USE OF THESESES

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THE POLITICS OF PATRONAGE:
ISRAEL AND EGYPT BETWEEN THE SUPERPOWERS
1962 - 1973

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This thesis is a study of the interaction between two weak states and their superpower patrons through the application of a theoretical analysis of the 'power of the weak' to the study of the political and military conduct of relations between Israel, Egypt, the United States and the Soviet Union in the period from 1962 to 1973.

The thesis establishes some of the conditions under which lesser powers, engaged in a protracted conflict and dependent upon the military, economic and political support of the superpowers, could nevertheless resist and thereby influence the policies of their patrons.

In the Arab-Israeli context, the thesis examines the effect that the politics of patronage have had on the conduct and settlement of the conflict and analyses the successes and failures of Israeli and Egyptian diplomacy in securing the support of their superpower patrons while resisting the imposition of an order inimical to their own interests.

This thesis is my own original work.

Martin Indyk
PREFACE

In January 1975, I stood in a Cairo street watching the masses surge past to a riot in Tahrir Square; a year earlier I had watched a weary Israeli soldier - returning from the Yom Kippur War - dragging himself and his gun through Jerusalem's Zion Square. Their fixed stares reflected the same anxiety, despair, confusion and weariness. They reflected the human tragedy which has afflicted the Middle East for thirty years.

The intractability of the Arab-Israeli conflict and its potential for engulfing the world have caused many students of international relations to focus their attention on the problem of a settlement; some have put forward their proposals, others have tried to implement them. And yet, despite the attention which has been paid to this tragedy, it still defies solution. By now the causes of the conflict are well understood. The struggle for survival, independence and modernity, the conflict of nationalisms, the contest over territory and rights, and the competition for the region's strategic resources, have been analysed at length. But such analysis fails to explain the dynamics of the conflict: why war broke out when it did in 1956, 1967 and 1973; why Israel and its Arab neighbours enjoyed (or suffered) relative stability and tranquillity from 1957 to 1965, and from 1970 to 1973; and what process could bridge the gap between the minimum demands of each side in the conflict. In my search for a suitable focus for this study of the Arab-Israeli conflict, it became clear that not enough attention had been paid to the politics of the conflict and therefore the political conditions which might be conducive to a settlement.

In examining the dynamics of the conflict, it also became evident that the interaction was complex in the extreme, occurring on different levels as well as between these levels. First, of course, was the conflict between the Arab states and Israel; second, the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians; third, the inter-Arab conflict; fourth, the conflict between external powers for influence in the region; fifth, the conflict between external powers and the states of the region, be they clients or adversaries; and sixth, the domestic conflict within each of the parties
to the dispute. Unable to analyse all of these interactions adequately, it became necessary to give the study a particular focus.

Since the superpowers fuelled the conflict with their economic and military assistance, their actions and policies did much to determine its course and the prospects for its settlement. However, in looking at the contemporary history of the superpower involvement in the Middle East, I was struck by the little influence and less control these giants of international relations actually possessed. Their experience in the Middle East seemed to militate against the conventional wisdom that the system of states was dominated and controlled by those at the top, who maintained order by sacrificing the interests of those at the bottom. This phenomenon was not of course unique to the current conflict in the Middle East; the impotence of the great and the power of those considered weak has been remarked upon in other areas and at other times. However, the idea that the tail could wag the dog seemed to be particularly applicable to the problems involved in reducing or settling the Arab-Israeli conflict and curiously lacking in detailed analysis.

I suspect that one of the reasons for the lack of such analysis is the understandable tendency of those who choose to study the role of the superpowers in the Arab-Israeli conflict to approach this topic from the perspective of the superpowers and to treat the regional combatants as the objects of their policies. Consequently, although the inability of the superpowers to influence their clients is often remarked upon, the underlying reasons for this phenomenon are not within the realm of such studies. They are concerned with the power of the great, not their impotence; with relations between the superpowers, not between patrons and clients; and with the influence of the strong, rather than the resistance of those presumed weak.

