USE OF THESES

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

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THESIS
SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
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AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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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
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.
Geoffrey Jukes, as my principal supervisor, provided guidance, encouragement, criticism and lessons in English expression; in short, he safeguarded the thesis.

Among the many people who have influenced my thinking, Hedley Bull has perhaps had the greatest impact. The general intellectual inspiration which he provided while in the Department of International Relations, and his critical comments on the theoretical aspects of the dissertation, considerably improved the quality of this work.

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'Neill, John Vincent, Carsten Holbraad and Astri Suhrke enabled me to rethink and develop the key concepts used.

My research in Beirut and Cairo was greatly assisted by Mr Ghassan Tueni and Dr Yehiya Eweiss. I am particularly grateful to Shimon Shamir and Itamar Rabinovitch for making the considerable resources of the Shiloah Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University available to me, and to Daniel Dishon for enabling me to use the unpublished drafts of the Center's Middle East Record for 1969/1970.

In the United States I benefited greatly from the assistance of Richard Ullman, who helped to open doors for me in the State Department, John C. Campbell for critical comments on my early drafts, and William Quandt.

I should also like to record here my gratitude to the many officials and academics in Lebanon, Egypt, Israel, England and the United States who gladly gave their time, thoughts and recollections to a student who could only repay them by doing them justice in this thesis. Their names are recorded in the Bibliography.

On a personal level, in the course of researching and writing this thesis I came to depend upon many good people for intellectual, emotional and material sustenance. In this regard, I would like to acknowledge my greatest debts to: Peter Spearritt, Nancy Viviani, Roland and Sabena Rich, Simon Cowen, Daryl Feil, and Sonia Collier in Canberra; Motti Amzel, Hannah Greenberg, Shlomo Dinur, Hannah and Michael Engelman and Alec Meyer in Israel; and Dan and Joanna Rose in New York.
To my family I owe much more than gratitude for their unity, love, encouragement and guidance; and an apology for allowing the thesis to keep me away from them.

To Jill Collier, who loved, supported, tolerated and advised me, and who, moreover, insisted on assuming the mammoth task of typing the manuscript, I would like to record here my love and my appreciation for sharing the burden and for making even the pain a pleasure.

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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1967 - 1973

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One of the first notions, I should say even the basis of contemporaneous policy is and should be tranquility...
If the principal Powers... adopt this principle the small States, which can hardly stand alone, must adopt it also, whether they like it or not.
- Count Metternich to Emperor Francis, 1817.

On the political plane it has been found that small and medium sized countries can, if they wish and if they are determined, regain their usurped rights. They can bypass the network of complicated international relations and the rapprochement agreements concluded between the Big Powers; can decide their own fate, can take war decisions alone.
- President Anwar Sadat, 1974.

The contradiction between the attitude of Metternich and the claims of Sadat cannot simply be explained by pointing to the one hundred and forty-seven years which have elapsed since Metternich's efforts to establish order in Europe. Although the international system has undergone marked transformations in this period, Metternich's conception of the role of small or weak states in international affairs, as the mere vassals of the principal powers, has survived. Thus, writing in 1975, Hedley Bull expressed what is still the conventional

wisdom about the balance of power between the strong and the weak:

Because states are grossly unequal in power certain international issues are as a consequence settled, the demands of certain states (weak ones) can in practice be left out of account, the demands of certain other states (strong ones) [are] recognised to be the only ones relevant to the issue at hand...The inequality of states in terms of power has the effect of simplifying the pattern of international relations, of ensuring that some states will prevail while others will go under...3

Of course the conventional wisdom can draw on many examples from history to testify to the operation of this principle: the partition of Poland, the division of the Balkans, Hitler's absorption of Czechoslovakia, and the operations of the superpowers in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, the Dominican Republic and Chile in more recent times. As Johan Galtung has noted about the contemporary system, "international politics is big power politics" and "it is only the USA and the USSR that really count, the other countries are of little or no importance".4 This view of superpower predominance and weak state subservience is strongly held by those who argue that the United States and the Soviet Union should impose a settlement on the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Their belief in the efficacy of either a superpower condominium or a Pax Americana in the Middle East is predicated on the assumption that the superpowers will prevail and that Israel and Egypt will submit.5

How then is it possible to reconcile the claim of Egypt's President Sadat, that the weak can defy the strong and decide their own fate, with the historical and conventional wisdom? On the theoretical level, the purpose of this dissertation is to demonstrate that the orthodox picture of the present international order, painted as it is from the perspective of the great, is oversimplified and does not take account of

a number of factors inherent in this complex system. By focussing on these factors, which contribute to what has been labelled, rather paradoxically, as the "power of the weak"\textsuperscript{6}, it is possible to develop and test a number of different and even counter-intuitive hypotheses about relations between the great and the weak in the contemporary international system. Stated simply, these hypotheses are:

i) the demands of certain weak states, which possess the power of resistance, cannot always or easily be left out of account;

ii) if the superpowers wish to maintain their dominance of the system through the promotion of tranquillity and stability then they will have to take account of the demands of these states;

iii) while the great may indeed prevail on issues which directly affect the central balance of power, their preponderance does not mean that they will succeed in imposing their will on issues which affect relations between the weak and the great.

Although these hypotheses have wider applicability they will only be tested in regard to relations between the American and Soviet superpowers and two conflicting weak states in a specific time period. Because the dissertation is primarily a study of the conduct of the Arab-Israeli conflict during a period of changing superpower relations, the theory of weak power - superpower interaction which will be developed will only be based on a study of this conflict and the conclusions to which the analysis points may not be applicable in other contexts.\textsuperscript{7} In other words, this is an analysis of the effect that the politics of superpower patronage have had on the conduct and settlement of a conflict between two particular weak states during the development of detente between the United States and the Soviet Union.

\textsuperscript{6} The term appears to have been coined by Arnold Wolfers in his \textit{Discord and Collaboration}, Baltimore Maryland, 1962, p. 111; see also Erling Bjøl, "The Power of the Weak", \textit{Cooperation and Conflict}, No. 3, 1968.

\textsuperscript{7} However, in developing the theoretical framework, concepts which have been developed in regard to the Korean and Vietnam conflicts have been utilised, suggesting that there certainly are similarities in relations between other weak states and the superpowers, although such comparisons will always be hindered by the unique circumstances surrounding a particular conflict.
In constructing the theoretical framework which will be used to analyse relations between Israel, Egypt and the superpowers, it is first necessary to explain why Israel and Egypt have been defined as "weak" states. The fact that both countries have military forces which rival those of the European middle powers would suggest that if strength were measured in military terms alone, Israel and Egypt would not be considered weak. If strength were measured in terms of material wealth, of GNP per capita ($250 for Egypt and $2720 for Israel in 1973), then Egypt might be considered weak while Israel would stand with the developed nations; measured in terms of population, Egypt might be considered strong (38 million) while Israel would certainly be amongst the weakest (3.5 million); in territorial terms Israel would be considered small (some 80,000 square kilometres, including occupied territories), while Egypt would be judged large (some 940,000 square kilometres presently under its control); yet if strength were measured in terms of the state of a nation's indebtedness both countries would be classed as weaker than most (Israel's foreign debt exceeded $6 billion while Egypt's debt exceeded $6.8 billion in 1974).*

It is precisely this definitional problem which has plagued analysts of small states, leading one reviewer of the literature to conclude that "whatever criteria is adopted, small states form too broad a

8. The following table illustrates the point. Naval combat vessels have been excluded because of their non-comparability.

CONVENTIONAL MILITARY FORCES, 1974/1975

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Armed Forces</th>
<th>Tanks</th>
<th>Combat Aircraft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>323,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>354,600</td>
<td>1,080</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>502,500</td>
<td>2,020</td>
<td>431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Germany</td>
<td>490,000</td>
<td>3,560</td>
<td>468</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Including about 100 in storage.


* For an attempt to define small states according to population, military and economic capabilities, see R.P. Barston, "The External Relations of Small States", in A.Schou and A.O. Brundtland (eds.), Small States in International Relations, Nobel Symposium 17, New York 1971, pp.50-55.
category for the purpose of analysis". For this reason, and because neither Egypt nor Israel fits easily into the category of "small states", the use of that term has been eschewed.

However, in their attempts to define the class of small states some analysts have pointed to the common weakness of these states and it is this concept which has been utilised in placing Israel and Egypt in the hierarchy of states. Robert Rothstein has observed that the small state is one "which recognizes that it cannot obtain security primarily by use of its own capabilities, and that it must rely fundamentally on the aid of other states, institutions, processes, or developments to do so". Similarly, Annette Baker Fox defines small states as "those whose leaders...recognise that their own state's political weight is limited to a local arena, rather than the global one, that they are dependent upon outside political forces for much of their security, and that their particular state's interests may be dispensable in the eyes of one or more great power". In fact both writers, in their attempts to define the small state have instead defined the weak state. For it is precisely this dependence on external forces for security and survival which distinguishes the weak from the classes of stronger states.

Thus it should be possible to construct a spectrum of dependence to determine a country's status in the hierarchy of states. At one extreme of the spectrum stand the weakest states which are completely dependent upon external support for the achievement of their basic objectives of physical and economic survival. At the other extreme stand the strongest states.


states which can secure their physical and economic survival, if they must, independent of external support. This is not to suggest that the superpowers which stand at this extremity are absolutely independent of the rest, for clearly they depend upon lesser powers for strategic and economic resources, trade and investment outlets, and the political, military and ideological support necessary for the pursuit of their global objectives. But it is to suggest that the superpowers can secure the resources which they do not possess by virtue of their physical and economic strength.

On the other hand, weak states are dependent upon stronger powers, particularly the superpowers which have the resources to spare, for economic aid, trade and investment; for military and technical assistance; and for security. Lacking the independent strength of the great, the weak must rely on the good intentions of other states in the international system to secure the resources necessary to their survival. In other words, although all states are dependent on others to some degree, the dependence of the superpowers is of a 'second-order' nature because they can absorb or mitigate the costs of a drastic alteration or termination of the relationship with the states on which they depend, whereas the dependence of the weak states makes them unable to absorb the costs of such a shift and only able to mitigate the effects of such a redefinition by transferring their dependence to another state or states. In short, the great can dispense with the interests of the weak, while the weak can only secure their interests with the support of the stronger states.

Where are Israel and Egypt situated on this spectrum of dependence? Clearly, in the period under examination in this thesis (1962-1974), they both depended heavily upon external economic and military assistance for the achievement of their basic objectives of growth, industrial development and military strength.

I - THE WEAKNESS OF ISRAEL AND EGYPT

a) Economic Dependence

With a population of only 2.3 million in 1962 growing to 3.2 million in 1974, with a land area of only 20,700 square kilometres (pre-1967 borders) almost half of it arid desert, with limited water supplies and only minor natural resources, with a small domestic market limiting economies of scale, with a diverse population of immigrants who had to be absorbed and integrated into a national entity, and within an environment of economic as well as military hostility, Israel was highly dependent upon an import surplus to promote its aim of rapid economic development.

Between 1962 and 1965 Israel's GNP grew at an average annual rate of 10.25% in real terms, but this clearly could not have been achieved without the massive capital inflow of $184 million from the American Government, $628 million from the West German Government and $1.3 billion from world Jewry. As the summary tables illustrate, during this period Israel's import surplus contributed an average of 16.5% to the economy's total resources and the balance of payments deficits which it caused were only financed by the capital inflow from world Jewry, West Germany and the United States. 13 Moreover, while world Jewry made the greatest


14. Capital inflow from world Jewry comprised: private transfers; institutional transfers through the Jewish Agency, the Jewish National Fund and a host of other philanthropic, educational and welfare institutions; the purchase of State of Israel Bonds; and private investment. Over 65% of these funds come from American Jews. Capital inflow from West Germany comprised reparation payments to the Israeli Government and personal restitutions to the victims of Nazism. Reparation payments ended in 1964 and since then the payments have consisted only of personal restitutions. U.S. Government aid included technical assistance grants and low-interest hard-currency loans under the aegis of the Agency for International Development. See Michael Brecher, The Foreign Policy System of Israel, Setting, Images, Process, London, 1972, pp. 103-109.

contribution to Israel's capital inflow, most of this money came from American Jews whose donations and interest receipts were tax deductible.\(^{15}\)

The 1967 war struck the economy at a time when the government had already imposed an artificial brake designed to reduce Israel's mounting balance of payments deficit. The deficit had reached its high point of $572 million in 1964, at a time when American grants and German reparation payments were being terminated. Thus Israel's dependence on what appeared to be decreasing external support necessitated a policy of restraint which reduced the growth in GNP to less than 1% in 1966 and to 4.4% in 1967. However, in the aftermath of victory, Israel experienced an economic boom with GNP growing at an average rate of 10.8% per year in real terms in the period from 1968-1972. Yet again, this rapid growth depended upon massive capital inflow from world Jewry, West Germany, and increasingly, from the American government.\(^{16}\) During this period capital inflow from these sectors financed an import surplus which contributed an average of 18.7% per year to the economy's total resources.\(^{17}\)

The October 1973 War and its aftermath put a decisive end to the economic boom. The lengthy mobilisation of Israel's citizen army and the need to reequip the armed forces caused severe dislocation to the economy: growth in GNP dropped to 6.3% in 1973 and less than 1% in 1974; defence expenditure leapt from $1.5 billion in 1972 to $3 billion in 1973. Just as the boom period was financed by external sources, so too was the economy kept afloat through the economic recession which it now experienced by external support. The import surplus jumped from $1.5 billion in 1972 to

\(^{15}\) For a discussion of Israel's economic growth during this period see Nadav Halevi and Ruth Klinov-Malul, *The Economic Development of Israel*, New York and Jerusalem, 1968, passim.


\(^{17}\) As Table II shows, the U.S. Government contribution towards financing the import surplus increased from an average of 8.8% before 1967 to an average of 18.8% in the period after 1967. This inflow comprised, almost entirely, long-term military credits, although there was a grant for the absorption of Soviet Jewry in 1972. As a result the ratio of unilateral transfers to long-term capital on Israel's capital account fell from 3.2:1 in 1968 to 2:1 in 1972, further increasing Israel's indebtedness. The ratio rose to 2.8:1 in 1973 as a result of a jump in unilateral transfers from world Jewry after the war and the unprecedented provision of grants by the American government. Based on *S.A.I.*, Table vii/4.
$3.3 billion in 1973, financed by a proportional increase in Israel's
dependence on contributions from world Jewry and a disproportional increase
in economic grants and loans from the American government. Thus,
although Israel had achieved rapid industrialisation by the end of the period
under study, the economy depended, more than ever, on external support, most
of which emanated from the United States. There could be no better
indication of this growing dependence than Israel's external debt
obligations which grew from $800 million in 1962 to over $5 billion in 1973.
At that stage some 30% of the debt was owing to the United States
Government. Finally, the direction of Israel's trade during this period reinforced
its dependence upon the United States and Western Europe. Over half
Israel's imports came from the United States, England, and West Germany
while these three countries accounted for only 37% of Israel's exports.
This meant that while Israel's export markets were diverse, its sources
of imports tended to be concentrated, making it more dependent upon these
three countries. This is illustrated by the fact that the United States,
England, and West Germany accounted for over two-thirds of Israel's trade
deficit.

18. Defence imports, as a proportion of total imports, increased from
14.5% in 1972 to 23% in 1973, and by 1975 still accounted for 20% of
total imports. See David Kochav, "The Economics of Defense-Israel", in
(Louis Williams, ed.) Military Aspects of the Israeli-Arab Conflict,
Tel Aviv, 1975, p. 181.

19. Debt service was estimated at $170 million in 1962, rising to
$690 million in 1973. SAI Table vii/6, and U.S. Congress House of
Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, Emergency Security Assistance
Act of 1973, Hearings, 93rd Congress, 1st Session, Washington,
30 November and 3 December 1973, p. 51.

20. For a breakdown of Israel's trade with each of these three
countries see Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel's Foreign Trade,
### TABLE I

**TOTAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE ISRAELI ECONOMY, 1962-1973**

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1962-1966 † ($m) (%)</th>
<th>1967 ($m) (%)</th>
<th>1968-1972 † ($m) (%)</th>
<th>1973 ($m) (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G.N.P.</td>
<td>2966 33.5</td>
<td>3896 87.1</td>
<td>5377 81.3</td>
<td>8949 72.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPORT SURPLUS</td>
<td>585 16.5</td>
<td>579 12.9</td>
<td>1238 18.7</td>
<td>3327 27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL RESOURCES</td>
<td>3551 100.0</td>
<td>4475 100.0</td>
<td>6615 100.0</td>
<td>12276 100.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Annual averages


### TABLE II

**FINANCING ISRAEL'S BALANCE OF PAYMENTS DEFICIT, 1962-1973**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1962-1966 † ($m) (%)</th>
<th>1967 ($m) (%)</th>
<th>1968-1972 † ($m) (%)</th>
<th>1973 ($m) (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEFICIT CN GOODS &amp; SERVICES</td>
<td>490 100.0</td>
<td>531 100.0</td>
<td>1018 100.0</td>
<td>2597 100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPITAL INFLOW:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORLD JEWRY</td>
<td>320 65.3</td>
<td>603 113.6</td>
<td>662 65.0</td>
<td>1651 63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. GOVT.</td>
<td>43 8.8</td>
<td>31 5.8</td>
<td>191 18.8</td>
<td>1057 40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.G. GOVT.</td>
<td>147 30.0</td>
<td>122 23.0</td>
<td>201 19.7</td>
<td>264 10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER MOVEMENTS</td>
<td>-20 -4.1</td>
<td>-225 -42.4</td>
<td>-36 -3.5</td>
<td>-375 -14.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Annual averages

**SOURCES:** S.A.I., 1963-1975, Balance of Payments Tables.
TABLE III
ISRAEL'S DIRECTION OF TRADE, 1962-1973

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Imports from</th>
<th>Exports to</th>
<th>Trade Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(m) (%)</td>
<td>(m) (%)</td>
<td>(m) (%)</td>
<td>(m) (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>($m) (%)</td>
<td>($m) (%)</td>
<td>($m) (%)</td>
<td>($m) (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.A., U.K., W.G.</td>
<td>418 54.7</td>
<td>405 52.1</td>
<td>791 51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHERS</td>
<td>346 45.3</td>
<td>373 47.9</td>
<td>756 48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>764 100.0</td>
<td>778 100.0</td>
<td>1547 100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.A., U.K., W.G.</td>
<td>144 37.2</td>
<td>219 39.4</td>
<td>327 38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHERS</td>
<td>243 62.8</td>
<td>335 60.6</td>
<td>523 61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>387 100.0</td>
<td>554 100.0</td>
<td>850 100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.A., U.K., W.G.</td>
<td>-274 72.7</td>
<td>-186 83.0</td>
<td>-464 66.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHERS</td>
<td>-103 27.3</td>
<td>-38 17.0</td>
<td>-233 33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>-377 100.0</td>
<td>-224 100.0</td>
<td>-697 100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Annual averages
*Imports and Exports of goods and services

SOURCE: Israel's Foreign Trade, General Summary, 1974.
While Israel sought rapid industrialisation to provide the economic base for its security and for the absorption of large numbers of migrants, Egypt, under Nasser, sought rapid industrialisation to raise the Egyptian masses out of their poverty and to assert the nation's independence from its colonial past. However, with only one-tenth of its land area cultivable with few natural resources, with a burgeoning population to feed (growing from 26 million in 1960 to 30 million in 1966 to 35 million in 1972), and with its leadership devoting large sums to military budgets and engaging in costly foreign exploits, the Egyptian economy could provide neither the raw materials, nor the domestic savings necessary for industrialisation. Accordingly, Egypt's dependence was merely transferred from the former colonial powers to the new superpowers.

As Table IV shows, in the period of the First Five Year Plan (1959/60 - 1964/65), Egypt depended heavily on capital inflow to cover its investments and to compensate for the lack of domestic saving. Table V illustrates Egypt's dependence on capital inflow to finance its growing import surplus which, in turn, provided the raw materials and intermediate products for its industrial development, as well as the grain provisions for its burgeoning population. The bulk of this assistance came from the United States and the Soviet Union: from 1962-1966 Egypt received some $770 million in economic assistance from the United States (mainly PL 480 aid) and some $600 million in economic credits and finance for the Aswan Dam from the Soviet Union.21 As a result, in the period of the First Five Year Plan, Egypt experienced an annual growth in GDP of 5.5% in real terms.22 However, in 1966, with the continual rundown in foreign reserves

21. Egypt also received an estimated $1 billion during this period from China, Eastern Europe, West Germany, the World Bank and Kuwait. See Eliyahu Kanovsky, "Does the Expansion of Arab Financial Resources Imply Economic Development?", in the Shiloah Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Occasional Papers, Tel Aviv, December, 1974, p. 4.

22. Official estimates put the growth rate in real terms during this period at 6.4% but Bent Hansen has cast doubt on the accuracy of these figures because of the unreliability of price indices. He argues that a more accurate figure is 5.5%. See Bent Hansen, "Planning and Economic Growth in the U.A.R., 1960-5", in P.J. Vatikiotis (ed.), Egypt Since the Revolution, London, 1968, p. 26.
and the curtailment of American economic assistance Egypt was forced to rein in its economy. No longer able to finance its chronic balance of trade deficit, Egypt was forced to restrict severely its imports, reduce its investment rate and go further into debt.  

In the following five years the average annual growth in GDP dropped to 3.5%. There was a clear link between this downturn in growth and the balance of payments deficits of earlier years. In other words, Egypt's dependence upon external support had a marked impact upon its economic development. Moreover, the 1967 Six Day War exacerbated these tendencies because the closure of the Suez Canal, the loss of the Sinai oilfields and the disruption of Egypt's tourist industry were estimated to have cost the economy some $380 million per year in badly needed foreign exchange earnings. Although these losses were partly offset by an increase in Egypt's dependence upon the oil-rich Arab states, who committed themselves to annual contributions of some $270 million.

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23. In 1966 Egypt's foreign currency reserves dropped from $195 million to $173 million while its foreign liabilities rose from $170 million to $240 million. At that stage Egypt sold $46 million of gold. International Monetary Fund, United Arab Republic - 1967 Article XIV Consultation, 22 December, 1967 (mimeo, in the possession of the author).


25. As Table V shows, transfers from Arab governments provided over 70% of the finance necessary to cover Egypt's deficit on goods and services. The 1973 October War caused these unilateral transfers to jump to $529 million, enabling Egypt for the first time in over a decade to build up its foreign currency reserves.
it was also necessary to seek continued economic assistance from Moscow to help keep the economy afloat between the wars.26

Preparations for the October 1973 War increased Egypt's defence burden and as the deficit in the balance of payments continued to grow (from $462 million in 1970 to $1.1 billion in 1974), despite a sporadic improvement in the terms of trade, Egypt's foreign debt mounted. In 1967 the foreign debt was already $2.2 billion, 35% of which was owed to the Soviet Union, but by the end of 1974 the foreign debt had risen to $6.8 billion, 76% of which was owed to the Soviet Union. While in 1967 debt servicing was estimated to cost $240 million per year, in 1974 it was estimated to cost $1.9 billion; some 53% of Egypt's GNP had been mortgaged in debts.27

Finally, in 1974 President Sadat announced his new "open door" economic policy designed to attract foreign investment from the West and from the oil-rich Arab states. Although the plan envisaged some $2.7 billion of foreign investment in 1975, to produce a target growth rate of 12.6% per year (sic), less than one half of this amount was actually committed.28 Nevertheless, Egypt continued to place its hopes

26. By 1972, according to Egyptian data, the output of industrial enterprises set up in cooperation with the Soviet Union accounted for 30% of the total output of all the Egyptian enterprises which commenced production in the latter half of the 1960s. Egypt's dependence on Soviet technology is illustrated by the fact that Egypt headed the list of importers of spare parts from the Soviet Union, accounting for some 14% of Egypt's imports from the U.S.S.R. Moreover, the industries in which the Soviet Union invested were those whose products would be exported to the U.S.S.R. in order to pay for the investment. In March 1971 new trade and aid agreements were signed in Moscow which provided for 376 million rubles in economic and technical aid. Soviet commitments to expand Egypt's largest industrial enterprises and construct new industries formed the basis for Egypt's Five Year Plan for 1971-75. See Yaacov Ro'i and David Ronel, The Soviet Economic Presence in Egypt and its Political Implications, Soviet and East European Research Centre, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1974.

27. Middle East Economic Digest, 13 February 1976, pp. 11-12.

for economic development on foreign capital and without such external support, on a huge scale, the rate of population increase would quickly cause a decline in already low per capita income.  

Egypt's trade tended to reinforce its dependence in that it maintained a favourable trade balance with the Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe which was used to repay its obligations to Moscow and from which it earned no hard currency, while it ran up a trade deficit with Western Europe and the United States. In other words, it depended upon the Soviet bloc for its export market and on the West for its imports, making it vulnerable to Soviet economic policies and exacerbating its balance of payments problems. Thus, although the economic development and material wealth of Israel and Egypt had little in common, both countries were weak states in economic terms because they depended on the financial support of the superpowers and their more wealthy Jewish and Arab brethren to achieve their basic economic goals.

29. In 1974 Egypt received economic assistance worth just under $1 billion from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and the Gulf emirates; $250 million from the United States (which grew to $750 million in 1975); and $200 million from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Egypt needed over $1 billion in foreign currency just to pay for the import of food for its people. See, "If the poor should do more than grumble", Economist, 13 November 1976, pp. 83-5; Bent Hansen, "Middle East Development Prospects - What they Look Like in 1973", in A.S. Becker, B. Hansen and M.H. Kerr, The Economics and Politics of the Middle East, New York, 1975, pp. 14-19.
TABLE IV
GROSS INVESTMENT AND GROSS SAVINGS AS PERCENTAGES OF EGYPTIAN GNP, 1961/62 - 1966/67

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>GROSS INVESTMENT</th>
<th>GROSS SAVINGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961/62</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962/63</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963/64</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964/65</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965/66</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966/67</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


TABLE V
FINANCING EGYPT'S BALANCE OF PAYMENTS DEFICIT, 1962-1973

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1962-1966† ($m) (%)</th>
<th>1967 ($m) (%)</th>
<th>1966-1972† ($m) (%)</th>
<th>1973 ($m) (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEFICIT ON GOODS AND SERVICES</td>
<td>268 100.0</td>
<td>286 100.0</td>
<td>379 100.0</td>
<td>464 100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPITAL INFLOW:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT TRANSFERS</td>
<td>2 0.7</td>
<td>122 42.6</td>
<td>275 72.6</td>
<td>529 114.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER CAPITAL INFLOW*</td>
<td>183 68.3</td>
<td>94 32.9</td>
<td>76 20.0</td>
<td>43 9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONETARY MOVEMENTS</td>
<td>83 31.0</td>
<td>70 24.5</td>
<td>28 7.4</td>
<td>-108 -23.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† Annual averages
* Government and private capital

TABLE VI
EGYPT'S DIRECTION OF TRADE, 1962-1973

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1962-1966 $\times$1000</th>
<th>1967 $\times$1000</th>
<th>1968-1972 $\times$1000</th>
<th>1973 $\times$1000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>($m$)</td>
<td>($)</td>
<td>($m$)</td>
<td>($)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPORTS* FROM:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.S.R. and E. EUROPE</td>
<td>206 21.7 300 37.9 236 30.2 239 26.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>227 23.9 69 8.7 52 6.6 115 12.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.E.C.</td>
<td>257 27.1 130 16.4 192 24.5 271 29.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARAB LEAGUE</td>
<td>62 6.5 51 6.4 58 7.4 80 8.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHERS</td>
<td>197 20.8 242 30.6 244 31.3 209 22.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>949 100.0 792 100.0 782 100.0 914 100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPORTS* TO:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.S.R. and E. EUROPE</td>
<td>243 44.5 256 45.2 401 53.5 582 52.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>21 3.8 13 2.3 10 1.3 17 1.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.E.C.</td>
<td>103 18.9 66 11.7 82 10.9 178 16.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARAB LEAGUE</td>
<td>38 7.0 46 8.1 66 8.8 80 7.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHERS</td>
<td>141 25.8 185 32.7 190 25.5 260 23.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>546 100.0 566 100.0 749 100.0 1117 100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRADE BALANCE:</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.S.R. and E. EUROPE</td>
<td>+37 +9.2 -44 -16.5 +165 +500.0 +343 +169.0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.E.C.</td>
<td>-154 -38.2 -64 -24.1 -110 -333.3 -93 -45.8</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARAB LEAGUE</td>
<td>-24 -6.0 -5 -1.9 +8 +24.2 - -</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHERS</td>
<td>-56 -13.9 -57 -21.5 -54 -163.6 +51 +25.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>-403 -100.0 -226 -100.0 -33 -100.0 +203 +100.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† Annual Averages  
* Imports and Exports of goods and services

b) Military Dependence

On the military level, while Israel and Egypt must be ranked, because of the strength of their forces, with the middle powers of Europe, these forces were equipped and generously subsidised by their respective superpower patrons. Not only did the United States and the Soviet Union supply them with the weapons of war, they also proffered the weapons on favourable terms, and, on occasion, provided outright grants of military equipment. There could be no more vivid illustration of the military dependence of these two countries than the resupply operations mounted by both superpowers during the October 1973 War, each supplying some $1 billion of materiel in less than eight weeks.30

By 1968 Israel and Egypt were spending proportionally, almost twice as much of their budgets on defence as any other nation31; they would have found it difficult to do so without the economic and military assistance of their superpower patrons.32


32. David Kochav, the Chief Economic Adviser to Israel’s Ministry of Defence, has pointed out: "...a good part of our defence expenditures are not actually borne by the economy of Israel - but to some extent by U.S. assistance...the economy of Israel on its own is really unable to cover the entire defense requirements". See Kochav, op.cit., p. 180.
### TABLE VII

**ISRAEL AND EGYPT: MILITARY EXPENDITURES, 1963-1973**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>ISRAEL</th>
<th>EGYPT</th>
<th>ISRAEL</th>
<th>EGYPT</th>
<th>ISRAEL</th>
<th>EGYPT</th>
<th>ISRAEL</th>
<th>EGYPT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1962-1966</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>1202</td>
<td>1143</td>
<td>3953</td>
<td>2844</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>5383</td>
<td>6782</td>
<td>8706</td>
<td>8794</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968-1972</td>
<td>16846</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Annual averages

**NOTE:** ACDA estimates were used for the Israeli figures on military expenditures and GNP. SIPRI figures for Israeli military expenditures tended to be lower and IISS marginally higher. ACDA figures for Egyptian GNP were used, but after 1966 its estimates of Egyptian military expenditures appeared to be considerably understated in comparison with both the SIPRI and IISS figures which were in fundamental agreement about the size of military expenditures after 1966, although not about the proportion of GNP. Accordingly, SIPRI and IISS figures were used for Egyptian military expenditures after 1966.


In the decade from 1963 to 1973 Egypt is estimated to have received over $2.6 billion in military assistance from the Soviet Union. Arms were supplied at cut-rate prices with repayment spread over ten years after a grace period of one to three years, at 2-2 1/2% interest. Barter arrangements were also organised so that in the mid-1960s Egypt was repaying the equivalent of $20 million per year in the form of cotton exports. When this repayment burden proved too heavy Moscow agreed to reschedule or postpone the military debts. ACDA also estimates that 40% of the value of the equipment was being written off as grant aid during this period.

Until the October 1973 War the United States considered that Israel was capable of paying for its military equipment. Nevertheless, Foreign Military Sales Credits under the Foreign Assistance Act were extended to Israel from the inception of American arms deliveries in 1964. In fact, from 1964 to 1973 Israel received over $1.4 billion in military credits, which were to be repaid over a ten year period at a concessional interest rate of 1-2 1/2%. By 1972 Israel had repaid only $183 million (including interest payments). Under the Emergency Security Assistance Act of 1973 Israel was provided with a further $2.2 billion in military assistance to enable it to replace its war losses and further strengthen its armed forces. For the first time the American Administration decided to provide $1 billion of this sum in outright grants.

The growing financial dependence of both Israel and Egypt for the equipping of their forces in the period from 1962 - 1973 is illustrated in Table VIII. Military assistance from the superpowers assumed an ever increasing proportion of both countries' defence budgets. By 1974 American assistance provided over one third of Israel's defence budget.

33. This ACDA figure should be regarded as the minimum estimate because it values Soviet arms at official rather than free-market exchange rates. Moreover the weapons were known to be supplied at cut-rate prices. Thus Al Ahram reported in 1972 that the Soviet Union had supplied Egypt with $5 billion worth of equipment and the IISS reported in 1971 that Egypt had received $4.5 billion of military equipment, at free market prices, from the Soviet Union during the period 1967 - 1970. See New York Times, 31 March 1972 and IISS, Strategic Survey 1970, London, 1971, pp. 46-50.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOVIET MILITARY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSISTANCE TO EGYPT:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>($million per year)</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>480*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AS PERCENTAGE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OF EGYPTIAN</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEFENCE BUDGET</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S. MILITARY</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSISTANCE TO ISRAEL:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>($million per year)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>1600*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AS PERCENTAGE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OF ISRAELI</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEFENCE BUDGET</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†Annual averages

*This figure does not include the cost of resupply during the war because the Soviet Union was reported to have demanded hard cash for this equipment.

‡This figure includes $1 billion spent by Israel during and after the war which was later written off as a grant.

and although the military assistance relationship between Egypt and the Soviet Union was all but terminated in the wake of the October War, Egypt's military debts to the Soviet Union were estimated at $3 billion by the end of 1974.  

This military dependence can also be demonstrated by examining the origin of the weapons in the Israeli and Egyptian arsenals. Table IX illustrates the fact that in the period under examination, the Soviet Union was Egypt's sole source of supply, except for a few British tanks and naval vessels. A further indication of Egyptian dependence on the Soviet Union was the presence in Egypt, after 1967 and until July 1972, of more than 15,000 Soviet military advisers, and missile technicians and four squadrons of Soviet-piloted aircraft. Egypt's attempt to diversify its arms sources in 1972 met with no success and even in 1976, after two years of concerted effort to gain arms from the West, Egypt had only managed to deploy 38 French Mirage III fighter-bombers.

Before the 1967 War Israel had tended to depend on arms supplied by Britain and France, although it received Hawk missiles from the United States and American tanks, first through West Germany and then directly. After that war Israel faced a French arms embargo, so that while Britain continued to supply tanks, Israel came to rely on the United States for almost all its front-line equipment. Although Israel had invested heavily in its own arms industry, it only began to deploy its fast patrol boat (the Reshef, carrying the Israeli designed Gabriel missile) and fighter-bomber (the Barak) in 1973, and did not deploy the more sophisticated Kfir fighter-bomber and the Jericho surface-to-surface missile until the end of 1974. In fact, indigenous defence production in the period before 1974 was more important for its overhauling of obsolete British Centurions and captured Russian tanks than for the production of Israeli-developed weapons.

37. More arms were of course on order, including 44 Mirage F-1s, 100 British Hawk fighters - to be produced in Egypt under licence - and nine fast patrol vessels. Yet none of these were expected to be deployed in the Egyptian forces until 1979. See IISS, The Military Balance, 1976/77, London, 1976; and SIPRI, Yearbook 1976, Stockholm, 1976, pp. 254-5.
38. Since then Israel has developed a tank (the Merchava or Chariot), some sophisticated guidance and radar equipment and an air-to-ground missile. However, Israel's arms industry still remains dependent upon the import of intermediate goods such as aircraft and tank engines and titanium. See Jerusalem Post, International Edition, 31 May, 1977.
It is also important to note, in assessing the dependence of these two weak powers, that once they stocked their armed forces with Soviet and American equipment they also became dependent upon the superpowers for training, replacements, spare parts and much of the sophisticated ordnance and support equipment.

TABLE IX

THE COMPOSITION BY SOURCE OF THE EGYPTIAN AND ISRAELI ARMED FORCES, 1967 and 1973

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>1967 (Israel)</th>
<th>1967 (Egypt)</th>
<th>1973 (Israel)</th>
<th>1973 (Egypt)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TANKS:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.S.R.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>350¹</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIRCRAFT:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.S.R.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>161²</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>24³</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISSILES:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>- ⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.S.R.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAVAL VESSELS:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.S.R.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12⁶</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Pre-war figures
² 250 British Centurions overhauled in Israel and refitted with French 105 mm guns and 100 Russian T54/55 tanks captured in the Six Day War, overhauled in Israel and refitted with 105mm guns.
³ Includes 23 Mystere IVA Fighter bombers held in reserve.
⁴ The Israeli Barak fighter.
⁵ Numbers were probably higher because of the unknown quantities of SAM-6s. There were reported to be 130 SAM sites.
⁶ Surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles.
⁷ Includes 5 SAAR patrol boats taken from Cherbourg in France in 1970.

Thus in terms of material strength both Israel and Egypt, despite the differing structures of their economies, must be classed as weak states because whatever strength they possessed in economic or military terms was heavily dependent upon the support of stronger states. In the specific context of relations between weak states and the superpowers which dominate the international system, Israel and Egypt clearly fitted into the "weak" category, not only because they were weak relative to the material strength of the superpowers, but also because the achievement of their basic goals of economic development, military security or political power were dependent, in large measure, on the patronage of the superpowers.

Now, because they depended on superpower patronage and because the support they received was mostly extended to them on the basis that such assistance would improve the respective positions of the superpower rivals, either in the Middle East or elsewhere, Israel and Egypt became the objects of superpower influence. However, whether the dependence of the weak could be translated into influence for the great would be determined not merely by the intentions of the superpowers, but also by the objections of the weak states. For, as the targets of superpower policies, Israel and Egypt had the common aim of cultivating patronage but resisting any influence which they found inimical to their interests. In other words, while they needed the support of the superpowers, they also wanted to retain their independence of action, and therefore sought to minimise the effects of their dependence by directing the power which they did possess towards resisting the incompatible influence of their patrons. Of course, where resistance or independent action by these weak states succeeded in forcing the superpowers to alter their policies, Israel and Egypt might claim to have influenced their patrons. However, to the extent that weak states can be said to influence the superpowers they only tend to do so as a result of their ability to resist successfully their patrons' influence. For just as the lesser animals may indeed lead the elephant to which they are yoked, they only do so as a result of their ability to resist the elephant's haul.

Interaction between the great and the weak can be characterised in this simplified form of influence (on the part of the
great) and resistance (by the weak). In this context, the "power of the weak" should be understood as the ability of a weak state to resist the policies of a superpower where the dictates of that state's perceived interests conflict with the imperatives of the superpower's perceived interests. Whereas most studies of the interaction between the great and the weak in the Middle East have tended to concentrate on the ability of the superpowers to influence their weak clients, this study adopts the perspective of the weak and focuses upon their ability to resist the influence of the superpowers. Consequently, the questions which have to be addressed tend to be the obverse of those questions which are normally addressed by analysts of superpower influence. Whereas a study of influence will concentrate on the effect that superpower policies have

39. These concepts of influence and resistance do not encompass interaction between the weak state and its superpower patron when their interests converge. In this case the weak state will be pursuing objectives which its patron prefers and which it also would have opted for had it been in possession of independent means. Consequently, the issues of superpower influence and weak state resistance are not relevant. Neither state prevails nor submits. However, if a weak state fulfils one superpower expectation in order to relieve itself of the burden of another superpower expectation, then the patron can be said to have influenced the client and the client can also be said to have resisted its patron. Both will have prevailed and both will have submitted, although the issues may not have been of equal importance. A weak state may also gain influence over a superpower as a result of successful resistance on the part of another weak state. These facets of the bargaining relationship will be discussed below. Cf. Alvin Z. Rubinstein, "Assessing Influence as a Problem in Foreign Policy Analysis", in Rubinstein (ed.), Soviet and Chinese Influence in the Third World, New York, 1975, pp. 11-13.

40. Conversely, the power of the great in their relations with the weak can be defined as their ability to induce other states to follow lines of conduct or policy which they might not otherwise pursue. David Vital, The Inequality of States, London, 1967, p. 87.


There has also been a host of other studies of either American or Soviet relations with their Israeli or Egyptian clients which also adopt the perspective of the superpower patron. The more notable are: J.S. Badeau, The American Approach to the Arab World, New York, 1968; Jon D. Glassman, Arms for the Arabs; Malcolm Kerr, "Soviet Influence in Egypt", in
had on the behaviour of the weak client states, this analysis concentrates
on the effect that the behaviour of the weak clients has had on the policies
of the great. Thus the focus will be on the reaction of Israel and
Egypt to the policies of their superpower patrons and an attempt will be
made to answer the following questions:

i) How have Israel and Egypt, as weak states, been able to
resist the inimical policies of the superpowers?

ii) How have Israel and Egypt been able to cultivate amicable
superpower policies or maintain patronage when their own
policies were opposed by their patrons?

iii) In what circumstances have Israel and Egypt prevailed over
their superpower patrons and in what circumstances have
they been forced to submit?

iv) How have asymmetries in the patronage relationships
affected the outcomes of these conflicts?

v) How has the development of relations between the
superpowers affected the resistance capabilities of their
Israeli and Egyptian clients?

vi) Finally, what then are the prospects for a superpower imposed
settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict?

To answer these questions it is necessary to outline the sources
of power for weak states in their relations with the superpowers and
apply this theoretical exposition to the powers of Israel and Egypt in
their interaction with the United States and the Soviet Union.

Walter Laqueur, The Struggle for the Middle East, London, 1969; William
R. Polk, The United States and the Arab World, (Revised edition) Cambridge,
Massachusetts, 1969; Alvin Z. Rubinstein, "Moscow and Cairo: Currents of
Influence", Problems of Communism, July/August, 1974, pp. 17-28; Steven
L. Spiegel, The Patron Meets the Pygmies: U.S. Trials in the Arab-Israeli
Theater, California Arms Control and Foreign Policy Seminar, September, 1973.

Conversely, there are relatively few studies of weak power resistance in
the Middle East. David Vital, in his The Survival of Small States,
(London, 1971), provides a general analysis of Israel's ability to resist
its Soviet adversary; Yair Evron, in his The Middle East: Nations,
Super-Powers and Wars, (London, 1973) briefly discusses some of the levers
which Israel and Egypt can command in their dealings with the superpowers;
and Gabriel Scheffer, in his "Independence in Dependence of Regional Powers:
The Uncomfortable Alliances in the Middle East Before and After the
October 1973 War" (Orbis, Volume XIX, No. 4 , 1976, pp.1519-1538), discusses
some of the tactics utilised by Israel and Egypt during the October 1973
War period.

Red Star on the Nile (Princeton, New Jersey, 1977), which discusses the concept
of influence and applies them to an analysis of Soviet-Egyptian relations, was
only received after the final drafts of this chapter had been written. I have
incorporated some references to it in later chapters.
II THE SOURCES OF POWER FOR THE WEAK

Although we have distinguished between the power of the strong and the power of the weak, the sources of power for both remain the same; the difference lies in the composition of the power resources. Thus, while the strong will tend to have an abundance of physical, economic and military resources, the weak will tend to lack such capabilities - that is precisely what distinguishes the weak from the strong and that is also why the strong seek to use these abundant resources to influence the weak while the weak, lacking such resources, seek to resist rather than influence. On the question of the composition of power, Clausewitz has argued that the power of resistance comprises two components: the "strength of the will" (Willenskraft) and "the sum of the available means." While it is certainly true that the power to influence also consists of these two components, the distinction is particularly important for the power of the weak, since what the weak lack in available means may be compensated, to some degree, by will-power.

(a) Will-power

The importance of the strength of the will in international relations should not be under-estimated since, no matter how abundant the other sources of power, without the necessary will a state would be unable to bring these physical resources to bear in a given situation. As Clausewitz suggests, the strength of the will is primarily determined by the intensity of interest (the strength of the motives) which a state may have in the achievement of certain objectives. Now, because the weak state is primarily concerned with local matters, which are crucial to its survival or the pursuit of its goals, it will tend to have a greater intensity of interest in these matters than the superpower, concerned as it is with global affairs and the balancing of its superpower adversary. From the Congress of Vienna - when the great and the weak were characterised as states with "general interests" and states with "limited interests" - to the present day, the structure of the international system has ensured that the weak, by nature, will have a different, narrower perspective than the great. As Annette Baker Fox has observed, and as almost every analyst of small states

44. Ibid.
The primary difference [between great powers and small states] and it holds true regardless of time, situation or states involved - was the scope of their attention. Great power leaders had to broaden their gaze to sweep the whole international arena... The leaders in the small states, on the contrary, were primarily concerned with their own fate, regardless of the larger constellations of power over which they could have no control.46

The importance of this difference in perspective for the weak state's ability to resist the influence of the great lies in the asymmetry it tends to impart to the intensity of interest and thus to the strength of will. Matters of far-reaching importance to the weak, which are at the same time of secondary or peripheral importance to the superpower, tend to provide the weak state with a stronger will to resist than the will of the superpower to bring to bear its more powerful means.

However, while intensity of interest is a necessary ingredient in a nation's will-power, it is not sufficient. Quality of leadership, especially the leaders' readiness to take risks and their courage and resolve to face powerful opposition, is necessary if the people's will is to be translated into the state's determination. Conversely, the leaders must be able to imbue their colleagues and their people with their own self-confidence, if their own intensity of interest is to be translated


46. A.B. Fox, The Power of Small States, Chicago, 1959, p. 181. Henry Kissinger made a similar observation after his attempts to negotiate a settlement of the Vietnam conflict:

...what we face here is one of the problems great powers have in dealing with their clients, that the client looks at problems from its own regional or national perspective, while the great powers may take action in a much wider one.

into the state's will to resist. Moreover, internal unity, a common perception of external threat and the willingness of the people to accept the costs as necessary and therefore absorb them, are also essential ingredients for successful resistance. On the one hand, if these elements are missing the leadership will face internal dissent which will undermine its will-power. On the other hand, the superpower will not hesitate to exploit internal differences to subvert the legitimacy of the leadership and thereby not only further undermine the weak state's will-power, but even cause the leadership to be replaced with those more willing to acquiesce in the superpower's design.

However, provided that there is internal cohesion, that the leadership enjoys legitimacy, and that a level of political, social and economic organisation sufficient to maintain the state's viability exists, the leadership will generally find it easier to sustain its strength of will than will the leadership of a superpower. This is because the leadership of the weak state can reduce external problems to the question of national survival and induce a siege mentality which the latter would find difficult to do because of the essential security which its people enjoy.

While the interests and motivations of Israel and Egypt were rather different, they both tended to possess the strength of will necessary to attempt to resist their patrons. Israel's will-power is derived, in part, from the commonly perceived threat which Arab hostility posed to the very survival of the Jewish state. This threat served to unite the people, raised their willingness to absorb the human and material costs of war and gave them the ultimate motivation—survival.

47. Cf. D. Vital, *The Inequality of States*, p. 37. Czechoslovakia's collapse in the face of Hitler's demands in 1939 is a notable example, since Benes demonstrated negligible Willenskraft. As Vital observes this lack of will was the result of the sudden collapse of twenty years of policy and came close to the abrogation of statehood and sovereignty by the leadership. See Vital, *The Survival of Small States*, Chapter 2.

48. A notable example of the triumph of will-power based on internal unity was North Vietnam's victory over a deeply divided American polity which, among other things, essentially lost its will to bring its more powerful means to bear. See Andrew Hack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict", *World Politics*, Volume XXVII, No. 2, January, 1975, pp. 175-200; Vital, *The Inequality of States*, pp. 110, 191.

49. Thus David Ben-Gurion has remarked: "I knew that we would be vastly outnumbered...But I also knew that our will would prove stronger...because we are fighting for a cause and because defeat for us would mean national destruction". *Ben-Gurion Looks Back in Talks With Moshe Pearlman*, New York, 1970, p. 12.
The unique history of the state of Israel, recreated after over seventeen centuries of dispersion, born into a hostile environment, and rebuilt by refugees from persecution and holocaust in Europe and from oppression in the Arab world, gave profound meaning to this concept of survival. It was commonly perceived that if the Jewish state were again destroyed, not only the future of Israeli Jews, but also the future of the Jewish people the world over, would be placed in jeopardy. Although Israel had to absorb large numbers of migrants with diverse cultural backgrounds, and although a significant number of Arabs lived in the Jewish state and a much larger number in the territories occupied during the Six Day War, the state was still able to ensure social cohesion, internal tranquillity and an extremely effective political, social and economic organisation to underpin its will to survive and to enable its leadership to demand considerable sacrifices from the people. Because the state was a thriving democracy the government's legitimacy was unquestioned and, although Eshkol's will to act decisively was placed in doubt during the 1967 crisis and the quality of Meir's and Dayan's leadership and their lack of imagination were the cause of criticism before as well as after the October War, all Israel's leaders possessed a strong, even stiff-necked, determination to pursue the objectives of survival and security.


51. These causes of internal dissention are more salient today than they were in the period under examination. This is because of the growing radicalisation of Israeli Arabs and the active dissent which is being expressed in the occupied areas of the West Bank. Moreover, the social gap between Western and Oriental Jews (the Ashkenazim and Sephardim), which emerged as a significant problem in the 1970s, could increasingly affect internal cohesion as the recession continues and if the external threat is reduced as a consequence of the settlement process. Nevertheless, these factors did not seriously affect Israel's strength of will in the period from 1962-1974. See A.S. Becker, Israel and the Palestinian Occupied Territories: Military-Political Issues in the Debate, Rand Corporation, December 1971, R-882-TSA.

52. Israelis have had to bear the highest average tax burden in the world - over 60% of their incomes - as well as three years of full-time military service for men and up to two years for women and reserve duty until the age of 55.

53. See Brecher, op.cit., Chapters 12-14 and Conclusions.
Egypt could not match Israel's motivation of survival since at no time during the period did the people of Egypt perceive a threat to the existence of the state. Nevertheless, if there was an asymmetry between Israel and Egypt in this respect, there were a number of factors which served to enhance Egypt's strength of will and to reduce the asymmetry. First, the unbroken unity of the state over some six millennia of history resulted in a remarkably homogeneous population. Second, the charismatic leadership of Nasser, who based his legitimacy on the achievement of foreign triumphs and blamed any setbacks on external forces, unified the Egyptian masses against the external threats of "imperialism" and "Israeli aggression". Third, the regime's elimination or suppression of almost all of its political rivals, from the Moslem Brotherhood to the Communists, its confiscation of property from the landowning class, its crippling of the private sector through nationalisation, its control of the media and educational institutions, and the extreme effectiveness of its security forces, ensured that there would be little if any internal dissent. Finally, the fact that almost ninety per cent of Egypt's large population lived in or on the margin of poverty ensured that the cost of resistance, in human and material terms, could be spread so that it did not add significantly to the considerable hardship which the masses were already experiencing. Moreover, what the people lacked in motivation, Nasser made up for with his own determination to resist external influence and to lead the Arab world to unity under Egyptian hegemony. Nasser's strength of will was determined by factors which encouraged its continued application in Egyptian foreign policy: his perception of Egypt's role of leadership in the Arab, African and Islamic worlds; his successful utilisation of will-power in the past to defy Britain and France at Suez, the United States over the Baghdad Pact and the Aswan Dam and the Soviet Union over the direction of his revolution; and, perhaps most importantly, his understanding that proud defiance of external

54. Egyptians are ethnically homogeneous and almost 85% of them follow the Sunni sect of Islam. A. Dawisha, *Egypt in the Arab World*, p. 80.
pressure endeared him, not only to his own people, but also to the Arab masses throughout the Middle East. In fact, as we shall see, Nasser had a tendency to substitute his will for the too slow process of structural change in Egypt and in the Arab world. His setbacks in the sixties, culminating in the 1967 defeat, left their mark on Nasser's belief in his own will and by the time of his death he had, for the most part, given himself over to a fateful acceptance of the constraints on Egyptian policy.

Nevertheless, the Six Day War had provided the Egyptian people, the army, and the leadership with two new motivations which strengthened their resolve: first, revenge for the humiliating defeat inflicted on the army; second, the regaining of Egyptian land now occupied by Israel. However, Nasser's successor, Anwar Sadat, had the reputation of a calculator rather than a leader and, lacking the charismatic authority of his predecessor, he seemed incapable of utilising these motivations. Moreover, his own authority was challenged by others in the collective leadership who regarded themselves as the rightful heirs to Nasser's legacy. It was not until mid-1971 that Sadat was able to consolidate his authority by eliminating his opposition within the leadership, but by this time his regime was experiencing serious dissent within the army and amongst the people. By 1972 the increasing economic hardships and Sadat's apparent indecisiveness in the conflict with Israel led to demonstrations and disillusionment. It was not until his dramatic expulsion of the Soviet advisers in July 1972 that he was able to restore his people's faith in his leadership (especially amongst the army) and it was not until his launching of the surprise attack in October 1973 that his determination to regain Egyptian territory and reassert Egypt's strength of will was

58. See James Eayres, Fate and Will in Foreign Policy, Toronto, 1973, passim.
59. Sadat faced considerable dissent from university students who were finding that their years of study had left them without suitable jobs. Their demonstrations in January 1972 illustrated some of the problems he faced. Moreover, he had promised his people that 1971 would be "the year of decision" in the conflict with Israel, but the year passed without any political or military progress on the level of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Sadat now faced dissent within the army as well. See P.J. Vatikiotis, "Egypt Adrift: A Study in Disillusion", New Middle East, No. 54, March 1973, pp. 6-7.
demonstrated to all who had doubted it. 60

Thus while the basis of Israeli and Egyptian will-power differed in some important respects, they both tended to possess the necessary internal unity, the quality of leadership, the willingness to absorb costs, and the intensity of interest in a given outcome, to provide them with the strength of will to resist inimical policies and to enforce threatened action on issues which affected their vital interests. Now, in the interaction between weak and great, the weak, as already noted, tend to enjoy the advantages inherent in the general asymmetry between their intensities of interest and those of their patrons, between their ability to forge national unity and their patrons' abilities, and in their willingness to absorb costs on matters of vital interest to them but of peripheral interest to the superpower patrons. In other words, Israel and Egypt, as weak states, were able to maintain their commitment in matters of fundamental and far-reaching importance to themselves, but of secondary or peripheral interest to the superpowers. In such matters the will of the weak tended to be greater than the will of the great and thus the will to resist was usually greater than the will of the superpower to bring to bear its more powerful means. To paraphrase Yeats: in situations where the great lacked all convictions while the weak were full of passionate intensity, the weak could indeed prevail.

However, this general asymmetry between the will of the weak and the will of the great (and therefore the advantage which the weak have in their interaction with the great) tends to decrease as the local issue, which concerns the weak, increases in significance to the superpowers. 61 In other words, where the local issue begins to affect the vital interests of the superpowers, they too will tend to have the necessary intensity of interest, internal consensus and willingness to absorb costs, which will provide them with the necessary will-power to bring their more

60. Thus Sadat declared after the October 1973 War: "The important thing is the will of the Arab nation. It is the one safeguard. Before October 6 we had no other safeguard. Talk of war aroused ridicule, no one believed that we should fight and cross [the Canal]. Nor did anyone believe that this nation would give expression to its unity in the way that it did...How were all these forces released? By the Arab will - and this will still exists." (Egyptian Gazette, 6 February, 1974).
powerful means to bear. In such a situation the great will indeed tend to prevail and the weak may find it wiser to submit voluntarily than to bring on a clash of wills and be forced to submit.

The operation of this principle is illustrated by the establishment of superpower spheres of influence. Such areas, are recognised, by strong and weak alike, to be of primary importance to one of the superpowers. Accordingly, that superpower will tend to be prepared to protect its interests by bringing its more powerful means to bear. Thus weak states in geographic proximity to one of the superpowers, or in possession of strategic assets of importance to one of the superpowers will tend to become part of that superpower's sphere of influence. Weak states unfortunate enough to be in such positions have two choices: either they recognise the superpower's intensity of interest and modify their behaviour accordingly, or they confront the wrath of the superpower and are usually forced to modify their behaviour to conform to the superpower's preferences. On the other hand, weak states situated on the periphery of a superpower's sphere of influence, or in an area where both superpowers have interests and are competing for influence, will tend to enjoy greater independence, provided that they have a greater will to resist than the will of the superpowers to exercise their influence.

Fortunately for Israel and Egypt, during the period under analysis, neither the Soviet Union nor the United States possessed vital interests in the Middle East, but the region was significant enough to both for them to compete for influence there, and attempt to deny influence to each other. Situated at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa, the Middle East region provided essential land, sea and air communications between

62. Quality of leadership has been omitted at this point because it would appear to be independent of whether a state, large or small, has to confront momentous issues of vital importance to its well-being.

63. Finland's strict neutrality, Yugoslavia's cautious non-alignment and Burma's acquiescence are examples of voluntary modification; the invasions of Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the Dominican Republic are examples of the forced modifications of behaviour. See Alvin Rubinstein, Yugoslavia and the Non-aligned World, Princeton, New Jersey, 1970, Chapter I; Ralph Pettman, Small Power Politics and International Relations in South East Asia, Sydney, 1975; D. Vital, The Survival of Small States, Chapter 4; Trygve Mathisen, The Functions of Small States in the Strategies of the Great Powers, Oslo, 1971.

these continents. The region was, at the one time, regarded by the Soviet Union as its "back door" and by NATO as its "southern flank"; from the seas which surrounded the region the United States could strike at the Soviet heartland with its Polaris missiles; from the air bases and ports of the littoral states the Soviet Union could supply the necessary air cover and maintenance facilities for its Mediterranean squadron. Moreover, in the sands of the Middle East lay the oil deposits which fuelled the industries of Western Europe and Japan, and although the control of these deposits was not perceived to be vitally significant to either superpower before the 1973 oil embargo, security and stability of supply were important to the United States and therefore also of interest to the Soviet Union. 65

However, while these interests provided both superpowers with sufficient incentive to cultivate their positions of influence in the region, with the waning of the Cold War and their preoccupation elsewhere, neither had sufficient interest in the region to make this a vital priority. 66 Instead, before 1967, both the United States and the Soviet Union tended to focus most of their attention on Europe, the Caribbean and South East Asia, shifting their focus to the Middle East when tension there threatened to involve them in conflict, as it did in 1967. After the Six Day War, the Soviet Union paid closer attention to the region because developments in the Arab-Israeli conflict threatened its prestige and position in the Arab world. On the other hand, the United States remained preoccupied with the war in South


66. While the Soviet Union sought to organise the Arab 'progressive' states into an anti-imperialist, pro-Soviet force, this ranked in importance below its activist European policy, its accelerated support for North Vietnam and its strategic build-up. See Lawrence L. Whetten, The Arab-Israeli Dispute, Great Power Behaviour, Adelphi Papers No. 128, December, 1976, p. 2.
East Asia and did not turn its full attention to the Middle East until mid-1970 when Washington began to consider that its own position of influence in the region was under threat from the Soviet Union. Following the Jordanian crisis of 1970 both superpowers sought stability in the region to ensure that conflict there did not disrupt their own relations at the superpower level. This stability, which lasted until the October 1973 War, enabled the superpowers to place the Middle East on the backburner while they concerned themselves with the development of detente, and their interests in other regions. After 1973 the intensity of American interest increased significantly, not only because of the West's dependence on Middle Eastern oil, the supply and price of which was no longer under its control, but also because of new opportunities to develop American influence in the Arab world. Meanwhile the Soviet Union tended to shift its attention to other regions - notably Africa - while cultivating relations with states which were on the periphery of the Arab-Israeli conflict (Libya, Somalia, and Ethiopia).

In other words, in the period from 1962 to 1974, neither superpower maintained a high intensity of interest in developments in the Middle East, except when conflict between protégés threatened to involve both superpowers in a confrontation which could cause severe disruption to their relations on a global level. Thus in 1967, 1970 and 1973, when wars were waged between Middle Eastern clients, both superpowers demonstrated a high intensity of interest in avoiding a superpower confrontation while protecting their own interests in the outcome of the fighting. Consequently, during these crisis periods the superpowers tended to possess the strength of will to bring their powerful means to bear, if necessary.

Nevertheless, except when the Arab-Israeli conflict threatened confrontation between the superpowers, Israel and Egypt possessed an advantage over their patrons in that they both maintained a higher intensity of interest in the outcome of their conflict than did the superpowers. Thus in most cases both clients possessed greater will-power than their patrons possessed in exercising control over them. For what was often a question of survival, security or sovereignty for these weak states was usually more marginal to the superpowers.

67. These developments will be discussed in detail in the ensuing chapters.
However, while these weak states tended to enjoy the advantages of the general asymmetry between the will of the weak and the will of the great on local issues, will-power could be of little use in the resistance process in the absence of the political, military and economic resources which enabled the will to be applied. For just as "the available means" would not be brought to bear in a particular situation without the necessary will-power, neither would strength of will alone have any impact on that situation if the state lacked the power resources to which its will could be applied. For if the lesser animals lack the power to lead the elephant, their will to do so could not budge him.

(b) The Available Means

The weak state, by its very nature, will possess few political, economic and military resources in comparison with the superpower's command of an abundance of these means of influence. However, whatever intrinsic resources it does possess, in terms of geography, demography, ideology, military and economic capability or natural resources, may be supplemented from two sources:

i) the power which the weak state derives from its ability to command the support of other states in the international system and their resources;

ii) the power which the weak state derives from its ability to gain the support of important groups within the domestic system of the superpower and their resources.

Moreover, in the context of relations between the weak and the great, the value of these intrinsic and derived resources will be determined by their importance to one or both of the superpowers rather than their inherent worth to the weak state itself. In turn, this contingent value of the weak state's resources will be determined by the roles which the resources are perceived to play, or can be made to play, in superpower politics on three levels:

i) in relations between the superpowers;

ii) in the competition between the superpowers for influence in the weak state's region;

iii) in the domestic politics of the superpower.
The term contingent is used advisedly because it reflects the conditional nature of the utility of these power resources in relations between the great and the weak. As noted at the outset, the superpowers, by virtue of their strength, retain, in the final analysis, an ability to restructure the relationship between themselves and their clients. Moreover, developments in relations between the superpowers, changes in the conduct of their competition in the weak state's region, or suppression of the weak state's supporters within the domestic system of the superpower, constitute events which are beyond the control of the weak state but very much within the power of its patron. Thus whatever leverage the weak state acquires from the value placed on its resources is contingent upon factors which are often beyond its ability to control, factors which may only exist in the short-term, and factors which can be affected by developments in other regions of the world.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, the weak state which is fortunate enough to have a high contingent value placed on its inherent or derived resources will be in command of a number of levers which it can utilise to resist the influence of its superpower patron. Whether this leverage is used effectively will depend upon the leadership's awareness of its existence, its will to apply it in the cause of resistance, its skill in doing so, and its calculation of the effect that utilisation now will have on the contingent value of the resources in the future.

Just how effectively Israel and Egypt used their contingent leverage will be the subject of most of the dissertation, but it is necessary here to illustrate the nature of the levers which these two weak states commanded. As we shall see, both Israel and Egypt were indeed fortunate to possess or acquire resources of considerable importance to their superpower patrons. Some of these levers were unique - particularly in Israel's case - others were based on their involvement in a regional conflict, and still others resulted from the particular characteristics of the competition between the superpowers for influence in the Middle East. Thus the comparability of their leverage with that of other weak states will depend on the degree to which their particular circumstances reflect the circumstances of other weak states in their relations with the superpowers. Nevertheless, the framework which is used for the analysis of the sources of this contingent leverage should be applicable to an analysis of the power of weak states in general.

THE CONTINGENT VALUE OF INTRINSIC RESOURCES

1) Geo-Strategic Position

Despite the thawing of the Cold War and the development of detente between the United States and the Soviet Union during the period under examination, both superpowers continued their competition and conflict, seeking unilateral advantages in the pursuit of their national interests. This competition tended to centre on the areas situated on the peripheries of the superpowers' respective spheres of influence. Thus a weak state which was situated in such an area of superpower competition found that its geo-strategic position could be of considerable importance to both of the superpowers. This strategic position between the superpowers provided the weak state with a source of power, since it could threaten to transfer its allegiance and favours from one superpower to the other, or from non-alignment to one of the poles, thereby providing the superpower's adversary with a strategic advantage.69

Egypt's geographical position at the hub of the Middle East, its control of the Suez Canal (which constituted the only direct sea link between the Indian and Mediterranean Oceans), its proximity to the oil-rich Persian Gulf and to North and East Africa, and its control of the largest eastern Mediterranean port (Alexandria), gave its geo-strategic position considerable value for the superpowers.70 Thus the Soviet Union

69. This tactic, which has been referred to as the "power of blackmail" became the basic bargaining ploy of the nonaligned states which emerged in the 1950s. See Arnold Wolfers, Discord and Collaboration, p. 112; L.W. Martin (ed.), Neutralism and Nonalignment, New York, 1962, Introduction.

70. Thus writing in 1964 and "reflecting an official assessment of primary American interests in the Middle East", William Polk stated: "The Suez Canal is one of the world's greatest arteries of commerce and communication... Closure of this area to...sea traffic would present the United States and the Atlantic Community with serious economic and military problems which, while solvable by sea traffic diversion around the Horn of Africa... would be a serious blow to Western interests". However, writing in 1968, Polk concluded that the closure of the Suez Canal "has cost us little" and was no longer a basic interest. Nevertheless the Suez Canal remained important for America's European allies and also for the Soviet Union. However, after 1967 Egypt no longer controlled the Canal and its reopening depended on Israel. See W. Polk, The United States and the Arab World, pp. 315 and 317.
was particularly interested in securing access to Egypt's Mediterranean ports (not only Alexandria but also Mersa Matruh) for the maintenance of its navy, and access to Egyptian air bases for the aerial protection which its Mediterranean squadron lacked. On the other hand, although the United States was not interested in securing the same access for its strategic forces, Washington was concerned to deny access to the Soviet Union, particularly after Moscow moved combat forces into Egypt in 1970. As Henry Kissinger, then U.S. National Security Advisor, observed at the time:

The danger that arises from the persistence of a Soviet combat base in Egypt is that the Eastern Mediterranean may become a Soviet lake as a result. It may become very difficult for our fleet to operate in that area in the face of short-range Soviet bases. What is more important...is that the oil supplies of the Middle East may become totally at the mercy of the Soviets and their radical clients...We are trying to expel the Soviet military presence, not so much the advisors, but the combat pilots and the combat personnel, before they become so firmly established...What they are doing in the Middle East...poses the graviest threats in the long term for Western Europe and Japan and therefore for us.71

Egypt's geo-strategic value to the superpowers was further enhanced by the role which its position played in the competition between the superpowers for influence in the Middle East (i.e. level (ii)). With the Soviet Union seeking polarisation in the region as the most appropriate means for spreading its influence, Egypt's position was pivotal to the entire operation. Military support for Egypt, especially with Nasser at the helm, enabled the Soviet Union to pressure, by proxy, the Western clients in the Middle East. Egypt was in close proximity to the conservative Arab states of Morocco, Tunisia and Libya (before the fall of King Idris) in the West; to the sheikhdoms of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf in the East; and to Hashemite Jordan and Israel across the Sinai. Thus, through support for Egypt, Moscow was able to sustain tension in the region on three axes: between Egypt and Israel; between Egypt and the conservative Arab states; and between Egypt and the West.72


because Egypt's geo-strategic position was so valuable to the Soviet Union, it was also valuable to the United States, since Washington sought the relaxation of tension, the promotion of stability and the depolarisation of the region as the most appropriate means for cultivating its position in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{73}

Furthermore, the value of Egypt's geo-strategic position was also enhanced by the fact that some groups within the domestic political systems of both superpowers advocated support for Egypt on the grounds of its strategic importance. This was certainly the case in the U.S. State Department where the bureaucrats involved in handling policy towards the Middle East perceived a primary American interest in the wooing of Egypt because it would lessen the threat to the conservative sheikhdoms and deprive the Soviet Union of a base for promoting instability in the region. Because they perceived themselves to be the trustees of American security interests in the Arab world they promoted the strategic importance of Egypt in Washington.

While it is difficult to find evidence of dissension within the Russian hierarchy over Soviet policy towards the Middle East, nevertheless there are indications that the critics of Soviet actions based their charges on the unreliable and non-progressive nature of Soviet clients in the Middle East. One of the answers which the proponents of Soviet involvement could have given to these charges might have been that the strategic importance of Egypt for Soviet naval deployments outweighed the impurity of its ideology and the cost of Soviet support.\textsuperscript{74}

Thus a high contingent value was placed on Egypt's geo-strategic position by both superpowers and this in turn provided Egypt with a

\textsuperscript{73} See J.C. Hurewitz, "Superpower Rivalry and the Arab-Israel Dispute: Involvement or Commitment?", in The U.S.S.R. and the Middle East, pp. 155-169.


