arab national liberation movement” (Viktorov 1985: 102–6).

Despite Soviet reservations concerning the mission of President Reagan’s special envoy, Philip Habib, Brezhnev’s July 8, 1982, appeal to Reagan for the United States “to do everything in its power to halt the Israeli aggression and to see to it that the activities of the USA and its emissary . . . do not serve as a smokescreen for Israeli aggression and the destruction of the Arab people of Palestine” seemed to indicate Soviet recognition of the American position vis-à-vis the parties concerned and the special responsibility, and perhaps ability, of the United States to negotiate a Lebanese settlement. Even if this attitude emanated from a belief that such an assignment was not in fact implementable and therefore must, perforce, lead to U.S. blunders from
which Moscow would necessarily benefit, it entailed at least a tacit recognition of the tactical and diplomatic advantages resulting from the U.S. relationship with Israel. A solitary reservation concerning the actual right of the United States to mediate was voiced in Izvestiia by K. Geivandov early in August 1982.56

The sense of American Middle East policy, as borne out by Habib's mission, can—in Primakov’s opinion—be summed up as unequivocal strategic support of Israel and, simultaneously, an endeavor to extend American positions in the Arab world by both consolidating relations with conservative Arab leaders and searching for new contacts with the nationalist leadership. This probing was inherently contradictory in view of the fact that Israel was in confrontation with the entire Arab world, including its conservative sector. The United States tried to solve this contradiction by bringing about a rapprochement under its aegis of Israel and the conservative Arab regimes. The success of such an effort presupposed that somehow the Camp David process had not become blocked or that some parallel process of “political settlement” could be initiated. In the circumstances, and bearing in mind the priority that Washington stringently gave to its ties with Israel, such a “settlement” would naturally have to satisfy Israel’s expansionist ambitions, at least in part. At the same time, in order to consolidate the American position in the Arab world it was necessary for Washington to promise something to the Arabs as well (Primakov 1985: 273–75).

Batumin, too, took an intermediate position on this issue, which was that the United States had first of all its own interests, yet could not ignore those of Israel; thus these interests sometimes forced Washington to operate against its own better sense or even in direct opposition to its wishes. He noted Washington’s support for the “insolent demands” of its “strategic ally” concerning the creation of a security zone in southern Lebanon, the withdrawal of Syrian troops from that country, and the liquidation of the PLO infrastructure in areas under Israeli control. Therefore, through its various emissaries who began constant visits to the Middle East, as it were for peacemaking missions, Washington had to endeavor to apply pressure on the Lebanese authorities and the PLO leadership to capitulate to the Israelis (Batumin 1985: 53–56).

We have already seen reactions to American reservations regarding the annexation of the Golan Heights and the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor. The general sense was that these reservations were a farce necessitated by U.S. hopes to retain and win over friends in the Arab countries. V. Sisnev, a Trud political observer, went so far as to say, in the context of the Golan Law, that Washington was a “prisoner” whose interests are ignored and disparaged by the unpredictable acts
of the Israeli government. Bovin quotes King Hussein as saying that the United States had "lost its freedom of action and [was] in a position to act only within the confines of what the Zionists and the State of Israel allow," while, as we have noted, Bol'shakov in Pravda noted that the Washington Zionist lobby sometimes committed the U.S. administration to side with Israel even when Israel acted in opposition to the American national interest (see above). One seems to be able to discern a hint of understanding for the American predicament, probably a projection of similar Soviet experiences with Arab allies, in remarks about the ability of a small country to hold sway over its superpower patron. In the case of the U.S.-Israeli relationship this phenomenon was explained as being a result of the influence of Zionists in both American politics and the American economy, and by Zionist control of the press, which protested loudly at attempts to pull Israel into line. Over the years, Sisnev argued, the Zionists had succeeded in creating the impression that American and Israeli interests were identical. In fact, however, Israel's awareness of its irreplaceability for the U.S. administration (and again one can sense a peculiar empathy for the Americans) led Israeli leaders to "undertake extremist steps even when they were liable to harm their ally's political game." One rather more sophisticated article, written by observers of the American scene working at the Institute of the USA and Canada, expressed the opinion that both the Zionist lobby and general support for Israel in the American public were on the decline, particularly among the left wing, which had traditionally upheld Israel, and even among the Presidents' Conference of Major Jewish Organizations. They attributed this tendency to Israeli adventurism. Yet they, too, agreed that Israel's rulers retained "a key position" in American plans for "creating an anti-Soviet 'strategic consensus' in the Near East." Washington had no intention of retracting its support for Israel's "aggressive course." The Reagan administration's policy of "diversifying its clientele" in the region, of consolidating its ties with "the pro-American regimes in Egypt and Saudi Arabia," did not mean that these countries were to be substitutes for Israel, but rather that they were to take their place alongside it (Osipova and Rogov 1982: 17–19).

HOW BENEFICIAL IS ISRAEL TO THE UNITED STATES?

The benefits or liabilities that accrue to the United States because of its partnership with Israel are to a large extent a function of the reply to our previous question. Brezhnev's message to Reagan implied that
he saw at least short-term advantages. Those who conceived of Israel as dictating policy or specific measures to the Americans, on the other hand, were clearly skeptical. Kislov's understanding that "the Lebanese aggression" had demonstrated to the entire world that in the final account the United States invariably supported Israel and was incapable, because of its Israeli connection, of following an impartial course in the Middle East was intended to highlight the drawbacks of the partnership from Washington's point of view. So, too, was his contention that American policy served to encourage Israeli effrontery, thus creating further difficulties with U.S. allies both in the region and in Western Europe, and undermining the view that Washington, and Washington alone, was able to restrain Israel from undertaking new aggression if the Arabs showed "moderation" (Kislov 1983).

Primakov, for his part, says that policy can have stable results only if it is based on realities, on a correct understanding of the correlation of forces and of the objective demands and national interests of the different communities. American Middle Eastern policy had been in the past, and still was, based on subjective foundations—the desire to give multifaceted support to Israel when Israel was conducting an openly expansionist policy toward the Arab countries and peoples (Primakov 1985: 113). The implication of this conclusion is that U.S. policy is doomed to failure and frustration, which is an interesting subordination of an otherwise relatively sober analysis of U.S. achievements in the Middle East to the desiderata of the ideological framework in the Soviet system within which even a scholar as rational as Primakov is constrained to operate.

These two views, then, albeit on different levels, emphasize the disadvantages of the U.S. partnership with Israel with, perhaps, a disguised intention of suggesting cooperation with the USSR as an alternative. Similar to them is the article by director of TASS, S. Losev, also in SShA, which quotes from the London Times to demonstrate that the U.S.-Israeli alliance compels those who consider Israel their foe to call the United States their foe also. Even moderate and conservative Arab regimes dissociated themselves from the U.S.-Israeli December 1983 agreement. Moreover, according to Losev, more and more people inside the United States cautioned that the administration was dragging the country into a new adventure on the Vietnam model, a most dangerous path. Losev quoted from a TASS statement on Lebanon:

U.S. pretensions to establish order in accordance with the American prototype in countries whose social system they do not like, the desire
to place themselves and their narrow interests above international law and the interests of humanity, to make force the standard of justice and legality, all this cannot but boomerang with grave results not only for others but also for the USA itself. It is thought necessary in the USSR’s leading circles to warn the U.S. Government of this in all seriousness.” (Losev 1984: 3-6)

CONCLUSION

The U.S.-Israeli partnership, in the Soviet understanding, then, is a multifaceted one based on a wide range of permanent factors that have not fundamentally changed since 1978. The ideologists focus their attention on the conceptual proximity of American imperialism and international Zionism, which is personified by the State and Government of Israel. These ideologists, presumably, are both opponents of détente and proponents of keeping Israel at arm’s length, so as to prevent, or at least reduce to a minimum the possibility of causing ferment among the USSR’s Jewish population. The pragmatists prefer to dwell upon the common strategic objectives of Washington and “Tel Aviv.” Among the latter category, those who stress the military aspect of the relationship are perhaps interested in increasing the Soviet military budget as a whole and, specifically, arms supplies to Syria and other Middle Eastern countries. All, however, seem to agree that despite occasional differences of opinion and the diminished popularity of Israel in American public opinion, and despite the American endeavor to bring the “moderate” or “conservative” Arab states into the U.S. orbit, exemplified by the new U.S.-Egyptian relationship, the basic U.S.-Israeli partnership has not been adversely affected, nor is it in danger of suffering any serious setback.

In the final account, the reason the partnership has not suffered is irrelevant; it may, however, be a result of one or both of the following:

1. It may be the outcome of a proximity of outlook that brings the two sides automatically together in pursuit of common general objectives—anti-Sovietism and anti-communism, and opposition in principle to national liberation movements;
2. It may also be the natural sequitur of attempts to curb Soviet influence in the Middle East in the practical, political, and military arena, brought about by a community of interest of the USSR and the Arabs; the conviction in the United States that Israel is its only reliable ally in the long term by virtue of the
nature of its regime, on the one hand, and the "socio-political shifts" in Arab and other developing countries, on the other, and in Israel the conviction that it has no viable alternative to the United States in the present power constellation, given its need for the political and material backing of a major power.

The consensus of Soviet opinion regarding the goals, character, and permanence of the U.S.-Israeli partnership, and its virtual imperviousness to the chops and changes of both the global and regional scenes would suggest that the partnership is an essential ingredient in Soviet policy formulation. The somewhat ephemeral and intangible ideological affinity between "U.S. imperialism" and "Zionism," which perhaps explains the considerable attention directed by Soviet commentators to Israel and Zionism, helps to make Israel into a much more significant—and sinister—world power than it would otherwise be reasonable to believe and a power, therefore, that must be kept at a distance, namely, one with which one does not even maintain diplomatic relations. At the same time, the claim that Washington's apparent reliance on, and commitment to, Israel result from the unreliability of its Arab customers probably reflects Moscow's sense of uncertainty regarding its own relationships with its Arab friends and clients. In accordance with Soviet reasoning the lesson the Arabs should learn regarding the military-strategic connotations of the U.S.-Israeli partnership is that the Arabs need to set up a concomitant military-strategic alliance with Moscow. Finally, the closeness of the bonds that link the United States and Israel helps to explain Soviet failures in making headway with Washington in becoming part and parcel of regional mediation efforts, as the Americans are not prepared to forego their alliance with Israel. In this way, the fundamental Soviet conception of the U.S.-Israeli relationship has become an integral part of its Middle Eastern policy, a conception in which Moscow would appear to have a vested interest and thus one with little chance of being altered, whatever happens to the actual relationship between Washington and Jerusalem. If Gorbachev tries to change Soviet policy in this region in any fundamental way, he will have to confront a broadly shared set of perceptions and perspectives regarding the nature of the U.S.-Israeli adversary.

ENDNOTES

1. I had the privilege of discussing this issue with a Soviet émigré who spent many years in these research institutes and who has since written about the Soviet system—author's interview with Michael Voslensky,
February 1978.
3. See Batumin (1985: 3). The last quotation was taken from an article by Meir Wilner, Secretary-General of the Israeli Communist Party (Rakah) in Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn', (December 1983). Since, however, Wilner is a reliable mouthpiece of the CPSU, and since nothing that is published in a Soviet journal is printed without the consent, if not the actual instructions of the CPSU Central Committee Propaganda Department, this is to all intents and purposes an authentic Soviet position.
6. Primakov (1985: 281). In fact, the Reagan plan had been announced a few weeks prior to Fez.
9. Pravda, 14 February 1985. Other comments on this issue included a Trud item on the approach to Israel to set up these transmitters for broadcasts to the USSR and other socialist countries—28 December 1984; and items in Krasnaia zvezda, 9 February 1984, and Izvestiia, 11 February 1984, noting Israel's acceptance of the proposal.
12. Batumin (1985: 9–10). Other sources also dwelt on U.S. encouragement of Israeli arms sales to states with which Washington did not wish to be directly associated—for example, Pravda, 24 November 1980.
18. Krasnaia zvezda, 26 July 1981. For further comment on the U.S.-Israeli military partnership in the Lebanese context, see also L. Koriavan, Izvestiia, 16 April 1982.
22. For example, V. Lashkul, Izvestiia, 21 March 1986; V. Bashkin, Krasnaia zvezda, 12 October 1985.
25. Izvestiia, 21 March 1986. See also V. Peresada's summation of Peres's visit to Washington early in April—Pravda, 5 April 1986.
29. For example, Pravda, 27 January 1985; Krasnaia zvezda, 30 January 1985, commenting on a visit to Washington of Defense Minister Rabin.
32. Krasnaia zvezda, 4, 6 June 1986 (see also above).
33. For example, V. Vinogradov, Krasnaia zvezda, 7 December 1985; Pravda, 8 December 1985.
34. Pravda, 10 January 1986.
40. Primakov (1985: 255). At the time, Pravda accused the United States of “assisting and inspiring” the attack by supplying the fighter-bombers that carried it out—10 June 1981. For views identical with that of Primakov, see Sovetskaia Rossiia, 11 June 1981; Pravda, 16 June 1981; and Izvestiia, 30 June 1981.
42. Pravda, 18 May 1986.
44. Kommunist vooružennyykh syl, no. 10, (May 1985).
45. They are referred to, for example, in Friedgut (1984: 3–22). Friedgut brings a passage on this question from the initial appeal for the establishment of the Soviet Anti-Zionist Committee (AKSO), Pravda, 1 April 1983; and “Beware Zionism!” Sovetskaia Litva, 1 June 1983.
47. Izvestiia, 10 June 1982.
53. For example, Pravda, 11, 13 May 1986; Krasnaia zvezda, 18 May 1986.
54. It was denounced as “interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state” and an attempt to “isolate the Palestinian movement and impose upon it capitulatory conditions”—Pravda, 24, 26 June 1982.
56. Izvestiia, 2 August 1982.

**Bibliography**


Part III

Prospects for Superpower Cooperation
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Chapter 9

Perspectives on Superpower Crisis Management and Conflict Resolution in the Arab-Israeli Conflict

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This chapter contrasts superpower cooperation in the Middle East during crisis and noncrisis periods. Superpower behavior is cautious and relatively easy to coordinate during crises, for purposes of crisis management. During noncrisis periods, however, the effort to coordinate superpower policies and to resolve regional conflicts is fraught with immense obstacles.

I will explain this contrast in behavioral patterns and outcomes by arguing that systemic theories of international relations alert us to the factors that become most salient and powerful during crisis situations. During normal periods of diplomacy, however, factors below the level of the international system—namely, the distinctive features of politics, ideology, elite perceptions, and personality in each capital—play the major role in frustrating superpower collaboration geared toward conflict resolution. Indeed, in the hour of crisis, when external pressures on the state are unusually powerful, international systemic factors (such as the distribution of capabilities and the number of great powers in the international system) logically would exercise greater influence than usual on the behavior of states. At the same time, certain conditions at nonsystemic levels (regional, domestic, and cognitive) are necessary in order to make possible noncrisis diplomatic cooperation.

The most influential systemic theory of international relations is the “balance-of-power” theory, which begins with the premise that international politics is inherently anarchic and conflictual. This theory, however, then underlines conditions that reduce the degree of disorder in the international system. Thus, one of the remarkable differences between the Hobbesian state of nature and world politics
is the unequal distribution of capabilities in the international system, as opposed to the equality among men in the state of nature. The differences between these two theorists notwithstanding, both Hedley Bull (1966: 46; 1971, 1977, 1980) and Kenneth Waltz (1979: 132, chapter 9) highlight this factor as a major contribution to the international order. Due to the inequality among states, these scholars argue, the great powers emerge as potential regulators of world affairs.

In addition, the theory predicts that when an equilibrium exists in the capabilities of the major centers of power in the system, states will behave not as power maximizers but as security and survival maximizers. Their conduct will be restrained. In the face of countervailing force and resolve they will seek to rein in local allies and contain local wars in order to avoid colliding with other major powers. This will especially be the case under conditions of bipolarity (only two great powers) and nuclear deterrence (both superpowers have survivable second-strike capability that can inflict unacceptable damage, even after absorbing a first strike). Under these conditions their balance of interests, rather than the precise balance of their military capabilities, will determine the balance of resolve and consequently the patterns of great power crisis behavior and crisis outcomes.

More specifically, and all other things being equal, the defender of the status quo will have greater resolve than an expansionist state. The reasoning is twofold. First, states are willing to suffer more to defend what they already have than to gain something new (especially if they would thereby also threaten what is already in their possession). Second, nuclear deterrence (which prohibitively raises the costs of miscalculation) provides major incentives for cautious behavior in times of crisis. The superpowers will be sensitive to the vital interests of the adversary because any forcible change in the status quo, especially in vital regions, could result in uncontrolled escalation.

At the same time, bipolarity facilitates tacit cooperation between rivals when they are managing crises. Indeed, one may infer from "balance-of-power" theory that whereas the superpowers act unilaterally in defending their own interests, the "unintended outcome" of the superpowers' demonstration of resolve could be, under conditions of bipolarity, the emergence of recurring patterns of restraint or even "tacit rules." These rules regulate superpower military intervention according to the relative balance of interests that are at stake in the specific crisis setting. In the absence of formal agreements and explicit negotiations between antagonists, the relative clarity of the balance of capabilities, commitments, and interests under bipolarity minimizes the chances of misjudging the rival's resolve to defend his vital stakes.
The presence of only two great powers, moreover, facilitates nonverbal bargaining, which is especially critical in crisis periods. Through various "show of force" options the superpowers signal their "red lines," that is, the point beyond which the stakes of the signaling superpower are clearly greater than those of his rival. Since trespassing of red lines may trigger intervention by the rival superpower, each superpower has a strong incentive to be cautious, to preserve the status quo, and to restrain his ally.