For this reason, I decided to make the most significant regional combatants - Israel and Egypt - the subject of this study, to adopt their perspective of relations with the superpowers, and to focus the analysis on their abilities to resist the policies of their superpower patrons. The thesis thus became a study of the 'power of the weak' in relations between the superpowers and their clients on either side of the Arab-Israeli conflict.
Part One of the dissertation provides the theoretical introduction to the analysis. Its length is occasioned by the need to outline the sources of power for weak states in general and Israel and Egypt in particular. However, because this is a study of two particular weak states, engaged in a protracted conflict, in their relations with the two superpowers, during a specific period, the theoretical analysis concentrates on the sources of power relevant to their circumstances. Some of their capabilities are unique, others will be possessed by similar weak states in conflict within a bipolar superpower environment, and still others by weak states in general. But I should emphasise at the outset that the principles outlined in this section are deduced from an examination of Israel and Egypt in their relations with the superpowers. Insofar as that makes some contribution to the theory of the 'power of the weak', it is a particular rather than a general contribution. No attempt has been made to compare or contrast their capabilities with those of other weak states, for that would be a thesis in itself, and hardly suited to the purpose of examining the dynamics of the Arab-Israeli conflict. I am hopeful, however, that the conceptual framework developed here will have applicability to other weak states involved in regional conflicts.

Part Two analyses relations between Israel, Egypt and their superpower patrons in the period from 1962 to 1967; Part Three analyses the period from 1967 to 1973. Because I am concerned with cases of resistance and influence - with the politics of patronage - I have not attempted to analyse or relate all the events which occurred during these periods. Instead, I have concentrated on those events which best illustrate Israeli and Egyptian strengths and weaknesses. In this regard, 1962 was an important year because it marked the beginning of the arms relationship between Israel and the United States, the warming of relations between Egypt and the Soviet Union after the heated disagreements of the period from 1959 to 1961, and the first test of relations between Egypt and its new American patron over Egyptian intervention in Yemen. Thus, Chapter One analyses Israel's success in overcoming the American arms embargo and Chapter Three examines Nasser's failure to maintain American patronage while resisting its influence. Chapters Two and Four examine the May-June 1967 crisis from the perspective of the politics of patronage, in an attempt to explain the strategies of the two clients and the reasons for the political outcome of that crisis.
The first two chapters of Part Three analyse the period of the War of Attrition, which was above all else a battle for patronage. Chapter Three analyses the differing effects of the development of detente on relations between the superpowers and their Middle Eastern protégés, explains why the avowed principles of detente did not conform to the practice in the Middle East, and examines Egypt's decision to go to war, and Israel's decision to await the Arab attack, in terms of their respective abilities and willingness to resist the policies of their patrons. Finally, Chapter Four discusses the behaviour of the patrons and clients in the October 1973 War and explains how the interaction of superpower influence and weak state resistance in this crisis affected the outcome.

Most of the events which I have dealt with have been recounted by others; there is no shortage of secondary material on the Arab-Israeli conflict. In conducting the research, however, I have relied for the most part on primary sources - public statements, newspaper reports, radio broadcasts and published documents. These have been supplemented by the cautious use of the biographies of decision-makers and the accounts of people who can claim inside knowledge of the events, or have had access to classified documents. In 1975 I conducted fieldwork in Beirut, Cairo, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, London, New York and Washington. Beyond the collection of material which was unavailable in Canberra, I conducted interviews with high officials and government advisors, who occasionally revealed something which was not a matter of public record, but who were more valuable in providing me with the necessary 'feel' for the subject.

The task of producing a thesis is an agonising one, particularly when the preoccupation lasts for a period of over three years. In that period I have come to depend on many people for support, guidance, inspiration and encouragement. Although what follows is my own work, it could not have been written without them.

As my supervisor, and Head of the Department of International Relations Bruce Miller provided not only wise and sensitive counsel on all the drafts, but also an extremely conducive environment in which to work and contemplate. I am indebted to him, the Department, and the University for enabling me to carry out fieldwork in the Middle East, England and the United States.
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The incisive, thorough and merciless criticism of Steven Rosen and David Vital, although hard to take at the time, did much to distil my own thoughts. In particular, David Vital provided the inspiration for the focus of the thesis and Steven Rosen encouraged its application to the chapters on the October 1973 War. Critical comments from Jim Richardson, Robert O'Neil, John Vincent, Carsten Holbraad and Astri Suhrke enabled me to rethink and develop the key concepts used.

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Finally, to my grandfather, Hilel Korman, I dedicate this thesis as testimony to the principles he lives by and has passed down.

Canberra,
September, 1977

Martin Indyk
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