\textsuperscript{75} Uri Ra'an an has constructed an imaginative analysis of how both Defence Minister Grechko and Admiral Gorshkov might have defended Soviet involvement in Egypt on the basis of its strategic importance. He also constructs arguments which might have been used by the opponents of Soviet support for Egypt. However, Ra'an an provides no evidence to suggest that these arguments were actually used within the Kremlin decision-making process. On the other hand, Ilana Dimant has assembled evidence which demonstrates opposition to Soviet support for Egypt on ideological and cost-effective grounds. See U. Ra'an an, "The USSR and the Middle East: Some Reflections on the Soviet Decision-Making Process", Orbis, Volume XVII, No. 3, Fall 1973, pp. 946-977; Ilana Dimant, Pravda and Trud - Divergent Attitudes Towards the Middle East, Soviet and East European Research Centre, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Research Paper No. 3, June, 1972.
considerable source of leverage in its relations with its Soviet and American patrons. Before 1967 Nasser was able to play one superpower off against the other by using the lever of Egypt's capacity to facilitate Soviet interests and disturb Western ones.\textsuperscript{76} In this way, Egypt became an important client for the Soviet Union to cultivate with economic and military assistance, as well as a regional troublemaker for the United States to appease with economic aid. After 1967, Soviet dependence on Egypt for its strategic position in the Middle East enabled both Nasser and Sadat to threaten a shift in Egypt's allegiance to bolster Soviet support for Egyptian policy. And when Sadat failed to elicit this support he was able to force a change in Moscow's policy by expelling the Soviet combat forces while maintaining the Soviet port facilities, thereby punishing the Soviet Union while giving credibility to the threat of further punishment in the form of a complete denial of Egypt's strategic position to the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{77}

While Israel is situated geographically at the point of convergence between the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa, its position was of little value to the United States and the Soviet Union in the conduct of their relations on the superpower level. With its small size and pariah status in the Middle East, Israel's potential as a strategic base was limited. The United States Sixth Fleet had facilities in southern Europe while the Soviet Union sought bases in the Arab world. Thus Israel, as a weak state with little or no strategic importance to the superpowers, had little or no ability to play one off against the other.\textsuperscript{78}

Israel experienced the same problem on the level of superpower competition in the Middle East because support for the Jewish state brought with it hostility from the Arab states which could cause a deterioration in the positions of the superpowers in the strategically important Arab world. In strategic terms, Israel was only attractive to those external


\textsuperscript{77} Soviet port facilities were finally closed in 1976 in an attempt by Sadat to persuade the Soviet Union to reschedule Egypt's huge outstanding debts. By this stage, however, Moscow had cultivated a new client in Libya making it less dependent on Egyptian port facilities.

powers which were themselves opposed to Israel's neighbours. Accordingly, Israel was of strategic importance to France and Britain in their opposition to Nasser in 1956, and when relations between the United States and Egypt deteriorated in the mid-1960s, Washington found support for Israel efficacious in containing Nasser. Thus Israel's geographic position between the Arab states had contingent value to a superpower which sought to prevent Egyptian hegemony in the Arab world or to a superpower whose position in the Arab world was enhanced by Arab hostility towards Israel. However, this leverage was not something which Israel could control because it was determined by external factors: Arab hostility towards the Jewish state and superpower attitudes towards that hostility. Thus, while the Soviet Union gained an advantage from this hostility (in that the Arabs came to depend on Moscow to provide them with the wherewithal to express their belligerency), Israel could hardly threaten the Soviet Union by refusing to respond to that hostility. By the same token, Israel could not threaten the United States by refusing to contain Nasser, since this was something which it would have done without American support because it was in its own basic interests.

However, after 1967 the contingent value of Israel's geo-strategic position increased for two reasons: its acquisition of Arab territory; and its role in a region now polarised between the two superpowers. On the superpower level, the fact that Israel now sat firmly on the east bank of the Suez Canal imparted a geographic dimension to Israel's position in the Middle East which it lacked within its pre-1967 boundaries. The Suez Canal had been closed during the fighting and it could not now be opened without Israeli consent. This gave Israel's position a contingent value in superpower relations because, while the United States lost little advantage in strategic terms as a result of the closure, the Soviet Union found it more difficult to supply its North Vietnamese protégé from its warm water ports, and this suited American interests.

The United States attached far greater importance, at least in the short term, to the contingent role which Israel could now play in preventing what was perceived to be the expansion of Soviet influence in a region which had become polarised between the two superpowers. While the United States had only managed to maintain its position of influence

79. Defence Minister Moshe Dayan was reluctant to allow the Israel Defence Forces to advance to the Canal in 1967 precisely because he understood that this would "globalise" what had been a local conflict, and thereby increase Soviet involvement. See Shabtai Teveth, Moshe Dayan, Jerusalem, 1972, pp. 333-5.
in Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, the Soviet Union had consolidated its position in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq and was perceived to be threatening the pro-American regimes in Jordan and Saudi Arabia. One of the most important factors in the Nixon administration's attempt to contain Soviet influence and promote the depolarisation of the area was Israel's strategic position in the heartland of the Soviet Union's protégés. Thus Israel was able to play an important role in deterring Syria during the 1970 Jordanian crisis and, more significantly, was able to exert pressure on the Soviet position in Egypt. As we shall see, Israel's ability to deter Egypt with American supplied arms, together with Soviet reluctance to become further involved in the local conflict, forced Sadat to break the deadlock by expelling the Soviet forces. 80

However, once Israel had helped to promote the decline of the Soviet position in the Middle East heartland, its strategic importance to the United States also declined. For, when the United States succeeded in depolarising the area, after the October War, through its cultivation of Egypt and then Syria, American policy turned full circle and Israel's strategic importance on the superpower level was devalued to its previous low point at the beginning of the Kennedy era. Nevertheless, Israel had not failed to take advantage of the temporary appreciation of its strategic position to secure a massive increase in American military assistance, while resisting American pressure for greater flexibility in its attitude towards the Arabs. 81 (As we shall see, however, the Israelis did not understand the contingent nature of this leverage at the time.)

However, while Israel's strategic importance depreciated when the United States began to succeed in depolarising the area, its geographic position in the occupied territories compensated for this loss of leverage, just as it had enhanced Israel's capabilities during the period of polarisation. Because the ability to persuade or force Israel to withdraw from these territories could enhance the position in the Arab world of whichever superpower was able to achieve such a feat, Israel was able


to bargain the territories for superpower support. Thus, American support for Israel's maintenance of its occupation, and Soviet inability to use its political or military means to budge Israel, persuaded Sadat that Washington alone possessed the means to pressure Israel to withdraw—that the United States held 99% of the cards. Accordingly, he turned Egypt away from the Soviet Union after the October War and sought improved relations with Washington. However, it would have been more accurate to say that 99% of the cards were in Israel's hands, since Jerusalem controlled the occupied territories. Israel was therefore able to bargain pieces of the Sinai for increased American support.

Of course there were constraints on the use of this leverage with Israel's American patron, because Israel sought both to use the occupied territories to bargain for peace with the Arabs, and to retain some of those areas to guarantee its own security. Accordingly, Israel exhibited considerable reluctance to trade the territories for American support, in the absence of significant concessions from the Arab states towards a final peace settlement. And Israel also refused to accept the principle of the return of all, or even most, occupied territories even though this might have relieved many of the strains in relations with Washington. Yet the very fact that the United States recognised the importance which Israel attached to the occupied territories in its settlement negotiations with the Arabs enabled Jerusalem to charge a higher price in terms of American patronage for giving even parts of them up. Thus Israel was able to convert an inherent disadvantage—Arab hostility—into a contingent advantage by virtue of its geo-strategic position in the Middle East after the Six Day War.

On the level of American domestic politics, as the Jewish state recreated in its ancient homeland, Israel enjoyed the strong support of many of America's six million Jews. Israel's image as the Holy Land, the land which God promised to Abraham for the Jewish people, ensured that it received the political support of those Americans—essentially Baptist fundamentalists—who took the word of the bible.

82 As Moshe Dayan noted during the Suez Crisis of 1956 (but it was equally applicable to Israel's position after 1967): "I am becoming more and more convinced that the principle force of the United States States when she seeks to influence developments in the Middle East ... lies in her pressure on us...". See Moshe Dayan, *Diary of the Sinai Campaign, 1956*, London, 1967 (Sphere Books edition). p. 75.
seriously. Moreover, its position in the heart of the Middle East enabled American conservative opinion to argue that Israel was not only a bastion against communism, but also the front line against Soviet domination of the Middle East. Israel was portrayed, with considerable effect, as the only permanent and reliable ally in a region of great strategic importance to the West—a region noted for its instability.

Within the bureaucracy, the State Department desk officers with responsibility for the Middle East argued vehemently against the concept of Israel's strategic importance in the Middle East. On the contrary, they said, support for Israel would only drive the Arabs into Soviet arms and this would be far more serious strategically because "it could mean a major shift in the balance of power." As far as these officers

83. 'Si' Kenen, the Congressional lobbyist for the America-Israel Public Affairs Committee, stresses this point: "What counts with the Congressmen is not our power in terms of votes or money. It is their own traditions and heritage. It is in some cases a Baptist fundamentalism—the Bible says the Holy land is for the Jews and now that the Jews have got it, they don't want to see it taken away. This biblical tradition is important... The Congress came out with a Zionist statement in 1891—years before the Zionists did." Interview with I.L. Kenen, Washington D.C., Tuesday, 17 June, 1975. President Carter has been able to use his Baptist beliefs to persuade the leaders of the American Jewish community that he would and could do nothing to harm the Jewish state. In this way he has been able to deflect some criticism of his Middle East policy. Interview with Allen Pollack, Executive Member of the Jewish Agency, Melbourne, 25 April, 1977.

84. Thus, as House Minority Leader Gerald Ford stated that "a strong Israel is the main guarantor of the survival of responsible governments in the oil-rich lands of the area", Jerusalem Post Weekly, 20 August, 1974, p. 5. Rep. Thomas R. O'Neill, when he was House Democrat leader, argued that "Israel is the only thing preventing Russia from spreading her influence and power from her own territory, through the Urals, across Asia Minor to the entire northern portion of Africa", Near East Report, Volume XVII, No. 20, May 16, 1973, p. 78.

85. Thus former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Eugene Rostow has recently argued: "...Israel [is] a bulwark whose presence and strength discourage imperial impulses on the part of Egypt, Syria or Iraq... only Israel prevented Egypt under Nasser from conquering Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf states. And if we face, as we may, a showdown some day with the oil-producing states, Israel would be an indispensable ally. In addition Israel is the only sure access point we have between Western Europe and our partners in the Far East, Australia, New Zealand, Korea and Japan. From the security point of view, this is a fact of cardinal importance in many perspectives". See E.V. Rostow, "The American Stake in Israel", Commentary, April, 1977, p. 37.

were concerned Israel was to be regarded as a liability rather than an asset for the United States. The civilian side of the Defense Department tended to agree with this formulation of American national interest, but the military side - the Joint Chiefs of Staff - argued that Israel was strategically important because American support required the maintenance of the Sixth Fleet at full strength, and because of the importance to them of the military supply relationship.  

In the White House, the attitude of the President and his advisors towards Israel's strategic importance tended to vary with the circumstances of the conflict with the Soviet Union on the superpower level and in the Middle East. Thus President Kennedy's support for Israel was based on factors which had little to do with Israel's minor geo-strategic value during his term of office. On the other hand, one of the factors in the pro-Israel stance of President Johnson and his advisors was Israel's ability to contain and constrain Egypt and the Soviet Union. And for President Nixon, Israel, after 1970, became strategically important for deterring what he perceived to be Soviet expansion in the Middle East. His National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, also viewed Israel in this light, after 1970, but his advocacy of Israel's strategic importance served a further purpose as a means for undermining Secretary of State Rogers in his bid for complete control of the conduct of American foreign policy. Rogers naturally advocated the State Department view that America's strategic interests lay in the Arab world and not with


88. Despite Kennedy's commitment to Israel he was only prepared to sell Israel defensive weapons and preferred to assist Israel in purchasing its equipment from Europe.

89. In 1966 Johnson had called for a special study of Soviet penetration in the Middle East, which revealed "a pattern of serious Soviet advances, sparked in large part by emotions generated in the Arab-Israeli confrontation..." In part to balance this penetration Johnson decided to sell Israel offensive weapons: Skyhawk A-4 attack aircraft and Patton tanks. See Lyndon Baines Johnson, The Vantage Point, London, 1971, p. 288.

90. Nixon was the first American president to enter into a long-term arms supply agreement with Israel. He argued that to maintain a balance of power in the Middle East, it was necessary to tip that balance in Israel's favour.
Thus Israel's geo-strategic position was valued differently by domestic and bureaucratic groups depending on their perception of their own interests, which in turn determined their perceptions of America's national interest. The task for Israel in this situation, as we shall see, was to play one group off against the other and avert bureaucratic opposition by wooing advocates at a higher level in the U.S. government.

ii) Demography

A superpower's perception of the value of a weak state may depend in part upon the size and situation of that state's population. Clearly, the fact the Egypt was the largest state in the Arab world, and the fact that the vast majority of its population lived in poverty, affected superpower evaluations of its importance in the region. First, the sheer discrepancy between the size of Egypt's population and the size of other Arab populations gave it a centrality in the eyes of the superpowers when seeking influence in the Middle East. Second, the economic condition of these people made Egypt inherently unstable; if their plight were not alleviated Egypt's leaders might look elsewhere for palliatives — especially to their oil-rich, but under-populated, neighbours. This prospect caused the United States concern because of its interests in the security of these small neighbours as well as its interest in general stability in the region. Thus in the early sixties, and again after the October 1973 War, the United States provided economic assistance to Egypt on the premise that such aid would encourage its leaders to look inward and concern themselves with the alleviation of their people's misery rather than seek relief through external conflicts.


93. In the period under study 27% of the total population of the Arab world was Egyptian. See A. Davisha, Egypt in the Arab World, p. 183.

The third factor in superpower evaluations of Egypt's demography lay in the potential which this huge population had for making Egypt economically and militarily dominant in the Middle East. If economic development could be achieved, Egypt could become the most important industrialised nation in the Middle East with its abundant and cheap labour, and it could also become an important export market for the economies of the industrialised world. On the military level, its population could provide it with the largest army in the Arab world, making it an important client for a superpower which sought to spread its influence in a region where conflict and tension tended to be the norm. Thus Soviet economic and military assistance was directed towards strengthening Egypt to give Moscow a formidable long-term capacity to influence events in the region. Without its large population Egypt would not have figured so importantly in Soviet plans.

Apart from the lever of economic weakness, which will be discussed below, Egypt's demography provided it with no direct leverage with its superpower patrons. However, these factors further enhanced Egypt's importance on the geo-strategic and politico-ideological levels and thereby contributed indirectly to its ability to woo both superpowers.

In contrast, the size of Israel's population counted for little in its relations with the superpowers. However, the fact that it was so overwhelmingly outnumbered by its Arab adversaries gave it a bargaining lever with the United States, since Israel could argue that it needed qualitative military superiority to match Arab quantitative superiority. Thus Henry Kissinger noted in 1970:

The Israeli problem now is this: 2 1/2 million or 3 million people cannot possibly hold off 80 million people unless they are militarily superior...Under normal conditions if these were two opponents with roughly equal strength you would say you want to bring about a military balance, but a military balance is death for Israel...So the Israelis have to aim for superiority. It is in the nature of their condition.


96. See Background Briefing by Dr Henry Kissinger, pp. 21-22.
Moreover, the Jewishness of Israel's population gave the state a unique importance in the policies of the superpowers. In the United States, the widespread identification with this "nation of immigrants" as it struggled to rebuild the land, as well as the moral responsibility felt towards these people who had suffered so much in Europe and yet had made so large a contribution to Western civilisation, ensured that support for the survival of Israel was deep-seated in the American liberal psyche. This moral commitment to the survival of Israel has been reinforced by the fact that, since the American Congress expressed its unanimous approval of the Balfour Declaration in 1920, through President Truman's crucial role in the establishment of Israel in 1948, to the present day, every administration and every Congress have constantly supported Israel's right to exist. 97

The recent struggle by Soviet Jewry to gain the right to emigrate to Israel boosted this image of Israel as the Jewish homeland at a time when the memories of the Jewish post-war experience were fading. It thereby enhanced Israel's moral standing in the minds of many Americans. In 1973 Soviet restrictions on Jewish emigration became salient in superpower relations with the introduction of the Jackson-Vanick-Mills Amendment to the Trade Bill, which would have made the granting of Most Favoured Nation status to Soviet exports to the United States conditional on the granting to Soviet citizens of the right to emigrate. Israel was not directly involved in the ensuing battle between the Nixon administration and Congress, but the fact that the critics and opponents of detente used the issue of Soviet Jewry to bolster their case, put the Jews, and therefore Israel, in the middle of a fight between the two sections of the American polity (i.e. conservatives and liberals) which had both traditionally supported Israel. 98 There is no evidence that the injection of this new element into support for the survival of the threatened Jewish state affected American support for Israel during the period under examination, but the identification of support for Israel with American conservative interests

97. As Eugene Rostow expressed this moral commitment: "It is unthinkable that the international community could stand idly by...if Israel were in danger of destruction. The moral and political convulsion such an event would engender is beyond calculation. It could spell the end, not only of the Atlantic Alliance, but of liberal civilisation as we know it". See Rostow, "The American Stake in Israel", op.cit., p. 46.

may, in the longer term affect the basic and fundamental support which Israel enjoyed in the United States because of its Jewishness. It was this essential American commitment to Israel which provided the foundations of the patron-client relationship and, as we shall see, helped Israel to resist American policies. For Israel was able to gain increased support within the United States when its survival was perceived to be threatened, and could argue that to bow to the administration wishes would affect its very prospects for survival.

iii) Ideology and Political Structure

Because of their antithetical political and economic systems, ideology is a factor which plays an important, if secondary, role in the competition and conflict between the superpowers. Although this ideological factor tended to be more central to the superpower conflict during the Cold War than it did during the cold peace and the developing detente of the period considered here, the United States continued to take seriously 'the defence of democracy' and the proliferation of Western democratic values. On the other hand, even though Realpolitik tended to guide Soviet foreign policy in this period, Moscow continued to take its communist ideology seriously and justified its aid for national liberation movements and the emerging nations of the Third World in terms of their 'anti-imperialist' and 'progressive' aspirations. Thus, in terms of their own prestige, the United States felt obliged to defend 'threatened democracies' while the Soviet Union felt it necessary to promote the non-capitalist path to economic and social development as a means for combatting 'the forces of imperialism'. Israel and Egypt both benefited from the commitment which the superpowers' ideologies often forced them to make to the maintenance of their clients, although the leverage which they enjoyed differed in some important respects.

For Egypt in the early 1960s, the leverage it gained was the political equivalent of the leverage which it had acquired from its geo-strategic position. By stressing his socialist principles, by taking measures to weaken the capitalist sector of the Egyptian economy and strengthen the state's control of the means of production, and, most importantly, by stressing the anti-imperialist nature of the Egyptian

99. The evidence suggests that Nixon and Kissinger warned the Jewish leadership that if the Jackson-Mills-Vanick amendment went through, the Soviet Union might be less cooperative in the Middle East. In other words, the administration tried to use support for Israel as a lever to defeat the amendment, rather than vice versa. Ibid., and Interview with Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, President, American Jewish Congress, Sydney-Canberra, 28 July, 1975.
revolution, Nasser endeared himself to his Soviet patron. On the other hand, by stressing his independence from all foreign ideologies (including Marxism), by incarcerating Egyptian communists and suppressing their counterparts in Syria, and by emphasising the nationalist motives of the Egyptian revolution, Nasser was able to provide evidence to an eager American administration that Nasserism was an Arab ideology which differed markedly from communism. Thus, in the early period of the study, when Nasser played the superpowers off against each other on the strategic level, he was at the same time playing them off on the political level by encouraging each to believe that its support would keep Egypt out of the other's ideological camp.

However, Nasser's pan-Arab policy soon clarified Egypt's ideological position. In combatting his conservative Arab adversaries Nasser launched a campaign against Western 'imperialism' and its Arab 'pawns', thereby alienating the United States on the political level while he threatened American interests on the strategic level. While this cost Egypt the support of the United States, it nevertheless endeared Nasser to the Soviet Union where he was hailed as a "revolutionary democrat" who understood the necessity of transforming the anti-colonial revolution into an anti-capitalist one. Thus when Egypt was defeated by 'the forces of imperialism' in 1967, the Soviet Union's ideological commitment to protect its 'progressive' client played a significant part in the decision to reequip the devastated Egyptian forces, even though it had not been an important enough consideration to encourage Soviet support during the war.

While Nasser could no longer play the superpowers off against each other, since he was now well and truly in the Soviet camp, he still retained leverage over his Soviet patron on this ideological level. For if Nasser's regime collapsed, a serious blow would be dealt to Soviet prestige as Egypt succumbed to the 'forces of reaction'. More importantly for the Soviet position in Egypt, Nasser's successor might not have the same ideological affinity and might therefore be less committed to Soviet-Egyptian friendship. Moreover, because the Soviet position was linked to Nasser, he could claim a binding public opinion in Egypt as a means for resisting a policy which would cost him his domestic legitimacy. And since his domestic legitimacy depended upon success in foreign policy, if the


101. Pennar, ibid., p. 69.

Soviet Union wanted to maintain him in office, it could not pressure him into accepting a compromise settlement with Israel which his people would not accept.

In other words, Nasser could credibly threaten political collapse, either as a result of external force or as a consequence of internal dissent, in order to resist his patron and alter its policy. This was illustrated in the War of Attrition when both Moscow and Cairo perceived that Israel and the United States sought Nasser's demise. Heikal reports that when Nasser went to Moscow in January 1970 to seek a Soviet-manned air-defence system, he told Brezhnev:

If we do not get what I am asking for everybody will assume that the only solution is in the hands of the Americans... Egypt is an anti-imperialist outpost in the Middle East, if Egypt falls to American-Israeli force the whole Arab world will fall...I shall go back to Egypt and I shall tell the people the truth. I shall tell them that the time has come for me to step down and hand over to a pro-American President. 103

While the Soviet Union may have had some doubts about the true ideological direction of Nasserism, Moscow was soon given reason to rue the day that Sadat took command. Not only was Sadat a deeply religious man, he was also willing to negotiate with the United States without consulting his Soviet patron, to remove the Ali Sabri group (which included prominent members of the Nasserite Left who were known for their close ties with the Soviets) from office, and to assist President Numeiry in his suppression of a communist-backed coup in the Sudan. 104 Thus, although Sadat appended his name to the Soviet-Egyptian Friendship and Cooperation Treaty in May 1971, and although the Soviet Union declared its appreciation of his determination "to follow the progressive, anti-imperialist road to which Gamal Abdul Nasser had adhered", he was in fact unable, and perhaps unwilling, to convince the Soviet Union of his ideological steadfastness and this was one of the causes for the reduction in Soviet support before 1972. 105 Having lost the political leverage which Nasser had possessed by virtue of his ideology, Sadat had to rely on Egypt's strategic importance in his bargaining for Soviet weaponry.

He could hardly threaten collapse because the Soviet Union might well have preferred to see him replaced by someone more amenable to Soviet policies. Nor could Sadat point to internal dissent as a reason for the Soviet Union to increase its support, since internal dissent was one means by which Moscow could exert pressure on Sadat.

However, once Sadat renewed diplomatic relations with the United States and declared his willingness to enter into peace negotiations with Israel, he immediately acquired the leverage of threatening collapse since, if the United States could not prevail on Israel to withdraw in the face of Sadat's 'moderation', he might be replaced by someone with more extremist and perhaps pro-Soviet tendencies.106

Israel's resources on the ideological and political level stemmed from the free, open and democratic nature of its political system. This structure enabled Israel to touch on a fundamental nerve in the American psyche - the defence of democracy. The liberal evangelism which has been at the foundation of much of American foreign policy ensured that Israel's survival would be supported by every administration, every Congress, and a majority of the American public. This ideological affinity between the United States and Israel reinforced the support which Israel received as a result of its unique nature as a Jewish state. Thus President Ford recently expressed to Prime Minister Rabin what other American leaders have often stated:

Both of our nations have had a very painful birth as well as growth. As havens for men and women fleeing persecution, both of our nations find their vitality as well as their strength today in a commitment to democracy and the spirit of free peoples.107

106. In his interview with Frost, Nixon revealed that he was concerned for Sadat's survival during the October War, i.e. before the American-Egyptian rapprochement: "The destruction of the Third Army would have brought about a coup or worse as far as Sadat was concerned. Somebody would have come into power in Egypt, probably worse than Nasser, oriented toward the radical point of view. Egypt would have become a total Soviet satellite...". See "Nixon Says He Saved Sadat", Near East Report, Volume XXI, No. 20, 18 May, 1977, p. 79.

107. Jerusalem Post International Edition, 3 February, 1976. Senator George McGovern has stated that "the survival of a democratic, thriving and secure Israel should stand as the cornerstone of our policies in the Middle East...Israel is not Vietnam. It is, in fact the very opposite of Vietnam...Israel is a democratic nation". Cited in Near East Report, Volume XVI, No. 23, 7 June, 1972, p. 99.
This ideological affinity is further reinforced by the fact that none of the Arab countries which surround Israel have provided the same freedom, justice and democratic expression for their citizens. Thus support for Israel, in the minds of most of the American public, is support for much that they hold dear, and this may go a long way towards explaining why Israel enjoyed strong public backing, far out of proportion to support for the Arabs. 108

However, unlike Egypt under Nasser, Israel's politico-ideological structure did not provide it with the power of blackmail. Israel's leaders could not threaten "to go communist", partly because such a threat was not credible given the minute support which the Israeli Communist Party enjoyed, and partly because the Soviet Union was not much interested in such a development given its more important interests in the Arab world. On the other hand, the Israeli government could credibly threaten collapse if Washington attempted to push it beyond the limits acceptable to the Israeli public. Because of the existence of a right-wing and harder-line alternative to the ruling Labour Alignment, and because Israel's democratic institutions ensured the articulation of public opinion, an American policy which proved unpopular with a majority of the Israeli people could well produce a government less willing to cooperate with Washington. Particularly on matters which affected Israeli security, the government could therefore claim that public opinion prevented it from bowing to the wishes of the United States, and if Washington refused to accept this argument, then it might have to be prepared to put up with the alternative of an even less compliant government. 109

108. In 1967 polls showed that while 56% of American public opinion "sympathised with Israel" only 4% sympathised with the Arabs. In 1969 support for Israel dropped to 50% but support for the Arabs only rose to 5%. In December 1973 support for Israel increased to 54% while support for the Arabs increased to only 8%. See Hazel Erskine, "The Polls: Western Partisanship in the Middle East", The Public Opinion Quarterly, Volume XXXIII, No. 4, Winter, 1969, pp. 627-640; George E. Gruen, "U.S. Middle East Policy and Diplomacy", American Jewish Year Book, 1974-75, p. 197.

109. This was particularly the case in the negotiations which broke down in April 1975 over a Second Sinai Disengagement. Rabin was able to claim that the Israeli public would not accept the proposal which Kissinger wanted him to put to them. Golda Meir was also able to use the threat to gain increased American support immediately before the December 1973 elections and to postpone the substantive settlement negotiations until after these elections. Rabin developed the threat into a more binding form by announcing, after the 1975 disengagement, that any plan for Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank would be taken to the polls. With the election of Likud, this leverage may be enhanced in some ways but reduced in others. Prime Minister Begin may be better able to claim a binding public opinion against withdrawal from
Thus the leaders of both Egypt and Israel were able to reduce the scope of their own authority when their domestic public committed them to positions which they could not compromise without the certainty of losing their jobs. On these occasions the leverage of these weak states was increased and the ability of their patrons to influence them was reduced. For, as Thomas Schelling has argued:

If a binding public opinion can be cultivated and made evident to the other side, the initial position can thereby be made visibly final.110

iv) Military Capability

Israel, with the strongest armed forces in the Middle East, and Egypt, with the strongest armed forces in the Arab world, derived their greatest means of influence from these military capabilities. Given the Hobbesian state of nature in which these two adversaries existed, their respective military capabilities did much to determine the course of events in the region and for that reason proved to be important to the superpowers, in their quest for regional influence. However, the fact that much of the military strength of these two weak states depended upon the arms which were supplied by their superpower patrons (a fact which was demonstrated at the outset), did not give the patrons control over the use of these arms; nor did they prove able to exercise control over their clients by withholding the arms so necessary to their military capabilities. The explanation for this apparent impotency of the superpowers again lies in the importance which they attached, at different times and in varying degrees, to the military potential of their Israeli and Egyptian protégés in their quest for influence in the Middle East, in the conduct of relations at the superpower level, and in the interaction between domestic groups within the superpowers.

On the level of superpower competition for influence in the Middle East, the military capabilities of their respective protégés were important because of the existence of a bitter regional conflict, which

109. (continued) the West Bank. On the other hand, Washington may calculate that a clash with Begin on this issue might lead to the collapse of his government and the reelection of the Labour alignment. Of course if Begin proves inflexible and uncooperative, a future Labour government's threat of collapse will be even more credible than it was in the past, since Washington will have experienced the alternative.

erupted periodically into war, and which had the potential for threatening or enhancing the positions of the patrons. The United States wanted to avoid war because, if Israel were threatened, Washington might be forced to align itself with this state, since it was committed to Israel's security and survival, and since the defeat or the destruction of the Jewish democracy would damage the American reputation and raise serious doubts about the value of its commitments elsewhere. Support for Israel during a war in the Middle East would alienate America's Arab clients and could polarise the region between the superpowers, thereby promoting the influence of the Soviet Union. Thus American interests were clearly better served by the avoidance of overt conflict between Israel and the Arab states, and in this, Israel's military capability came to play a crucial role by the mid-1960s. For if Israeli military preponderance could be maintained then the Arabs might be deterred from attack and this would obviate the dilemma involved in supporting Israel while seeking friendly relations with the Arab world.

Israel's military capability also came to play an important role in America's long-term strategy for settling the Arab-Israeli conflict. For if Israel remained capable of defeating its Arab adversaries on the battlefield, sooner or later the Arabs would recognise that Israel was a permanent factor in the Middle East and reconcile themselves to living in peace with the Jewish state. Moreover, as long as the United States provided Israel with weapons to enhance its qualitative superiority over

111. Reputation is a particularly important consideration for a superpower for its actions in one area will be judged by those with whom it deals in other areas. As Iklé has suggested, influence (or bargaining strength) will depend not so much on what the attributes of the state really are as on what others believe them to be. See Fred Charles Iklé, How Nations Negotiate, New York, 1964, Chapter 6; Schelling, Ibid., pp. 30ff; and Oran Young, The Politics of Force, Princeton, New Jersey, 1968, pp. 35 and 263.

112. Thus President Nixon stated in July 1970: "...once the balance of power shifts where Israel is weaker than its neighbours, there will be a war. Therefore it is in U.S. interests to maintain the balance of power and we will maintain that balance of power...once it is upset we will do what is necessary to maintain Israel's strength vis-a-vis its neighbours. Not because we want Israel to be in a position to wage war...but that is what would deter its neighbours from attacking it". New York Times, 2 July, 1970.

113. As Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Rush argued in supporting the President's request for $2.2 billion in emergency military assistance to Israel in 1973: "We must make it clear to our friends in Israel and those who have opposed her in the past that we will see to it that Israel has the weapons to defend herself effectively. This is particularly important as we look ahead to a round of negotiations which hopefully will lead to a
the Arabs, this would obviate the need for American intervention to defend this state - the Vietnam experience had discouraged any such involvement. Nixon's Guam Doctrine had applied in the Middle East, tacitly rather than explicitly, since the 1967 War and this ensured that, as long as Israel was capable of defending itself, the United States would supply Israel with the necessary equipment. In short, to the extent that Israel's military capability served American interests in the Middle East, the contingent value of this military capability would be high.

On the other side, Egypt's military capability was important to the Soviet Union because it sought the very polarisation which the United States wanted to avoid. By supplying Egypt with arms, substance would be lent to Egypt's promotion of tension and instability in the region. In this way, the Soviet Union could force the United States to increase its supply of arms to Israel, thereby identifying Washington with the Zionist presence in the eyes of the Arabs. At the same time, by boosting Nasser's preponderance over his conservative adversaries in Jordan and Saudi Arabia, the Soviet Union could force the United States to protect these regimes, thereby identifying Washington with the forces of reaction in the Arab world. For these purposes, Egypt had to be kept militarily strong, not only because it promoted the polarisation of the area but also because this process could easily lead to the outbreak of war in the Middle East, and a defeat for Egypt would be a defeat for Soviet prestige and reputation as well. 114

113. (continued) permanent peace in the area. The people of Israel must be convinced that we will provide them with the weapons needed to maintain the military balance in the area. The Arab nations must be aware of this as well." See Statement of Hon. Kenneth Rush, in House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Emergency Security Assistance Act of 1973, p. 2.

114. This is highlighted by a discussion Henry Kissinger is reported to have had with De Gaulle. The French President asked him: "Why don't you get out of Vietnam?" Kissinger responded, "The credibility of the United States is important not only to us but to our allies. We keep our commitments". De Gaulle then asked where else were American commitments so important and Kissinger pointed to the Middle East. De Gaulle shook his head..."In the Middle East it is your enemies that have the credibility problem, not you". Cited in William Safire, Before the Fall, An Inside View of the Pre-Watergate White House, New York, 1975, p. 124.
In this way, the superpowers fuelled the Middle East arms race: the United States underwriting Israel's military capability to maintain the balance of power in favour of American clients in the region; the Soviet Union supporting Egypt's military capability as a means for disrupting this balance of power. Consequently, by serving American interests in stability and the maintenance of the status quo, Israel could secure the arms it required for deterrence and defence. And by serving Soviet interests in tension and instability, Egypt could secure the arms necessary for the pursuit of pan-Arabism or the conflict with Israel.

However, once the arms were supplied to these clients, the patrons found that they could exercise little control over their use, since the clients were the ones whose fingers were on the triggers. And as the superpowers soon discovered, while arms supplied to their protégés might increase the dependence of these weak states and bolster the positions of the superpowers in the region, these arms also enabled the protégés to resist and act independently of their influence. The contingent value assigned by both the United States and the Soviet Union to the military capabilities of their Israeli and Egyptian clients locked them into place and reduced their ability to convert military dependence into political influence. 115

In Israel's case, the United States supplied it with arms to maintain its preponderance and thereby prevent the outbreak of war. However, Washington's maintenance of this balance of power was an interim measure designed to provide stability in the absence of a just and lasting settlement to the deep-felt grievances of both sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The very presence of these grievances, lurking beneath the surface calm, ensured that maintenance of the balance of power was not an entirely effective way of preserving stability. For one thing, the regional arms race encouraged the belief in the Arab world that Israel did not have military superiority and that its claims to preponderance could therefore safely be put to the test. For another thing, conventional military preponderance could not effectively deter the guerrilla operations of the fedayeen. In both cases Israel's security doctrine was clear: when

deterrence failed, an offensive became necessary. Thus in 1967, Israel launched a pre-emptive strike when its military strength failed to deter Nasser from remilitarising the Sinai and infringing Israel's right to free passage in the Gulf of Aqaba; in 1970, Israel launched its deep-penetration raids into Egypt because its deterrent strength had failed to persuade Nasser to keep the peace; and, throughout the period under consideration, Israel conducted a policy of "massive retaliation" against the countries which sponsored the fedayeen raids, to persuade them to exercise control over the guerrillas.

Unable to prevent these disruptions to stability, the United States was forced to choose between Israeli military action or American intervention to suppress or alleviate the causes of instability. In all cases during the period, Washington eventually realised that Israeli military action was preferable to its own intervention, but the consequence was of course less stability and further polarisation. Thus arms supplied by the United States to promote stability could be used by Israel to compound the instability and Washington would be forced to acquiesce for want of a viable alternative.

However, Israel also faced a dilemma in this situation because its ability to deter the Arab states from attacking, or supporting fedayeen attacks on its territory or people, was based not only on amassed weapons, but also on repeated demonstrations of this military capability in the field, especially at times when the arms levels of its adversaries appeared to be rising too rapidly. Thus, on the one hand, its contingent value to the United States lay in its potential for preserving stability, but on the other hand it found it difficult to maintain stability without demonstrating its strength and causing instability. And because of its dependence on American support for its defence and deterrence capabilities, Israel had to be continually concerned that in resolving its dilemma it did not provide its patron with sufficient reason to halt arms deliveries and adopt a different policy towards the region.

116. See Michel I. Handel, Israel's Political-Military Doctrine, Occasional Papers in International Affairs, No. 30, Harvard University, Center for International Affairs, July, 1973, Chapter VII.

117. See Yair Evron, The Middle East; Nations, Superpowers and Wars, pp. 178-180.
Nevertheless, there were a number of considerations which reduced the possibility of the United States deciding to restructure the relationship and to abandon Israel's military requirements, and these factors made it easier, though no less traumatic, for Israel to risk the ire of its patron. First, if Israel did not receive the arms necessary to maintain its preponderance, it could quite credibly threaten to go to war as an alternative means for preventing the balance of power from tipping against it. The United States might then be forced either to intervene in support of the Jewish democracy, were it about to be defeated on the battlefield, or to protect Israel from Soviet intervention caused by an Israeli victory over Moscow's Arab clients. Second, if Israel were facing the prospect of an American arms embargo, it could also credibly threaten to construct and deploy nuclear weapons to compensate for its prospective loss of a conventional deterrent. Since Washington relished neither the prospect of a nuclear arms race in the Middle East, nor the proliferation of nuclear weapons to 'nth' countries, it could be forced to maintain Israel's conventional deterrent strength. Third, an arms embargo on Israel might disrupt the long-term American plan for a settlement between Israel and its Arab neighbours by encouraging the Arab states to believe that it would eventually be possible to upset the balance of power and defeat Israel on the battlefield. And as well as encouraging intransigence on the Arab side, an arms embargo would increase Israel's feelings of insecurity and make it less flexible and forthcoming in the settlement negotiations.

Thus, having underwritten Israel's military capability, the United States became the captive of its client and discovered that its ability

119. See Simcha Flapan, "Nuclear Power in the Middle East", New Outlook, Volume 17, No. 6, July, 1974, pp. 52-3; Aubrey Hodes, Dialogue With Ishmael, Israel's Future in the Middle East, New York, 1968, Chapter 13; and Donald G. Brennan (ed.), The Implications of Precision Weapons for American Strategic Interests, Hudson Institute, January, 1975, HI-2204-RR, pp. 28-33.
120. Thus Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Joseph Sisco, argued for military aid for Israel in terms of encouraging Israeli flexibility: "...I can't conceive of any peace settlement that will not involve some giving up of territory on the part of Israel. Therefore, the kind of confidence that we can give to the Israelis in terms of the kind of military support that we think will be necessary over the coming months...I think this is important in terms of giving the Israelis self-assurance and confidence, that its security will be supported". See Statement of Hon. Joseph J. Sisco, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Emergency Security Assistance Act of 1973, p. 44.
to influence Israel's conduct in the Arab-Israeli conflict was limited. As Secretary of State Rogers noted in 1969:

It is interesting to me that we have had a study made of how many times we have been able to influence the policy of another government by withholding military aid, and we find that it has not been successful in any instance.121

The Soviet Union fared just as badly in its relationship with Egypt. While Egypt's utilisation of its military capability to promote tension and instability in the region served Moscow's purposes, there was a strict limit beyond which instability could be counter-productive for Soviet interests. War between Egypt and an American client in the Middle East could cause a confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union; that sort of instability was certainly not in Moscow's interests. Moreover, a defeat for Soviet arms in such a war would damage the reputation and prestige of the Soviet Union, not only in the Arab world but also in other regions where the currency of Soviet influence was its military assistance. Just as Israel retained control over the use of its military capabilities, so too did Egypt, and this ensured that the timing of Egypt's challenge to the balance of power would not be determined by the Soviet Union.122 And just as the United States found that withholding arms did not increase its influence over Israel's policy, so too did the Soviet Union discover that Egypt retained a number of levers which enabled it to resist the strategy of withholding.

First, if the Soviet Union refused to supply Egypt with the arms necessary for war, Egypt could threaten to go to war regardless. This threat of defeat was the military equivalent of the political threat of collapse.123 Faced with such a threat, Moscow would have to

decide whether its interests were better served by allowing Egypt to be defeated and leaving itself open to the charge that it had deserted its client when the chips were down, or by intervening to save its client from defeat and risking a superpower confrontation as a result. Since neither alternative could serve Soviet interests, Moscow could be forced to abandon its strategy of withholding arms. For if Egypt were determined to go to war, better that it go well-equipped and capable of lasting the distance than it be allowed to suffer a defeat which would denigrate the Russian reputation or force a Soviet intervention. 124

The second lever which Egypt could employ to ensure Soviet backing for its military capability, was the threat of capitulation to American and Israeli pressures for a settlement of the conflict. Such a possibility was worrisome for the Soviet Union because it would mean that Egypt would no longer depend upon it for military equipment, would no longer be a force for instability, and would enjoy better relations with the United States. In Soviet eyes it was better to have an uncooperative client in Egypt than to have no client at all. However, the threat was not entirely credible, because in swapping patrons Egypt would also have to be prepared to compromise on its demands in the conflict with Israel and to renounce the military option. Washington would hardly be prepared to supply Egypt with the arms which Moscow had refused if these were to be used against Israel or other American clients. Nevertheless, it was a possibility which the Soviet Union had to take into account in attempting to influence Egypt by withholding arms, especially in Sadat's case because Moscow had reason to suspect that ideologically his sympathies lay with the West. 125


125. Sadat has declared that the Soviet Union was concerned that the United States might have been behind his decision to expel the Soviet advisers in July, 1972. Fears of a shift in Egyptian allegiance played a role in arms decisions in 1971 also. See William B. Quandt, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict in American Foreign Policy, 1967-1973*, Shiloah Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, December, 1974. For Sadat's account of arms negotiations with the Soviet Union see his speech to the Egyptian Students Union, Alexandria University, *British Broadcasting Corporation, Summary of World Broadcasts, Part IV (BBC/SWB)*, ME/4569/A/1 - A/10, 5 April, 1974.
Thus considerations of the effect of Egyptian military action on Soviet reputation, prestige and position of influence in the region committed Moscow to support for its client's military capability, even when its use caused damage to Soviet interests. As Nasser demonstrated in 1967 and 1970, and as Sadat demonstrated in 1973, Egypt was able to acquire considerable, even "massive", military support from a not always enthusiastic Soviet patron by using the levers of collapse and capitulation in the regional conflict.

Precisely because the superpowers both found it difficult, if not impossible, to control the military actions of their clients in the Middle East, Egyptian and Israeli military capabilities assumed an importance to the superpowers beyond the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The development of a nuclear balance of terror, with its concomitant danger of mutual assured destruction for the United States and the Soviet Union, encouraged the superpowers to seek ways of insulating their bilateral relations from their involvement in areas where local rivalries could drag them into a superpower confrontation and threaten the nuclear peace. But because of their inability to exercise effective control over their clients in the Middle East, the task of insulating superpower relations from the consequences of their involvement there became a difficult one, especially once Soviet forces were stationed in Egypt.

As Henry Kissinger was wont to point out:

The danger of the Middle East situation is that you have two groups of countries with intense local rivalries and with an overwhelming concern for their grievances or their security... both backed by major countries but not fully under the control of the major countries confronting each other. This is the sort of situation that produced World War I. What we are attempting to bring about is a situation in which events do not get almost automatically out of control. We do not want to leave to the local rivalries the future of peace and war on a global scale.


To prevent events from getting "almost automatically" out of control, the superpowers developed techniques of crisis management. And, as detente between them progressed, President Nixon and Secretary-General Brezhnev also undertook to do their utmost to avoid military confrontations and declared that "efforts by either to obtain unilateral advantage at the expense of the other, directly or indirectly, were inconsistent with the objectives of achieving accommodation by peaceful means". But crisis management and the Basic Principles of Detente notwithstanding, the United States and the Soviet Union continued to compete for influence in the Middle East by supporting opposite sides in the Arab-Israeli conflict. And because they sought to maintain their influence through the purveying of arms, but had little control over their use, both superpowers remained vulnerable to the threat of a superpower confrontation. Whether there was detente or not, a defeat for Soviet arms could force the Soviet Union to intervene, while a victory for Soviet arms might lead to American intervention and vice versa. From intervention there was but a short step up the ladder to military confrontation between the superpowers. Thus, at a time when both superpowers sought a relaxation of tension in their own relations, the danger that their competition for influence in the Middle East could involve them unintentionally in a military confrontation, made the task of insulating their relations from their support for the opposing sides in the Arab-Israeli conflict not only important but urgent.

131. Thus Kissinger told Heikal, editor of *Al Ahram* after the October 1973 War: "My thinking was on the following lines. The Egyptians had embarked on a dangerous adventure...but Israeli military force would now crush them without mercy. What would happen after that? Egypt would turn to the USSR to rescue her, and there were two possibilities; that the USSR would intervene in a way that would oblige us to intervene too, which would confront us with a terrible possibility - us and them together; or the Soviets would not intervene but would enter Egypt in such a way that they would never leave it. This too was a possibility we did not want". In *Al-Anwar*, November 16, 1973, reprinted in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Volume III, No. 2, Winter, 1974, pp. 212-3.
132. The danger of nuclear confrontation was particularly great because, while both superpowers had the capability to intervene in support of their clients, the United States, at least, had no contingency plan for fighting a full-scale conventional war with the Soviet Union in the Middle East. *Interview with Robert J. Pranger, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (1968-1970)*, Washington, June 1975.
The respective military capabilities of Israel and Egypt became central to this superpower attempt at insulation or 'decoupling', for if a regional balance of power could be struck which served the interests of stability and tranquillity, it might be possible to establish an order of sorts in the Middle East which would prevent the disruption of superpower relations. Conversely, if weak clients could subvert or resist this order, the superpowers would be unable to insulate their relations. In this process, Israel's preponderant strength proved to be valuable to both the United States and the Soviet Union because, insofar as it deterred the Arabs from attack, it could impose stability in the region. We have already noted that the United States supported this stability for the protection of its regional interests, but the fact that this stability served its global interests as well, added a new dimension to the value of Israel's military capability. And this was further enhanced by the fact that once the Soviet Union had become operationally involved in Egypt in 1970, it too began to seek stability in the Middle East. So Moscow also valued Israel's preponderance and refused adequately to support Egypt's military capability lest this cause a disruption of the superpower rapprochement.

Conversely, even though Egypt might have lacked the ability to disrupt the balance of power, it could still resist the imposition of a superpower determined order, which was inimical to its interests, by escalating the conflict and threatening disruption to superpower relations. Nasser demonstrated his understanding of Egypt's contingent importance in this context during the War of Attrition when he turned on the tap of hostilities to threaten a disruption in superpower relations and thereby forced them to consider establishing an order in the region more favourable to Egypt. The fact that after the ceasefire of 1970 this lever was no longer operative for Egypt demonstrated the advantage of Israel's potential for imposing stability; Israel was able to secure a noticeable increase in military support from the United States during the period 1970-1973. Egypt was then only able to reclaim the leverage of instability by launching


135. U.S. military credit sales to Israel rose from $30 million in Fiscal Year 1970 to $545 million in Fiscal Year 1971. In 1972 the Nixon administration entered into its first long-term military supply agreement with Israel.
war in October 1973, a war which presented a serious threat to Soviet-American detente as a result of the superpower confrontation which developed. By demonstrating Egypt's disruptive capability, Sadat was able to secure greater American support for the settlement of Egypt's grievances after that war. On the other hand, Israel continued to enjoy support for its stabilising potential as a means for keeping the Arab states interested in a political rather than military settlement of the conflict.

Nevertheless, both Israel and Egypt had to exercise circumspection in the use they made of the leverage conferred on them by the contingent importance to the conduct of superpower relations of their military capabilities. Because war in the Middle East had the potential for superpower confrontation, it increased the interest of the superpowers in finding a stable solution to the conflict and made them more willing to impose control on their clients while absorbing the costs of forcing the clients to submit. Thus Nasser's War of Attrition resulted in the imposition of an order based on Israel's deterrent strength which certainly did not suit Egypt's interests, but which the Soviet Union was prepared to uphold by restricting the supply of arms to Egypt. And Israel's attempt to defeat Egypt in the October 1973 War resulted in the imposition of a cease-fire which certainly did not suit Israel's interests at that stage, but which the United States was prepared to enforce by threatening intervention against its client. In other words, the threat to superpower relations posed by their inability to prevent the outbreak of war in the Middle East could rebound to the disadvantage of one or both of the clients, and it therefore had to be used with great caution and skill by the weak states.

Finally, Israeli and Egyptian military capabilities were also valued by various groups within the domestic polities of both superpowers. The Defence Departments tended to have the greatest interest in a continued military relationship between client and patron because it could help

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136. Note, however, that the Soviet Union's interest in stability did not exceed its interests in maintaining its position of influence and its bases in Egypt. The expulsion of Soviet advisers in July 1972 raised the cost of stability beyond Moscow's tolerance.

137. In his interviews with Frost, Nixon describes how he used 'Godfather' tactics on the Israelis to force them to submit: "we gave them an offer they couldn't refuse". The United States argued that forcing the Egyptian IIId Army to surrender would not serve Israel's interests in a peace settlement. The Israelis did not agree, but were forced to submit to the wishes of their patron. As Dayan told the Knesset: "Whoever proposes that we conduct this war in a split with the United States is...suggesting
justify increased defence production, and the maintenance of an intervention
capability as well as providing an all-important testing-ground for their
weapons under "real" conditions.  

This was particularly the case for the military side of the Pentagon,
during the period examined here, because support for Israel justified the
maintenance of the Sixth Fleet at full strength, obviated the need for
American military intervention in the Middle East at a time when the
United States was preoccupied with fighting a war in Vietnam, and provided
victories for American arms.  

In testifying on Department of Defense appropriations in 1974, Admiral Thomas Moorer argued that support for
Israel, which was a "vital interest" of the United States, justified the
construction of the C-5A transport plane, the maintenance of the Sixth
Fleet, the building up of military stockpiles in the United States and
in American bases overseas, and the establishment of politically secure
forward bases for intervention or the resupply of a client (i.e. Diego
Garcia).

One can only surmise that the Soviet military also had an interest in
maintaining the supply relationship with its Egyptian client for similar
reasons and advocated Egypt's cause in the Kremlin. Those who argued that
the Soviet Union needed to develop the capability to support and protect,
by military means, a coterie of clients in key areas of the Middle East,
would probably see military support for Egypt as justifying such developments.

(continued) that we will not be able to win this war. We have bitter
pills to swallow...". See "Television Interview with Nixon", loc.cit.;
Defence Minister's Reply in the Knesset to Motion on Israeli Prisoners of War

138. See Robert Keohane, "The Big Influence of Small Allies", Foreign Policy,

139. In the early 1970s Congress was keen to cut the Defense budget.
Senator McGovern, in his 1972 Presidential campaign, had called for a
reduction in the size of the Sixth Fleet. On the other hand, Congress was
predominantly pro-Israel (including Senator McGovern), so that if the Defense
Department could justify military expenditures in terms of support for
Israel it had a better chance of getting more of its budget through the
Congress.

140. See Statement of Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, Senate Armed Services
Committee, United States Military Posture for FY 1975, Hearings, 93rd

Resentment in the Pentagon over allegations that Israel had cannibalised
American military technology, over competition for arms sales to other
countries, over Israel's campaign against sale of arms to Jordan and Saudi
Arabia, and over the fact that Israel had received priority in the supply of
some weapons over American forces, did not surface until 1974 and did not
affect Israel's relationship with the Pentagon during the period examined
here.
They could also argue that this capability required air bases and naval facilities in Egypt which would have to be adequately protected by Egypt's military forces. Others with responsibility for particular operations in Egypt (such as P.V.O. Strany - the Air Defence Forces) might see their prestige linked to the continuation of these operations. In other words, the Soviet military might have had good reason for supporting the military supply relationship with Egypt. 141

On the other hand, they might also have had good reason to want to limit this relationship. First, the Egyptians faced a formidable adversary in the American-supplied IDF and the defeat of Soviet equipment on the battlefield must have been as unwelcome to them as it was welcome to the Pentagon. Second, since they were responsible for training the Egyptians, their own prestige was at stake when the Egyptian forces were defeated. Third, the credit for any victory over the Israelis would go to the Egyptians rather than to their Soviet patrons. 142 Fourth, the deployment of front-line Soviet equipment in Egypt increased the risk that it would fall into American hands - in fact just about everything, from radar systems, to missiles, to advanced aircraft, was captured by Israel and passed on to the United States. Fifth, they faced the ultimate humiliation of a tactical defeat inflicted on their own forces by the tiny state of Israel. 143 And finally, a defeat for Egypt might reduce their influence in the Kremlin as those leaders who were accused of adventurism or too costly commitments turned to the military organisations for explanations and scapegoats. So, while it is by no means certain, logic and knowledge of American bureaucratic politics would suggest that some within the Soviet military supported the military relationship with Egypt, while others


142. Egyptians often complained about the inadequacy and obsolescence of Soviet equipment in defeat, but in victory Sadat claimed that one of the reasons he had expelled the Soviet advisors was so that nobody would charge that the Soviet Union had been responsible for the crossing of the Canal.

143. In January 1970 Israeli commandos had occupied an Egyptian Island in the Gulf of Suez and had absconded with a complete Soviet radar system. In July 1970 the Israel Air Force ambushed and shot down five Soviet-piloted MiG-21s. The military attaché at the Israeli Embassy in Washington was apparently given a triumphant reception by the American generals in the Pentagon. *Interview with Shaul Ben Haviv*, Tel Aviv, 23 March, 1975.
opposed it; and that this changed over time with opposition increasing as the stakes went higher and as their client's military performance declined. Egypt may have benefited from the support it received from its advocates in Moscow but it seems unlikely that it would have been able to exploit that advocacy to gain increased support.\footnote{144}

On the other side, Israel could use the fact that it received forthright support for its arms request from the military within the Pentagon to help thwart the almost inevitable opposition it faced in the State Department and the civilian sections of the Department of Defense. While State might set the political framework within which arms negotiations were conducted, there was still considerable room for manoeuvre where the support of the military could be extremely useful: testimony on the Hill; advice to the White House; information about the positions adopted by Israel’s adversaries in the bureaucracy; support for the often important technical issues where decisions might depend upon the expertise of the military (e.g. what type of aircraft best suited Israel’s needs); and general cooperation in the Pentagon’s implementation of the arms agreements.

Opposition to Israel’s arms requests was strongest in the State Department, where Near East desk officers tended to argue, at first, that arms supplies to Israel would drive the Arabs into the embrace of the Soviet Union and confirm Nasser’s charge that the United States had become the new "Imperialist" in the region; then, after 1967, that such supplies would escalate the arms race in the region; then, after the Soviet Union intervened in the air-defence of Egypt, that American arms to Israel had caused that intervention; and, in 1970, that arms supplies would disrupt the delicate negotiations for a cease-fire and settlement.\footnote{145} These officers tended to discount Israel’s contingent strategic importance in a polarised Middle East and blamed domestic politics for the Presidential consent

\footnote{144} Alexander Dallin concludes: "There is assuredly no evidence – surmises to the contrary notwithstanding – that Soviet policy in the Middle East is being made in Moscow or on the spot by the military". See Dallin, "Domestic Factors Influencing Soviet Foreign Policy", in Confino and Shamir (eds.), The U.S.S.R. and the Middle East, pp. 47-51.

However, their opposition was not always consistent, nor monolithic, because some could see indirect advantages in the relationship with Israel. First, sales to Israel could assist them in their battle to sell arms to the conservative Arab states - as long as they could persuade Israel, and its American supporters, not to object, as a quid pro quo for its arms. Second, some believed that, if Israel felt secure in its relationship with the United States, it would be more flexible in negotiations; and, if it were heavily dependent upon the United States, then more pressure could be brought to bear to ensure this flexibility. Third, while they blamed Israel's deep penetration raids for Soviet intervention in 1970, some could see that supplying arms to Israel was a cheap way of increasing the costs and the risks of Soviet involvement in the Middle East. And finally, if Israel were going to get its arms from the United States despite their objections, better that it get them in one go than in dribs and drabs, which would continually complicate their diplomacy in the Arab world.

Nevertheless, the opposition to Israel's arms requests, which existed in the bureaucracy, could be overcome by the support which Israel enjoyed at higher levels in the administration and by Congressional pressure on the President. The White House did not always support arms sales to Israel, but the President and his advisors had different concerns and perceptions than the officers of the State Department. Johnson believed that Israel's military capability was important in containing Nasser and felt some responsibility for not coming to Israel's assistance during the 1967 crisis. Nixon went along with the State Department policy until its collapse in 1970, but then his concern for Soviet involvement in the Middle East, his appreciation of the role that Israel could play in stabilising the conflict

146. Pranger and Saunders, ibid.; Interview with Sam Hoskinson, Head, Middle East Desk, Central Intelligence Agency, McLean, Virginia, 18 June 1975.
147. See page 61, footnote 120.
148. Thus Deputy Secretary of State Rush argued, that:
"Authorising a lesser amount now could necessitate our asking for an additional authorisation at a time in the future when such a request could have an unsettling effect on efforts to negotiate a peaceful solution to this dispute...The world knows that this is what we have asked for, and we have taken all the heat, one might say, that one can take for asking for $2.2 billion". Emergency Security Assistance Act of 1978, pp. 2 and 7. On State Department attitudes in general towards the Middle East, see Joseph Kraft, "Those Arabists in the State Department, loc.cit.
and his admiration for Israeli "moxie", led him into providing unprecedented support for Israel's military capabilities. Kissinger, as his National Security Advisor, was persuaded to adopt a low profile on the Middle East before 1970. But with rising concern over Soviet actions, and his own desire to undercut Secretary of State Rogers in the one area of policy he still controlled, Kissinger took a more active role in persuading the President that support for Israel's deterrent strength was more important than attempting to force a diplomatic settlement on unwilling adversaries, which, he argued, assisted the Soviet Union to solidify its position in the region.

If Presidential support for Israel's military capability could not always be taken for granted, Congressional support almost certainly could. Across the spectrum of political opinion, the issue of arms for Israel invariably met with a favourable consensus. Many Congressmen believed that the United States should supply Israel with the arms necessary to defend itself against Arab hostility. Those who were concerned that the United States not become involved on the ground in the Middle East, as it had in Vietnam, saw military support for Israel as making such involvement unnecessary. Others, who saw the Middle East as a battle-ground for American and Soviet proxies, were concerned that Israel, as the American bastion, not be defeated by Soviet arms. As Senator Jackson stated in a report to the Senate Armed Services Committee in December 1970:

...the Israelis are determined to provide for their own defense, even under adverse conditions, and...they have the skill, determination and courage to do so. The frontline of Western defense is manned by the men and women of Israel, who ask only for assistance in obtaining the tools with which to defend themselves...All that is asked of us is help in getting the essential means in adequate quantities with which they can do the job.

150. See William Safire, Before the Fall, p. 567 and 577.


152. Defence Minister Dayan's statement on the eve of the Six Day War, that "if somehow it comes to real fighting I would not like American boys to be killed here", symbolised the difference for Americans between Israel and Vietnam. Thus in a poll taken during the October 1973 War respondents opposed by 68% to 14% sending American troops to the Middle East. However, 75% supported the supply of military aid to Israel to enable it to defend itself. Congress reflected this public sentiment. See George E. Gruen, "U.S. Middle East Policy and Diplomacy", loc.cit.; Sand Ibrahim, "American Domestic Forces and the October War", Journal of Palestine Studies, Volume IV, No. 1, Autumn, 1974, pp. 55-60.

The overwhelming support of Congress provided Israel with important, though not decisive, leverage in its arms negotiations with the U.S. government. While it was up to the administration to decide, Congressional support for the maintenance of Israel's military strength ensured that the requests, once approved, received speedy passage through both Houses and that, unlike other military assistance programmes, arms supplies for Israel received widespread public endorsement. Thus, in 1970, when the future of the foreign aid bill was in doubt, because of Congressional opposition to the war in Vietnam, Senator Jackson introduced an amendment to the Defense Procurement Act which contained an open-ended authorisation for military credits to Israel. Congress later appropriated $500 million for that purpose and, despite continued wrangling over military aid to Vietnam and Cambodia, Israel was able to purchase military equipment with these long-term credits.\footnote{See \textit{Near East Report}, Volume XIV, 1970, p. 126.} When, in October 1973, the Nixon administration sought an unprecedented $2.2 billion in military assistance for Israel, within two months of the request the authorisation and appropriation bills were passed by an overwhelming 364 to 52 vote in the House, and by a 66 to 9 vote in the Senate.\footnote{Ibid., Volume XVII, 1973, pp. 202 and 206.}

On the other hand, at times when the administration seemed unresponsive to Israel's requests, considerable Congressional pressure could be brought to bear to help persuade the President to alter his policy. Since the administration needed the cooperation of Congress to govern effectively, and since Congressmen reflected the opinion of the electorate at large, the President had to take notice of such expressions of support for Israel. Thus, when the administration held up arms supplies to Israel in April 1970, 75 Senators and 239 Congressmen sent letters to the President and the Secretary of State expressing their conviction that the United States "should now announce its intention to provide Israel with the aircraft so urgently needed for its defense".\footnote{Ibid., Volume XIV, 1970, p. 122.} Again in May 1975, when the administration was holding up arms supplies to Israel while it 'reassessed' its Middle East policy, 76 Senators wrote to President Ford to express, in strong terms, their expectation that he would be responsive to "Israel's urgent military
and economic needs". 157

Thus Israeli diplomats in Washington faced a mixture of supportive and opposing bureaucratic and political groups and, if they were adept, could play them off against each other and woo advocates at the highest levels by pointing to the strategic, political and bureaucratic value of supporting Israel's military capability. 158

v) Economic Capability

The economic capability of a weak state is, by definition, slight, and dependent upon external assistance. If this weakness and dependence is exacerbated by a lack of natural resources, then the contingent value to the superpowers of the state's economic capability is likely to be small also. Weak states in this situation should be most vulnerable to economic pressure exerted by their patrons. 159 However, unless the patron is ready to restructure the relationship and abandon its protégé, economic pressure is an unreliable and often counterproductive method for exercising political influence over a client. For, rather than breeding gratitude and compliance, economic aid often encourages mistrust towards the motives of the donor and an extreme sensitivity towards the dependent state's own vulnerability. Any sign of pressure aimed at changing the political behaviour of the weak state can produce an aggressive reaction, especially from a leadership anxious to demonstrate its independence from its colonial past. 160 In such cases, the weak state may decide to restructure the relationship itself and bear the economic consequences. This will of course only be possible if an alternative patron exists, willing to provide economic assistance without explicit political strings. Conversely, the state which has no value to alternative patrons may find that it either has to accept the political strings attached to the aid it receives, or abandon its plans for development.

157. Ibid., Volume XIX, 1975, p. 95. The letter said, inter alia: "Cooperation between the Congress and the President is essential for America's effectiveness in the world...Withholding military equipment from Israel would be dangerous, discouraging accommodation by Israel's neighbours and encouragin a resort to force. Within the next several weeks, the Congress expects to receive your foreign aid requests for fiscal year 1976. We trust that your recommendations will be responsive to Israel's urgent military and economic needs."

158. This was certainly the strategy adopted by Ambassador Rabin during his time in Washington. He wooed Kissinger, the President and top officials in the Pentagon, while his staff took care of Congress. Interview with Amos Eran, Shaul Ben-Haim, and Robert J. Pranger. Cf. Kalbs, Kissinger, pp. 219 and 239-

159. See David Vital, The Inequality of States.

On the other hand, there are a number of factors which inhibit the superpowers from attempting to use economic aid for political purposes. First, there is an understanding of the reactions this pressure can evoke; unless the patron has decided that further assistance is just good money after bad, it will tend to prefer to use economic aid as a means for creating a long-term dependence relationship, rather than dissipate whatever goodwill it has paid for over minor political issues. Second, the prestige and reputation of the patron could be damaged considerably by any such attempt at heavy-handedness, since its other clients will also tend to be sensitive about the possibility of the patron applying economic pressure on them for political purposes. Finally, the patron may be reluctant to lose the investment it has already made in the economy of the client by precipitating a break in relations—nationalisation of the patron's properties, abrogation of the client's debt obligations, and loss of trade, are all possible costs which the patron would have to weigh against the benefits to be gained from the exercise of economic pressure. This is hardly to suggest that the superpowers have not used economic pressure to promote compliant behaviour. But it is to suggest that their experience in this regard has encouraged both of them to see in economic assistance a means for promoting economic ties and cultivating long-term dependence, which might provide solid foundations for a relationship that is likely to be unstable on the political level. This in turn has privileged the weak states by making it easier for them to resist economic pressures.

Egypt epitomised the problems which both superpowers have experienced in their relations with economically dependent states. Egypt possessed few natural resources and its importance as a trading partner was relatively minor. But, the value of Egypt's economic capability—more precisely, its lack of economic capability—lay in its size, its position at the forefront of the Third World, and its status as a newly independent, less developed country. As such, it mattered to both the United States and the Soviet Union whether the Egyptian economy developed along the lines of the capitalist or socialist model. Thus, both were prepared to provide Egypt with extensive economic assistance, not only to enhance their prestige, but also

to turn Egypt into an example for the other developing countries which were deciding on the structure of their economies and the direction of their dependence. The Aswan Dam, which was built with Soviet technical and financial resources after the United States had refused to honour its commitment to do so, vividly illustrates the prestige involved in assisting the Egyptian economy. Visiting Aswan in 1963, Richard Nixon called it: "America's greatest mistake. It broke my heart when I saw the Russian flag flying over the High Dam, and if it had not been for Dulles it could have been the American flag flying there". Brezhnev, Podgorny and Kosygin, in a message to Egyptians on the eve of the official opening of the Dam in January 1971, called it:

One of the most grandiose edifices of the twentieth century...a true symbol of Arab-Soviet friendship, a convincing proof of how effective and fruitful is the cooperation of young developing states with the socialist countries.\(^{163}\)

If Egypt's economic development was valued by the superpowers on the level of their global competition, it was also important on the level of their competition for influence in the Middle East. The United States government perceived that economic aid to Egypt could be an effective means for encouraging its leadership to concentrate on the development of the domestic economy. As the largest and strongest Arab state, with the most difficult economic problems to overcome, if Egypt could achieve economic development, this might reduce tensions in the region, persuade the Egyptian leadership to moderate its foreign policy, and provide an example to the rest of the Arab world of the benefits which would come from friendly relations with the United States. The Soviet Union viewed its economic assistance in a similar light: it could stabilise its position of influence in Egypt by cultivating long term economic dependence on Soviet capital, technology, raw materials and spare parts; it could demonstrate the advantages of the 'non-capitalist' path of development; and it could be "the strongest cement for the brotherhood of the Soviet people and the people of the United Arab Republic".\(^{164}\) Both superpowers were therefore prepared to assist in

\(^{162}\) Cited in Heikal, *The Cairo Documents*, p. 190.


\(^{164}\) Khrushchev, in a speech after his return from Cairo in 1964, cited in *ibid.*., p. 71.
Egypt's economic development. However, neither could claim success in converting economic dependence into political allegiance, for Egypt was always capable of transferring its dependence, despite the cost, from one to the other.

Thus in the 1950s, the United States was prepared to provide economic assistance on the condition that Egypt remain in the Western camp. Nasser refused and turned instead to the Soviet Union to provide the finance and technology which the West had promised. Unlike the United States, the Soviet Union was more prepared to tolerate Egyptian behaviour, but then there was also a greater compatibility in the political objectives of patron and client. When political differences did emerge over the role of communism in the Arab world, Soviet economic assistance was not suspended. However, at one stage in their verbal battle, Khrushchev warned Nasser that finance for the Aswan Dam might not be forthcoming if anti-Soviet behaviour persisted. Nasser responded by turning back to the United States, which was now prepared to provide PL 480 aid because of the Soviet-Egyptian split. Soviet aid was never suspended and, when relations improved in the early 1960s, after Nasser had taken nationalisation measures which were hailed as 'progressive', additional aid was provided and much of the Egyptian debt to the Soviet Union was erased.

In the meantime, American assistance, in the form of PL 480 food aid (which was paid for in Egyptian currency and this money was then relented for Egyptian development projects), as well as development finance from Western institutions, began to flow into Egypt. However, this aid was predicated on the understanding that it would moderate Nasser's behaviour towards Egypt's neighbours. When this behaviour did not materialise, Congress began to express strong reservations about the wisdom of providing aid which enabled Nasser to divert other resources to arming Egypt and causing trouble for the United States in Yemen, the Congo, Cyprus, Libya.