While expecting the superpowers to exercise restraint in crisis situations, this theory is not optimistic about their explicit, conscious cooperation during periods of normal diplomacy. For in contrast to the pressures of crisis settings, external pressures on decision makers are diminished during noncrisis diplomacy. Hence, in order to explain the failure of joint efforts at conflict resolution we must examine within each state factors that shape the formulation of foreign policy during normal periods. It is insufficient simply to point to the anarchic and conflictual nature of international politics as the explanation for such frustration. Such conflict is a constant that cannot explain differences in degrees of enthusiasm for collaboration between and within the superpowers, changes over time in their respective approaches, and the varying degrees of success and failure they have experienced in their efforts at collaboration.

The first part of the chapter addresses superpower crisis management in the Middle East. In contrast to those who have argued that the United States and the Soviet Union have behaved recklessly during Arab-Israeli wars, I will show that the superpowers have been restrained in times of crisis and have cooperated tacitly in the termination of local wars. This cooperation can be explained with reference to systemic factors.

The second part will present attempts at superpower cooperation in resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. I will analyze the failure of these attempts with reference to both systemic and nonsystemic factors. Although joint diplomacy aimed at conflict resolution has never succeeded, I will argue that a process of elite learning can, in principle, weaken certain domestic, cognitive, and ideological obstacles and increase the strength of forces for superpower collaboration geared toward settling the Arab-Israeli conflict.

**RECENT SUPERPOWER BEHAVIOR IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

In the eyes of some observers the claim that superpower crisis behavior has been cautious would be a strange one. Arms shipments by the superpowers have allegedly made it possible for the quarreling
Middle Eastern nations to engage in large-scale modern warfare in the first place or, at least, to raise the level of intensity of the wars (Becker 1979: 253-54). The superpower arms resupply has, moreover, helped the fighting states to prolong armed conflict, most notably in the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. The global patrons have also engaged in "shows of force," especially naval movements, during most of the Arab-Israeli wars. Most dangerously, they have reached the brink of direct conflict several times in the Middle East, far more frequently than in any other region in the last two decades.

SOVIET OVERREACTIONS TO MIDDLE EAST CRISSES?

The type of conduct that is expected by a "power politics" conception seems to apply, in particular, to Moscow's crisis behavior; its advisors became engaged in military activities in the War of Attrition and the 1973 war and the USSR threatened to intervene at the end of six Middle Eastern crises: the Suez crisis of 1956, the 1957 Syrian-Turkish crisis, the 1958 Lebanese-Iraqi crisis, the June 1967 war, the 1970 War of Attrition, and the October 1973 war. The Soviets, furthermore, deployed their own combat troops on three occasions: 1970, 1973, and 1983 (in Syria). Overall, observers have pointed to elements of "reckless" Soviet conduct in five Middle Eastern wars: the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973, the War of Attrition, the Jordanian Civil War of 1970, and most recently in 1983, following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in the preceding year.

There is widespread agreement among analysts that the Soviets played a critical role in inflaming the May 1967 crisis that eventually brought about the June war, with its far-reaching consequences for the Arab-Israeli dispute. Beginning in late April, the Soviets had issued allegations that Israel was planning to attack Damascus. The most important target of this apparent "disinformation" campaign was Egypt. Moscow informed Cairo that "Israel was massing its forces on the Syrian frontier and an attack was planned for sometime between May 18 and May 22" (Heikal 1978: 171). At the same time, the Soviet ambassador in Tel Aviv turned down the Israeli offer to see for himself the alleged Israeli troop concentrations on its northern border (Eban 1977: 318-19). The important point is that while Egypt did not attribute much credibility to the Syrian reports, "their approval by the Soviets caused Nasser to proclaim a state of emergency on May 16 and to send troops into the Sinai" (Heikal 1978: 174-75), although "it is quite impossible that Moscow could have believed what it was saying" (Eban 1977: 320). The Egyptian move, which was supported by the Soviets (Wells 1979: 159; Jabber and Kolkowicz 1981: 424-25; and
triggered an escalating cycle that resulted in the outbreak of war on June 5, 1967. The Soviets allegedly made little effort to restrain Nasser and obstructed attempts by other powers to prevent war in the weeks preceding the initiation of hostilities (Wells 1979: 159; drawing upon Howe 1971: 73).

The USSR itself made its most threatening move in the war on June 10, the last day of the armed conflict. While the Israelis were completing their takeover of the Golan Heights, Moscow threatened to intervene militarily. The threat was communicated in a “hot line” message sent by Premier Kosygin to President Johnson. According to Johnson’s memoirs, Kosygin spoke of the possibility of an “independent decision” by Moscow. He foresaw the risk of a “grave catastrophe” and stated that unless Israel unconditionally halted operations within the next few hours, the Soviet Union would take “necessary actions, including military” (1971: 302).

Less than three years later, in the midst of the Israeli-Egyptian War of Attrition along the Suez Canal, the Soviets went beyond just issuing threats of intervention. Starting in the spring of 1970 Moscow deployed into Egypt large numbers of highly capable air-defense missiles and aircraft and 15,000–20,000 military personnel, including technicians, advisors, air-defense crews, and, most dramatically, Soviet pilots (Rubinstein 1981: 474). In fact, Soviet forces had assumed responsibility for Egyptian air defense. This was the first substantial deployment of Soviet combat troops into a Third World country. “While the direct involvement of these forces in combat against the Israelis turned out to be negligible in the end, they were clearly prepared to fight a major battle if circumstances had required” (Dismukes 1979: 221).

Indeed, beginning in the early summer of 1970, Soviet-manned surface-to-air missile (SAM) units reinforced the Suez Canal air defense and made Israeli attacks more costly. Moreover, in July Soviet-piloted MIGs, “which, during their first weeks in Egypt had restricted their patrols to the Nile Valley, extended their operations forward to areas on the flanks of the Canal front” (Glassman 1975: 78; see also Whetten 1981: 60; Dismukes, 1979: 232). The Soviet move increased the probability that there would be direct Soviet-Israeli clashes and that the situation would get out of control. Fortunately, when combat finally took place on July 30 (Israeli pilots shot down five Russian-piloted jet planes south of Suez City), it was just on the eve of a cease-fire. Still, the Soviets cooperated with the Egyptians in blunt violation of the terms of the cease-fire by deploying SAMs along the canal after the warring nations had stopped shooting (Evron 1979: 30; Rubinstein 1981: 476; Kissinger 1979: 585–91; Nixon 1978, vol. I: 598; Quandt 1978: 260, 265).

In September 1970 a civil war broke out between the pro-Western King Hussein of Jordan and radical Palestinian guerillas
who challenged the king's authority. The Jordanian army's success in driving the Palestinians out of Amman triggered an invasion into Jordan by Syrian armored forces, beginning on September 18. They were initially successful; but after a few days of fighting, the Jordanians defeated the invaders and Hussein maintained his grip over the country. Even if the Soviets could not be blamed for instigating any specific threatening actions in the initial stage of this crisis, "they could . . . still be charged with general culpability for the state of affairs engendered in the crisis, and most decision makers assumed that they would in every event try to capitalize on the situation as well as they could" (Dowty 1984: 118).

The 1973 Yom Kippur War has provided fertile grounds for allegations of "irresponsible" Soviet conduct in the Middle East. Both in the months preceding the October war (starting in February 1973—see Spechler 1978) and shortly after the war broke out, the Soviets delivered massive shipments of arms to their clients, which enabled them to initiate the armed conflict and then to prolong the fighting. Most important, the Soviets again threatened military intervention toward the end of the war when there were violations of the cease-fire on the Egyptian front. On October 24 General Secretary Brezhnev conveyed a message to President Nixon in which he said

[I]f you find it impossible to act jointly with us in this matter, we should be faced with the necessity urgently to consider the question of taking appropriate steps unilaterally. Israel cannot be permitted to get away with the violation. (Kissinger 1982, vol. II: 584; Nixon 1978, vol. II: 497–98)

There were, indeed, a number of Soviet military moves that made the verbal threat appear credible. By October 24 all seven Soviet airborne divisions, totaling some 50,000 troops, were on alert. A stand-down in the airlift of Soviet arms supplies, moreover, took place on that day. The reason for the stand-down might have been to concentrate and prepare the airlift for the transport of Soviet troops (Garthoff 1985: 377; Blechman and Hart 1982: 278–79; Whetten 1981: 75). The Soviet naval fleet in the Mediterranean had gradually been reinforced to reach the "unprecedented" number of 85 ships (Kalb and Kalb 1975: 488; Whetten 1981: 75). Finally, a nuclear dimension was added when a Soviet freighter, passing the Bosporus on October 22 en route to Alexandria, gave off neutron emissions, indicating the potential presence of nuclear weapons on board, possibly for a brigade of Soviet SCUD missiles (Glassman 1975: 163; Blechman and Hart 1982: 278; Jonsson 1984: 186; Garthoff 1985: 378 n.69).

In a move similar to that of the 1970 War of Attrition, Moscow introduced sophisticated air-defense systems (notably SAM-5s,
manned by Soviet personnel) into Syria in 1983, following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. As Dennis Ross points out (chapter 4), the deployment of an additional 5,000 Soviet advisors meant that, in fact, the Soviets assumed responsibility for Syrian air defense. They also provided the Syrians with modern ground-to-ground missiles capable of hitting Israeli population centers. Since the SAM-5s, moreover, covered Israeli airspace, they generated a high risk of preemptive Israeli strike and, thus, a potential for escalation that could get out of hand.

In sum, both the 1970 and 1983 deployments could have generated an escalation difficult to control and one that would require the Soviets to up the ante further. In the Jordan crisis, the Soviets appeared to support aggression by their allies against a U.S. ally. Certainly, the threats of intervention in 1967 and 1973 seemed to be risky, triggering American military responses and thereby creating two of the most dangerous confrontations in the Third World in the postwar era.

**U.S. OVERREACTIONS TO MIDDLE EAST CRISES?**

Other analysts have focused on what they regarded as American overreactions, especially in the Jordanian Civil War of 1970 and the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

Nixon and Kissinger allegedly misperceived the 1970 Jordanian crisis as a critical global showdown (Hersh 1983: 234–49; Quandt 1977: 124) and overrated the Soviet role and Soviet control of their clients (Dowty 1984: 151 n.13). As a result of these misperceptions Washington supposedly overreacted with tough anti-Soviet rhetoric and overblown military moves (Quandt 1977: 114; Garfinkle 1985: 123). The 82nd Airborne Division and five divisions in West Germany were put on alert. The Sixth Fleet was enlarged from two to five carrier task forces and sailed toward the Eastern Mediterranean.

Indeed, the Soviets deployed the elements of two additional anticarrier task groups to counter the U.S. reinforcement and could have posed a significant military threat to the Sixth Fleet (Shulsky 1979: 171–75). In order to shadow the U.S. naval units the Soviets intermingled their ships with the U.S. task force (Garfinkle 1985: 125). As Shulsky argues, "the sustained presence of two powerful fleets in close proximity during a period of international tension tends to produce an inherently unstable situation" (1979: 175).

Since the Soviets behaved in a nonprovocative manner (Hersh 1983: 240–41; Garfinkle 1985: 126), the prospects for escalation were reduced substantially. Still, under these tense circumstances actions by third parties, whether accidental or malicious, could trigger events
leading to inadvertent escalation. This was especially true for the United States, "since by concentrating almost exclusively on the U.S.-Soviet relationship, Nixon and Kissinger let themselves be manipulated by the local parties" (Quandt 1978: 288).

Through its verbal and unspoken behavior the United States committed itself almost unconditionally to the defense of Jordan. Yet, lacking sufficient interventionary forces in the locale (Garfinkle 1985: 125-26), the United States had to encourage the threat of an Israeli intervention and, as a result, to commit itself to come to the help of Israel in the event of Egyptian or Soviet military responses. Thus, both Jordan and Israel could have dragged the United States into military engagement.

More severe are the charges in the second case of alleged U.S. "recklessness." The Washington Special Action Group (WSAG) ostensibly overreacted to Brezhnev's message of October 24, 1973, not only by ordering a worldwide DEFCON-3 (nuclear alert), but also by alerting the 82nd Airborne "for possible movement" and sending additional aircraft carriers to the Eastern Mediterranean (Kissinger 1982: 587-89). Fifty to sixty B-52 strategic bombers were moved from their base on Guam to the U.S. mainland. Aerial refueling tankers assigned to the Strategic Air Command were dispersed to a greater number of bases and started nonroutine actions. Marginal changes were also made in the status of strategic submarines and ICBMs (Blechman and Hart 1984: 281).

A BALANCE OF POWER INTERPRETATION

Despite this impressive battery of evidence regarding both Soviet and American assertiveness in Middle East conflicts, analysts drawing conclusions on the basis of this evidence tend to overlook features of the superpower balance that better explain patterns of restraint that have repeatedly prevented escalation of these crises into actual superpower military conflict. The most serious shortcoming is that analysts overlook as a major determinant of great power crisis behavior and of crisis outcomes the relative balance of stakes or interests in each crisis. To the extent that a big power demonstrates resolve only when its important interests are threatened, while becoming restrained once the adversary has greater interests at stake, one may conclude that the likelihood of armed conflicts among great powers is low.

Indeed as we shall see, the balance of interests, rather than the precise military balance, is the decisive element in affecting the "balance of resolve," and goes a long way toward explaining U.S. and
Soviet conduct in Middle East crises. Under conditions of bipolarity and nuclear deterrence, and all other things being equal, the power that values the interest at stake more highly has the advantage in the "balance of resolve." Also, under these systemic conditions, the superpower defending the status quo, an interest that is in its possession, tends to have greater motivation than does an opponent challenging the existing balance. Operationally, preservation of the status quo means the preservation of an existing regime, rather than avoidance of relatively marginal territorial changes or a tactical military defeat. The implication for crises is that a patron defending the survival of his client will have the edge in the "balance of resolve" over the protector of a client trying to change the status quo and thereby disrupting the great-power balance.

Hence, most U.S. and Soviet apparent "overreactions" can be accounted for by their commitment to defending the existence of key allies. Since in most of the crises Soviet clients were on the defensive strategically, it should not be surprising that the Soviets showed greater willingness than the United States to become engaged in Arab-Israeli wars. But the Soviets threatened to intervene militarily only when their regional ally faced a major danger. At the same time, they, as well as the Americans, refrained from any military engagement in the offensive activities of their client that took place on the territory of the client's rival, and showed some willingness to restrain their aggressive clients.

**SOVIET CAUTIOUS RESOLVE IN MIDDLE EAST CRISES**

The USSR threatened to intervene in the 1967 war only when the road to the capital of a client-state appeared open and there seemed to be a danger of an attack on that capital (Jabber and Kolkowicz 1981: 434; Wells 1979: 165), which could bring down a pro-Soviet government. The Soviets, however, did not threaten to intervene and did not provide much help to the Arabs before that stage of the Six Day War, despite the humiliating defeats suffered by their allies (Wells 1979: 165; Fukuyama 1981: 584; Heikal 1978: 181, 185, 191; Whetten 1981: 55) and despite the Arabs' outrage at Soviet nonintervention (Jabber and Kolkowicz 1981: 436). On the Egyptian front the Israelis stopped at the Suez Canal and did not make any threatening move toward Cairo. In contrast, on June 10 Israel could have easily advanced on Damascus, since Syrian defenses on the nearby Golan Heights had collapsed (Wells 1979: 165; Jabber and Kolkowicz 1981: 434). There were also indications that the Israelis were more inclined to overthrow the radical Syrian regime (Whetten 1981: 47; Riad 1981: 17; Aronson 1978: 388 n.85). The
United States, for its part, "would probably not have acted on her own to prevent Israel cutting the three main highways to Damascus (the presumed operational plan) and thus humiliating the Syrian regime. . . . it was only when the Soviet Union threatened independent action that the United States decided, if she could, to exercise a moderating influence on Israel" (Whetten 1981: 54). U.S. pressures, indeed, probably helped to stop the Israeli advance (Whetten 1981: 54 n.31).

Thus, the superpowers in fact tacitly agreed that the overthrow of Middle Eastern governments through external military pressure should be avoided. By restraining Israel, moreover, the United States implicitly recognized the "legitimacy" of the Soviet threat (see Secretary Rusk's interview with Wells 1979: 166). On the whole, both superpowers demonstrated caution. Whereas the United States showed sensitivity to Soviet interests in Syria, the USSR did not back up its intervention threat with any military moves; nor did the Fifth Eskadra behave as if a Middle East war was under way (Whetten 1981: 54; Jabber and Kolkowicz 1981: 436-37).