165. U.S. economic assistance to Egypt from 1952 to 1966 amounted to $1.2 billion. Soviet economic assistance from 1954 to 1973 has been estimated at $2.4 billion.
166. See the correspondence between Khrushchev and Nasser cited in Heikal, op.cit., pp.144-6.
167. During his visit to Cairo in 1964 Khrushchev pledged an additional $277 million in economic assistance. When Nasser visited Moscow in 1965 the new leadership erased an Egyptian debt of $460 million. See Ro'i and Ronel, op.cit., p. 10.
168. American aid amounted to some $770 million in the period 1962-1966. West Germany provided $200 million in loans and export credits, while the IMF provided Egypt with $40 million in 1964 to cover Egypt's foreign currency debts. See Part Two, Chapter Three, below.
Jordan and Israel. Rather than change his policy, Nasser chose to defy his American patron, so that when the aid agreement expired in 1966 it was not renewed. Of course Egypt paid the price in terms of a slow-down in the development of the Egyptian economy and increased dependence upon the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, Nasser was able to show that economic assistance would not alter Egypt's foreign policy; it may have been a quixotic gesture, but it demonstrated that despite Egypt's economic weakness, it could still survive without American aid.

By the time of Nasser's death in 1970, the Soviet Union had achieved its aim of cultivating a long-term Egyptian dependence on Soviet economic aid. As Egypt's Aswan Dam, Alexandria dockyards, power stations and its iron and steel industry were completed, new projects were undertaken with Soviet backing: the expansion of the steel industry, land reclamation, and the construction of aluminium and phosphate industries. Soviet aid commitments played a central role in Egyptian economic planning; exports to the Soviet Union dominated the trade balance. And as political relations deteriorated with the Sadat regime, this economic assistance was maintained. New aid and trade agreements were signed in 1971 and 1972, reflecting the Soviet desire to maintain its ties with Egypt on the economic level to compensate for deterioration on the political level.169

However, despite its dependence on the Soviet Union, it was Egypt that restructured its economic relations, after the October 1973 War, by turning back once more to the United States and the anti-Soviet Gulf states (led by Saudi Arabia) for the aid necessary to set the Egyptian economy back on the road to economic development. Abandoned by its client, the Soviet Union now turned Egypt's economic dependence into a lever for improving political relations by refusing to renegotiate Egypt's huge debt. Sadat has so far resisted this pressure by increasing Egypt's dependence on its new patrons, demonstrating yet again that economic pressure will not change Egypt's political behaviour.170 Thus, the history of Egypt's economic relations with its patrons suggests that aid has tended to be a counter-productive political lever. The existence of an alternative patron ensured that when political objectives became incompatible economic pressures could not succeed in bridging the gap by altering Egypt's behaviour. Although the Egyptian economy suffered most in the process, Egypt's ability to shift patrons enhanced its power of resistance.

170. While still refusing to renegotiate the debt, the Soviet Union entered into a new trade agreement with Egypt at the beginning of 1977, reflecting its interests in maintaining economic ties as a means for promoting dialogue.
On the other side, Israel's ability to resist the economic pressure of its American patron was much more limited, simply because it could not turn to an alternative patron. However, the nature of Israel's vulnerability to economic pressures was somewhat different to Egypt's. Until the 1973 October War, Israel depended on the United States government not so much for economic assistance, but rather for the granting of tax exempt status to donations from American Jewry and, more importantly, for permission to transfer this capital to Israel. The U.S. government had provided some development grants and loans, as well as PL 480 aid, but this economic assistance amounted to less than 40% of the massive transfer of capital from American Jewry. Moreover, the United States received some compensation for American economic assistance in that Israel's impressive record of economic development served as an excellent example to newly independent states of what a small, Western-oriented country could do with its economy, despite the hostility of its physical and political environments. Israel demonstrated the advantages of its model of development to these states by sharing with them the techniques and social organisations which it had pioneered. While this may not have produced much tangible economic assistance from the United States, partly because such assistance was not really necessary, it reinforced the American-Israeli relationship by demonstrating the shared values of the two states.

However, because Israel depended on the economic assistance of world Jewry, and because the bulk of this assistance came from American Jewry, it was vulnerable to the threat of suspension of private capital transfers. Only on one occasion has the United States government actually threatened economic sanctions, including the suspension of private transfers, but it was an effective measure. Israel's decision in 1956, to accept the principle of withdrawal from Sinai, and its decision to withdraw its troops in 1957, were both taken in the face of overt threats from Eisenhower and Dulles to

171. In the period from 1949 - 1972, Israel received $1 billion in loans and $270 million in grants from the United States in the form of economic assistance. In the same period American Jewry donated $1.9 billion to Israel and purchased $1.6 billion worth of State of Israel Bonds. See Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Emergency Military Assistance for Israel and Cambodia*, pp. 57 and 60.

172. By 1972 Israel was operating technical assistance programmes in 27 African countries, 10 Asian countries and 19 Latin American countries. At the same time Israel had trained some 18,000 of their people in courses in Israel. See Michael Curtis and Susan Aurelia Gitelson, (eds.) *Israel in the Third World*, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1976.
suspend both governmental and private assistance. Although the threat was never repeated in the period under examination here, nor was it the only consideration in the decision to withdraw, the traumatic impact which the threat had on Israeli decision-makers made them sensitive even to the possibility of such sanctions. Unlike Egypt, Israel had no alternative to its dependence on world Jewry and the American government. In other words, should push have come to shove at any time during the period, Israel would have been unable to transfer its dependence to another patron, since there was no other patron willing to foot the bill. Conceivably, Israel could have taken the decision to go it alone, but the issue would have had to be so vital to Israel's security that it would have been prepared to absorb the costs in terms of a drastic alteration to its economy and its international relations. On the other hand, the application of sanctions would have been in itself such a drastic measure, that the United States would have only done so had it been prepared to abandon its Israeli client. The fact that the policies of patron and client were never allowed to diverge to that extent was testimony to the importance of Israel's other resources in the relationship as well as its skill in applying them to the task of resisting American policies.

III - THE DERIVED RESOURCES OF ISRAEL AND EGYPT

Throughout this analysis of Israel's and Egypt's available means, there has been a noticeable asymmetry in the nature of the relationship between each weak state and its patron. While Egypt's ability to resist was determined by its position between the superpowers and its importance to both of them, Israel's ability was determined by its importance to only one of the superpowers. Thus, to gain patronage and resist influence, Egypt could play the superpowers off against each other, in different ways on the various levels of their interaction, while Israel could only play the United States off against itself, or play one interest of the United States off against another. This asymmetry is also noticeable in the sources of derived power for these two states. Egypt could acquire importance to both superpowers from its ability to lead the Arab world, while Israel could only depend, beyond its own capabilities, on the power it acquired from the presence and effectiveness of American Jews in the domestic politics of the United States.

173. See Brecher, Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy, Chapter 6.
However, these derived resources contributed in similar ways to the power of resistance of both weak states by adding, to their intrinsic resources, the extrinsic resources of other states or groups. The advantage to their powers of resistance lay in the fact that, if the leadership of a superpower perceived that a given policy would be met, not only by the determined resistance of the client at which it was aimed, but also by the concerted opposition of other states in the international system, or significant groups within the domestic system, then the superpower's determination to pursue that policy would be undermined. And of course, the extent to which the policy was undermined — the extent to which the weak state could increase its power of resistance as a result of these derived resources — depended upon their contingent value to the superpower. Were Egypt supported in its stance by Yemen alone, it would have less power than if it were supported by a united Arab world; were Israel only supported by the Zionist Organisation of America, it would have less power than if it were supported by a united American Jewish community articulating the opinion of a majority of the American public and using its influence to gain majority support from Congress.

However, because these additional resources were derived from external support, the weak state could not always be sure of its control over them. It might in fact find that the superpower's influence over them was greater than its own, and might therefore discover that these resources were less reliable than its own capabilities. So, just as the weak state had to be cautious in its utilisation of its own capabilities and its application of will-power, lest its contingent value be depreciated or its patron decide to restructure the relationship, so too did the weak state have to be careful in applying its derived resources, lest it lose its supporters or force the patron to restructure its relationship with those states or groups. For if the lesser animals attempt to lead the elephant in different directions, they may only succeed in helping him to divide and lead them all.

i) Egypt's Derived Resources

...I always imagine that in this region in which we live, there is a role wandering aimlessly about seeking an actor to play it. I know not why this role...should at last settle down...on our frontiers beckoning us to move, to dress up for it and to perform it, since there is nobody else who can do so.175

Rhetoric aside, when Nasser wrote those words in his *Philosophy of the Revolution* he was well aware of the reasons why the Arab 'role', in search of its actor, should turn to him to don the robes of leadership. For Nasser perceived his country to be at the centre of the Arab, African and Moslem worlds, and he believed that under his leadership Egypt had the ability to become the hub of a unified Arab nation with its spokes reaching out to the African and Muslim rims. Nasser believed that under him, Egypt could achieve an eminent position in international society. There is a certain ambivalence in Nasser's statement: was the actor Egypt or himself? The answer is probably both, for the country and its leader together possessed the capabilities to dominate the Arab world. Egypt's centrality has already been remarked upon in discussing its geo-strategic and demographic resources. With the strongest army, the largest population, a level of economic, technical and industrial development matched only in part by Lebanon and Syria, and located in the heartland of the Middle East, astride the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aqaba, it was only natural that Egypt should be the focus of efforts to unite the Arab nation. Moreover, Egypt had the cultural and human resources to spread its influence throughout the Arab world. Its educational institutions had trained most of the Arab elites; its teachers, professionals, businessmen and journalists, who were often unable to find suitable employment in an over-crowded Egypt, took up positions in neighbouring countries; its Al Azhar University was the oldest and most influential institution in the Moslem world; its large bureaucracy was capable of undertaking the administrative tasks involved in the unification process; and Cairo Radio could be heard by the masses in every corner of the Arab world. Thus in each Arab country an appreciation of Egypt's primacy could be cultivated and it was generally understood by the elites in these countries that there could be no Arab unity without Egypt.

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178. Thus Michel Aflaq, one of the founders of the Syrian Ba'ath Party, argued that there could be no Arab unity without Egypt because "she could and would successfully oppose any movement towards Arab unity which excluded her". Cited in Dawisha, *Ibid.*, p. 76.
As Daniel Dishon has noted about the centrality of Egypt after 1967, and it was equally true of its situation before then:

...when Egypt's credibility was high and she believed herself capable of acting - she immediately became the very focus of activity...when, due to weakness, domestic problems or marked inferiority in the conflict with Israel, Egypt was rendered incapable of taking the lead in inter-Arab affairs, there was no one else to take her place.179

This centrality provided Nasser with the power base for the development of his charismatic, revolutionary and nationalist leadership of the Arabs. His anti-imperialist triumphs endeared him not only to his own people but to the other Arab masses as well. Through his expulsion of the British, his reception at Bandung, his conclusion of an arms deal with the Soviet Union, his nationalisation of the Canal, his diplomatic triumph over the British, French and Israelis in 1956, his campaign which doomed the Baghdad Pact, and his crowning achievement of union between Egypt and Syria, Nasser had come to personify Arab aspirations for independence and unity.180 Consequently, he came to speak to, and for, the Arabs qua Arabs, over the heads of their own regimes. And because Nasser was leader of the Arabs rather than just leader of Egypt, the superpowers had to take greater note of him. As his confidant, Heikal, has noted:

Inevitably Nasser had more leverage because his voice was heard over the whole Arab world: what Nasser chose to say could affect Soviet relations with, perhaps, Iraq; and this was important, particularly in the perennial arguments over arms supplies. By his influence, Nasser extended the frontiers of Egypt. If you deal with either of the superpowers from the context merely of your own frontiers, well, you are one country much like another; but if you deal with them as a head of a movement, that confers much greater power.181

Thus, when Nasser played one superpower off against the other, he was able to do so by threatening or promising to enhance their interests in the Arab world, rather than just in Egypt. However, the contingent value of this derived power depended on just how solid and unified his support in the Arab world was. For if Nasser's leadership were undermined by dissension and opposition in the Arab world, then his ability to threaten superpower

interests beyond Egypt's borders would be eroded. While Egypt under Nasser enjoyed primacy in the region, he could not succeed in exercising hegemony over his neighbours. In fact, the very attempt at hegemony provoked opposition from those Arab rulers who had hegemonic ambitions of their own and from those whose regimes were threatened in the process.182

This inter-Arab rivalry did much to weaken the coalition which Nasser had assembled to oppose 'imperialism' in the 1950s. By 1962, the beginning of the period examined here, the aura of Nasserism had begun to fade, only to be replaced by fear of his subversive power. The ideological arguments with Kassem in Iraq, the Syrian secession from the United Arab Republic, and the war between Egypt and Saudi Arabia in the Yemen, all served to divide rather than unite the Arab world. Nasser still retained the ability to threaten Western interests in the region and therefore the ability to promote Soviet interests, but the United States could respond by bolstering his opposition rather than by appeasing him, while the Soviet Union could seek other protégés in the region without necessarily depending on Nasser.

Increasingly frustrated by these setbacks, Nasser exacerbated the divisions by renouncing the concept of "unity of the ranks" and adopting the concept of "unity of aim": the Arab world was thus divided into "progressive" and "reactionary" camps, as Nasser assumed the role of a militant revolutionary dedicated to the overthrow of the conservative regimes in Jordan and Saudi Arabia.183 Moreover, a common aim did not provide unity in the "progressive" camp because of the Syrian Ba'ath's attempt to outdo Nasser's revolutionary nationalism.184

Yet just as Egypt's isolation in the Arab world was mounting and its derived power was therefore diminishing, the issue of Israel was injected into inter-Arab rivalry. The common Arab perception of the Jewish state as an alien organism in the Arab body, a new extension of Western imperialism an obstruction to Arab progress and a means for keeping them divided, weak and backwards, ensured that an Egyptian policy of hostility towards Israel

182. See Kerr, Regional Arab Politics and the Conflict with Israel.
183. Thus, in his speech on the occasion of Union Day, 22 February 1962, Nasser declared: "Unanimity about the goal is more important than unity of the ranks. We demand unity regarding the goal, but we regard with suspicion slogans calling for unity of the ranks...What is the meaning of ranks about which they are talking today; unity between imperialistic stooges, and the liberated countries; the reactionary elements and the progressive elements?... We would never accept any unity of the ranks directed against the interests of the Arab nation". In Speeches by President Gamal Abdul Nasser, 1962, U.A.R. Ministry of Information, State Information Service, p. 24.
would meet with the backing of all Arabs. 185 Thus when Israel announced its impending diversion of the Jordan waters, Nasser called for an Arab summit to discuss how best to deal with the problem, and his arch-rivals travelled to Cairo from Damascus, Amman and Riyadh, to bury their differences. Nasser naturally dominated the summit meetings, held over the next three years, because without Egypt the other Arab states could not confront Israel's military strength.

However, the fact that only Egypt could add substance to an anti-Israel campaign placed Nasser in a serious dilemma: on the one hand he aspired to an unchallenged position of leadership of the Arab world; on the other hand, given the opposition he faced from other would-be leaders, the only way that this could be achieved was by standing up to Israel, yet this could lead to disaster because Israel's strength was superior to Egypt's. Nasser attempted to sublimate the dilemma by focussing Arab attention on a long-term strategy for building the military strength of the states bordering Israel. However, by 1966, Syrian efforts to undermine this strategy by outbidding Egypt in its hostility towards Israel, and a Saudi Arabian challenge to his leadership (in the form of the Islamic Conference), forced Nasser to abandon this strategy, dissolve the Arab summit forum, and renew his political and diplomatic war against the 'reactionaries'. 186 This new isolation not only reduced Egypt's value to the United States, which found it more efficacious to support the 'reactionaries' and Israel; but it also reduced Egypt's value to the Soviet Union, which used its leverage over him to encourage a closer alignment with its new Syrian protégé. Finally, in 1967, Nasser's desperate effort to end Egypt's isolation and combat the challenge from Saudi Arabia and Jordan led him back again to hostility towards Israel. The remilitarisation of Sinai and the eviction of UNEF did serve to unite the Arabs, as Jordan and Saudi Arabia, as well as the 'progressives' in Syria, Iraq and Algeria, joined in the call for jihad (holy war). However, this momentary unity proved to be an inadequate lever with either of the superpowers during the ensuing crisis, concerned as they both were to avoid a confrontation. 187


186. Kerr, The Arab Cold War, Chapters 5 and 6.

187. On Nasser's attempt to use the support of the other Arab states against the United States during the 1967 crisis, see Part Two, Chapter Four.
The division between 'progressives' and 'reactionaries' was mended in the wake of the 1967 defeat as Egypt joined with Jordan and turned to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Libya to finance its political and military campaign aimed at "eliminating the traces of (Israeli) aggression". Ideological conflict and hegemonic competition had been submerged in the face of the Arab humiliation, for Nasser had lost, in the process, his desire to champion the cause of Arab unity.

Yet, instead of encouraging unity in adversity, the defeat had caused a new divergence between Egypt and Jordan on the one hand, and Iraq, Syria and Libya on the other, because the former were prepared to consider using political means against Israel, while the latter, who had suffered least, wanted all-out war. Nasser was therefore unable to concert Arab pressure on Israel and consequently unable to convince the superpowers, using only Egypt's resources, of the need to impose withdrawal on Israel. Egypt had to fight the War of Attrition against Israel without the assistance of the other confrontation states and their backers, and yet when Nasser accepted a cease-fire in August 1970 these same states could accuse him of selling out the Arab cause. This illustrated Egypt's difficulties in enhancing its diminished intrinsic resources by deriving power from Arab support.

However, Sadat was better able to exploit Egypt's centrality because he did not generate, in other Arab regimes, the fear of subversion which had been part of Nasserism. Thus, while the potent combination of Nasser's charismatic leadership and Egypt's primacy were missing, they were replaced by a more cooperative Egyptian effort to lead the Arab world. As Sadat rebuilt Egypt's credibility in the Arab world, after some indecisiveness, he also began to establish close links with a more pragmatic Syria (under Assad's rule since 1970), and with a more forthcoming Saudi Arabia (following his expulsion of the Soviet advisers in 1972). Now that Israeli withdrawal had become the decisive Arab question, rather than a side issue to be used in inter-Arab rivalry, the former antagonisms could be forgotten for the moment at least. While both the United States and the Soviet Union began to take greater notice of this emerging alliance, it was not until the October War and its concomitant oil embargo that the full potential of Egypt's derived support was realised. In fact this support had been a crucial part of Sadat's strategy for maximising the pressure on Israel on both the military and political levels. The 'third party war', waged by the Arab oil states

188. See Daniel Dishon, op. cit.
against America's allies, did much to create a new American awareness of the importance of placating Egypt now that it enjoyed the support of Saudi Arabia and its suddenly important oil.\textsuperscript{189}

In short, the resources which Egypt derived from its ability to gain the support of other Arab states did not make any significant contribution to Egypt's intrinsic resources in the period between 1962 and 1973. Rather, Nasser found that relations with other Arab states were a liability in his dealings with the United States and a cause for pressure in his dealings with the Soviet Union. While Egypt's centrality in the Arab world was given due recognition in the policies of both superpowers, its ability to gain the support of the Arab world was not, because this backing was neither reliable nor constant. Conversely, in 1973, Sadat was able to increase Egypt's importance to both superpowers by putting together a powerful coalition of confrontation states and oil-rich backers, and by using both acquired weapons in the October War, at a time when the West was hungry for Middle Eastern oil, the Arabs could afford an oil embargo, and the superpowers wanted to avoid the disruption that war in the Middle East could cause to their own relations. The contrast between both superpowers' treatment of Egypt during the 1973 War (when the Soviet Union mounted a resupply operation and the United States prevented an Egyptian defeat) and their treatment of Egypt during the 1967 War (when the Soviet Union refused to resupply Egypt until after the war and the United States backed Israel's victory) was, in part, due to the different degrees of support Egypt received from its Arab brothers on these two occasions.

\textbf{ii) Israel's Derived Resources}

The re-establishment of the Jewish state after seventeen centuries of dispersion was a unique phenomenon in the history of mankind; a uniqueness reinforced by the fact that after the creation of the state only a minority of the Jewish people settled there. Yet the existence of one section of the Jewish people in a sovereign state, and another much larger section outside it, but lending the state support, considerably enhanced Israel's

resources. This has particularly been the case in Israel's relations with its American patron, for the existence of a large Jewish community in the United States helped to ensure that what had been an American moral commitment was turned into tangible support for Israel's security, survival and well-being. 190

Of course, were American Jewry the only group in American politics supporting Israel, its effectiveness would have been extremely limited and its contribution to Israel's resources probably would have been restricted to capital transfers to the Jewish state - assuming of course that the U.S. government allowed such transfers. But support for Israel in American politics went far beyond the Jewish community, ensuring that, as Henry Kissinger has put it:

...it has been a constant American policy, supported in every administration and carrying wide bipartisan support, that the existence of Israel will be supported by the United States. This has been our policy in the absence of any formal arrangement and it has never been challenged no matter which administration was in office. 191

It was this widespread, deep-seated and historical nature of the American commitment to Israel's survival as a democracy, as a reliable friend in an important area of rivalry with the Soviet Union, as a "nation of immigrants", and as the Jewish state recreated in the Holy Land, which formed the foundation of the American-Israeli relationship. But there can be little doubt that the presence and activities of the Jewish community in the United States helped to build that relationship. 192

The political influence of American Jews finds its basis in the Jewish vote. Although Jews represent only 2.8% of the American population, their electoral importance far outweighs their numerical size. The Jewish tendency to settle in large cities has led to their concentration in seven of the largest states of the Union and, with a decentralised voting system, this has made them an important group in Presidential elections, since these

190. In 1973, 41% of the World Jewish population resided in the United States, while only 19.8% resided in Israel. See American Jewish Yearbook, 1974-5, p. 567.


192. As 'Si' Kenen, the Congressional lobbyist for Israel, has put it: "...Israel would not have been born if the United States was not a democracy. Nor would it have been able to develop without American assistance and without American Jews urging Congress and President to assist Israel". Interview with Isaiah Kenen, Executive Director, America-Israel Public Affairs Committee, (1954-74), Washington, 17 June, 1975.
states, with their large electoral colleges, are the traditional 'battleground where candidates focus their attention and where the elections are won or lost. This electoral significance is reinforced by the fact that Jews turn out in large numbers on polling day, accounting for some 4% of the presidential vote. But, most importantly for their influence in the American political system, their vote is a Jewish vote in the sense that it is determined by the issues which are important to them as Jewish-Americans.

However, it is important to note that the Jewish vote, traditionally, has not been a swinging vote determined by a candidate's support for Israel. Rather the Jewish vote has tended to be a liberal-internationalist vote; since the days of Franklin Roosevelt, American Jews have been "the most liberal and most Democratic white voters in the electorate". What this

193. In 1973, 83% of American Jews resided in the following eight states. Within these states over 75% of the Jews lived in the main cities. Connecticut and Ohio also have large Jewish communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Jewish Population</th>
<th>% of Total State Population</th>
<th>Presidential Electoral Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>2,150,385</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>666,610</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>470,655</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>418,000</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>217,340</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>269,000</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>226,610</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


194. In New York City 79% of native-born Jews and 70% of foreign-born Jews claimed they 'almost always vote' in elections. This contrasts with a 59% response from 'all New Yorkers'. Columbia University Public Health Survey [no date], cited in Mark R. Levy, and Michael S. Kramer, The Ethnic Factor, How America's Minorities Decide Elections, New York, 1973, p. 99. 1% may not seem like much but it translates into 750,000 votes which is enough to be decisive in a close election, especially because that 1% is concentrated in large electoral colleges. See Stephen Isaacs, Jews and American Politics, New York, 1974, p. 7.

meant in electoral terms was that if the Democratic Party candidate was perceived to be liberal he would win the overwhelming majority of Jewish votes; even if the candidate was Jewish he was only likely to win the support of his co-religionists were he a liberal.\textsuperscript{196} The conclusion drawn by Lawrence Fuchs in 1956 is still true today:

...the Jews constituted the only ethno-religious group in which differences in Democratic-Republican strength could not be correlated with differences in occupational prestige, amount of income or education.\textsuperscript{197}

Because American Jews voted their "fixation" rather than their interest, the Jewish vote did not swing on the issue of Israel. Naturally, a candidate who was anti-Israel could not expect to win the Jewish vote. But, since the creation of the state of Israel, no presidential candidate has been anything less than supportive of the survival of the Jewish state. Thus a conservative candidate who promised stronger support for Israel than his liberal opponent was still unlikely to win anything more than a small percentage of the Jewish vote. In 1948 all candidates were committed to Zionism, but Dewey's pro-Israel effort won him only 12\% of the Jewish vote, while Truman took 75\%. In a landslide victory in 1952, Eisenhower - the general who had liberated the Nazi concentration camps - won only 36\% of the Jewish vote; in 1956, when Eisenhower had protested against Israeli actions in Sinai on the eve of the elections, he managed to gain a record 40\% of the Jewish vote. In 1960, although Kennedy avoided the normal pro-Israel speeches in his campaign, he received overwhelming support from 82\% of American Jews. His opponent, Richard Nixon, was the epitome of all that they feared: a man who had served on McCarthy's House Un-American Activities Committee, who had smeared Helen Douglas, who was to many 'an archetypal Jew baiter'. In 1964 Johnson collected 90\% of the Jewish vote; a reflection of Goldwater's arch-conservatism, rather than Johnson's support for Israel.\textsuperscript{198}

\textsuperscript{196} The case of Senator Javits is exemplary. The Jewish senator, running on a Republican ticket, lost the Jewish vote to Catholic Democrat James Donovan in 1962. In 1968 Javits increased his share of the Jewish vote by 20\% because he was endorsed by New York's Liberal Party. See Levy and Kramer, \textit{ibid.}, p. 121; Lawrence H. Fuchs, \textit{The Political Behaviour of American Jews}, Glencoe, Illinois, 1956, Chapter VIII.

\textsuperscript{197} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 74.

In 1968, Nixon captured only 17% of Jewish votes despite Humphrey's support of the Democratic administration's policies in Vietnam; policies which Jews more than any other ethnic group opposed. Nixon had made a strong statement to the B'nai B'rith about the need for America to tip the balance of power in the Middle East in Israel's favour. Nevertheless he made an accurate prediction when he told his speechwriter, William Safire:

You'll see there won't be a single vote in this for me. They'll cheer and applaud, and then vote for the other guy, they always do. But we're right on the issue, and it wouldn't hurt to say so.

The 1972 elections represented an interesting confirmation of this record. The Campaign to Re-Elect the President, as we now know, was prepared to do everything and anything necessary to secure a second term for Nixon. As part of this campaign, a strategy for winning the Jewish vote had been devised and implemented. While the Democratic candidate, George McGovern, was accused of being 'soft on Israel', Nixon's support for Israel was portrayed as greater than any other President's. The Israeli ambassador, Yitzhak Rabin, openly endorsed Nixon as Israel's preferred candidate. After a slow start, McGovern tried to respond by doing everything from visiting boards of Rabbis to issuing declarations about his intention to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, to alter his image. In the end Nixon did indeed double his Jewish vote, capturing some 35%, but analysts have noted that the vote did not swing on the issue of support for Israel. Rather, those Jews who defected to the Republican camp did so, mostly because of their fear of McGovern's policies on education quotas, which threatened to privilege blacks at the expense of Jews, and because of their fear of bussing and forced suburban integration. Some less well-to-do Jews who defected wanted a new brand of social justice which McGovern could not supply; some well-off Jews who defected, did so mostly because of the fear of McGovern's tax reform proposals. Being thought soft on Israel would not have helped McGovern's standing with these people, but the most important fact was that in a landslide election, when Nixon collected 69% of all white votes and 75% of votes from those who lived in high socio-economic areas, 65% of the Jews still voted for McGovern.

The voting record of American Jews therefore suggests that as long as a candidate espoused pro-Israel policies he did not automatically lose the Jewish vote. But to win anything more than a small proportion of the vote, support for Israel had to be only one part of a package of liberal-

199. Safire, *Before the Fall*, p. 566.
internationalist policies. The closer the Republican candidate came to espousing such a package, the greater were his inroads into the Jewish-Democratic vote. Nevertheless, to make that inroad the candidate had to appear supportive of Israel, since an anti-Israel image would lose him much of his Jewish support. What this meant for Israel was that in an election year the incumbent President could not afford to fight an open battle with Israel over diplomatic policy or arms supplies, for fear that he would be portrayed by his opponent as anti-Israel. He, or his party's preferred candidate, might then lose whatever potential they had for winning enough Jewish votes in states like New York and California; states where the Jewish vote could make the difference between victory and defeat. A candidate enjoying popular support might calculate that he could ignore the Jewish vote, but the dissension caused by an anti-Israel policy in domestic politics could damage more than just his ability to win the Jewish vote. In other words, the existence of a general consensus in the American electorate that the United States should support Israel, together with the role played by the Jewish vote in the elections, ensured that candidates would vie for the label 'more supportive of Israel' as part and parcel of their campaign strategy. And this in turn ensured that, since the establishment of an arms relationship with Israel in 1964, the Jewish state could expect to receive tangible support during an election year. 201

The salience of Israel and the Jewish vote in presidential elections meant that, for at least one year in every four, Israel would not have to resist American pressure because it was unlikely that any would be forthcoming. The Jewish vote played a lesser role in Congressional elections because it only mattered in eight states of the Union. However, in these eight states the Jews again voted their liberal fixation rather than their socio-economic interest, exhibiting a penchant for ticket-splitting where they perceived that a Republican candidate was more liberal than the Democrat. 202 More closely attached to a particular electorate and more concerned with opinion in that electorate than the presidential aspirants,

201. In 1964, during the first official visit of an Israeli Prime Minister to the United States, Eshkol received assurances from Johnson about arms; in 1968 Israel was promised Phantoms; in 1972 Israel and the United States entered into their first long-term arms agreement; in 1976 President Ford announced, one month before the election, that Israel would receive Fuel Air Explosives and night-vision fighting equipment.

the Senators and Congressmen from these eight states were attentive to Jewish concerns. Moreover, support for Israel played a more important role in Congressional elections because the candidates had limited ways of appealing to the Jewish vote. To vote against a bill in the Congress which would provide aid to Israel, or to refuse to sign a resolution urging arms supplies to Israel, would be portrayed as more anti-Israel than a presidential decision not to supply arms or aid. The president could claim that he was acting out of some wider national interest, the Senator or Congressman could not easily do so, since it was his responsibility to represent his electorate. It is not surprising therefore that the voting record of representatives from California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania, on issues which affected Israel, was consistently in favour of support for Israel. However, while in presidential elections the Jewish vote in all these eight states could be crucial, in Congressional elections, the Jewish vote was restricted in its salience to those states, so that while it was effective, its potential for influencing Congressional opinion was limited.

Yet the value of the American Jewish community as a derived resource for Israel went beyond the role of the Jewish vote at election time. For if that were not so, the president would have been free to conduct his Middle East policy as he pleased in the interim, and Congressional support for Israel might have been restricted to the Senators and Congressmen from those states where the Jewish vote was significant. The fact that the president's policy was constrained, and the fact that Israel enjoyed majority support in Congress was due, in large part, to the Jewish community's ability to orchestrate and articulate, in the period between elections, the general consensus amongst the American public that the government should support Israel. Because of the existence of this consensus the Jewish community was able to lobby legitimately the Congress and the Administration, since support for Israel could be portrayed as support for the American national interest rather than support for parochial Jewish interests. 203

203. The constant public refrain of Jewish leaders was that support for Israel served the national interest. See for example the statements of Dr Wexler, I.L. Kenen, and Professor Bernstein in U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on the Near East, The Near East Conflict, U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970s, Hearings, 91st Congress, 2nd Session, July, 1970, p. 69, 99, 175, 209; and the statement of Rabbi Bernstein in U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Emergency Military Assistance for Israel and Cambodia, pp. 110-115.
The value of this lobbying effort to Israel, in its relations with the United States, depended on just how active and effective the Jewish community was in pressuring the Congress and Administration to support Israel. In the period before 1967, when the relationship was entering a new phase of cooperation, lobbying activities were neither intense nor really necessary. However, the 1967 War catalysed the Jewish community into active advocacy of Israel's cause; in the period after 1967 there was intense activity by the Jewish lobby at the slightest sign of a policy that was not fully supportive of Israel. While one might expect that the most important time for lobbying was during the two wars, the Jewish community was in fact rather ineffective during these crisis periods. In part that can be explained by the president's preoccupation with foreign policy rather than domestic politics at such times, and in part by the reluctance of Congress to appear as anything but supportive of the president during periods of crisis in the Middle East. Thus Israel gained most from this derived resource in the period from 1967 to 1973 and then after the October 1973 War. There is an interesting contrast here, between Israel and Egypt, for while Egypt only tended to gain benefit from its derived resources during war, Israel tended to lose much of the benefit of its derived resources during these periods.

The Jewish lobby operated on three levels: public opinion, Congress, and the Administration. On the first level, the fact that the Jewish community was highly organised into welfare, religious, ethnic civil rights, union, academic, student, teachers, fraternal, war veterans and women's groups, throughout the country, and the fact that these groups were active on a whole range of political issues, from civil rights through education to trade with the Soviet Union, meant that it was possible to establish contact with counterpart groups in the wider community and enlist their

204. As Rabbi Hertzberg has observed: "Suddenly a brute sense was reevoked that the ultimate line between 'us' and 'them' was the line between Jews and everybody else". The threat to the security of Israel was perceived as a threat to the security of American Jewry as well. See A. Hertzberg, "Jewish Identification after the Six Day War", Jewish Social Studies, Volume 31, 1969.

205. Kenen related how he tried to get a resolution through the Senate during the October 1973 War which would have condemned the Arabs for starting the war and expressed staunch support for Israel. AIPAC sent out 98 telegrams with that purpose in mind. However, Senator Scott (the Republican leader in the Senate and a strong supporter of Israel in the past) checked with the Administration, was told not to assign blame, and thus introduced a resolution which called for a cease-fire without even mentioning Israel. Interview with I.L. Kenen, 17 June, 1975.
support. Jews were part of 'coalition politics' in the United States and could therefore gain public support for Israel in exchange for their support of other causes. Moreover, these Jewish groups could also be mobilised for letter-writing campaigns and demonstrations to back the lobbying efforts in Washington.

On the Congressional level, lobbying was carried out by the America-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), a registered lobbyist, in coordination with the B'nai B'rith, the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress. The success of AIPAC's operations in securing majority support for Israel on Capitol Hill depended upon its close contact with key Senators and Congressmen. These people, some with presidential aspirations, others serving on foreign affairs and armed services committees, had an abiding interest in foreign policy. While support for Israel fitted into their world view AIPAC could provide the background information for the articulation of their views on the Middle East. AIPAC would often draft resolutions, letters and speeches for these Congressmen, who would then make it their business to secure the support of others in their party or on their committees. AIPAC also maintained contact with these Congressmen' staffers, many of whom were Jewish, to coordinate the footwork involved in gaining wider Congressional support. On crucial issues

206. The American Jewish Yearbook (1974-5) lists 26 community relations organisations, 33 cultural organisations and institutions, 10 overseas aid organisations, 61 religious institutions and organisations, 16 social and mutual benefit organisations, 24 social welfare organisations, 48 Zionist and pro-Israel organisations, 19 women's organisations, and 24 youth and student organisations. These are national Jewish organisations. Fully 95% of the American Jewish population is organised into communities which have some form of communal council or federation; these organisations are in turn affiliated with the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds. In 1973 there were 187 Jewish periodicals in the United States.

207. Among those who spoke out in support of Israel in the wake of the October War were George Meany (AFL-CIO), Cesar Chavez (United Farm Workers Union), Christian religious leaders, and the leaders of the Polish, Irish, Italian, Greek, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Puerto Rican, Japanese and Black communities. See American Jewish Year Book, 1974-75, pp. 290-1.

208. The key senators included: Ribicoff (D-Connecticut), Gurney (R-Florida), Bayh (D-Indiana), Muskie (D-Maine), Kennedy (D-Massachusetts), Humphrey (D-Minnesota), Mondale (D-Minnesota), Symington (D-Missouri), Javits (R-New York), Schweiker (R-Pennsylvania), Scott (R-Pennsylvania), and Jackson (D-Washington).

209. The staffers mentioned as part of the AIPAC network were: Richard Perle and Tina Silbert (Senator Jackson); Morrie Amitay (Senator Ribicoff, now executive director of AIPAC); Richard Siegal (Senator Schweiker); Mel Grossman (Senator Gurney); Daniel Spiegel (Senator Humphrey); Jay Berman (Senator Bayh); Kenneth Davis (Senator Scott); Albert Lakeland (Senator Javits); Mel Levine (Senator Tunney). See Isaacs, Jews and American Politics, p. 255.
would also be lobbied by people in their constituencies after AIPAC, or the other Washington lobby groups, had contacted them. Because the individual Congressman was readily accessible to his constituents and was always interested to know their concerns and preferences, people who held a view with great intensity and conveyed this view to their representative were likely to have a considerable impact on him. The Jewish penchant for political involvement, their prominence as donors to political campaigns, and their often important positions in the professions, business and the universities, provided them with access to their representatives in Washington and ensured that their views would be taken seriously. The inevitable result of all this activity was that at least seventy Senators and two hundred and fifty Congressmen could be mustered for Congressional action in support of Israel's arms and aid requests and its diplomatic position.

Much of the activity at the public and Congressional levels was directed at the administration, for it was in the White House and the State Department that American policy towards Israel was formulated and implemented. The president-as-politician always had to be concerned with the opinion of his electorate and, since the American public for the most part supported Israel, he had to listen to the concerns of the Jewish community when it articulated that opinion. He could attempt to outmanoeuvre the Jewish lobby, he could attempt to nullify it, or he could attempt to build a rival mass public which supported him on the issue, but he certainly could not ignore it. The president-as-administrator had to listen to Congress when it expressed support for Israel because he was dependent upon Congress for the approval of, and appropriation of, money for his policies. The ability of the Jewish community to mobilise the support of Congress ensured that if the president were not responsive to what were perceived to be Israel's requirements on the political, economic and military levels, then he would face stiff opposition and criticism from the other branch of American government.


212. Hilsman, op.cit., p. 103; Lester W. Milbrath, "Interest Groups and Foreign Policy", in James N. Rosenau (ed.), Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy, New York, 1967.
Moreover, beyond the orchestration of public and Congressional opinion, the Jewish community was also able to establish an institutionalised form of communication with the White House. Access to the White House was particularly important because the president had the power to decide to whom he would listen. It was an indication of the importance which every president attached to the Jewish community’s support for Israel that each one had a special counsel and channel of communication with the Jewish leadership: in Kennedy’s time it was Meyer Feldman; in Johnson’s time it was Harry McPherson; and in Nixon’s time it was Leonard Garment. To maximise the effectiveness of this channel of communication, and to ensure that the administration was unable to split the Jewish community and play one group off against another, the thirty-one national organisations which represented the totality of the organised Jewish community banded together in the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organisations. The Conference was an umbrella organisation which articulated a unified Jewish point of view in support of Israel; it met with the President, the Secretary of State and their advisors at least once a year, but more often when it felt the administration was not being responsive to Israel’s needs. As one of the Presidents, Charlotte Jacobson, pointed out:

> We are engaged in an institutionalised dialogue with the administration and they know that we speak on behalf of American Jewry, and that behind us is a wider consensus of Congress and public opinion.

Beyond the Conference, the Jewish community also established a private form of communication with the Oval Office through individuals who had a ‘direct line’ to the president by virtue of their friendship with him or their importance as campaign contributors. Johnson had a number of close Jewish friends, the most prominent of whom were Abe Fortas and Arthur Goldberg; Nixon communicated with the Jewish community through Max Fisher, a Detroit multi-millionaire who was a large donor to the Republican coffers and the organiser of Nixon’s Jewish strategy in the 1972 elections. Because the Jewish community and its leadership were predominantly Democrats, the

Republican administration also found it convenient to use Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg - the 'House Democrat' - as a channel of communication. Thus, with the president keen to maintain a consensus in favour of his policies in the Middle East, the Jewish community came to play an important role in communicating what were essentially Israel's concerns about American policy, but the concerns often had a greater impact on the president because they were voiced with an American accent.

However, the American Jewish community laboured under several constrain which reduced their effectiveness as a derived resource in Israel's relation with the American government. First, the Jewish organisations were by no means monolithic and differed sharply in their attitudes to a whole range of political, social and religious issues which concerned Israel. The only time that they were likely to reach a consensus was when the Israeli government took a firm stand and made its position clear. However, on issues such as final borders and the rights of the Palestinians the Israeli government was unwilling to take a stand, partly because of the lack of consensus in Israel on such questions. And, during times of crisis, the Israeli government was often unsure how it wanted to deal with the administration.215 In such cases, the Jewish community was particularly concerned that the administration not be allowed an opportunity to play it off against Israel, or against itself.216 Silence was sometimes preferred to divided advocacy. Second, there was a general reluctance to challenge the administration or confront its policies because of the Jewish community's sensitivity to the charge of 'dual loyalty', and because of its awareness that, in the final analysis, Jews comprised only 3% of the American population.217 Third, the structural position of the Jewish lobby in the decision-making process also constrained its effectiveness. Since it did

215. A classic case in point was the role of the Israeli Ambassador, Simcha Dinitz, during the October 1973 War. Believing that Kissinger was on Israel' side and that the supply of urgently needed materiel was only being delayed by the Pentagon's reluctance, Dinitz restrained the Jewish lobby groups and directed their attentions to the Pentagon. Interview with Kenneth Wollack.

216. Consensus on a course of action is regarded as crucial to the effect­iveness of the Jewish lobby. The leaders were particularly concerned that the Administration, and Kissinger in particular, would play them off against each other if they allowed their splits to show. Consequently a great deal of energy was expended on maintaining unity. Interviews with Rabbi Miller, Rabbi Hertzberg, and Charlotte Jacobson.

217. 'Si' Kenan makes the point: "We are a very small minority - only 3% of the population - so we can't block the State Department and we can't overthrow the Administration. We just don't have that power". Interview with I.L. Kenan.
not participate in the formulation of American policy, it could not initiate action, except on the Congressional periphery, and was forced to adopt a reactive posture. This meant that, when support was not forthcoming for Israel, the Jewish community's ability to orchestrate public and Congressional opinion could raise the domestic costs of such a policy, but it could not bury that policy and force the administration to abandon it in favour of increased support for Israel. The presence and effectiveness of the Jewish community in the United States could help Israel to resist American policy, could help ensure that the United States did not abandon Israel, but it could not prevent the American government from adopting policies which were perceived by Israel to be inimical to its interests. As Rabbi Hertzberg, the President of the American Jewish Congress, pointed out:

We are like a dog which can bark loudly when the master hasn't made up his mind. And we are a strong dog and may be able to pull him in a certain direction. But once the master has made up his mind he can curb his dog. We are capable of knocking heads, we can raise the costs to the administration of a particular policy, but in the final crunch we can't deliver the goods - we can't deliver the United States for Israel. What we can achieve is a better deal for Israel.  

IV - CONCLUSION

It should be clear from this analysis of the sources of power for Israel and Egypt as weak states, that they possessed diverse but formidable means for resisting the effects of their weakness. What has been described here is essentially a relationship of interdependence, where the dependence of the weak is offset, to some extent, by the dependence of the strong on them for advantage in the competition for influence, either between the superpowers, or between political groups within their domestic systems. Because of this dependence of the strong on the weak, the weak state's resources are given contingent value to the superpowers which will often make these resources worth more, in the resistance process, than they might be worth in other spheres of foreign policy. It has been emphasised that

this value to the superpowers is contingent because changes in the nature of the superpower competition and changes in the international environment, factors which are usually beyond the control of the weak state, will determine the worth of the resources to the superpowers at any particular time. Moreover, the value of these resources is also contingent because, in the final analysis, the superpowers will always retain the ability to restructure the relationship of interdependence and render these resources worthless in the cause of resistance. However, the analysis of Israeli and Egyptian resources has highlighted factors which can often compensate the weak for the asymmetrical nature of their relationships with their patrons. Prestige and reputation are factors which have made it difficult for the superpowers to abandon their clients because, in their competition for global influence, both superpowers have been concerned to show that they honour their commitments to lesser states, and that these commitments are worth something to the clients as well as to the patrons. In Israel's case, the American commitment to support its survival, a commitment which was reinforced, though not determined, by the presence of a politically effective American Jewish community, ensured that, during the period examined here, there was no consideration given to the idea of the patron abandoning its client. As one member of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff has observed:

Israel is a very peculiar case in our relations because of the domestic support it commands. We have an historical connection with the establishment of the State of Israel and we have a moral commitment...So we can't use the normal great power threat to a small client, that is; if push comes to shove we will lose interest and thus drop our support. With Israel we can't drop our support so that ultimate threat is not present.

However, if these factors helped to reduce somewhat the contingent nature of Israel's resources in its relations with the United States, the fact that Israel had no alternative patron to turn to, the fact that in the final analysis it was at least as dependent on the United States as this patron was committed to Israel, meant that the worth of Israel's resources

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221. Interview with Reginald Bartholomew, Policy Planning Staff, Department of State, Washington, 9 June, 1975.
depended almost entirely on the value which the United States attached to them. Consequently, the relationship between Israel and the United States was, especially after 1967, particularly sensitive to any perceived or actual change in American policy. On the one hand, this tended to make Israel cautious in its application of leverage, on the other hand, the slightest cloud on the horizon of American-Israel relations could cause a storm. 222

On the other side, Egypt did not enjoy the same commitment from its patrons - when push came to shove, they could, and indeed did, abandon Egypt. However, Egypt's importance to both superpowers, in their competition for influence, gave it an advantage which Israel did not have, and which reduced the effectiveness of the ultimate threat of abandonment. For Egypt always seemed to have the ability to thwart the effects of abandonment by transferring its dependence from one patron to the other. Thus, unlike Israel, Egypt could afford to be daring in its application of leverage with its patrons, could afford to use more of the levers at its disposal, and in fact tended to possess greater leverage than did Israel. While Israel tended to emphasise its reliability as an American client and the contributions which it could make to American interests in the region, Egypt tended to emphasise its unreliability and the contributions which it could make to the interests of its patron's adversary in the region. 223 However, the more dependent Egypt became on one patron, and the less the opportunity it had to transfer its dependence to another, the more its leadership's behaviour would approximate Israel's emphasis on its reliability and its contribution to the relationship.

In other words, the analysis of Israeli and Egyptian resources in their relations with their patrons has generated hypotheses about the behaviour of weak states in their relations with the superpowers, which can be added to the earlier hypotheses about who prevails in the contest of influence and resistance between weak states and the superpowers:

222. Golda Meir has revealed the dilemma which this relationship often created for her: "I regret that I cannot promise myself and the nation that, from now on, the U.S. will see matters exactly our way. But even a small nation has the right to insist on matters of vital interest to herself...this is a great nation, confronted with the second great power, which is entirely opposed to us...On the other stands the greatest power in the world; she does not do everything we would like her to do, but can we do without her?". Jerusalem Post, 2 December, 1973.

iv) the weak state which has no alternative patron will act with caution up to the point where it believes that it is about to be, or has been, abandoned by its patron; at that point it may take desperate measures to dissuade its patron, or to gain alternative patronage;

v) the weak state which has alternative patrons will act with daring up to the point where it believes that it will lose, or has lost, its alternative; at this point it will act with caution.

Of course the behaviour of the weak states will do much to determine the outcome of the contest between clients and their patrons. These hypotheses suggest that the greater the degree of the client's dependence on one patron, the more cautious its behaviour. However, one should not conclude from this that the superpower patron will therefore prevail. For, as we have seen in the Egypt-Israel case, the ability of the patrons to resist the effects of their dependence upon their clients, and, in the final analysis, their ability to abandon their clients, was circumscribed by the determinants of their own behaviour. Thus the outcome of the contest between the superpowers and their weak clients depended upon the interaction between the two, and this interaction was in turn determined by the behaviour of the weak and the great - not the weak alone. For whether the elephant or the lesser animals lead will depend upon their relative strengths and weaknesses in the particular tug-of-war; whether one leads the others will depend upon its ability to transcend its own weaknesses and overcome the strengths of the others.

The interaction between Israel, Egypt and their superpower patrons took place on three levels: between the weak states on the level of their own conflict; between the superpowers on the level of their global conflict; and between the weak states and their superpower patrons, or prospective patrons, (including interaction with groups within the domestic system of the patron). This thesis focuses on the last level of interaction, but it is clear that interaction on the other levels will affect the conduct of relations on this level. In particular, the contingent value of the weak states' resources will be affected by developments on the other levels of interaction, and this could do much to determine the outcome of a particular contest between patron and client. Whether the patron or the client

224. Failure to take account of the effect of interaction on other levels has led analysts to some rather erroneous conclusions about who prevails in the Middle Eastern contest. Thus Trygve Nathisen concluded: "The small rival parties need and seek the support of the great powers whose influence is thus increasingly extended to the region with ensuing reduction of the small
prevailed in this process was determined by the relative strength of the resources each could bring to bear, and the relative strength of will each possessed in applying them. And both the available means and the will-power which were in fact brought to bear would in turn be determined by the prior demands of their activities on other levels and in other areas.

The actual process of interaction involved the threat or application of punishments and the promise or fulfilment of rewards by both patron and client. In this process, the weak state's task was to resist the punishment its superpower patron could mete out, either by threatening to punish, or actually punishing, the superpower in response, or by promising the superpower something, or actually delivering something, which it valued more than the desired change in its client's behaviour. Conversely, if the superpower attempted to alter the client's behaviour by the promise of blandishments, the weak state's task was to acquire the blandishments while avoiding the attached conditions, by the same process of punishment and reward.

The perceptions that each state had of the other's determination (i.e. will-power) to fulfil its threats or promises could be decisive in determining who prevailed. Thus if the weak state was expected to resist a threatened course of action with all its means, and accordingly the cost of imposing the superpower's preferences was perceived to be too high, the superpower might alter its policy without applying the sanctions. By the same token, if a weak state's threatened action was made credible by the intensity of interest which it was perceived to have in the outcome, then the cost of such action would have to be taken into account by the superpower and it would have to weigh it against the perceived benefits which it expected to acquire from a given policy. Conversely, if the superpower misperceived the determination of the weak state to resist its policy, and therefore miscalculated the costs and benefits of this policy, it might carry out its threats or promises at high cost to both, but with little

224. (continued) powers' scope of action. The Arab-Israeli conflict is an illustrative example...of the way the small powers may in fact lose most of what independence they have in foreign affairs". Yair Evron reached a contradictory conclusion: "The essential dynamic of international politics in the Middle East, however, is that the local powers are, and in all probability will remain, for better or for worse, masters of their own fate". If they had taken account of the dynamics imparted to the interaction between great and weak by their conduct of relations on other levels, they would have found that in some cases they were both right, while in other cases they were both wrong. See Mathisen, The Functions of Small States in the Strategies of the Great Powers, p. 237; Evron, The Middle East: Nations, Super Powers and Wars, p. 227.
gain for itself. By the same token, if the weak state's threats or promises lacked credibility, because of a perceived weakness of will, then it might have to carry out its threatened or promised action to ensure that its interests and its determination were not discounted in the future.

Thus, in the interaction between the weak and the great, the state which was more capable and more willing to absorb the costs of punishment and/or forgo the inducements of compliant behaviour, would prevail. If this contest were merely one between the respective resources of the great and the weak, then the great would invariably prevail. But because it was not always an unequal contest of pure strength and weakness, because the weak often possessed resources which, in terms of their contingent value to the great, could increase their strength, and because they often possessed stronger will-power than the great to apply their available means, the weak could well prevail. In other words, the client was on some occasions more capable and willing than its patron to absorb the costs of a particular course of action, which it preferred, and to forgo the benefits of another course of action, which its patron might prefer; accordingly, on those occasions, it was able to resist the policy of its patron.

That at least is the theory of weak power resistance. Whether, and in what circumstances, Israel and Egypt actually did prevail over their patrons depended, as we shall now see, on their awareness of the value of the resources at their disposal, and their determination and skill in employing these resources in the cause of resistance.

225. Thus the Soviet Union misperceived Sadat's will to resist its policy of limiting arms supplies and was accordingly forced to pay the humiliating price of expulsion and the deterioration of its position of influence in Egypt. On the other hand, Israel's determination to resist any encroachment of its rights during the 1967 crisis was correctly perceived by President Johnson and therefore the United States did not attempt to impose a compromise on Israeli claims to freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba.

226. Thus Sadat's threats of war were not taken seriously by his Soviet patron or by his Israeli and American adversaries, because he was perceived to lack will-power (as well as the means) and it was therefore necessary to go to war, in part to restore Egypt's credibility in its relations with the superpowers. On the other hand, Israel's willingness to develop and even use nuclear weapons as a last resort if its survival were in jeopardy is regarded as a highly credible threat by the United States and is one reason why the United States was, and is, prepared to supply Israel with a conventional deterrent.
Periods of relative regional stability, such as existed in the Middle East between 1962 and 1967, provided opportunities for weak states to consolidate or diversify their sources of patronage as the superpowers attempted to build or cement their positions of regional influence. Fortunate indeed, in such a situation, was the protégé which, because of its regional influence and its geo-strategic position, attracted the competitive attention of both superpowers. For such a weak state the opportunities for increasing its support by balancing its patrons were manifold. However, a state which had little to offer the superpowers in terms of regional importance or strategic assets was likely to find itself at the end of the queue, receiving minor dispensation in proportion to its global and regional importance. Like the poor boy making good, such a state could only rely on its adeptness, its flexibility, its will to survive, the good fortune it acquired from events outside its control, and the 'good intentions' of the dominant powers, were it to succeed in securing patronage and resisting the influence which came with it.

At the beginning of the 1960s, Israel was very much at the end of the queue. The unremitting hostility of its Arab neighbours, which had come to be supported by the Soviet Union, had ensured the isolation of this weak state and made it dependent on the West for arms, aid and trade to secure its continued survival and well-being. While Israel had managed to gain French patronage after their cooperation during the Suez Crisis, there were now growing indications that this relationship would not last, as France began to negotiate with the FLN in Algeria and sought to improve its relations with the Arab states from which it had been estranged since 1956. The United States had also sought to reestablish relations with Egypt and was particularly concerned to avoid any new commitments to Israel, especially arms supplies, while there was some prospect that this effort might succeed. In the words of one of the practitioners of American policy in the Middle East at that time, "Israel needs to be viewed as a
problem rather than an interest". ¹ As Golda Meir, then Israel's Foreign Minister, had noted:

The rest of the world seems to be grouped into blocs that have sprung up because geography and history have combined to give common interests to their people. But our neighbours - and natural allies - don't want to have anything to do with us, and we really belong nowhere and to no one, except to ourselves.²

However, by the end of 1967 Israel appeared to have achieved a reversal in its fortunes. The Jewish state had secured an open arms supply relationship with the United States, had gained American acquiescence in its June pre-emption which had resulted in the devastating defeat of the Arab armies, and further, had ensured Washington's support for continued retention of territories occupied during the 1967 war, until such time as a negotiated peace settlement could be achieved. The isolated state of 1960 had become the dominant military power in the Middle East and in the process had secured the political and military backing of the United States, the overwhelming support of Western public opinion, and the recognition of a significant number of developed and developing states. In short, Israel had transcended its regional isolation and in the process had secured superpower patronage.³

Israel's surprising effectiveness in cementing its relationship with the United States cannot be explained by simply pointing to the unique relationship which existed between the Jewish state and its American patron, for in the decade of the fifties, when the same moral commitment to Israel's survival existed in Washington, American decision-makers not only rejected Israel's repeated requests for a security guarantee, but also refused to supply it with arms. When Israel launched a preventive war against Egypt in 1956 (with the support of France and Britain - America's allies) the United States demonstrated its opposition by pressuring Israel to withdraw from Sinai. Rather, the

¹. J.S. Badeau, *The American Approach to the Arab World*, p. 27.
explanation for the reversal of Israel's fortunes in the sixties lies in its ability, during the period from 1962 to 1967, to exploit the changes in the global and regional environments by skilful utilisation of its contingent importance to the United States. Israel thereby translated an American moral commitment to its survival into tangible support for its policies and actions. The examination of this bargaining process requires a division of American-Israeli relations into two areas: i) the arms supply relationship in the period before the Six Day War; ii) American acquiescence in Israel's pre-emption and its subsequent political support for Israeli conditions for a settlement. In both areas it will be demonstrated that the combination of careful cultivation of relations, adept use of both tacit and explicit bargaining levers, and the application of will-power enabled Israel to exploit favourable changes in the global and regional environment, to acquire American support and then to resist American influence.

II. THE HAWK MISSILE NEGOTIATIONS

In the face of Arab hostility and refusal to recognise the legitimacy of the Jewish state, Israel's decision-makers had made security the first priority in foreign policy. Having failed to gain a security guarantee from either the United States or Britain in the aftermath of the War of Independence, and having failed to encourage the great powers to maintain their arms embargo, Israel sought an open supply relationship with at least one Western power to maintain a balance of arms with its Arab neighbours. Both the United States and Britain sought to avoid identification in Arab eyes as arms purveyors to the Jewish state, and this concern became particularly acute following the Soviet-Egyptian arms deal of 1955, since such an identification was believed likely to encourage further Soviet 'penetration' in the Arab world. Despite this reluctance Israel's security policy remained clear: an arms balance would have to be maintained, sufficient to deter the Arab states from attacking Israel and, if deterrence should fail, sufficient to defeat the Arab armies in war. The Soviet-Egyptian arms deal


seriously challenged this policy by raising the spectre of an arms balance tipped in Egypt's favour, following the introduction of IL-28 bombers and JS-12 tanks. However, Israel was fortunate indeed to find that the interests of France in North Africa and its opposition to Nasser in Egypt provided that country with the necessary incentive to enter into a tacit alliance with the Jewish state, supplying advanced interceptors as well as air defence during the 1956 war. This war, fought by Israel in part to prevent the tipping of the arms balance against it, served to cement the Israeli-French arms relationship, which led to technical co-operation in the development of Israel's arms industry and its nuclear potential.6

Meanwhile, Dulles' post-war diplomacy, under the rubric of the Eisenhower Doctrine, enabled the United States to avoid becoming a major arms supplier to the Middle East region by encouraging pro-Western Arab states (Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon) to purchase their arms in London. On the question of arms supplies to Israel, American policy had now become formalised: the United States would seek to avoid becoming a major arms supplier to the region. However, the policy had undergone a subtle change as a result of the events of 1956-7. First, the United States had adopted a policy of bolstering and protecting the status quo in the region - gone were the attempts to establish a Western defence alliance in the region, replaced by a policy of containment of the influence of the Soviet Union. Secondly, Washington had come to understand that Israeli fears of an imbalance in the arms equilibrium could lead to preventive war and the consequent disruption of the status quo.7 Thus, while the United States refused to supply Israel with arms, it encouraged Israel to seek arms elsewhere, encouraged its allies to supply Israel with arms and in effect became the supplier of last resort if this proved to be the only way to prevent a shift in the arms balance and a disruption of the status quo.8 The challenge for Israel was to turn this policy of sympathetic detachment into an open commitment to Israel's security through the supply of American arms as the guarantee of Israel's deterrent strength. By the 1960's this

7. Abba Eban has noted that following the 1956 experience the United States had become more aware of the danger of neglecting Israel's security needs: "Washington now understood that embattled solitude was not the condition most likely to breed patient counsel in Israel". Abba Eban, My Country, p. 156
challenge had assumed some urgency for Nasser had embarked on a long-term policy of strengthening Egypt's arsenal and this forced Israel to seek a secure source for advanced and highly sophisticated weapons.\(^9\)

By 1962 developments in the Middle East arms race had made the time opportune for an Israeli approach to Washington to alter its supply policy. A request for Hawk air-defence missiles had apparently been placed by Ben-Gurion on his first visit to the United States in 1960. At the time the United States had encouraged him to seek arms from West Germany and, as we shall see, an agreement was struck with Chancellor Adenauer, who met Ben-Gurion in New York during this visit, for the supply of helicopters, submarines, anti-aircraft guns, anti-tank rockets, transport planes, spare parts, training devices and other equipment. However, West Germany could not supply an air defence system and for this Ben-Gurion turned to Washington.\(^10\) He apparently received no more than an assurance that the request would be looked at "with sympathy" as well as a "positive feeling" that Washington might provide development loan funds to assist Israel in paying for its arms purchases.\(^11\) However, in 1961 the revelation that both Egypt and Israel were embarking on missiles programmes raised fears in Washington that a new and dangerous arms race was developing which the United States would have to control.

Nasser had initiated a programme to produce ground-to-ground missiles, employing German scientists to tap the expertise they had acquired in developing missiles during World War II.\(^12\) Israel had been developing its missile technology with French assistance in strict secrecy, but the publicity given to Nasser's programme apparently forced a demonstration of Israel's capabilities as a means of maintaining the credibility of Israel's deterrent posture. Thus in July 1961 the Shavit II unguided, meteorological rocket was launched in the presence of the Prime Minister, Deputy Defence Minister, the chief of Staff and other high ranking security

\(^10\) Shimon Peres, who as Deputy Defence Minister negotiated Israel's arms deals, notes that the British Bloodhound was available but was not considered suitable for Israel's requirements. See Peres, op.cit., p. 77; Hurewitz, op.cit., p. 477; Safran, From War to War, pp. 167-169.
Washington's fears about these developments were compounded by Ben-Gurion's announcement, in December 1960, that what Washington had been led to believe was a textile factory was actually a large nuclear reactor under construction at Dimona in the Negev desert. In the light of this announcement it was thought that the development of missiles could well be part of a nuclear weapons programme in Israel, matched by a similar development in Egypt. Although Ben-Gurion had declared that the development of the 24-megawatt nuclear reactor was intended for peaceful purposes only, the elaborate secrecy surrounding its construction and the fact that no details of the agreement with France for its construction had been released, created serious suspicions in Washington. President Kennedy put pressure on Ben-Gurion to allow the United States to inspect the Dimona site in order to determine whether a separation plant was being constructed. Ben Gurion resisted this pressure, but after meeting with Kennedy in New York in May 1961, he agreed to regular inspections, the first of which took place shortly afterwards.

Apparently, the pressure Kennedy applied included a suggestion that refusal to allow inspection might lead to the termination of American assistance in the nuclear field. Ben-Gurion's biographer states that the Kennedy administration used "sharply-worded notes, veiled threats and allusions to measures that the United States might employ", but it later became known that Washington had also used some positive...

13. The military significance of this meteorological rocket was emphasised by Peres when he told the press that the development of rockets had been given high priority because of "grave defence problems". A government spokesman declared at the time that the rocket was meant to forestall the Egyptian missile programme. See Simcha Flapan, "Nuclear Power in the Middle East - the Critical Years", New Outlook, Volume 17, No. 8, October 1974, pp. 35-36; Fuad Jabber, Israel and Nuclear Weapons, London, 1971, p. 95.

14. Ben-Gurion announced that the 24,000 kilowatt thermal reactor was scheduled to be completed in 1964. Ambassador Harman gave the Eisenhower Administration official assurances that Israel was not engaged in nuclear weapons production. See Jabber, ibid., pp. 34-5.

15. The recruitment of German scientists had raised the suspicion that Nasser was also developing weapons of mass destruction. While Egypt did not have the capability to produce nuclear weapons it may have been developing chemical and bacteriological warfare. Flapan, op.cit., p. 36.

16. Ben-Gurion permitted a second visit in the summer of 1962. The American inspectors reported that no separation plant had been erected at Dimona. See Aubrey Hodes, Dialogue with Ishmael, Israel's Future in the Middle East, New York, 1968, pp. 231-2.

17. The U.S. had helped construct a much smaller reactor at Nahal Soreq which, although it could not provide enough plutonium for the construction of a bomb, was important in training Israel's nuclear scientists. See Jabber, Chapter 2.

inducements as a *quid pro quo* for inspection. Kennedy had sent Mike Feldman, his special advisor on the Middle East, to Israel in early 1961 to pledge both the protection of the Sixth Fleet in the event of Arab aggression and the supply of Hawk missiles in return for inspection rights at Dimona. 19

It is unlikely that Ben-Gurion actually bargained for the Hawk missiles in exchange for a commitment not to go nuclear since there was, at the time, a reluctance to use Israel's nuclear potential as a bargaining lever because of its intrinsic importance. Moreover it appears that a decision not to build a separation plant, at that stage, had already been taken because the Cabinet had been persuaded to concentrate on building a conventional deterrent which would require a large investment in armour and air-power. Accordingly, the Government reduced expenditure on nuclear development. 20 Nevertheless, the connection, however tacit, between Israel's ability to defend itself with conventional arms, and its ability therefore to forgo nuclear development, had been established in the minds of American decision-makers and this had paved the way for the conclusion of the Hawk missile deal. 21

The American decision, in principle, to supply Israel with the Hawks was not announced until September 17, 1962, even though the commitment appears to have been made in 1961. 22 The Kennedy administration's desire to be seen to adhere to the principle of not becoming a major supplier of arms to Middle East states was clearly the reason for the delay. A new approach to the Arab world, with its focus on economic aid to Egypt, had been launched and the administration, particularly the State Department, wished to avoid jeopardising the development of these relations by becoming identified as Israel's protector and the opponent of the forces of change and modernisation in the Arab world. 23

22. Apart from Feldman's confirmation of the offer of the Hawks, Peres states that he went to Washington in early 1963 to follow-up Ben-Gurion's request for these missiles. See Peres, *op.cit.*, p. 93.
23. Hurewitz, *op.cit.*, p. 478; see Chapter 3 below for a detailed analysis of this approach.
However, developments in the arms race provided both the justification and the necessity for publicly announcing the decision in 1962. By that time the Soviet Union had supplied Egypt with TU-16 medium bombers, more IL-24 light bombers, and MiG-21 supersonic interceptors. Although Israel had purchased French Mirage III and Super Mystere interceptors to counter these supplies, the numerical superiority of the Egyptian deployment not only gave it the prospect of air superiority over the battlefield, but also provided a limited strategic threat to Israel. The United States recognised that the balance would have to be redressed and that the safest way of doing so was to supply Israel with purely defensive weapons. Moreover it could claim justification for selling Israel the Hawks "to achieve a balance again and to maintain an admittedly precarious peace in the area". Further justification was provided by the launching of Egypt's first test missile on July 21, 1962. Shortly before the administration announced its Hawk decision Kennedy sent a message to Nasser which noted that the firing of the missile "was bound to accelerate the arms race" and informed him of the decision to supply Israel with a missile-defence system. Heikal, Nasser's confidant, notes that this manoeuvre tied Nasser's hands and prevented him from protesting the arrangement.

The public outcry in Israel over Egypt's missile development also made it necessary to announce publicly the Hawk missile decision since the Kennedy administration apparently feared that the anxiety of Israelis might force the government to change its plans for nuclear development. The symbolic importance of American missiles would serve to allay Israeli concern while undercutting any justification that the government might have for proceeding with a nuclear weapons programme.


27. See Simcha Flapan, "Nuclear Power in the Middle East", New Outlook, Volume 17, No. 6, July, 1974, pp. 46-54, for the public outcry in Israel. Ambassador Harman noted that the "symbolic imagery" of the missiles was important. The New York Times report of the announcement noted that although Hawks were designed for use against aircraft the U.S. army had proved that they were effective against offensive missiles, Interview with Abraham Harman and, New York Times, loc.cit.
This fear also found expression in Kennedy's request, at the same time as he informed Nasser of the Hawk decision, to pledge that Egypt would not seek atomic weapons and that he allow American inspection of Egypt's nuclear reactor. Since Egypt's reactor was clearly too small to produce weapons-grade plutonium in the necessary quantities (except over a long period of time), it seems fair to assume that the request for inspection was designed as a further means for allaying Israeli fears, as well as a *quid pro quo* for American inspection of Dimona.

Washington's unpublicised actions in 1962 were also designed to strengthen Israel's confidence in its ability to maintain a conventional deterrent against Arab hostility. Ezer Weizmann, then commander of the Israel Air Force, claims that Kennedy had declared that the United States was prepared to sell Israel "as many batteries of Hawks as you need". Moreover, American development loans to Israel were boosted from $16 million in 1961 to $45 million in 1962 as indirect assistance to pay for the arms deal. And as further assurance, Feldman's earlier commitment of the protection of the Sixth Fleet was reinforced by a Presidential assurance given to Foreign Minister Meir that "the United States was, in effect, Israel's 'ally', joined to her in a relationship of special intimacy".

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28. Heikal, *op.cit.*, p. 208. Nasser's account of these requests puts their date at the end of 1963 rather than at the end of 1962. Either one of them has his dates wrong or the request was repeated in 1963. However it is clear from statements made by Kennedy and Harriman that representations had been made in Cairo on the issue of nuclear weapons well before the end of 1963. See "President Nasser's Address on the Eve of the Thirteenth Anniversary of the Egyptian Revolution", *Arab Political Documents*, 1965, Beirut (n.d.), pp. 276-7; "Reply by President Kennedy to a Question Asked at a News Conference, April 3, 1963", and "Address by the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs [Harriman], October 26, 1963", in *American Foreign Policy, Current Documents*, 1963, Washington D.C., 1966, pp. 568 and 580.


30. These loans were repayable over ten years at an interest rate of 1-21/2%. A similar loan was made in 1963 to provide funds for Hawk purchases and for the training of personnel. *Near East Report*, Volume VII, 1963, pp. 26 and 55; Interview with Avraham Harman.

From a position of detachment in the face of an accelerating arms race during the Eisenhower administration, Washington had reversed its policy, had become a significant, if not major, source of arms supplies for the Jewish state, and had given tangible assurances of American support for its survival. Thus the long-term political and military significance of the Hawk deal should not be underestimated, even though the missile was a strictly defensive weapon and not very important to Israel's military strategy of preemptive war. As Weizmann notes, "the first time that an American president decided to sell arms to Israel was, without doubt, a breakthrough of the first magnitude". Its political significance lay in the fact that the pre-eminent superpower was now overtly supporting Israel's defence with supersonic weapons which had not previously been supplied to a nation outside the Western military alliances. Its military significance lay in the fact that the verbal principle of American support for a military balance in the Middle East had been converted into a tangible demonstration of its willingness to counter Russian shipments of sophisticated weapons to the region. Moreover, Israel had demonstrated that it could secure access to advanced and highly sophisticated weaponry, not available from its traditional sources of supply, to match Egypt's development of missiles and its deployment of front-line Soviet equipment.

In explaining this turn-around in American policy we have emphasised the role of Israel's nuclear development, the emerging missile race, and the Soviet escalation of the arms race as decisive factors which worked in Israel's favour. These levers were complemented by two other sources of leverage inherent in Israel's relationship with the United States. First, America's support for Israel's existence assumed greater importance during Kennedy's administration because the President "believed strongly

32. Weizmann apparently argued that Israel should purchase only a minimum number of batteries since Israel would attack first and therefore needed offensive not defensive weapons. Weizmann, op.cit., p. 185; cf. Edward Luttwak and Dan Horowitz, The Israeli Army, London, 1975, pp. 198-9.

33. Ibid., p. 184. Peres, who was reluctant to seek arms from the United States, preferring to depend on Europe, agreed with Weizmann's judgement that the deal constituted a breakthrough in the American embargo. See Peres, op.cit., p. 99.

34. Crosbie, loc.cit.; Weizmann, op.cit., p. 184; Interview with Avraham Harman.
in America's moral commitment to Israeli security". Golda Meir has described how she explained to Kennedy that Israel "desperately needed arms", for, she argued, were Israel again to lose its sovereignty the Jews of the world would no longer be able to retain their identity - this time it would be lost forever. Kennedy is said to have replied solemnly: "I understand, Mrs Meir. Don't worry. Nothing will happen to Israel."

If Kennedy's moral commitment to Israel was important in the Hawk decision, so too was his concern for the Jewish vote in the 1962 Congressional elections. In the 1960 campaign Kennedy had gained the largest proportion of Jewish votes of any presidential candidate, but historically Congressional voting had not been much affected by the popularity of the president. The administration needed extra Democrats in the Congress and the Jewish vote therefore assumed greater importance than it had in Kennedy's own campaign. Thus just as the administration backed away from the Johnson plan for settling the Palestinian refugees, partly because of its unpopularity amongst American Jews, so too did it ensure that the leaders of Jewish organisations were informed of the Hawk decision before it was publicly announced in September 1962.

Just how important these two factors were in the calculus of the Hawk decision cannot be ascertained but it is clear that they reinforced the strategic arguments in favour of supplying the weapons.

It is likely that the State Department opposed the decision on the grounds that it would jeopardise the administration's new approach to Egypt. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Kitchen tended to confirm this in testimony to Congress in 1967:

First, the overriding consideration was for the United States not to be identified as a heavy or principal supplier to either of the antagonists in a potential conflict. Second, we wanted to maintain as much suasion as we could in the Arab countries. We felt that would have been decreased if we had become a large single source supplier to Israel.38

Peres also states that on his visit to Washington in 1963 to finalise the arrangements for the purchase of the missiles, he experienced bureaucratic hold-ups and made no headway until the President, Robert Kennedy and Mike Feldman intervened to clear away the State Department's objections.39 Thus strategic arguments alone might not have been sufficient to secure the Hawks for Israel had they not been reinforced by the desire in the White House to sell the missiles to Israel.

The conclusion of the Hawk missile deal, accompanied as it was by economic assistance and verbal assurances about the constancy of American support, represented a triumph for Israel's security policy. It was the first overt American arms commitment since the creation of the Jewish state. As such it illustrated the interplay of Israel's intrinsic resources (its capability to develop missile and nuclear technologies), with contingent events beyond Israel's control (the Soviet provision of a limited strategic option to Egypt and Egypt's own development of missiles), and with factors derived from Israel's support within the American polity (the President's belief in the "special relationship" between the United States and Israel, the support of his advisors in the White House and the role of the Jewish vote in the 1962 Congressional elections). Thus, although Israel had some tough negotiating to do in New York and Washington, these other factors made the task much easier and enabled Israel to overcome the blockage in the State Department. The American policy of "supplier of last resort" had been converted into a tangible arms deal.

However, the United States stressed that the sale of Hawks was an exception to its policy of not becoming a major supplier of arms to the region and Israel was told to continue to seek its arms in


Europe. Thus the challenge to Israel's leadership now became to convert this "once-only" deal into an open and continuous relationship; to transform American policy from that of "supplier of last resort" to that of supporter of Israel's deterrent strength.

III. ESHKOL'S QUEST FOR AMERICAN ARMS

The U.S. State Department had found it relatively easy to neutralise the impact of the Hawk sale on American relations with the Arab world. Nevertheless, it had a significant stake in ensuring that further deals of this kind were avoided and especially in ensuring that the United States did not become identified as the major source of arms for the Jewish state. The pursuit of the national interest had long been regarded as the preserve of the State Department; it was the role of the White House and Congress to concern themselves with domestic pressure in favour of particular foreign policies. While State did not ignore domestic realities, it saw as its role the articulation of the general national interest as a counter to what it regarded as the parochial interests of domestic pressure groups. In the Middle East it was clear to the State Department that America's national interests lay in the cultivation of relations with the Arab world because of its strategic and economic importance; as far as State was concerned, support for Israel only hindered the pursuit of these interests. The fact that American public opinion called for the preservation of the Jewish state, and that both the President and Congress responded to this attitude, created a problem for "Foggy Bottom" in its articulation of what it regarded as the pure national interest - a problem which could not be eliminated while the Arab-Israeli conflict continued, but it was hoped could be either neutralised or restricted in its impact on American foreign policy.


41. An excellent example of the State Department view at the time was given by Ambassador Badeau upon his return from service in Cairo: "It needs to be made clear both in Congress and in sections of the general public that the American commitment to Israel is limited...The basic consideration must always be what serves American interests in the Middle East. This principle is understood in policy-making circles in Washington and, in general, action accords with it. The difficulty lies in the sensitive domestic political situation...It is too much to expect that all politicians will resist the temptation to drag Israel into their election campaigns as a vote-catching device...but it would help if American policy decisions involving Israel could be kept out of election campaigns, thus underscoring their character as considered moves based upon American national interest and not merely election gestures". John S. Badeau, "U.S.A. and U.A.R. - A Crisis in Confidence", Foreign Affairs, Volume 43, 1965, p. 295, (emphasis in original).
This desire to neutralise the impact of domestic support for Israel had become crucial in the early sixties because of the opportunity, provided by an initiative from President Kennedy, to improve relations with the Arab world through a "new approach" to the forces of nationalism and modernisation in the region. Thus, in its attempt to build American influence in the Arab capitals, the State Department decided that the best way to deal with America's commitment to Israel was to place the Arab-Israeli conflict in the "ice-box" through an open recognition of the differences that existed between the Arab states and Washington and an emphasis on the areas of interest which both sides held in common - American assisted economic development leading to peaceful and stable evolution. Naturally arms sales to Israel were one sure way of removing the Arab-Israeli conflict from the "ice-box" and making it a salient point of divergence in relations with the Arab world, so the State Department could be counted on to oppose vehemently any new arms deals with Israel.

On the other hand, while the White House listened to the counsel of the diplomats, it also had to consider Congressional and public opinion, which strongly favoured tangible support for Israel's security. So there was a basic divergence between the interests and policies of the diplomats in the State Department and those of the politician-President in the White House. Herein lay the challenge to Israel in attempting to change American arms policy. Somehow Israeli leaders had to overcome the arguments of the State Department - that Israel should seek and could purchase its arms in Europe, and that the United States should remain the "supplier of last resort" in order not to interfere with the American approach to the Arab world. A sympathetic President and a supportive Congress were necessary but not, in this case, sufficient to overcome the 'elegant' arms embargo; Israel would have to present a convincing case that American arms were necessary for the maintenance of American interests in the region, thereby meeting the objections of the State Department.

During Ben-Gurion's long tenure as Prime Minister and Defence Minister this idea of securing an open arms relationship with the United States had not received much support because he believed that Europe could in fact meet Israel's requirements: Deputy Defence Minister Peres had indeed

42. This approach is analysed in detail in Chapter Three.
succeeded in securing arms from France, Britain and later West Germany. Although the Foreign Ministry under Sharett, and later Golda Meir, understood the political importance of receiving arms from the United States, Peres had the support of Ben-Gurion for covert arrangements with Europe. Taking advantage of French sympathies for the victims of Nazism and antagonism towards Nasser because of his support for the FLN in Algeria, Peres was able to secure French aircraft, particularly the supersonic Mirage, and French assistance in the development of Israel's nuclear and missile technology. Although it was a politically explosive issue, Peres and Ben-Gurion also took advantage of Germany's special responsibility to the Jewish state to secure weaponry gratis. Because Peres' opinions carried weight in Ben-Gurion's cabinets, his view became accepted: American friendship would be limited by its desire for "Arab sympathy", and by the dictates of its national interests. Further, he argued that while the Europeans were prepared to provide whatever was requested, if arms could be secured from the United States, they would come attached with political strings and attempts to supervise their use.

However, in June 1963 Ben-Gurion retired and was replaced by Levi Eshkol as Prime Minister and Defence Minister. Eshkol did not accept Peres' argument that Israel should seek closer ties with Europe and mount a drive to join the emerging European economic and defence communities. Sceptical of the constancy of French policy and more suspicious of the "new" Germany than his predecessor, Eshkol was aware that, if an open arms supply relationship with America could be secured, it would represent a greater and more reliable source of security for an Israel which now needed sophisticated arms to counter the supply of Soviet front-line equipment to Egypt and Syria. His Deputy Prime Minister, Abba Eban, was a strong proponent of the American axis because he well understood the special nature of the relationship. He argued that, unlike Israel's relations with Europe, "the American-Israel partnership owes more to historical affinities reaching back into the national experience of both peoples than to any transient conditions of political harmony or international expediency". Eshkol's Foreign Minister, Golda Meir, also

43. See Crosbie, A Tacit Alliance, Chapter VIII.
45. Cited in Brecher, ibid., p. 331.
supported a new approach to Washington, both because she viewed the United States as the most important source of support, and because she sought a new foreign policy orientation to undercut Peres' influence and to prevent Ben-Gurion's legacy from passing to the 'youngsters' (i.e. Peres and Dayan). Eshkol himself perceived the same advantage because of the threat which Ben-Gurion's technocratic disciples presented to his own tenure as Prime Minister. Thus Israel under Eshkol had decided, both for security and for domestic political reasons, to pursue relations with the United States, with the express purpose of gaining greater political and military support from this superpower patron.

Clearly Israeli determination would hardly constitute a sufficient reason for Washington to abandon its detached approach, but it would provide the will-power necessary to employ the various means of leverage at Israel's disposal, to capitalise on the underlying commonality of interests between the patron and its client, and to concentrate its efforts on surmounting the opposition of the State Department. In this regard, the leverage which Israel possessed stemmed not from its inherent strategic significance in the calculus of America's national interest, for that was small indeed, but rather from the contingent importance which its strategic position acquired from developments in the regional balance of power. These contingent factors enabled Israel to build, on the base of America's underlying commitment, an argument which the State Department was eventually unable to resist.

Perhaps the most important development in this process was the founding of the new, State Department engineered, approach to Egypt, already in evidence by the beginning of 1964. The argument that American assistance would encourage Nasser to concentrate on economic development sounded hollow indeed as he refused to withdraw his troops from Yemen, bombed Saudi Arabian villages, stirred-up trouble in Aden, Libya and Cyprus and raised the spectre of war with Israel. While the State Department continued to defend the approach, there was a growing

46. Under Ben Gurion, Peres had operated as "adjunct foreign minister" to the military establishments of Europe, bypassing Golda Meir and refusing to inform the Foreign Ministry of his negotiations. See ibid., Chapter 13; Amos Perlmutter, "The Ben-Gurion Legacy and its Challengers", Middle East Journal, Volume 22, No. 4, Autumn 1968, pp. 415-432.

sentiment in the Administration that stability might be better purchased by bolstering the strength of the 'conservative' Arab states and Israel - the status quo forces in the region. Since the Soviet Union appeared determined to continue its arming of Egypt and its exploitation of the tension created by pan-Arabism, and since Nasser appeared determined to use this support as a means for spreading his influence throughout the region, a policy of containment gained increasing support in Washington over the policy of encouraging Nasser to turn his attention away from foreign exploits to internal economic development. Thus, insofar as decision-makers in Washington might be prepared to see in Israel a force for stability and the containment of Nasser's influence, to that extent they would be receptive to Israel's requests for the weapons necessary to bolster its strength. Moreover, a strong Israel could serve the twofold purpose of deterring Egypt from attack, thereby helping to keep the Arab-Israeli conflict in the 'ice-box', and also of reducing the temptation for Israel to pre-empt through fear of the balance of power tipping against it. Israeli deterrence was not a popular concept in the State Department, but the tacit threat, that Israel might pre-empt and thus cause instability if it did not have sufficient strength to deter or absorb an Arab first-strike, represented a danger which the diplomats well understood, and wished to avoid.

Eshkol demonstrated his awareness of this leverage when he stated, in his first press conference:

...the best contribution the United States could make would be to take measures in order to prevent the creation of circumstances which may make a military attack on Israel possible.

He also adopted a policy of restraint towards the Arabs, which was admittedly aimed at encouraging more moderate attitudes in Arab capitals, but which also served to bolster Israel's image as a force contributing to stability in the region. Instead of pursuing Ben Gurion's policy of "massive retaliation" for guerrilla raids and border attacks, he held this

49. Thus in a State Department document which was drawn up in 1965 to explain American policy to the Egyptian Government the authors noted: "...the key to the shaky peace in the Near East, therefore, may lie only in preventing imbalances to categories of arms that might lead to pre-emptive strike..." Cited in Heikal, The Cairo Documents, p. 235.
policy in abeyance while seeking diplomatic support for Israel's territorial integrity.\textsuperscript{51} Insofar as arms supplies would strengthen Israel's perception of its own security and encourage continued moderation, a strong case could be made in Washington that meeting Israel's arms requests served America's interests in stability and tranquillity in the Middle East.

The Soviet Union's continued supply of weapons to its Arab clients provided a second source of contingent leverage for Israel. In June 1963 the Soviet Union concluded a new arms agreement with Egypt, whose value has been estimated at $500 million, and whose contents included further shipments of TU-16 medium bombers, MiG-21 supersonic interceptors and other aircraft, as well as large numbers of T-54B medium tanks. Similar but smaller deals were also concluded with Syria and Iraq.\textsuperscript{52} As we have already noted, Israel was able to counter the supply of supersonic aircraft and strategic bombers by its purchase of the French Mirage III and the American Hawk missiles. However, the Soviet decision to equip two Egyptian armored divisions with its front-line T-54 tanks meant a significant qualitative improvement in Egyptian ground forces and therefore lent credence to Israel's requests for tanks capable of matching this deployment. The leverage which Israel acquired over the United States as a result of this new injection of Soviet arms might not have been significant if a European tank had been rolling off the production lines, for the State Department could have again argued that Israel should acquire its arms from Europe. However, disagreements between the French and Germans at both the technical and political levels and a reduction in the German defence budget had delayed the production of a French-German tank, leaving the American Patton (M-48) tank as the only viable alternative.\textsuperscript{53}


\textsuperscript{52} See Glassman, \textit{Arms for the Arabs}, pp. 24-27; Safran, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 214 and 231; and John L. Sutton and Geoffrey Kemp, \textit{Arms to Developing Countries, 1945-1965}, Adelphi Papers, No. 28, October, 1966.

Thus, if Washington was committed to ensuring an arms balance between Israel and the Arabs, it would have to find a way to supply Israel with Pattons.

Moreover, in a more general sense, the Soviet arms deal gave Israel leverage over the State Department itself. This leverage arose as an indirect consequence of growing Congressional criticism of American aid to Egypt because of Nasser's 'trouble-making' in the region. By 1964 the State Department found itself defending aid to Egypt against Congressional charges that this assistance enabled Nasser to divert Egyptian resources to Soviet arms acquisitions. In mid-1963 amendments to the Foreign Assistance Act had been tabled in both Houses which called for an end to American assistance to nations acquiring Soviet weapons. In its final form the Foreign Assistance Act for 1963 contained a provision which required that all aid under this or any other Act be cut off to any country which the President determined had attacked or was preparing for aggression against the United States or any U.S. aid recipient; the sponsors made it clear that this provision was aimed at Egypt. In defence of the aid policy, the State Department argued that to deny aid would only tend to increase tension "without curbing the priorities which are given to military preparedness". State also sought to reassure Congress that "there is no question as to the reality and depth of the Department's attention to the integrity and security of Israel".

But were State to prove that its attention to Israel's security equalled its attention to Egypt's economic needs, it could not easily oppose Israel's acquisition of arms. If it opposed the suggestion of cutting economic assistance as a means of reducing Nasser's arms procurements it could

55. In tabling the amendment Senator Keating argued that "Congress certainly should reduce any aid programme for Nasser by at least the amount that Nasser feels able to splurge on Soviet equipment". *Near East Report*, Volume VII, 1963, pp. 59-60.
56. *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, Volume XIX, 1963. In proposing the provision Senator Greuning also made it clear that he expected the State Department to change its attitude towards Nasser, otherwise Congress would write the law "so that there will be no discretion and no argument", *Near East Report*, Volume VII, 1963, pp. 97-99.
not effectively oppose arms sales to Israel as a counter to Egypt's build-up; State could only hope that Israel's arms request would be met by the Europeans.

Further, Israel gained leverage with the United States as an indirect result of the impact of Soviet arms supplies on the inter-Arab conflict. The United States, in particular the State Department, had long felt the need to protect the 'conservative' states of Saudi Arabia and Jordan from the pressures of Nasser's pan-Arab nationalism and the need to prevent the spread of Soviet influence to these states through the proffering of Russian arms. Saudi Arabia, engaged in war with Egypt over Yemen, needed aircraft and missiles to defend itself from Egyptian bombing raids. Jordan, having joined the Egyptian-sponsored United Arab Command as a result of Arab summity, was under pressure to equip its army and air-force with Soviet weaponry, which was offered at cut-rate prices and which would be paid for by the UAC. Thus, were the United States to protect Saudi Arabia on the one hand, and enable Jordan to withstand Egyptian pressure to purchase Soviet equipment on the other, it would have to ensure that these states received arms from Western sources. Such action would indirectly create a further imbalance in the Arab-Israeli arms race since these weapons could also be directed against the Jewish state, so Israel could demand reciprocal treatment for its arms requests in order to maintain the balance. As we shall see, this contingent bargaining lever played an important role in Israel's acquisition of American tanks and Skyhawk tactical bombers.

All these contingent factors, which were, for the most part, outside the control of Israel, were enhanced by Eshkol's use of the nuclear option, an intrinsic Israeli resource, as a tacit bargaining lever. Despite Ben-Gurion's assurances that Israel's nuclear development was designed for peaceful purposes, Washington remained perturbed about this development for a number of reasons: i) if Israel went nuclear, or was suspected of doing so, Egypt might seek and acquire nuclear weapons, adding a dangerous

58. In the same State Department memorandum, the United States told Nasser: "Although the Arabs may not appreciate the danger, the alternative of Soviet arms in Jordan would mean a Soviet presence and influence in the area from which they had previously been excluded. Resultant dangers to stability of the entire Near East would threaten Arab as well as outside interests. The United States therefore decided it would sell arms to Jordan to prevent Soviet exploitation of the situation...", Heikal, op.cit., p. 236; Hurewitz, Middle East Politics, p. 483.
and perhaps uncontrollable dimension to the Middle East arms race; ii) if, in response to Israel's development of a nuclear option, Egypt gained either weapons or a nuclear guarantee from the Soviet Union, this would seriously undermine Washington's attempts to avoid polarisation between the superpowers in the Middle East; iii) since, as a result of mutual nuclear deterrence at the superpower level, both Moscow and Washington would be unlikely to become involved in nuclear war on behalf of their clients, nuclearisation of the Middle East would inhibit Washington's ability to compete for the allegiance of Soviet protégés, and would make its guarantees to its own protégés less credible; iv) a nuclear Israel would create doubts about the ability of the superpowers to control the spread of nuclear weapons, would reduce the credibility of a superpower umbrella and thereby would undercut Washington's role as guarantor of the independence of small nations, perhaps encouraging other states to seek a nuclear capability. 59

Eshkol seemed to understand the leverage which this concern could provide through linking non-development of Israeli nuclear weapons to the notion of conventional 'sufficiency'. However, the issue of nuclear deterrence, like the issue of where Israel should seek its conventional arms, created a divergence in the opinions of Cabinet members. Peres and Dayan argued that, given Israel's numerical inferiority, nuclear deterrence was essential for Israel's future independence and for effective deterrence of the Arabs. If Israel committed itself not to develop nuclear weapons then the deterrent effect of the nuclear option would be reduced. So, they argued, it was better to encourage Arab suspicions without actually going nuclear by maintaining ambiguity about Israel's intentions: "As long as their [the Arabs] aggressive policy is shrouded by clouds, we should not take the clouds away from our deterrent policy". 60


Eshkol, with the support of Allon and Eban, felt that the nuclear option should be used as a lever to bolster Israel's conventional deterrent, while maintaining a certain ambiguity about the future of nuclear development. Thus in 1965 Allon declared: "Israel will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East. May I add that Israel will not permit any of its Arab neighbours to start this destructive race". And in a formal policy statement in 1966 Eshkol reiterated:

...Israel does not have nuclear weapons and...will not be the first to introduce them into the region. He...who really wishes to take away from the people living in the Middle East the fear of the arms race...should work for general disarmament in the Middle East...while striking a reasonable balance...inclusive of bans on the introduction of nuclear weapons into our region.

By declaring that Israel would not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons, Eshkol could remove some of the anxieties of the United States and the Arab states. But, by suggesting that Israel would not be the second either, and that nuclear disarmament should be linked to conventional disarmament, he was able explicitly to link the issues of nuclear and conventional deterrence. As long as a "reasonable balance" in conventional arms was maintained in the Middle East, Israel would not feel the need to go nuclear, but should the balance be upset, or should Egypt acquire or develop nuclear weapons, then Israel would exercise its option. In this way Israel could exchange assurances about nuclear development for American guarantees of its conventional strength.

All these factors taken together ensured Israel a serious hearing in Washington for its arms requests. However they might have been worth far less as bargaining resources in negotiations had no basic American commitment to Israel's integrity existed. Without such a commitment the White House might have come to adopt State's view that Israel was a liability to its interests in the Arab world, rather than an asset in maintaining stability and containing Nasser's influence; without the commitment Washington might have been less interested in maintaining an arms balance between Israel and the Arabs. Israel's development of a nuclear option certainly endowed it with the ability to be a nuisance to

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both superpowers, but had there been no underlying American commitment it seems unlikely that the United States would have felt responsible for furnishing Israel with conventional 'sufficiency' to prevent it from going nuclear.

Moreover, this basic American commitment to Israel's survival increased in value with the accession of Johnson to the presidency and the notable decline of American influence in Egypt. Johnson's personal commitment to Israel can be dated back to his opposition in 1957, as Majority Leader in the Senate, to Eisenhower's threat of sanctions against Israel and to his support, at the same time, for American guarantees against the renewal of blockades and boycotts in exchange for Israel's withdrawal from Sinai. Kennedy had acted on his belief in the "special relationship" between Israel and the United States, but his support had been tempered to some extent by his desire to improve relations with Egypt. By the time Johnson became president this policy had begun to founder under the strain of Nasser's actions in Yemen, the buildup of Soviet arms in Egypt, and mounting Congressional criticism of the State Department approach.

Furthermore, the President's preoccupation with American involvement in Vietnam, during this period (from the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution of August 1964, to the escalating troop commitments and bombing raids of 1965 and 1966), may have served indirectly to reinforce his disposition towards more forthright support for Israel. After all, the principles which motivated his policy in South East Asia might equally be applied to the Middle East: the combatting of aggression; the containment of communism; the defence of threatened democracies; and the keeping of American commitments. Thus, as a democracy threatened by what was perceived to be Soviet-supported Egyptian aggression, and as a country to whose survival the United States was committed, Israel fitted President Johnson's Weltanschauung far better than its Arab adversaries. And since Johnson had, in this period, relied on the counsel of his advisers and friends on questions of foreign policy, he would have found strong reinforcement for his support for Israel from Vice-President Hubert Humphrey, Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs Eugene Rostow, United Nations Ambassador Arthur Goldberg, and Johnson's confidant, Justice Abe Fortas,

all of whom were staunch supporters of the Jewish state.  

Thus events in the regional and global environments, together with Israel's nuclear option and the support it could count on from the Johnson administration, provided this weak state with some important resources to use or draw upon in its negotiations with a patron which was predisposed to support its independence. As we shall now see, Israel was indeed able to benefit from all these factors in an ultimately successful effort to alter the arms supply policy of the United States by overcoming the opposition of the State Department.

An official invitation to visit Washington in June 1964 provided the opportunity for Eshkol to press Johnson for a change in American arms policy. Regional events since the conclusion of the Hawk deal in early 1963 had enabled Eshkol to prepare the ground well for his request. First, he was able to demonstrate Israel's interest in regional stability by referring, for the first time in many years, Syrian armistice violations to the United National Security Council rather than retaliating with force. Although the Security Council resolution criticising Syria was vetoed by the Soviet Union, Israel won praise from the United States for its moderation. The link between moderation and deterrent strength was then underlined indirectly by the introduction of a new cause of tension as a result of Israel's diversion of the Jordan Waters.

Since its inception the Israeli project had received the approval and support of the United States. However, the completion of the project in late 1963 aroused Arab enmity and precipitated an Arab summit decision to oppose the Israeli project by diverting the headwaters of the Jordan.


65. It was the first official visit by an Israeli Prime Minister — underlining Washington's greater preparedness to be associated with Israel, despite Arab objections. See Near East Report, Volume VIII, 1964, p. 51.

66. See Khouri, op.cit., pp. 444-5.

67. See Brecher, Decisions in Israeli Foreign Policy, Chapter 5.
river. Since the American administration regarded Israel's diversion as legitimate and the Arab plan as unwarranted interference, and since Washington lacked the means, or the will, to prevent the Syrian diversion, it was predisposed to favour Israeli deterrence of Arab action as the most appropriate means for reducing the tension. Moreover, the efficacy of this approach received confirmation in Nasser's repeated declarations that the Arabs were not in a strong enough position to challenge Israel's diversion.

Thus Washington could see in the combination of Israeli moderation and deterrent strength an effective way to keep the Arab-Israeli conflict in the 'ice-box': bolstering Israel's deterrent strength might, at the one time, discourage Arab hostility (expressed in the form of raids and water diversion projects), while encouraging continued Israeli moderation. If Israel could demonstrate its need for arms to maintain its deterrent strength and its moderation, Washington would have to view these arms requests with some sympathy. The rhetoric of Israel's decision-makers served to bolster this argument by constantly reiterating their desire for a peaceful settlement, arms control agreements and stability, and through constant warnings of their determination to deter Arab hostility.

The American perception of Israeli moderation and stability was reinforced by the concurrent perception of an irascible Nasser with revisionist aims in the Middle East. His refusal to withdraw Egyptian

68. See Chapter Three below.

69. Thus in a public response to Khrushchev's call for the peaceful settlement of disputes Eshkol suggested that all states in the Middle East should refrain from the threat or use of force, put an end to their belligerency and settle all disputes by negotiation, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report, (FBIS), 31 January, 1964. Golda Meir proposed full and absolute disarmament with mutual inspection, FBIS, 18 April, 1964. In his Independence Day speech Eshkol called for the maintenance of Israel's deterrent strength "so our enemies will not conceive the criminal idea that it is possible to provoke a war with Israel", and called on the great powers to compete in providing development assistance rather than in arms supplies, FBIS, 16 April, 1964. In a speech to the Histadrut he declared "any Middle Eastern country endangered by plotting from Cairo should know it will always find in Israel firm support for peace and stability in this region", FBIS, 26 April, 1964. Meanwhile Peres declared that Israel "must continue to strengthen itself in order to prevent a war...", FBIS, 22 April, 1964.
troops from Yemen, his attacks on American clients in the Arab world, his call for the closure of the American base in Libya, the belligerent content of many of his speeches, and his apparent rapprochement with the Soviet Union following Khrushchev's visit to Cairo in May 1964, raised serious doubts about Nasser's intentions and the validity of the new American approach to Egypt. Thus, for reasons external to Israel's relations with the United States, the Johnson administration began to place a higher contingent value on a strong and viable Israel, as one alternative means for dealing with Egypt, and containing both Nasser's influence and that of his Soviet patron. This altered attitude of the Johnson administration had been encouraged by continued Congressional criticism of American aid to Egypt. Meanwhile, influential Congressmen had been urging the Administration to maintain Israel's strength as an alternative to appeasing Nasser.  

Israel's nuclear option also played an important role in softening Washington's resistance to Eshkol's approach for arms. We have already noted that the link between conventional military strength and the ability to delay a nuclear decision was established, however tacitly, in Ben-Gurion's negotiations with Kennedy. We have also noted Eshkol's desire to make this linkage explicit by exchanging a commitment to freeze nuclear development for ample supplies of conventional weapons. Perhaps as a lead-up to the June negotiations, this policy was publicly communicated to Washington in December 1963 when Professor Yiftach, Scientific Director of the Defence Ministry's development programmes, declared that Israel had no intention of building a separation plant and was therefore not anxious to exercise Dimona's nuclear weapons option. Johnson responded, in February 1964, by offering American assistance in the development of nuclear desalination techniques. The American purpose appears to have been twofold: to encourage Israel to concentrate on peaceful uses for its  

70. The Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Thomas E. Morgan, declared in May 1964: "If that alternative (of cutting aid to Egypt) cannot be carried out, then manifestly the Administration should consider the second alternative - make certain that Israel has the arms to defend herself". Senator Hugh Scott called on President Johnson to "stop all aid to Egypt" and "to consider the possibility of providing military defence equipment to Israel - as we did in 1962 - to offset the dangerous advantage that both U.S. and Soviet aid has given Egypt". Addresses to the National Policy Conference of AIPAC, cited in Near East Report, Volume VIII, 1964, p. 39.  

71. See Kodes, Dialogue with Ishmael, p. 233.
nuclear technology, and to persuade Israel to place its nuclear reactors under IAEA inspection. So Washington was clearly prepared to offer Israel a quid pro quo for concessions on nuclear policy and this encouraged Eshkol to bargain for weapons in exchange for such concessions.

According to Peres, beyond the general diplomatic purpose of demonstrating the close ties between Israel and the United States, Eshkol set four objectives for his negotiations in Washington: an American declaration to support Israel in the event of an Arab attack; American tanks; an agreement on the nuclear desalination project; and support for the emigration of Soviet Jewry. It is not possible to establish just what role in the negotiations the various sources of leverage played, but the evidence suggests that they were all utilised with some degree of success. Eshkol argued the need for weapons to enable Israel to defend itself by pointing to the imbalance created by Soviet arms supplies to Egypt and Egypt's deployment of missiles. In negotiations with the Pentagon, Peres himself argued that the United States should openly support Israel's deterrent strength to prevent war:

I added, Israel was interested not only in American tanks but also in receiving them from the American source, with all its political implications, for this would add to our deterrent power. The direct supply by the United States would contribute to the avoidance of war, and not only to our ability to defend ourselves if war broke out.

72. In his speech Johnson emphasised that "the International Atomic Energy Agency will play a very vital part. In this way we will demonstrate the constructive meaning of man's mastery of the atom". Another purpose of this proposal might well have been to underline American support for the diversion of the Jordan waters: "We will pursue our common quest for water, for water should never divide man; it should unite them (sic). Water should never be a cause of war, it should always be a force for peace...", see Near East Report, Volume VIII, 1964, pp. 13-14.

73. Peres, David's Sling, p. 101.


75. Ibid., p.104. Eshkol put a similar argument in public, calling for an arms control agreement between the superpowers, but emphasising that in the absence of such agreements Israel had to strengthen her defensive capabilities in order to deter aggression. The purpose of Israel's policy was "not to win a war, but to prevent one, to keep pushing off the danger of explosion and gain time for the counsels of reason to prevail", see Near East Report, Volume VIII, 1964, p. 50.
Both in public and in his private talks, Eshkol stressed Israel's desire for peace and stability in the Middle East. He also emphasised Israel's unique status as a Jewish state in much the same terms as Golda Meir had in her discussions with Kennedy: "Israel was "not a state like other states, but a last refuge for her people", and Israel was "not afraid so much of losing a war as of losing a whole people".\footnote{Prittie, loc.cit.}

The nuclear option came into play when Johnson emphasised American opposition to the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East and asked Eshkol to place the Nahal Soreq reactor under IAEA inspection. On the first point Eshkol is said to have implied that nuclear weapons would only be developed "if Israel could not obtain conventional arms equivalent to Egypt's and felt it was being outstripped in the arms race".\footnote{Hodes, op.cit., p. 232.} He apparently gave further assurances that the Dimona reactor would not be used to produce weapons-grade plutonium and backed these up by agreeing to further and regular American inspections of this reactor.\footnote{Prittie, loc.cit.}

On the issue of IAEA inspection of Nahal Soreq, Eshkol was reluctant to agree, allegedly because of the possibility of discrimination against Israel in this international organisation. He was eventually persuaded by two American offers: an agreement to proceed with the nuclear desalination project and an American commitment to provide Israel with 40 kilogrammes of enriched uranium.\footnote{Prittie, loc.cit.}

Other outcomes demonstrated the strength of Israel's bargaining position in the negotiations. While Israel did not gain a public American commitment to its defence, Eshkol did receive Johnson's assurance that the United States "stands four square behind Israel", that it would not remain idle were Israel attacked and that this was a "solemn and serious commitment".\footnote{Prittie, loc.cit.} The United States also agreed to help Israel get Patton

\footnote{Prittie, loc.cit.}

\footnote{Hodes, op.cit., p. 235; cf. Simcha Flapan, "Israel's attitude towards the NPT", in SIPRI, Nuclear Proliferation Problems, Stockholm, 1974, p. 281.}

\footnote{Hodes, ibid., p. 232.}

\footnote{Peres, op.cit., pp. 105-6; Jabber, op.cit., p. 31. The fear of discrimination was based on the fact that the IAEA had its regional headquarters in Cairo. The inspection and uranium agreements were signed in 1966.}

\footnote{Peres, ibid., p. 103.}
tanks from West Germany and, if this failed, to supply the tanks directly. MacNamara is said to have promised personal attention to this problem, emphasising that it was a promise he intended to keep. Harriman briefed Eshkol and Peres on America's ability to intervene in regional conflicts, a move designed to emphasise that Johnson's assurances were backed by the presence of the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean. In this regard, Eshkol later revealed that his request for arms was met by the argument: "Don't spend your money. We are here. The Sixth Fleet is here". The public speeches and declarations, although pitched at the usual level of generality, reinforced these American commitments. Johnson noted Israel's desire for peace while emphasising that the United States and Israel "share many common objectives", and expressing the hope that "this visit will result in increased understanding between us and a strengthening of our already cordial relations". The joint communique made Washington's position a little clearer:

[The President] reiterated to Prime Minister Eshkol U.S. support for the territorial integrity of all countries in the Near East and emphasised the firm opposition of the United States to aggression and the use of force or the threat of force against any country in the region.

Nevertheless, Israel had not received the arms which Eshkol had sought and his critics in Israel were quick to charge that he had been too moderate in his approach and too willing to accept American assurances instead of tangible arms supplies. However, the fact that Peres had accompanied Eshkol and participated in the negotiations was important in deflecting this criticism, for as Eban noted, Peres and his supporters could no longer underestimate "the significance and potentialities of our

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81. Schiff notes that the Pentagon concurred with the Israeli claim that the military balance was being tipped against Israel. Rather than supply offensive weapons directly, the Pentagon is said to have agreed to transfer 300 M-48 tanks from U.S. Army units based in Germany to the German government which would in turn hand them over to Israel. See Schiff, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

82. Peres, *op. cit.*

83. See "Interview with Prime Minister Levi Eshkol", *U.S. News and World Report*, 17 April, 1967, p. 76. Following the visit to Washington, Israeli officials noted that Eshkol had been convinced by Johnson that the United States had both the capacity and the will to intervene in a matter of hours in case of aggression in the Middle East. See *New York Times*, 24 June, 1964.


interests in the United States". 86 Peres himself admitted:

This Washington visit...did much to tear down America's 'elegant arms embargo' against Israel....it paved the way for the American supply of most types of weapons to Israel, and this enabled Israel to preserve the arms balance even after the arms embargo imposed by De Gaulle in the wake of the Six Day War.87

There were two reasons for Washington's refusal to supply Israel with tanks in June 1964. First, the United States did not accept Israel's arguments that Soviet arms supplies had yet created an imbalance against Israel; on the contrary, they argued, Israel enjoyed a clear advantage both because of the quality of its manpower and because Nasser's missile programme was experiencing serious difficulties and could not yet be regarded as a significant threat. Secondly, the Americans still felt it was better for Israel to obtain the tanks indirectly from West Germany. 88 However, by January 1965 events beyond Israel's control had intervened yet again and created the conditions which enabled Eshkol and Peres to build on the ground-work laid during the visit to Washington.

The most important event to affect Israel's arguments was West Germany's decision, in January 1965, to cease all shipments of arms to Israel. As we have already noted, the Germans began supplying Israel with significant quantities of arms in 1959. By 1963 an arrangement had been concluded whereby they agreed to provide Israel with a further $80 million worth of arms.89 From its inception the United States had encouraged this arrangement, with Kennedy himself intervening to allay the concern of the Social Democrats. In 1963 Peres had gained a commitment in principle from Adenauer and Strauss to supply Israel with second-hand Patton tanks until German tanks became available. When Erhardt replaced Adenauer the Germans became reluctant to fulfil the commitment because of the fear that the Arab states would retaliate by recognising East Germany. This fear was exacerbated by the publicity given to the arms deal in early 1964 and Erhardt decided to refer Israel to Washington for the tanks. As already noted, during Eshkol's visit to

89. Safran points out that both Israeli and Egyptian reports of the arms deal with West Germany suggested that $80 million was only a nominal figure and that the deal was worth a lot more than that. See Safran, From War to War, pp. 168-9.
Washington, the Americans argued that Israel should get the tanks from Germany. In the face of German reluctance, Peres devised a scheme whereby 150 tanks would be transferred from Germany to "another European country", overhauled and then shipped to Israel. The Germans, as a result of American pressure, agreed to this scheme and tanks began to arrive in Israel towards the end of 1964.  

In January 1965 Nasser launched an attack on Germany for supplying arms to Israel, announced that East Germany's Ulbricht had been invited to Cairo, and threatened to recognise East Germany if Bonn refused to halt its arms shipments. Fearing that the implementation of Nasser's threat would deal a blow to the Hallstein doctrine and might well be followed by other Arab states breaking off relations, Bonn announced, almost immediately, the suspension of arms shipments to Israel.  

By this time, the original arms deal was 80% complete; the most important items now outstanding were most of the tanks. Since the United States had pressured Germany into supplying the tanks and had assured Eshkol, during his visit to Washington, that the tanks would be supplied directly if they could not be obtained elsewhere, Israel appeared to have an irresistible case for American supply. Yet Eshkol still had to overcome State Department reluctance. The argument of the bureaucrats, that an open supply relationship with Israel would drive Egypt and other Arab states into Moscow's arms, polarising the Middle East and leaving Washington with only a pariah client, still carried weight in the White House. But again, events in the region weakened the State Department case and contributed to the eventual breakthrough.

First, relations with Nasser had by now reached a new low as a result of his abuse of the United States, the burning of the U.S. Library in Cairo, and his support for the Congo rebels. This precipitated Congressional action designed to bar aid to Egypt unless the President determined that it was in the national interest, while seriously undercutting the State Department argument that cultivation of Nasser was in the interests of the United States.  

Second, Lebanon and Syria had announced the commencement of their diversion projects which, if completed, would reduce the amount of water flowing into Israel and

91. See Chapter Three below and H. Speier, Crisis and Catharsis in the Middle East, 1965 - A Chapter of German Foreign Policy, Rand Corporation, P-3615, June, 1967,
which therefore provoked Israeli declarations that it would act to protect its vital interest in water. Unless some action were taken, a war over the Jordan waters could easily erupt, especially if, as a result of the cancellation of the German arms deal, Israel felt its long-term ability to defend itself would be jeopardised, and its short-term policy of moderation was paying no dividends.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, both Jordan and Saudi Arabia were seeking American arms - the former to resist Egyptian pressure to purchase Soviet arms, the latter to defend itself against Egyptian attack. Since the State Department believed that it was in America's interests to sell or supply arms to these 'moderate' Arab states, arms sales to Israel became attractive, if only because they provided justification to Congress, the American public and Israel for the purveying of arms to Saudi Arabia and to Jordan. Conversely, arms sales to the Arabs provided the State Department with the justification that the provision of arms to Israel was consistent with a policy of 'even-handedness', that the United States was not a partisan purveyor of arms but rather the balancer of Soviet arms supplies. Thus the deterioration in relations with Nasser, the fear

93. In January and February Eshkol, Meir, Peres and Chief-of-Staff Rabin all issued warnings that Israel would protect its vital interest in the Jordan waters. If its deterrent posture proved inadequate then "the strength necessary for success would be thrown into battle". Within Israel the debate centred around the question of when, rather than whether, Israel should retaliate against the Lebanese and Syrian diversion projects. Dayan argued that it should be as soon as they commenced work; Eshkol suggested that Israel could afford to wait until the projects were actually completed. See FBIS (Israel Home Service), 15, 19, 29 January, and 6, 7, 9 February 1965.


95. Thus Heikal notes: "Because Johnson was giving an Arab country arms as well as the Israelis, Nasser was being forced into a position where he could not protest. The Americans could claim they were being evenhanded, that they were giving weapons to both sides", The Cairo Documents, p. 236.

To prepare the case for arms sales to Israel the State Department, in an unprecedented move, announced that Saudi Arabia had received military assistance totalling $88 million, that Jordan had received $32.6 million, and that both were negotiating for further military assistance. See Near East Report, Volume IX, 1965, p. 21; New York Times, 28 February, 1965.

As Hurewitz points out: "...the United States tried to balance sales - not quantities but systems - to Israel and to these Arab states, and to announce the sales in such a way as to make clear that its policy was evenhanded. The announcement itself on each occasion seemed more important to the Department of State than the sales themselves", "Super Power Rivalry and the Arab-Israel Dispute: Involvement or Commitment?", in Confino and Shamir (eds.), The U.S.S.R. and the Middle East, p. 163.
that Israel might take precipitate action over the Jordan waters dispute if America reneged on its assurances, and the desire to supply Jordan and Saudi Arabia with arms, served to persuade the State Department to drop its opposition to arms sales to Israel.

In February 1965, immediately after Bonn's announcement of its decision to halt arms sales to "areas of tension", Averell Harriman was dispatched to Israel to negotiate an arms deal which would consummate Eshkol's efforts to obtain an open supply relationship with the United States. The negotiating team, comprising Eshkol, Meir, Peres and Chief-of-Staff Rabin, sensing that they were in a strong position, were determined to drive a hard bargain: they sought both an American commitment to supply the arms necessary for Israel's defence and its strategy of deterrence and, specifically, tanks and the other items not yet delivered by Germany, as well as further tanks and aircraft to counter Western supplies to Jordan and Soviet supplies to Egypt. Harriman appears to have been authorised to meet their requests on two conditions: Israel would not protest the supply of arms to Jordan; and Israel would have to give a commitment that it would not take action over the Jordan waters dispute until and unless the Arabs took more than their allocated share (i.e. 60%). For four days and nights the negotiators argued over the deal with the Israelis reluctant to agree to either of the conditions which Harriman sought, and even more reluctant to see Jordan receiving advanced American equipment because of the vulnerability of Israel's border with the Hashemite Kingdom. As Peres has subsequently noted: "Israel found it hard to reconcile herself to the idea of American arms deliveries to a country who might use them against Israel in a time of crisis". 96

Harriman apparently assured the Israelis that Hussein had committed himself never to send the tanks across the Jordan River. 97 He also argued that the issue was not whether or not Jordan should receive arms, but rather from whom was Hussein to get them - surely, he suggested, Israel


97. In 1976, Golda Meir revealed that she had objected to the sale of tanks to Jordan because "these tanks are on our threshold". Harriman is said to have replied: "But Hussein said these tanks will never cross the Jordan River", See Near East Report, Volume 20, No. 22, 1976.
would not want Russian arms in Jordan? So the deal was finally struck: Israel would receive 150 M-48 tanks, and the other outstanding items in the German agreement. In response to the Israeli request for tactical bombers to bolster its deterrent strength, Harriman suggested that Israeli negotiators should put their case to the Pentagon and that it would be treated with sympathy in Washington.

Harriman apparently also gave Eshkol an assurance that the United States would continue to supply Israel with the arms necessary for its defence. This assurance was publicly affirmed by Secretary of State Rusk in a press conference given while Harriman was conducting the negotiations in Israel. Rusk stated that it was the continuing policy of the United States to help maintain a military balance of power in the Middle East between Israel and the Arab states.

98. Peres, op.cit. Eshkol later explained, rather facetiously; "In fact the Americans had no need to ask us whether they should give those tanks [to Jordan] or not...they are not yet our satellite. Of course, they did not want us to cause an outcry and make protests. The President himself said: "If Eshkol says we should not give tanks to Husayn, but instead should send him to graze in foreign pastures - to receive tanks from Nasser or from Russia through Nasser - then we shall not give tanks to the Jordanians...": Davar, 24 January, 1969, cited in Quandt, United States Policy in the Middle East, p. 47 fn.

99. This deal remained secret until February 1966 when the State Department announced that it had sold tanks to Israel. The announcement was prompted by publicity given to the supply of tanks to Jordan and demonstrated the State Department's use of arms sales to one side of the Arab-Israeli conflict as justification for supplies to the other side. In explaining the sale, the State Department also pointed to the need to correct the arms imbalance created by "massive" shipments of Soviet arms to Egypt, Syria and Iraq. See "U.S. Reveals Sale of Patton Tanks to Israeli Army", New York Times, 6 February, 1966.

100. Weizmann, On Eagles' Wings, p. 262.


In return, Israel apparently agreed not to protest the supply of American equipment to Jordan, and Eshkol gave some kind of assurance that Israel would take military action against the Arab states over their diversion projects "only if the Arabs took more than their share of the Jordan's waters, as allocated by the Johnston Plan". While Eshkol publicly declared that "no strings" had been attached to the arms deal, the absence of Israeli criticism when the Jordanian deals were announced, and the care taken to prevent Syrian border incidents from escalating to full scale war, demonstrated Israel's adherence to these commitments.

On the American side of the bargain, in February 1966 a further deal was concluded in Washington, expressing America's intention to provide Israel with 48 Skyhawk (A-4) tactical bombers by November 1967. Although the tanks had been important both in strengthening Israel's defence and opening the doors of America's arsenal, the Skyhawks were even more significant for Israel's relationship with the United States. For the first time Washington had agreed to supply Israel with strictly offensive weapons, designed specifically to bolster Israel's deterrent strength rather than its defence. Although justified as a counter to the supply of Russian MIG 21s to Egypt, Syria and Iraq, British Lightnings to Saudia

103. Prittie, loc.cit. The first assurance was strictly adhered to. When the State Department confirmed that the U.S. was supplying tanks to Jordan, Mrs Meir responded by assuring Knesset members that the balance of power would not tip against Israel and that the government would take "all steps necessary in order to safeguard, nurture and even enhance the deterrent strength of the Israel Defence Forces", New York Times, 30 December 1965. When the State Department announced the sale of F-104 fighter bombers to Jordan, the Government of Israel issued a statement declaring that it would maintain the arms balance and was "fully confident" that it would be able to maintain "an effective deterrent", New York Times, 3 April, 1966.


105. Washington did not register any public protest over Israel's retaliation against Syrian bombardments, partly because they were strictly limited actions, partly because, having failed to get U.N. action when Israel took its complaints to the Security Council, Washington could not offer a viable alternative to Israeli retaliation, and partly because its own policy of reprisals in Vietnam made it difficult, it not hypocritical, to criticise Israel. In the main, Israel used its tanks in these actions to neutralise Syrian positions and to hit the diversion equipment. This obviated the need to employ artillery or the Air Force, both of which would have aggravated the chances of the incident leading to open war. Instead, the IDF pursued a policy of "locally restricted incidents". Apparently the Syrians were not sure whether their equipment had been destroyed by accident or deliberately. See Teveth, The Tanks of Tammuz, London, 1970 (Sphere Books Edition), pp. 84-5.
Arabia and American F-104s to Jordan, the sale of the A-4s to Israel was the first time Washington had agreed to sell strike, as opposed to fighter, aircraft to a country in the Middle East.  

Ezer Weizmann, the commander of the Israel Air Force, had persuaded the Pentagon of Israel's requirements in November 1965, using as his main argument the need to bolster Israel's deterrent strength as a way to ensure that Israel would not have to pre-empt an Arab attack. He told his American counterparts:

...the weaker we were, meaning the more arms we lacked, the greater would be our inclination to launch a pre-emptive strike against our enemies. The stronger we were the less inclined we would be to do so.

He argued that, because Israel could not hope to intercept the sophisticated aircraft now in the Egyptian and Syrian arsenals, if they attacked Israeli targets, the IAF required "a plane whose range permitted it to penetrate deep into enemy territory" as a means for deterring such attack. The Pentagon accepted this argument and, in return, demanded only that Israel agree to restrict its use of American economic aid to purchase other military equipment. Yet again the State Department opposed the sale because it feared that the slight improvement in relations with Nasser through 1965 would be jeopardised, but it only succeeded in ensuring that the deal would be kept a secret. Clearly Israel's arguments had struck a responsive chord in the White House because the President


107. Weizmann, op.cit., p. 262. Aiming high, Weizmann asked for sixty-five Skyhawks and forty-five Phantoms. On the latter, he was turned down cold.


109. New York Times, loc.cit. In testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on May 11, 1966, Secretary of Defense McNamara outlined the conditions attached to the sale of the Skyhawks as "very restrictive and tended to limit the degree to which that nation could acquire military equipment, either through grant aid or through sale and purchase from us or any other nation". He also restated Israel's argument in general terms: "I think the greatest danger of a war would occur when one nation or one group of nations acquire so much power in relation to neighbouring countries that they had the capability and, because of age old conflict, the desire to carry out aggression against those nations", Near East Report, Volume X, 1966, p. 38.
overruled State Department objections, ordered the Pentagon to draw up an agreement for the sale of fifty Skyhawks and agreed to the sale in a meeting with Foreign Minister Eban in February 1966.  

With the announcement of the Skyhawk deal in May 1966, Israel could truly claim that it had achieved its aim of securing an open arms supply relationship with the United States. Not only that, it could feel secure in the knowledge that the Skyhawk deal also signified American acceptance of Israel's constant argument that it needed arms, not only sufficient to defend itself, but also sufficient to deter the Arabs from attacking. In other words, Washington had tacitly accepted what it would, four years later, make quite explicit: balance of power in the Middle East meant a balance tipped in Israel's favour so as to deter the Arabs from launching war. Thus, in mid-1966, Eban had good reason to hail the American-Israeli partnership in these fulsome terms:

We stand at a high point in the evolution of American-Israel friendship...President Johnson has contributed in abundant measure to the reinforcement of Israel's strength and spirit. He has inspired our confidence in the sincerity of the American commitment to Israel's security. He has shown a perceptive understanding of our need to develop our defensive strength.

Through adept and determined manipulation of circumstances which bolstered Israel's case in Washington, Eshkol had been able to overcome the arguments of the State Department and build on the Administration's underlying commitment to secure an open and continuing arms supply from the United States. How different American policy now was to its stated position at the beginning of the sixties that it would not become a major arms supplier to the region. How forlorn was the State Department's aspiration of wooing Egypt and limiting American support for Israel. How surprising that a small state with so little intrinsic significance to America's national interest should become the recipient of such military aid from the United States.

Although it was certainly not appreciated at the time (especially in Israel, where Eshkol was being accused by Ben-Gurion and others of


111. See Part Three, Chapters Two and Three.

undermining Israel's security, but also in Egypt, where Israel's military strength was about to be seriously underestimated) this change in American policy was one of the signposts of a new polarisation in the Middle East which would have a profound effect on the conduct of the regional adversaries and their superpower patrons. The Six Day War of June 1967 was of course the catalyst for this polarisation, but the events of the preceding six years had cast the die and had ensured that, as long as it followed the fundamental precepts of successful client behaviour, Israel would retain American patronage. In this way, Israel was able to gain both American acquiescence for its pre-emptive strike on Egyptian airfields on 5 June, 1967, and American political support for its peace terms once it had won a devastating military victory. Israel's success in securing American patronage helped to ensure this dependent client state of a dominant position during the next six years of the Arab-Israeli conflict and, as such, must surely be regarded as a triumph of weak power politics.

PART TWO
CHAPTER TWO

ISRAEL'S DECISION TO PRE-EMPT IN 1967

I - THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF SUCCESSFUL CLIENT BEHAVIOUR

Having examined the intricacies of the American-Israeli relationship and having demonstrated how adept bargaining had resulted in a closer alignment between patron and client, it is necessary now to widen the focus of the analysis and paint, with broad brush strokes, the larger picture of the consequences, for both Israeli and American policies, of this closer alignment as the Middle East drifted unknowingly towards the 1967 war. In this way it will be possible to understand how Israel was able to persuade the United States of the necessity for pre-emption in June 1967 and how it was able accordingly to secure American support for its settlement terms after the war.

As analysed in part one of this dissertation, American policy had three purposes: i) the containment of Soviet influence in the Middle East; ii) the maintenance and promotion of American influence in the Arab world; iii) the support of the continued existence of the Jewish state of Israel. The Arab-Israeli conflict, and the related inter-Arab conflict, presented the greatest obstacles in the way of the attainment of these objectives, so, as the United States assumed a primary role in the region, it had attempted to settle these conflicts. During the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations the United States had made several attempts to settle the underlying grievances in both conflicts by assisting the Arab states in their economic development and by attempting to find equitable solutions to the problems of the Palestinian refugees and the division of the area's water resources. However, the failure of American settlement policy led to a realisation that the time was not yet opportune for solving the

1. The Johnston plan for the division of the Jordan waters will be discussed below (see pp. 205-206). In 1961 Dr Joseph E. Johnson was sent to the Middle East to negotiate a settlement of the Palestinian refugee problem. He recommended a plebiscite of the refugees to determine whether they wished to return or be resettled. Those who wished to return would be accommodated by Israel, while those who did not would be compensated, and resettled in Arab countries. The United States would finance the whole operation. Neither Israel nor the Arab states accepted the Johnson Plan, and it was quietly dropped by the Kennedy Administration in 1962.
underlying grievances. Instead, short-term measures were adopted to ensure, at the very least, some stability and tranquillity as the preconditions for an eventual settlement and, in the meantime, for the pursuit of American objectives. Thus, since a settlement appeared beyond reach, the second-best objective of stability, if achieved, would ensure maximum opportunity for the cultivation of American influence, minimum opportunity for Soviet 'trouble-making' and, consequently, would reduce risk of a superpower confrontation arising from their competitive diplomacy.

So, in pursuit of stability, the United States had sought to 'freeze' the Arab-Israeli conflict, and reduce the inter-Arab conflict, by encouraging Nasser to turn Egypt away from external adventures towards a concentration on internal economic development. As we shall see in the next chapter, both internal and external pressures on Nasser made it impossible for him to conform to this American expectation and caused the collapse of this 'conflict reduction' approach. Consequently, the United States began to adopt a balance of power approach as a more appropriate means of stabilising the two conflicts; Washington sought to balance the growing power of the 'revisionist' forces (the Soviet Union and its Arab clients - Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Yemen) by bolstering the status quo forces in the region (Israel and the conservative Arab states of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and Lebanon). To maintain the balance of power between the conservative and radical Arab states, the United States placed greater emphasis on strengthening the internal legitimacy of the conservative regimes than on improving their defensive capabilities, for radicalisation (i.e. Nasserisation) was more likely to result from internal disruption than from external attack. However, to maintain the balance of power between Israel and its Arab adversaries the United States found it necessary to strengthen Israel's ability to deter Egypt from attacking. Hence, as we have already observed, Israel's closer alignment with the United States and Washington's growing acceptance of Israel's strategy of deterrence. Yet Washington could hardly lose sight of the fact that its interest was not in deterrence per se, but rather in the stability which Israeli deterrence would help preserve.

2. Janice Stein has noted that patrons can play an important role in the process of reducing conflicts by creating an environment which facilitates negotiations. The American approach to Egypt in the early 1960s is a good example of this role, for the United States was attempting to induce Egyptian behaviour which would have facilitated, in the longer term, a settlement. See Janice Gross Stein, "War Termination and Conflict Reduction or, How Wars Should End", Jerusalem Journal of International Relations, Volume 1, No. 1, Fall, 1975, pp. 1-27.
On the other hand, Israel's policy towards the conflict was based not on the desire for stability *per se*, but on the desire to prevent, by deterrence if possible, by compulsion if necessary, any Arab infringement upon its vital interests – its territorial integrity, its freedom of navigation, its fair share of the area's water resources and its right to live in peace. Thus Israel's policy was not always compatible with America's desire for stability because, if deterrence failed to prevent *fedayeen* incursions, Arab diversion of the Jordan waters, Syrian bombardments, Egyptian restriction of Israel's freedom of navigation or an all-out Arab attack, then Israel would feel it necessary to resort to force to compel the Arabs to desist from these activities and this would inevitably exacerbate tension and cause instability.

Now, as a result of Israel's newfound American alignment, when deterrence changed to compulsion, and caused instability, it also caused conflict and strain in relations between patron and client because of the divergence in their respective policies. Were Israel to ensure that this divergence did not lead to a reduction in the military, economic and political support of its now most important patron, it had to find some way of reducing the dissonance, either by adjusting its policy to American preferences, or by convincing Washington that its long-term interests were better served by some short-term instability.

On the other hand, were the United States to ensure that its new military support for Israel's deterrent strength would not be used by Israel for compulsive purposes if deterrence failed, it would have to pursue its own methods of preventing Arab infringement of Israeli rights, while attempting to impose restrictions on the use of Israeli force. With these purposes in mind the United States had demanded, during the arms negotiations in early 1965, a commitment from Israel that it would not use force against the Arab states until and unless they took more than their fair share of the Jordan waters. Following this, the United States launched a diplomatic effort to persuade the Arab states to desist from their diversion projects. On the issues of *fedayeen* incursions and Syrian bombardments, the United States urged Israel to refer its grievances to the United Nations where the United States attempted to get the Security Council to deal with the problem rather than have Israel resort to its policy of retaliation.

3. See above, page 139, footnote 103.
Now Israel learned, as a result of interaction with the United States on these issues, that although the United States sought commitments from Israel, the closer alignment of patron and client involved the United States in reciprocal commitments to its protégé. In other words, if Israel heeded American pressure and refrained from military action, it made the United States responsible for finding its own remedy to the Arab incursions. As long as the United States recognised that it had a responsibility, either to solve the problem or to remove its causes, it would act accordingly; and if it failed to provide a remedy, then it could not easily oppose Israeli action to deal with the situation on its own. Thus, Israel discovered that it could reduce the dissonance of divergent policies if it first obliged Washington to seek a solution to the problem by heeding American advice and delaying military action, and then allowed Washington time to learn that American diplomacy was ineffective in dealing with the problem. Once such a realisation dawned on American decision-makers they would find it difficult to oppose Israel’s use of compulsive force, especially if such action was preferable to a more forceful American policy which might jeopardise American relations with the Arab world or risk superpower confrontation.

In this way, after American diplomacy had failed to prevent Syria from implementing its diversion project, Israel was able to retaliate against Syrian bombardments by destroying the diversion equipment and forcing the movement of the project site further and further away from the border and the headwaters of the Banias river. The United States did not protest this retaliation. As a result, in September 1965 the Arab summit at Casablanca decided to confine work on the diversion projects to areas

4. U.S. diplomacy may have succeeded in getting Nasser to oppose the diversification project. Following a visit from Assistant Secretary of State Philips Talbot, in which the diversion was discussed, Nasser announced that the Arabs were neither capable of attacking Israel, nor capable of protecting the diversion projects from Israeli retaliation, and recommended that the diversion work therefore be postponed until such time as it could be defended. Syria paid no heed to Nasser’s advice, so Israel took the opportunity of Syrian attacks on Israeli tractors working in the demilitarised zone to hit the Syrian diversion project. On 17 March 1965 Israel destroyed Syrian earth-moving equipment at the headwaters of the Banias river. The Syrians moved their project to a new site, 4 kilometres away from the border, which was shelled on 13 May 1965. The Syrians again moved the site further east to Almagor, which was shelled in August 1965 and again in July 1966. In March 1967, Chief-of-Staff Rabin observed that if Syria continued its project at the present rate "they might be able to finish the job in ten or twenty years..." See Middle East Record, 1967, Shiloah Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Jerusalem, 1971, p. 165; N. Bar-Yaacov, The Israeli-Syrian Armistice: Problems of Implementation, 1949-1966, Jerusalem, 1967, pp. 145-7; and Fred J. Khouri, "The Policy of Retaliation in Arab-Israeli Relations", Middle East Journal, Volume 20, No. 4, Autumn 1966, pp. 450-1.
beyond the reach of Israeli retaliation until Arab strength was sufficient to protect operations closer to the border; the summit estimated that it would require four years to reach the necessary stage of military preparedness so, effectively, the diversion was postponed until the distant future. The combination of Israel's deterrent strength and its limited use of compulsive force had prevented the diversion of the Jordan river and neutralised one cause of tension and instability. Because the United States had been unable to offer a viable alternative remedy, it acquiesced in Israel's use of force and discovered that its interests in stability were served, despite short-term disruptions.

Again, in dealing with fedayeen activity, Israel was able to gain American acquiescence for its retaliation against Syria. At first, Israel ignored American advice to submit its complaints to the United Nations Security Council instead of retaliating with force, and found itself censured in that forum by American diplomats. However, by submitting its case to the Security Council in October 1966, it was able to neutralise American opposition to its subsequent action because a mild resolution censuring Syrian activities was vetoed by the Soviet Union. After this debacle Washington apparently informed Israel that it would not intervene again if terror incidents recurred, and would instead let events take their course.

In this process of persuading Washington to accept Israel's use of compulsion to bolster its deterrent posture, Eshkol made one serious mistake which actually reinforced the policy of delaying military action until the United States proved incapable of redressing the situation by diplomatic means. Under increasing pressure from his critics to respond more vigorously to the fedayeen raids, in November 1966 he ordered an attack on the Jordanian village of Samu. The raiding forces were engaged by a Jordanian unit and bitter fighting left 18 Jordanians dead and 54 wounded. On the West Bank widespread unrest ensued and Hussein's regime was seriously


6. In dealing with the diversion, Israel strictly limited its use of force so that the incidents did not escalate into a wider conflict. This reduced American trepidation at Israeli retaliation. See Teveth, *The Tanks of Tammuz*, pp. 84-5.


8. David Kimche and Dan Bawly, *The Sandstorm*, London, 1968, pp. 52-3. The United States was not really in a position to criticise Israel since it was pursuing a much more forthright policy of retaliation in Vietnam against Vietcong incursions.
threatened. This instability was precisely what the United States had sought to avoid, especially in Jordan, which was probably America's most loyal client in the Arab world. Consequently the United States publicly deplored the action and supported a UN resolution, passed with only one abstention, which condemned Israel and recommended consideration of economic sanctions in the event of further Israeli raids. U.S. Ambassador Goldberg stated that Washington regarded the raid as a "clear violation of the solemn obligations undertaken by Israel", and rejected Israeli explanations because "this large-scale military action cannot be justified, explained away, or excused by the incidents which preceded it...". Moreover, the Israeli raid had other repercussions which must have caused further consternation in Israel. The United States announced that it was considering Jordanian requests for further arms; it airlifted defensive equipment to Jordan and expedited the delivery of already contracted F-104s. Further, American ambassadors in some Middle Eastern posts took the opportunity to recommend the suspension of arms shipments to Israel and Eshkol found it necessary to assure Washington that American tanks had not been used in the Samu raid.

As proof that Israel had learned the lesson of successful client behaviour, in January 1967 it deferred military action and instead referred Syrian and fedayeen attacks to the Security Council, while appealing to President Johnson and other Heads of State to halt Syrian "aggression". In response to an appeal from U Thant, Israel agreed to a cease-fire on the Syrian front and announced its willingness to attend meetings of the Israel-Syrian Mixed Armistice Commission. Again in March, Israel complained to the Security Council about sabotage and terrorism, thereby emphasising its willingness to try diplomacy before using force. When these actions naturally failed to prevent Syria from sponsoring its "popular war of liberation" and Israel finally retaliated on April 7, shooting down six Syrian MIGs in the process, the United States expressed little concern. With Hussein weathering the storm in Jordan, with no possibility of deterring Syria by diplomatic pressure, and with Israel directing its

retaliation only against Damascus, a Soviet client and the real source of support for the fedayeen, the United States had little reason to be dissatisfied with Israel's strategy. In fact Washington seemed to have good reason, at least on the surface, to feel that tension and instability would be confined to the Israel-Syrian border. For the time being Washington's strategy of stability had converged with Israel's combination of deterrence and compulsion. There seemed little reason to doubt the claims of Israeli leaders that Israel's strength would ensure a few more years of relative tranquillity, especially because Nasser had declared time and again that the Arabs were not strong enough to attack Israel.

Nevertheless Israel's experience in persuading Washington to accept use of force against Syria had proved instructive, and when, in May 1967, both the United States and Israel faced an unexpected and dangerous crisis, consequent upon Nasser's remilitarisation of Sinai and his closure of the Straits of Tiran, decision-makers in Tel Aviv were aware that Washington would only acquiesce in Israel's resort to force if it were first unable to redress the situation by diplomatic means.

However, the proponents of this course of action in Tel Aviv had to dissuade those in the decision-making elite who called for immediate military action, were Israel to pursue diplomacy before resorting to force. At first this task did not prove too difficult, but as the pressure of the Arab military build-up on Israel's borders increased the arguments of the proponents of a pre-emptive strike gained greater and finally unanimous support in the Israeli Cabinet. However, by this time it had become clear to decision-makers in Washington that their diplomatic efforts could not redress the situation and that Israeli military action was preferable to America's use of force. Thus Israel was able to secure American acquiescence in its decision to pre-empt, starting a war which, initially, the United States had vehemently opposed, but the outcome of which it steadfastly supported.

14. Washington ignored repeated warnings from its Cairo Embassy that Nasser was being forced into a corner and would have to escalate the conflict in Yemen, in Libya, or with Israel. Interview with Lucius D. Battle, Ambassador to Cairo (1964-1967); Assistant Secretary for Near East and South Asian Affairs (1967-1968), Washington, June, 1976. Cf. David G. Nes, The Sinai Accord, The United States and Egypt (1952-1975), International Symposium on October 1973 War, Cairo University, October, 1975.

15. See below, Chapter Four.
II - ISRAEL'S FIRST REACTION TO THE MAY-JUNE 1967 CRISIS

For Israel the 1967 crisis began when Nasser announced, on the evening of May 22, the closure of the Straits of Tiran to shipping headed for the Israeli port of Eilat. Israel's decision-makers had reacted calmly to the build-up of events which led to this announcement, confident in their belief that Israel's deterrent strength would prevent war for at least another few years. Nasser's remilitarisation of Sinai was therefore interpreted as 'grandstanding' and although precautions were taken, it was felt that the tension would soon subside. The removal of the UNEF buffer from the Egyptian-Israeli border was regarded with some trepidation, but the closure of the Straits precipitated the crisis, for Israel had made it clear that such action would be treated as a *casus belli* and now Nasser was evidently intent upon challenging Israel's resolve to protect what it regarded as its rights. On the morning of 23 May Israel's Ministerial Defence Committee met to decide on an appropriate response to Nasser's actions now that Israel's doctrine of deterrence had failed.