Indeed, the late timing of the Soviet threat—after the United States had been actively pressuring Israel to cease firing and Israel was already halting its activities—led one prominent analyst to conclude that the Soviets were, in fact, bluffing (Fukuyama 1981: 584). While we agree that Soviet conduct was very restrained, an alleged "bluff" seems to carry the argument a bit too far. Fukuyama himself admits that at the time Kosygin issued his threat "the Soviets could not have known for sure that the Israelis were not about to push on to Damascus" (1981: 589). Since the Soviet objective was fulfilled—Israel complied with the cease-fire and the danger to Damascus disappeared—"the seriousness of the Soviet threat was never put to the test" (Wells 1979: 166). U.S. policymakers themselves, as was suggested above, took the Soviet threat seriously (this is mentioned also by Fukuyama 1981: 594). As a result, the Soviet threat exercised at least some influence on the intensity and timing of U.S. restraining efforts vis-à-vis Israel and, consequently, on Israeli behavior and the final outcome—preservation of the Soviet client's regime.

The most plausible explanation for Soviet provocative behavior in May 1967 is the apparent Soviet calculation that they would be able to control Egyptian moves so that these would remain at the level of deterrence but would not provoke Israeli military action. The Soviets were interested in an Egyptian show of force in order to deter a widely expected Israeli attack on Damascus (Whetten 1981: 47). Such an attack could easily have devastated the pro-Soviet Syrian government (Fukuyama 1981: 584) and thus could have caused the "loss" of a major Soviet ally.
Indeed, although they supported the Egyptian show of force at the outset of the May crisis (the deployment of Egyptian troops in the Sinai), the Soviets failed to support subsequent Egyptian steps that could more easily have generated an escalation, notably the closure of the Tiran Straits (Jonsson 1984: 162; Glassman 1975: 40–44; Jabber and Kolkowicz 1981: 431; Wells 1979: 159; Whetten 1981: 49).

The lesson of the unintended escalation appears, however, to have been quickly learned. A few days after spreading false rumors Moscow tried to collaborate with Washington in restraining their respective clients.

The Soviet decision to intervene in the War of Attrition seems to be related, on the one hand, to the major blows inflicted by Israel on Egypt in that war, which could have threatened the survival of the Nasser regime itself. Tacit U.S. blessing of the Israeli moves, on the other hand, tended to reinforce the Soviet inclination to become militarily engaged in Egypt. In the fall of 1969 Israel achieved total air superiority in the canal front and could thus inflict heavy damage on the Egyptian military. The delivery of U.S. Phantom planes to Israel in September could, moreover, be interpreted as tacit approval of Israel’s policy and as a major fortification of Israeli might (Quandt 1977: 88; Riad 1981: 105; Breslauer 1983: 79).

This seems to be the background for the Soviet decision around that time (autumn 1969) to commit forces, if required, to reconstruct Egyptian defenses. The Soviets, however, were cautious enough to postpone the final decision, pending political-military developments (Breslauer 1983: 79; Rubinstein 1981: 473). On January 7, 1970, Israel initiated deep penetration raids on the heartland of Egypt, probably in order to topple Nasser (Riad 1981: 118–19; Aronson 1978: 117; Bar-Siman-Tov 1980: 117–44). Once again, the United States seemed to be supporting Israeli behavior, if not Israeli intentions (Aronson 1978: 116–17; Riad 1981: 121; Whetten 1981: 60–61).

In his trip to Moscow at the end of January, Nasser threatened to resign if the Soviets would not restore Egypt’s capacity to defend its skies. Nasser’s resignation could have meant the loss of the Soviets’ most trusted and important ally in the Middle East. That was a key factor in the Soviet decision to let their own crews take charge of Egypt’s air defense (Heikal 1975: 83–90; Sadat 1977: 197; Riad 1981: 113, 119–20, 124–25). But rather than immediately carry out their pledge, the Soviets first issued a threat of intervention, conveyed in a letter from Kosygin to Nixon (Kissinger 1979: 560–62). The United States rebuffed the warning and the Soviets introduced their air-defense system starting in late February 1970. By not countering the Soviet intervention and by, initially, even suspending arms transfers to Israel, the United States, in fact, tacitly acknowledged the “legitimacy” of the
Soviet engagement and the significance of Soviet interests in Egypt (Evron 1979: 30; George 1983, 1986).

In contrast to the contentions of the critics of détente, the USSR behaved cautiously in the 1973 war and in the months preceding it. The arms supply in the months before the war was probably a response to growing American unilateralism in the region (see below) and to the Egyptian expulsion of Soviet military personnel in July 1972. One of the major reasons for the expulsion, in turn, was the restraint imposed by the Soviets on their arms shipments to Egypt in the preceding years. Worried that they might lose their position in the Middle East, the Soviets responded to that expulsion by becoming more responsive to Egyptian demands for weaponry; at the same time, they urged Cairo to emphasize negotiations, rather than war, as the means for regaining the Sinai (Golan 1977: 39–42; Porter 1984: 116–25; Garthoff 1985: 362–68; Karsh 1985: 39–40). Indeed, some analysts argue that the arms supply in the months before the war was not intended to encourage Egyptian aggressiveness, but rather to deter a preventive Israeli attack, thereby inducing the local parties to move to a diplomatic solution (Jabber and Kolkowicz 1981: 464–65). At most, one could claim that the Soviets hoped to preserve some restraining influence over a policy of war already decided by Egypt, irrespective of the provision of Soviet materiel (Roberts 1979: 193, 374–75). Similarly, since the Soviets had anticipated an Arab defeat, the wartime arms delivery represented “more an attempt to minimize their expected defeat than an attempt to help them achieve an overwhelming victory” (Sagan 1979: 162; see also Sadat 1977: 221, 247, 259, 267, 292; Porter 1984: 133; Garthoff 1985: 370 n.38). Once the war broke out, moreover, the Soviets sought to bring an early halt to the fighting (Sadat 1977: 252–65). Their use of military tools, such as naval deployments, during the war was restrained (Jabber and Kolkowicz 1981: 458–62; Roberts 1979: 192–210).

As in the 1967 and the 1970 wars, Moscow threatened to intervene in 1973 once their ally faced a strategic defeat that could bring about the collapse of the regime. On October 22 the UN Security Council endorsed Resolution 338, jointly sponsored by the superpowers, calling for a cease-fire. Nonetheless, the problem of enforcing the cease-fire was not an easy one. While the question of who had first broken the cease-fire is irrelevant, the Israelis, evidently, were taking advantage of the violations to complete their encirclement of the Egyptian Third Army. Since the surrender of the Third Army could have had a devastating political effect on his regime, President Sadat asked both the United States and the Soviet Union to dispatch a joint peacekeeping unit to enforce the cease-fire. While the United States immediately dismissed the plan, the Soviets supported it. Indeed, the
“threatening” message from Brezhnev to Nixon proposed, in the first place, to respond to Sadat’s appeal for a joint U.S.-Soviet intervention to oversee the cease-fire, which had been sponsored by both of them. Only if the United States rejected the idea would the Soviets “consider the question of taking appropriate steps unilaterally” (Kissinger 1982: 583). Brezhnev did not state explicitly that these unilateral steps would be military ones, as Kosygin had in 1967, nor did Brezhnev in fact pledge to implement them, but only to “consider the question.” The Soviets also knew from their talks with Kissinger in Moscow on October 21 and from the two U.S. votes in favor of the cease-fire in the UN that the United States supported the status quo of October 22. Washington and Moscow, moreover, shared at the moment the same operational objective, though for different reasons: to prevent a humiliating Egyptian defeat.1

Certainty about the American position and the late timing of Brezhnev’s “ultimatum” led Fukuyama to conclude that as in 1967, the Soviets were again bluffing (1981: 588–89). Indeed, even Soviet military activities “were sufficiently ambiguous to cast serious doubts on their status either as deliberate signals of a will to intervene or as bona fide preparations for impending unilateral action” (Jabber and Kolkowicz 1981: 458). Still, it would be erroneous to suggest that the Soviets did not take any risks and that their moves did not have any effect on the termination of the war. At the time it issued the threat the Kremlin could not be certain about Israeli intentions and especially about U.S. determination and capacity to control its ally. The absence of immediate Israeli compliance with the UN resolutions could then bring the Soviets to a very uncomfortable choice between a major blow to their credibility as a patron (in the eyes of their clients and also in relation to the United States) and some kind of unilateral intervention.

The best way to conceive the Soviet threat would be neither as a bluff nor as a reckless move toward confrontation with the United States. Rather, the Soviet signaling was likely aimed at increasing the pressure on the United States to control Israel (Glassman 1975: 164; Golan 1977: 110–11; Sagan 1979). Indeed, the main effect of the Soviet “show of force” was to accelerate the U.S. pressure on Jerusalem. Washington would have attempted to restrain its client, in any case, in its own interests. But when time was a very critical factor, and when facing such a disobedient ally as Israel, the Soviet ultimatum provided Kissinger with an invaluable card in his efforts to rein in Israel (Whetten 1981: 75; Garthoff 1985: 384–85; Spiegel 1985: 265). Since the Soviet diplomacy of force made the stakes much broader than Israeli interests and U.S.-Israeli relations (Kissinger 1982: 576), Kissinger could afford to exert very heavy and effective pressure on a client (Kissinger 1982: 602–5; Eban 1977: 537; Dayan 1976: 551–52),
which in normal times commanded a powerful constituency in the American body politic.

While the Soviets were ready to confront Washington when their allies faced a strategic defeat, they behaved cautiously when a U.S. ally was threatened by their client. There is widespread agreement among analysts that Nixon and Kissinger were wrong in believing that the Soviet Union instigated the PLO and Syrian invasion of Jordan in 1970 (Quandt 1978: 278–79; Shulsky 1979: 169–71; Garfinkle 1985: 136). The Soviets expressed their disapproval of the Syrian invasion by withholding Soviet military advisors from the Syrian units that crossed the border (Shulsky 1979: 171). Moscow reported to Washington the removal as a signal that she disagreed with the invasion (Kalb and Kalb 1975: 239). This was consistent with Soviet conduct in other cases when clients invaded other countries—a type of action the Soviets do not generally support by military engagement (Karsh 1985: 37–41). Such dissociation was in marked contrast to the Soviet tendency to support allies when they were on the defensive and faced a strategic defeat. The Soviet fleet, though it was reinforced, did not interfere with the Sixth Fleet’s movements (Quandt 1978: 281; Hersh 1983: 241). Moscow, moreover, was trying to restrain the Syrians through quiet diplomacy in Damascus (Quandt 1978: 280; Shulsky 1979: 177; Garfinkle 1985: 136). In addition, the USSR urged “utmost restraint” on the Egyptians (Heikal 1975: 98–100; Riad 1981: 165).

The most plausible explanation of this Soviet caution is to be found in the superpower balance of stakes; clearly the Soviets had a much smaller interest in Jordan than the United States had (Quandt 1978: 281; Garfinkle 1985: 136). Hence, “it did not take much of a combined U.S.-Israeli threat to make the crisis seem unduly risky” (Quandt 1978: 281).

It is noteworthy that although Moscow tacitly accepted that the United States had greater stakes in Jordan than the United States had (Quandt 1978: 281; Garfinkle 1985: 136). Hence, “it did not take much of a combined U.S.-Israeli threat to make the crisis seem unduly risky” (Quandt 1978: 281).

Since 1973 only one more Arab-Israeli war has taken place—when Israel invaded Lebanon in June 1982. Again, Moscow’s clients, Syria and the PLO, were roundly defeated. Yet despite the massive material and political support that the Soviets have provided in the past, Moscow remained virtually passive during the summer of 1982 (Ross, this volume, chapter 4; see also Golan 1982 and Sella 1982).

Soviet inaction can best be explained by their relatively low stakes during the “Peace-for-Galilee” operation as compared with previous Arab-Israeli wars. This time no key Arab government was
threatened. The PLO is a national liberation movement, not a nation-state. The lack of help for the PLO is consistent with Soviet past behavior in relation to social movements in general and to the PLO in particular (Ross 1985: 13). The Syrians, on the other hand, have been the key Soviet ally in the Middle East since Egypt's realignment. Nonetheless, the blow inflicted on the Syrians in 1982 constituted a major tactical defeat, but did not threaten Damascus. The hostilities, moreover, took place in Lebanese territory and not on Syrian soil, and the Soviets had disapproved of the Syrian entry into Lebanon in 1976 (Golan 1982: 4).

One can, certainly, make the argument that despite the expansion of its sealift and airlift capabilities, Soviet power is still a far cry from being able to control developments on the battlefield. This observation makes sense given U.S. naval deployment in the region, and, especially, given Israel's local superiority and momentum during the march toward Beirut. Yet we have noticed the earlier Soviet willingness to issue threats of intervention and to demonstrate an inclination to use force—even when their military capabilities (strategic-nuclear and power-projection) were weaker. The difference concerns not the capabilities but the interests at stake. In 1982 they chose restraint. But in 1983, as the question became (as in 1967, 1970, and 1973) one of the preservation of a central ally, the Soviets became more deeply involved (Ross 1985). Their assumption of Syrian air defense and delivery of advanced ground-to-ground missiles were meant to deter future Israeli action that could threaten Damascus directly.

**U.S. CAUTIOUS RESOLVE IN MIDDLE EAST CRISES**

U.S. behavior in the Jordanian crisis did not constitute an overreaction, for five reasons. First, the United States apparently did not pledge Israel specific and unequivocal support against a possible Soviet or Egyptian intervention (Garfinkle 1985: 130). Second, since there had not been any formal or explicit superpower agreement on the balance of stakes, and given the superpower competition, the United States could not predict Soviet behavior and had to demonstrate its resolve by nonverbal military means that would clarify its commitment to Jordan and thus minimize the prospects for miscalculation. That was a useful reminder to the Soviets at a time when sizable American forces were committed in Vietnam. Third, the Soviets themselves admitted that their attempts to restrain Syria and Iraq “were aided to a considerable degree by the American buildup in the Eastern Mediterranean.” Fourth, U.S. signaling also reassured King Hussein, and emboldened him enough to commit his full military power to the
decisive battle, which removed the need for U.S. or Israeli action. Finally, American diplomacy coordinated the Israeli reaction with Amman and thus helped to avoid miscalculations in the absence of direct Israeli-Jordanian communication during the crisis (Quandt 1977: 125).

As for October 1973, the coincidence in the timing of the DEFCON-3 alert and the culmination of the fight over access to the presidential tapes in the Watergate affair have led to claims that the alert was an overreaction undertaken for domestic political purposes (Betts 1987: 126). I find this argument unconvincing. Seen in the context of the time it was issued, and in light of other U.S. responses to crisis situations, the alert seems to have been more a deliberate reaction to an external threat than a reaction to an internal challenge. The Soviets had the motive for intervention because a military collapse of the Egyptians would entail a major strategic loss and put "their prestige as a superpower on the line" (Quandt 1977: 196; also Kalb and Kalb 1975: 553; Kissinger 1982: 585, 587; Dowty 1984: 256; Garthoff 1985: 383). The Soviets also had the capability for at least limited intervention. Hence, a Soviet unilateral move was perceived in Washington as likely (Kalb and Kalb 1975: 554–55; 563–65; Spiegel 1985: 263–64).

Top U.S. decision makers believed that not opposing a Soviet intervention in a vital region would have a major adverse impact on the U.S. position worldwide. Under these circumstances, the alert was viewed as an unambiguous and prompt device to signal the seriousness with which the United States regarded the situation and its willingness to react to any Soviet resort to force, if necessary with military power (Blechman and Hart 1984: 286; Sagan 1985: 124). The shift to DEFCON-3 was viewed as especially useful because it was expected to be picked up immediately by Soviet intelligence without being publicized in the media; thus, there would be no public challenge to the Soviet Union and no domestic political turmoil in the United States (Kissinger 1982: 586, 591). And, while signaling that it would have been ready to escalate if the Soviet Union had used force, the United States controlled the prospects that the situation would get out of hand by showing sensitivity to Soviet concerns. Simultaneously with the alert, Kissinger exerted extremely heavy pressure on Israel. He demanded that Jerusalem comply with the cease-fire and permit the resupply of the Third Army, which Israel had surrounded after the cease-fire the superpowers had sponsored. He thereby addressed the concern that had led Moscow to threaten intervention in the first place. In addition, Washington provided Moscow with a face-saving formula by agreeing to the deployment of a limited number of Soviet (alongside American) observers to supervise compliance with the cease-fire. Thus, in light of the reason for the alert and the accompanying
respect for Soviet sensibilities, it is hard to characterize the U.S. response as "reckless."

U.S.-SOVIET TACIT COOPERATION IN MIDDLE EAST CRISES

Despite their conflicting objectives in the Middle East and their dispute over the balance of interests between them, Washington and Moscow have been able not only to avoid any shooting incidents between their forces, but also, because of the restraining and clarifying effects of postwar systemic changes (the transition to mutually assured destruction [MAD] and bipolarity) they have been able in times of crisis to reach tacit agreements on the relative balance of their stakes and on regulating the use of force. These agreements constitute the "rules" of the U.S.-Soviet "game" in the Middle East.

More specifically, instead of attempting to maximize gains, the rules manifest an inclination on the part of the superpowers to minimize losses (Stein 1980: 495; McConnell 1979: 277). In fact, they have defended the status quo: the loser's patron preserves his client; the other superpower tacitly accepts the "legitimacy" of the intervention while staying on guard to keep the first superpower from going beyond reducing losses. Their failure to prevent local wars notwithstanding, by observing the tacit rules and by being restrained in crises, the United States and the Soviet Union have shown little inclination to provide "blank checks" to their allies. Instead, they have demonstrated a strong desire to avoid an entanglement in their allies' conflicts that might lead to armed hostilities between themselves. This desire, moreover, has induced them to cooperate in the limitation and the relatively early termination of those local wars that threatened to require their own military involvement.