From the outset of the crisis a military response was regarded as necessary for two reasons: i) the Egyptian mobilisation, combined as it was with growing Arab military backing and belligerent statements, appeared to be in preparation for an all-out attack on Israel, aimed, as Nasser declared, at "avenging the events of 1948 as well as 1956"; ii) even if this attack did not eventuate in the short term, the continued presence of large-scale Egyptian deployments on Israel's border and the continued blockade of the port of Eilat would be proof of Israel's failure to deter an infringement of its rights and security.

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While it soon became evident that Nasser intended, in the immediate term at least, to await an Israeli first strike and allow it to incur the onus of starting the war, Israel would have to force the demilitarisation of Sinai and the reopening of the Straits were it to prevent the balance of power, as perceived by the regional powers and the superpowers alike, from tipping in favour of the Arabs. Were Nasser allowed to get away with his fait accompli the balance of power would have been perceived to tip in his favour as surely as a successful attempt to place Soviet missiles in Cuba would have been perceived as a tipping of the superpower balance in favour of the Soviet Union. For Israel would have proved itself too weak-willed to protect its vital interest, while Egypt might have been encouraged to take bolder steps, gradually diminishing Israel's power and undermining the country's existence. As Abba Eban subsequently noted:

...any submission by Israel to a blockade of the Straits of Tiran... would mean the collapse of Israel's deterrent power, for there was no issue in which Israel had pledged its honour in more irrevocable terms...Unless a stand were made here, nobody in the Arab world, and few people beyond it, would ever again believe in Israel's power to resist and therefore survive. 17

However, while acceptance of Nasser's fait accompli was impossible given its long-term implications for Israel's survival, precipitate military action by Israel carried with it the certainty of American opposition and the condemnation of world opinion. While few of Israel's decision-makers placed any faith in diplomatic attempts to get Nasser to back down, a period of delay would demonstrate the ineffectiveness of diplomacy and win support for unilateral Israeli action from the United States and other Western opinion, in the same way as Israel had succeeded in gaining American


17. Eban, p. 204.
support for its use of force in the period from 1965 to 1967. The problem in deferring action to ensure American support was that with every day of waiting the risk of a coordinated two-front Arab attack increased markedly. Were Israel confident that it could successfully resist such an attack with acceptable costs in terms of casualties, the argument for diplomatic action might have persuaded all. However, it was clear that to await the Arab attack was believed to be fraught with danger and unacceptable costs for a number of important reasons: the TAF was concentrated on a small number of virtually unprotected airfields vulnerable to an Egyptian air strike; Arab armies, attacking from the West Bank, could cut-off Jerusalem and sever the country in two by advancing the meagre ten miles between the Jordanian border and the sea; the vulnerability of Israel's population centres and strategic targets, which were small in number and concentrated in nature; while the Arab armies consisted of regulars who could be permanently deployed on Israel's borders, Israel's citizen army could not remain mobilised for long periods without serious disruption to the economy; and, an Arab first strike would inevitably take a higher toll in Israeli casualties.

Thus, even though the proponents of diplomatic action could invoke the experience of prior years, when, as we have seen, diplomacy had reduced American opposition to Israel's use of force, in this new crisis, with the stakes of far greater consequence, the diplomatic option was handicapped because of the premium on time were Israel's military response to be pre-emptive. Nevertheless, the advocates of diplomatic action also possessed some persuasive arguments and in the Ministerial Defence Committee meeting of 23 May they carried the day, primarily because the discussion focussed on an appropriate response to Nasser's closure of the Straits rather than on the military threat posed by the deployment of Egyptian troops in Sinai.19

18. For the perceptions of Israel's decision-makers see Brecher, pp. 331-355. His content analysis of the speeches of key decision-makers reveals that the most intense perception was that the survival of the state was in jeopardy and that immediate action was called for. However, the second-most intense perception, and it was almost equally intense as the first, was that the Western powers would do nothing and Israel must rely on its own strength. The third most intense perception was that Israel would lose the sympathy of world opinion if it acted before all efforts at a peaceful settlement had been exhausted. Although one should not overemphasise the importance of such analysis, it nevertheless supports the argument that while a military response was considered necessary, it was also felt that time would have to be allowed for diplomatic efforts to be exhausted and for the Western powers to realise that their action would not redress the situation, before Israel's decision-makers felt they could pre-empt.

In arguing that Israel had to concentrate on the politics of patronage before resorting to the politics of force, the advocates of diplomacy were able to invoke the bitter memory of 1956-7, when the United States had forced Israel to withdraw from Sinai in exchange for guarantees that the Straits would remain open.\(^{20}\) If Israel took precipitate action now, the United States might adopt the same attitude again—only this time the consequences were potentially far more serious. For, while the Soviet Union, as in the Suez Crisis, had again made it clear that it supported the Arabs, unlike in 1956, Britain and France could no longer be expected to come to the aid of Israel. This made American patronage crucial to balance Soviet support of the Arabs, as well as to ensure that in the event of an Israeli pre-emption it would be able to ratify its military victory with political success. This argument was reinforced by a letter which President Johnson had sent to Eshkol on May 17, urging restraint and consultation:

> I know that you and your people are having your patience tried to the limit by continuing incidents along your border. In this situation I would like to emphasise in the strongest terms the need to avoid any action on your side, which would add further to the violence and tension in your area. I urge the closest consultation between you and your principal friends. I am sure that you will understand that I cannot accept any responsibilities on behalf of the United States for situations which arise as the result of actions on which we are not consulted.\(^{21}\)

The pre-eminent advocate of diplomacy, Foreign Minister Eban, was able to cite both this letter, and a cable received from Washington while the Committee was deliberating, to bolster his case. The cable contained a formal request from the President to delay any action for 48 hours, and a repetition of his earlier warning that he would take no responsibility for action on which he was not consulted.\(^{22}\) On the other hand, Eban argued that Israel had strong cards to play in Washington by pointing to Dulles' written commitment of February 1957 to guarantee "free and innocent passage in the Gulf", as well as other solemn American commitments to Israel's integrity.\(^{23}\) Eban concluded: were Israel to ensure military

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23. Eban also cited Mrs Meir's speech to the U.N. General Assembly which declared Israel's right to freedom of navigation and which was drawn up after assurances of free passage had been received from the U.S., France, Britain and Canada, and every word of which had been checked in advance by Dulles. For the text of Dulles' *aide mémoire* see Draper, Appendix 1.
assistance in the event of a war, were it to redeem American pledges, were it to mobilise international opinion in support of its cause, and were it to ensure that the United States would not seek "to annul whatever Israel could achieve by itself", then it would have to pursue diplomacy before resorting to force, it would have to saddle the United States with the responsibility for making a choice between, either opening the Straits and forcing Nasser to back down, or acquiescing in Israel's pre-emptive redemption of its deterrent strength.²⁴

Perhaps surprisingly, only Moshe Carmel, the Transport Minister, argued for immediate military action and opposed Eban's desire to consult with the United States. He seems to have been acutely aware of the danger of an Arab first strike and therefore argued that such consultation would tie Israel's hands and prevent it from pre-empting.²⁵ Had Yigal Allon, the Minister for Labour and the public exponent of the strategy of pre-emption, been present at the Ministerial Defence Committee meeting, Carmel's arguments would have been bolstered. Allon seems to have immediately grasped the strategic import of Nasser's moves and to have decided that a pre-emptive strike (an "anticipatory counter-attack" was what he preferred to call it) was now the only means of reaction. He believed that diplomatic feelers would only invite the Western powers to exert pressure on Israel to exercise restraint and that therefore the time to explain Israel's position was "immediately after the war had started".²⁶ But Allon's views were not taken into account at this stage because he had not yet returned from a conference in the Soviet Union.²⁷ Dayan and Peres, although not in the Cabinet, were present at this meeting, along with other members of the opposition parties. They argued in favour of a 48 hour delay while Eban consulted with the Western powers, but they cautioned that it should only be 48 hours and that there should be no official commitment to the principle of prior consultations.²⁸

²⁴ Eban, p. 209; Brecher, p. 379; and Burdett, p. 245.
²⁵ Kimche and Bawly, pp. 139-140; Middle East Record, 1967. Commenting in 1972 on the 1967 crisis, Carmel remembered: "If...the enemy had succeeded in hitting our airfields and putting all, or some of them, out of operational use, our military situation would have immediately become very serious and very dangerous". Cited in Benjamin Geist, "A Question of Survival", International Journal, Volume XXVIII, No. 4, Autumn, 1973, pp. 634-5.
²⁷ Bar-Zohar reports the following conversation between Eshkol and Allon on May 25, after his return from the Soviet Union: Eshkol: "Yigal, what do you think?"; Allon: "We should go to war". Eshkol: "When?"; Allon: "Yesterday". P. 108.
²⁸ Brecher, p. 380; Bar-Zohar, p. 77.
Perhaps the decisive opinion which swung the meeting over to Eban's position, was that of the General Staff, who were surprisingly reticent with their advice and apparently did not exert pressure for military action. Rabin outlined the military strategy for reopening the Straits, but did not oppose a 48 hour delay. The IDF certainly could have used the time to complete its preparations, but it was more likely that the General Staff needed more time to assess the significance of Nasser's actions before such a weighty decision as war was recommended to the Cabinet. As Weizmann, then Head of General Staff Division, has observed:

If the government was groping in the dark, it was the General Staff that strengthened and reinforced its doubts, because it too was perplexed and confused, and didn't put things before the government clearly.

Thus, with only one strong opponent of diplomatic action, the Committee decided to postpone military action until Eban had consulted Johnson, Wilson and De Gaulle. The Foreign Minister departed for Washington, via Paris and London on May 24, to gain international support for Israel's right to freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba. Israel had decided to respond to Nasser's closure of the Straits by seeking international, but particularly American, support for its cause. The Cabinet had acceded to Washington's requests for consultation before taking military action. As a dependent client state, Israel had bowed to considerations of patronage before taking upon itself the responsibility of dealing with Nasser's actions. By stressing its readiness to fight, on the one hand, but its readiness to delay war, on the other, Israel could try to ensure that the United States would recognise its responsibilities to its client and would attempt to prevent war by redressing the situation. Once the United States realised that it could not fulfil its responsibilities, that it could not redress the situation, it would not be likely to seek to undo politically what Israel achieved on the battlefield. However, were Israel to adhere to these precepts of the politics of patronage, it would have to delay military action.

29. Brecher, p. 378. Accounts differ on this point with some observers arguing that the General Staff wanted immediate military action, while others maintained that the IDF needed the time to complete its preparations. Brecher cites his own interviews and later accounts as persuasive evidence for his claim that "there was no military pressure for immediate action". See Brecher, footnote 2, p. 378, and Lagueur, p. 142, Eban, p. 208, Middle East Record, p. 196, Draper, p. 88, Kimche and Bawley, p. 139 and Burdett, p. 245.

30. Weizmann, On Eagles' Wings, p. 211. After the May 23 meeting Rabin collapsed with nervous exhaustion; a sign of the doubts that existed in the mind of the Chief-of-Staff.
until the United States recognised its responsibilities and then accepted that Israeli force was preferable to American action aimed at the fulfilment of these responsibilities.

It is inherent in the nature of crises that time will be of the essence. This was particularly the case in the last days of May 1967 because, with each day of waiting, the perceived danger of an Arab first strike increased, strengthening the arguments of those in the Israeli Cabinet who favoured an immediate pre-emption. So Israel's attempt to secure American patronage in this crisis was severely handicapped by its urge to resort to force. Had the perceived costs of delaying the use of force outweighed the perceived benefits of American support for whatever ensued, the political outcome of the 1967 war might well have been very different, and much less favourable to Israel.

III - THE REACTION IN WASHINGTON

While Eban travelled to Washington, American decision-makers were considering three possible alternative courses of action: i) the reopening of the Straits by diplomatic means if possible or by means of a multilateral fleet if necessary; ii) a diplomatic compromise tantamount to Israel's acceptance of Nasser's action and Nasser's acceptance of freedom of navigation for all ships other than those flying an Israeli flag; iii) 'unleashing' Israel - i.e. allowing Israel to deal with the problem alone. 31

Those State Department officers with responsibility for the Near East favoured the second option because of their concern that either of the other two options would cause further polarisation and portray the United States as Israel's protector. They were mindful of the consequences of British and French action in 1956 and felt that if the United States attempted to open the Straits, the ensuing confrontation with Egypt would lead to the demise of America's already diminished influence in the Arab world. Keen to reassert American influence, they advised against the United States taking any overt action to support Israel or to open the Straits, and strove instead for a diplomatic compromise, suggesting at various stages that UNEF be positioned on the Israeli side of the border, that Israel was exaggerating the importance of Eilat, and that if Israel gave Nasser a way out he might agree to reopen the Straits at least to all ships other than

31. Draper, pp. 89-90.
those flying the Israeli flag. They seemed to believe that if this compromise failed, 'unleashing' Israel would be preferable to any American action on Israel's behalf, since Israel was expected to win the war and the United States could then reassert its position of influence in the Arab world by forcing Israel to withdraw.  

However, the locus of decision-making had shifted from the desks of the State Department to the Oval Office of the White House where Secretary of State Rusk, Under Secretary of State Eugene Rostow, Secretary of Defense McNamara and National Security Advisor Walt Rostow were advising the President. Rusk and Eugene Rostow opposed the State Department idea of compromise, because it might provide Nasser with a diplomatic victory. They viewed the decline of American relations with Nasser and the consolidation of Soviet influence in the Arab radical camp with considerable trepidation; a victory for Nasser could only strengthen the anti-American forces in the region. At the same time they wanted to avoid a war, partly because of the risk of superpower conflict and partly because they too were concerned with the polarisation of the Arab world such that the hitherto friendly 'conservative' Arab states would be forced to turn against the United States.

McNamara voiced the Pentagon's fear of military involvement in another region of the world while the United States was preoccupied with Vietnam. He opposed the use of American force to open the Straits of Tiran and favoured, instead, multilateral action to force Nasser to back down. He apparently told Johnson that if war broke out the Pentagon was sufficiently confident that Israel would win and therefore intervention would not be necessary. Thus it is reasonable to speculate that McNamara, espousing the military perspective, was not so opposed to unilateral action on the part of Israel. On the other hand, Walt Rostow was apparently persuaded by his brother that the idea of a multilateral fleet designed to test the blockade -- a suggestion the British had made a day earlier -- was a viable option and so he backed this action.

32. Bar-Zohar claims that some State Department officials "thought any concession justified as long as it did not call for an abandonment of basic policies". Others apparently argued that the U.S. should take "an objective attitude towards the conflict" which would take into account America's oil interests. See Bar-Zohar, pp. 56, 84, 161. Cf. Quandt, pp. 41-2

33. Quandt, p. 41; Rostow expounds on his anti-Soviet perspective in his "The Middle Eastern Crisis in the Perspective of World Politics", International Affairs, Volume 47, No. 2, 2 April, 1971.

34. Quandt, p. 42.

35. Interview with Townsend Hoopes, June, 1976.
Thus on May 23, in preparation for Eban's visit, these advisors drafted a joint memorandum for the President which advised that the United States was faced with two basic policy options given its commitment to Israel: i) permit Israel to deal with the problem on its own; ii) assume responsibility for opening the Straits. The advisors, at this stage, rejected the first option but it should be borne in mind that they were well aware of the danger that if they failed in their pursuit of the second option, the only alternative to a diplomatic victory for Nasser was the 'unleashing' of Israel. In support of the second option, they recommended that the United States pursue three steps: i) exhaust all possibilities of resolving the conflict in the United Nations; ii) sponsor a declaration to be signed by as many maritime powers as possible in support of freedom of navigation in the Straits; iii) if all else failed, use a multilateral fleet to test the blockade. 36

The President was predisposed to pursuing the second option. He recognised that the United States had a commitment to Israel, not only to preserve its integrity, but also to support its right to free passage through the Gulf of Aqaba. The deterioration in relations with Nasser's Egypt gave him little incentive to back a compromise solution, for he had little interest, either in preserving Nasser's diplomatic victory, or in helping him to save face. However, he did want to preserve stability and avoid a superpower confrontation and had therefore already taken steps to forestall war by urging Kosygin, Nasser and Eshkol to act with restraint. 37 Recognising the need to take effective action were he to prevent Israel from going to war over the blockade of the Straits, he was nevertheless preoccupied with the need for Congressional approval for any American or multilateral action to reopen the Straits because of the opposition he was encountering from Congress over his actions in Vietnam. 38

The House of Representatives seemed to favour action in support of Israel for 110 Congressmen had signed a statement drafted by Representative Cellar which declared:

36. Draper, pp. 89-90; Quandt, p. 42.
38. See Johnson, pp. 291-2.
We pledge the fullest support to measures which must be taken by the Administration to make our position unmistakably clear to those who are now bent on the destruction of Israel, that we are now prepared to take whatever action may be necessary to resist aggression against Israel and to preserve the peace.

However, the Senate was more cautious and divided in its expressions of support. The Majority and Minority Leaders both declared their support for multilateral action, with Senator Mansfield (Majority Leader) emphasising that "there should be no question of unilateral military involvement in the Near East". Senator Fulbright, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, declared that the only binding commitment of the United States was to support action in the United Nations. Although other Senators were more forthright in their support for Israel's rights, after Rusk conferred with the Foreign Relations Committee on 24 May, he reported to the President that, while there was general support for Israel's survival, there was opposition to unilateral action and a preference for multilateral action, hopefully through the United Nations.

Thus Johnson felt constrained by the need to secure Congressional support for any American action. Nevertheless, he recognised his responsibility to Israel and believed it necessary to publicly emphasise America's commitment to Israel's right of freedom of navigation by stating on 23 May:

The United States considers the Gulf to be an international waterway and feels that a blockade of Israeli shipping is illegal and potentially disastrous to the cause of peace...

To the leaders of all nations of the Near East, I wish to say what three American Presidents have said before me - that the United States is firmly committed to the support of the political independence and territorial integrity of all the nations of the area. (emphasis supplied).

40. Ibid.
41. Johnson, pp. 291-2. Bar-Zohar reports that the majority of Senators on the Foreign Relations Committee had "definitely pronounced against unilateral action on the part of the United States" (p.99). According to the Near East Report, the State Department had advised Senators "to speak softly and in terms of UN action", which, if true, would explain the caution of some Senators, normally forthright in their support for Israel. Newspaper editors were also apparently briefed by the State Department and told that in the event of war, the U.S. would probably suspend aid to both sides to maintain its evenhandedness (p. 43). This illustrates the point made in Part One about the ineffectiveness of the Jewish lobby during periods of crisis. The Senators preferred to listen to the State Department.
42. See "Statement by U.S. President Johnson Calling for Restraint in the
But he had accepted the advice of his counsellors, that the United States should pursue diplomatic and multilateral action to reopen the Straits. Were this action to have any chance of success Israel and Egypt would have to be restrained from taking precipitate action. His intelligence reports indicated that he "could be reasonably sure the Middle East would not explode", but once Eban had consulted with him, the Israeli Cabinet might well decide to go to war if it felt that the situation would not be redressed by American intervention. Clearly what he said to Eban would be decisive in preventing war immediately, but what the United States did about its now public commitment to Israel would be even more important in preserving stability over a longer period by removing the incentive for Israel to take pre-emptive action.

Given the President's disposition, Israel would obviously have to allow time for the United States to pursue its diplomacy, were it to gain American acquiescence in its pre-emption. Just as Washington had acquiesced in Israel's use of force over the Jordan waters dispute and Syrian border strife, after it proved unable to do anything to relieve these sources of tension, so too would the United States only support an Israeli pre-emption if its own efforts to redress the situation in Sinai proved worthless. Thus what was required of Israel now was patience and a demonstration of its willingness to resist Nasser's fait accompli. If Israel took precipitate action, it might find itself condemned by America, and if the White House perceived weakness in Israel's will to resist, it might take more seriously the State Department's proposal for a diplomatic compromise over Israel's right to free passage in the Gulf.

Given that the United States' primary interest lay in stability rather than the preservation of Israel's rights, it would only be convinced to forgo its interest in stability if it proved unable to preserve stability by its own actions and if Israel was prepared, in any case, to disrupt stability in order to preserve its rights. Thus, Eban's mission to Washington would only be successful if he convinced American decision-makers of the urgency of testing diplomatic action (thereby reducing the time during which Israel would have to exercise restraint), and of Israel's resolve to take matters into its own hands if this action failed.

42. (continued) Middle East, May 23, 1967", in International Documents on Palestine, 1967, Document 23, pp. 10-11. Bar-Zohar claims that domestic pressures played an important role in persuading the President to declare the blockade illegal. He cites pressures from congressmen, from the AFL-CIO, and from "one of Israel's most influential partisans" (pp. 84-86).

43. Johnson, p. 292.

44. Cf. Safran, p. 311.
Eban's task was made all the more difficult by the fact that, while en route to Washington, Israel's willingness to exercise restraint had been seriously undermined. For, in his absence, the advocates of immediate military action had been strengthened by the deployment of the Egyptian Fourth Armored Division in Sinai. It was now clear to the General Staff, and a growing number of Ministers, that the real problem for Israel was no longer the closure of the Straits but rather the challenge to Israel's deterrent strength, inherent in the remilitarisation of Sinai. The gravity of two problems was now impressed upon the minds of Israel's decision-makers: i) the longer Israel waited the greater the danger that Egypt might decide to strike first and the less the advantage of an Israeli first-strike as a result of the increased preparedness of the Arab military forces on its borders; ii) international action to force Nasser to back-down had become inappropriate because, if this pressure succeeded, Israel would appear to be the weak ward of the Western powers and the challenge to its deterrent strength would go unanswered. What the Israeli decision-makers failed to appreciate at this juncture was that, were they to secure American support for an Israeli pre-emption, they would have to risk an Egyptian first strike, they would have to accept the reduced effectiveness of an Israeli first strike, and they would have to wait and hope that international action would not succeed. Perhaps because they did not appreciate the complexities involved in securing American patronage, or rather, because they were preoccupied with the military treat, they made Eban's mission immensely more difficult and, to some extent, undermined the belief in Washington that Israel was prepared to take matters into its own hands, thereby undermining Israel's leverage with the United States.

Eshkol's concern with the remilitarisation of Sinai rather than the closure of the Straits had been caused by a tour which he had made, together with Allon, to the Southern front on 25 May. There he had met with the commanders of the Israeli forces who had argued that there was great danger, especially the danger of a sharp increase in casualties, in any further delay, because the Egyptians were consolidating their forces on the other side of the border. Allon agreed with their analysis, arguing

45. Brecher notes that "from that day on there was almost unanimous pressure...from the army commanders on the Prime Minister to go to war" (p. 385).
that the time for waiting was over, and Eshkol was apparently convinced by these arguments that war was now inevitable. He therefore felt it important that Eban find out from Johnson, not what the United States would do about the closure of the Straits, but rather, whether it was prepared to do anything about the threat created by the military build-up in Sinai, and whether it would support Israel if it now took action on its own.

Given the fact that the United States was not so concerned with Israeli deterrence as it was with the stability which Israeli deterrence had failed to maintain, Eshkol could not expect Eban bluntly to request American support for an Israeli disruption of this stability, especially if the United States was pursuing action through diplomatic channels. Nevertheless, it was now necessary to make it clear to Washington that, while in other circumstances Israel might be able to await diplomatic action to open the Straits, the concentration of Egyptian troops in Sinai made waiting dangerous and less and less possible with each new day. In consultation with Chief-of-Staff Rabin and Herzog, the Director-General of the Prime Minister's Department, Eshkol apparently decided to put the blame for disruption of the precarious stability on Egypt by claiming that Nasser was planning an imminent attack. In this way Israel could be portrayed as being concerned to prevent an Egyptian attack and American willingness to support an Israeli pre-emption could be tested. So, on 25 May, Eshkol sent a cable to the Israeli embassy in Washington to await Eban's arrival, which advised him that they were now concerned about an imminent Egyptian offensive, and which asked him to clarify "to what extent the U.S. is prepared to make good on obligations given in the past to Israeli leaders" in the event of such an attack. A second cable, dispatched by Herzog, was more alarmist, stating that Israeli Intelligence believed that Egypt would attack on 27 May, and advising Eban to seek an American declaration that an attack on Israel would be regarded as an attack on the United States.

46. Ibid., p. 389; Bar-Zohar, p. 108.

47. The cables are cited in Brecher, p. 386; cf. Bar-Zohar, p. 109. The evidence of such an attack was apparently rather flimsy. Safran reports that Israeli Intelligence had intercepted an Egyptian Command order to one of its air force units to bring its preparations to the point of readiness for offensive operations on May 27 (p. 300). As we shall see, there were many more indications that the Egyptians were not preparing for an offensive at this stage. Rabin has since explained that the idea of sending the cables came not from the General Staff but rather from Herzog who had suggested that "we send a telegram to... Eban... and in it we would say that, according to the information in our hands, there may be the development of an Egyptian offensive initiative against Israel as the events evolve". (Cited in Brecher...
Eban arrived in Washington on the afternoon of 25 May, read the cables, and sought an immediate meeting with Rusk. At this meeting he reported Israeli fears of an imminent Egyptian attack and Rusk immediately suspended the discussions to consult with the President and McNamara. Despite the fact that Eban's information did not concur with American intelligence estimates, the Egyptian ambassador was called to the State Department and told to warn Nasser not to attack. Then, when the meeting with Eban resumed, Rusk told him that the United States did not share the Israeli appraisal: Washington "did not regard the Egyptian order of battle in Sinai as offensive though it might change its character". The Secretary of State went on to rule out any American declaration that an attack on Israel would be regarded as an attack on the United States, explained that the President could not act without prior Congressional consent, and warned that if Israel pre-empted it would tie the President's hands and create great difficulties for him.

Far from gaining American support for pre-emption, the cables had helped persuade the Americans to pressure Israel not to pre-empt. Since they did not agree with the Israeli assessment, that the Egyptians were about to attack, they could only interpret the Israeli alarm in one of two ways: either the Israelis were preparing to pre-empt and were fabricating an Egyptian plan for an offensive as justification; or they had lost confidence in their ability to resist the Egyptians. Whatever the case, American pressure on both Egypt and Israel to prevent either from striking first must have appeared efficacious. Eban had lost the first round and had little choice but to pursue the question which he had originally intended to raise - the blockade of the Straits. He produced Dulles' aide-memoire (rather surprisingly the State Department did not have a copy of this document) and asked what the Johnson administration was prepared to do about this solemn commitment. The Americans outlined their proposal for a declaration of maritime powers which would support the principle of freedom of navigation in the Straits; were this declaration not endorsed by the United Nations and appropriate action taken, it would be followed by assembling a multilateral "regatta" which would test the blockade. Israel, they warned would have to exercise restraint while all

47. (continued) p. 385. Herzog's cable was apparently much more alarmist than Rabin's explanation implies.
possibilities of action in the United Nations were exhausted. 49

The next morning, Friday 26 May, Eban met with McNamara, Wheeler (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) and their aides at the Pentagon. Again, following his instructions which had been confirmed by another cable received as the talks began reiterating "in drastic terms" the Israeli appraisal of imminent attack, Eban raised the issue of an impending Egyptian offensive. This time the Pentagon chiefs outlined in greater detail the American intelligence estimates: Egypt's armed forces were deployed in defensive formations; Nasser was waiting for Israel to incur the onus of striking first; Israel would retain air superiority even if Egypt did strike first; Israel would win no matter who started the war; and the passage of time would only increase Egypt's logistical problems while leaving Israel's security unimpaired. 50

Eban was now in a quandary. Clearly the United States believed Israel to be militarily strong and in no great danger of imminent attack. He sensed that the Israeli General Staff were exaggerating the danger and that continued repetition of their appraisal "would be exchanging an attitude of military self-confidence for one of apparent weakness". 51 Already he felt that his recitation of the cables had created the impression that the Israeli government was the "trembling victim of an imminent coup de grace". 52 Moreover, sounding the alarm had not only generated pressure from the United States not to pre-empt, it had also resulted in American pressure on Egypt not to attack. Both these factors would make it extremely costly, in terms of American patronage, for Israel to take immediate military action; partly because the United States had warned it not to do so, and partly because if Israel attacked after the United States had warned Egypt against such action, Israel could be charged with perfidy while America would be accused of collusion.

His mission was beginning to take on the awesome appearance of failure. As a diplomat rather than a general he understood the politics of patronage better than the politics of force. He had come to Washington on a diplomatic mission to secure American political support, but so far had only succeeded in creating the impression that Israel feared Egyptian strength. It could only do more harm to push the charge of an imminent Egyptian

49. Ibid., p. 387; Bar-Zohar, pp. 110-113; Draper, p. 89; Laqueur, p. 154.
50. St. John, p. 428; Brecher, p. 390; Bar-Zohar, p. 117.
51. St John, pp. 426-7; Laqueur, p. 154.
52. St John, p. 429.
attack because American intelligence reports contradicted this assessment; and if Egypt did not intend to attack, for the present, Israel could hardly persuade Washington that it had to pre-empt and could not allow time for the diplomatic process to be tested. As far as Eban was concerned there was only one strategy for gaining American acquiescence in an Israeli pre-emption: allow time to demonstrate that diplomacy could not redress the situation; emphasise Israeli resolve to resist any compromise solution; and thereby encourage the realisation in Washington, that it was less costly to allow Israel to deal with the situation on its own rather than intervene with force. Therefore his first task was to ensure that the President recognised his responsibility to reopen the Straits and that he took urgent action to fulfil this responsibility. If this action secured the reopening of the Straits, well and good, but if it failed, as was more likely, then the United States "could hardly censure Israel for defining its own policy in similar terms - and with more effect". Eban's second task was to emphasise to the President that Israel was prepared to take unilateral action if the United States proved incapable or unwilling to redress the situation; that there could be no diplomatic compromise because Israel possessed the will-power to protect its vital interests. Thus the meeting with Johnson would be crucial for testing American resolve, demonstrating Israeli resolve and undoing the damage caused by emphasising Israel's fear of an Egyptian attack.

The meeting with Johnson did not take place until the evening of Friday 26 May. That morning, Eban had spoken with Rusk and emphasised that Israel would resist the blockade and that unless the President stated that he would act "unreservedly" to reopen the Straits, and provided Israel with the logistical details, hostilities would occur in the next week. He noted that the Israeli Cabinet would meet on Sunday morning and that it would probably be "the most crucial in the history of the nation";

53. Eban, p. 211.

54. Most accounts of Eban's mission, other than his own and St John's, emphasise his failure to gain American support or to understand what the American's were trying surreptitiously to tell him. They also accuse him of reporting inaccurately to the Israeli Cabinet. Safran, in particular, makes much of the argument that Eban failed to demonstrate Israeli resolve. The accounts of Johnson and Brecher, which seem to be the most reliable and accurate, although neither of them are free of bias, support my contention that while Eban may have created doubts in the minds of officials in the State Department and the Pentagon as to Israel's will to resist, he did not fail to impress on the White House Israel's determination to take action if American efforts failed. They also support the contentions that Eban did report the proceedings accurately and that he well understood the complexities
he had to know before then where the United States stood.  

Eban used this same lever - Israel's readiness for war if the United States did not take firm action - in his talks with Johnson that evening. He did not dwell long on the claim of an imminent Egyptian attack, providing the President with the essence of the cables, and using them to emphasise not so much an impending attack but rather the threat which Nasser's actions posed to Israel's survival. As far as Israel was concerned, he stressed, it was faced with a choice between surrender and resistance - it would not surrender. He then turned to the American commitment given to Israel in 1957 on freedom of navigation in the Straits, and asked whether the United States was now determined to carry out this commitment by reopening the Straits. He argued that action through the United Nations would be worthless because of the Soviet veto, but if the United States backed Israel and the President pledged that the blockade would be opposed, then Nasser might be forced to back-down and war might be avoided.

Johnson first asked McNamara to summarise American intelligence reports which showed that in the judgment of the three intelligence agencies an Egyptian attack was not imminent. Johnson added: "All of our intelligence people are unanimous, that if the UAR attacks you will whip hell out of them". He emphasised that the United States would carry out its responsibility for freedom of passage in the Straits, but that any action involving the possibility of force would have to have Congressional backing for it to be effective: "I am fully aware of what three past Presidents have said, but that is not worth five cents if the people and the Congress do not support the President". In this regard, action through the United Nations had to be the first resort, in order to secure public support even if it achieved nothing else. He was hopeful that the United States and Britain would be able to raise an international fleet to test the blockade, but time was needed for the arrangements to be made. In the meantime, Eban could tell the Israeli Cabinet that "we will pursue vigorously any and all possible measures to keep the strait open". He had

54. (continued) of this diplomatic bargaining. What Eban failed to do, was to convey the sense of alarm in Israel about Egyptian military preparations without giving the impression that Israel was weak-willed.
57. Johnson, p. 293.
58. Ibid.
not forgotten the commitments he had made to Eshkol and he was not about to retreat or back-track, but these matters had to take their course and Israel should devote its attention to winning diplomatic support.

If Israel decided that it had to take action, then the United States would have no obligation for any consequences which might ensue. Then Johnson stated with heavy emphasis: "Israel will not be alone unless it decides to go alone". He repeated the statement and Eban then asked: "Can I tell my Cabinet that you are going to use any and all measures in your power to get the Gulf of Aqaba opened to all shipping, including that of Israel?" Johnson assured him that this was his position.

At the end of the meeting Johnson handed Eban an aide-memoire which summarised the American attitude. It contained three essential points: i) the United States could only act according to its Constitutional dictates and would also have to pursue action in the United Nations; ii) the blockade was illegal and the United States would "pursue vigorously the measures which can be taken by maritime nations" to reopen the Straits; and iii) Israel must not make itself responsible for the institution of hostilities - "Israel will not be alone unless it decides to go alone. We cannot imagine that Israel will make this decision."59

Neither Eban nor Johnson had failed to impress their point of view on each other. Johnson is reported to have turned to his advisers after the meeting and said: "I've failed. They'll go".60 Eban had made it clear that if the United States did not succeed in its plans to reopen the Straits, Israel would be left with only one option - war.61 Equally, Johnson had made it clear that were his plans to have any chance of success he would have to have time to muster domestic and international support. If Israel

59. This account of the talks is taken from Johnson, pp. 293-4; Brecher, pp. 391-3; St. John, pp. 431-3; Bar-Zohar, pp. 124-7; Draper, pp. 90-91. Brecher's account, including the text of the aide-memoire and the text of Johnson's earlier conversation with Ephraim Evron (The Counsellor at the Israeli Embassy in Washington), are based on the actual Israeli records of the meetings. They are consistent with Johnson's account, which is presumably based on the American minutes of the meeting.

60. Bar-Zohar reports that Johnson's reaction was rather different: "I was ready for heavy bargaining, but I found myself up against a light-weight, and I could get away with niceties". There is more reason to doubt this than to doubt Quandt's version because Bar-Zohar's purpose is to paint Eban as a weak and ineffectual negotiator. As we shall see, Johnson took Eban very seriously. Quandt, p. 44.

61. At one point in the discussions Johnson had suggested that perhaps Israel could do without Eilat, just as it had made do without passage through the Suez Canal since 1956. Eban quickly scotched any idea of such compromise. He apparently replied: "This is like asking a man who is forced to live on one lung whether he can't also live without any lungs at all". St. John, p. 4.
pre-empted before he had been given an opportunity to fulfil his commitment, then it would have to bear the consequences on its own. Eban is said to have left the meeting with a feeling that if the American initiative were given "a minimal area in which to breathe" and it failed, then unilateral action on Israel's part would meet with American support. The President had recognised that Israel had been wronged and that the situation created by Nasser would have to be redressed. Were Israel to gain American support it was now crucial that it delay action until the United States had sufficient opportunity to act.

IV - ISRAEL'S DECISION TO WAIT

At 8.00 p.m. on Saturday, 27 May, the Israeli Cabinet began its deliberations on appropriate action now that the 48 hour delay had expired. By this time, the IDF had completed its mobilisation and was ready for war, while the IAF had prepared its plans for a pre-emptive strike on Egyptian airfields. Weizmann reports that "there were no further doubts left in the General Staff about the necessity of Israel breaking out of the noose Nasser had placed around its neck". However, there was still no unanimity within the General Staff as to how long the Government could safely allow for the diplomatic process. Meanwhile, the ministerial advocates of pre-emption had grown in numbers as the strength of the Egyptian forces deployed in Sinai had increased, and as the Arab leaders had stepped-up their rhetoric in calling for the destruction of the Jewish state. By the time Eban arrived at the meeting (at 10.00 p.m.), the Cabinet

62. Ibid., p. 434.
63. Weizmann, op. cit., p. 213.
64. Weizmann notes that while he argued that every additional day of waiting gave the Egyptians a better chance of organising their defences and making it more costly for the IDF to break through, the Commander of the IAF, Motty Hod, argued that the more Egyptian troops that were concentrated in Sinai the better, because they would be easy prey for the IAF. He states that there was no unanimity in the General Staff on immediate action until Dayan's appointment as Defence Minister on 2 June (p. 214). Peres argues that Israel could have borne the cost of mobilisation but could not accept a long delay because such a delay might have convinced Nasser that he had nothing to fear and he might then have decided to strike first. See Shimon Peres, David's Sling, p. 229.
65. On 26 May, Nasser had announced that war with Israel would be total "with the basic objective of destroying Israel". See below, page 254.
was almost evenly divided with some nine ministers, including Eshkol, calling for immediate action, and the other eight recommending further political consolidation.

The Foreign Minister gave a brief résumé of his talks with De Gaulle and Wilson and a more detailed exposition of the American reaction. He reported that Johnson had given his assurance that the United States would pursue "any and all measures" to reopen the Straits. He pointed out that, if Israel wanted to attack immediately, it should not have raised the alarm in Washington about an imminent Egyptian attack, since Washington had warned the Egyptians not to attack and would be seriously embarrassed by Israeli action which would appear disingenuous. He argued that the President's assumption of responsibility had to be allowed to mature, "if it failed, after more patience on Israel's part, new political possibilities would open out in the American-Israeli relationship". Eban proposed that the Cabinet should wait another 48 hours before deciding on military actions.

Allon and Carmel led the opposition in arguing that an international fleet would not succeed in keeping the Straits open while Egyptian troops remained at Sharm el-Sheikh, that such a fleet would not solve the problem of Egyptian troop concentrations in Sinai, that its passage would only signal to Nasser the opening of the hostilities, and that, even if the fleet succeeded, it would increase Israeli dependence on the United States. Fearful that, with the passage of time, the chances of a successful pre-emption would be severely reduced, they recommended immediate action. An informal poll showed that the Cabinet remained evenly divided: nine for immediate action, nine for a further waiting period. Although Eshkol favoured military action he was not prepared to force such a crucial decision on his Cabinet. Instead he adjourned the meeting at 5.00a.m. and recommended that they reconvene on Sunday afternoon, 28 May.

On Sunday evening the Cabinet decided by a vote of 16 to 1 to accept Eshkol's proposal that Israel delay action for "a week or two" while the idea of an international flotilla was tested. By all accounts, the cables received that day from Washington were decisive in winning most of the

66. De Gaulle had counselled Eban that Israel must not strike first and should rather acquiesce in Nasser's fait accompli for the time being. Wilson was more forthcoming; the British Cabinet had agreed that Britain would join others in an effort to secure freedom of navigation in the Straits. He apparently did not counsel Eban on the question of pre-emption. See Brecher, pp. 382 and 384.
67. Eban, p. 211.
advocates of military action over to the idea of delay. The first cable was from Johnson to Eshkol. This letter outlined the response Johnson had received from Kosygin on 26 May, which claimed that Israel was about to attack and that if it did so the Soviet Union would come to the aid of the attacked states. Johnson underlined his support for Israel's interests and repeated "even more strongly what I said yesterday to Mr Eban: Israel just must not take pre-emptive military action and thereby make itself responsible for the initiation of hostilities". The letter was backed by a cable from Rusk which outlined the substance of Johnson's discussions with Eban and added that the United States and Britain were proceeding "urgently" to prepare the fleet; the Dutch and Canadians had already joined. Rusk added: "With the assurance of international determination to make every effort to keep the Straits open...unilateral action on the part of Israel would be irresponsible and catastrophic". The third cable came from Ambassador Harman, reporting his talks with Eugene Rostow on 27 May, in which Rostow had outlined the details of American and British efforts and had asked that Israel wait some two weeks, for the President to gain Congressional approval, and for the fleet to be assembled and sent through the Straits.

This pressure from the United States proved sufficient to convert Eshkol from "hawk" to "dove". Just as six years later Golda Meir would decide against pre-emption because of fear that Israel would be isolated from its only reliable source of support, so too did Eshkol change his mind for fear that if Israel pre-empted Johnson might say: "I warned you in advance and now you cannot make any claims whatever on the United States and its allies." Presumably some of the others who had favoured military action the night before were swayed by Eshkol's volte-face; they may also

70. Brecher, p. 398; Middle East Record, p. 197; Bar-Zohar cites the text of Kosygin's warning: "...according to our sources, Israel is planning an armed action against its Arab neighbours. We know the Arabs do not want war...If Israel begins hostilities the Soviet Union will come to the aid of the attacked countries" (p. 130).
73. Bar-Zohar, p. 139.
have been influenced by the fact that Ben-Gurion did not believe that a
military response was appropriate until and unless Israel was assured of
the support of a reliable ally. 75 Some may have also been swayed by
their own doubts about the outcome of military action and the costs involved
in terms of casualties. 76 For the leaders of this weak state a decision
to go to war was difficult given the grave implications; to go to war without
the support of the United States, and in the face of its express opposition,
and with the Soviet Union threatening to support the Arabs if Israel attacked
was a decision which only Carmel, unswerving in his advocacy, was prepared
to take. Even Allon did not vote for war, preferring to abstain and
reserving the right to call for a reconsideration if circumstances changed. 77
Eban argued that to ignore Johnson's appeal would by flying in the face of
international opinion; he pointed out that international support was now
greater than it had ever been in previous crises and that, while waiting
would not injure Israel's military prospects, it would certainly enhance
its political strength. 78 So Israel had decided to wait. In itself the
decision was a tactical one aimed at ensuring American support for pre-
emption when its own efforts had failed. It was taken, not out of a lack of
will to resist Nasser's actions, or American pressure, but rather out of
a desire to apply Israel's will with careful judgement to enhance its
prospects and to prevent the alienation of its American patron. However,
to the Israeli public and to some decision-makers in Cairo, Washington, and
Moscow, it appeared that the Israeli Government indeed lacked the will to
take events into its own hands and the public outcry in Israel, which
followed Eshkol's halting announcement of the Cabinet's decision to do
nothing, only reinforced this perception. A crisis of confidence in Eshkol's
leadership, caused by his wavering and indecisiveness, had been building
since the Government's first decision on 23 May, to delay military action.
Until 28 May the crisis had been restricted to the corridors of power, where
the opposition parties had begun negotiating for the replacement of Eshkol
as Defence Minister, and for a national unity government. Now with the
country mobilised and waiting for decisive leadership, Eshkol's inability

75. When asked his advice, Ben-Gurion had argued that the time was not
right for war because Israel lacked external support. He suggested that
Israel should wait until such support had been secured. See Geist, op. cit.,
p. 643.
76. Safran, p. 312; Bar-Zohar, p. 143.
77. Brecher, p. 400. Most accounts state that Allon voted for the decision;
but Brecher's account is based on an interview with Allon conducted in 1968.
78. Eban, p. 212.
to instil confidence into his very attentive public caused an outcry in the press which spread to the inner sanctum of the ruling alignment. 79

V - WASHINGTON ACQUIESCES

Israel's apparent lack of will to take independent action was not perceived uniformly in Cairo, Moscow and Washington. Nasser at this stage appears to have felt that his gamble had paid off and that Israel would not go to war. 80 The Soviet Union also seems to have based its actions in the Security Council on a belief that the worst of the crisis was over. 81 But in Washington, where the responsibility now lay for action, the White House, the State Department and the Pentagon had rather divergent perceptions of Israel's will.

The President and his advisors did not doubt that they had gained only a short respite; a feeling confirmed by the receipt of a letter from Eshkol, on 30 May, which emphasised American responsibility for Israel's decision to delay action. The letter stated: "it is crucial that the international naval escort should move through the Strait within a week or two". Johnson recalls in his memoirs:

As my advisers and I interpreted it, the phrase "within a week or two" meant that we had about two weeks to make diplomacy succeed before Israel took independent military action. 82 (emphasis supplied).

Rusk had apparently been concerned that Israel would take action while the United States was organising its international fleet and thereby give the impression that Israel and the United States were working in collusion. Now that they had gained a short respite, and the deck was cleared for American action, his attention turned to organising the flotilla. 83

On the other hand, in the State Department, those who had already interpreted Eban's alarm over an imminent Egyptian attack as evidence of

79. For detailed accounts of the crisis of confidence, see Middle East Record, 1967, pp. 367-372; Brecher, Chapter 7.
80. See below, Chapter Four.
81. The Soviet Union refused to have the matter debated in the Security Council, arguing that there was no danger of war. See Arthur Lall, The U.N. and the Middle East Crisis, 1967, New York, 1968, Chapter III.
82. Johnson, p. 294.
83. Kimche and Bawley, p. 127.
Israel's fear of war, now perceived the decision to wait as evidence of a lack of resolve. They saw an opportunity to revive the third American option of a diplomatic compromise. Consequently, the State Department began downgrading the importance of Eilat for Israeli shipping and proposed that Israel should be compensated for any financial disability while the United States should undertake responsibility for finding alternative sources of oil for Israel. At the same time two American officials, Charles Yost (a State Department advisor on Near Eastern affairs), and Robert Anderson (former Secretary of the Treasury), were sent to Cairo to test Nasser's willingness for compromise. Anderson met with Nasser on 31 May and found him ready to agree on only two points - that Vice-President Mohieddin should go to Washington for further talks on 7 June, and that this should be followed by a visit from Vice-President Humphrey. Yost met with Foreign Minister Riad on 1 June and found him eager for a diplomatic solution, yet unwilling to back down on the question of Egyptian sovereignty over the Straits. As Yost subsequently observed:

Unavailing efforts were made to persuade Nasser to revoke, suspend or moderate the blockade but, the action once taken, he did not feel politically free to reverse it, even had he so desired.

Had Nasser shown some flexibility at this stage, the option of diplomatic compromise might have gained greater currency in Washington, but as things now stood the State Department could no longer advocate this as a viable option. Not only had Nasser rejected compromise, so too had Israel, as Eban made clear on 30 May when he stated: "We will have no part of any suggestion or arrangement which implies that all other ships can go through, but not Israeli ships."

Meanwhile the Pentagon was preoccupied with the military implications of any American attempt to break the blockade. Those responsible for organising the fleet were firmly opposed to such action, if the

Egyptians fired on an American ship, the risk was high that the United States would become involved in war with Egypt. This prospect raised the spectre of a "second Vietnam", something which the Pentagon sought to avoid at all costs. The Administration had already faced the first major American demonstration against the war in Vietnam and the Pentagon had no desire to weaken its efforts there by becoming involved in a land war in the Middle East - a war for which they were as logistically unprepared as was American public opinion politically unprepared. Thus the Pentagon had already come around to the opinion that "if war is unavoidable, let the Israelis do it; let's not get the United States involved". As for its assessment of Israeli will-power, a visit to Washington by Meir Amit, head of Israeli Intelligence, on 31 May, was apparently sufficient to convince the Pentagon that Israel was prepared to take appropriate action.

With compromise effectively ruled out, although the State Department and even the President had not yet given up the idea that Mohieddin's visit might yield results, and with the Pentagon opposed to American action to reopen the Straits, Washington was itself beginning to show signs of a lack of will-power, and was quickly exhausting all options other than that of 'unleashing' Israel. The essential question was whether the international fleet had any chance of redressing the situation.

Eugene Rostow was responsible for organising the fleet and retained a belief in its efficacy even at the last moment when it was clear to most in Washington that it would not work. However his task was growing more difficult with each new day. As already noted, the Pentagon was opposed to the concept, but on top of these bureaucratic problems, Rostow was having great difficulty persuading more than a handful of maritime nations to sign the declaration and join the fleet. At first Rostow had spoken of 40 to 50 signatories on a joint declaration which would state that the Gulf of Aqaba was an international waterway, that this right of free and innocent passage should apply to all nations, and that the

87. Interview with Townsend Hoopes, June, 1975; Cf. Draper, p. 107.

88. As we shall see, Amit was sent to the United States for a different purpose, but in his talks at the Pentagon he imparted a feeling of quiet confidence that Israel would settle the crisis quickly and efficiently. Bar-Zohar, p. 159; Kimche and Bawley, p. 132.
signatories were prepared to exercise this right. Yet by 31 May the number of maritime nations prepared to sign this declaration had shrunk to five: the United States, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Australia and New Zealand; neither France nor Canada were now willing to participate. 89

Moreover, events in the Middle East created a new and serious problem for Rostow. On 30 May Hussein had journeyed to Cairo, healed the deep rift between Egypt and Jordan, and, together with Nasser, had announced the signing of a Joint Defence Pact which placed the Jordanian army under Egyptian command in the event of hostilities. 90 With the Arab world apparently unified, if the United States attempted to reopen the Straits to Israeli shipping, Washington risked alienating its remaining bases of influence in the Arab world. Further, Congress was registering its strong opposition to the use of American force to reopen the Straits and Rusk found it necessary to assure them that the United States would not undertake unilateral action. 91 For all the emphasis Johnson had placed on Congressional approval, the Administration was not yet prepared to test its support because the President's aides had told him that any meaningful resolution would become "bogged down in acrimonious dispute". Johnson himself began to talk of diplomatic remedies and ruled out any use of force until these had been exhausted. 92

Taking all these factors into account, Rostow began to water down the concept of the international fleet, removing any sanction of force which it might have used. The declaration of maritime powers which he drafted did not contain any threat of the use of force, only an assertion of the right of free passage, and an expression of the desirability of a coordinated effort to seek "general recognition" of this right. 93 On 30 May, Walt Rostow called in Evron (the Counsellor at the Israeli Embassy), and told him that Israel had misunderstood Johnson's statements; the United States was not prepared to use "any and all measures" to reopen the Straits, only multilateral action. 94 And on 31 May State

90. Middle East Record, 1967, p. 203.
94. Middle East Record, 1967, p. 200.
Department spokesman Robert McCloskey announced:

The focus of our effort to solve the Middle East crisis without hostilities is the United Nations. We regard its responsibilities as essential and fundamental, and we are doing everything in our power to seek a fair and just outcome of the crisis in that forum. As part of that effort and in support of that policy...we are consulting other maritime powers as to their views on the international character of the Straits of Tiran...95

With the United States apparently pinning its hopes on the outcome of the debate in the Security Council, it soon became painfully clear that these hopes too would come to nothing. On 31 May Ambassador Goldberg had submitted a draft resolution which called on all parties to comply with U Thant's call to "forgo belligerence", and in his supporting speech had made it clear that non-belligerence on the part of Egypt would require it to lift its blockade of the Straits. The Council adjourned without taking a vote and only reconvened on 3 June, when the French Ambassador announced that his country was neutral, Soviet Ambassador Federenko made no reference to the draft resolutions, and Britain's Lord Caradon remained silent. At 2.20p.m. the Security Council adjourned without reaching a decision.96

Thus by the weekend of 3-4 June, the United States had been forced to recognise that pursuing the option of international action had been to no avail. While Johnson later claimed that the next week would have seen "intensive diplomacy", on that weekend Rusk sent cables to his ambassadors in Arab capitals seeking new ideas for a solution which would prevent war. In these cables he stressed that the United States was committed to "the right of Israeli flagships to transit the Strait", and that it would do no good to suggest that Israel compromise on this right, "because Israel will fight and we could not restrain her".97 In other words, now that the idea of an international fleet had collapsed, and the option of compromise was unacceptable because of the American commitment to Israel, and because Israel would go to war to protect its rights, unless there was some other form of action, only one option remained -'unleash' Israel. On Sunday afternoon, 4 June, the "Watch" committee, consisting of Eugene Rostow as chairman, Lucius Battle, Townsend Hoopes and Cyrus Vance, studied

96. See Lall, op.cit., pp. 32-45; Middle East Record, 1967, p. 203.
a paper submitted by Hoopes and others which outlined the alternatives for
the United States and argued that it should take no action, that it was
preferable "to have the Israelis out front". There was a broad consensus
in support of this conclusion, only Rostow dissented. With the United
States lacking the will to fulfil its commitments to Israel, because of
Congressional and bureaucratic opposition, because of the lack of
international support, and because of the prohibitive costs of doing so,
in terms of America's other interests, its decision-makers were now
prepared to acquiesce in an Israeli pre-emption.

VI - ISRAEL DECIDES TO PRE-EMPT

It was up to Israel to interpret this change of mood in Washington;
it did not fail to read these signs of an American lack of will to do
anything about the situation. The first indication came on 31 May with
the reports of Evron's conversation with Walt Rostow and Rusk's briefing
to the Senate - the United States would not take unilateral action. The
question then became: was there any chance of multilateral action? On
30 May Eshkol had sent Meir Amit, Head of Israeli Counter-Intelligence,
to Washington to evaluate American resolve. On 31 May he reported that
while it was necessary to wait a few days to give the international fleet
a chance, "I get the impression that the maritime force project is running
into heavier water every hour". On the same day came the report of the
State Department's announcement that the focus of American efforts would
be the United Nations. As Eban interpreted it, that "was very like saying
there were no efforts and would be no focus". Then there was a message
from an American close to the Administration which noted that Israel's
exercise of restraint "would have a decisive influence when the United
States came to consider the measure of its involvement" once hostilities
broke out; together with a report of Rusk's answer to a question about
restraining Israel: "I don't think it is our business to restrain anyone."

98. Interview with Townsend Hoopes, June, 1976.
99. Cited in Brecher, p. 417. According to Jon Kimche, CIA Director
Richard Helms, had told Amit that while the Americans might find it
necessary to pressure Israel to protect themselves against the suspicion of
collusion, Israel would have to resist this pressure if it wanted to get
tangible results. See Jon Kimche, Palestine or Israel, The Untold Story of
100. Eban, p. 215.
These signs were sufficient to convince Eban that the period of restraint had achieved its objectives of neutralising American opposition to independent Israeli action, of ensuring that the Administration recognised Nasser's actions as an aggressive act, and of protecting Israel from a repetition of the events of 1956. So on 31 May, the Foreign Minister, the man who had been the strongest opponent of immediate military action, told the Chief-of-Staff and the Chief of Intelligence that he was withdrawing his opposition to whatever military action they considered necessary; there was no longer any need to wait. The Cabinet took a little longer to reach the same decision since, until 1 June, most ministers, and especially Prime Minister Eshkol, were preoccupied with the negotiations which finally brought Moshe Dayan into the Cabinet as Defence Minister and Menachem Begin, the leader of Gahal (the major opposition party), as Minister without Portfolio.

On Saturday 3 June, Eshkol convened a meeting at his home of his key ministers and advisors to consider the military and political situation. New elements had become salient in the military calculus: Hussein had healed his rift with Nasser and on that very morning Egyptian troops had begun to arrive in Jordan; Iraq had joined the confrontation states and had also begun to move its troops into Jordan. The threat of attack on Israel's vulnerable centre from the West Bank was now serious and dangerous. The Army commanders had grown more forthright in their insistence on immediate military action since the evening of 28 May, when they had told Eshkol that his indecisiveness would cost Israel "thousands of lives"; if Egypt attacked while Israel was attempting to gain support in Washington, they argued, then the country was heading for a catastrophe. As the pressure mounted the advocates of pre-emption were strengthened by Dayan's appointment to the Defence portfolio and the fact that Eshkol had given way to overwhelming pressure on this issue suggested that it would not be

102. As Eban subsequently noted: "...Israel had involved the Americans very deeply. Their political and moral responsibility was much greater in their own conscience than it had been a week before. Israel would not be repeating the experience of 1956, when the United States, shocked by the sheer surprise of Israel's eruption, had joined with the Soviet Union to cancel its results...The United States could not again question Israel's plight or claim that Israel had not involved it frankly in the dilemma". Eban, pp. 217 and 220.
103. St John, pp. 444-5; Brecher, p. 417.
104. Present at this meeting were: Eban, Dayan, Allon, Rabin, Yadin (Former Chief-of-Staff), Herzog (Director-General of the Prime Minister's Department) Amit and Harman.
long before he acceded to their pressure for military action. 106

On the political plane, Eban's recognition that the time for waiting had ended was confirmed by new developments. Harman and Amit had reported that the United States would not take any unilateral action and that there was little chance of any international action.107 The first point was confirmed by a letter from Johnson received on 3 June which, while repeating the warning against pre-emption, emphasised that "our leadership is unanimous that the United States should not move in isolation".108 The second point was confirmed by the small number of states prepared just to sign the declaration, let alone send their ships through the Straits. Moreover, Britain's Foreign Minister had made it clear that his country also saw the United Nations as the first forum for action, followed by consultations on "appropriate action". Meanwhile, the Security Council had adjourned on 3 June without reaching a decision, and there was now the new danger that, if Israel delayed action until Egypt's Vice-President arrived in Washington, pressure would be exerted on the White House to promote a compromise settlement which would not meet Israel's requirements. Accordingly, pressure would then be exerted on Israel to accept this compromise.109 So there was nothing to be gained, and much that could be lost, in terms of American patronage, from a further delay. Israel's decision-makers were in agreement that if Israel now acted on its own responsibility the United States would not permit "a policy of international intimidation".110

106. Weizmann recounts that he went to Eshkol, on his own initiative at the end of May to counsel that "the armed forces are ready for war. If you give the order, Jewish history will remember you as a great leader. If you don't it will never forgive you". On Eagles' Wings, p. 219.


108. Ibid.; according to Burdett, the letter did not contain any warning about pre-emption (p. 315).

109. The State Department proposals and the Yost mission had confirmed these fears. See Burdett, pp. 304 and 308.

110. Eban has suggested: "...when President Johnson and Prime Minister Wilson met in Washington on June 2, they would have been less than human if they had not asked themselves, whether explicitly or in glances of private understanding, if it would be all that disastrous for Israel to solve her own problems on her own responsibility". Eban, p. 236; Cf. Brecher, pp. 420-1.
Moreover, French policy at this stage added impetus to the decision to pre-empt. De Gaulle had made it clear to Eban that France would oppose whichever side fired the first shot and this had been confirmed in public statements. Up to 3 June Israel had been able to acquire military supplies from the French defence industry through the contacts which it had established as a result of ten years of military cooperation. But now the French government had announced an embargo on arms sales to the Middle East, effective from 5 June - i.e. before either side had fired any shots. As Eben subsequently noted:

...General De Gaulle's embargo helped to secure unanimity in the Israeli cabinet in favour of armed resistance. From 3 June onward France had ensured that time would henceforth be working against Israel. This completely cut the ground under any possible argument in favour of further patience. In short, President De Gaulle had faced Israel with a 'now or never' dilemma; if that were the case, the answer had to be 'now'.

If Israel was sure that whatever it did France would not support it and that the 'tacit alliance' had finally come to an end, then clearly the only patronage that now counted was American, and it was already fairly evident that this had been ensured.

Finally, the attitude of the Soviet Union had to be taken into account. The Russians had made several démarches to Eshkol about their opposition to hostilities, but both the Foreign and Defence Ministries were in agreement that, if Israel could achieve a quick victory, the Soviet Union would not intervene for lack of a capability to do so and for fear of American reaction and superpower confrontation. This assessment added weight to the argument for immediate pre-emption to ensure that a quick victory would be achieved.

Thus the political-military calculus pointed to only one conclusion. The time for waiting was over; the time for action had come. Dayan outlined the IDF's plan for a pre-emptive strike against the Egyptian forces with the aim of destroying them and capturing Sharm-el-Sheikh. A holding operation would be fought in the North against Syria, and Jordan would not be attacked unless it decided to enter the war. The ministers and advisors approved this plan and it was decided that Eshkol would propose to the full Cabinet on Sunday, 4 June that Israel go to war.

111. Eban, p. 239.
The question now was whether the Israeli Cabinet had the collective will-power to make this decision. The events of 28 May to 3 June had been sufficient to convince Eban and Eshkol that no further purpose could be served by waiting. Allon, Dayan and Carmel had already been persuaded of the need to go to war and the General Staff was unanimous in its support for this action. The remaining task was to convince the rest of the Cabinet that it was necessary to take military action, and that this action would succeed in removing the threat posed by the Arab armies. The task did not prove difficult given the unanimity amongst the key ministers, although the Minister of Interior, Moshe Shapiro, felt it necessary to restate Ben-Gurion's opposition to war on the grounds that Israel was isolated, would have to fight a war on three fronts, was deprived of the element of surprise, lacked decisive leadership, and its army was not sufficiently prepared. Ben-Gurion had argued that Israel must wait until it found a reliable ally but Dayan, his disciple, countered with the charge that if the country waited for an ally it was doubtful whether it would still exist. The waverers who had feared the costs of war were fortified by the united resolve of the Prime Minister, Defence Minister and Foreign Minister, and the confidence of the General Staff. On Sunday, 4 June the Cabinet decided by unanimous vote "to take military action in order to liberate Israel from the stranglehold of aggression which is progressively being tightened around Israel."  

At 7.45 a.m. on 5 June, 1967 the IAF simultaneously attacked ten Egyptian airfields. By 10.35 that morning, after three waves of air strikes, the Egyptian Air Force had been rendered ineffective, and by the end of the day 286 aircraft had been destroyed, 70% of them hit on the ground during Israel's pre-emptive strike. The war was effectively over, bar the fighting on the ground which, after six days, routed the armies of Egypt, Syria and Jordan, and left Israel in possession of the Sinai peninsula, the Golan Heights, Jerusalem and the West Bank of the Jordan.  

113. Geist, op. cit., p. 643.
114. From the text of the decision in Brecher, op. cit., pp. 422-3. At the meeting Dayan had outlined the strategy of pre-emption, Eban gave his reasons for believing that the United States was committed and that Israel would not be isolated after an armed clash, and Eshkol reaffirmed his faith in the Army and his unequivocal support for the proposed action. Laqueur, p. 178; St. John, pp. 447-8.
115. See Middle East Record, 1967, p. 208.
Israel's lightning victory, the small number of casualties it suffered, and the overwhelming position of strength it had now achieved, vindicated the decision to pre-empt on the military level, but on the political level Israel's decision to delay military action was the decision which had been vindicated.

VII - THE AMERICAN REACTION

The crucial test of Israel's success in playing the politics of patronage, and thereby ensuring that its military victory would not be undone by political manoeuvering, came not on the battlefield, but rather in the actions of Israel's American patron, both in regard to the fighting, and in regard to the deliberations in the Security Council.

The period of waiting had not been in vain. By involving the United States in Israel's dilemma, by ensuring that the United States was committed to Israel's right to freedom of navigation, by allowing Washington time to realise that unilateral Israeli action was preferable to American intervention, Israel had guaranteed, not only the support of American public opinion for its reaction to Nasser's "aggression", but also American diplomatic support in international forums and American military support in opposition to Soviet intervention.

The American attitude became clear in the first days of war. Washington did not voice any criticism of Israel's pre-emption and in the Security Council it steadfastly refused to agree to a Soviet-Egyptian proposal for a cease-fire resolution which would brand Israel the aggressor and require it to withdraw from territories occupied during the fighting. In the face of this American refusal, the Soviet Union was forced to reverse its stand, abandon Egyptian demands for a cease-fire tied to Israeli withdrawal, and agree to an unconditional cease-fire resolution. This resolution was adopted by the Security Council on 6 June, accepted by Israel, but rejected by Egypt. On 7 June, the cease-fire appeal was repeated and with Egyptian acceptance on 8 June, it went into effect in Sinaí.

On the Syrian front, General Dayan gave the order to attack on 9 June, after sensing that a swift occupation of the Golan Heights would not

116. According to a Gallup Poll taken during the crisis, 56% of Americans sympathised with Israel while only 4% sympathised with the Arabs. According to Quandt, Louis Harris informed the White House during the crisis that U.S. public opinion had rarely been so unanimous as it was in its support for Israel. See Hazel Erskine, "The Polls: Western Partisanship in the Middle East", The Public Opinion Quarterly, Volume XXXLI, No. 4, Winter, 1969, pp. 627-640; Quandt, p. 46.

precipitate Soviet intervention to protect its Syrian client. However, as the IDF advanced and the Syrians raised the spectre of an attack on Damascus, the Soviet Union found it necessary to threaten military intervention unless the Israeli advance was halted. When this threat was conveyed to Washington, via the 'hot line', President Johnson decided to respond in a forthright manner in order to prevent any such intervention. He ordered the Sixth Fleet to steam towards Syria, cutting its cruising pattern from 100 miles to 50 miles from the coast. As Johnson himself has stated, his intention was clear: "the United States was prepared to resist Soviet intrusion in the Middle East". American diplomatic pressure had already been exerted on Israel to cease-firing once the Golan Heights had been cleared, and Washington had received Israeli assurances in this regard before the Soviet ultimatum was delivered. Further pressure was applied, but it was unnecessary, for Israel had already achieved its objectives and had agreed to cease-firing at 6.00p.m. on 10 June. With the cease-fire taking hold and the American attitude clearly expressed, the Soviet Union had little choice but to back-down. In other words, American action to deter Soviet intervention had the effect, probably intended, of preserving Israel's occupation of the Golan Heights.

Of far greater consequence to Israel's long-term prospects and to the future of the Arab-Israeli conflict was the American attitude towards a political settlement now that the war had ended. The first sign that

118. Bar-Zohar reports that a Soviet threat to sever diplomatic relations with Israel unless it stopped fighting was received on 7 June. In Israel this threat was interpreted as meaning that the Soviet action would be limited to breaking diplomatic relations and would not extend to military intervention (p. 239). Teveth, Dayan's biographer, states that he was preoccupied by the threat of Soviet intervention and therefore issued orders to restrict the attack to the central sector of the Golan, at first setting the end of the demilitarised zone as the objective and then drawing the line at Kuneitra once the Syrian army collapsed. See Shabtai Teveth, Moshe Dayan, London, 1972, pp. 338-340.


120. Ibid., pp. 301-303. Johnson states that the U.S. was aware of Israel's military intentions towards Syria. Bar-Zohar claims that the U.S. had been encouraging Israel to attack Syria (p. 260).

121. This begs the question of whether the Soviet Union would have intervened had Israel not halted its advance. Classman argues that it was "a gratuitous gesture to regain Arab political support" since the Soviet Union did not have the capability to intervene with conventional forces. Nevertheless, had the United States wanted to pressure Israel into halting short of its objectives or force it to withdraw, it could have used the Soviet threat as a means of leverage. It did not do so in 1967 because it supported Israel's objectives, but it was a very different story in 1973. See Jon Glassman, Arms for the Arabs, p. 58.
the United States would not repeat the action it took in 1956 in forcing Israel to withdraw in exchange for American guarantees, instead of a political settlement with the Arabs, came in a speech made by U.N. Ambassador Goldberg on 8 June. He explicitly linked Israeli withdrawal to "longer-range discussions" on the establishment of "a stable and durable peace in the Middle East". The President and his advisors were reported to believe that there should be no return to the status quo ante, that Israel should only be asked to withdraw from newly acquired territory in return for a peace settlement, and that in the meantime Israel should use the territories to bargain for peace. This policy found its formulation in President Johnson's enunciation of his "Five Great Principles of Peace in the Middle East", delivered on 19 June, 1967:

First, the recognised right of national life; second, justice for the refugees; third, innocent maritime passage; fourth, limits on the wasteful and destructive arms race; and fifth, political independence and territorial integrity for all.

In regard to the fifth point, Johnson elaborated on America's position by calling for "recognised boundaries and other arrangements that will give [the nations of the Middle East] security against terror, destruction and war". Moreover, he made it clear that the United States supported the principle that "the parties to the conflict must be the parties to the peace", but he added the important proviso that "they must be helped by external mediation". In terms of principles, the

122. Middle East Record, 1967, p. 237. On 8 June and again on 13 June, the U.S. submitted a draft resolution encompassing this linkage between withdrawal and peace. The second paragraph read: "Calls for discussions promptly thereafter among the parties concerned, using such third party or U.N. assistance as they may wish, looking toward the establishment of viable arrangements encompassing the withdrawal and disengagement of armed personnel, the renunciation of force regardless of its nature, the maintenance of vital international rights and the establishment of a stable and durable peace in the Middle East". This resolution was not submitted to a vote because the Soviet ambassador made it clear that the Soviet Union would veto it. A Soviet resolution which branded Israel as the aggressor and called for its unconditional withdrawal was submitted to a vote but it was opposed by the U.S., U.K. and France, and failed to gain the necessary majority. See Middle East Record, 1967, p. 75.