Obviously, the Soviets did not fully control the behavior of their Arab clients; hence, there was some lapse of time until their clients accepted the Soviet position. Developments on the battleground, moreover, had a greater impact than Soviet pressures on Arab acceptance of cease-fires at the end of the wars. As their primary arms supplier, however, the Soviets could limit the ability of their protégés to fight protracted wars. Thus, lack of Soviet support for continuation of the fighting did result in an earlier termination of the wars than otherwise would have been the case. It is true that Moscow failed in its efforts to prevent the outbreak of the 1967 and the 1973 wars. Such failures indicate the limits of superpower influence on determined clients who have stakes in the outcome of local conflicts that are greater than those of the external powers, that is, at least before there is a danger of their
escalation to global confrontations. Still, new research reports that the Soviets succeeded in averting the planned Arab assault in May 1973, hoping that the scheduled superpower summit in the following month would preclude the need for the Arabs to resort to force in order to recover the occupied territories (Ben-Porat 1985).

Through their diplomacy of force, the Soviets also exerted a restraining influence on the military conduct of American allies. Soviet threats increased the effectiveness of U.S. restraining efforts vis-à-vis its own allies. Hence, Moscow’s threats lent greater credibility to American pressures on the Israelis in 1956 and 1973 (and on the British and the French in the Suez crisis) to stop their advances, for fear they would trigger World War III. On the other hand, in 1967 and in the War of Attrition, and to a lesser extent in 1983, the Soviets fulfilled even more important roles in defending regimes that the United States and Israel might have wanted to topple. On a more general level, by conferring identical “rights” and “duties” on both superpowers, the unspoken rules connote a sense of great-power equality, at least implicitly, and a parallelism of great-power responsibilities. Moreover, the awareness of common interests has given rise to shared methods and practices of crisis management. The United States and the Soviet Union have shown readiness to concert their constraining efforts through direct negotiations with each other.

Hence, as soon as large-scale violence broke out in 1967 and in 1973, the superpowers managed to communicate to each other their intention not to intervene directly, assuring reciprocal military disengagement. Kosygin’s reply to Secretary of State Rusk’s message on June 5, 1967, was the first use of the “hot line” in a crisis. In the ensuing exchange the Soviet premier and the U.S. president agreed, in fact, on mutual nonintervention (Johnson 1971: 297–98; Quandt 1977: 62; Hollbraad 1979: 106–7; Jonsson 1984: 165; Stein 1980: 488–89). On October 7, 1973, a day after the Yom Kippur War had started, Nixon sent Brezhnev a letter encouraging reciprocal caution. Brezhnev’s reply was conciliatory and encouraging (Quandt 1977: 173 drawing upon Kalb and Kalb 1975: 462–63; Golan 1977: 64; Glassman 1975: 143; Jonsson 1984: 181).

Beyond coordinating their own military disengagement, the superpowers concerted their efforts to moderate the behavior of their clients. Hence, the United States and the Soviet Union coordinated the delivery of notes by their diplomats on May 25 and 26, 1967, to both Egypt and Israel, calling for self-restraint (Hollbraad 1979: 103; Johnson 1971: 291; Whetten 1981: 49; Jonsson 1984: 164). The communication on the “hot line” on the first day of the Six Day War also referred to joint attempts to moderate the local actors. Cooperative crisis diplomacy reached its peak during the 1973 war with Kissinger’s trip to Moscow on
October 21 following Brezhnev's request for urgent consultations on the crisis. In their talks Kissinger and Brezhnev reached an understanding on how to end the war. They agreed to a simple cease-fire "in place," together with a call to begin the implementation of UN Resolution 242. A day after the superpower talks the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 338, which was almost identical to the U.S.-Soviet cease-fire agreement, thus ratifying that agreement.

There are real limitations to the explicit superpower cooperation in crises, however. The superpowers face a persistent dilemma and frequent trade-offs between their global role as comangers of the international system and their regional role as alliance leaders and protectors (Snyder and Diesing 1977: 447; Stein 1980: 488-89, 513). They try to reconcile the resulting inevitable conflicts by maintaining a delicate balance between resolve and restraint, by coercing prudently or accommodating cheaply, or by some combination of both (Snyder and Diesing 1977: 207-8; see also Williams 1976: 52-55; Young 1968). As world powers the United States and the Soviet Union are concerned with avoiding a dangerous disruption of the overall stability of the global international system (Ben-Zvi 1986: 5). Accordingly, their conduct has manifested caution and accommodation. But, as patrons they are committed to minimizing the losses of their partners, even if that entails coercive diplomacy that may lead to confrontations with the other superpower. Hence, despite their concerted crisis diplomacy in 1967 and 1973, Washington and Moscow stumbled into confrontations toward the end of both wars. In these confrontations "shows of force" played a key role.

What is more, the tacit rules are not self-enforcing; they do not come into play automatically. In other words, the implicit norms fall short of the expectations of an "international regime" in regard to the independent restraining effect of institutions and rules (on the restraining effects of rules, see Rosecrance 1981: 69; Krasner 1983: especially the introduction and the conclusions). Instead, threats of intervention backed by short-of-war procedures are essential in order to activate the unspoken norms (see George 1986: 9). As Stein puts it, "Only when the patron of the loser deliberately and self-consciously manipulated the risk of confrontation through threat of intervention, did the other patron exert sufficient pressure to force an end to the fighting" (1980: 496).

But while the rules are not as powerful as in an explicit "international regime," the role of military forces in U.S.-Soviet crises does not invalidate the characterization of each side's behavior as cautious. Threats to intervene, guided by diplomatic rather than military "logic" (George 1984), have been used primarily for bargaining purposes. The superpowers have usually focused during crises on the signaling,
bargaining, and negotiating character of the use of military power and not on the actual negation of the rival’s military capabilities.\textsuperscript{3} 
Tacit signaling for political purposes has been an important function of the superpower nuclear and power-projection forces (on signaling see Schelling 1966; Jervis 1970; Cohen 1980, 1981).

Indeed, while one protector activates the rules, when the asymmetry of motivation develops in its favor, the second patron has a significant restraining role. As the “balance-of-power” perspective would expect, the second patron must induce caution in the first protector (the one that issued the threat of intervention)

\ldots to force him to think through the matter carefully and make sure that real interests are in jeopardy and that the effect of his intervention, however defensive in intent, will not be such as to give his client a subsequent advantage. He has an even more important role if and when intervention actually takes place: to make sure the defensive intervention remains defensive. (McConnell 1979: 249)

The United States exercised this restraining force in 1956, 1967, the War of Attrition, and in 1973. The USSR played it in 1970 (Jordan) and in 1983 (Syria).

The type of cooperation that has emerged during U.S.-Soviet crisis interaction fits the predictions of the “balance-of-power” school about great-power conduct in a bipolar world: resolute but also restrained; competitive but cautious; security-conscious rather than power maximizing. Superpower crisis collaboration, especially in the critical moments of war termination, has been primarily the outcome of unilateral moves but also of what Hollbraad characterized as “parallel but unconcerted and uncoordinated steps” (1979: 100). Thus, it has differed from the more explicit, concerted cooperation of the earlier stages of the crisis. Such crisis behavior fits the expectations of systemic theory regarding cooperation under bipolarity: unilateral steps leading to mutual adjustments, tacit bargaining, and unintended cooperation. The absence of a shared vision of world order and of a moral code of conduct has not jeopardized the emergence of tacit arrangements for successful crisis management, including even implicit norms, once the appropriate systemic conditions were in place.

At the same time, the superpower ideological rivalry and cultural heterogeneity have constrained high-level cooperation, such as the construction of explicit security regimes and joint diplomacy in conflict resolution.
SUPERPOWER CONFLICT RESOLUTION DURING NONCRISIS DIPLOMACY

In contrast to the repeated success of superpower crisis management, the record of joint superpower conflict resolution in the Middle East is poor. On various occasions both superpowers have tried to construct common diplomatic initiatives. At times they have taken positions at some distance from their respective clients in order to advance the peacemaking process in the Middle East. Yet, while the positions of the superpowers have at some times been closer than at other times, they have never succeeded in sustaining a collaboration long enough to have a decisive joint impact on the prospects for conflict resolution in the region. That could yet happen, for the formal negotiating positions of Moscow and Washington today are closer to one another than they were in 1981 or 1974. To understand the reasons why each side has approached the task of conflict resolution in the manner that it has, we must focus on the ideological, political, and circumstantial factors that are not treated in a systemic, balance-of-power perspective. But first, let us review the record of U.S.-Soviet cooperation during noncrisis periods.

ATTEMPTS AT SUPERPOWER COOPERATION IN NORMAL DIPLOMACY

The first attempt at superpower cooperation resulted in the endorsement on November 22, 1967, of Resolution 242 by the UN Security Council. The resolution was based on a joint U.S.-Soviet formula, first discussed during the Glassboro summit conference between President Johnson and Premier Kosygin, held a few weeks after the Six Day War (Johnson 1971: 484), and later finalized in negotiations between Foreign Minister Gromyko and Secretary Rusk. The formula called for Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in the June war in exchange for recognition of the right of every state in the region to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries.

Although the Arab-Israeli conflict has remained unresolved, this trade-off constitutes the most widely accepted formula for settling this persistent dispute. In the months immediately following the 1967 war the superpowers demonstrated some willingness and capacity to advance proposals independent of their allies. The United States for a moment that summer was in favor of complete Israeli pullback whereas the Soviet Union supported a negotiated peace (Saunders 1988: 552). Thus, the superpowers helped to establish the foundation for a potential Middle East settlement.
A second attempt at collaboration followed the U.S. presidential elections of 1968. The Soviets indicated their interest in joint diplomacy by putting forward in December 1968 a plan for an overall peace settlement, calling for full implementation of the provisions of Resolution 242. The incoming Nixon administration agreed that Secretary of State Rogers and Assistant Secretary Sisco should conduct substantive talks with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin and ultimately with Foreign Minister Gromyko. Commencing in March 1969 the so-called “two-power talks” picked up considerable momentum while the great powers distanced themselves from their clients' stances, despite Soviet retrogressions in June 1969 (Breslauer 1983: 83–84). On October 28 the superpowers concluded a joint brief to guide an Egyptian-Israeli agreement (Whetten 1974: 75–76). The joint document came to be known as the “First Rogers Plan” and was essentially based on the principle of trading territories for peace. The joint initiative was overshadowed, however, by the escalating War of Attrition along the Suez Canal during the winter of 1969–70. Further progress was made in the two-power talks during the summer of 1970. But, again, developments on the ground, notably U.S.-Israeli accusations of Egyptian-Soviet violations of the cease-fire, overtook the diplomatic collaboration; and the two-power talks were suspended (Whetten 1981: 63).

When a third attempt at cooperation was under way, about a year later, the leadership of U.S.-Middle East policy had already moved from the State Department to the White House. The superpower dialogue on the Middle East was thus conducted by top policymakers. Through an exchange of letters, Nixon and Brezhnev agreed to collaborate (Kissinger 1979: 1285–86, 1288–89). The main substantive negotiations were handled by Kissinger and Gromyko during the May 1972 summit. As a result, the superpowers concluded “general working principles” for a comprehensive peace agreement. The common principles indicated a major Soviet concession, as they made allowances for considerable territorial changes (Kissinger 1979: 1293–94; Quandt 1977: 150–51).

Formal superpower cooperation culminated in the immediate aftermath of the October war. In a scene reminiscent of the great conferences of the nineteenth century, the great powers cochaired the Middle East Peace Conference in Geneva in December 1973. That collaboration was short-lived, however, for Henry Kissinger embarked upon unilateral diplomacy, which continued from 1974 to 1976.

The Carter administration came into office in 1977 with a commitment to renew the superpower collaborative effort. The major manifestation of that diplomatic cooperation was the U.S.-Soviet
The joint communiqué of October 1, 1977. That statement called for withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict; resolution of the Palestinian question, including ensuring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people; termination of the state of war and establishment of normal peaceful relations. (Quandt 1986: 343–44)

This episode, however, was also short-lived, as unilateral diplomacy marked the negotiation of the Camp David accords (1978) and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty (1979).

Finally, the failure of U.S.-sponsored attempts to persuade other Arab states to join Egypt and Israel in the Camp David process has led to renewed interest since 1985 in the idea of an international conference to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute. The Soviets and their allies, the Syrians, have persisted in their support of multilateral diplomacy, which in their view means an active and influential Soviet participation in the peace process. While the Reagan administration has not shown great enthusiasm for joint diplomacy with the Soviets, pro-Western Arab states, most notably Jordan and Egypt, have expressed their support for a multilateral forum. Even more surprising is a recent modification of the Israeli position, at least by the Labor part of the “national unity government.” Under the leadership of then Prime Minister (and now Foreign Minister) Shimon Peres, Labor agreed to an “international forum” or “international sponsorship” of the peace negotiations. This agreement has opened the way for Soviet inclusion in the peace process after many years of firm Israeli support for exclusionary U.S. diplomacy.5

The recurring efforts of the superpowers to coordinate their diplomacy in the Middle East indicate a certain degree of continued commitment to the idea of a joint managerial role for the superpowers in the international system. Their joint diplomacy suggests, moreover, a certain willingness both to cooperate with the rival superpower, sometimes even at the expense of their local allies, and to advance a peace settlement. Such a commitment is present despite the keen competition characterizing postwar superpower relations, and despite the numerous ideological, domestic-political, and regional obstacles to great-power cooperation.

Yet more frequently during normal periods than during times of crisis, the United States and the Soviet Union have sought unilateral advantages and have aspired to maximize their influence at the expense of their adversary. Accordingly, every attempt at collaboration was followed by unilateral policies, with each power using its comparative advantage in order to build up its influence. The big powers did
not, moreover, persist in maintaining distance between their own diplomatic positions and those of their clients. In the aftermath of the collaborative episodes they were quick to return to support their protégés' stances. At any rate, neither superpower managed to persuade the other that it was willing and/or able to restrain its ally. The collective goods of an "international regime"—(local) war avoidance, (global) crisis prevention, (regional) arms control, and conflict resolution—seem to take a back seat to the particular interests of each superpower in its role as protector of local protégés.

An examination of the historical record could, indeed, suggest the dominance of competitive policies. On the whole, Washington has helped to maintain the Israeli military advantage. It has also tended to exclude the Soviets from participation in the peace process and to reject Moscow’s offers of collaboration in settling the Arab-Israeli dispute. Moscow, for its part, has focused on arming the Arabs, especially those that oppose the peacemaking efforts. The general consequences of these superpower policies have been an accelerated arms race in the Middle East, the outbreak of a number of regional wars, and the failure of attempts to reach a comprehensive settlement of the conflict.

More specifically, in the wake of superpower cooperation in reaching UN Security Council Resolution 242, in 1968 the United States and the Soviet Union turned to focus on arming their respective allies without substantial efforts to ameliorate the conflict. In the following year the Soviets backtracked twice from the collaborative road just as an agreement on a settlement seemed to be close—in June 1969 (Whetten 1974: 73; Quandt 1977: 104; Breslauer 1983: 83–84), and most notably six months later. Indeed, on December 23, 1969, the Soviets formally informed the United States of their objection to the joint U.S.-Soviet brief of October 28 of that year (Whetten 1974: 79–80; Breslauer 1983: 84). The major, if not the only, reason for such changes in the Soviet stances appears to have been Arab opposition to progress in the peace process with Israel.6

On top of these diplomatic retrogressions, Moscow deployed air-defense systems in Egypt during 1970. Thus, it does not seem surprising that Washington started to move away from the cooperative path in spring 1970 (Quandt 1977: 98–104). Moreover, following the Soviet role in the Egyptian violations of the cease-fire in August 1970, the United States formally disengaged from the two-power talks. Finally, the shipment of major Soviet military hardware to Egypt and Syria, beginning in February 1973 (Spechler 1986), enabled them to attack Israel on October 6, 1973, probably with some kind of Soviet approval of the use of the military option, if necessary,

Nonetheless, the USSR was not the only great power that played "power politics" by preferring a patron's commitments to big-power "managerial responsibilities." It is true that the publicly stated U.S. diplomatic position, as expressed in the Rogers Plan, considerably diverged from its client's position (Quandt 1977: 91). The United States, moreover, delayed Israeli arms requests in spring 1970 (Quandt 1977: 98; Kissinger 1979: 571; Safran 1981: 438; Spiegel 1985: 190). In the final analysis, however, the United States helped Israel to maintain its qualitative military edge over the Arabs, especially in air power (Quandt 1977: 129-30), and did not lean too forcefully on Israel in the diplomatic field in the period preceding the 1973 war.

In the military domain, the arrival of U.S. Phantom aircraft in Israel in September 1969 guaranteed Israeli air predominance (Quandt 1977: 88; Aronson 1978: 116-17; Riad 1981: 105; Spiegel 1985: 163). This helped Israel inflict devastating losses on Egyptian forces in the fall of 1969. The probable effects on Soviet behavior of this support for Israeli military activities were twofold. First, the Soviets decided at this time (fall 1969), in principle, to escalate their military engagement in the War of Attrition. Second, on the diplomatic front the apparent U.S.-Israeli collusion (Breslauer 1983: 86-87) and the resultant Israeli military superiority (Whetten 1974: 82) were probably important factors in bringing about the Soviet decision to back off from endorsement of the first Rogers Plan.

While Secretary Rogers presented in his plan positions departing from those of Israel, the United States did not exert any pressure on Israel to accept the administration's policy. Thus, although Nixon authorized the submission of the Jordanian portion of the Rogers Plan, he reassured Golda Meir that the United States would go no further and that it would not press its proposal (Kissinger 1979: 376). But the Israelis were not reassured and unleashed a domestic storm in the United States over the Rogers Plan. As a result, not only did Washington not press the acceptance of its proposal, but it approved, earlier than planned, Israeli requests for economic and military aid. Indeed, the first Rogers Plan and the State Department's Middle East policy in general, including collaboration with the Soviet Union, were not wholeheartedly supported by President Nixon. Furthermore, these policies were, in fact, opposed by his influential national security advisor, Kissinger, although the State Department was ostensibly in charge of U.S. Middle East policy in the years 1969-71.
KISSINGER'S STRATEGY AND ITS EFFECTS

Hence, in order to understand superpower noncrisis collaboration, and especially its limitations, one must address Kissinger's strategy in the Middle East, that is, the relations between his objectives, means, and their policy implications in that region (see Kissinger 1979; 1982; Quandt 1977; George 1983; Garthoff 1985; Spiegel 1985; Saunders 1986; Zak 1986). Then, the analyst must examine the intended and unintended effects of this strategy on superpower cooperation.

While he embarked upon a policy of détente and negotiations with the USSR, Kissinger's major objective in the Middle East was to expand Washington's influence at the expense of Moscow's. At a minimum, he hoped that Egypt would defect from the Soviet camp and enter the U.S. orbit. Kissinger's maximal goal was to guarantee U.S. hegemony in the Middle East and to exclude the Soviets from exercising any influence on the international politics of that vital area. The major means for accomplishing a pax Americana was to establish the United States as sole arbiter of the Arab-Israeli conflict and to minimize the role of the Soviets in the peace process.

The major intended effect of the Kissingerian strategy was the July 1972 expulsion of Soviet advisors from Egypt (although Kissinger could not anticipate the form and the timing of such an effect) following the vague U.S.-Soviet declarations of May 1972. These statements created the impression of Soviet support for the status quo and thus alienated Sadat from the Soviets. Nonetheless, an unintended effect of the diplomatic stalemate was the outbreak of the 1973 war. The resort to force by the Arabs (especially Egypt) can be accounted for by their growing frustration with the lack of diplomatic momentum. Moreover, precisely because of the expulsion of their advisors, the Soviets became much more willing to accommodate Arab demands for arms delivery than they had been before (see above). These arms shipments, in turn, made it easier for Egypt and Syria to initiate the 1973 war.

In short, the superpower rivalry and the competition over allies entrapped them in the local conflict. The global contest made the superpowers unable to restrain their allies so as to prevent the outbreak of hostilities and to advance the cause of peace. Indeed, their policies could be blamed for contributing to the escalation of the conflict.

Following the interval of the 1977 attempt to reconvene the Geneva Conference and the October 1 joint statement, the Carter administration likewise turned to what became, in fact, unilateral mediation. Even if it had not been its initial intention, this Democratic administration responded to the Sadat visit to Jerusalem (November
1977) by embarking upon the exclusionary brokerage of the Camp David accords (September 1978), which were later translated into a separate Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty (March 1979).

When the Reagan administration came to power, the exclusionary policy was transformed from an unplanned effect of global and regional developments during Carter's term to the hallmark of deliberate U.S. policy in the region. But while Kissinger's and Carter's unilateral courses, despite their many differences, had been geared to regional conflict resolution, Secretary of State Haig's "strategic consensus" was aimed at constructing an anti-Soviet coalition of Israelis and Arabs.

**PAX AMERICANA IN THE MIDDLE EAST?**

American policy has been based on the assumption that superior U.S. capabilities for influencing events in the region would ensure the success of unilateral mediation. The United States combines superior nonmilitary resources with the willingness to sacrifice tangible short-term benefits for intangible long-term gains. This "leadership" has been manifested in the willingness to invest scarce resources of money and top leaders' time and attention (thus, foregoing tangible resources) for the advancement of the peace process (the long-term objective). Spending time and money, in turn, helps the United States "bribe" small states by offering them "side payments" (financial assistance and technology transfer in addition to "honest brokerage"). Such payments facilitate the acceptance of the "regime" (pax Americana in the Middle East) and of the "collective goods"—peace, stability, justice, mutual recognition, and territorial arrangements.

While the USSR has achieved impressive military capabilities, if not military parity, the United States can offer the Third World countries much more economically and technologically than can the Soviets. Furthermore, particularly in the Middle East, the United States enjoys a diplomatic leverage that the Soviets lack. Israel is the superior military power in the region. Soviet leverage over Israel, however, is limited because it has not maintained diplomatic relations with the Jewish state since the 1967 war and, already before that war, relations were very strained. In contrast, the United States has, at least potentially, substantial leverage over Israel because of the extremely heavy Israeli dependence on American military and economic aid and diplomatic support. The Israeli dependence on Washington is further enhanced because Israel does not have any real option of realignment.
Consequently, once Arab states realized that they could not recover the occupied territories by force because of Israeli military predominance, one could expect, as Kissinger did (1979: 379, 559), that Arab leaders would have to turn to the United States as the chief arbiter. Only the United States, according to this logic, could bring about a settlement that would satisfy the Arabs' territorial demands. Developmental and technological needs could also reinforce the inclination to approach the United States as the principal broker of the regional reconciliation process. Manipulation of its foreign assistance and its pivotal diplomatic position, in turn, could help the United States extract concessions from the local antagonists for attaining regional accommodation under pax Americana.

The United States would be ready to engage in such a tumultuous and tiresome process because pax Americana would stabilize a turbulent and dangerous region and mitigate the primary U.S. dilemma—the tension between the contradictory goals of supporting Israel, maintaining good relations with the Arabs, and ensuring an uninterrupted flow of oil from the Gulf. Furthermore, the likelihood of a superpower clash resulting from a local war would decline.

Moscow, for its part, has refused from the outset to accept the legitimacy of a peace process that does not include a major role for the USSR. The Soviet response has been to reinforce ties with those actors (Libya, Iraq, the PLO, Syria) who opposed what all of them saw as an effort to impose American hegemony in the Middle East. The result has been a diplomatic stalemate regarding solution of the Palestinian problem, a recurrent cycle of violence, increasing power for the extremists on both sides, and ever-growing chances of renewed warfare that might draw in the superpowers. To some observers Soviet unwillingness to accept U.S. unilateralism has been the main cause of this stalemate. To others U.S. unwillingness to take advantage of Soviet interest in collaboration has been the main cause.

THE SOVIET APPROACH TO SUPERPOWER COLLABORATION

A recent survey of the literature on Soviet behavior as a superpower concludes that

Soviet status-consciousness combined with the tendency to look to America, have created an evident yearning to achieve equality and gain global credentials, to be treated as a superpower on a par with the U.S. A pervasive element in Soviet international conduct ever since the
Khrushchev period has thus been the quest for recognition—especially by the U.S.—of its superpower status. (Jonsson 1984: 24–25)

Numerous Soviet statements since the early 1960s, cited by Jonsson (1984: 25–28), underscore their aspiration to fulfill the traditional great-power “right” and “role,” to have a voice in the settlement of international disputes, even those that are geographically remote from its borders. Since the Middle East is not remote from the Soviet Union and, indeed, is much closer to its frontiers than to the United States’ shores, it should not be surprising that the Soviets have especially insisted on their inclusion in the Middle East peace process. As Smolansky observes,

Throughout all the convolutions of Moscow’s Middle East policy since 1955, the one common theme that emerges is the Kremlin’s quest for full superpower status and consequent recognition that its interests must be considered in whatever regional arrangements are reached. (1978: 195; cited also in Jonsson 1984: 194)

Smolansky argues, moreover, that only some kind of peaceful arrangement would enable the Soviet Union to gain the great power status and international legitimacy it aspires to get from being recognized as the coequal collaborator with the United States in settling regional disputes.

A number of analysts have reached the conclusion that the Soviets have been interested in joint diplomacy with the United States in order to resolve the Middle East dispute and jointly guarantee the peace. This interest has been contingent, however, on U.S. willingness to reciprocate, and has been valid only to the extent that the peaceful settlement would not reduce Soviet influence in the Arab world.8

In sum, the United States and USSR have pursued incompatible terms for superpower resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Yet before we argue that factors internal to the states involved explain this pattern, we must deal with the possibility that a systemic explanation would be sufficient. Systemic explanations, such as the balance of power, focus on the distribution of capabilities in the international system. One could argue that in a nuclear bipolar world the fear of a superpower clash is so great that crisis management is greatly facilitated. At the same time, one could argue that even in such a world, it is the relative superpower possession of nonmilitary capabilities that conditions their interest in collaboration for conflict resolution in noncrisis periods. According to the logic of this proposition, the Soviet interest in superpower collaboration stems
from awareness of their inferior economic and diplomatic leverage in the region. Similarly, the U.S. choice of a unilateral approach flows from its awareness of its superior economic and diplomatic resources.

Before we conclude that objective capabilities explain subjective choices, however, we must bear in mind the limits of this explanation. First and foremost, this conclusion cannot explain divergences among and within U.S. and Soviet administrations, and therefore underestimates the degree of contingency in the process of policymaking. Two main groups of decision makers can be discerned. Policymakers who subscribed to the “bandwagoning-global” outlook focus on the global rivalry and believe that states join the stronger party (or coalition of states). Kissinger, for example, expected that inherent U.S. advantages in the Middle East would lead states to accept pax Americana and make it feasible for the United States to exclude the Soviets from the international diplomacy of the region (1979: 379, 559; 1982: 195, 196, 200, 202, 468, 1034).

In contrast, adherents to the “balancing-regional” perspective were more inclined to cooperate with competing great powers in conflict resolution. This group stressed local problems and believed that states tend to join the weaker coalition in order to protect their autonomy. These policymakers therefore lacked confidence that hegemonic policies could succeed in excluding a great power from a region it perceived to be vital to its national interests. State Department officials from the first Nixon administration and the Carter administration were adherents to this perspective and were skeptical of U.S. ability to produce a settlement unilaterally. Secretaries Rogers and Vance believed that if the Soviets had a voice in shaping a settlement, they could restrain their clients. But if the Soviets were excluded, they would help and urge their clients to spoil the peace process.

These differences of opinion among U.S. decision makers indicate that the identity of the “hegemon” and the exclusionary pursuit of “stabilizing” policies are subjective-cognitive matters that, in the final analysis, are influenced by leaders’ perceptions.

A second reason to doubt the proposition that objective capabilities explain subjective choices is that while the balance or imbalance of nonmilitary capabilities may predispose the superpowers toward certain policies, the interactive process between the superpowers can substantially modify their initial behavior. Thus, the Soviets might have been inclined to cooperate with the United States in settling the Arab-Israeli dispute in the aftermath of the 1967 war. The opposition to collaboration in the White House and the eventual choice of a unilateral U.S. approach, however, could explain some
of the Soviet deviations from the cooperative road and their resort to competitive means that seemed to be designed to obstruct the peace process.

At the same time, moderate U.S. policymakers (such as Rogers and Vance) might have sincerely believed that their deviations from joint superpower diplomacy were only in response to regional constraints and seeming Soviet intransigence, rather than the result of a conscious strategy to exclude the Soviets. Moreover, they believed that under these regional circumstances, Washington's unilateralism could contribute to the advancement of peace and thus, presumably, be in the interest of every moderate actor. If the USSR had raised the political ante in reaction to such peace efforts, these officials could perceive the Soviets as obstructing the peace settlement rather than impeding U.S. hegemonic efforts, which might not have been pursued intentionally by the more moderate decision makers. Such an emerging perception of the Soviets, in turn, would reinforce the inclination to exclude them. This tendency would be supported by those officials who were, at any rate, disposed to view the Soviets as the "villain" or the "culprit."

THE "BALANCE OF POWER" EXPLANATION OF NONCRISIS PATTERNS

The "balance-of-power" perspective cannot account for the collaborative urge in Soviet policy or the exclusionary urge in U.S. policy; nor can it account for differences within each state's policy elite. It can account for certain persistent dynamics and outcomes of U.S.-Soviet interaction, however.

The interactive process just described can be seen as reflecting the balancing tendencies in world politics. These tendencies intensify international conflict regardless of the original intentions of the actors, given the prevalence of the security dilemma in an anarchic world. Hence, the Soviets might feel that it is imperative for them to play the role of "spoiler" in the Middle East in response to U.S. unilateral diplomacy, even if Moscow is really interested in stability in the region. As a superpower patron committed to protecting its allies, the United States would feel obliged to accelerate its arms supply to Israel, irrespective of Israeli behavior, and despite its intention to exert moderating pressure on its client. Thus, even though the superpowers' substantive positions about the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict have not been very far apart, and despite their interest in some kind of settlement, the commitment of the United States and the USSR to their allies and
their own security concerns dispose them to pursue conflict and competition.

CONCLUSION

We have seen that a systemic theory of international politics ("balance of power") goes far to explain both the process and the outcomes of superpower crisis management in the Middle East. We have also seen that such a theory helps to explain certain obstacles to superpower collaboration that is geared toward regional conflict resolution during normal periods. The vagaries of such efforts at conflict resolution, however, cannot be understood without reference to factors internal to the states involved. Indeed, in order to reach explicit, consciously concerted cooperation, a number of conditions at levels below that of the international system must be met. Based upon the evidence presented in this chapter, I would point to the following such conditions.

First, the top leaders of the superpowers have to believe in the collaborative inclinations of the adversary. They also have to hold the view that hegemonic policies cannot exclude the other superpower from having a voice in the international politics of a region that is vital to its national interests. Thus, they must come to believe in the necessity and feasibility of superpower collaboration for purposes of conflict resolution. Indeed, the recent movement of the Reagan administration toward greater collaboration with the Soviets in the Arab-Israeli arena might be accounted for by the growing recognition within the administration that the Soviets cannot be excluded from the Middle East at affordable cost, and that Gorbachev is more willing to cooperate with Washington than were his predecessors in the Kremlin.

Second, bureaucratic and political infighting within each capital must be under sufficient control that it does not undermine the pursuit of a consistent and coherent strategy. The intensity of the internal struggle during the first Nixon administration (between Kissinger and Secretary Rogers) obstructed attempts by the State Department to pursue joint diplomacy with Moscow.

Third, allies that can penetrate the domestic political system of a pluralist superpower must not be permitted to prevent the adoption and implementation of the strategy. The ill fate of both the 1969 Rogers Plan and the 1977 joint statement can be, at least partly, accounted for by Israel's opposition and its ability to mobilize a powerful coalition against these plans inside the American political system.

Fourth, small regional powers must accept the need for joint superpower involvement in the forging of a political settlement. Thus,
the recent movement of King Hussein, President Mubarak, and Prime Minister Peres toward supporting an international framework for Middle East peace negotiations that include the participation of the USSR can be explained by their growing belief in the potential superpower contribution to the regional order. Were Israel to support Soviet inclusion, domestic U.S. opposition to cooperation with Moscow would surely decline.

Fifth, while the superpowers can cooperate in managing crises even during eras of cold war, a minimal degree of détente in their relations is necessary in order to concert their diplomacy. Thus, the détentes of 1972 and 1977 were most conducive to U.S.-Soviet diplomatic cooperation. Indeed, the joint statements on resolving the Arab-Israeli dispute were produced in precisely those years (May 1972 and October 1977). The absence of some or all of the other necessary conditions, however, brought about the failure of these attempts at superpower concerted diplomacy.

Such subsystemic factors are presumably easier to change than is the general distribution of capabilities in the international system. Superpower collaboration could yet result from cognitive or political change (or both) in Moscow and Washington. For example, American leaders could decide that unilateral policies jeopardize the improvement of bilateral, Soviet-American relations. Or Washington could decide that exclusionary strategies are extremely costly and dangerous and, in the final analysis, have questionable chances of success at affordable cost in a world in which both superpowers are committed to their status as global powers. Superpower collaboration could also result should Moscow and Washington jointly learn of their collective “responsibilities” as great powers to the stability of the world. Each side could arrive at a deeper appreciation of the uncontrollable character of regional dynamics, which could result in a greater sense of urgency about the need to concert their efforts, and a greater sense of futility about the payoff to be had from competitive policies.

In sum, the question remains open as to whether the superpowers will learn to cooperate in noncrisis periods in order to resolve these local conflicts that continue to poison their relations and threaten escalation.

ENDNOTES


4. As distinguished from the four-power talks in which London and Paris also took part. This set of negotiations was clearly less important than the two-power talks.

5. There are at least two recent precedents for such an Israeli agreement, however. First, Israel was ready to accept Moscow's participation in the Geneva Peace Conference of 1973. Second, it was none other than the Israeli government under Menachem Begin that backed, at least formally, the efforts to reconvene the Geneva Conference in 1977 before Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in November 1977.