123. Quandt, op.cit., p. 46.

United States and Israel were in agreement that withdrawal should only be in the context of a peace settlement, arranged through direct negotiations which would provide for "secure and recognised boundaries". Throughout the debate in the special emergency session of the General Assembly, called on Soviet instigation in July, and the deliberations of the Security Council in October and November, the United States refused to depart from these principles which were within the bounds of Israeli policy. And this steadfast approach contributed in large measure to the formulation of Security Council Resolution 242 which encompassed, in vague terms, these principles and constituted the basis for all subsequent negotiations on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Further, while the United States opposed and refused to recognise Israel's unilateral annexation of East Jerusalem and its establishment of settlements in occupied territories, it did little else to prevent these actions and, even in 1977 its opposition is still confined to ineffectual votes in the United Nations. Finally, although Israel was in little need of military equipment immediately after the war, when the Soviet Union began to resupply Egypt and Syria with military equipment to compensate their losses, the United States announced that it would fulfil its commitment to Israel to supply the 36 Skyhawk aircraft which had been negotiated before the war. It was the first sign that the military supply relationship which had been established in the pre-war period would continue and grow ever larger in quantity and sophistication.

125. The United States did move away slightly from the principle of direct negotiations in suggesting that a U.N. mediator should be sent to the Middle East to facilitate negotiations, but this was acceptable to Israel. See Lall, op.cit., pp. 198, 206-7, 210-212, 238-9.

126. The complex negotiations are outlined and analysed in Lall, ibid., Chapter 24. He shows that Caradon's compromise resolution was based on the American draft resolution while including some of the points raised by the draft resolution introduced by India, Mali and Nigeria. In particular, the American attitude on withdrawal was carefully enunciated in Resolution 242:

"(i) Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict;
(ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries free from threats or acts of force."

The resolution deliberately did not call for withdrawal from "all the territories" because it was felt not only that Israel would find this unacceptable but also that the United States would veto such a resolution.
VIII - CONCLUSION

Israel had come a long way since its emergence from the 1950s with all the disadvantages and none of the benefits of non-alignment. The outcomes of the war were not altogether advantageous since the Soviet Union had broken-off relations with the Jewish state, and its Arab neighbours were in no mood to negotiate peace from a position of weakness. Nevertheless, in terms of the politics of patronage, Israel had succeeded in enhancing its prospects and its value to its superpower patron. In six years it had managed to forge a solid relationship with the United States, based on an underlying commitment to Israel's survival, but going far beyond that commitment to a level of economic, military and political patronage which Israel had not hitherto experienced. In six years, Israel had managed to transfer its dependence from a waning and ultimately unreliable great power to the pre-eminent superpower. Moreover, in six days, Israel had become the dominant military power in the Middle East, defeating with devastating speed the combined might of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq, while its American patron squared-off Israel's Soviet adversary, and then backed its political stance after the victory. The contrast between 1956, when the United States had combined with the Soviet Union to force Israel to withdraw from Sinai, and 1967, when the United States backed Israel's demands for a negotiated peace settlement in return for withdrawal, could not be stronger. As such, it was one further indication of the turn-around in Israel's fortunes.

How had this turn-around been achieved? These two chapters have demonstrated that adept utilisation of the various bargaining levers, some intrinsic to Israel (its capability to go nuclear, its military strength, its unique nature as a Jewish state), others conferred on Israel by the regional and international environment (its role as a status quo power, its role as the balancer of Soviet-supplied Egyptian power, its role as a regional stabiliser, etc.) enabled this weak and dependent state to secure American patronage and resist American policy. However, Israel's experience during this period also underlines the importance of the rational application of will-power in bringing these available forms of leverage to bear upon its newfound patron. Without a strong will on the part of the leadership, the wooing of the United States might have become a low priority because of powerful internal opposition. Without a strong will to defend its rights and protect its interests, Israel might have
failed to convince the United States that its combined strategy of deterrence and compulsion had to be supported for lack of a viable alternative. And without the will-power to go to war in defence of its vital interests, Israel would not have gained American acquiescence in its pre-emption and would rather have been forced to submit to the compromising of its rights and perhaps its survival.

It is necessary to place two qualifications on the general thrust of these conclusions. First, had Israel not applied its will-power with judgement and care as to the consequences for its relationship with its patron, the outcome might have been very different. Had Israel decided to ignore the American requests for consultation and then delay, during the May-June crisis, had it decided to take immediate military action (as it almost did on 28 May), instead of allowing time for the United States to realise that diplomacy held no prospect, the political aftermath might well have included American support for an unconditional Israeli withdrawal, an American arms embargo, and a concerted superpower attempt to undo Israel's victory.

Second, factors beyond Israel's control contributed in large measure to the turn-around in Israel's fortunes. Had relations between the United States and Egypt not deteriorated into a 'tail-spin', Israel would have had great difficulty in convincing the United States of the wisdom of supporting its deterrent strength. Had the United States retained a position of influence in Cairo during the May-June crisis it would have been unwilling to consider the option of unleashing Israel, far more willing to impose a diplomatic compromise, and far less eager to recognise its commitment to Israel's rights. Had Nasser applied his will-power less impulsively in his relations with the United States, had he not taken the ill-advised decision to close the Straits, had he shown greater flexibility at the eleventh hour when the United States sought a compromise, Israel's fate would have been considerably less glorious. The triumph of Israel's weak power politics was closely related to the failure of Nasser's non-aligned politics and could not have been achieved without it.
PART TWO

CHAPTER THREE

THE POLITICS OF NASSER'S NON-ALIGNMENT

I - INTRODUCTION

In stark contrast to Israel's predicament as the decade of the sixties dawned, Egypt emerged with Nasser's revolution intact and riding high on the prestige which it had gained from the defiance of the West at Suez and Aswan, from its friendship with the Soviet Union and from the apparent success of its union with Syria. Nasser had established himself as the popular hero of the Arab masses in their struggle against colonialism, the champion of Arab unity and a leader of the non-aligned world. He had made Egypt a force to be reckoned with in the world arena and his demonstrated ability to promote Soviet interests and denigrate Western ones had ensured that both superpowers, in their competition for influence in the Middle East, would seek an accommodation with Egypt. As one Egyptian official told the American Ambassador at the time, and it was equally applicable to the Soviet Union:

   The West no longer has us in a corner. We are now in a corridor and if you press us too hard we can always come out at the other end.

1

The common superpower perception, that Cairo represented the most influential capital in the Middle East and that the protection and promotion of their interests therefore dictated common policies of coming to terms with Nasser, provided Egypt with considerable leverage by which it could gain the aid and support of both the United States and the Soviet Union. By 1960 Nasser had become renowned for his successful utilisation of this leverage in playing one superpower off against the other. 2 Yet by 1967 this leverage had disappeared, Egypt had become solely dependent on the Soviet Union and Nasser was so much out of the corridor and boxed into the corner that he threw caution to the wind and precipitated a war which he was not prepared for and which he had previously sought to avoid. These developments appear stranger still when it is remembered that


at the outset of the 1960s the United States had hammered the last nail in the coffin of its inappropriate 'containment' policy and had adopted a new approach to Egypt aimed at promoting relations through large-scale economic assistance. At the same time the Soviet Union had begun to recognise the shortcomings of its doctrinal rigidity and, despite Nasser's anti-communist actions, had decided that the provision of arms and aid to Egypt represented the most promising and stable investment in Middle Eastern influence. How does one then explain why Nasser, having succeeded in gaining grain from one superpower, guns from the other, and economic aid from both, unnecessarily alienated his American patron and thereby forfeited the foreign aid so crucial to the stable development of his country?

The explanation lies in the very failure of the exercise of leverage by a weak state which perhaps possessed greater means to resist the influence of its patrons than any other country of similar status. Nasser can be held responsible for much of this failure because his impulsive behaviour caused the dissipation of goodwill between patron and client, and thereby reduced the effectiveness of his leverage. However, his impulsiveness would not have been sufficient to cause the United States to abandon Egypt had it not been accompanied by an underlying conflict between the imperatives of Nasser's foreign policy and American interests in the Middle East. In accentuating rather than sublimating this conflict, Nasser's conduct doomed Washington's new approach as effectively as it doomed Egypt to the fate of Soviet dependence.

Theoretically, it is possible that the existence of a basic conflict of interest between patron and client can be sublimated by careful efforts on both sides to emphasise that which unites rather than that which divides, by the construction of a reservoir of goodwill, by the accumulation of positive nuances through the exercise of leverage only on those issues where both possess flexibility. Such cautious conduct is especially important for the client if its patron has no underlying commitment tying it to the client and can as readily abandon it and support its adversaries as accept the cost of continuing the investment when the prospects of return appear small. In periods of relative stability, such as existed in the Middle East before 1967, the demands of this particular type of relationship are more easily met because issues vital to patron or protégé tend to be submerged beneath the surface calm of the detente. But the client must
take care to appear to have regard for the interests of the patron on the minor issues of dispute, if the major issues produced by the basic conflict of interest are to be prevented from disturbing the halcyon atmosphere. In this way the client is likely to get its way on issues vital to its well-being, but of minor import to the superpower, while storing goodwill for the clash over vital interests should it arise. Moreover, the task of accommodation is made easier where the patron perceives an interest in maintaining the detente and promoting the relationship by purposely deemphasising the basic conflict. In short, whether the client will be able to secure patronage from, and resist the influence of, a patron whose basic interests are in opposition to its own, will depend on the tolerance of the superpower and its expectations of pay-offs for its patronage, as well as on the skilful promotion of this tolerance and encouragement of these expectations by the client.

If the theory appears simple, the practice proved to be far more complex in the case of Egyptian-American relations. Sublimating the basic conflict of interests was particularly difficult for Nasser because of the dictates of his foreign policy. His priorities were set by the nature of his regime. Revolutionary and nationalist, imposed on Egypt by a small group of officers, surrounded by conservative and feudal monarchies, the regime had to be protected from internal subversion and external attack by establishing its legitimacy at home and its importance abroad through domestic economic development and foreign policy achievements. Domestic economic development had become a priority because of the poverty of the masses and because the regime's pursuit of modernisation had widened the expectations of the burgeoning 'modern' sector of the population. Thus political stability could only be assured by the fulfilment of the economic expectations of the masses and the bourgeoisie, which required the maintenance of a high consumption, welfare economy. This in turn required extensive foreign aid to finance the balance of payments deficits generated by imports of food, raw materials and finished goods. Thus the survival of Nasser's regime depended, in part, on foreign assistance, and in this

3. Accordingly in the first five year plan Egypt allocated a greater proportion of investment to services, housing and public utilities than to agriculture or industry. The planned share in total investments for 1960-1965 of dwellings, public utilities, transport and other services was 43%. Moreover, in this plan, a good part of industrial investment was directed to industries producing such things as air-conditioners, refrigerators and motor cars. See Galil A. Amin, The Modernisation of Poverty, Lieden, 1974, p. 61.
context Egypt sorely needed American aid, because it provided large amounts of food which could be paid for in Egyptian currency, thereby freeing hard currency for other purposes, while these payments were mostly relent to Egypt for its investment projects. However, this means of promoting internal political legitimacy had to be complemented by continuous foreign policy triumphs to provide Nasser's supporters with a constant replenishment of his charismatic authority: As one analyst and observer of Nasser's style has noted:

...the Egyptian masses pictured him as the Nile Valley-dweller rising against the invader, courageous enough to say "No" and shrewd enough not to return empty-handed...Nasser became Gamal, he who does not retreat.

His failure to develop a political structure that would legitimise his power made him reliant on this "personification" of authority through diplomatic triumphs which reinforced his popular mandate. Moreover, Nasser's desire to build his prestige, to fulfil the role of leader and unifier of the Arab world, compounded this propensity for foreign exploits already enhanced by his dramatic successes in the fifties.

Herein lay the dilemma which made Nasser's task so difficult, for while he needed American aid for economic development, he needed to debase American interests to achieve diplomatic success. Were he to enhance his authority by championing the causes of anti-imperialism, Arab unity and Palestine, and by achieving victories at the expense of his conservative Arab rivals, it was inevitable that he would threaten the interests of the United States, which had become identified as the new imperialist, which possessed important oil interests in the conservative Arab states, and which was committed to preserving the integrity of Israel, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Thus Nasser's natural proclivities produced a peculiar form of non-aligned politics which relied, not on playing one superpower off against the other, but rather on the debasement of American interests and the promotion of Soviet ones. Given this natural proclivity for conflict with the United States, how could Nasser encourage the American tolerance and expectations of benefit so necessary to maintain its patronage?


The State Department in Washington thought it had the answers to this problem, for its officers were as keen to promote the relationship as the Egyptians. Seizing on Kennedy's desire to build fruitful relations with the newly emergent nations of the Third World, and the particular White House priority of coming to terms with the most powerful leader of the Arab world, the State Department articulated a new approach designed to extend the limits of American tolerance. First it was argued that American strategic interests no longer required a pro-Western defence coalition in the Middle East heartland, a policy which had caused conflict with Nasser in the 1950s. The development of ICBMs had made the Middle East less important as a strategic base for the containment of the Soviet Union, while the Arab opposition generated by this policy had demonstrated that "emphasis on a maximum military security programme is not necessarily the best way to protect our national interests". Secondly, non-alignment was looked on with greater favour than in Dulles' era, especially in the Middle East where the suppression of the communist parties in Egypt, Syria and later Iraq, was hailed, in Washington, as the coming of age of Arab neutralism; while not pro-Western it had ceased to be unthinkingly pro-Soviet. In particular, Nasser's dispute with the Soviet Union was interpreted as a "growing understanding that communism is antithetical to Arab nationalist aspirations"; Egypt exemplified "how diametrically opposed these two forces really are and what a powerful obstacle to foreign infiltration the dynamic effort of a developing new country can be".

11. Bowles, op.cit., p. 747. From 1959 to 1961 relations between Egypt and the Soviet Union went through a stormy period because Nasser had embarked on a campaign to suppress the Arab communists of Egypt and Syria, while vehemently attacking their influence in Iraq, in an attempt to eliminate communist influence from the Arab national movement. Moscow had treated the suppression of the relatively insignificant Egyptian communists as an internal affair, but it was unable to ignore the suppression of the more numerous and influential Syrian party, and Nasser's opposition to the rising
The success of Arab socialism, so the argument went, better suited American interests than its only real alternative, communism. This new attitude was reinforced by a reassessment of the threat to American oil interests posed by Arab nationalism. The development of a glut in the world oil market and the discovery of new fields in Libya and Venezuela seemed to assure the security of oil supplies for the industries of the West, because even if radical regimes replaced conservative ones in some Arab oil producing states, they would still need to sell their oil to the West.

Finally a critical appraisal of past American policy failures encouraged the belief that the best interests of the United States lay in remaining detached and impartial in the face of the inter-Arab and Arab-Israeli conflicts — a wise arbiter, rather than a partisan promoter of parochial interests. Since stability best served American interests, it would be promoted by assisting economic development and by discouraging external involvement in local rivalries. Progressive regimes would be encouraged to develop in an orderly and productive way in order to reduce the opportunities for Soviet exploitation of the tensions that were bound to accompany the modernisation of the Arab world.


13. The fears of an interruption in oil supplies as a result of radical coups in the Arab oil-producing states had been allayed by the experience with Iraq after Kassem's coup. See Richard Kolte, "United States policy and the Middle East", in ibid., pp. 79-80.

14. Under Secretary of State Harriman stated this explicitly in a speech in 1963: "The U.S. is not taking sides in disputes and is encouraging other states where possible not to take sides in disputes in the area, but rather to allow states to decide their own destinies. We are assisting those nations in the achievement of their basic goal — an adequate rate of economic development. Such development, I firmly believe, affords the soundest and in a sense the only basis for long term stability". Op.cit., p. 567; Cf. Badeau, The American Approach to the Arab World, pp. 16-18; Charles D. Cremeans, The Arabs and the World, Nasser's Arab Nationalist Policy, New York, 1963, Chapter XIII.
Thus Washington's new approach to Egypt was to be explicitly based on tolerance of Nasser's non-alignment and his desire to lead the Arab world. As one of the State Department's policy planners put it:

The theory behind American policy in this period rested on two assumptions: that it might be possible to use American aid to encourage tendencies and people, even where regimes appeared hostile, to create a situation more favourable to American interest; and that the United States could tolerate, with safety to its fundamental objectives, a high level of "static" in Arab political activity. 13

Relations with Egypt were to be cultivated through the provision of extensive economic assistance under the PL 480 'food for peace' programme. Egypt had already been receiving some $45 million to $100 million per year since 1959 under this programme, but in 1962 the United States concluded a medium-term agreement providing Egypt with $431.8 million worth of American wheat and other surplus commodities over a period of three years. The food would be paid for in Egyptian currency, 85% of which would be relent to the Egyptian government at a low interest rate for development projects. 16 This assistance would be supplemented by hard currency loans amounting to between $20 million and $40 million per year, bringing annual assistance to a proposed total of some $200 million per year, a doubling of existing levels. 17 As an indication of the importance Washington attached to cultivating relations with Cairo, Egypt would receive over the next three years between 30% and 43% of total American economic aid to the Middle East. 18


18. U.S. ECONOMIC AID TO THE MIDDLE EAST 1946 - 1966 ($ millions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>EGYPT</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>EGYPT AS % OF TOTAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946-1961</td>
<td>384.4</td>
<td>2325.6</td>
<td>16.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>224.1</td>
<td>524.0</td>
<td>42.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>199.7</td>
<td>661.8</td>
<td>30.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>140.5</td>
<td>441.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>147.8</td>
<td>402.4</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>262.3</td>
<td>23.0</td>
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The Kennedy Administration was also responsible for encouraging the West German government to provide extensive aid to Egypt. A protocol signed in April 1963 provided Egypt with a loan of $97.5 million, repayable over 12-16 years at an interest rate of 2 1/2 - 4%, as well as technical aid of $12.5 million, and export credits of $127.5 million over seven to ten years. A further agreement was signed in August 1964 for a hydro-electric and irrigati project at Quattara for which West Germany would have provided $118 million
Clearly, there were important pay-offs for Egypt if Nasser could keep his foreign exploits within the bounds of increased American tolerance.

What did Washington expect in return? The most important expectation of American policy-makers was that the Arab-Israeli conflict would be frozen and placed in the 'ice-box'. If Nasser could resist heating up this issue, the basic conflict of interest between patron and client would remain submerged and Washington could then adopt an 'even-handed' policy, without affecting its commitment to the integrity of the Jewish state. According to Ambassador Badeau, the former president of the American University of Cairo who was dispatched to Cairo by Kennedy to supervise the implementation of the new policy, the Arab-Israeli conflict would be frozen by a "frank and mutual recognition of basic differences regarding the matter and an agreement not to let these intrude on mutually profitable relations". 19

A further expectation of American policy was that the United States, in assisting Egypt in its economic development, would encourage those tendencies which were constructive and peaceful, while removing the incentives for policies aimed at defying the West or damaging its interests in the Middle East. Returning from a trip to Cairo in 1962 Chester Bowles, a special advisor to Kennedy, best expressed this expectation:

If the leaders of the Egyptian government come to see that their role in history will be determined...by what they actually do about the aching poverty and misery that oppress the people of Egypt, there will be opportunities for constructive, peaceful cooperation between the American and Egyptian governments. In this event tensions may gradually be eased throughout the Middle East and energies may increasingly be diverted from angry conflict to constructive development. 20

Thus Washington's new approach to Egypt appeared to allow Nasser considerable leeway in pursuing the enhancement of his charismatic authority and prestige, as long as he also paid some attention to the boundaries of American tolerance and made some attempt to fulfill American expectations.

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18. (continued) aid. This project was scrapped in 1965 along with the cancellation of the other aid agreements because of Nasser's invitation to Ulbricht of East Germany (see below). Keeling's Contemporary Archives, 15-22 May, 1965, p. 20740.


by leaving conflict with Israel in the "ice box" and by concentrating on economic development. Yet by 1966 he had lost all American support and had become heavily dependent on the Soviet Union. Why did he fail?

Some analysts of this period have tended to emphasise the basic conflict of interest between Egypt and the United States when explaining the failure. Others have argued that the United States forced Nasser into a corner, was even out to destroy him. Yet a careful analysis of the conduct of the relationship will show that while elements of these arguments are apposite, Nasser's conduct of the politics of patronage bears the major responsibility for his failure. Far from sublimating the basic conflict of interest, far from demonstrating that aid moderated his tendency to denigrate American interest, he preferred to use the United States as his \textit{bête noire} to enhance his position in the Arab world and his importance to the Soviet Union. In doing so, he tended to ignore the limits beyond which damage to American relations would prove counterproductive; he tended to ignore the fact that while his admirers in the State Department could make policy, Congress and the President could do much to break it, if they decided that there was little to gain from cultivating a leader whose imperatives were anti-American; and perhaps most significantly, he tended to ignore the fact that, once America tired of the game, it had the ability to redefine the conditions, abandon him to the Soviet Union, and turn its attention to other clients in the region. The new approach in Washington allowed for "static" in relations with Cairo, but it did not allow for the noise to become so loud that it would exceed American tolerance and obscure any of the supposed benefits of the relationship. Nasser failed to keep the noise down to a tolerable level.

II - YEMEN: THE FIRST TEST

It did not take long for the noise to generate. In September 1962 a coup in the Yemen replaced the feudal Imam with a revolutionary, professedly Nasserite regime under the leadership of Abdullah Al-Sallal.


popular support, and opposed by the deposed Imam, who was busy rallying
the support of the mountain tribesmen as well as Saudi Arabia and Jordan,
Sallal's regime appealed to Nasser for assistance. Within a few days,
Egyptian paratroopers and materiel had arrived in Yemen, and by November,
a mutual defence treaty had been signed; within two months of the coup
there were already 10,000 Egyptian troops in Yemen. 23 Meanwhile, the Imam
had gained the financial and material backing of Saudi Arabia and Jordan,
since they perceived the Yemeni revolution as a direct threat to the
integrity of their regimes and to stability in the Arabian Peninsula. By
the end of November, with Egyptian planes bombing Saudi cities and Sallal
publicly threatening to march his forces into Saudi Arabia, a new theatre
of conflict between the 'progressives' and 'reactionaries' of the Arab
world had opened. As a consequence, Nasser's intervention generated
noise in the relationship with Washington, for it raised the spectre of
instability in the Arabian Peninsula spreading to the feudal oil states of
the Persian Gulf and to the British protectorate of Aden.

The civil war in Yemen thus presented Cairo and Washington with their
first test of whether the patron and its uncertain client, while remaining
true to their interests, could conduct relations to their mutual benefit.
It was not a major test for the new relationship since the vital interests
of neither were involved, but it would prove to be a classic case of how
a minor issue, involving divergent interests, could do much to affect the
tenor of relations and lead the patron to question its policy.

At the outset of the civil war Washington's concerns were twofold:
to prevent the subversion of the monarchies of Saudi Arabia and Jordan;
and to deprive the Soviet Union of an opportunity to exploit the conflict
and precipitate a polarisation of the Arab world, making Moscow the champion
of progress and Washington the protector of reaction. Accordingly,
the United States, adhering to the precepts of its new tolerant approach,
decided to regard the revolution in Yemen as a legitimate expression of
nationalist and progressive aspirations, while bolstering Saudi Arabia and
Jordan with declarations of support. 24 Washington was determined to remain

24. The State Department was concerned that if it did not recognise and
courage such movements the United States would become increasingly
identified as the protector of reaction while the Soviet Union became the
champion of progress in the Arab world. To avoid this polarisation and
enhance America's moderating influence, recognition of the new regime in
Sana'a was considered essential. See Badeau, p. 137 and a letter from
Assistant Secretary of State Phillips Talbot to Senator Hickenlooper, printed
detached from this local dispute and to continue its policy of impartial assistance to Egypt. The new three-year aid agreement, concluded in October 1962, at the very time that Egyptian troops were landing in Yemen, would not be used as a lever to pressure Nasser into withdrawal because policy-makers argued that food aid was too sensitive to be used as a bargaining lever, and too important in the development of American relations with Egypt to be abandoned because of limited tension in the Arabian Peninsula. Instead Washington would rely on quiet diplomacy, dialogue and mediation to persuade Nasser that it was in his interests, both for the welfare of his country, and for the continuity of good relations with the United States, to cooperate in finding a way out of the impasse created by Egyptian intervention on behalf of the republicans and Saudi support for the royalists. The aim of American policy would be to provide a face-saving way for Nasser to withdraw his troops while providing Saud and Hussein with sufficient security to enable them to accept the new regime in Sana'a.

American policy therefore, in theory, provided Nasser with the leeway to preserve the republican regime as well as his American connection. Moreover, the absence of pressure for continued involvement from his Soviet patron should have enhanced this manoeuvrability. While Moscow had recognised the republican regime and expressed its support for the "just national aspirations of the Yemeni people" it had also adopted a cautious approach, channeling minor assistance through the agency of Egypt, but demonstrating little desire to exploit the situation or to encourage greater Egyptian involvement. The Soviet Union certainly supported this 'anti-imperialist' revolution, but it was not averse to Egyptian withdrawal. It has been suggested that Nasser feared that Egyptian withdrawal would enable the Soviet Union to replace his support for the republicans. But this fear of Soviet penetration was shared by the

25. According to Badeau, the aid was designed to promote long-term dependence: "...the real choice here...(was) between surrendering an area that is vital to American interests to further Soviet penetration and control, or remaining to wield such influence as is possible while pursuing the long-term objective of gradually making Western and American aid so needed to the local economy, that the need will temper activities harmful to American interests". J.S. Badeau, "The Sovereign Middle East: New Horizon in American Foreign Policy", in S.N. Fisher (ed.), New Horizons in American Foreign Policy, Ohio, 1966, p. 94.


27. In fact the Soviet Union endorsed the peace talks between Faisal and Nasser in August, 1964.
United States and might therefore have been used in bargaining for American guarantees of the Sallal regime, in exchange for Egyptian disengagement.

However, if the policies of his patrons were conducive to withdrawal, Nasser's Arab aspirations exerted pressure in the opposite direction. The collapse of the United Arab Republic in 1961, following the secession of Syria, together with antagonism towards Kassem in Iraq, had served to isolate Egypt in the Arab world. Nasser had been concentrating on socialist reconstruction at home and a polemical war against the 'reactionaries' abroad through the carrying of the message of the Egyptian revolution across the borders and over the heads of his Arab opponents.  

Under attack from Iraq and Syria on the left, and Jordan and Saudi Arabia on the right, he responded in kind, labelling them "reactionary" and "imperialist" and declaring that "unanimity about the goal is more important than unity of the ranks". When the coup in Yemen brought to power a regime which espoused this very unanimity with the Egyptian revolution and called for its support, Nasser was presented with an opportunity to reject his isolation, to prove that his ideas on Arab unity through revolution were not moribund, and to demonstrate to their own people the reactionary nature of the Saudi and Jordanian monarchs. It was an opportunity he could hardly refuse, given his predilection and need for foreign exploits, his desire to enhance his prestige and the blow that non-intervention would have dealt it, his interest in regaining the initiative in inter-Arab rivalry, and the pressure of his powerful deputy supreme commander, General Amer.  

Any consideration of damaging Egypt's relationship with the United States would have been dwarfed by these stakes, had it not already been dwarfed by Washington's own purposeful tolerance. So Nasser intervened with precipitate haste, knowing next to nothing about


the country and the conflict yet impulsively committing his troops and his
prestige in support of a regime which had little prospect of exercising
authority over its countrymen without this support. In these
circumstances he could not withdraw his troops unless the royalist
opposition had been eliminated. This commitment, together with his belief
that victory could be achieved (which was bolstered by Amer's unfounded
optimism) led him to reject American mediation efforts, thereby
dissipating the goodwill that Washington had brought to this dispute.

The first American attempt to mediate a disengagement came in November
1962 when Kennedy wrote to Nasser, Faisal, Hussein and Sallal proposing
a compromise settlement whereby Egypt would withdraw its troops, while
Saudi Arabia and Jordan would cease all assistance to the royalist forces.
Both Saudi Arabia and Egypt rejected the proposal because at this stage
neither had abandoned its hopes for victory. Cairo's rejection had not
yet strained relations with its American patron because Washington
recognised that it could not expect a unilateral Egyptian withdrawal. So
Washington persisted and managed to secure what it thought was an Egyptian
commitment to withdrawal as a *quid pro quo* for American recognition of
the Yemen Arab Republic. This agreement was made explicit in the official
American statement of recognition, which welcomed Egypt's declaration of
its willingness "to undertake a reciprocal disengagement and expeditious
phased removal of troops from Yemen as external forces engaged in support
of the Yemen royalists are removed from the frontier and external support
of the royalists is stopped."35

However, Washington did not receive its *quid pro quo* because the
Egyptian forces sought and failed first to deal a decisive blow to the
royalists before withdrawing. Within two weeks of American recognition,
Egyptian planes had resumed their bombing raids on Saudi villages and within
two months Egyptian forces had launched a major offensive against the
royalist strongholds. Washington responded with patience, "strenuous"
representations in Cairo, a reiteration of its support for the integrity
of Saudi Arabia - underlined by the dispatch of a squadron of jet fighters,

32. See Nutting, *loc.cit.*
34. See Patrick Seale, "The War in Yemen", *New Republic*, Volume 198, 26
35. See "United States Recognition of the Yemen Arab Republic", in
*U.S. Foreign Policy, Current Documents, 1962*, p. 784.
a destroyer and paratroopers - and yet another attempt at mediation. In March 1963, Kennedy sent a special envoy, Ellsworth Bunker, to negotiate with Nasser and Faisal in conjunction with an American sponsored U.N. mediation effort by Ralph Bunche. Ostensibly successful, Bunker and Bunche arranged a disengagement based on the same terms as had originally been proposed by Kennedy, but by the time the U.N. Yemen Observer Mission (UNYOM) had been dispatched to oversee its implementation, the royalists had launched a counter-attack and had regained much of the ground lost in the Egyptian offensive. In these circumstances Nasser was less inclined than ever to withdraw. By September 1963, the number of Egyptian troops deployed in Yemen had risen to 28,000 with their maintenance estimated to be costing Egypt some $150 million per year.  

Although Nasser had demonstrated a willingness to negotiate and to entertain the idea of withdrawal he seemed trapped by his committed prestige and therefore proved unable to prevent a deterioration in relations with the United States. Even after Saudi Arabia, on American urging, suspended its assistance to the royalists in June 1963, it was clear that the republican regime could not survive without Egyptian protection. In such circumstances withdrawal would lead to the downfall of the regime, striking a blow to Nasser's prestige and the cause of Egyptian-led Arab unity. Unable and unwilling to cut his losses, he found it necessary to increase the Egyptian commitment, thereby precipitating the suspicion in Washington that he sought to spread his influence in the Arabian Peninsula and threaten Saudi Arabia. If Egyptian bombing of Saudi territory did nothing to allay these fears, Nasser's rhetoric did much to reinforce them, declaring as he did that "the revolution in Yemen is an expression of, not only the Yemeni people's hopes, but the hopes of the Saudi people" and that Egypt supported these people "against the despotism and exploitation of the Saudi rulers".  

Instead of emphasising Egyptian desires for withdrawal, Nasser demonstrated his disregard for American interests, thereby exacerbating the divergence in Egyptian-American relations. By October 1963, Kennedy's patience seems to have run out, for in his last letter to Nasser he charged  

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that, while Faisal was carrying out his end of the bargain, Nasser was not and this fact was causing him "personal concern":

I therefore have no leverage with Faisal when...he continues to see Egyptian troops in Yemen and hear expressions of hostility from Cairo...While we think we understand some of the reasons we cannot blink at the fact, which is becoming public knowledge, that the United Arab Republic is not carrying out a compact made with the United Nations and, in effect, underwritten by the United States as a friend of both parties. 40

But if Nasser had only strained Kennedy's patience, his involvement in Yemen had antagonised Congress, which now felt that American aid had enabled Egypt to divert resources to the war. While the Administration continued to defend aid to Egypt on the basis of Nasser's importance in the Arab world, his non-alignment, and the necessity to keep aid "impartial", Congress began seriously to question the rationale behind this policy. 41

In October, Senator Gruening presented a report on American aid to the Middle East in which he charged that:

U.S. dollars are enabling Egypt to wage war in Yemen, to foment trouble in Jordan and Saudi Arabia, and to arm to attack Israel just as surely as though they were spent directly for that purpose. 42

In November, the Senate and House approved an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act to ban aid and sales of surplus food to nations preparing for aggression against other recipients of aid. 43 Although Egypt was not referred to by name, the deployment of troops in Yemen, and Nasser's threats against Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Israel came under attack from both sides


41. Secretary of State Dean Rusk, in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, defended aid to Egypt on the grounds that it had helped to reverse the adverse situation of the 1950s and encouraged Egypt to maintain a non-aligned policy which was "increasingly more compatible with free world interests". He argued that the use of aid "as a bludgeon to force solutions will not work where deep-seated beliefs and long-standing grievances are held". Cited in Near East Report, Volume VII, 1963, p. 56; Cf. Testimony of Assistant Secretary Talbot to the House Sub-Committee on Foreign Operations, cited in Near East Report, p. 90.


43. The amendment stated that no aid should be supplied to "any country which the President determines is engaging in or preparing for aggressive military efforts directed against: 1) the United States; 2) any country receiving assistance under this act; 3) any country to which sales are made under the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954, until
in the Congressional debate. In proposing the amendment, Senator Gruening charged that the State Department had many pro-Arab people in it who would never get tough with Nasser except under a stiff Congressional mandate.

In public, Kennedy's reaction reflected the continued tolerance of his Administration. He criticised the Congressional amendment for reducing his flexibility in negotiating an Egyptian withdrawal from Yemen and warned that "these threats that the United States is going to cut off aid is [sic] a great temptation to Arabic countries to say: 'Cut if off' ". He went on to argue that, while quiet diplomacy might not bring about the withdrawal, Congressional threats were likely to have the opposite result of encouraging Nasser to keep his troops in Yemen. However, in private representations it became clear that Congressional action, together with growing dissatisfaction within the Administration, had led the United States to increase its pressure on Nasser: the Egyptian government was informed that future aid would depend on the progress of troop withdrawals from Yemen. Apparently, Nasser responded with some assurances that there would be withdrawals in January 1964, but these did not eventuate. By September 1964, when UNYOM was disbanded, having failed to complete its task, Egyptian troop deployments had in fact risen to 40,000 with still no prospect of resolving the conflict.

Accordingly, with the accession of Johnson to the presidency the United States abandoned its attempts at mediation and instead adopted what became known as a 'stew-in-your-own-juice' policy. No further efforts would be made to salvage Nasser from his difficulties in Yemen. Instead, Washington hoped that discontent within Egypt at the high cost and absence of benefits from the Yemeni involvement would eventually force the disengagement which

43 (continued) the President determines that such military efforts or preparations have ceased and...will not be renewed...". Cited in U.S. Foreign Policy, Current Documents, 1963, p. 612. The amendment was passed in the Senate by a majority of 65 to 13 with 22 absent; 17 of those absent announced that they would have voted in favour, bringing opposition to Nasser up to at least 82 Senators. See Near East Report, Volume VII, 1963, p. 99.
46. See President Kennedy's News Conference on 14 November, 1963, in U.S. Foreign Policy, Current Documents, 1963, p. 612. Rusk also publicly opposed the legislation: "I am very concerned with the loss of flexibility, the loss of any ability to move to protect and forward the interests of the United States wherever they might be engaged". New York Times, 9 November, 1963.
American diplomacy had failed to secure.  

In the final analysis, the civil war in Yemen had only a marginal impact on American interests in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia had been stabilised through the accession of King Faisal and minor demonstrations of American support; revolutionary nationalism had been contained within the borders of Yemen. However, the failure of America's mediation effort had caused disillusionment with the new approach developed under Kennedy and had led to a deterioration in American-Egyptian relations. Although the damage to American interests had been limited, and Nasser's involvement in the civil war had not yet become a major source of tension in relations between patron and client, the limits of compatibility between the Egyptian revolution and American interests in the Arab world had been delineated. Nasser had not only succeeded in raising the level of noise in his relations with Washington, by making it difficult for American policy-makers to justify continued assistance in the face of Congressional opposition, he had also done much to destroy the expectation that American aid would encourage him to concentrate on internal development. An atmosphere of mutual suspicion had developed, with Washington attaching greater significance to the 'anti-imperialist' component of Nasser's foreign policy, while he suspected that Washington was behind the royalist successes and sought to keep him tied down in Yemen. The Yemen civil war had demonstrated that, for Nasser, the politics of American patronage conflicted with the politics of Arab unity; he seemed unable to strike a balance between the two. In 1962, Kennedy had written to Nasser that "many people in both of our countries question whether good relations between us are really possible. I think they are wrong, but it is up to us to prove them wrong." By 1964 Nasser had done much to prove them right.

III - UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS

If Egyptian involvement in the Yemen had demonstrated that American aid would do little to encourage Nasser to concentrate on the economic

51. Cited in ibid., p. 220.
development of his country, Nasser's reaction to subsequent events underlined his slight regard for other American expectations. Time and again, when the underlying conflict of interest between patron and client emerged, he disregarded the limits of American tolerance and, instead of sublimating the conflict, used it to bolster his position in the Arab world and his importance in Soviet eyes. He wasted his leverage through impulsive attacks on the United States and thus ensured that, at the same time as his position in the Arab world became more untenable, Washington's attitude exacerbated his problems. Nasser's task was not easy given the incompatibility of his objectives and American interests, but by continually drawing attention to this incompatibility he made that task far more difficult. Consequently, by the end of 1964 America's new approach had all but collapsed under the strain of unfulfilled expectations, taking Nasser's policy of non-alignment with it.

The most important expectation of the new approach had been that the Arab-Israeli conflict would remain in the 'ice-box'. America's commitment to the integrity of Israel was bound to create difficulties for its relations with the Arab world given the deep-seated nature of Arab hostility towards the Jewish state. Precisely for this reason the United States had sought to neutralise the conflict by promoting a settlement of the Palestine refugee problem, by arbitrating the dispute over the utilisation of the Jordan river, by avoiding the role of major arms supplier to the region while seeking to maintain a military balance between Israel and the Arabs, and by encouraging Egypt, which possessed the most powerful Arab army, to concentrate on other issues. The policy had functioned well enough in preventing any major outbreak of fighting, although no progress had been made on the basic issues of recognition of Israel by the Arab states or the redressing of Arab grievances. However, its efficacy was tested anew at the beginning of 1964, after Israel announced the completion of preparations for its diversion of the Jordan river.

Under a plan negotiated by Eric Johnston, an envoy dispatched by Eisenhower, Arab and Israeli engineers had agreed, in 1955, to diversion of the Jordan waters for the development of the riparian states. Although the Arab League had rejected this plan because it implied recognition of, and cooperation with, the Jewish state, the plan acquired de facto status as a result of the implementation of American supported projects in Israel and Jordan, which conformed to the limits laid down by
Johnston. To allay Israel's doubts about the Jordanian project, Kennedy had written to Ben-Gurion in November 1962 reiterating American support for Israel's project, thereby committing Washington to the diversion which was about to take place.

Perhaps Washington believed that the tacit Arab agreement to the diversion plan in 1955, together with the implementation of Jordan's East Ghor Canal project, had defused Arab objections to the Israeli plan and thus no conflict between the Arabs and Israel would arise. If that was the case, the belief quickly proved mistaken, as Israel's announcement of the completion of its National Water Carrier aroused anew the Arab fear that the diversion would assist the expansion of Israel's presence in the region. Its stated purpose had been to make the Negev desert 'bloom', enabling the creation of new settlements for Jewish immigrants. Although, by the time the project was completed, this aim had become impracticable because of the high salinity of the water, the prior demands of the coastal water tables which had been depleted by drought, and the shift of emphasis from agricultural to industrial expansion, the diversion retained its symbolic significance to the Arabs. Settlement in the Negev would scotch the dream of a land bridge between Egypt and the rest of the Arab world and emphasise Arab inability to promote the return of the Palestinian refugees.

As one analyst has noted:

The feeling that the Israeli water withdrawals in 1964 were as serious a matter as was the establishment of Israel in 1948, is so innate and pervasive that it demands attention from any would-be Arab leader.

Nasser, very much a 'would-be Arab leader', seized the opportunity to promote his cause by championing Arab opposition to the Israeli project. In doing so, he was again forced by inter-Arab rivalry to adopt a position which brought him into conflict with the United States. Since 1959, when

52. Under the Johnston Plan, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon were apportioned 60% of the water, and Israel the rest. See Georgiana G. Stevens, Jordan River Partition, Hoover Institution Studies, No. 6, Stanford University, Stanford, California, 1965, p. 15; Cf. Nutting, who claims that Israel intended to divert 75% of the water! p. 345.

53. Dulles had given oral assurances of support for the Israeli diversion in 1955 and again in 1958. The letter from Kennedy was accompanied by State Department assurances that Washington would strongly oppose submission of the issue to the World Court and any action by the Security Council. See Brecher, Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy, p. 210.

Israel first announced its decision to proceed with the diversion, Syria had been urging a military confrontation to prevent its implementation. In that year Nasser had successfully quashed Syrian proposals for military action and the reinstatement of the blockade in the Straits of Tiran.\(^5\) Instead, he had encouraged the Arab League to investigate a plan for the diversion of the Jordan headwaters in Lebanon and Syria, in order to reduce the flow of water to Israel. A plan was drawn up and adopted by the League in 1961, but no further action had been taken. Now the Syrians were again urging a military response and Nasser faced the prospect of being outbid on an issue which would test his pan-Arab credentials. Nasser had to act to promote his leadership while avoiding a war with Israel which he knew the Arabs were not prepared for.

In a now rare demonstration of the skill which had brought him success in the fifties, he moved to undermine Syrian blustering by declaring publicly his opposition to war:

...we cannot use force today because our circumstances do not enable us to do so...I will not be outbid. I am not ashamed to say that I cannot fight if I feel that I cannot really. If I cannot fight and then go out and fight I will lead you to a disaster. Shall I gamble with my country? Impossible.\(^5\)

Instead, he proposed a summit of Arab heads of state to decide on unified action, and declared his willingness to bury the hatchet and "sit together with those with whom we have disputes, because of Palestine". Within a month, his sworn enemies, Hussein and Saud, his Syrian antagonists, and the other leaders of the Arab world, had convened in Cairo for the first Arab summit. Nasser demonstrated his consummate skill by isolating the Syrians, by forcing the other Arab states to share responsibility for the decision not to fight, and by suggesting an alternative course of action - the implementation of the plan for an Arab diversion of the headwaters of the Jordan together with the establishment of a Unified Military Command to coordinate the strengthening of Arab armies. He also

\(^5\) According to Heikal, Nasser told the Syrians at the time: "I shall not permit the initiation of war unless I am capable of developing it into all-out war against the enemy and against all the support which may be sent to him, and achieve victory". Cited in Robert Stephens, Nasser, A Political Biography, London, 1973, p. 443.

managed to patch up his differences with Jordan and Saudi Arabia, reestablishing diplomatic relations with Amman and acquiring a commitment from Saud to normalise relations through a reconciliation of their differences over Yemen.  

By championing the cause of Palestine, Nasser appears to have taken one step forward and two steps back, placing himself in a more difficult position because the short-term benefits were outweighed by the long-term costs. In the inter-Arab sphere, he had certainly enhanced his prestige by constructing a facade of Arab unity which concealed the deeper divisions between the aspirants for leadership in the Arab world. This mustering of third party support, however uncertain, served to increase his importance to the Soviet Union, where the summit was hailed as confirmation of Khrushchev's contention that Soviet influence could best be promoted by supporting Nasser. However, these benefits had to be weighed against the costs involved in the consequent thawing of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The decision to proceed with the diversion of the headwaters had been met by an unequivocal declaration from Eshkol that any attempt to deprive Israel of water would meet with action to protect Israel's "vital rights". Thus by choosing diversion rather than confrontation Nasser had not avoided war, he had only postponed it. In supporting the Arab diversion he had committed himself to protect Syria, Lebanon and Jordan against Israeli retaliation; he could not abandon them, or the project, without revealing himself as too weak to deal with Israel.

More importantly for this analysis, the thawing of the conflict with Israel caused the disappointment of a very significant American expectation. By making an issue of Israel's diversion, Nasser had removed the conflict from the 'ice-box' and had highlighted the divergent interests of Cairo.


58. See Y. Ro'i, From Encroachment to Involvement, p. 379.

59. Eshkol in a Speech to the Knesset, FBIS, 17 April, 1964. The debate in Israel focussed not on the question of military action but whether such action should be taken to prevent the implementation of the project, or whether it should be taken after the project had been completed.
and Washington. If Nasser had hoped that the demonstration of unified Arab opposition to Israel's project would force the United States to alter its position, he was sorely mistaken. Washington was already committed to the diversion and, in the wake of the summit, reiterated its support for Israel. The State Department declared that it endorsed utilisation of the Jordan waters "as long as this is in accordance with the Johnston plan" and noted that the Israeli diversion conformed to the provisions of that plan. Deputy Under Secretary of State Johnson also reiterated the Administration's commitment to support "any intended victim of any would-be aggressor" in the Middle East.

These statements confirmed Nasser's suspicion that Washington was in fact encouraging Israel's diversion and using Israel's military strength to deter the Arabs from proceeding with their project. Accordingly, the Cairo press vilified the United States while Nasser accused Washington of partiality, declaring that "whoever supports Israel, his interests in the Arab homeland, from the Gulf to the Atlantic will be affected". He warned that "war will occur to repulse and deter aggression, which I expect will take place at any time".

60. Until the Arab Summit, the State Department had been able to claim that at least Nasser had been cooperative in this regard. Thus James P. Grant, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, told the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on 30 April 1963: "in a very real sense, in terms of real actions, the UAR, I think, can be said to have put its relations with Israel in the 'ice-box'." Cited in Near East Report, Volume VII, 1963, p. 50.

61. Israel Home Service, in Hebrew, 13 January, 1964; FBIS, 16 January, 1964. This statement was repeated on 9 May, 1964 by a senior State Department official who affirmed Washington's policy "to support and endorse any project of any of the riparian states which remains within the limits of the Unified Water Plan". Cited in American Jewish Committee, Water and Politics in the Middle East, New York, December, 1964.


63. See Heikal's report of his discussions with an American diplomat in which he charges that the United States had warned that it would not stand by idly if Israel faced an Arab attack, and if the Arabs implemented their diversion plan, then Israel might be forced to occupy the Al-Hasbani and Baniyas springs. Heikal charged that the United States was protecting Israel, trying to impose its trusteeship on the area and inciting Israel to aggression. Al Ahram, 31 January, 1964, in FBIS, 4 February, 1964.

64. Interview with Indian magazine "Blitz", in Al Ahram, 7 February, 1964; FBIS, 7 February, 1964. Cf. Nasser's Unity Day speech, 22 February, 1964, FBIS, 24 February, 1964. In this speech he repeated the threat of war declaring that "the possibilities of the future will be war with Israel".
Of course, Nasser was under pressure to prove his anti-Israel credentials in the Arab world and American support for Israel's diversion had not made his task any easier. Nevertheless, if Nasser, in his contacts with the United States, had sought to downplay the Jordan waters dispute and emphasise instead the Arab decision not to take military action, he might have allayed American fears about the spectre of war. Instead, he used the issue as an occasion to attack the United States and emphasise the conflict of interest over Israel. In doing so, he again demonstrated the incompatibility of his objectives and American interests and, with his rhetoric, succeeded in raising serious doubts in Washington about the validity of the expectation that the Arab-Israeli conflict would remain frozen.

The thawing of the Arab-Israeli conflict coincided with Khrushchev's visit to Cairo in May 1964; again Nasser's reaction challenged American expectations and confirmed the direction in which he was drifting. The State Department had previously argued convincingly that Nasser's 'positive neutralism' was anti-communist as much as it was anti-imperialist, but now Nasser had decided to patch up his ideological differences with Khrushchev. As a prelude to the visit, he released the Egyptian communists whom he had earlier gaolced and backed this move with an orchestrated bout of anti-imperialist rhetoric. He attacked the American presence in neighbouring Libya, calling on that country to demand the closure of the Wheelus Air Base, which it dutifully sought to do, the next day.65 He launched a new offensive in Yemen, and declared that the primary mission of the Arabs was "to expel the British from every part of the Arab homeland".66 In return, he was rewarded by Khrushchev with a new $277 million long-term loan (252 million rubles) and the title Hero of the Soviet Union and the Order of Lenin. While Khrushchev criticised the ideology of Arab unity during his visit, on his return to the Soviet Union he declared:

...different interpretations of certain phenomena does not prevent us from strengthening friendship between the two states, friendship which is based on identical aims in the struggle against imperialism and colonialism...67

In the joint communique issued at the conclusion of the visit, Egypt and

65. Unity Day Speech, ibid.
67. Cited in Ro'i, From Encroachment to Involvement, p. 398.
the Soviet Union expressed mutual support for the people's struggle in the Arabian Peninsula, called for the elimination of Western bases in Libya, Oman and Aden, and noted Soviet support for the Arab stand on the Jordan Waters dispute. For his part, Nasser declared Egyptian support for Soviet policies across the globe from Laos to Africa.

The visit received a quiet response in Washington, reflecting the fear that a hasty reaction might drive Nasser even further into Khrushchev's embrace. The opening of the Aswan dam during Khrushchev's visit had served as a reminder of the consequences of previous American policies. Since Congressional opposition, now supported by a British call for cuts in American aid to Egypt, made an overt gesture to Nasser difficult, the Administration responded with indirect support by virtually forcing the International Monetary Fund to lend Egypt $40 million, on terms unprecedented for their leniency, to cover Egypt's foreign currency debts. Moreover, the Administration continued negotiations on direct assistance of $20 million, in the hope that the atmosphere would become more conducive to American support for Egypt.

Although the Soviet-Egyptian rapprochement had raised doubts about how neutral Nasser now was, the American reaction demonstrated the leverage which he retained in playing the Soviet Union off against the United States. Even though his actions in Yemen and over the Jordan waters dispute, and his periodic attacks on American interests in the Arab world, had strained American tolerance and raised doubts about the validity of its expectations, the specter of Egypt becoming a Soviet satellite was still sufficiently worrying to ensure continued economic assistance. However, the fact that the Administration did not believe it could gain Congressional support for further aid suggested that America's role as patron had become severely circumscribed, and that Nasser would have to make a serious effort to appear friendly to the United States, were he to maintain its patronage when the aid agreement expired in mid-1965. Towards the end of 1964 there appeared to be good reasons for believing that an improvement in relations might be possible. The second Arab summit conference in September had

68. Ibid., pp. 385-394.


confirmed his policy of delaying any military action against Israel, while a truce went into force in Yemen as a result of Nasser's agreement with Faisal to bring the rival factions together for a peace conference in Erkwit (Sudan).

It is therefore ironical, surprising, and yet typical of the ineptness generated by Nasser's sensitivity, that at the very time he had begun to fulfill some of the American expectations, a serious crisis was generated by minor issues of marginal interest to both patron and client, rather than by the underlying conflict of interest.

The spark was provided by events in the Congo, where Belgian paratroopers in American planes had recaptured Stanleyville from the rebels in November, 1964. Since Egypt had been supporting the rebels, this setback touched off riots in Cairo which resulted in the burning of the American Embassy's library. While the Cairo press accused the United States of "imperialist aggression" the Egyptian government made its belated apologies for the burning, doing little to allay the ambassador's suspicions that the incident had been officially condoned. This event was quickly followed by the shooting down over Egypt of an American oil company plane, which injected a personal element into relations since the president of the company was a friend of President Johnson. Again the Egyptian government showed little concern in providing an explanation to the United States. It was in this context that Deputy Prime Minister, Ramzi Stinu, sought a meeting with the new ambassador, Lucius Battle, to request early agreement to an additional $35 million in food assistance, so that when the 1962 agreement expired Egypt would not have to pay in foreign currency for new shipments. Battle was "livid" over the plane-downing incident and suggested to Stinu that it was not an appropriate time to discuss an increase in American aid. Ali Sabry reported this conversation to Nasser, claiming that the American ambassador had threatened to cut-off aid because of Egypt's behaviour, and in his impulsive way Nasser responded with a scathing public


72. The urgency had been caused by a change in the PL 480 legislation which required the recipient country to pay the shipping expenses for aid agreements concluded after 13 December, 1964. Egypt's foreign currency reserves were very low and the present aid agreement was due to expire in 1965.

73. Battle had just returned from identifying the bodies of the plane crash victims, Interview with Lucius D. Battle.
attack on the United States:

I hereby tell anybody not liking our behaviour to go and drink out of the Mediterranean. If the water of the Mediterranean is not enough then let him drink from the Red Sea. What I want to say is that we cannot sell our independence for thirty million pounds. We will never accept any reproach from anybody. Whoever addresses the slightest reproach to us, we will cut out his tongue. This is clear and this is frank... If anything this smacks of an attempt to exert pressure on us. We are sorry. We cannot tolerate any pressure or accept insolent words or vileness.74

And, as if that was not enough to offend Washington, he declared in the same speech that Egypt had sent arms to the Congo rebels and would continue to do so.

Nasser had overstepped the limits of American tolerance, not on the burning issues of Yemen or Israel, but on the very issue which the United States had been determined to keep divorced from relations with its client. Despite growing doubts about the assumptions of the new approach, and strong Congressional opposition, the Administration had adhered to the principle of 'impartial' assistance as a means of keeping the lines of communication open between Washington and the most influential capital in the Arab world. Even in the wake of the library burning incident, the State Department had announced that it was giving "favourable consideration" to the Egyptian request for the additional $35 million in food aid.75 Ambassador Battle had not threatened to cut off aid after the plane-downing incident, he had only suggested that it was an inappropriate time to discuss it.76

Even if we accept that Nasser had been misinformed by Sabry about the aid discussion, there remains the question of what he was trying to achieve by attacking the United States and insulting its ambassador and President. It has been suggested that Nasser was particularly concerned to ingratiate himself with the Soviet Union because the removal of Khrushchev from office in October, 1964, following trenchant criticism among the Soviet leadership of his additional aid commitments to Egypt.77 had raised doubts


76. Interview with Lucius Battle; the Ambassador's account is confirmed by Heikal in The Cairo Documents, p. 229.

77. See Ro'i, From Encroachment to Involvement, p. 394.
about the continuity of Soviet patronage. Since the speech was delivered in the presence of Politburo member Shelepin, some credence might be attached to this explanation.\(^{78}\) However, the new Soviet leaders had previously promised to honour Khrushchev's pledge, Amer had signed a new military agreement in Moscow in November, and Shelepin had already received a quid pro quo for his reiteration of Soviet economic commitments, in the form of an invitation to Secretary General Ulbricht of East Germany to visit Cairo and Egyptian recognition of North Vietnam.\(^{79}\) In these circumstances it would hardly have been necessary to upbraid the United States to gain further Soviet support. On the contrary, having just negotiated some $500 million in aid from Communist countries, Nasser should have been preparing to seek further aid from the West. Given the doubts which had already been raised in Washington, and the fact that the aid agreement was about to expire and would require renegotiation, wisdom should have dictated a conciliatory attitude. Such an attitude might have convinced the U.S. Administration that Nasser's moderation was still worth encouraging through adherence to the "impartial" aid guideline. After all, the State Department had announced before his speech that it would give favourable consideration to the request for additional aid,\(^{80}\) and even in the wake of Nasser's attack, the Administration still fought hard to prevent Congress from cutting aid altogether, arguing that the programme had encouraged Nasser to exercise restraint.\(^{81}\) It is therefore fair to assume that the Administration was predisposed to renegotiation of the aid programme before Nasser delivered his speech.

78. Thus Kerr argues that Nasser "may have felt at least subconsciously impelled to please his successors by raising the level of tension with the United States"; Heikal notes that Nasser feared that the understanding he had finally reached with Khrushchev, after much argument, would disappear with his removal from office. On hearing of Khrushchev's fate Nasser is said to have remarked to Heikal: "Now we have got to start all over again". Malcolm Kerr, "Coming to Terms with Nasser, Attempts and Failures", _International Affairs_, (London) Volume 43, No. 1, January, 1967, p. 79; Heikal, _The Cairo Documents_, p. 158. Cf. Hedrick Smith, "Ulbricht Visit to Cairo Today Said to Have Been Urged by Soviets", _New York Times_, 24 February, 1965.

79. Hedrick Smith, _ibid._; Ro'i, _op.cit._, p. 413.


81. In January 1965, the House had voted to ban aid to Egypt, a decision which would have immediately prevented the shipment of the final $37 million instalment on the original 1962 programme. The Administration lobbied hard to reverse the vote in the Senate and Secretary of State Rusk, in special testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, argued that food aid provided one of the few remaining levers in U.S. relations with Egypt. The language in the final bill was amended to allow the President discretionary authority to complete the shipments. See _New York Times_, 27 January, 1965, 28 January, 1965, 4 February, 1965; and _Congressional Quarterly Almanac_, Volume XXI, 1965, pp. 190-3.
Thus, Nasser's decision to bite the hand that fed Egypt appears to have been dictated by impulse rather than wise application of his will. Generated by the conviction that Egyptian independence could not be bartered for aid, his impulse drove him to a flamboyant and provocative demonstration of this independence. In doing so, he ignored the realities of American-Egyptian interdependence. Far from being solely dependent on Egypt, the United States possessed a number of alternative clients in the 'conservative' Arab states and Israel, and could well decide to promote its influence in the Middle East by increasing its support for Nasser's adversaries, rather than by continuing to appease him. On the other hand, Egypt did not possess a viable alternative to American food assistance. The Soviet Union, a grain importer, could supply neither the food nor the hard currency to pay for it. Nasser may have found it easy to make quixotic speeches about Egypt's ability to survive with less bread, meat or tea, but he would find it more difficult to satisfy the demands of the burgeoning 'modern' sector of Egyptian society, on whom he depended for legitimacy, without American assistance. In this context, his speech was a classic example of the misapplication of will by a weak state in defiance of its patron, for it ignored the fact that the patron could afford to abandon its client should it decide that the benefits of continued assistance were outweighed by the costs, in terms of domestic opposition and international humiliation.

IV - THE BREAK WITH THE UNITED STATES

The United States did not decide to abandon Egypt, but Nasser's speech provided sufficient additional strain to cause the collapse of the new approach developed under Kennedy. While widespread domestic condemnation of American policy increased the pressure on the Administration to respond in kind, Cairo's rejection of an official American protest over the shooting down of the plane confirmed the view in Washington that Nasser

82. Nasser was extremely sensitive about Egypt’s independence because of the colonial experience. See Kerr, "Coming to Terms with Nasser", p. 82; Badeau, The American Approach to the Arab World, p. In a letter to Johnson written later, Nasser had attempted to explain to the President his sensitivity: "We have big hopes, but we have big problems, and that is what makes us sensitive to any pressure because if we submitted to any pressure then we would be losing whatever we had gained. We cannot adhere to anything except our principles". Cited in Heikal, The Cairo Documents, p. 238.

83. In his 23 December speech Nasser had gone on to say: "If we are drinking tea seven days a week now, we can drink it five days only to build our country. If we have coffee seven days a week now, we can drink it four days only. If we are eating meat four days a week, we can do with only three... for we are a proud people, conscious of our dignity, and are not prepared to trade our dignity".
had adopted his toughest anti-American stance since the 1956 Aswan Dam incident. On 28 December the Administration announced that Egypt's request for additional aid would be deferred because the paperwork could not be completed by the end of the year. The aid door had not been slammed shut, but policy-makers now made it clear that whether it remained open would depend on Egyptian efforts to prevent it from being closed.

The Administration had decided to place Egypt on a 'short-leash': the long-term agreement which expired in mid-1965 would not be renewed; instead each request for short-term assistance would be considered in the light of Egypt's attitude at the time. Abandoning the 'impartial' guideline, the United States would now use aid as an explicit bargaining lever, with the process of continuous negotiations designed to encourage better relations by providing or denying aid on the basis of Egyptian behaviour towards its patron. Washington's attitude would make it difficult for Nasser to play his politics of non-alignment because any new attack on American interests would be met by a reduction in aid; the very antithesis of the former policy, under which aid was granted despite such attacks. It was no longer a question of limiting the damage to American interests, while promoting Soviet ones, to gain assistance from both, for if Nasser now damaged American interests, he might gain Soviet support, but he would lose American food aid.

Nasser soon discovered how seriously this redefinition of American policy had limited his manoeuvrability. Washington ignored the Egyptian request for an additional $35 million in food aid, refused to discuss a long-term request for $500 million and only agreed to the shipment of the

86. *Ibid.*; in a press conference on 4 February, 1965, President Johnson stated that "relations between the United States and the United Arab Republic must be improved. It will demand efforts from both countries. I cannot predict whether improvement can be achieved". "Transcript of the President's News Conference on Foreign and Domestic Affairs", *New York Times*, 5 February, 1965. In testimony to the Senate Appropriations Committee, Under Secretary of State George Ball stated: "If an improved relationship is to be achieved, it will take a substantial effort by the United Arab Republic and not merely by the United States". Cited in *Near East Report*, Volume IX, 1965, p. 10.
87. *Interview with Lucius Battle.*
final $37 million instalment of the 1962 programme in June 1965. To prise this relatively small and already committed amount out of Washington, in the intervening six months, Nasser restrained the Egyptian press, declared his independence from communism, provided compensation for the library, discontinued arms shipments to the Congo rebels, and toned down his attacks on Israel and the United States. Nasser's 1965 May Day speech stood in stark contrast to his earlier sarcasm for the measured tenor of its declaration of independence:

We have asked for renewal of the [wheat] agreement, but so far it appears that there will be no renewal. Some say that there is a possibility. What I want to say is that we can never accept threats...He who tells us to do something or else we will tell him: sorry we do not accept conditions...we are prepared to eat half a loaf instead of the whole loaf in order to safeguard our honour and dignity.

Nasser also discovered during this period that Washington was no longer restrained, by its desire for improved relations with Egypt, from supplying arms to Israel. Again his ineptness did much to force Washington's hand, but the collapse of the 'new' approach had already reduced American reluctance to be identified with the status quo forces in the region. Nasser actually created the issue by threatening, on the eve of Ulbricht's visit to Cairo in February 1965, to recognise the German Democratic Republic unless the Federal Republic ceased shipping arms to Israel. When Bonn hastily complied with Nasser's demand, Washington was placed in an embarrassing position since it had encouraged the arms deal as a means of avoiding direct involvement in the Middle East arms race. The $80 million deal involving M-48 tanks, aircraft, helicopters and torpedo boats was already 80% complete when Nasser raised the issue but, as

88. The request for the $500 million aid programme was raised in discussions with Assistant Secretary of State Talbot when he visited Cairo in April, 1965. The Cairo correspondent for the New York Times reported: "The administration is understood to feel that in the wake of the clash with Cairo late last year on the aid question and over Congo policy a big, new aid package is out of the question for the time being". See Hedrick Smith, "New U.S. Food Aid is Asked by Cairo", New York Times, 17 April, 1965.


we have already seen, Israel exploited Bonn's decision to acquire the rest of the arms deal directly from the United States. Prior to this, Washington had sought to avoid becoming a major or principal supplier of arms to either side in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The reason had been quite explicit:

We wanted to maintain as much suasion as we could in the Arab countries. We felt that would have been decreased if we had become a large single source supplier to Israel.  

But with the collapse of the new approach, this barrier to an open arms supply relationship between Israel and the United States had been removed. Henceforth, the United States would supply Israel with the arms necessary to maintain "a reasonable balance" between the adversaries in the Middle East.  

And if this development was not enough to demonstrate Nasser's loss of leverage, Washington used its own form of 'blackmail' politics to keep him from making an issue of it. In March 1965 Nasser was informed that the United States would supply Israel and Jordan with tanks and was explicitly warned that if he exacerbated the issue the United States would simply respond by selling more arms to Israel.

For a time, Washington's 'short-leash' restrained Nasser and he made a serious effort to improve the tenor of relations with his now uncertain patron. At the end of May 1965, he told the Palestine National Conference that the Arabs were not capable of attacking Israel, and in response to American requests conveyed by Assistant Secretary of State Talbot on a visit to Cairo in April 1965, he stated that since they could not protect the diversion project it should be postponed. He attacked Syria for attempting to involve Egypt in a war with Israel and emphasised the necessity of building Arab strength, a task which would require the postponement of confrontation for some four to five years, at least.  

Although, following the announcement of the $37 million aid package in June, he charged

91. Testimony of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Kitchen, in U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (Sub-Committee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs), Arms Sales to Near Eastern and South Asian Countries, 90th Congress, 1st Session, 22 June, 1967, p.88.


93. See the State Department memorandum cited in Heikal, The Cairo Documents, pp. 235-6.

the United States with attaching conditions to its aid, he referred only to pressures supposedly exerted in 1963, which he could safely reject, having already acceded to the pressures applied by the more recent 'short leash'. As a declaration of independence the speech was mild in comparison with his earlier flamboyance, and was coupled with an announcement of the resumption of peace talks with Saudi Arabia over the war in Yemen, and a declaration of his readiness to withdraw Egyptian troops "within six months". In August, he affirmed this intention by reaching agreement with Faisal on the terms for a settlement of the Yemeni conflict.

Meanwhile his moderate approach towards the problem of Israel found confirmation at the Cassablanca summit in September, where the Arab leaders agreed to a four year programme for strengthening the armed forces. As Eshkol was quick to observe, it appeared that war had been postponed "until the 1970s or later".

Even Nasser's visit to Moscow in August reflected this new caution in his approach to international affairs. In his speech to the Arab-Soviet Friendship Society, he made scant mention of Israel, the United States or even imperialism (except in its historical context), concentrating instead on "socialist transformation" in Egypt. The joint communiqué issued at the end of his visit was notable in that, while condemning imperialism and British policy in Aden, it made no direct attack on either the United States or Israel. Instead the communiqué meekly called for a cessation of the bombing


96. A Saudi-Egyptian commission would supervise a truce under which both sides would disengage while Egyptian troops prepared to withdraw; the republicans and royalists would convene for peace talks at Harad in November, to create a provisional regime which would organise a plebiscite on the country's future; the plebiscite would be held within a year, by which time the Egyptian troops would have completed their withdrawal. For the text of the agreement see ibid., pp. 309-310.

97. Retaliation raids by Israel in 1965 against the Arab diversion projects led to a decision in September 1965 that work should be confined to areas beyond the reach of retaliatory measures, until Arab military strength was sufficient to cover operations closer to the border. It was estimated that it would take four years, and $250 million to reach the necessary state of military preparedness. See Middle East Record, 1967, Tel Aviv, 1970, p. 107.

98. FBIS, 22 September, 1965.

of North Vietnam and condemned only West Germany for supplying Israel with arms, while endorsing Nasser's peace moves in Yemen.

If Washington had reason to be satisfied with the direction of Egyptian foreign policy, it also had reason to be encouraged by Nasser's concentration on domestic economic problems. The uncovering of a Moslem Brotherhood plot against his regime in July, together with serious food shortages, an alarming foreign deficit, and the realisation that the five year plan completed in June had been 33% short of its production goals, had served to emphasise the dangers inherent in neglecting these problems. If Washington had reason to be satisfied with the direction of Egyptian foreign policy, it also had reason to be encouraged by Nasser's concentration on domestic economic problems. The uncovering of a Moslem Brotherhood plot against his regime in July, together with serious food shortages, an alarming foreign deficit, and the realisation that the five year plan completed in June had been 33% short of its production goals, had served to emphasise the dangers inherent in neglecting these problems.

On his return from Moscow Nasser replaced Prime Minister Aly Sabry (known for his pro-Soviet leanings) with Zacharia Mohieddin, who introduced an austerity programme, relaxed planning controls, encouraged Western investment and promised "to let the laws of supply and demand operate".

Thus in October, despite Congressional reiteration of its opposition to aid for Egypt, the Administration reopened discussions with Egyptian officials on a new aid agreement. As these negotiations drew to a close, Nasser publicly underlined the new tenor of relations by declaring, on the anniversary of the burning of the American library, that while basic differences existed over attitudes to Israel, "there has been a great improvement in the relationship between us recently...both parties have made

100. And for this mild performance, Egypt received $300 million worth of arms, and the Soviet Union erased $460 million of Egyptian debts. True, the Soviet navy did make its first call at an Egyptian port in September 1965, but this only emphasises the resources which Egypt had to bargain with and therefore makes the explanation that he spurned the United States in 1964 to endear himself to the new Soviet leaders even less credible. See Ro'i, From Encroachment to Involvement, pp. 413-419; George S. Dragnich, "The Soviet Union's Quest for Access to Naval Facilities in Egypt Prior to the June War of 1967", in Michael McGwire, Ken Booth and John McDonnell (eds.), Soviet Naval Policy, Objectives and Constraints, New York, 1975, pp. 237-277.

101. The balance of payments deficit in 1964/5 amounted to $213 million, with the total deficit over the five years of the plan estimated at $1,156 million. IMF statistics show that by 1965/66, 34% of nationalised industry was able to utilise only 30% or less of its capacity because of shortages of raw material and spare part imports. See Stephens, Nasser, p. 370; International Monetary Fund, United Arab Republic - Article XIV Consultation, 22 December, 1967; New York Times, 23 October, 1965.


103. New York Times, 13 October, 1965. In September, Congress had added a general rider to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1965 which stipulated that no sales of surplus agricultural commodities could be made to Egypt unless the President determined such sales to be essential to the national interests of the U.S., and that no such sale should be based on the requirements of the U.A.R. for more than one fiscal year. Congressional Quarterly Almanac, 1965, pp. 425 and 437.
important efforts to stop the deterioration and to ease the sharpness of tension in these relations...our concern is to create a basis for mutual understanding and appreciation". In January 1966, the terms of the new agreement were announced: $55 million food aid over six months, 25% to be paid in hard currency, the rest in Egyptian currency, 75% of which would be relend for development projects.

The terms were the toughest yet negotiated since they required part payment in hard currency, as well as an Egyptian commitment not to expand cotton production. Clearly, Washington believed that its 'short leash' policy had proved efficacious and that by continuing to offer short term aid it was encouraging Nasser to fulfill the long-held expectations of American policy: avoidance of external confrontations and concentration on restoring balanced growth to the economy. Nasser had indeed demonstrated that it was possible to sublimate the basic conflict of interest between patron and client and to conduct relations to mutual advantage. However, it would prove to be too little, too late; a momentary calm before the all too familiar storm. For twelve months Nasser had successfully parried the pressures of inter-Arab rivalry, undercutting Syrian belligerency, seeking a settlement of the war in Yemen, taking care not to provoke Israel, nor to damage American interests, and only promoting Soviet interests in safe areas. Yet his new moderation depended upon the maintenance of the facade he had created to conceal Arab disunity. When this facade began to collapse, the goodwill accumulated during twelve months of restraint was dissipated in two months of conflict in the Arab world. Washington's limited tolerance had reduced Nasser's flexibility and made relations between patron and client brittle. Faced with a new challenge to his leadership of the Arab world, he again proved unable to reconcile the politics of Arab unity with the dictates of American patronage. But, whereas before this failure had only strained relations,

104. President Nasser's Speech to the National Assembly, in Arab Political Documents, 1965, p. 424.


106. For example, playing China off against the Soviet Union by backing Moscow's requests to be represented at non-aligned summits. The Soviet Navy's call at Port Said in September 1965 was low-keyed - no publicity, either Egyptian or Soviet, surrounded the visit. Dragnich suggests that this was because of Egyptian sensitivity about the issue of naval facilities. However, it may also have been because of the Egyptian desire not to jeopardise the improved relations with Washington. See Dragnich, op.cit., p. 255.
under these new conditions, which he had done much to create, it became inevitable that relations would be broken.

Nasser's leadership of the Arab world had suffered several setbacks in 1965. The failure to maintain unity in the face of West Germany's decision to recognise Israel, Bourguiba's 'heretical' proposals for recognition of Israel, and Syrian, Jordanian and Lebanese objections to the stationing of Egyptian forces in their territories and to other United Arab Command measures, had cracked the facade of unity which Nasser had constructed through Arab summity. Nevertheless, the spirit of reconciliation had appeared to hold sway, and the Yemen agreement seemed to represent its consummation. But appearance and reality had diverged in the Arab world, for while Nasser and Faisal had reached agreement on a settlement, neither was sufficiently committed to the compromise to force his Yemenite protégé to accept it. Thus, neither seemed particularly perturbed by the breakdown of talks at Harad in December: not Nasser, because the announcement of British withdrawal from Aden by 1968 had given him a new reason for maintaining a presence in the Arabian Peninsula; not Faisal, because he believed that Nasser's journey to Jeddah reflected a weakening of his domestic position and created the opportunity for Faisal to challenge his leadership. The Arab summits had never reconciled the basic differences between the conservatives and progressives of the Arab world, but they had provided the conservatives with legitimacy. Now Faisal seized on Nasser's weakness to promote the cause of the conservatives by floating the idea of an Islamic Conference to be convened in Mecca under his auspices. His idea received the support of Iran, Jordan, Turkey, Tunisia, Morocco and Pakistan - which only confirmed its image as a new conservative coalition in the Middle East.

107. When West Germany recognised Israel in May 1965, Nasser called on the Arab states to break off relations. Morocco, Tunisia and Libya refused to do so. In April, President Bourguiba had proposed that the Arabs should negotiate a settlement with Israel. His proposals were attacked by Nasser and criticised by all Arab states except Morocco, Libya and Saudi Arabia. Bourguiba responded by accusing Nasser of trying "to exercise exclusive leadership in the Arab world in such a way as to appear the uncontested master of its destinies. As a great nation, Egypt has a right to our consideration, but that is no reason for trying to impose its law on everyone". *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, 15-22 May, 1965. On the problems of the United Arab Command, see J.C. Hurewitz, *Middle East Politics, The Military Dimension*, pp. 482-3.

For Nasser, Faisal's challenge took the shape of a horrible phoenix rising from the ashes of the Baghdad Pact and the Eisenhower doctrine. The seriousness of Egypt's domestic economic difficulties, and his failure to consolidate the support of radical Syria and Iraq, heightened his sensitivity to this challenge and encouraged him to meet the threat head-on. This proclivity was compounded by his growing sense of isolation in the world arena. The downfall of Ben Bella and Nkrumah, the deaths of Nehru and Aref, and the challenge to Sukarno in Indonesia, generated the fear that Egypt was "the next objective of the imperialist-reactionary advance." Nasser perceived the hand of Washington behind Faisal's Islamic proposal and in these circumstances America's 'short leash' was not strong enough to restrain him. He responded with a harsh condemnation:

The Islamic alliance is an imperialist one, aimed at resisting liberation movements and blocking social progress. The Islamic alliance is an alliance of conspiracy against the Arab peoples, designed to cluster them within the Western spheres of influence...it is designed to gather all the pro-imperialist reactionary forces in one last defence line against the revolutionary progressive tide in the Arab countries.

He backed the charge with a declaration that Egyptian forces would remain in Yemen for another five years, if necessary, and certainly until after the British withdrawal from Aden in 1968. He attacked the United States for supplying arms to his adversaries and threatened "preventive war" against Israel because of its supposed development of nuclear weapons.

In one blow he had dashed the American expectations so carefully nurtured in twelve months of restraint, for now Washington's worst fears about Nasser's designs in the Arabian Peninsula had been confirmed. Patron and client were back on a collision course over the perennial problems of Yemen, but this time the reservoir of tolerance and goodwill had evaporated. Cairo's requests for a $100 million development loan and $150 million in food aid to replace the agreement which would expire in June went unanswered. If there was some slight chance that the Administration might accede to a new aid agreement Nasser made a negative response certain by stepping-up his attacks on the United States, with all too perfect timing. His

111. Ibid.
condemnation of the Islamic alliance came on the eve of Vice President Sadat's arrival in Washington. A few months later, as Assistant Secretary of State Hare was travelling to Cairo to mediate the Yemen conflict, Nasser threatened to invade Saudi Arabia and "occupy the centres of aggression". A few days after that, on the occasion of Premier Kosygin's first visit to Egypt, he introduced a new area of conflict into relations with the United States by condemning its involvement in Vietnam as "horrifying aggression that shakes the conscience of the free world". Heikal accompanied this new attack with the charge that Washington's use of "a policy of force and blind pressures" ruled out political and economic cooperation.

In these circumstances it should have come as little surprise that Heikal's charge proved to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. With Secretary of State Rusk voicing the Administration's anxiety over the deterioration in relations "on matters of great concern to us, such as Vietnam", Washington deferred any negotiations on Egypt's aid requests. In subsequent months, while ignoring Cairo's repeated requests for aid, the Administration refused to reschedule Egyptian debts, stalled on the release of Egyptian currency for development projects and, unlike in 1964, declined to pressure the IMF into loaning Egypt $70 million to cover its now disastrous balance of payments deficit. Washington also demonstrated the direction of its patronage by supplying Nasser's adversaries with weapons of greater sophistication: Saudi Arabia received Hawk missiles, Jordan received M-48 tanks and F-104 aircraft, while Israel, in addition to securing a

113. *New York Times*, 11 May, 1966. A NLF office was opened in Cairo soon after this visit.
renewal of economic assistance, acquired an American commitment to supply some 48 A-4 Skyhawks, in an unprecedented move which would provide Israel with an offensive capability to strike at Arab bases. Nasser responded with the charge that there was an inevitable clash with Western interests, sacked Mohieddin and the pro-Western members of his cabinet, and finally, in January 1967, withdrew the unanswered request for aid which he had placed with Washington some 11 months before. In mutual recognition that only formal relations remained, Ambassador Battle returned to Washington and was not replaced for what proved to be a very crucial three months, while Heikal expounded at length on the "violent clash" between Egypt and the United States.\textsuperscript{117}

The death knell had sounded for Nasser's policy of non-alignment. The United States had finally decided to abandon its Egyptian client to the Soviet Union and redefine its interests in the Middle East. Until some new opportunity presented itself, Washington was content to maintain the \textit{status quo} and protect its vital interests by bolstering Israel's deterrent strength and by supporting the conservative Arab regimes. Nasser had failed to sublimate the basic conflict of interest because he had placed a higher priority on the pursuit and protection of his prestige and power in the Arab world. Had he been sufficiently adept to harbour his resources, consolidate his relations, and exercise his leverage with caution when necessary, he might have prevented what had become inevitable. But, as one analyst has observed: "Nasser never appeared to be able to differentiate between the symbols and implements of modern power and the factors which made them employable".\textsuperscript{118} Perhaps "never" is too strong, for there were indeed times when, sublimating his concern for the symbols of power, he proved quite capable of adhering to the precepts of successful weak state behaviour. In fact, his behaviour during the short improvement in relations during 1965, would appear to be a confirmation of one of the hypotheses devised in Part One. For when relations reached the stage where Egypt was about to lose its alternative patron, its leader indeed began to act cautiously. However, this caution was overwhelmed by events which were external to the Egyptian-American relationship, but which nevertheless had a direct impact on it. When faced with challenges to his position of


\textsuperscript{118} William Polk, \textit{The United States and the Arab World}, p. 291.
leadership in the Arab world, Nasser ignored the wider consequences of his reactions, applying his will-power carelessly, so that by enhancing his position on the regional level, he depreciated it on the level of patronage. Consequently, Egypt was abandoned by its American patron at precisely the time when it could least afford it.

At the end of 1966, Nasser had declared that "our first duty is to prove to those who want to put pressure on us that we can rely on ourselves and can follow an independent road and bear its consequences".119 Certainly, by that time Nasser had demonstrated that he possessed the ability to resist American pressure and could act independently of American policy. But in the process, he had tended to ignore the fact that, in the final analysis, the patron could abandon its client, and he had therefore neglected to secure the support without which resistance had little point. Thus, far from placing Egypt on an independent road, Nasser's resistance had placed Egypt a long way down the road which led to Soviet dependence, and he would now have to bear its consequences.

PART TWO

CHAPTER FOUR

1967 — NASSER'S DEFEAT IN THE POLITICS OF PATRONAGE

The Egyptian debacle of 1967 and the earlier failure of Nasser's policy of non-alignment might appear to be unusual case studies for a thesis whose subject is the power of weak states in their relations with superpower patrons, for they could be said to demonstrate the weakness of Egypt in its inability to resist or influence either the policies of its superpower patron or the policies of its superpower adversary. Nevertheless Egypt's experience during this period is of considerable heuristic value in defining the parameters of successful weak power behaviour; a sobering antithesis to the surprising success of Israel, which serves to illustrate the bounds beyond which a weak power cannot go if it is to achieve its aims in the politics of patronage. For although Nasser failed on the political plane as surely as his armed forces were defeated on the field of battle, he did in fact succeed in resisting the pressures of both the Soviet Union and the United States when he felt they clashed with his own aims, and he might well have prevailed in this crisis had he understood his true condition, had he not miscalculated the direction of the political forces present in the international and regional environment of 1967, had he applied his will with judgement, caution and flexibility, and had he devoted more attention to influencing rather than defying the superpowers. Thus the reverses which Egypt suffered as a result of the May-June crisis should be seen not as a demonstration of weakness but rather as an overstepping of the bounds of successful weak power politics; as the exception which proves the rule rather than as the evidence which refutes the hypothesis.

Although the origins of the 1967 crisis undoubtedly lie in the long history of the Arab-Israeli enmity, its immediate causes can be traced back to Egypt's all but formal break with the United States at the end of 1966 and the signing of the defence pact with Syria in November of that year. The first development marked the end of Nasser's policy of non-alignment, making Egypt heavily dependent upon Soviet military and economic aid now that the United States had halted its wheat shipments and was supplying arms to Nasser's adversaries. However, this dependence constituted only one of the reasons for Nasser's despair; the collapse of Egyptian-led Arab unity,
the spectre of the "Islamic alliance", the expense of the war in Yemen, and the exacerbation of the border conflict in the north (between Syria, the Palestinian fedayeen and Israel) while Egypt watched from the side-lines, all heightened Nasser's sense of isolation, frustration and dependence. Clearly he had to take some action to pull Egypt out of this 'tail-spin', reassert his leadership of the Arab world and demonstrate his importance to, and independence from, both superpowers.

In searching for a foreign policy issue which would serve these purposes Nasser's choice was limited: he could escalate the war in Yemen, repeat his demands for the removal of Western bases in Libya, or confront Israel. While the last option presented the most dangerous risks it also held out the prospect of the greatest gains, but that does not seem to have determined the choice, although it did much to determine the outcome. Rather, as was so often the case with Nasser, events determined his priorities. Thus the events which followed the signing of the defence pact with Syria in November 1966 ensured that Nasser's target would be Israel. For, in signing the defence pact, Nasser linked Egypt's fate to the uncontrollable Syrians and continued border conflict then made it impossible for him to remain on the side-lines. So Nasser, forced to choose Israel as his target, decided to remilitarise Sinai and then subsequently decided to confront Israel at the brink of war, in order to secure a political triumph for his troubled regime.

In all this Egypt's relations with the superpowers played a crucial role. On the one hand, the Soviet Union had urged him to sign the defence pact with Syria and to take appropriate measures to protect the Syrian regime. However, as we shall see, Nasser was not simply doing the bidding of his Soviet patron in precipitating the May-June crisis; rather, he was acting in what he regarded as his own interests. When Soviet and Egyptian interests diverged, after his decision to close the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, he proved quite capable of maintaining his course despite Soviet opposition. On the other hand, during the crisis, he treated with the United States in an attempt to isolate Israel from its American support and, although he would have been well advised not to do so, he nevertheless was able to resist American demands for a relaxation of the blockade and was thus able to render American diplomacy ineffective. Of course, in the final analysis he failed and Egypt was defeated, both militarily and politically, by an adversary which was more skilful in its utilisation of leverage and more cautious in its application of will-power. Nevertheless, Nasser failed to secure the superpower support, so crucial to his success
during the crisis, because he ineptly orchestrated the leverage at his command and ignored the realities of both the American and Soviet positions. He did not fail because he lacked leverage or will-power, but because he applied his resources rashly and wrongly.

I - THE SIGNING OF THE SYRIAN DEFENCE PACT

On 4 November 1966, Egypt entered into a mutual defence pact with Syria, linking Egypt's fate to Syrian security without conferring Nasser with the recompense of control over Syria's belligerency towards Israel. This move marked the first substantive connexion between the Syrian and Egyptian regimes since the abortive unification of 1958. As such, it constituted a significant departure in Egyptian policy because, since the break up of the union in 1961, Nasser had been irreconcilably antagonistic towards the ruling Syrian Ba'ath party. For very practical reasons Nasser had sought to avoid any connexion with Syria because its successive regimes had called for immediate military action against Israel and had attempted to involve Egypt in a war which Nasser knew his army was not prepared for and could not win.

Since 1959, and throughout the era of Arab summitry, Nasser had managed to undercut the Syrians and ridicule their persistent calls-to-arms, although this was a difficult task given the importance of hostility towards Israel in establishing one's credentials in the Arab world at that time. Nevertheless, Nasser constantly declared that Egypt would not go to war until its forces were capable of achieving victory, that he would not gamble with Egypt's fate because the Arabs were not strong enough to fight Israel, and that the confrontation should be postponed until the forces of the Arab revolution were adequately prepared. Why then did Nasser decide to enter into a defence pact with Syria, linking Egypt's fate to a Syrian regime even more radical than its predecessors in its sponsoring of a 'war of popular liberation' against Israel?

1. The Cairo Unity Talks in 1963 demonstrated just how reluctant Nasser had been to link Egypt with a regime whose ideology he regarded as suspect and whose stability he believed to be non-existent. See Malcolm H. Kerr, The Arab Cold War, pp. 44-95; Jon Kimche, The Second Arab Awakening, London, 1970, Chapter 3; BBC/SWB (Middle East) June-July, 1965.

In searching for the answer one might all too easily find the guiding hand of the Soviet Union. After all, as Egypt's relations with the United States deteriorated, Nasser's dependence on the Soviet Union necessarily increased and one might have expected that his ability to resist the influence of Moscow would be diminished. Moreover, the Soviet Union was clearly interested in bolstering the position of the new regime in Syria, not only because it espoused the ideologically 'pure' motives of uniting the 'progressive' forces of the Syrian proletariat, aligning with the 'progressive' forces of the Arab world, and relying upon the support of the Soviet Union and the Socialist Commonwealth, but also because Moscow well understood the considerable advantages to its position in the region of establishing two radical regimes (i.e. Egypt and Syria) in the Arab heartland, dependent upon the Soviet Union. Thus Moscow was keenly interested in an alliance between its two Arab protégés as a means for both reducing the risk of subversion of the new Syrian regime because of Nasser's opposition, and for establishing Syrian legitimacy in the Arab world.

The task became more urgent with the emergence of the so called 'Islamic alliance' in 1966, because it now appeared to Moscow that the West was renewing its drive for influence in the region through this alliance of conservative Arab states.

Moscow's public calls for the establishment of a bloc of "progressive and patriotic forces" in the Arab world, which was echoed by Syrian Premier Zuayyin on his visit to Moscow in April 1966, is testimony to the Soviet desire for the defence pact. When Kosygin journeyed to Cairo for talks with Nasser in May 1966, he was reported to have urged closer ties with the Syrian regime; the defence pact was said to have been the main

3. Moscow's interest in Syria at that time resulted from its strategic importance in outflanking Turkey, its key position in relation to Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, and its proximity to the southern borders of the Soviet Union. Relations with the Ba'ath had been difficult in the early sixties but by the end of 1964 relations improved. Moscow however had remained suspicious of the 'petty bourgeois' base of the party, despite the nationalisation decrees of 1965, and had only embarked on a policy of strengthening its influence and supporting Damascus after the coup of February 1966 brought the left-wing of the party to power under President Atassi and Premier Zuayyin. See A. Yodfat, Arab Politics in the Soviet Mirror, p. 134; Y. Ro'i, From Encroachment to Involvement, pp. 419-420.


5. See the text of the communique in Ro'i, ibid., pp. 420-4.
item on the agenda. Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that the Soviet Union was pressuring Nasser into joining a defence pact with Syria. Yet it is also clear that Nasser had the means to resist this pressure had he so desired. For, although Egypt was now heavily dependent upon the Soviet Union, Moscow had few worthwhile alternatives in the Middle East and could not risk alienating Nasser. Moreover, Nasser could have argued that the deterioration in Egyptian relations with the United States, which had cost Egypt irreplaceable economic assistance, and the accelerated pace of his anti-imperialist campaign, were sufficient recompense for Soviet military and economic support. Nasser might also have responded to Kosygin's call for unity amongst the Arab 'progressives' by suggesting that the Soviet Union should first heal its rift with China before offering advice to its clients in the Middle East.

Yet despite these forms of leverage over his Soviet patron, Nasser appears not to have even attempted to resist the pressure to do something which he had previously avoided with every effort. That Nasser could not have demonstrated any reluctance to do Moscow's bidding in his talks with Kosygin is evident from the fact that he was offered no quid pro quo for his subsequent decision to sign the defence pact. Kosygin gave him nothing more than vague assurances about the continuation of economic assistance at current levels at a time when the Egyptian economy was in dire straits. In other words, if Nasser had not attempted to drive a bargain over the defence pact it would suggest that he in fact perceived it to be in his interests to link Egypt's fate to Syrian belligerency.

This was a complete turn-around in Nasser's perception of Egyptian interests, for we have already noted his continual reluctance to provide Syria with an opportunity to force Egypt into a confrontation with Israel. Implicitly, he had recognised Israel's deterrent strength and had therefore opposed any Arab action which would challenge Israeli deterrence until they were strong enough to do so. For the same reason, he had avoided challenging Israel's strategy of compulsion by refusing to respond to Israeli retaliations against Syria, Jordan and the fedayeen. A defence pact with Syria would now force him to respond to any Israeli retaliation and he would therefore be forced to challenge Israel's doctrine of deterrence. Since he


could not have believed that the balance of power had changed and that Egypt was now capable of confronting Israel, how could he then have regarded it as in his interests to sign the Syrian defence pact?  

The explanation for Nasser's behaviour lies in an understanding of his perception of the deterioration in Egypt's economic, political and diplomatic position. First, the loss of American assistance placed severe internal pressures on Nasser and he therefore perceived the United States as responsible for his predicament. By June, 1966 Egypt's external debt had climbed to $2 billion while its foreign exchange reserves had declined to only $53 million and its gold reserves to $114 million. With the balance of payments deficit at $268 million, Egypt was forced to set aside $40 million in hard currency just to meet Egypt's food imports for the last half of 1966. Production of cotton, Egypt's chief export, went into decline, while industrial production began to exhibit the consequences of a lack of capital and raw material. The official growth in Gross Domestic Product had dropped from an average increase of 6.5% during the previous five year plan to 4.7% in 1965/66 and to 4% in 1966/67. In these circumstances, it was only natural for Nasser to blame Egypt's economic problems on the United States, especially because Washington refused to answer Nasser's requests for renewed economic assistance, rejected an Egyptian attempt to renegotiate its American debts, declined to intervene (as it had done in 1964) when the IMF refused to extend some $70 million in special drawing rights, stalled on the release of Egyptian pounds for development projects (pounds which had accrued in Cairo from the PL 480 programme), and refused to participate in other development projects.

Nasser's perception of Washington's responsibility for Egypt's economic plight only reinforced his perception of American 'imperialism', hell-bent

8. That Nasser at this stage still recognised Egypt's inferiority is evident from the testimony of Badran, the Minister for War. He has revealed that Nasser rejected Amer's proposal to occupy Sharm el-Sheikh in December 1966, precisely because he believed that it would lead to war. See Theodore Draper, "From 1967 to 1973, The Arab-Israeli Wars", Commentary, December, 1973, p. 33; Bar-Zohar, Embassies in Crisis, pp. 65-6.

9. These projects included construction of grain silos, an agricultural project, modernisation of the Suez Canal, and a nuclear desalination project. It was at least expected that the U.S. would support Egypt's approaches to financial institutions to acquire the necessary funds. In fact, Egypt's balance of payments problems and the decline in its economic growth were responsible for Egypt's inability to raise international capital. But American refusal to renew its aid contributed to the problems as well as to Egypt's low credit rating, and stood in stark contrast to its earlier representations on Egypt's behalf. See David G. Nes, The Sinai Accord: The...
on his demise. The spectre of the 'Islamic alliance' was one of the manifestations of this apparent threat, but there were others. The demise of Sukarno, Ben Bella, and Nkrumah, his companions in Third World non-alignment, was taken as further evidence of a new imperialist offensive. Moreover, Egyptian intelligence reports of American intentions to neutralise Arab nationalism by supporting Israeli actions against Syria and Saudi actions against Yemen, reinforced these fears. As Heikal warned in an article in April 1966:

The imperialist-reactionary advance is moving from East to West Asia and from South to North Africa, in other words it is creeping towards the Arab world and in particular towards its focal point - the UAR. Indeed the UAR is the next objective of the imperialist-reactionary advance. (emphasis supplied).

With support for the Yemeni Republicans draining the Egyptian economy, with his aspirations for leadership of the Arab world blocked by the opposition of Saudi Arabia and Jordan, with the deterioration of Egyptian-American relations, and with the Soviet Union beginning to demand some returns for its heavy military and economic investments, Nasser had to break out of this downward spiral of economic and political setbacks. He had to take the initiative in some area, gain a political triumph, and thereby demonstrate his importance to the Soviet Union and the Arab world as well as proving America's inability to defeat him and therefore its need to come to terms with him - this time on his terms. With nowhere else to go because of his perception of the 'conservative' Arab states and Israel as the agents of American 'imperialism', Nasser turned to Syria and the other 'progressive' Arab states to consolidate his influence and reassert his importance in regional and international politics.

By November 1966 a defence pact with Syria appeared to provide the

10. Nutting recounts that the Egyptian Embassy in Brussels reported that the Americans had told a secret meeting of NATO that peaceful-coexistence with Egypt was no longer possible and that henceforth defence of American interests in the Middle East would be based on the twin bastions of Israel and Turkey. See Nutting, Nasser, p. 390. Heikal reported CIA support for Saudi Arabia and for the Yemeni Royalists aimed at removing the Egyptian army from Yemen "crushed if possible or intact if this proved impossible". See"Heikal Continues Study of US-UAR relations", Cairo Home Service, 5 May, 1967, FBIS, 9 May, 1967.
11. BBC/SWB, ME/2133/A/1-2, 10 April, 1966.
opportunity which Nasser had been looking for. Following Kosygin's visit he had amplified his campaign of rhetoric against the Arab 'conservatives' and the United States and had put an end to the facade of Arab unity by announcing that he would not attend the forthcoming Arab summit.

Meanwhile, growing tension on the Israeli-Syrian border, as a result of Syrian-sponsored fedayeen raids and Israeli warnings of a forthright military response, threatened to cause him embarrassment and underline his weakness. If Israel attacked Syria, and Egypt stood idly by, he would be vulnerable to the humiliating charge, levelled by his conservative and radical critics alike, that Nasser was too timid to do his duty in protecting the Arab world from "Zionist aggression". However, if he now agreed to join Syria in a mutual defence pact, he might deter Israel from attacking Syria, restrain the regime in Damascus from further acts of provocation by shoring it up with Egyptian support, counter the conservative Arab alignment by consolidating the 'progressive' forces, and placate his Soviet patron by doing its bidding. While in theory such a move risked dragging Egypt into war with Israel, in Nasser's perception of reality the risk was not significant because Syria refused to allow Egyptian forces to be stationed on its territory and refused to place its forces under Egyptian control. Therefore Nasser assumed no direct responsibility for Syria's defence. Just to make sure that Syria understood this, Nasser publicly emphasised that Egypt "reserves to itself absolute freedom of action" while Heikal warned that Egyptian forces would not automatically intervene against an Israeli attack on Syrian territory.12

Thus, acting in what he regarded as his own interests, Nasser had decided to do the bidding of his Soviet patron. He had acted out of a desire to improve his position in the Arab world and between the superpowers, rather than out of an inability to resist the designs of his Soviet patron. Had Nasser not been so isolated, had Egypt not been in such economic difficulties, and had he not alienated the United States, such a move would not have made sense; it certainly made no better sense simply because the Soviet Union was advocating this course of action. But in the present circumstances it appeared to be the only way of reasserting his importance.

12. See President Nasser's Speech to the National Assembly, 24 November, 1966; Malcolm H. Kerr, Regional Arab Politics and the Conflict with Israel, Rand Corporation, RM-5966-FF, October, 1969; Nutting, pp. 390-2; Winston Bardett, Encounter with the Middle East, p. 371.
and regaining his prestige as leader of the Arab world. His ineptness in harboring and utilising his political leverage over the past years had finally taken its toll by forcing him to adopt a position which, despite his declarations to the contrary, would bind Egypt to Syrian belligerency. Thus the remilitarisation of Sinai followed on 'as the night the day', Nasser's decision to sign the Egyptian-Syrian defence pact. It was not, however, the consequence of Soviet pressure on a compliant client.

II - THE REMILITARISATION OF SINAI

At first it appeared that Nasser's action would produce the desired results. Apparently deterred by its reluctance to test the new alliance, on 13 November, 1966 Israel struck at Jordan instead of Syria, in retaliation for fedayeen raids known to have been sponsored by Damascus. The raid on the village of Sammu did raise the Jordanian charge that Egypt should have come to its defence but was instead hiding behind the UNEF buffer. However, the Hashemite regime itself faced Palestinian charges that it was not doing enough to protect and support the fedayeen, and these charges served to defuse its criticism of Egyptian inaction.

However, it became increasingly evident, as fedayeen raids and Syrian bombardments mounted, that far from restraining Syria and deterring Israel, the Egyptian-Syrian defence pact could only serve either to embarrass Nasser further or to embroil Egypt in the escalating conflict. Syria showed no signs of exercising restraint as a result of the defence pact and on 7 April, 1967 Israel retaliated, shooting down six Syrian MIGs in the process. Still unwilling to respond, Nasser declared that Egypt was unable to come to Syria's defence because Damascus refused to allow the stationing of Egyptian aircraft on Syrian territory. Perhaps surprisingly, Syria did not respond to this charge and its bombardments of Israeli border settlements subsided in subsequent weeks as the regime became preoccupied with an internal crisis over its legitimacy.

16. The Syrian official press ignored Nasser's charges devoting only a ten line summary to the speech. The internal crisis was precipitated by the publication, in a Syrian Army journal, of an attack on religion which caused an outrage amongst the religious leaders and mass demonstrations. See C. Earnest Dawn, "The Egyptian Remilitarisation of Sinai", Journal of Contemporary History, Volume III, No. 3, July 1968, pp. 205-7; Walter Laqueur, The Road to War, pp. 92-95.
However, fedayeen raids increased, with almost daily incidents, and the corresponding warnings issued by decision-makers in Jerusalem made it apparent that Israel would take action "no less drastic" than the April raid if Damascus did nothing to restrain the fedayeen.  

In these circumstances, it was natural for those interested in bolstering the increasingly unstable regime in Damascus to welcome and magnify the external diversion presented by the threats from Israel, and this in turn made it difficult for Nasser to remain on the sidelines of the conflict. At some stage he would have to demonstrate that the defence pact was not a 'paper tiger' and that Jordanian claims that he had reached agreement with Israel, ensuring calm on the Egyptian border "until the Palestine question is settled or until reconciliation occurs", were unfounded. Moreover, the more severe the Israeli retaliation, the weaker would Nasser appear if he failed to respond - and the Israeli warnings made the attack sound ominous indeed if the press dispatches could be believed.

Further reason for responding to the situation on the Israeli-Syrian border came from the actions of Nasser's Soviet patron. On 11 May in Moscow, Chairman Podgornyi warned Vice-President Sadat that Israeli troops were being concentrated on the Syrian border in preparation for an attack on 17 May. Such warnings were not new; they had been a standard Soviet technique for bolstering the Syrian regime since May 1966 when Moscow had first accused Israel of such intentions. In the circumstances of May 1967 however, they provided Nasser with both the opportunity and justification for a show of force which would have Soviet backing because Moscow had raised the alarm in the first place.

17. For a list of the raids conducted by the fedayeen in this period see Middle East Record, 1967, p. 178; and for a summary of the warnings issued by Israel see, ibid., pp. 179 and 187.
19. Arab sources quoted a UPI dispatch reporting an off-the-record briefing given by an Israeli official on 12 May. The dispatch stated that Israel would take limited military action designed "to topple the Damascus army regime if Syrian terrorists continue sabotage raids against Israel". The record of this briefing shows no direct reference to such an aim but it would not have been difficult to infer from the words of the official. For the official text, see Middle East Record, 1967, p. 187. The text of the dispatch is cited in Dawn, "The Egyptian Remilitarisation of Sinai", p.210.
The question again arises as to whether Nasser was doing Soviet bidding in remilitarising Sinai or whether he was acting in what he regarded as Egyptian interests. Yet again the answer lies in the convergence of Soviet and Egyptian interests, for while the Soviet Union appears to have had good reason for wanting Nasser to remilitarise Sinai, Nasser had reasons of his own which were more decisive in his calculations. The Soviet reasons for wanting an Egyptian show of force appear to have been twofold. First, Moscow wished to bolster the Syrian regime and secure its own position of influence in Damascus by deterring Israel from attacking at a time when there was domestic strife in Syria. Soviet warnings to Israel, combined with an Egyptian mobilisation on Israel's southern front, might effectively achieve this aim while demonstrating that the Egyptian-Syrian defence pact had teeth and that the union of 'progressive' Arabs would have to be taken seriously by all its adversaries. Second, it is possible that the Soviet Union was interested in replacing Egyptian support for the regime in Yemen with its own direct assistance, to secure a position of influence in Southern Arabia in preparation for the British withdrawal from Aden in 1968. An Egyptian withdrawal from Yemen could only be achieved if Nasser could justify the withdrawal in terms of the higher demands of the conflict with Israel. So the remilitarisation of Sinai would provide Nasser with the justification for withdrawing his troops from Yemen and thereby enable the Soviet Union to replace Egyptian support for the regime in Sana'a.  

Nasser's purpose in remilitarising Sinai is more difficult to unravel. It seems unlikely that he believed, and was therefore prompted by, Soviet and Syrian warnings of Israeli troop concentrations. Not only had

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22. The evidence for this Soviet interest comes from the press reports of a meeting in Cairo between Foreign Minister Gromyko and Nasser from 29 March to 1 April, 1967. The subject of these talks was said to be the situation in Yemen, but the well-informed Yugoslavian news agency, Tanyug, reported that the UNEF in Sinai was also discussed. A Lebanese paper reported that Nasser had told Gromyko that he could not withdraw from Yemen without causing trouble there and in Egypt. Gromyko is said to have answered that nothing is impossible in politics and that the Soviet Union was no longer prepared to finance the Egyptian campaign in Yemen. From these reports one might speculate that one of the purposes of the Soviet warning on Israeli troop concentrations was to provide a cover story for the withdrawal of Egyptian troops from Yemen. See Middle East Record, 1967, p. 22; Ro'i, From Encroachment to Involvement, p. 437.
Nasser had sent General Fawzi to Syria on 14 May (i.e. before he decided to remilitarise Sinai) and Fawzi had advised, according to the subsequent testimony of Badran, that the reports of troop concentrations were without foundation and that the Soviets and Syrians "must have been having hallucinations". Nasser's subsequent explanation, that the defence pact with Syria made it impossible for him either to remain silent or only to issue "cables of support", and that therefore he had to "take concrete steps to face the danger threatening Syria", should also be discounted. The threat of an immediate Israeli invasion was illusory, and Nasser had explicitly stated that he would not be drawn into precipitate action as a consequence of the mere existence of his signature on a piece of paper.

What then were Nasser's motivations in sending two Egyptian divisions into Sinai on 15 May? By analysing the pressures on Nasser at this stage it is possible to construct an explanation of his motives. First, as already enunciated, Nasser's position in the Arab world was at a low point and he was under pressure to improve it to reassert his influence in the region. For this reason he had signed the defence pact and for this reason General Amer had proposed in December 1966, that Egypt send troops into Sinai and occupy Sharm el-Sheikh. Nasser had rejected the proposal in 1966, but it now appeared more attractive as a means for deflating his Arab

23. On 17 May, U Thant told El-Khony that UNTSO had reported no troop movements "which should give rise to undue concern". This was repeated on 19 May in U Thant's report to the Security Council: "Reports from UNTSO observers have confirmed the absence of troop concentrations...". Nes reports that the American Embassy in Cairo had tried to refute the Soviet reports based on American intelligence. See Middle East Record, 1967, p. 186; Nes, op.cit., p. 8; Safran, From War to War, p. 274; Dawn, op.cit., p. 209.


27. According to the testimony of Badran, Amer had proposed this action to relieve the pressure on Egypt from Jordan, whose leaders were criticising Nasser for "hiding behind the skirts of UNEF": "So the idea occurred to the Field Marshal that we ought to do something about it in order to forestall the campaign [of the reactionary Arab states]". Cited in Draper, loc.cit.
critics, who were accusing him of selling out the Arab nation in its conflict with Israel, by demonstrating that Egypt would protect a threatened Syria. Whereas in better times he had resisted such pressure by arguing that the Arab forces were not strong enough to confront Israel, now his political fortunes had declined to such an extent that he found it necessary to reconsider his caution and accept higher risks in order to recoup his lost prestige in the Arab world.\textsuperscript{28}

Accordingly, by concentrating his forces in Sinai Nasser could force Israel to divert its attention and its troops from Syria to the southern border with Egypt.\textsuperscript{29} Nasser may not have believed that Israel intended to launch an offensive war against Syria but he would have been certain that Israel would retaliate against Syria for the escalating activity of the fedayeen - Jerusalem was warning of such a move and it would have been consistent with its policy of retaliation. An Egyptian mobilisation might deter such an attack and thereby reduce the pressure on Nasser to respond to Israel with a more forthright and offensive strategy. Israel could be expected to act with caution on all fronts until it had gauged Egyptian intentions and Nasser might thereby claim that he had deterred Israel, protected Syria, and upheld the Arab cause. And in the longer term, Israel might continue to be deterred by the prospect that any retaliation would be at the risk of uncontrolled escalation to a large-scale conflict.\textsuperscript{30}

Second, Nasser faced the pressures of what he regarded as an imperialist offensive against his revolution - an offensive spearheaded by Israel. According to two of his biographers, the coup in Greece on 21 April had confirmed these fears and increased his desire to pre-empt, politically,

\textsuperscript{28} Nasser had rejected Amer's proposal concerning UNEF and Sharm el-Sheikh because he believed it would lead to war. According to Badran: "Nasser turned it down and told Amer that this would be a dangerous action, for seizure of the Gulf would lead to blockade and this would lead to war". Even on 5 February 1967 Nasser demonstrated his understanding of the need for caution: "The battle with Israel is a decisive one. The Arab world cannot afford to enter a losing battle. We shall mobilise the Palestinian people first; then the Arab people; then we shall face the fifth columns among us. Then we shall be free to deal with the Palestinian issue. We must first purge the Arab lands of the forces that collaborate with Imperialism". See Draper, \textit{loc.cit}; Middle East Record, 1967, p. 160.

\textsuperscript{29} Heikal subsequently claimed this to be Nasser's intention. See Al Ahram, 6 October, 1967, cited in Middle East Record, 1967, p. 191.

\textsuperscript{30} Safran argues, similarly, that the mobilisation might have been part of a new strategy of undermining Israel's strength by guerrilla action. Mobilisation would thereby prevent Israel from launching a surprise attack, i.e. a repeat of 1956, on the guerrilla bases. See Safran, pp. 283-4.
the imperialist design. Since he had received warnings of an impending Israeli attack from the Soviet Union, Nasser could safely expect Moscow to support such a political pre-emption, for it would serve Soviet interests in the region. Thus, by remilitarising Sinai, Nasser might hope to thwart the expected offensive if this show of strength succeeded in deterring Israel while Soviet backing neutralised the United States. If, by means of this action, Nasser could demonstrate that Egypt was still a force to contend with and that he had not lost his will to resist the apparent design of the United States, then perhaps he would succeed not only in reasserting his leadership of the Arab world, but also would succeed in reclaiming Egypt's position of importance between the superpowers. If, in this way, he could precipitate the realisation in Washington that the 'progressive' Arab states could not be contained and neutralised by Israel's deterrent strength, he might force American policy makers to rethink their strategy and attempt anew to come to terms with him - on terms which would help to alleviate Egypt's economic plight as they alleviated his own political plight.

Finally, Nasser may have been attempting a trade-off with the Soviet Union to reduce Moscow's pressure for a withdrawal from Yemen by doing its bidding in Sinai and bolstering the Syrian regime. Clearly Nasser did not want to withdraw his troops from Yemen despite the drain of the civil war on the Egyptian economy and despite the fact that Egyptian intervention had been a major cause of the rift with the United States. Rather, he saw an opportunity to spread his influence to southern Arabia when the British withdrew in a year's time. Nasser could not have welcomed the Soviet attempt to exercise direct influence in Yemen by replacing Egypt, for Moscow had the same intentions as Nasser; in southern Arabia they were competitors rather than allies. Nevertheless, Moscow was apparently exerting pressure on Nasser to withdraw by arguing that the Egyptian economy could no longer bear the burden and by suggesting that the Soviet Union was no longer prepared to finance the Egyptian operation. While the Soviet Union may have created the cover for an Egyptian withdrawal by suggesting the movement of Egyptian troops into Sinai, Nasser perhaps intended to use this cover, not to withdraw from Yemen, but rather to bargain with his Soviet patron on the

32. Nutting, pp. 383-4; Middle East Record, 1967, pp. 128 and 598.
33. See above, footnote 22.
basis that the remilitarisation of Sinai would protect Moscow's Syrian protégé, and that therefore Nasser was a valuable client whose objectives in southern Arabia should be supported rather than thwarted if the Soviet Union wanted his continued support in the north. In the same way, Nasser could defuse his critics in Jordan and Saudi Arabia who were charging that Egypt's intervention in Yemen prevented its forces from being deployed against Israel. Thus on 22 May, while announcing the closure of the Straits of Tiran and Egypt's willingness to confront Israel, Nasser addressed himself to the question of Yemen and declared:

> Of course they say we are tied up in the Yemen and have problems there...but...we are capable of performing our duty in the Yemen and at the same time performing our national duty here in Egypt, both in defending our frontiers and attacking, if Israel attacks any Arab country. (emphasis supplied).

Thus, because of mounting pressures, the perceived advantages to Egypt's position in the Arab world and between the superpowers made the option of remilitarising Sinai attractive to Nasser. It was these pressures, rather than the bidding of the Soviet Union, which forced him to take the action which would spark a chain of events disastrous to Egypt. At this stage, he calculated the risk of war as a result of the troop movements at 20%, so he clearly believed that the possible advantages would outweigh the implicit risks involved. Nevertheless, he was now seeking a political victory over his adversaries in a game in which he controlled very few of the levers. As a result, Nasser forced himself into an ever more dangerous and costly disposition, raising the stakes without improving his position in this game of brinkmanship. He might just have achieved his aim of a political victory, and at stages looked like doing so, had his importance to the superpower players been greater, had he correctly perceived Egypt's political strengths and weaknesses and the commitments of the other players, and had he acted according to the limitations imposed by these factors. Unfortunately, he failed to assess his position and the resolve of his opponents accurately and these miscalculations led to his denouement in a daring playing out of the politics of patronage.

34. Hussein made an attack on Nasser in these terms in February, 1967 on a visit to Saudi Arabia. He charged: "Members of this group [Egypt] have led the Arab forces away from their natural positions along the [Israeli] border. They instead have sent these forces to kill our brothers in...Yemen". R. Jedda, 12 February, 1967, BBC/SWB, 14 February, 1967; cf. Middle East Record, 1967, p. 115.


III - THE WITHDRAWAL OF UNEF AND THE CLOSURE OF THE STRAITS

The remilitarisation of Sinai could not achieve its manifold purpose if UNEF still held its positions on the border with Israel, for then Nasser would be seen to be bluffing and neither his adversaries nor his brothers would take him seriously. Clearly, were Egypt to establish the credibility of its deterrent threat to Israel it would have to seek the withdrawal of UNEF from its observer positions on the border. Again Nasser had been considering this action for some time and did not rush into the decision without careful thought for his objective and the chances of achieving it.

That Nasser was aware of this option and cognisant of its consequences was evident in 1965 when he stated, in his retort to Syrian demands for war:

They say "remove the U.N. Emergency Force. This force prevents Egypt getting at Israel". Well, remove the Emergency Force. Then what shall we do? What is our plan? We must first of all have a plan. (emphasis supplied).

Moreover, when Amer had proposed in December 1966 that Nasser demand the evacuation of UNEF and then occupy Sharm el-Sheikh, without blockading the Gulf of Aqaba, Nasser had rejected this plan because he believed that the removal of UNEF and the occupation of Sharm would make it necessary to close the Gulf and this would lead to war. Badran claims that he also shared this perception: if Egypt removed UNEF it would have to close the Gulf and this would lead to war. He too rejected it as "half a solution".

However, Nasser and Amer had gained some experience in UNEF withdrawals in 1960 when, following an Israeli reprisal raid on the Syrian village of Tawarfiq, large military formations had been ordered into Sinai while UNEF had been requested to withdraw from the border, but not from Sharm el-Sheikh. Secretary-General Hammarskjöld had agreed to withdraw the UNEF from the border positions to their base camps in the Gaza Strip. Although Israel had also mobilised reserve units and sent large tank formations to the south, when tension had eased on the northern border, Nasser had ordered the Sinai reinforcements to withdraw and, after a month, UNEF

had returned to its observer posts on the border. Thus, Nasser apparently decided to repeat the Tawarfiq manoeuvre by requesting a partial withdrawal of UNEF from the border with Israel. If UNEF remained at Sharm el-Sheikh then Egyptian forces would not have to occupy that position and the problem of Israeli navigation in the Gulf would not present itself. And if UNEF only withdrew to its base camps, then it could return to its border positions once the Egyptian remilitarisation had succeeded in deterring Israel from retaliating against Syria.

Thus the decision to request the withdrawal of UNEF was taken neither precipitately nor without due regard for its consequences. The time had come to challenge Israel's doctrine of deterrence by demonstrating that Egypt had the power to deter Israel from attacking Syria. To be effective, such a strategy required the removal of UNEF from the border with Israel so that Egyptian resolve would not be questioned by Nasser's adversaries in the Arab world and elsewhere. However, while Egyptian spokesmen had always claimed that UNEF did not present an obstacle to effective action against Israel, the fact remained that UNEF did occupy positions on the Egyptian border and acted as a symbolic buffer between Israel and Egypt. If Nasser was to demonstrate Egyptian resolve to face Israel he could not afford to become engaged in a side-battle with the United Nations which might reveal UNEF to be somewhat more of an obstacle than had been portrayed. The UNEF troops had to be withdrawn as quickly as possible, without diplomatic wrangling, for Nasser's strategy to be effective.

40. Kimche and Bawly, p. 84; Bar-Zohar, p. 32. This experience remained salient in the subsequent defence of Egypt's role in the conflict with Israel: When Nasser declared in 1965 that he would not remove UNEF without a plan, Damascus radio attacked Egypt for deserting the Syrians. Al Ahram responded: "...the presence of UNEF in the Gaza sector cannot constitute an obstacle in the face of Egyptian movements in the case of a comprehensive war or the possibility of such a war. The Syrian rulers know this very well from the experience of the At-Tawarfiq battle when matters along the armistice line were about to develop into a possible comprehensive war. At that time the Egyptian military command asked the UNEF to move out of the way. Egyptian forces were then massing heavily along the armistice line, and the emergency force - with its symbolic number - could not possibly show any objection". Al Ahram, 3 June, 1965, FBIS, 3 June, 1965.

However, Nasser could not be sure that U Thant would do his bidding meekly and withdraw UNEF from the border forthwith, so on 16 May he first sought to repeat the manoeuvre of 1960 by requesting the withdrawal of UNEF to its base camps. Hoping to avoid any deliberations about this withdrawal in New York, the request was issued to General Rikhye, the Commander of UNEF in Sinai, and was accompanied by a warning that, if UNEF troops were not ordered to evacuate their observer positions and to remain in their camps, fighting might well break out between Egyptian and UNEF troops. Rikhye refused to comply with the request and said that he could only take instructions from the Secretary-General. Everything now depended upon U Thant's decision. If he followed Hammarskjöld's precedent Nasser's plan would have succeeded and Egypt's show of force on Israel's borders would have been achieved without any complications. However, when U Thant received Rikhye's report, on the evening of 16 May, he called in the Egyptian ambassador and told him that a request for partial or temporary withdrawal of UNEF from the Armistice lines would be regarded by him as tantamount to a request for a complete withdrawal of UNEF from Gaza and Sinai since UNEF could not be asked to stand aside while Egyptian and Israeli forces confronted each other.  

Thus U Thant presented Nasser with an 'all or nothing' decision and, given Nasser's situation, he had to demand 'all', for he would completely lose face if he accepted 'nothing' and UNEF remained in its positions. However, now that his initial plan for partial withdrawal had failed, Nasser still had to make sure that U Thant complied with his request for total withdrawal and did not adopt stalling tactics in the face of pressure exerted by Israel's friends in the United Nations. Accordingly, Nasser decided to establish a fait accompli which would make it impossible for U Thant to do other than order the immediate withdrawal of UNEF. On 17 May, before Egypt formally requested complete withdrawal, its troops surrounded or occupied UNEF positions while others moved up to the Armistice line with Israel. Meanwhile General Fawzi, the Egyptian Chief-of-Staff,


43. As Golda Meir has noted: "...I don't for a minute believe that Nasser actually expected the United Nations to do his bidding meekly. It was against all rhyme or reason...and I am sure that Nasser anticipated a long round of discussions, arguments and haggling. If nothing else he almost certainly reckoned that the United Nations would insist on some kind of phasing out operation". Golda Meir, My Life, pp. 295-6.

44. The UNEF position at El Sabha was occupied, while the positions at El Kuntilla, El Amr and El Quseima were surrounded. U Thant, loc.cit., p. 212.
requested Rikhye to order the withdrawal of the Yugoslav detachments (the troops which were at that time occupying the border positions) from Sinai within twenty-four hours and from Sharm el-Sheikh within forty-eight hours.\textsuperscript{45} Egypt intended to occupy all UNEF positions regardless of the deliberations at UN headquarters in New York.

At the same time, the governments of Yugoslavia and India were consulted to ensure that they would advise U Thant to comply with the Egyptian request.\textsuperscript{46} Thus when U Thant consulted with the contributing countries on the afternoon of 17 May, he was duly advised by Yugoslavia and India that Egypt was entitled to make the withdrawal request and that he should comply without consulting the General Assembly.\textsuperscript{47} That evening U Thant informed Egyptian ambassador El Khony that, if a formal request for withdrawal were lodged by the Egyptian government, he would have to comply, because UNEF could not remain on Egyptian territory without the host government's consent.\textsuperscript{48}

When this message was received in Cairo it signalled the green light for the occupation of the remaining observer posts. On the morning of 18 May, before the formal request for withdrawal was submitted, General Fawzi ordered his troops to occupy Sharm el-Sheikh, El Kuntilla and El Amr, while Foreign Minister Riad summoned the ambassadors of the contributing countries and informed them that UNEF had "terminated its tasks" in Egypt and the Gaza Strip and "must depart from the above territory forthwith.\textsuperscript{49}

Then the final touches were added to the \textit{fait accompli} by allowing U Thant no room to manoeuvre once he had received the request. Thus when El Khony submitted the formal request on the afternoon of 18 May, he informed U Thant of the bitter resentment felt in Cairo over what was considered to be attempts to turn UNEF into "an occupation force". While U Thant could not have wanted to be portrayed as the new 'imperialist' in the Third World, he nevertheless expressed his intention to appeal

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Ibid.} The greater time allowed for the evacuation of Sharm el-Sheikh can be explained by the need for more time to deploy Egyptian troops in this distant and inaccessible position.

\textsuperscript{46} Burdett, \textit{Encounter with the Middle East}, p. 225. Yugoslavia and India were part of the non-aligned "old boy" network and were glad to comply.

\textsuperscript{47} U Thant, \textit{loc.cit.} p. 213. The contributing countries were Brazil, Canada, Denmark, India, Norway, Sweden and Yugoslavia. Canada advised against withdrawal and suggested that the opinion of the General Assembly should be sought.

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Ibid.}; Charles Yost, "The Arab-Israeli War: How it Began", pp. 311-12.

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Ibid.}; Burdett, p. 225.
directly to Nasser to reconsider his decision. The Egyptian response was
to warn U Thant that any such intervention was ill-advised because it
would be "sternly rebuffed". 50

If U Thant had intended to try for a compromise at this late stage,
this warning was sufficient to convince him that it would be in vain.
Moreover, when U Thant consulted with the contributing countries on
the formal request for withdrawal, he was informed by Yugoslavia and
India that they would withdraw their contingents even if he did not
immediately comply with the request. 51 Thus, with the UNEF positions
already occupied by Egyptian troops, with Nasser rejecting any compromise
and with the most important UNEF contingents withdrawing regardless of
his decision, U Thant was left with only one option. On the evening of
18 May, he ordered the complete withdrawal of UNEF from Egypt.

Within forty-eight hours of the initial request for the withdrawal
of UNEF, Nasser had achieved his purpose; his troops were now deployed
along the border with Israel. On the other side, although Israel had
ordered a partial mobilisation on its southern border, all threats
against Syria had ceased and the attack which Nasser had claimed would
occur on 17 May had not transpired. If Nasser had now allowed the tension
to subside by exercising the same caution as Israel, he would have
achieved the initial aims he had sought in deciding to remilitarise
Sinai. He would have demonstrated that the defence pact with Syria had
teeth and that the alliance of 'progressive' Arab states had to be taken
seriously; he would have pleased the Soviet Union and would have demonstrated
his ability to deter Israel; he would have deflated his critics in the
Arab world by proving that Egypt was in the vanguard of action against
Israel.

However, the total withdrawal of UNEF confronted Nasser with the
problem of the "half a solution" which had led him to reject Amer's
earlier proposal for the removal of UNEF in December 1966. UNEF had
now vacated Sharm el-Sheikh and with Egyptian troops moving into positions
at this strategic location the question arose as to whether Nasser should
close the Straits and blockade Israel's southern port of Eilat. Israel
had declared time and again that it would regard any such interference
with its right to freedom of navigation as a casus belli. Clearly, if
Nasser closed the Straits he would be risking war with Israel. Yet on

50. U Thant, ibid., p. 214; Burdett, ibid.
51. Ibid.
22 May, after lengthy deliberation, Nasser declared: "Under no circumstances can we allow the Israeli flag to pass through the Gulf of Aqaba".\footnote{Nasser's Speech on 22 May, 1967, IDOP, 1967, p. 540.}

Was Nasser intending to provoke Israel into war? From the available evidence it would seem unlikely. Nasser claimed after the war that when the closure of the Gulf was discussed at meetings of the Higher Executive Committee...

...it was clear to all of us that our role would be purely defensive; we should not attack unless there was an aggression against Syria; we merely had to be in a state of preparedness. At that meeting no one spoke of attacking Israel; there was absolutely no intention of taking offensive action against Israel.\footnote{Nasser's Speech on 23 July, 1967, IDOPs 1967, p. 623.}

If one is sceptical of such post hoc explanations, it should be borne in mind that had Nasser intended to launch an offensive against Israel, such an intention would have required a belief in the ability of Egypt's forces to defeat Israel on the battlefield. From Nasser's statements it is evident that he did not hold such a belief in 1965 or 1966 or even in February 1967, and nothing had changed in the structure of Egypt's forces since then which might have altered the fact that Egypt possessed only a limited offensive capability. Although Amer and Badran had informed Nasser that the army was ready for war and although, as Heikal has suggested, the remilitarisation of Sinai had created a state of euphoria which might have encouraged over-confidence, nevertheless Nasser must have been aware of the limitations imposed by the structure of his forces.\footnote{See the testimony of Shamseddin Badran cited in Burdett, p. 240.} Even if he believed that his air force could match Israel's and that Egypt's numerical superiority in tanks would neutralise Israel's qualitative manpower advantage, even if he believed Amer's exaggerated assessment of the balance of military power, he would still have been aware that, while the air force possessed large numbers of interceptors (MIG 21s), its strategic bomber force was much smaller and Egypt could therefore only hope to inflict marginal damage on Israel's strategic targets. He would also have been aware that the Soviet Union had only supplied large quantities of obsolescent ground-attack aircraft (MIG 17s and MIG 19s), which were no match for Israel's Mirage IIIIs, while limiting the supply of the far more effective and modern...
Moreover, had Nasser intended to launch an offensive against Israel he would certainly not have decided to forgo an Egyptian first strike with such complacency, since this would have given Egypt the only chance of achieving a decisive advantage over Israel.56

Nasser's professed plan for confronting Israel had been to build Arab strength over four to five years, to weld the Arab states into a unified force through the alliance of progressive regimes and the overthrow of reactionary ones, and to withdraw his troops from Yemen before confronting Israel.57 None of these conditions had been fulfilled, nor were they likely to be fulfilled in the near future. Moreover, in scotching calls for an Arab attack on Israel over the years he had constantly warned that it was first necessary to isolate Israel from its international support. Yet he had witnessed and registered his alarm at the emerging alignment of the United States and Israel, culminating in the Skyhawk deal of 1966 and Eshkol's bold declaration that the American Sixth Fleet protected Israel. He had constantly warned of the threat from 'imperialism', in the guise of this alliance, aimed at his revolution. Therefore Nasser must have assessed that launching an offensive against Israel or provoking it into war with the aim of defeating it on the battlefield would surely lead to American intervention to prevent Israel's destruction. He could not hope to defeat Israel in such circumstances. Given these considerations it seems unlikely that by blockading the Gulf Nasser intended to provoke a war with Israel with the aim of defeating it on the battlefield, although he certainly

55. Egypt's offensive capabilities were also limited by the ineffectiveness of its own missiles, due to guidance problems, and the fact that the Soviet Union had not supplied any significant quantities of anti-tank weapons. As Glassman notes: "These deficiencies reduced the flexibility and mobility of Arab fire-support and battlefield-interdiction capabilities. Because of this, Arab forces could be expected to have greater difficulty penetrating Israeli lines and Israeli forces would be relatively more free to deliver reinforcements to threatened points". Glassman also notes that Egypt possessed only thirty TU-16 strategic bombers equipped with Kennel air-to-ground missiles. If these missiles achieved even a 100% penetration only sixty tons of conventional warheads would have hit Israel - "a painful but inconsiderable sum". See Glassman, *Arms for the Arabs*, pp. 31-5; Cf. Safran, *From War to War*, pp. 282-4.
56. See below, pp. 263-4
57. In his speech in May 1965 Nasser had declared: "Supposing we were to attack Israel; will I attack while I have 50,000 of our soldiers in Yemen?... if I want to attack Israel, the first thing to be done is to bring these 50,000 soldiers from Yemen...". See Nasser's speech, 31 May 1965, *Arab Political Documents, 1965*, p. 227.
knew that he would be risking war.  

Were there then pressures placed on Nasser to institute the blockade, pressures so great that he was incapable of resisting them? This also seems unlikely in the circumstances. Apparently the Soviet Union was not consulted on the closure of the Straits and, in the aftermath of Nasser's announcement, Moscow quickly sought to restrain Nasser from launching any offensive and urged him to compromise. The Soviet Union had certainly sought the remilitarisation of Sinai to deter Israel from an attack on Syria, but that had already been achieved and did not require the closure of the Straits. Nor, for that matter, did the desire to provide Nasser with an excuse for pulling his troops out of Yemen require this precipitate action. On the other hand, Moscow was keenly aware of American commitments to Israel concerning freedom of navigation in the Gulf, and Kosygin had received a veiled warning from President Johnson on 22 May about the risk that "our ties to nations of the area could bring us into difficulties". Nasser's closure of the Straits raised the spectre of superpower confrontation which the Soviet Union wished to avoid at all costs. It therefore seems beyond doubt that the Soviet Union did not pressure Nasser to close the Straits.

Pressure from Nasser's Arab critics may have been a factor in the decision, for as Nasser stated after the war: "This was one of the things our Arab brothers had always insisted upon". However, after the withdrawal of UNEF, there appears to have been very little pressure from the other Arab states to blockade the Gulf. Jordan Radio did claim on 19 May that "logic, wisdom and nationalism" made it necessary for Nasser to close the Straits otherwise "what value would there be in

58. In his 23 July speech Nasser revealed that at the meeting of the Higher Executive Committee on 22 May he had estimated the risk of war at 50%, and at another meeting at 80%, IDOP, 1967, p. 623. On 9 June Nasser explained: "We knew that there was a real possibility of armed conflict and accepted the risk". President Nasser's Resignation speech, 9 June, 1967, IDOP, 1967, Document 372, p. 597.

59. Lall records that at the United Nations Soviet diplomats were taken by surprise by Nasser's announcement of the blockade "and assiduously inquired from all who might have special knowledge of Arab intentions why Nasser had taken this step and how far he intended to go". Johnson gives the Soviet Union the benefit of the doubt: "Although we cannot be sure, it seems likely that Nasser took this mortally dangerous action, independently of the Soviet Union". Arthur Lall, The U.N. and the Middle East Crisis of 1967, pp. 30-32; Lyndon Baines Johnson, The Vantage Point, p. 291; Yost, "The Arab-Israeli War", p. 315; Y. Ro'i, From Encroachment to Involvement, p. 438; Eric Rouleau (et.al.) Israel et les Arabes, p. 103; Johnson, ibid., p. 291.

60. Johnson, ibid., p. 291.

61. Burdett, p. 273; Glassman, pp. 40-41; Safran, p. 295

military demonstrations". Nevertheless, Nasser had already won a victory over his Arab critics by remilitarising Sinai and forcing UNEF to withdraw and, had he wanted to resist what little pressure there was to close the Straits, he now certainly possessed the means to do so, having reestablished his anti-Israel credentials, and having supposedly deterred Israel from attacking Syria. What, after all, had the Jordanians done to protect the Arabs from Israel? Certainly, once the immediate crisis had been defused he would have inevitably faced growing pressure from his Arab critics to close the Straits. But Nasser would still retain a considerable ability to resist these pressures without jeopardising his refurbished popularity, just as he had resisted past pressure over the last ten years to take a more active role in confronting Israel. He might have argued that the time was not yet right for war because inter-Arab cooperation had not reached its full potential. He might have combated any such pressure by adopting a Syrian-style strategy of supporting fedayeen incursions from the Gaza Strip.

Nor should Egyptian claims, made after the war, that once Egypt had repossessed Sharm el-Sheikh it could not fail to exercise its sovereignty by blockading Israeli shipping, be taken seriously. For one thing, when Amer had proposed the removal of UNEF and the reoccupation of Sharm el-Sheikh in December 1966, he had explicitly recommended that the Straits not be closed and, according to Israeli reports of testimony taken from Egyptian prisoners, Amer had told his troops on 20 May not to expect a blockade of the Gulf. Moreover, Badran's evidence shows that originally, when UNEF was withdrawn, there was no intention of closing the Gulf:

I asked the Field Marshal [Amer] whether we were ready to go through with the battle and told him that the withdrawal of UNEF would lead to a confrontation. He told me that he intended to occupy Sharm in place of UNEF and agreed with me not to close down the Gulf.


64. Safran suggests that such a strategy might have replaced the strategy of blockade. *The Road to War*, p. 337.


66. Safran, p. 288 and Kimche and Bawly, p. 95. Safran also notes that during the period after the withdrawal of UNEF and before the closure of the Straits no suggestion of closure was made in the Cairo press.

67. Badran's evidence cited in Burdett, p. 240. Badran also revealed that Amer had made no plans to implement the blockade: "A certain date was set to close the Gulf. The date was at very short notice, to the point where it was impossible to affect it. So the Field Marshal had to bring in paratroop units and light units to occupy Sharm...He had to embark on a quick operation entailing many difficulties". Cited in Burdett, pp. 241-2.
If the explanation for Nasser's action in blockading the Straits does not lie in a miscalculation of Egypt's offensive capabilities, nor in pressure exerted by his Soviet patron and Arab adversaries, nor in the inevitability of the decision, where then can we find the explanation? The answer seems to lie in the complex calculation, which the evidence suggests Nasser made, that the combination of his will-power, Egypt's defensive capabilities, the protection of his Soviet patron, the support of other Arab states, and his decision to await an Israeli first strike, would be sufficient to outweigh, in an essentially political contest, the combination of Israeli will-power, military strength, and American backing. Thus Nasser's action in blockading the Straits should be seen as the first step in a policy of brinkmanship, rather than an irrational action which led Egypt into a well-laid Israeli trap. It was a calculated gamble on which he staked all Egypt's depleted political capital. Whereas previously he had explicitly rejected such action, now the cost-benefit calculation had altered because the costs appeared to have been reduced by the combination of Soviet backing and Arab support, while the prospect of benefit had increased as a result of his desperate isolation and the gains which he had already achieved with a minimum of effort. As such, Nasser's decision to close the Straits and risk war with Israel was a daring attempt to fight his way out of the corner he had boxed himself into. By crowning his earlier achievements with a political victory over Israel, he would demonstrate Israel's inability to protect what it regarded as its rights, its inability to deter Arab action by means of superior military force, and its isolation in the world arena, just as he would demonstrate Egypt's leadership of the Arab world, its vital role in the conflict with Israel, and its value to both superpowers.

Nasser failed in this gamble because he miscalculated not only Egypt's military ability to resist an Israeli offensive but also — and in the event more significantly — because he underestimated Israel's

68. For the argument that Nasser was trapped by the Israelis see Nutting, pp. 396-8; and Elias Sam'o, The June 1967 Arab-Israeli War: Miscalculation or Conspiracy?, Wilmette, Illinois, 1971, pp. 147-162.

69. An interesting, though biased, confirmation of Nasser's political rather than military purpose has been given by General Mohamed el-Gamasy, in 1973: "...the armed forces were surprised by political decisions of which they had no prior knowledge. When they began to carry out orders, it was purely a military demonstration to consolidate the political decision. The armed forces had to concentrate in Sinai without knowing the required strategic aim..." General Mohamed el-Gamasy, The Military Strategy of the October 1973 War, International Symposium on the October 1973 War, Cairo University, October, 1975, p. 10.
will-power and overestimated Egypt's political strength, the extent of
Soviet support, and the desire of the United States to restrain its
Israeli protégé and renew its relations with Cairo. In earlier times,
when the United States had been interested in wooing him and he had been
less dependent upon the Soviet Union, such a daring ploy might well have
succeeded. But in the international environment of 1967, Nasser no
longer possessed the same leverage with the superpowers and could not
regain this leverage through brinkmanship unless he combined his actions
with a realistic appraisal of Egypt's position, cautious diplomacy and
a demonstration of his willingness to consider measures which would bring
Israel and Egypt back from the brink of war. In other words, Nasser
failed yet again to understand the rules of the game of patronage and
the limited value of the cards which he held in this game. He failed to
understand that since Egypt lacked alternative patronage and was now
entirely dependent upon the Soviet Union, what was needed was caution
not daring in this duel at the brink.

What was Nasser's strategy in closing the Gulf of Aqaba? By
confronting Israel on the brink of war, he was aiming to test Israel's
will to resist an encroachment on what it regarded as its rights.
Nasser was throwing down the gauntlet to Israel by blockading Eilat.
If Israel lacked the will to pick up this gauntlet, it would have to
back down on the issue of freedom of navigation in the Straits and
Nasser would thereby achieve a significant political victory without
war. If Israel picked up the gauntlet and launched war then Egypt's
defensive capabilities, Nasser calculated, would be adequate to hold the
Israeli advance in Sinai while the superpowers intervened to stop the
war and punished the Israeli 'aggressor' by forcing it to withdraw, leaving
Egypt in control of the Straits and with its political victory intact.
This strategy was predicated upon three related assumptions: i) that
Israel's leadership would not have the will-power to launch war without
external support; ii) that Egyptian diplomacy could deprive Israel of
this external support; iii) that if Israel's leadership changed, and/or
a new will were forged in Jerusalem, in going to war, without external
support, Israel would not win anything more than a limited victory, and
certainly would not secure the political fruits of such a victory.

To ensure the validity of these assumptions, and therefore the
success of his strategy, Nasser would have to use his tactical skill
during the crisis to intimidate the Israeli leadership, to isolate
Israel from its external sources of support, and, if it came to war, to maintain Israel's isolation and maximise Egypt's political support. In the event Nasser overplayed his hand and instead of achieving these aims helped only to ensure that Israel gained American political support, neutralising Egypt's political backing and leaving it militarily isolated as it failed to resist the Israeli onslaught. Nasser invalidated his own assumptions and this led to the collapse of his strategy and Egypt's denouement.

IV - THE ATTEMPT TO INTIMIDATE ISRAEL

At the outset of the crisis, Nasser had good reason to believe that he faced a weak-willed Israeli leadership, partly because of internal Israeli criticism of Eshkol for not taking a more forthright stand against fedayeen incursions, partly because of Eshkol's demonstrated unwillingness to test the Egyptian-Syrian defence pact in attacking Jordan rather than Syria in November 1966, but mostly because of Israel's weak reaction to the remilitarisation of Sinai, the withdrawal of UNEF and the closure of the Straits. At the beginning of May, Israeli leaders had filled the air-waves with dire warnings of retaliatory action against Syria, so, by comparison, the Israeli reaction to Nasser's challenges must have appeared timid indeed. Israeli warnings of retaliation ceased, only to be replaced by expressions of anxiety and concern addressed to the Western powers and the United Nations. Although Eshkol did order partial mobilisation, his first verbal response to the withdrawal of UNEF and the massing of Egyptian troops on Israel's border was mild. On 22 May, while Nasser was deciding to close the Straits, Eshkol appealed to the superpowers for diplomatic action "to ensure continuation of the quiet", and a restoration of the status quo "on both sides of the border". Far from emphasising Israel's deterrent strength or its willingness to confront Egypt, Eshkol declared to the Arab states:

"...we harbour no aggressive designs. We have no possible interest in violating either their security, their territory or their legitimate rights. Nor shall we interfere in any way with their internal affairs, their regimes, or their regional or international relations. We expect of them, according to the principles of reciprocity, the application of the same principles toward us."