9. As expressed in UN Resolution 242, the first Rogers Plan, and in the May 1972 and October 1977 joint statements.

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As Benjamin Miller has argued in the previous chapter, structural or neorealist theories of international relations may explain a good deal about the record of U.S.-Soviet competition and collaboration in the Middle East. Those theories may explain the record of consistent crisis management—control of escalation in acute crisis situations (though we can never be sure). They may also explain the consistent failure of superpower efforts to forge a diplomatic settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. As neorealist theories would predict, during noncrisis periods the logic of competition between rival great powers would overwhelm the capacity to forge an ongoing collaborative relationship.

Grand structural theories cannot be expected to explain either the process or the path of efforts to coordinate superpower diplomacy, only perhaps the frustrating outcome of those efforts to date. As Miller also points out, and as evidence from other chapters in this volume demonstrates, the overwhelming of collaborative processes was not the result of equal disinterest or distrust on both sides. The frustration was not caused by bipolarity per se; were that the case, we would expect both superpowers to be equally disinterested in collaboration. Rather, the relative power of the United States and the Soviet Union in the region appears to have fed into their calculations of their interests. Thus, perhaps because of her greater political and economic leverage in the region, and because of her exclusive leverage over Israel, the U.S. government since 1970 has been consistently less interested than the USSR in superpower collaboration as a mechanism for settling Middle East conflicts.

This explanation for the failure of superpower collaboration is consistent with a traditional realist perspective, for it deduces interests.
from capabilities. Such a perspective, however, should also alert us to the growing possibilities for collaboration that may emerge as relative capabilities shift, or as policymakers learn the limits of their ability to employ available power resources to achieve their goals. Under those circumstances, policymakers' definitions of their interests can evolve, forcing us to consider cognitive factors as we search for the preconditions for superpower collaboration.

For example, unilateral American diplomacy has thus far failed to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict, though it has succeeded in removing Egypt from a war footing with Israel. Certainly Moscow does not have the power to turn the tables and unilaterally broker a settlement or impose her will on the warring parties. But she may well have the leverage to encourage ambivalent local actors to participate constructively in a peace process in which the Soviet Union would play an important role. And conversely, Moscow probably also has the leverage to encourage and reward intransigence on the part of key actors, should the process of conflict mitigation or conflict resolution move in the direction of consciously undermining Soviet, and bolstering American, influence in the region. Presumably, given the numerous forces of radicalism in the region and the politically shaky position of the forces of compromise, Moscow has sufficient points of leverage through which to conduct obstructive policies, if so inclined.

Superpower collaboration need not seek to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict once and for all. Its goals could be more modest. We may wish for conflict resolution, but we must also prepare for more modest forms and degrees of cooperation (for example, measures to restrict the delivery, development, or use of ballistic missiles or chemical weapons). Once we allow for more modest degrees of collaboration, attention to cognitive factors becomes still more important than does the deduction of interests from overall capabilities. Extensive work on the requisites of superpower crisis prevention has been conducted and inspired by Alexander George (1982). Some theoretical work has appeared recently on the requisites of conflict management in the Middle East (Ben-Dor and Dewitt 1987). George and associates (1988) have sought to specify the conditions for varied forms and degrees of superpower cooperation. All these bodies of literature are relevant to our effort to understand the conditions for reducing the escalatory potential of Middle East conflicts. In this chapter I will review factors obstructing and facilitating superpower cooperation in this region and will ask whether the evidence regarding Soviet collaborative and competitive orientations suggests that Soviet behavior, if reciprocated, might increase the probability of conflict mitigation in the near future.
OBSTACLES TO SUPERPOWER SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

There are numerous obstacles to security cooperation between the superpowers—both generally and in this region—that would have to be overcome to advance even the more modest goals of crisis prevention and conflict management. First, there are general obstacles that impede cooperation of any sort. These include ideological differences between the United States and the USSR; asymmetries in their relative power and leverage on the global scene, which in turn affect their calculations of national needs and national interests; the distrust and uncertainty that impede the ability to verify compliance with agreements at mutually acceptable levels of confidence; the security dilemma that pervades their interactions; the momentum of technological development that frequently outstrips their ability to stabilize the political-military relationship; and domestic constraints on superpower cooperation (George et al. 1988: 656). In light of all this, Steven Weber is wise to conclude that “achieving cooperation under anarchy in mixed-motive ‘games’—even when there are strongly shared interests—is no mean feat” (Weber 1988: 634).

Second, there are further obstacles specific to the Middle East as a region and as an issue. This is a region of “disputed interest symmetry,” that is, one in which Moscow and Washington disagree about whether their respective stakes in the area are equally large. Theorists inform us that such a condition is “least amenable to mutually acceptable rules of conduct” (George 1982: 385). Then, too, the Arab-Israeli dispute is classifiable as an “acute and protracted conflict” in which states are most likely to “compete to maximize relative differences [in wealth, security, or status] with their opponent rather than on increasing their own gains”—a condition that theorists also specify as one under which conflict management is a low probability outcome (Stein 1987: 61, 59). Indeed, Saunders argues that this has been a leading obstacle to superpower collaboration in the Middle East: “[N]either [superpower] seems ready to cooperate with the other if cooperation would result in enhancing the other’s position” (1988: 577). Finally, cooperation is impeded by the lack of control that the United States and USSR exercise over their allies in the region. When “smaller allies . . . seek not to avoid war but to provoke crisis” (Stein 1988: 172)—recall Nasser in 1969, Sadat in 1973, the PLO throughout much of the 1970s and 1980s, Ariel Sharon in June 1982—and when the superpowers remain committed to the protection of their allies, it is relatively easy for regional actors to polarize the situation on the ground and frustrate superpower efforts at joint conflict management. In sum, disputed interest symmetry, zero-sum perspectives on competition, and lack
of control over uncompromising regional allies combine to make the Middle East a region unusually obstructive of superpower efforts to mitigate conflict jointly.

And yet no theory persuasively rules out the possibility of success for such efforts, especially when more modest forms of cooperation are under consideration. The general obstacles to collaboration have been overcome in areas such as arms control, European security, certain technical domains, naval incidents at sea, and others (George et al. 1988). Currently, some progress is being made on superpower collaboration in southern Africa. What has made this possible?

**FACTORS FACILITATING SUPERPOWER COOPERATION**

A number of conditions relevant to the Middle East appear to be conducive to overcoming the obstacles to collaboration just noted. We do not yet have a deductive theory that persuasively allows us to assign weights to these factors. So let us merely list them: a mutual awareness of high interdependence and high vulnerability between the superpowers in the issue domain (George et al. 1988: 644–46); relatedly, complementary, if not common, fears of the consequences of nonagreement; a common desire to improve the condition of the general superpower relationship; a mutual awareness that the "game" will be played many times again, such that future payoffs are not "highly discounted in relation to present pay-offs" (Weber 1988: 634, based on Axelrod 1984); and strong leadership on at least one side that can overcome political obstacles to agreements. As for the region-specific factors, the example of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty demonstrates that within the region a common aversion to war may be sufficient for given local actors to abandon their extremist ambitions and make peace (Stein 1987). More fundamentally, we should note that almost all the facilitating factors noted, as well as two of the three region-specific obstacles (disputed interest symmetry and zero-sum perspectives on competition), are subjective in nature. Thus, if almost all the region-specific obstacles and facilitating factors hinge ultimately on perceptions and perspectives, there is hope for superpower convergence in their definitions of their interests, for these are plausibly capable of alteration through a learning process. Whether such convergence will result in successful conflict management, however, will depend on their capabilities—that is, their joint ability to pressure their clients toward accommodation. But the will must first be there.

Indeed, the "new political thinking" in Moscow may be an example of learning, a matter to which we will devote considerable
attention later in this chapter. As for Washington, Dennis B. Ross, a leading official in the Bush administration and a contributor to this volume, was recently quoted as pointing to the proliferation of chemical weapons and ballistic missiles in the Middle East as creating "a convergence between U.S. and Soviet interests in the region, with new opportunities for cooperation between the superpowers" (Pear 1988). Within the region itself the PLO's hesitant recognition of Israel, and the need Israel felt to respond with a peace plan of its own, if not aborted by extremist efforts to repolarize the situation, may inch matters toward new approaches to conflict management, if not conflict resolution. Thus, the subjective factor may be changing in Moscow, Washington, and the Middle East itself.

Whether all this results in any form of conflict mitigation remains to be seen. If such efforts are successful, however, what might such measures look like? Among those most likely to be pertinent to the circumstances of the Middle East are the establishment of neutral or demilitarized zones or areas (Lauren 1982); early-warning systems, police zones, and on-site inspections (Dewitt 1987: 252); restrictions on the numbers and types of arms transferred to the region, or to certain actors within the region (George 1982: 388-89); the introduction of peacekeeping forces to separate combatants (Haas 1986); the use of third parties as mediators; and superpower pressure on local allies to compromise for the sake of reaching agreements and to insulate the process against efforts to obstruct it. More generally, measures and mechanisms will be required for clearly and rapidly detecting defection from obligations, for punishing such defection and rewarding compliance, and for distinguishing offensive from defensive weapons systems (Jervis 1978; Stein 1987). In many cases such measures would be required even in the context of conflict resolution—that is, in the context of a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The question now to be addressed is whether the evolution of Soviet policies and perspectives has been in a direction, and of sufficient magnitude, to further the cause of introducing such measures and mechanisms into the Middle East.

**ON THE EVOLUTION OF SOVIET THINKING**

One way to approach the question of evolution is to compare the mind-set that informed Soviet Middle East policy in the 1950s with the mind-set that informs it today. In the 1950s Khrushchev and his colleagues looked upon the region of the Arab-Israeli conflict as an opportunity to be exploited (Smolansky 1974; Klinghoffer and Apter 1985). The Soviets saw the "Arab East" as an area fertile for
competitive gain at the expense of "imperialism" and to the benefit of the USSR. They still assumed that Arab nationalist regimes were transitional phenomena that would evolve into radical socialist regimes. They also saw the United States, Great Britain, and France as imperialist adversaries that were on the defensive against the rising tide of decolonization. There was relatively little doubt in Khrushchev's mind that indigenous forces would eventually expel imperialism from the region. The main goal of Soviet policy therefore was to assist Arab nationalism in its anti-imperialist struggle for national liberation, and then to assist and encourage nationalist regimes to make the transition to radical socialism. In a similar vein, the main goal in the foreign policy realm was to encourage these regimes to adopt a "positive neutralist" stance in world affairs, and then to evolve into staunch allies of the USSR.

Of course, the prevailing thinking in Moscow was not entirely opportunistic and activist. A strong realization that the region was a dangerous place in which to compete also existed. The Baghdad Pact, Arab-Israeli conflict, the Suez crisis of 1956, and the U.S.-British invasions of 1958 demonstrated both that imperialism would employ force to evade or postpone its being expelled and that backing erstwhile allies could require threats of military intervention that might be called. Hence, Soviet optimism about the long run was tempered somewhat by awareness of the short-term risks of escalation—a combination that often resulted in cautious activism and avoidance of engagement in trains of events during Khrushchev's term. It did not, however, result in a developed Soviet strategy of long-term superpower or great-power collaboration in the region.

Now let us compare these perspectives with those that prevailed in Moscow in the early 1980s, before Gorbachev came to power. By that time, as Malcolm has aptly put it, the region had come to be viewed "more [as] a problem to be solved than an opportunity to be exploited" (1988: 101). Optimism about the inevitable and imminent victory of the Arab national liberation struggle against the influence of imperialism had given way to sobriety if not pessimism on that score. Optimism that Arab nationalism would be transformed into radical socialism had given way to a sense that a complex variety of alternatives—some good, some bad—were also possible, and that Soviet-style socialism was not likely to take root in the Arab East in the foreseeable future. The Islamic fundamentalist revival, the resilience of religion, culture, and Pan-Arabism, and the fate of indigenous Communist parties left Soviet leaders with a sense that while there was nothing so sure as change in this unstable region, there was also little hope of predicting the direction in which change would go, and whether that change would prove welcome to Moscow.
In like manner, by 1982 Soviet leaders no longer displayed optimism about the reliability of Soviet partners as allies in the Middle East. The defection of Sadat in 1972, and again in 1975 and 1976, was a major blow both to Soviet competitive leverage in the region and to Soviet expectations about Arab nationalists' foreign policy allegiances. These expectations were further eroded by the Iran-Iraq War, by Syrian unwillingness to heed Soviet demands throughout the 1970s (especially in Lebanon), by PLO unwillingness to listen to Soviet urgings, and by the removal of Egypt from the war with Israel through the Camp David accords. Thus, at both the domestic and the foreign policy levels in Moscow a perception of the intrinsic uncontrollability of events in the region had emerged dominant.

Nor did the Soviets perceive imperialism to be on the verge of expulsion from the Middle East. The American stake in maintaining, at minimum, access to Middle East oil and underwriting Israeli security, both to be achieved by military means if necessary, displayed to the Soviets the lengths to which the United States would be willing to go to maintain commitments in the region. The dependence on or flirtation with U.S. aid by many regimes in the region convinced most Soviet leaders that the competitive game was far more complex than a simple projection from decolonization would suggest.

Again comparing the late Brezhnev era with the early Khrushchev era, we find a much different approach to conflict mitigation and superpower collaboration. Khrushchev sensed dangers of superpower confrontation in the region and sought to deal with them largely through tacit avoidance and caution. He did call for a mutual superpower embargo of arms sales to the Middle East, but, coming at a time when the United States was by far the larger supplier of arms to the region, this proposal was too one-sided to be taken seriously either by officials in Washington (Halliday 1981: 116) or by theorists of cooperation (who require a certain degree of reciprocity and symmetry of exchange for an initiative to qualify as “cooperative” [see chapter 1]). Brezhnev had explicitly incorporated into Soviet policy toward the region a sustained collaborative track, based on terms that were more predictably negotiable. Soviet leaders opted for this dual-track policy out of both ambition and fear. On the one hand, they had very much deepened their level of involvement with and commitment to their Arab clients. They had gone from being a supplier to being a protector of these regimes against a strategic military defeat. On the other hand, the Arab-Israeli conflict had heated up during the Brezhnev era; the level of weaponry had increased to the point that maintenance of Soviet status as an acknowledged protector of the Arabs would require substantially higher risk taking than it had during the 1950s. If superpower confrontations were to be avoided, the Soviet
Union would need to coordinate continuously with the United States. If the objective situation were to be kept sufficiently under control as to keep it from dragging the superpowers willy-nilly into a direct conflict, Moscow and Washington would have to collaborate to make progress toward resolving the substance of the Arab-Israeli conflict. These beliefs informed the Soviet switch to a strategy of collaborative competition sometime after the June 1967 war, their even greater sense of urgency and flexibility about collaboration following the October 1973 war, and their continuing commitment to a negotiated settlement during the remainder of the 1970s and 1980s.

As we survey the decline of optimism between the late 1950s and the early 1980s, we should not lose sight of important points of continuity, points that are demonstrated vividly in chapters 3, 4, and 5 of this volume. The USSR remained committed to the Arab cause against Israel and Western imperialism. Moscow also remained committed to preserving her position in the region and to preventing the United States from expanding her military presence there. The Soviets continued to assume the malign character of U.S. intentions, assumptions that were reinforced by U.S. behavior during the Lebanon and Iran-Iraq wars. But Moscow retained a basically optimistic faith that the "long-term" tide of history, would strengthen indigenous forces working to expel imperialist influence. Thus, at the level of both normative commitment to the anti-imperialist cause and philosophical assumptions about the course of history, a basic continuity allowed Soviet leaders to maintain a determined and selectively optimistic posture toward competition in the region. Specifically, optimism remained relatively high regarding denial goals: the ability to ally with and assist forces that would frustrate imperialism's efforts to control events. Optimism had declined markedly, however, regarding acquisitive goals: the ability to translate imperialism's setbacks into Soviet gains, or to see gains for Soviet policy in the region cumulate. In this respect, an erosion of zero-sum assumptions about the nature of the competition had taken place.

How much has changed since the early 1980s? Galia Golan has shown in chapter 6 that Soviet policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict has evolved somewhat under Gorbachev. Soviet negotiating terms for an Arab-Israeli settlement have become a bit more flexible (the major moderation of terms having come in July 1984, before Gorbachev); the Soviets have shown more serious interest in superpower collaboration against terrorism; and the Soviet strategy of competition has become more receptive to association with conservative monarchies and previously anathematized regimes (especially Israel), and slightly less receptive to the requests of radical regimes. Thus, there has been an evolution along both tracks of the collaborative-competitive strategy, but not a rupture with the past.
Soviet doctrine about international relations more generally has evolved substantially under Gorbachev, however, and this may provide clues as to the direction in which Soviet policy in the Middle East might go should conditions for still greater flexibility emerge, for example, within the context of an international conference on the Arab-Israeli conflict. There are many components of the self-proclaimed "new thinking," at varying levels of abstraction. A few of them are not entirely new, many others are new, and the entire package is certainly both novel and significant (Dallin 1988; Legvold 1987; Hasegawa 1987; Kubalkova and Cruickshank 1988). Those elements that are most relevant to potential Soviet policy in the Middle East include:

1. The interests of humankind transcend the class struggle. This formulation is often accompanied by the observation that certain global problems require great-power collaboration for their solution, lest they threaten human survival. One such global problem is accidental nuclear war, a fear that in the regional context is reinforced by the perception that the superpowers' clients now have the means to unleash a war with unprecedentedly high escalatory potential.

2. Peaceful coexistence is not a form of class struggle. This doctrinal revision is related to the first and, in a sense, operationalizes it. Although this revision still remains at a fairly abstract level as stated, it basically means that the weight of the competitive strand in Soviet foreign policy must be reduced relative to the weight of the collaborative strand, and that the latter, as in point number one (above), must be given ideological sanction as an end in itself.

3. The international system must be thought of as characterized by a high level of interdependence and resisting bifurcation into two camps; the globe must be thought of as an "integral whole." This replaces a perspective that treated the international system as divided into capitalist and socialist camps between which the nonaligned countries would eventually choose. Related to the new theme of interdependence are injunctions to abandon a zero-sum perspective on superpower competition, and to recognize instead that in some situations competition might inflict unacceptable pain on both sides.

4. National security cannot be attained without mutual security between adversaries. The previous emphasis on deterrence through intimidation must yield to a greater awareness that such intimidation only results in countermeasures and an escalation spiral. The alternative—mutual security through minimal deterrence and accentuated reassurance—must be
negotiated through political, not military means, based on reasonable compromises and a "balance of interests."

5. Solutions to problems must be sought that draw many countries and multinational organizations into the resolution of conflict. Multilateral approaches to problem solving, then, must be given greater emphasis than previously, when bilateralism (United States-USSR) prevailed, and such organizations as the United Nations were bypassed, ignored, or treated formally.

6. Linkage is a reality of American politics. This perspective replaces the earlier Soviet insistence that the condition of superpower competition in the Third World not be permitted to affect the state of superpower collaboration on such issues as arms control, trade, and European security. In practice, that effort at compartmentalization has failed (Breslauer 1982b). Revisions of perspective of the 1980s include the recognition that reverberation is a reality and that decisions about regional policy will affect prospects for success in Soviet-American collaboration on issues of higher priority.

Obviously, all these perspectives could reinforce Soviet flexibility on Middle East issues. A heightened fear of accidental nuclear war, caused by nuclear terrorism or uncontrollable state clients, and a heightened awareness of the counterproductivity of some competitive efforts would create a still greater sense of urgency about settling or mitigating the Arab-Israeli conflict. Greater awareness that military approaches are often counterproductive could dilute the Soviet commitment to building up the military capacity of her clients as a background condition for negotiations with Israel. Stress on accommodation through reassurance at the expense of deterrence through intimidation could increase Soviet sensitivity to Israel's security dilemma. This could result in greater Soviet flexibility about the scope and character of border adjustments, security guarantees, and demilitarization in the context of a settlement. The interdependence theme could make Soviet negotiators more receptive to the idea of regional confederations and economic interrelationships that could buttress a settlement by raising the price of retrogression (what Robert Freedman [1979: 316] calls a Model II settlement). Furthermore, the stress on multilateral organizations and Soviet efforts to bolster the authority and role of the UN Secretary General in regional conflict resolution could both improve the chances of success in conflict mitigation (Haas 1986) and ease the Soviet approach-avoidance dilemma by diffusing responsibility for pressuring her clients in the region to be flexible.

Then, too, if taken seriously and at face value, the new thinking could ease the fears of some Soviet leaders that unilateral American
initiatives, whether geared toward a peace settlement or toward military competition, will be successful at Soviet expense. Recall that in chapter 7 we found that both P. Demchenko and E. Primakov were occasionally uniquely susceptible to fears that imperialism might "irreversibly" consolidate its position in the region. These were the men who strove most vigorously to articulate strategies that balanced competitive and collaborative premises. It is therefore not unreasonable to suggest that within the Politburo similar fears existed among the majority of members seeking to reconcile competition with collaboration. All of which suggests that leading Soviet decision makers possess a real ambivalence about the optimistic and deterministic assumptions built into the ideology, an ambivalence that is reinforced by the logic of a mixed strategy of collaborative competition. Under Brezhnev that ambivalence resulted in a determination and a need to actively obstruct U.S. unilateralism. Both the content of Gorbachev's "new thinking" and the ongoing Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories could ease the fears and ambivalence about the ability of imperialism to control events, and could therefore increase the probability of a Soviet decision to try to change U.S. policy through conciliation rather than through obstruction. Certainly, Gorbachev's unilateral concessions on European security issues suggest that the Soviet leader has adopted such an approach in that policy realm.

A perspective on the international and regional political orders that presumes that events are uncontrollable and that there is nothing so sure as change would increase confidence that U.S. unilateralism will fail. If governed by that calming belief, Soviet leaders would be less inclined to raise the competitive ante in response to exclusion. The result of such a posture could be to reduce the likelihood of an escalation spiral, and thereby to increase the chances of both escalation control and eventual collaboration between the superpowers. Were the Soviets to make a conciliatory gesture in the face of U.S. frustration, it might break down some of the resistance in the United States to Soviet inclusion in the peace process. Nor should we rule out the possibility that as in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe in the late 1970s, the USSR under Gorbachev would be willing to desist from obstructing a unilateral American effort to effect a radical solution—in this case, establishment of a Palestinian state or homeland.

The new thinking could also encourage Moscow "to try to change the political base for negotiation" (Saunders 1988: 573), by engaging the local parties to the dispute on their own terms. This approach is implicit in Moscow's expanded relations with Israel, and certainly reflects a dilution of the traditionalist Soviet emphasis on exclusive ties with local regimes and zero-sum struggle with the United States for competitive influence (see chapter 7). Once so engaged, Moscow
might come up with new ideas regarding processes and forms of conflict mitigation, which some theorists believe to be necessary to de-escalate the Arab-Israeli conflict (Zartman 1988). This would especially be the case if the new thinking’s emphasis on flexibility leads Moscow to be less dogmatic about the need for a comprehensive settlement and more receptive to a step-by-step approach. All of which, if it came to pass, would reflect a Soviet redefinition of the calculus of both “approach” and “avoidance.”

Now let us relate these implications of the new thinking to the factors facilitating and impeding superpower security cooperation. Certainly the new thinking, taken at face value, suggests a heightened awareness of vulnerability and interdependence between the superpowers, a heightened fear of the consequences of nonagreement, a heightened willingness and desire to conciliate the adversary in order to improve the overall political-military relationship, and a diminished obsession with maximizing relative differences in wealth, security, and status with the opponent in the region. Less obviously, the new thinking reflects a reevaluation of the time perspective; it treats current gains as chimerical relative to the future losses likely to be incurred if the USSR does not reduce its level of competitive activism abroad and concentrate on repairing the home front. Thus, relative to the Brezhnev era, future payoffs are less “highly discounted in relation to present payoffs” (Weber 1988: 634). Indeed, this perceived imperative to repair the home front may be cited as a basic cause of the emergence of the new thinking as a force in contemporary Soviet foreign policy formation (Breslauer 1989a).

New thinking could also improve the chances for success of U.S.-Soviet discussions geared toward clarification of superpower interests in this region of “disputed interest symmetry.” Thus far, as Saunders notes, four years of regular discussions by officials at the subcabinet level have not led to much “self-revelation” on either side (1988: 580). This is not entirely surprising. While theorists of cooperation argue that such discussions could be beneficial to the development of a U.S.-Soviet crisis-prevention regime, the obstacles to candor in such formats are formidable. Each side has a strong incentive to exaggerate its interests. Each side will be tempted to exaggerate the political infeasibility “back home” of being flexible. Each side will also be inclined to exaggerate its inability to exercise leverage over its clients, defining the issue as one of capabilities (or the lack thereof), rather than one of will. In sum, the temptation to dissimulate in such forums can be great.

Nonetheless, if such discussions are continuous, private, geared toward exploring points of overlap among superpower interests in the region, and charged with demonstrating progress, they can, over time,
erode the obstacles just noted. For the actors involved (assuming there is low turnover among discussants) may develop a stake in both the success of the mission and their credibility as individuals. (These pressures, for example, appear to have pushed Paul Nitze and Yuli Kvitsinsky toward their famous "walk in the woods" compromise proposal on the Euromissiles controversy.)

Thus far we have not witnessed a comparable breakthrough at the subcabinet level discussion on the Middle East. Yet the continuity of perspectives and personnel between the Reagan and Bush administrations could contribute to more candor should Bush administration personnel feel the need to make progress on this regional issue. Moreover, the new political thinking in Moscow, to the extent that it informs policy on Middle East affairs, could dilute the temptations to dissimulate and manipulate. Thus, Golan (chapter 6) notes that Gorbachev has called for a "balance of interests" in the Middle East and reasonable compromises that reflect such a balance. This constitutes a rhetorical revision on the Soviet part, one that downplays the substantive content of a settlement while it plays up the need for flexibility. Such a perspective is more conducive than the substantive focus to exploring with some candor the points of overlap among the interests of the parties involved, for it implicitly legitimizes a priori certain interests of the adversary that were previously downplayed or denied. Similarly, that component of the new thinking that emphasizes reassurance over intimidation could stimulate Soviet interlocutors to become more sensitive to U.S. discussants' reactions to Soviet initiatives, and to avoid gratuitous bravado that might prove counterproductive.

The new thinking could also undercut Soviet overreactions to U.S. claims about political feasibility and client control. Thus, by accepting as a reality the existence of linkage in American politics, Soviet officials are less likely to write off such U.S. claims as manipulative and are more likely to seek ways of changing U.S. domestic political realities through reassurance. Indeed, in many realms of foreign policy, Soviet unilateral concessions have been motivated in part by a desire to deprive American hard-liners of the "Soviet threat" and to change the image of the Soviet Union held in the West from enemy to partner. Similarly, by acknowledging the universality of problems of client control, Soviet leaders undercut the more conspiratorial Soviet interpretations of U.S.-Israeli coordination and consensus (see chapters 7 and 8). In sum, just as the new thinking could hypothetically reduce the ambivalence that fueled the Soviet approach-avoidance dilemma, so too could that new thinking reduce the dissimulation that can hamper progress in private discussions.

Another way to think about the possible impact of the new thinking is to contrast it with the perspectives that informed the
dépêche of the 1970s. Elsewhere I have argued that one reason détente failed was that each side sought to define the terms of competition and collaboration (that is, the definitions of reciprocity and restraint on each track) in ways that played to its own comparative advantage and to the other side's comparative disadvantage (1982b). Since the Soviet comparative advantage was the military instrument, this approach accorded well with the Brezhnev regime's Middle East policy. That policy sought negotiation from a position of Arab military strength, with control of the war option being an ever-present means of responding to U.S. unilateralism. The new thinking's explicit depreciation of the payoff to be had from use of the military instrument constitutes a redefinition of the nature or existence of a usable Soviet comparative advantage in this realm. It also undercuts the arguments of those Soviet officials who would emphasize struggle rather than diplomacy as the route to defusing the Arab-Israeli conflict (see chapter 7); and with its stress on expanding political ties with all actors, including Israel, as a means of diversifying the means and points of leverage of the USSR in the area it squares with recent changes in Soviet policy toward the region.

This list of ways in which new thinking could make Soviet policy more flexible and conciliatory is based, of course, on "best-case" scenarios. There is justification for such an approach, since Gorbachev has surprised us all with the scope of his domestic and foreign policy changes. Given this record, the burden of persuasiveness should fall on those who endorse "worst-case" interpretations of what might be possible. Yet, at the same time, we should recognize that the relationship between the formal doctrinal content of "new thinking" and likely future Soviet behavior is by no means straightforward. First, new thinking is a doctrine in the process of formation; we cannot say how much further it will be elaborated upon or, most importantly, how many of the abstract concepts will be operationalized. Second, the relationship between new thinking and concrete policy changes is rarely direct and unproblematic.

Many other factors could mediate the relationship between new perspectives and actual behavior. Among such factors one would have to include politics, emotions, existing commitments to allies in the region, and the behavior of the United States and Israel. Thus, leaders have to justify their actions to audiences that may not share the new thinking, or that may share elements of it only to varying degrees. Similarly, emotions can run high regarding issues on which Soviet diplomacy has been so consistently excluded, on which Soviet clients have been so frequently humiliated, and on which there is a strong domestic-political implication for Moscow (the issue of Soviet Jewry and of anti-Semitism). Then, too, existing commitments to Syria
and the PLO, or to the Arab cause more generally, raise the price of changing course, even when the present course is no longer defined as cost-effective. And, of course, both competition and collaboration are interactive processes; the behavior of the adversary or would-be partner can affect Moscow’s calculation of the benefits to be gained from being conciliatory, as well as the ease of legitimizing conciliatory gestures to domestic audiences. Since the competitive streak is more deeply rooted in the Soviet ideological tradition than is the collaborative (see chapter 1), new political thinking runs against the grain of much of the political culture, making it more difficult to act upon when politics, emotions, and the behavior of adversaries are not supportive of the effort (Breslauer 1989b).

For example, Moltz and Ross, in chapter 5 of this volume, reach the conclusion that wars in the Middle East, within the context of which the United States sought to increase its military presence in the region, could short-circuit the impact of any new thinking on actual Soviet behavior. The high escalatory potential of those wars, combined with the proximity of the conflicts to Soviet borders, make it unlikely that Moscow will either take high risks, on the one hand, or accommodate U.S. military gains without offsetting behavior, on the other. The lesson to be drawn from this record is that a nonwar situation may well be a precondition for new thinking to result in still greater Soviet flexibility along the collaborative track of its Middle East policy.

Then, too, the Middle East situation revolves around a conflict in which core Soviet philosophical assumptions are engaged. As we saw in chapter 7, Soviet militants and moderates share an ideologically conditioned belief that short of a solution based on Palestinian self-determination, the Arab-Israeli conflict can neither be solved nor defused. That belief would lead Soviet policymakers to avoid becoming involved in efforts to solve the conflict without Palestinian self-determination—not because it would offend Soviet values, not only because it would alienate Soviet state-allies in the region, and certainly not because it would offend the PLO (Golan, chapter 3, argues that Soviet commitment to the Palestinians and the PLO has been instrumental), but principally because Soviet leaders would not have faith that the solution would work. The Palestinian uprising since 1987 could only have reinforced this belief, as well as the confidence that if a war can be avoided, time is not on the side of the Israeli hard-line position. In short, even if the new thinking engendered greater Soviet flexibility in negotiations (for example, restoring diplomatic relations with Israel in advance of negotiations, renouncing extremist wings of the PLO and cutting off their military supplies, reducing arms shipments to Syria, working openly with the West to crack down
on Libyan and Syrian terrorism, or publicly conceding the desirability of border changes in the context of a settlement), we should not expect such flexibility to lead to the renunciation of Soviet demands for a Palestinian homeland, albeit one perhaps in confederation with Jordan. Hence, at a minimum we should expect to witness considerable Soviet ambivalence, both individual and collective, in the course of collaboration. The Soviets will seek new approaches that increase the probability of a settlement, but will prove averse to being drawn into deals that would force them to renounce their most basic commitments or assumptions.

Thus far we have been discussing the possible impact of new thinking on Soviet approaches to superpower collaboration in the region. But the Soviet approach to competition in the region could also change under the impact of the new thinking. Having acknowledged that the international order is marked by tight coupling ("interdependence"), that regional competition is often a symmetrical negative-sum game (both sides take their lumps equally), that linkage is a reality, that either superpower is unlikely ever to be capable of controlling in detail local situations in turbulent regions, and that prolonged concentration on the home front is the top Soviet developmental priority (and national security imperative), it becomes difficult to legitimize (either to oneself or to one's domestic audiences) a strategy of struggle based on the search for exclusive relationships, consistently reliable allies, zero-sum military competition, and the supplanting of imperialist positions at acceptable risk. Thus, if we refer back to chapter 7 once again, we see that the new thinking is incompatible with much of the approach taken by Messrs. Kudriavtsev, Beliaev, and Demchenko—the militants and centrists in our sample. It is more consistent with the approach of Primakov and Bovin—the moderates in our sample.

This raises the question of whether we should think of Soviet policy in the Middle East in cognitive or political terms—as a product of a relatively unified problem-solving elite with mixed motives, which learns over time about alternative ways of defining and pursuing its interests, or as a product of bargaining among rival factions that replace each other in control of regional policy as the game of politics goes forward.

POLITICAL VERSUS UNITARY EXPLANATIONS OF CHANGE

Are the current changes a product of political change or cognitive change? That is, do they result from the replacement of "old thinkers" by "new thinkers" or by the evolution of "old thinkers"
into “new thinkers”? Certainly the evidence displayed in chapter 7 should make us wary of claims that many militants or centrists have evolved into moderates. We discovered little or no fundamental learning among the spokesmen studied in that chapter. Rather, it would appear that the new thinking represents the acceptance by Gorbachev and his coalition of the premises long since advocated in vain by the moderates or near-moderates within the journalistic and academic establishments. As a result, many recalcitrant old thinkers have been retired and replaced by people who have thought differently all along or who learned much earlier. For example, former head of the International Department of the Central Committee Boris Ponomarev was a dogmatic advocate of zero-sum struggle; he was initially replaced by Anatolyi Dobrynin, who was a proponent of a more moderate strategy of collaborative competition. Evgenii Primakov, whose writings have been analyzed in chapters 7 and 8 of this volume, was more moderate than most other commentators on the Middle East throughout the 1970s. He has been promoted under Gorbachev, and is surely a most influential current advisor on Middle East affairs. Several deputy foreign ministers under Shevardnadze—Vorontsov, Petrovsky, and Adamishin—have responsibilities in the area of Middle East affairs, and have displayed preferences for a relatively moderate mix of competition and collaboration. And in light of the new official perspective on linkage it is noteworthy that many of the individuals with influence on Middle East policy formation today are people whose careers had previously been devoted to the formulation of policy toward the United States or Western Europe.

What is more, the changes in other realms of Soviet foreign policy have been so dramatic and far reaching that they could only have been a product of such a coalition shift (for example, concessions regarding nuclear and conventional arms control, Afghanistan, China, Vietnam, and southern Africa). Since the changes in Soviet Middle East policy are consistent with the more conciliatory thrust of Soviet foreign policy generally, both of them are plausibly explained as products of Gorbachev’s political strategy to demonstrate that he is an effective peacemaker who can resolve many of the foreign policy dilemmas inherited from Brezhnev and create an international environment conducive to the realization of primary domestic goals without sacrificing Soviet status as a global competitor for influence. In contrast, both Khrushchev and Brezhnev sought to outflank and discredit their rivals in the leadership by initially adopting hard-line positions on key foreign policy issues, including the Middle East. Gorbachev has instead adopted the position of conciliator previously embraced by Malenkov and Kosygin—a measure, perhaps, of the depth of the domestic problems facing his regime, of the speed with which
he has consolidated his position within the leadership (suppressing much of the political competition that marked previous successions), and of the degree of disillusionment with the failures of Brezhnev’s foreign policy among many members of the post-Stalin generation of policymakers.

As we survey the history of Soviet Middle East policy since 1948, we notice that the most significant changes in approach have taken place between 1954 and 1955, 1967 and 1968, and 1987 and 1988 (the move toward partial reconciliation with Israel). In the first and third cases, the changes were direct products of disillusionment with previous policy, but were made possible only by a political succession. In the second case, the change (development of a collaborative track for concerting policy with the United States in order to defuse the conflict) was a product of an environmental shock, the June 1967 war, which led the policymakers who were previously in power to reevaluate their assumptions.

In explaining Soviet behavior at other times (1956-64 and 1967-82) (see chapter 1), I have not invoked political competition as an explanatory variable. Rather, I have referred to “Moscow’s” mixed goal structure, the contradictions among those goals, and the ways in which Soviet leaders have learned and adjusted over time in response to feedback. Is this approach justifiable?

Very few scholars have sought to interpret Soviet Middle East policy during nonsuccession periods through the prism of a conflict model (Dimant-Kass 1978; Spechler 1978, 1985, 1986, 1987). The most impressive presentation of a conflict-centered approach can be found in the work of Dina Spechler, which concentrates on the period, 1971-82. Spechler argues that a turning point took place in Soviet elite politics in 1972, in response to Sadat’s expulsion of Soviet military personnel from Egypt, as a result of which the hard-liners on Middle East policy seized the initiative from the moderates. A leading spokesman for the hard-line view, according to Spechler, was the Minister of Defense, A. Grechko. This political change explains the Soviet decision to pump Sadat with the weaponry that allowed him to go to war in 1973.

Thereafter, according to Spechler, Brezhnev continued to lead a moderate faction that worked to prevent Middle East affairs from scuttling the détente relationship with the United States (which was Brezhnev’s higher priority and primary foreign policy accomplishment). Spechler (1987) then examines Soviet behavior during the 1982 war in Lebanon, arguing that the variety of Soviet behaviors displayed during that war can best be explained as a product of compromises between the hard-line and moderate forces within the leadership.
Even this impressive body of evidence, however, does not strike me as persuasive. The evidence is often very thin or soft. Furthermore, even if we concede that there was a diversity of viewpoints on the Middle East conflict within the Politburo (which seems only reasonable), it does not necessarily follow that discord within the Politburo followed those lines, much less that factional alternation took place. For Spechler's evidence does not clarify the extent of incompatibility between moderate and hard-line positions within the Politburo. To what extent are the hard-liners attentive to the costs and risks of their preferred policies? Are they disparaging of diplomacy and committed solely to struggle? Are they interested in making negotiated trade-offs for the sake of confrontation avoidance and crisis prevention? To what extent are the moderates concerned with advancing the cause of political and military competition in the region? Are they opposed to upping the competitive ante through potentially escalatory arms sales, in response to tactical defeats, to increased U.S. support for Israel, or to concerted U.S. efforts to exclude the USSR from the settlement process?

These are difficult, if not impossible, questions to answer. Although Spechler's evidence is not conclusive, the evidence in the present volume is also inconclusive (see also Anderson 1989: chapter 10). We have not searched for conflict within the Politburo. In chapters 7 and 8 we searched for differences within the journalistic elite. Chapter 7 displays substantial polarization among commentators—from militants to moderates, with centrists in between. It is noteworthy that our militants displayed very little interest in diplomacy, whereas our most moderate journalist—Aleksandr Bovin—displayed very little interest in competition. Along other dimensions as well, there was high polarization, and little in common, between Bovin and Kudriavtsev. This constitutes circumstantial support for a claim that militants and moderates within the Politburo also have very little in common, and that factional alternation, perhaps triggered by events in the region, is therefore required to explain shifts in behavior within given administrations.

That conclusion is premature for several reasons. First, there are important points of consensus shared by Kudriavtsev and Bovin, which revolve around the ultimate unworkability of U.S.-Israeli policy. Yaacov Ro'i argues in chapter 8 that the points of consensus among Soviet commentators may be even more far reaching than this (a difference between chapters 7 and 8 that requires further analysis and, perhaps, follow-up research). Second, polarization at the level of journalistic commentators does not necessarily imply an equivalent degree of polarization within the Politburo. The logic of small-group decision making, Soviet norms of unity and democratic centralism, and the
power of the General Secretary after the stage of political succession give reason for us to hypothesize that the breadth of disagreement becomes telescoped at the Politburo level, such that the extremes fall out of the policymaking picture.

For example, it is quite likely that during the years from 1968 to the present a commitment to pursuing the role of global competitor and to exercising that role in the Middle East has been very broadly shared within the Soviet Politburo. Similarly, the commitment to defend past gains in the region, to expand influence when low-risk opportunities arise, and to check the expansion of U.S. influence have likely been broadly shared within that institution. Then, too, the commitment to a strategy that combines struggle with diplomacy as a means of stabilizing the region without losing one's allies has probably also been widely shared. And even if individuals within the Politburo differed in the intensity with which they embraced these beliefs and preferences, one can well imagine that a dual strategy of collaborative competition could be agreed upon as a consensus position through which to pursue Soviet interests in the region and to maintain political peace within the Politburo simultaneously. The specific terms of collaborative competition—the scope and intensity of competitive risk taking and the price to be paid for collaboration—appear to have been the points of contention. The evidence for these specific claims is, of course, soft, but so is the evidence for a factional model. Let us therefore continue to build upon these assumptions.

An alternative to the factional alternation image of Soviet elite politics posits that political competition is highly relevant to the explanation of policy changes only during periods of political succession, and that the winner in the political competition enters a stage of ascendancy during which he defines the direction of Soviet policy more fully and is less constrained to compromise over that direction. This squares with images of Soviet politics that posit a period of collective leadership followed by some form or degree of one-man rule. It also squares with the acknowledgment that political representation within the Politburo, while a variant of "bureaucratic politics," is distinctively shaped by norms of democratic centralism and by political machine building, in directions that discourage factionalism and deadlock. One need not accept the extreme totalitarian image of an unconstrained ruler in order to accept a model in which policy elites essentially defer to the program of the political boss until it proves to be totally unworkable; nor does the acceptance of this image imply a complete absence of bargaining or mutual adjustment within the leadership over the tactics to employ in response to the evolution of events in the region.
What is more, this alternative image posits that during his stage of ascendancy the General Secretary tries to present a comprehensive program that will be biased in the direction of the policies advocated during the stage of political succession, but that also will seek to reincorporate selective premises of his defeated adversaries' programs (Breslauer 1982a; Anderson 1989). As far as Middle East policy is concerned, this would mean that Brezhnev would seek to reconcile competitive activism with collaboration in ways that would advance the causes of both influence expansion and escalation control. Working toward a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict that would remove the escalatory potential from the dispute while placing Soviet regional presence and influence on a more stable basis would advance both goals. Securing Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories in return for Arab recognition of Israel and an end to the state of war would gain prestige for the USSR in Arab capitals while simultaneously de-escalating the conflict.

Such a synthetic program would, of course, be based upon anticipation of the reactions of others within the leadership and the broader political elite. This is not an autocratic image of Soviet elite politics, even at the stage of ascendancy, but it is certainly incompatible with an image of Brezhnev as the leader of a moderate faction. Rather, it views him as straining to pursue simultaneously several conflicting goals in the Middle East in order to build his authority by demonstrating the capacity of his regional policy to reconcile conflicting imperatives.

This image of the General Secretary as remaining somewhat "above the struggle" and seeking to reconcile tensions within regional policy is also consistent with the evidence of conflict among the journalists examined in chapter 7. It was the centrist, Pavel Demchenko, who, in contrast to all the other commentators, published regularly in Pravda (the organ of the Central Committee and, derivatively, of the General Secretary). It was Demchenko who strained most tortuously to reconcile collaborative with competitive premises, echoing the urge for synthesis found in Brezhnev's speeches. And under Gorbachev both militants and moderates continue to publish, but a moderate (E. Primakov) now publishes more frequently in Pravda than he ever did before. What this suggests is that Gorbachev's new thinking has shifted the weight within the Politburo toward a more moderate mix of competitive and collaborative premises than prevailed under Brezhnev, when a more militant mix prevailed. Militants within the Politburo, we could hypothesize, would expound a view biased toward optimism about indigenous trends in the region, pessimism about the adversary's intentions, and a preference for struggle. Moderates would expound a view biased toward pessimism
about indigenous trends in the region, optimism about the ability to do business with the adversary, and a preference for diplomacy. The General Secretary does not lead either camp; he proposes a weighted synthesis of the two. Brezhnev weighted the synthesis in a more militant direction than does Gorbachev. Under Brezhnev I would hypothesize that the pivot within the Politburo was located close to the position occupied by Demchenko on the spectrum presented in chapter 7. Under Gorbachev, that pivot appears to be located somewhere between Demchenko and Primakov. If the new thinking comes to be more fully applied to Soviet Middle East policy, that pivot may come to be located somewhere between Primakov and Bovin.

This image is, then, consistent with a depiction of Soviet strategy as "collaborative competition." As long as the General Secretary and the Politburo seek to maintain a competitive Soviet presence in the region (in contrast, say, to Stalin), and as long as they seek to coordinate with the United States to reach long-term compromise solutions to Middle East dilemmas (in contrast to Khrushchev), this characterization of Soviet policy has analytic force. It allows us to transcend the scarcity of hard evidence and employ a mixed-motive unitary-actor model as a representation of Soviet policy and politics in this region. This image is at least as useful as a political-factional model for explaining the ebbs and flows of Soviet behavior in the Middle East during nonsuccession periods; it can accommodate significant changes in policy as responses to shocks and failures. Yet a conflict and coalition-shift model may have greater value for explaining the more fundamental shifts we have witnessed during periods of political succession after Stalin and after Chernenko.

Also, the changes Gorbachev appears to be instituting in the Soviet foreign policymaking process are geared toward altering the biases within Soviet politics so as to make conciliatory foreign policies easier to legitimate. He is seeking to redefine the nature of superpower competition and to overcome the weight of a political culture so heavily biased against doing business with the imperialist adversary. He is altering information flows within the Soviet foreign policy establishment and seeking to redefine the relative status of varied institutions (Breslauer 1988; Snyder 1987–88). Indeed, much of the "new thinking" can be interpreted as an attempt to provide both normative and cognitive legitimacy for new foreign and domestic policies (George 1980). If we took Gorbachev's new thinking at face value and assumed its dominance in policymaking, we would have to reconceptualize Soviet Third World policy as "competitive collaboration," rather than "collaborative competition" (see chapter 1). There are, of course, limits to how far he will be inclined or allowed to go in these directions. But
to the extent that he is successful, he may fulfill still another condition for superpower cooperation: leadership that can "absorb the political costs of unrequited cooperative gestures for a period of time" (Weber 1988: 645).

In sum, many of the factors that stood in the way of superpower collaboration geared toward Middle East conflict mitigation during the past twenty years continue to exist. There are, however, signs that both key leaders in the region and certain officials in Washington are now more receptive to policies that Moscow has been advocating for decades: acceptance of Palestinian self-determination and a multilateral negotiating format toward that end. Only an optimist would predict that conflict resolution will be the outcome of this partial convergence. But if both the United States and Middle East actors (including Israel and the PLO) seek to include the USSR in the search for crisis prevention and conflict mitigation, they are likely to find Moscow a less malign competitor and a still more flexible collaborator than in the past.

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Soviet behavior in the Middle East since the summer of 1988 suggests strongly that a mixed strategy of collaborative competition, partially moderated by Gorbachev's "new thinking," but still characterized by an approach-avoidance dilemma, remains an apt depiction of Soviet strategy. Along the competitive track, Moscow has completed a major new arms transfer agreement with Syria, has continued work on enlarging a naval facility for probable use by the Soviet fleet on the Syrian coast at Tartus, has voted again with the Arab states for Israeli expulsion from the United Nations, has supported the proclamation of a Palestinian state by the Palestine National Council, and has sold 15 long-range SU-24 bombers to Libya.

Yet, along the collaborative track the Soviets simultaneously and successfully pressured the PLO (including both Fatah and more radical factions) to recognize Israel, to renounce terror, and/or to accept UN Resolutions 242 and 338. In this connection, Moscow played a very active role behind the scenes to induce Yasir Arafat to change his language regarding acceptance of a two-state solution and rejection of the PLO Charter. Despite protests from Syria, the Soviets refused to support the PLO bid for membership as a state in the World Health Organization. They also denied Syria the most advanced offensive weaponry that Damascus had been requesting, in line with Gorbachev's demand of the Syrians that they abjure a military solution and the acquisition of military parity with Israel. Moscow also successfully pressured Syria to drop her opposition to Egyptian reentry into the Arab League.

If, during the early 1980s, the main focus of Soviet efforts was to encourage a radical-rejectionist bloc to sabotage the Camp David process, the current Soviet focus is to forge a more moderate bloc, supportive of current PLO efforts to push the peace process forward. This has been reflected as well in the Soviet terms for settlement. Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze made a highly publicized tour of the region, during which he met in Cairo with Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Arens, as well as with Yasir Arafat. Throughout his journey
to Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and Iran he played down the traditional Soviet settlement terms. Instead, he emphasized procedural innovations for getting negotiations started, as well as new military and political proposals for guaranteeing Israeli security in the context of a settlement (intrusive on-site inspections of military installations and the banning of chemical weapons and ballistic missiles from the region, for example). Moreover, Moscow has been interacting bilaterally with Israel on an increasingly regular and warm basis. The diplomatic rapprochement has deepened during 1989, with an upgrading of the status of the Israeli consular delegation in Moscow, though full diplomatic relations have not been restored. And Soviet-Israeli covert discussions regarding trade, emigration, and Jewish cultural life in the USSR have made significant progress.

The continued impact of the approach-avoidance dilemma has been in evidence during these months as well. Soviet terms for restoring relations with Israel have varied; at one point, Shevardnadze suggested that Israel would have to talk to the PLO before relations could be restored—a retrogression from earlier Soviet statements. The Soviets have similarly been deliberately vague about the degree to which they recognize the PLO government-in-exile as a state. While supporting the Palestinian uprising, the Soviet media have not given it the centrality of attention it receives in the West. But, at the same time, the Soviets have put a moderate PLO at the center of their Middle East strategy, and have sought to cope with the difficulties this strategy creates in their relations with Damascus.

But the moderation of Soviet perspectives under the impact of the new thinking may be easing somewhat the Soviet dilemma. This is most in evidence in the Soviet reaction to U.S. talks with the PLO. Both privately and publicly Soviet officials support these talks. They do not display any of the fears expressed about the joint PLO-Jordanian delegation in 1985 and 1986 (see chapter 3), when Soviet leaders were deeply concerned that exclusionary U.S. diplomacy, coupled with moderation of the PLO, might lead to PLO defection from Soviet patronage. The diminution of those fears is likely attributable to a more relaxed view of the competitive process in the Middle East, one that is more confident that neither superpower can create durably exclusive relationships with its allies in such a turbulent region.

In private, Soviet officials have said that, after the withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Middle East would become the focus of Soviet efforts to make a breakthrough. At present (May 1989), Moscow appears to be eager for a joint U.S.-Soviet initiative of some sort, but also appears to lack a substantive notion of what that initiative might be. This should not surprise us. Given the constellation and present orientation of forces in the region, and given the Soviet commitment to
Palestinian self-determination, Moscow may not have very much room for maneuver. Unless new thinking comes to mean disengagement from military competition in the region, or the Soviets simply adopt the U.S. negotiating position, or, alternatively, the Israelis and the Palestinians converge in their definitions of their interests, Moscow is likely to continue to pursue an ambivalent, mixed-motive strategy that spawns predictable dilemmas.

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