70. See Middle East Record, 1967, p. 179.
71. Ibid., p. 194.
Instead, Nasser reciprocated by closing the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping and in so doing issued the challenge to Israel in forthright terms - terms intended to be interpreted as coming from a leader ready and determined to confront the Jewish state:

The Jews threaten war. We say they are welcome to war, we are ready for war, our armed forces, our people, all of us are ready for war, but under no circumstances shall we abandon any of our rights.73

Eshkol's response to this challenge could only be interpreted by Nasser as a demonstration of weakness given Israel's earlier warnings about the importance of free passage in the Gulf and its declarations that any blockade there would be regarded as a *casus belli*.74 On 23 May Eshkol again emphasised Israel's reliance upon international action, this time to maintain its right to freedom of navigation in the Straits. Although he labelled Nasser's action as "an act of aggression against Israel", he repeated Israel's readiness "to reduce tension and to consolidate peace in our region".75

With this confirmation of the apparently weak-willed nature of the Israeli leadership, Nasser set about intimidating it further by increasing the threatening tones of his rhetoric and emphasising his confidence in Arab strength. On 26 May he declared that Egypt was ready to do battle with Israel and, if Israel dared to take any action, there would be "total war with the basic objective of destroying Israel, which we can do".76 Concurrently, Heikal argued that war with Israel was now inevitable because Egypt had succeeded in challenging Israel's security doctrine. To bolster Nasser's bluff he declared that Egypt was ready and waiting for just such an attack: "Let Israel begin! Let our second blow then be ready! Let it be a knockout!" 77

74. In 1956 one of Israel's reasons for going to war had been Nasser's closure of the Straits in 1955. See Safran, pp. 228-9.
77. *Al Ahram*, 26 May, 1967. Most observers have argued that by this stage Nasser had become carried away with his rhetoric and the illusion of power and was goading Israel into a war. However, by his own account, and by the accounts of his biographers, it would appear that Nasser did not believe that war was inevitable until 2 June, and rather believed that war might still be avoided. It is for this reason that I have argued that his rhetoric was designed to make Israel back down rather than go to war on the theory that the bigger the bluff the greater the chance of success and the greater the self-doubt engendered in the adversary. As Eban
In gauging Israeli reactions to these threats Nasser was not privy to the attitudes of Israel's leaders nor to the content of their deliberations. He relied on his own image of the Israeli character and his interpretation of press, embassy and intelligence reports, as well as the speeches of Israeli leaders. Nasser's articulated image of Israel was that of an imperialist pawn, dependent upon the West for its creation and continued existence. 78 A small pariah state, vastly outnumbered by 30 million Arabs, and rent by internal disunity, Israel could not hope to stand up to the mobilisation of Arab might and when hard-pressed, he believed, like all the other imperialists which the Middle East had known over the centuries, it would retreat. 79 Nasser did not seem to understand at all that, as a Jewish state recreated after two thousand years of dispersion and oppression and comprising refugees from the pogroms, the holocaust, and the Arab states, Israel would fight for its survival when threatened, rather than allow its existence to be jeopardised. Thus, given this image, Nasser naturally tended to heed those indications which confirmed it and to ignore those which challenged its validity.

Thus when Eban departed on 24 May, cap in hand, for the capitals of the Western powers, Nasser perceived this action as confirmation of Israel's lack of will-power to take matters into its own hands. And when his ambassador in Washington reported that on 25 May Eban had told Rusk, "Israel is going to be attacked and destroyed today", Nasser must have concluded that his threats were having the desired effect, since he had no intention of launching an attack. 80 Moreover, Eshkol's speech on 28 May could only have provided further confirmation of this trend. After all, Eban had returned from his consultations with the Western powers and the Israeli Cabinet had since engaged in lengthy deliberations. If Israel now showed no sign of a willingness to pick up the gauntlet, which Nasser had thrown down by closing the Straits and threatening Israel's

77. (continued) commented: "This showed a curious inability to read the Israeli character. Arab leaders here were beginning to believe the contemptuous picture they had painted of their adversary." St. John, Eban, p. 435. See Nutting, pp. 408-10; Stephens, p. 481; and Nasser's 23 July speech, IDOP, 1967, p. 623.
79. Harkabi, ibid., pp. 89 and 322-3; Laqueur, The Road to War, p. 100.
80. The quote is from Heikal, p. 244. If this was in fact what Kemal had reported to Nasser it was an exaggeration, for Eban had only charged that Egypt was planning to launch an attack on 27 May. See above, Chapter Two. We have already noted that Eban's alarm had convinced some in Washington that Israel feared an Egyptian attack and did not have the will to resist it, so it is not at all surprising that Nasser interpreted it in similar terms.
destruction, then it would surely be safe to conclude that the worst of
the crisis was over and that Israel would soon back down. So, when
Eshkol announced in faltering tones that Israel would continue to rely
on international action to secure freedom of passage in the Straits and
demobilisation, "so that we shall not have to take action for self-defence
with our military forces", Nasser must have thought that his brinkmanship
had succeeded. He could not have known, though he might have guessed
if he had paid careful attention to the statements of Eshkol and Eban on
29 and 30 May, that the Israeli Cabinet had come close to a decision in
favour of war and had only decided to wait until American efforts to
resolve the crisis had been exhausted.

Thus, instead of taking a step back from the brink and reducing the
tension which was rising to breaking point, Nasser, sensing that political
victory was within his grasp, increased his threats of destruction and
raised his demands on Israel. On 28 May, in a press conference, he had
declared that he would accept no basis "for coexistence with Israel" and
had demanded the restoration of the rights of the Palestinians. Labelling
Israel's existence as "an aggression", he had stated that under
no circumstances would he allow Israeli shipping to pass through the
Gulf. Now, on 29 May, following Eshkol's announcement of Israel's
decision to wait, he reiterated this stance in a speech to the National
Assembly. Noting that the situation had been restored to what it had
been before 1956, he claimed that the Palestinian cause could now be
resurrected and the situation restored to what it had been before 1948,
i.e. before the creation of the State of Israel:

81. Statement by Prime Minister Eshkol Broadcast to the Nation, 28 May,
82. On 29 May Eshkol stated that freedom of passage in the Straits was a
"supreme national interest on which no concession is possible and no
compromise admissible". He warned that international action to reopen
the Straits would have to be carried out "in a short time" and that Israel
was ready and able to protect its rights and "defeat the aggressors".
Eban reiterated on 30 May that the time factor had to be taken seriously.
The buildup in Sinai and the blockade would have to be rescinded "in the
shortest possible time". He warned Nasser not to assume that what had
taken ten years of effort could be cancelled in ten minutes, and suggested
that he take Israeli defence preparations seriously. Speech by Prime
Minister Eshkol in the Knesset, 29 May, 1967; and News Conference
Statements by Foreign Minister Eban, in IDOP, 1967, pp. 24-25 and 28,
83. News Conference Statements by President Nasser, 28 May, 1967,
84. Ibid., p. 557.
Our preparations are complete and we are ready to face Israel...we are ready for a confrontation, we are ready to raise the whole question of Palestine. Today it is not a question of the Gulf of Aqaba...nor of the Emergency Force. It is a question of the rights of the people of Palestine.  

Throughout the Arab world Nasser's call for the destruction of Israel was echoed with ever greater vehemence. Even Faisal of Saudi Arabia, Nasser's sworn enemy, declared that he would be in the vanguard of any action against Israel and that there would be no peace until Israel ceased to exist. A factor of even greater significance to Israel's threat perception was the surprising announcement, on 30 May, that Hussein of Jordan had entered into a Joint Defence Agreement with Nasser, placing his forces under Egyptian command. The perceived threat to Israel's survival had become even more realistic with the spectre of a war on three fronts against an apparently unified Arab world.

Thus, far from intimidating the Israeli leadership into submission, Nasser had overplayed his hand and had made war inevitable, for as Eban pointed out at the time, Israel was not likely "to cooperate in [its] own annihilation". On 1 June, Moshe Dayan was appointed Israel's Defence Minister in a new government of national unity and, as we have already noted, on 3 June the key ministers, taking account of Nasser's threats and the deteriorating situation on Israel's borders, as well as other considerations, decided to recommend to the full Cabinet that Israel go to war. Nasser's threats had helped to forge a united determination to resist with force Egyptian encroachment on what Israel regarded as its rights.

V - THE ATTEMPT TO ISOLATE ISRAEL

If Nasser's post-war explanations can be believed, he realised on 2 June that the political changes in Israel and the Joint Defence agreement with

86. Interview Granted by Saudi King Faisal, 31 May, 1967, IDOP, 1967, p. 570. For other statements to this effect by Arab leaders see pp. 571 and 575; and Middle East Record, 1967, pp. 203-4.
87. As well as the mobilisation of the Egyptian, Jordanian and Syrian forces on Israel's borders, contingents were sent from Iraq, Kuwait, Algeria and Sudan.
Jordan had made war inevitable. Nasser even warned his officers on that
day that Israel would probably attack the Egyptian Air Force on 5 June.
Nevertheless, while he may have recognised that one of his calculations
had gone awry, Nasser still seems to have believed that he had succeeded
in his plan to isolate Israel from its American patron and that therefore,
even if Israel went to war, it would be unable to secure a military or
political victory devoid of American support. As he soon discovered,
this was no more than an exercise in wishful-thinking, for in his dealings
with the United States he had overplayed his hand as surely as he had
overplayed his hand in confronting Israel. Just as in his earlier
relations with Washington Nasser had neglected to give the Americans
anything to work with, so too in this crisis did he fail to realise
that the only way to isolate Israel from its American patron was to hold
out the prospect of a diplomatic compromise on the disputed issues.
Because Nasser failed to do this, the Johnson Administration lost faith
in the idea that diplomacy could solve the crisis and was not only
prepared to acquiesce in Israel’s pre-emption, but was also prepared to
give political support to Israel.

Consistent with his image of a weak-willed Israeli leadership, Nasser
perceived that Israel would not dare to act without the external support
of imperialism and, if imperialism so desired, it could restrain its
protégé. However, if Israel defied its patrons and this resulted in
damage to imperialist interests in the region, then the protégé would be
punished and deprived of the fruits of its action. This perception appears
to have been derived from Nasser’s experience in the 1956 Suez crisis when
Israel had launched a surprise attack on Egypt with French and British
support and when the United States and the Soviet Union had intervened,
first to force British withdrawal from Suez, and then to force Israeli
withdrawal from Sinai. Thus, in his blockade speech of 27 May, Nasser
observed that in 1956 Ben-Gurion had feared the Egyptian Air Force and
had refused to attack until he had received a written guarantee that France
would protect Israeli air-space while Britain would bomb Egyptian airfields.
Nasser argued that if Ben-Gurion had feared Egypt’s military strength in
1956, then Israel’s much weaker leadership in 1967 would surely fear
Egypt’s much enhanced military arsenal and would not dare to attack unless

89. See Nasser’s 23 July Speech, and the Battle Order of Field Marshal
Nasser's task during the crisis was therefore to ensure that Israel was deprived of this support. As far as Israel's former allies were concerned, Nasser had little problem. Britain and France would not repeat the debacle of 1956 and De Gaulle had announced that France would condemn whichever side fired the first shot (and later imposed an arms embargo on Israel before it had fired the first shot). Wilson was supporting Israel's right to freedom of navigation in the Straits, but he had emphasised that Britain would only act in concert with the United States. Accordingly, Nasser's attention was focussed upon Washington in his attempt to isolate Israel. From Nasser's speeches during the crisis he does not appear to have been under any illusion about the state of Israeli-American relations. He noted that Israel had received substantial arms from the United States, that there was "an alliance" between the two countries, that "today Israel is America". He knew that the United States was committed to Israel's territorial integrity and, of perhaps greater immediate importance, he knew that President Johnson supported Israel's right to freedom of navigation in the Straits. For on 23 May President Johnson had declared publicly that the blockade of the Gulf was an "illegal act" and that the United States would "strongly oppose aggression by anyone in the area".

Yet, while Nasser had probably not deluded himself about the nature of Israel's external support, he had certainly erred in believing that he could exercise sufficient leverage over a superpower, which he had already alienated, to deprive Israel of this support without relinquishing any of his gains. This is not to suggest that Nasser had no leverage with the United States, for he knew that Washington wish to avoid the outbreak of hostilities, or a superpower confrontation, or damage to its interests in the Arab world. He had the ability, during the crisis, to

90. Nasser noted that in 1956 Egypt only had a few strategic bombers whereas in 1967 it had many. Moreover he argued that in 1956 the bulk of the Egyptian army had been withdrawn from Sinai to face the British, whereas in 1967 the Egyptian forces were "face to face with Israel". Nasser's Speech of 22 May, IDOP, 1967, p. 538.


92. Ibid., p. 11. In his 23 July speech Nasser noted: "It was clear to us that when America said she would guarantee the frontiers of all countries in this area, and would not allow any changes to be made, she did not mean the Arab countries but she meant Israel", ibid., p. 623.
affect all three considerations. However, by disavowing offensive intentions, by raising the spectre of superpower confrontation, and by threatening American interests in the Arab world, Nasser could only encourage the United States to seek a diplomatic compromise and restrain its Israeli protégé. Such an exercise of leverage would only be decisive in depriving Israel of American support if Nasser convinced Washington that he was willing to compromise on the issue of the Straits and the deployment of his forces on the Israeli border. For Johnson had made it clear that the United States was committed to Israel's right to freedom of navigation in the Straits and therefore, in order to forestall hostilities, he would have to find some way of alleviating the blockade, obviating the need for Israel to take matters into its own hands. If American diplomacy failed to elicit such a concession from Nasser, Washington would have to find another way out of the crisis, either by using force to reopen the Straits, or by acquiescing in Israel's use of force to do so. If the United States did not act on its commitment to Israel, its protégé would take matters into its own hands. Washington would hardly be able to reprimand Israel for doing so since, having recognised Israel's rights, Washington would have failed to protect them.

At the outset of the crisis, Nasser appears to have understood the necessity for a demonstration of his flexibility, but as the crisis proceeded he deluded himself into believing that the need for compromise had been reduced. It was again a case of Nasser only heeding that which confirmed, and ignoring those indications which contradicted, his image and strategy. And again this was only natural, for Nasser could not afford to compromise on what he had declared were Egypt's sovereign rights. If he emerged from any negotiations with something less than complete control over the Straits of Tiran, his position in the Arab world and between the superpowers would again be jeopardised by what would certainly appear to be a backing down. He might be able to trade concessions elsewhere, but that would hardly solve America's problem, for Israel would not compromise on its right to freedom of navigation. In short, there was no chance of compromise and Nasser would therefore have been wise not to attempt to deprive Israel of its American support. His mistake lay in his failure to realise that he no longer retained sufficient leverage with the United States to force it to abandon its commitment to its Israeli protégé once it became clear to decision-makers in Washington that no diplomatic compromise was possible. But had Nasser realised that, he would
probably not have engaged in brinkmanship in the first place.

Instead, in the confident belief that his tactical skill would enable him to come between Israel and the United States, Nasser began to take action with this purpose in mind. At the outset of the crisis, on 23 May, he had received a letter from President Johnson and an accompanying memorandum explaining Washington's position. Johnson had written in friendly tones, emphasising his desire for improved relations and his interest in Egypt's independence and progress. He had urged Nasser to consider any proposals which U Thant might put on his visit to Cairo and had also suggested that he might send Vice President Humphrey to Egypt for negotiations. The accompanying memorandum went further in outlining America's opposition to fedayeen raids, its desire for the preservation of peace, its support for U Thant's mission and, most importantly, its commitment to freedom of navigation in the Gulf.

Thus, although Washington had restated Johnson's public commitment to Israel's right to freedom of navigation, Nasser had good reason to believe that the United States was interested in negotiating a compromise through the mediation of U Thant and perhaps its own Vice President. It is hardly surprising that Nasser placed more emphasis on the indications of Washington's desire for negotiation, than on the restatement of its commitment to Israel.

U Thant arrived in Cairo on 23 May and held discussions with Nasser and Foreign Minister Riad the next day. In these discussions Nasser apparently demonstrated some flexibility. He first assured U Thant that Egypt would not initiate offensive action against Israel and suggested that the Egyptian-Israeli Mixed Armistice Commission be revived.

93. Message from President Johnson to President Nasser asking for a relaxation of tension in the area, 23 May 1967, IDOP, 1967, pp. 7-8.

94. Memorandum from the U.S. Government to the U.A.R. Government on the Middle East Crisis, 23 May, 1967, ibid., pp. 8-9. Some accounts claim that Ambassador Wolte also had made a number of specific demands on Nasser: UNEF should be allowed to remain in Gaza and Sharm el-Sheikh until a consensus had emerged from the General Assembly; no Egyptian troops should occupy Sharm until freedom of navigation had been confirmed; no Egyptian troops should enter Gaza; the troops massed in Sinai should return to their bases. See Middle East Record, 1967, p. 199; Bar-Zohar, p. 83.

95. What Nasser seems to have had in mind, in suggesting that the Armistice Agreement of 1949 be revived, was the section in the agreement which stipulated that neither party shall use the territorial waters of the other. Egypt claimed the Straits as its territorial waters. See Nasser's Press Conference, 28 May, 1967, IDOP, 1967, p. 555.
as a "return to the conditions prevailing before 1956". However, Nasser has later claimed that he also agreed to U Thant's request for a 'breathing space' during which Egypt would not stop or search ships transiting the Gulf if Israel did not test the blockade with its own ships. If Nasser had indeed agreed to such a proposal it did not appear in U Thant's report of his mission, except perhaps in general terms in the Secretary General's call to all parties to exercise restraint and forgo belligerence.

In any case, this proposal was quickly undone by Egyptian statements. When U.S. Ambassador Goldberg took up U Thant's suggestion of non-belligerency in the Security Council, Egyptian Ambassador El Khony rejected the proposal outright and argued that Egypt had every right as a belligerent to restrict Israeli navigation in the Straits. Meanwhile, Egypt announced that from 23 May onwards neither Israeli ships nor strategic materials bound for Israel would be allowed to pass through the Straits. The Egyptian army was ordered to enforce the new regulations while Al Ahram reported that ships passing through the Straits would be inspected and Egyptian forces would open fire on any ship trying to break the blockade. Radio Cairo announced that the Straits had been mined and on 24 May warnings were broadcast to all ships bound for the Straits.

Moreover, Nasser made quite clear, in public statements, that he would not brook any compromise on the issues of the Straits and the return

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100. Middle East Record, 1967, p. 198. It has been suggested that Nasser never ruled out the possibility of allowing non-Israeli ships carrying non-strategic cargoes through the blockade. But that could hardly be regarded as a demonstration of flexibility given the fact that most of Israel's oil came through the Straits. Was oil a strategic cargo? This was never made clear, but Nasser did make clear that strategic cargoes would be prohibited. See Nasser's Press Conference, 28 May, 1967, IDOP, 1967, p. 556. Riad is reported to have stated that while the passage of Israeli ships would be regarded as "an aggression" the passage of non-Israeli ships with strategic cargoes would be regarded merely as "an uncordial act". Cited in Burdett, p. 279. If this was a genuine desire for compromise, rather than a public relations ploy, Nasser should have made his position clearer and should have seen to it that Egypt's official and semi-official media did not trumpet the measures supposedly taken to put the blockade into effect against all shipping bound for Israel.
of UNEF. On 26 May he declared: "We shall not relinquish our rights in the Gulf of Aqaba". And on 28 May he stated that on the issues of the Straits and UNEF "there can be no argument whatsoever". He went on to say:

The peace-keeping forces are finished, gone for good: they won't come back again... Under no circumstances will Israeli shipping... pass through Egyptian territorial waters. This is a position I will not retreat from a single inch.

Instead, Nasser suggested that the right of the Palestinians to return to their homes was the only appropriate subject for negotiation.

Meanwhile, Nasser sought to isolate Israel by applying direct pressure on the United States; something which he could not achieve by refusing to demonstrate flexibility on the issue of freedom of navigation. The most important thing was to assure the United States that he had no offensive intentions so that Washington should therefore concentrate its efforts on restraining Israel if it wanted to avoid hostilities. If Israel defied the United States and attacked Egypt, then his disavowal of offensive intentions would deprive the United States of a pretext for intervention on behalf of its client. Israel would incur the onus of aggression and would, he hoped, be condemned by Washington.

Accordingly, Nasser decided to forgo an Egyptian first strike and await Israel's attack, if it indeed came. Some of his officers were unhappy with this decision but he and Amer convinced them of the wisdom of not providing the United States with a pretext. Thus Badran has recounted how Amer persuaded Mahmud, the commander of the Air Force, who had wanted to strike first, by asking him: "Would you like to mount the first strike and face America, or prefer to receive the first strike and face Israel only?" Nasser has also testified to this argument in his 23 July explanation:

...we knew, particularly in view of the international situation, that we absolutely had to keep from firing the first shot. Had we done that we should have exposed ourselves to disastrous consequences, which it was beyond our power to endure. The first thing we should have had to face was direct American military action against us, on the pretext that it was we who had fired the first shot.

102. Ibid., pp. 550 and 557.
Nasser's decision not to commence hostilities was conveyed directly to Washington on 26 May, when Ambassador Kemal assured Rostow that Eban's report of an imminent Egyptian attack was untrue and that Egypt would not launch an offensive against Israel. This intention was also announced publicly at Nasser's press conference on 28 May: "We are leaving the initiative to Israel; if she wants to respond, with or without force, to our exercise of our rights, we are ready..."

This tactical sacrifice was not the only means for pressuring Washington not to support Israel. Nasser also threatened American interests in the Arab world in order to make Washington more reluctant to underwrite Israel's rights. In his speech to the Arab Workers' Conference on 26 May, while noting the revival of Arab solidarity, Nasser declared that "America is the enemy of the Arabs, for she is completely aligned with Israel". He called upon his Arab brothers to treat the United States as their enemy...

...and we can treat them like this because we are not countries with no weight, worthless countries. On the contrary we are countries of importance, located in an important part of the world.

Nasser went further in his press conference on 28 May, which he devoted almost entirely to American policy. He warned that if a power "however mighty" challenged Egyptian sovereignty, such a move would be regarded as an act of aggression, not only against Egypt, but also against the "whole Arab nation" and would do the aggressors "greater harm than they can possibly conceive". Assuming the mantle of spokesman for the Arab world he warned:

In these coming days the Arab world will learn who are its friends and its enemies, and its future conduct will be based on the conduct of its enemies and friends.

105. Lacouture, p. 308; Nutting, p. 411.
106. IDOP, 1967, p. 563. Nasser stated earlier in the press conference: "...we are now waiting to see what Israel will do...If Israel wants war... she is welcome to war". Ibid., p. 554.
107. Ibid., p. 548. This threat was reinforced by Jum'ah, the Prime Minister of Jordan - America's most reliable client in the Arab world. On 27 May he declared: "...the U.S. has adopted an attitude which, if it is maintained, bodes much ill for the future of American relations with the Arab world. The Arabs, in whatever country they live, call on America in this critical situation not to adopt an attitude of support for baseless Israeli claims of hostility to the whole Arab nation. The Arab countries, united in their support for the cause of Palestine, will never forgive such an attitude of support for Israel on the part of the United States..."

108. Ibid., p. 550.
109. Ibid., p. 556.
He then called upon the United States not to align itself with Israel, claimed that the only problem in Arab-American relations was the Jewish state, and that as a result of this alignment "America intends to injure the whole Arab nation". Having raised the stick of Arab enmity, Nasser then waved the carrot of Arab friendship by declaring that the United States could play a "major role in the Middle East", and that the Arab world was ready to be "extremely friendly with America" if Washington would only take a just view of things and not support or align itself with Israel. Hoping that the United States would revert to its 1956 policy he noted that all Washington had to do was to behave as Eisenhower had behaved and its position in the Arab world would be enhanced.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 556-564.}

Finally, sensing that the United States might restrain Israel and be more reluctant to intervene in support of Israel's rights if it thought that hostilities in the Middle East could lead to a superpower confrontation, Nasser sought to use the support of his Soviet patron to raise this spectre. On 23 May, Moscow had released its first statement on the crisis since Nasser's closure of the Straits. While making no mention of the blockade it declared that any aggression in the Middle East would be met "not only with the united strength of Arab countries, but also with strong opposition to aggression from the Soviet Union and all peace-loving states".\footnote{Ibid., p. 556.} Although Moscow had clearly drawn a distinction between the "united strength" of the Arabs and the "strong opposition" of the Soviet Union, Nasser ignored the caution of his patron and blandly declared on 26 May that the Soviet Union would not only resist "with the Arabs" any aggression, it would also resist any "interference". In his press conference on 28 May he repeated this claim of Soviet readiness to oppose any external intervention:

\begin{quote}
The USSR has supported us and issued a statement saying that the Arab countries will not be alone, and that the USSR will resist any interference.\footnote{Ibid., p. 556.}
\end{quote}

In his speech to the National Assembly on 29 May, he went still further in claiming that the Soviet Union was prepared to confront the United States if it interfered in support of Israel's rights in the Gulf. Having again threatened America with Arab enmity if it aligned with Israel and
continued to ignore the whole Arab nation, he went on to read a letter from Kosygin which supposedly had been delivered by Badran on his return from consultations in Moscow the previous day:

...Mr Kosygin...says that the Soviet Union supports us in this conflict, and will allow no country to interfere until the situation returns to what it was before 1956.  

Nasser thanked the Soviet Union for this support and then directly raised the spectre of superpower confrontation by declaring that he did not want the Soviet Union to intervene "because we do not want a confrontation that might lead to a world war". 

Washington displayed a mixed response to these pressures. The State Department was certainly sensitive to Nasser's threats of damage to America's interests in the Arab world and its officers accordingly urged the President to pursue a compromise settlement which would modify Israel's right to freedom of navigation. However, the locus of decision-making had been transferred to the White House where the President and his advisors were concentrating on ways to fulfil America's commitment to Israel. Nasser's warning that the Soviet Union would oppose outside interference was not taken seriously because Johnson had been in direct communication with Kosygin and had been assured that the Soviet Union would work for a peaceful settlement. The Egyptian commitment not to commence hostilities had produced the desired effect since Washington had been leaning heavily on Israel not to pre-empt. But Israel had made it clear that it would take matters into its own hands if the United States proved incapable of alleviating the blockade. Thus when Israel decided, on 28 May, upon American urging, to wait "a week or two" for the United States to try to resolve the crisis, Washington embarked on a new attempt to make its diplomacy work. As we have already noted, Nasser by this stage had ruled out any compromise on freedom of navigation in the Straits, and had raised his demands to a renegotiation of the whole Palestine question. At the same time, Israel had refused any suggestion of accepting a compromise on its right to freedom of navigation. Since Israel, not Egypt, was threatening to go to war, and since the United States was committed to Israel's rather than Egypt's rights, Washington could only hope to forestall hostilities by persuading Nasser to alleviate the blockade.


Thus, if Nasser had appraised the situation realistically he should have now taken a step back from the brink and encouraged the belief in Washington that a compromise was in the offing. Unfortunately Nasser believed that events were moving in his favour and therefore ignored his last chance to salvage something from his Kriegspiel when Washington launched a new effort to negotiate with him at the end of May.

On 31 May Robert Anderson, a special envoy from President Johnson, arrived in Cairo and met with Nasser. After a lengthy discussion in which Anderson found Nasser intransigent on the issue of the Straits, it was agreed that Vice President Mohieddin would be sent to Washington for talks with Johnson on 7 June. 115 Meanwhile, the State Department had sent Charles Yost to Cairo (apparently at the suggestion of the Egyptian Ambassador in Washington) to take over discussions from the inexperienced Nolte who had only just taken up his duties as ambassador. 116 Yost was unable to see Nasser, but on 1 June he met with Foreign Minister Riad and specifically questioned Egypt's willingness to compromise. Riad suggested a number of ideas which might be negotiated when Mohieddin arrived in Washington: an agreement akin to the Battle Act, restricting the blockade to strategic cargo, or a decision by the World Court on the status of the Straits. 117 However, it was clear to Yost that Egypt was not prepared to take any immediate action to "revoke, suspend or moderate the blockade" and unless some such action was mooted Israel was likely to take matters into its own hands. 118 Had Nasser at this stage sent Anderson and Yost away with an impression of his flexibility on the question of the blockade, Washington might well have been more willing to restrain Israel, and might well have regarded Israeli action as precipitate and condemned it as such. However, as matters now stood, Nasser had made action by the multilateral fleet a necessity and if this effort failed then Washington would have no alternative but to acquiesce in Israel's use of force.

With the Arab world uniting behind him Nasser obviously felt unwilling, and perhaps unable, to compromise on the issue of the Straits. He may have also believed that there was no need at this stage to show flexibility because the United States was still interested in negotiation and there would be time to discuss these matters when Mohieddin visited Washington. As Nasser later declared:

...there was wide-scale political and diplomatic activity which entitled us to believe that the explosion was not close at hand.120

Even when he realised on 2 June that Israel would have to go to war, he still felt confident that if Israel fired the first shot while Washington was apparently still interested in compromise, his plan for isolating Israel would yet succeed even if his plan for intimidating Israel's leadership had failed.

Thus on 2 June Nasser replied to Johnson's letter of 23 May and, consistent with his statements on previous occasions, gave Johnson nothing to work with at a time when the American President was preoccupied with reopening the Straits. The letter was written in friendly tones with the notable absence of the threats which Nasser had used in his public statements about American policy. Nevertheless, he outlined the course of events from his Egyptian viewpoint: Sinai had been remilitarised to deter Israel from attacking Syria; UNEF had been withdrawn for its own safety; once Sharm el-Sheikh was occupied logic dictated the exercise of Egypt's sovereign rights. As far as the blockade was concerned, it eliminated "the last consequences of the Tripartite Aggression in conformity with the principle that the aggressor must not be rewarded for his aggression". Egypt's right to prevent the passage of Israeli shipping or strategic materials bound for Israel was, Nasser wrote, "quite indisputable". He made it clear that there was nothing to discuss on this issue and nothing to justify the atmosphere of crisis, but the issues which did concern him and needed to be discussed were the rights of the people of Palestine and Israel's constant violation of the Armistice Agreements. Finally, he stated that he would be glad to receive Humphrey

121. As for Johnson's call for the avoidance of military action, Nasser claimed that Egyptian forces had "never started any aggression" and as for the President's objection to the fedayeen raids, Nasser absolved any government of responsibility because it could not control the anger of the Palestinians and their desire to return to their homes.
and was ready to send Mohieddin to Washington immediately "to explain our point of view to you".\textsuperscript{122}

Clearly, Nasser was confident that he was entering into a new dialogue with the United States, a dialogue which, at the outset, only required an outline of Egypt's general position—specific issues could be dealt with in future discussions. Even if Israel launched war, as Nasser later claimed he believed they would, the fact that he had now agreed to negotiations with the United States would surely convince Washington that Israel was again the aggressor, as in 1956. However, in Washington, decision-makers were taking a rather different view of the situation. The failure of the Anderson-Yost mission had meant that unless an international flotilla could be sent through the Straits to break the blockade, the United States would be left with only one option: to allow Israel to deal with the blockade on its own.

Nasser was not about to countenance any interference by an international fleet with Egypt's rights and therefore set about discouraging any such action to reopen the Straits. In his press conference on 28 May he issued a warning that any attempt to infringe Egyptian territorial rights in the Gulf would be "an aggression against the Egyptian people and the whole Arab nation". He also declared that "if the United States interferes with our sovereignty we shall resist such interference with all our strength", and issued a general warning that "in case another country intervenes, there will be no Suez Canal".\textsuperscript{123} In the Pentagon, the fear that Egypt would fire on a fleet which attempted to test the blockade had convinced those with responsibility for organising this fleet that it should be cancelled in order to avoid any American involvement in conflict with Egypt. It is not possible to ascertain what role Nasser's threats played in the decisions of other countries not to participate in the international flotilla, but by 3 June there were only five nations prepared to entertain the idea, or even sign a declaration that the Straits were an international waterway.


\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., pp. 552 and 557.
Thus by 4 June, the idea of an international fleet aimed at testing the blockade had collapsed. Nevertheless, with both the United States and Britain now placing emphasis on the United Nations as the appropriate forum for international action, Nasser again contributed a warning aimed at discouraging any such moves, especially a maritime declaration, which was now Washington's only remaining, and rather forlorn, hope that diplomacy might extinguish the crisis. Nasser declared:

...we shall not recognise any statement by the maritime nations, and shall regard any such statement as an act of aggression against our sovereignty and our legitimate rights. We shall regard such action as the prelude to hostilities, and we shall resist all aggression.\textsuperscript{124}

For good measure, and to ensure that nobody was under the misapprehension that Egypt was willing to compromise on the issue, he added:

As for talk about freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba, we say that we have recovered our rights in the Gulf of Aqaba, and that no power on earth can deprive us of them.\textsuperscript{125}

By this stage, however, the "Watch" committee in the White House had already decided that there was little alternative to acquiescing in Israeli action to reopen the Straits, and little purpose to be served by further attempts at diplomacy. If Mohieddin's visit had held out any hope that the blockade might be moderated, and it was only a faint glimmer at the time of Anderson's report on his talks in Cairo, Nasser's subsequent letter and statements had ensured that this glimmer had faded.\textsuperscript{126} With the collapse of the international fleet and strong domestic and bureaucratic opposition to unilateral action to reopen the Straits, the President and his advisors were realising that their commitment to Israel's freedom of navigation could best be met by allowing Israel to deal with the situation on its own, free of outside interference. Thus on the eve of Israel's pre-emptive strike the Egyptian and American perceptions of what the United States should or would do in the event of hostilities had seriously diverged. While

\textsuperscript{124} Speech of President Nasser after Iraq's Accession to the Joint Defence Agreement, 4 June, 1967, \textit{ibid.}, p. 578.

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{126} Johnson noted that he did not view Mohieddin's forthcoming visit with any optimism because he had assessed that persuading Nasser "to reverse himself and reopen Aqaba would not be easy". Johnson, \textit{The Vantage Point}, p. 295.
Washington felt that Nasser had overplayed his hand, Nasser believed that he had only just started playing and that with war new opportunities would open up in the politics of patronage.

VI - THE FAILURE TO RESIST ISRAEL

If Nasser's post-war claims can be believed, he now regarded war as inevitable and was expecting an Israeli air strike on the morning of 5 June. Yet Nasser approached Egypt's demise with apparent complacency, for he believed that even if his first assumption about Israel's willpower had proved invalid, his second assumption about isolating Israel had now been proved correct. Therefore, he was confident that his third assumption, that if Israel fought a war in isolation it would be unlikely to win anything more than a limited victory which would be undone by international action, would now be confirmed. The validity of this third assumption was now crucial, for if Egypt proved unable to resist Israel on the battlefield, and Israel were able to win a decisive victory, then Nasser might well lose all that he had gained in the last days of May, and more. If international action were not forthcoming and Israel were not pressured into withdrawal, then all Nasser's calculations would have gone awry and Egypt would have to face the political consequences of its military defeat. Nasser had always regarded war as an extension of politics and he was depending upon politics to undo any military defeat which Egypt might suffer. But this time both war and politics were on Israel's side, for not only would it prove capable of destroying Egypt's forces, it would also prove capable of maintaining American political support and therefore capable of resisting Egyptian and Soviet demands for withdrawal.

What went wrong with Nasser's third assumption? On the military level he made the mistake of believing the estimates of his General Staff. Badran and Amer had assured him that Egypt's numerical superiority on the ground and in the air would enable successful resistance. Badran's confidence is illustrated by his testimony after the war when one

127. Nutting claims that Nasser's complacency was based on the belief that Israel would not fight without external support, that Washington would be able to restrain Israel, and that his forces could in any case match Israel's. See Nutting, pp. 408-410.
might have expected him to be more circumspect about his miscalculation:

We were confident that our army was ready and that Israel could not attack because intelligence estimates pointed to the fact that we were superior in armored weapons, artillery and air power. It was calculated that Israel would not walk into an open grave...No one believed that the Jews would be so capable of undertaking the operation against us because of our superiority in weapons and air power and our excellent plan which would have obstructed any confrontation.\footnote{Cited in Burdett, pp. 240-1.}

Amer's Battle Order Number 2, issued to his forces on 2 June, and containing a warning that Israel would attack within the next two weeks, illustrates his confidence in the face of the imminent onslaught:

Our objective is to defeat the main forces of the Israeli army. Our armed forces, in terms of their numbers and the means at their disposal, can fulfil this task.\footnote{Cited in Safran, p. 302.}

But perhaps most disastrous of all was Commander of the Air Force Mahmud's estimate that the Air Force would only suffer a loss of 20% from an Israeli first-strike.

That Nasser accepted these estimates is evident from his decision to absorb the costs of an Israeli first strike and his shock when the actual results became known. So surprised was he that Israel had been able to render his air force ineffective in a matter of hours that he refused to believe that Israel had been unaided. On 7 June he told Hussein that "the enemy attacked all our airfields in far greater number than allowed by our estimate of his air strength".\footnote{Cable from President Nasser to King Hussein on the Progress of Hostilities, 7 June, 1967, IDOP, 1967, pp. 592-3.}

On 9 June, in his resignation speech, Nasser charged that Israel was operating with an air force three times its normal strength - i.e. three times Egypt's estimate of Israel's strength.\footnote{Ibid., p. 597. In this speech Nasser also explains that he had calculated that Israel would have had to devote aircraft to air defence because of Egypt's strategic bomber force. Accordingly, he believed it impossible for the IAF to attack all Egypt's airfields simultaneously. Evidence for this calculation also comes from Nutting who recounts that thirty-six hours before the war Nasser told him that the IAF was no match for the Egyptian Air Force and that the Israeli army would therefore be exposed to air-attacks as it entered Sinai. In November 1967 Nasser blamed the commander of the Air Force for his miscalculation: "...the command of the air force evaluated the situation wrongly. It was responsible for the disaster that befell the air force on the morning of the 5th, and consequently, it was responsible for the outcome of the war". Nutting, pp. 408-9; President Nasser's Speech to the National Assembly, 23 November, 1967, IDOP, 1967, p. 704.}
A careful appraisal of the strength of the enemy had convinced us that, given the standard of the equipment they possessed and the training they had received, our armed forces were capable of resisting and repelling him. 132

Thus, having miscalculated the relative strengths of the Egyptian and Israeli forces, Nasser had gone on to calculate that Israel might only achieve success on the battlefield if it had the military support of the United States. As we have seen, Nasser concentrated his diplomatic efforts on ensuring that Israel would be denied this support. Part of the calculation had been that if Israel struck first the United States would be denied a pretext for intervention, but Nasser was also relying upon the Soviet Union to deter American intervention. By 2 June Nasser clearly believed that the Soviet Union's support for Egypt had achieved this end. In his Battle Order issued on that day, Amer revealed the thinking of the Egyptian leadership:

> It is now clear,...that in view of the strong position of the government of the Soviet Union and its readiness to intervene immediately if any big power should go to war against Egypt, it is no longer to be expected under any circumstances that the United States government should join in a military adventure on Israel's side. 133

Because Nasser had assumed that he would only need the support of the Soviet Union to deter American intervention he appears to have ignored the fact that he might need Soviet military intervention to protect his forces from the advance of the Israelis, and had therefore done nothing to ensure such support. In any case it should have been clear to Nasser, by the time Israel struck, that the Soviet Union was keen to avoid hostilities and could not be counted on for any such intervention. On 27 May the Soviet ambassador had woken Nasser in the middle of the night and had warned him not to commence hostilities because it would place Egypt in an untenable political situation. When Badran visited Moscow, on 28 May, what Kosygin told him was very different to what Nasser had later claimed in his speech on 29 May. According to Heikal, Kosygin had warned Badran that Egypt had gained its point and won a political victory, "so it is time now to compromise, to work politically". 134

132. Ibid., p. 597.
Thinking that Soviet support was only necessary to deter the United States, Nasser ignored Moscow's wavering and exaggerated the extent of Moscow's commitment. But he must have known that Soviet support would be limited to the political sphere.\(^{135}\)

Before the war this change in Moscow's position, from one of encouragement prior to the remilitarisation of Sinai, to one of advising restraint and compromise after the blockade of the Straits, presented Nasser with neither cause for alarm nor cause for reconsideration, because Moscow was committed to its client and could hardly back away from Egypt's political position without a serious loss of prestige and reputation. However, on the military level, once the Egyptian Air Force had been all but destroyed on the ground in the first few hours of hostilities, Soviet military support represented the only way that the situation on the battlefield could be prevented from deteriorating into a total defeat. Theoretically, there were two ways in which the Soviet Union might have assisted Nasser during the war: by immediate resupply of aircraft; and by threatening military intervention or actually intervening if the Israelis did not cease firing.\(^{136}\) That the Soviet Union was not prepared to offer assistance in either of these ways demonstrates, in stark terms, the consequences of Nasser's dependence upon his Soviet patron. Having encouraged Nasser to remilitarise Sinai, the Soviets bore a serious responsibility for what ensued, even if they had not been consulted about the closure of the Straits, and even if they had urged Nasser to exercise restraint. Nevertheless, they were neither sufficiently concerned about their loss of face, nor about the imminent defeat of their Egyptian client, to offer military assistance or to threaten intervention.

\(^{135}\) Heikal recounts that Badran was responsible for giving Nasser the impression that Moscow would back Egypt to the hilt. However, when el Fekki, the man who had taken the minutes of the meeting with Kosygin, heard Nasser's speech claiming that the Soviet Union would not allow any country to interfere until the situation returned to what it had been before 1956, he sent Nasser the minutes and suggested that he read them. Ibid.

\(^{136}\) According to the Churchills only 100 of Egypt's 350 pilots were killed in the Israeli strike. Thus, theoretically, Soviet re-supply of aircraft might have enabled Egypt to fly air-cover for its ground forces. In practice, the IAF would have probably destroyed these aircraft as well since, according to Israeli figures, in the air-to-air combat which actually took place fifty Egyptian MIGs were shot down for the loss of no Israeli Mirages. Randolph and Winston Churchill, *The Six Day War*, London, 1967, pp. 89 and 91; Glassman, *Arms for the Arabs*, p. 46.
Egypt's inability to gain immediate Soviet resupply of weapons, or Soviet intervention, can partly be explained by the sudden collapse of the Egyptian forces and the acceptance of a cease-fire by Israel because it had been able to achieve its objectives in such a short time. The Soviet Union had apparently concurred with Nasser's assessment that immediate hostilities were unlikely and that in the unexpected event of such hostilities Egypt had the ability to resist the Israeli attack. In these circumstances, Moscow had probably not seriously considered the logistical problems involved in resupply until the destruction of the Egyptian Air Force on June 5. Nasser himself did not learn about the true extent of Egypt's setback until the evening of 5 June because Amer had withheld reports from the battle-front and had issued false communiqués about Egyptian advances. Thus valuable time for pressuring the Soviet Union into resupply was lost because Nasser was unaware of the seriousness of the situation. As for military intervention, the Soviet Union would have had to have a pretext for such a move and had it wanted to intervene, which is unlikely, Israel's acceptance of a cease-fire on 6 June, and its implementation on 8 June, deprived the Soviet Union of any such pretext.

Notwithstanding these considerations, the main reason for Soviet unwillingness to support Egypt militarily was the fear of a possible confrontation with the United States. Thus Nasser is reported to have told one of his associates that, after Israel attacked, the Russians "had been frozen into immobility by their fear of a confrontation with America." The Soviet Union had apparently considered sending replacement aircraft first directly, then through Yugoslavia, but feared that they might be intercepted by aircraft from the Sixth Fleet. Moreover, when Egypt charged, on 6 June, that American and British planes had provided air cover for Israeli ground forces in Sinai, these accusations were apparently angrily rejected by the Soviet Union on the basis of a message received from Washington. According to one report, Moscow accused

137. The Soviet resupply effort did not begin until two weeks after the war had ended. Glassman, ibid., p. 53.


139. Arms had apparently been dispatched by sea before the war started but the ship supposedly turned back for fear of Israeli bombing. See Nutting, p. 419.

140. See Middle East Record, 1967, pp. 242-3.
Cairo of attempting to draw it into conflict with the United States "on charges that have absolutely no basis in truth". 141

At this stage, Nasser apparently believed sincerely that there had been collusion between the United States and Israel and therefore sought an appropriate Soviet response. 142 But this attempted exercise of leverage failed, simply because the Soviet Union was not willing to confront the United States on behalf of its Egyptian client. Had there been a serious possibility that Egypt might fall into America's sphere of influence as a result of the war, either through the replacement of Nasser with an anti-Soviet leader, or through an exchange of patrons by Nasser, the Soviet Union might have been more anxious about its future position of influence in Cairo, and therefore more willing to risk confrontation with the United States on behalf of its Egyptian client. However, Nasser was already heavily dependent upon the Soviet Union and would become even more dependent, as a result of Egypt's defeat, on Soviet political support and military assistance in the future. The risk of Nasser changing patrons was non-existent because, in the process of charging the United States with collusion, Egypt had broken relations with Washington and had closed the Suez Canal. With Nasser blaming the United States for Egypt's debacle, relations with the United States had reached their nadir, so the threat to the Soviet position in Egypt was minimal. The threat could only come from the replacement of Nasser by an anti-Soviet leader and, although this could not be ruled out as a possibility, it was more likely that any replacement for Nasser would also view American action during the crisis critically. In any case this threat encouraged Moscow to seek an immediate cease-fire which would obviate the need for Soviet intervention to protect the regime of its client. When the cease-fire went into effect, any intervention on the military level became unnecessary.

The Soviet leaders had exhibited a strong interest in preventing a disruption of relations with the United States since the outset of the crisis over the Straits. On 22 May Johnson had sent a message to Kosygin urging a joint effort to calm the situation and warning that the ties of the superpowers to their respective clients in the region could

142. Heikal recounts that Nasser was at first sceptical of American involvement, but when he received reports of two American fighters flying over Egyptian positions, together with an explanation from Kosygin that they were going to the aid of the American communications ship Liberty (which had been attacked by Israeli aircraft) he suspected that the United States was attempting to blind the Soviet Union to an operation which had been
bring them into difficulties.\textsuperscript{143} The Soviets had responded by assuring Johnson of their "firm interest in preserving peace".\textsuperscript{144} As already noted, in response to a request from Johnson to restrain Egypt, Moscow had warned Nasser, on 27 May, not to commence hostilities. At the same time, Moscow did its duty by Egypt in warning Johnson that the Soviet Union would come to the aid of the Arabs if they were attacked.\textsuperscript{145} However, once war had broken out, Kosygin activated the "hot line" for the first time to assure Johnson that the Soviet Union had no intention of becoming militarily involved in the fighting and would work for a cease-fire.\textsuperscript{146} Egypt's plight failed to alter this Soviet attitude and its support, as we shall see, was confined to the political level. In short, the Soviet Union exhibited a greater interest in preventing a superpower confrontation than it did in preventing an Egyptian defeat and this attitude can only be explained by the fact that the Soviet Union did not regard its interests in Egypt as sufficiently threatened by the prospect of an Egyptian defeat. Thus Nasser lacked the leverage over his Soviet patron to involve it in hostilities against its will.\textsuperscript{147}

If the sudden collapse of the Egyptian forces and Soviet reluctance to support Egypt militarily had confounded Nasser's calculations on the military level, he was to be even more seriously disappointed by his failure on the political level, where his attention had been focused throughout the crisis, and where he had confidently believed that any military setback would be redressed by international action to deprive

\textsuperscript{142} (continued) conducted against Egypt: "He did not know exactly how they were involved, but everything pointed toward it and he reasoned that as we had not learned the full facts of the British and French collusion with Israel until four or five years after Suez, so American collusion could also be shrouded in mystery". See Heikal, \textit{The Cairo Documents}, pp. 247-8.

\textsuperscript{143} The text of the message is in Johnson, \textit{The Vantage Point}, p. 291.

\textsuperscript{144} Middle East Record, 1967, p. 196.

\textsuperscript{145} This warning was mentioned by Johnson in his letter to Eshkol on 28 May. See above, Chapter Two.

\textsuperscript{146} Johnson, p. 298; Middle East Record, 1967, p. 235.

\textsuperscript{147} Perhaps surprisingly, this was not the case in regard to Syria, where the Soviet Union was prepared to threaten intervention to stop the Israeli advance. However, here the Soviet Union perceived a real threat to the regime in Damascus, on whose behalf it had promoted the crisis in the first place, and here political efforts to enforce a cease-fire had not stopped the Israelis. However, as we shall see, in Sinai Israel had already achieved its objectives by the time the United Nations had passed a cease-fire resolution and had stopped its advance as soon as Egypt agreed to cease firing.
Israel of its military gains. For, on the political level, Nasser was soon to discover that American policy supported Israel despite the fact that it had struck first and despite the fact that such a policy would cost the United States dearly in terms of its influence in the Arab world. Part of the explanation lies in Israeli adeptness in securing American support, but Nasser's own actions during the crisis had helped to consolidate this support. And in the final analysis, just as Nasser lacked the leverage to gain Soviet military support during the war, so too did he lack the leverage to gain American political support after the war.

As already noted, while Nasser had been concentrating, during the crisis, on isolating Israel from its American patron, the United States had been working at cross purposes in seeking ways to fulfil its commitment to Israel. Thus, whereas Nasser had expected that his forswearing of offensive intentions, and his interest in negotiation through Mohieddin, would cause the United States to condemn Israel's pre-emption, Washington was instead rather relieved that it had been taken 'off the hook' by Israel's pre-emption because its own attempts to alter the status of the blockade had, or would have, failed. As far as the President was concerned, Israel had been subjected to ample provocation, had demonstrated restraint, and was now acting in self-defence rather than launching aggression. Thus Nasser's hope for an American condemnation of Israeli aggression did not materialise. Instead, Washington first declared that it was not clear which side had started the hostilities, and then concentrated on securing a cease-fire resolution in the Security Council which would pave the way for the reestablishment of peace.

The crucial question was whether Washington would pressure Israel into immediate withdrawal from the territories it was occupying as its army advanced. Nasser could rely on the Soviet Union to call for withdrawal, but the only hope for effective pressure would come from a concerted superpower effort to impose withdrawal on Israel - if the United States opposed immediate withdrawal there was little chance that Israel would comply. Nasser's leverage over the United States at this stage


was minimal because of the earlier deterioration in relations which had now been compounded by the blockade, the Egyptian accusations of American involvement in the war, and the breaking of diplomatic relations by six Arab states (a move which had been encouraged by Egypt). 150

Thus Washington was hardly keen to provide Nasser with a political exit from his military debacle. While the State Department could be depended upon to argue that America's interests in the Arab world dictated a policy of pressure on Israel to recoup its influence, public and Congressional opinion strongly supported Israel, and the President himself was determined to ensure both that the blockade was lifted and Sinai demilitarised in return for Israeli withdrawal. So the United States worked in the Security Council for a simple cease-fire in place, and resisted Soviet attempts to introduce a resolution which would have condemned Israeli aggression and would have called on it to withdraw to the pre-war lines. However, the United States did agree with the principle of Israeli withdrawal, as long as it was accompanied by a commitment from all parties to refrain from "acts of force regardless of their nature", and was prepared to introduce a cease-fire resolution incorporating these principles on 5 June. 151

If Nasser had been able to reassess his position realistically on 5 June, he might have realised that such a cease-fire resolution, in which Israel would be forced to withdraw while Egypt would only have to relinquish its gains of May, represented the best terms that Egypt could get. However, on that day, the political consequences of Egypt's imminent military defeat were not understood in a stunned Cairo; Nasser probably did not even know, at this stage, that he faced imminent defeat. So, despite Goldberg's warning to El Khony that this resolution represented Egypt's last chance to salvage the situation, Cairo rejected its wording and held out for a resolution which would only require a withdrawal of Israeli forces. 152

On the morning of 6 June the United States and the Soviet Union came close to agreement on a similar resolution, which would have dropped the

150. The six were: Egypt, Syria, Algeria, Iraq, Sudan and the Republic of Yemen.

151. Ambassador Goldberg made it clear during the cease-fire negotiations that what the United States meant by these words was the lifting of the blockade and the demilitarisation of Sinai. Middle East Record, 1967, p. 237; Johnson, p. 298.

152. Johnson, ibid.
Soviet demand for a condemnation of Israel, but would have called on Israel to return to its pre-war positions and on all other parties to abstain from the use of force everywhere, including the Gulf of Aqaba. However, by the afternoon, Moscow began to realise the urgency of an immediate cease-fire to stave-off Egypt's total collapse and obviate the need for a more forthright and dangerous Soviet response. Thus the Soviet Union abandoned Egypt's demands for a condemnation of Israel and a call for its withdrawal and instead endorsed a resolution, passed unanimously in the Security Council, which simply called for an immediate cease-fire. On 7 June, the Soviet Union again demonstrated its urgent desire for a cessation of hostilities by calling for an immediate vote on a second resolution which demanded that the parties cease firing at a set time that same evening. No attempt was made to condemn Israel or to call for its withdrawal. Still Egypt apparently failed to appreciate the urgency of the situation, for its Ambassador rejected the resolution as "of no value" and again called on the Security Council to condemn Israel and order its withdrawal.

Egypt's rejection of this cease-fire resolution had two effects: on the military level, Israel continued its advance, occupying Sharm el-Sheikh on 7 June, and reaching the Suez Canal on 8 June; on the political level, the United States altered its position and on 8 June suggested a package proposal which would couple Israeli withdrawal with the renunciation of force, the maintenance of vital international rights, and direct negotiations for the establishment of a stable and durable peace. Thus, while Egypt accepted the cease-fire on 8 June, by this time the damage to Egypt's political prospects had already been done. Henceforth the United States would oppose any resolution which called for unilateral Israeli withdrawal and Soviet attempts to have Israel condemned and forced to withdraw would be to no avail. The United States had realised by 8 June that the war might create a new opportunity for negotiating a settlement of the basic disputes at issue in the Arab-Israeli conflict, that Israel could use the occupied territories to bargain for peace, and that by using its 'good offices' to promote such a settlement the United States would be better able to protect its interests in stability and good relations with the Arab world than by gaining some momentary

prestige in Arab eyes from forcing Israel to withdraw.\textsuperscript{156}

All Nasser's hopes for American pressure to force an Israeli withdrawal had faded, and with them Nasser's crisis strategy for achieving a political victory over his Israeli adversary had collapsed. His miscalculations, misperceptions and rash manoeuvring had led Egypt into a devastating war which had resulted in the destruction of its armed forces, the loss of the Sinai Peninsula, the closure of the Suez Canal, and severe pressures on the Egyptian economy, as surely as they had put paid to his regional and international aspirations, alienated the United States, made him entirely dependent upon the Soviet Union, and created a great deal of human misery. Every part of his strategy had gone awry: Israel's leadership had not been intimidated by his threats of destruction, in fact these threats had been instrumental in Israel's decision to go to war; forgoing the first strike had given Israel a decisive military advantage, yet it had failed to encourage the United States to desert Israel; Egypt's forces were not capable of resisting the Israeli offensive, in fact they had been destroyed; Soviet support had not prevented Israel's victory and its political support had not achieved an Israeli withdrawal; the United States had not condemned Israel for striking first and had protected its client from political pressure.

What went wrong? Clearly, it was Nasser's utilisation of the political resources at his command, rather than any lack of such resources, which led to his failure in the politics of patronage, his army's defeat on the battlefield, and Israel's continued occupation of Sinai. Nasser had overstepped the bounds of successful client behaviour, first by defying his Soviet patron in refusing to seek a political compromise, then by failing to realise that the threat of superpower confrontation would neutralise the support of his patron rather than encourage his American adversary to treat with him, further by refusing to consider a compromise which would have given the United States some incentive to restrain its Israeli protégé, and finally by so alienating the United States that the powerful threat of blackmail, the threat that if the Soviet Union did not

\textsuperscript{156}. On 7 June Johnson created a special committee "to help build a new peace" in the Middle East. The committee's responsibility was to draft proposals for negotiations towards a peace settlement. The committee comprised: Rusk as chairman, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, General Wheeler, Helms, Walt Rostow, Clark Clifford and Fowler (Secretary of Treasury). \textit{Middle East Record, 1967,} p. 235.
give Egypt sufficient support its client would be forced to change patrons, became inoperative. In short Nasser misused his opportunity to play on the competitive interests of the superpowers and by precipitating war, and thereby raising the spectre of superpower confrontation, forced them into limited cooperation at Egypt's expense. Yet despite all these abuses of weak power leverage the outcome might well have been different had Nasser heeded Fuller's criticism of Field Marshal Foch's theories on war, that "however high the assailants' morale it does not render them bullet-proof". For while Nasser's will-power enabled him to resist the superpowers during the May-June crisis, it could not protect his army from Israeli bullets, and the consequent defeat of the Egyptian forces accordingly helped to render his political efforts worthless. In short, had Nasser been more cautious in his daring, his playing of the politics of patronage might have met with a less disastrous outcome.

PART THREE

CHAPTER ONE

THE CONTEST FOR PATRONAGE IN THE WAR OF ATTRITION

I - INTRODUCTION

The Six Day War represented a watershed in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. As such it injected new elements into the politics of patronage, for it not only changed the objectives of both clients and patrons, but it also altered the value of their resources in the influence and resistance process. In the pre-war period, the policies of patrons and clients had not greatly conflicted - with the notable exception of American-Egyptian relations - so that support could be secured by serving the interests of the patron which, for the most part, also happened to serve the interests of the client. So Israel deterred and occasionally coerced the Arab States for its own sake, helping to serve the interests of the United States, while Egypt promoted instability and this served the interests of the Soviet Union. The end result was a new and rigid polarisation between the superpowers on either side of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which lasted until the October 1973 War, even though it became slightly less rigid at times. However, together with this polarisation, the Six Day War had injected conflicting imperatives into the patron-client relationships on both sides, making the task of resistance more crucial to the securing of the objectives of the clients than it had been in the pre-war period.

In formulating their objectives and conducting their conflict on the political and military levels, the example of the 1957 Israeli withdrawal from Sinai loomed large in the calculations of both Israel and Egypt. Having created a new geographic reality which provided the country with strategic depth and shorter and more easily defensible borders, Israel sought to maintain its positions in the occupied territories until the Arab states agreed to its peace terms. ¹ In these

¹. The Suez Canal, the Jordan river, and the Golan Heights, provided Israel with what it regarded as "natural" boundaries. The length of Israel's land borders was reduced from 600 to 400 miles, and the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank and the Golan Heights provided buffer zones and potential battlegrounds beyond the population centres of the Jewish state. See Handel, Israel's Political-Military Doctrine, p. 50; J.C. Hurewitz, Changing Military Perspectives in the Middle East, Rand Corporation, RM-6355-FF, September,
circumstances Israel sought to avoid a repetition of its experience in 1956-7 when, in the face of American economic sanctions and Soviet military threats, it was forced to withdraw from Sinai in exchange for the flimsiest of guarantees concerning freedom of navigation. The experience of May 1967, when Nasser had remilitarised Sinai, evicted UNEF, and closed the Gulf to Israeli-bound traffic, while Israel’s guarantors stood by idly, had fortified its determination only to withdraw from occupied territories in exchange for Arab recognition of its right to exist in peace and security. Since Israel believed that the Arab states, after their humiliating defeat in 1967, were in no mood to recognise and make peace with the Jewish state, and since these states sought the return of their territories, it was felt that if Israel could maintain its hold on these territories, it could induce its neighbours to adopt a more realistic attitude. Thus Israel's primary task was perceived to be the resistance of any attempt, either by military means or by political and economic pressure, to force it to withdraw in the absence of a contractual peace.

Moreover, because Israel's experience had led it to regard the last line of withdrawal as the next line of Arab attack, its leadership was only prepared to consider withdrawal to secure and defensible borders. As far as the Israelis were concerned, this precluded a return to the pre-1967 lines, even with "minor rectifications", because these were regarded as neither secure nor defensible. Further, as a sign of Arab willingness to recognise Israel's right to exist, and as a means for resisting external interference in the terms of the settlement, Israel insisted on direct negotiations between the parties to the conflict. Thus Israel's secondary task was to convince those who were interested in a settlement


2. Although the Israeli government refused to specify the rectifications it required, simply because it could not reach a consensus between the parties, the Labour Alignment did adopt an 'oral law' which suggested that Israel would have to retain control over Sharm el-Sheikh, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights, and would have to have a military presence along the Jordan River. See Brecher, *Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy*, pp. 460-2.
of the Arab-Israeli conflict that this could only be achieved through
direct negotiations, leading to the delineation of boundaries which
provided for Israel's security and which were recognised by the Arabs.
In the interim, while the Arabs came around to accepting and negotiating
peace with Israel, its short-term objectives were the establishment of
a stable cease-fire on all its borders, the maintenance of its deterrent
strength, and the continued growth of its economy.

Political, military and economic assistance from the United States
was the necessary prerequisite for the attainment of all these objectives,
especially in the face of the support which Egypt received from the
Soviet Union. If, instead of supporting Israel's political demands, the
United States sought an imposed solution, as it had in 1956-7, then
Israel might be forced to withdraw to unsafe positions in the absence of
a "real" peace. If Washington did not support Israel's deterrent strength
by providing the necessary arms, then Israel might be unable to maintain
a stable cease-fire and prevent an Arab attack aimed at regaining the
occupied territories. In other words, were Israel to resist an imposed
settlement by the superpowers, and were it instead to promote its own
concept of a settlement, it required American support, not only for its
principles, but also for its tactical manoeuvres aimed at the fulfilment
of these principles.

Egypt's objectives were almost diametrically opposed to those of its
Israeli adversary, but were also predicated on the 1956-7 experience.
Because of the humiliating defeat which his army had suffered, and because
much of the responsibility lay in his own actions, Nasser was determined
to "erase the traces of aggression" by avoiding the political consequences
of the military debacle. Thus, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from all
the territories occupied during the fighting, without any political
concessions to Israel in the process, became his and the Arabs' most
important objective. As formulated in the resolutions of the 1967 Khartoum
Arab summit, all political, military and economic efforts would be
consolidated to eliminate the effects of the aggression, and this would be
done within the framework of the following principles: "no peace with
Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiation with it, and insistence on
the rights of the Palestinian people in their own country". 3 Withdrawal,

in the absence of any substantive concessions to Israel, was to be achieved by an orchestration of political and military pressures which would encourage the superpowers to impose a settlement, as they had in 1957, or short of that, would enable Egypt to resist the imposition of an Israeli settlement, neutralise Israel's American support and engage the Soviet Union in active support for Arab military pressure on Israel.

Given the state of Egypt's armed forces and its economy after the War, Soviet backing was essential for the achievement of these objectives. Were military pressure to be applied against Israel, the Egyptian army would have to be reequipped; were political pressure to be applied, Soviet advocacy in international forums would be essential; were Israel to be isolated from its American patron, the Soviet Union would have to become more actively involved in the conflict. Moreover, beyond Soviet support, Nasser also sought American backing for an Israeli withdrawal, and a reduction in American support for Israel's military posture and political demands. In other words, were Egypt to pressure Israel into complete withdrawal without political concessions, were it to promote a superpower imposed settlement on Israel while resisting Israeli terms, it needed Soviet support for its principles and strategy, and it needed to neutralise American support for Israel. 4

Both the United States and the Soviet Union confronted conflicting imperatives in the post-war environment. On the level of their global relations, the 1967 War had emphasised the dangers that their involvement on either side of the Arab-Israeli conflict could present to the conduct of their own relations. Their inability to restrain their protégés, and the risks this involved in terms of escalation to a superpower confrontation, encouraged both to seek solutions which would minimise the dangers of their involvement while maximising their control over the local combatants. Thus, as their global conflict began to be mitigated by the commencement of SALT negotiations, the gradual acceptance of the status quo in central Europe, and the winding down of American involvement and the exercise of

Soviet restraint in Vietnam, both superpowers expressed an interest in a political settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and both showed a willingness to try to persuade their protegés to accept such a settlement. However, while the United States and the Soviet Union expressed a common interest in settling the Arab-Israeli conflict, they were still competing for influence in the region. Accordingly, the United States wanted a settlement which would end the polarisation of the region and enable it to reassert its influence in the Arab world, while the Soviet Union sought a settlement which would maintain the regional polarisation and thereby keep the 'radical' Arab states as its own preserve. Moreover, Moscow had become committed to reequipping the Egyptian army and to securing the return of all Arab territory (by political means) in order to stabilise its own position of influence, maintain Egypt's allegiance, allow its client to negotiate from a position of strength, and recoup its prestige by absolving itself from the guilt associated with its failure to prevent Egypt's defeat in the war. Conversely, Washington had become committed, as a result of its own inactivity during the crisis, to negotiating a better deal for Israel in exchange for its withdrawal than it had arranged in 1957. And, with the Soviet Union supplying Israel's adversaries while France embargoed its arms, the United States also felt it necessary to maintain the balance of military power in Israel's favour as a means for deterring another war and for pressuring Egypt and the Soviet Union into a more reasonable attitude towards the settlement negotiations.

Thus, while Israel and Egypt faced the new danger of a superpower rapprochement at their expense, they also enjoyed new opportunities to exploit the competitive interests of the superpowers in order to resist the consequent political settlement, should it be inimical to their interests. Who prevailed in this post-war settlement process was determined, as it had been in the pre-war period, by the interactions between clients and patrons, between the local adversaries, and between the superpowers. It was a feature of this period, however, that while Israel and Egypt fought the War of Attrition over the Suez Canal, their American and Soviet patrons engaged in Two Power and Four Power Talks in New York, Washington and Moscow.

This fighting between the clients on one level, while the patrons discussed their fate on another, did much to determine who prevailed and who submitted on the third level, where the politics of patronage were played out.

II - PRELUDE: 1968 TO MARCH 1969

Like all good preludes, the events which led up to the War of Attrition foreshadowed the movements which followed; the four players providing glimpses of the performance each would give over the next two years. On the superpower level, attempts to cooperate in finding a political solution culminated in Soviet and American proposals which were the harbinger of Two and Four Power Talks; on the regional level, Egyptian artillery barrages and Israeli retaliations against strategic targets set the stage for the ensuing war across the Suez Canal; and on the level of patronage, both clients experienced their first problems in securing arms from their patrons while attempting to ensure political support for their maximum demands.

(i) Israel and the Johnson Administration

The first notes of discord in Israeli-American relations were not sounded until after Eshkol's visit to the LBJ Ranch in January 1968. The Prime Minister had pressed the President to agree to the sale of fifty Phantom F-4 fighters on the basis that France had embargoed the fifty Mirage fighters which Israel had ordered and paid for. The President had been briefed by the State and Defense Departments to refuse this request because of their assessment that, following Israel's victory, the balance remained in its favour despite the Soviet resupply of arms to Egypt and Syria. Nevertheless, far from turning Eshkol down, Johnson announced in the communiqué that Israel's military defence capability would be kept "under active and sympathetic examination and review in the light of all relevant factors, including the shipment of military equipment by others to the region".

Johnson had apparently reemphasised to Eshkol his determination to maintain the balance of power, but before the United States gave a new boost to the arms race, he sought first to try to reach an agreement with the Soviet Union on the limitation of arms supplies to the region. When the Soviet Union, after Nasser's visit to Moscow in July, began to supply Egypt with equipment under a new agreement which went beyond restoring its pre-war strength by providing it with SU-7 fighter-bombers, the pressure to accede to Israel's request mounted.

The imperatives of an election year in American domestic politics also worked in Israel's favour. The two Presidential Candidates expressed their common belief that Israel should get the Phantoms, with Nixon going even further than Humphrey in his declaration:

Israel must possess sufficient military power to deter an attack. As long as the threat of Arab attack remains direct and imminent "sufficient power" means the balance must be tipped in Israel's favour...For that reason...I support a policy that would give Israel a technological military margin to offset her hostile neighbours' numerical superiority. If maintaining that margin should require that the U.S. supply Israel with supersonic Phantom-F4 jets - we should supply those Phantom jets.10

Moreover, on 19 September, Congress placed a rider on the Foreign Assistance Act, calling on the President to negotiate an agreement for the sale of the Phantoms "to provide Israel with an adequate deterrent force capable of preventing future Arab aggression by offsetting sophisticated weapons received by the Arab states".11


9. The 90 SU-7s which were delivered to Egypt by mid-1969 were far in excess of what Egypt had received, in terms of similar aircraft, before 1967. MIG-21s were also supplied under this agreement, but only up to 85% of the pre-war level, while Egypt's bomber inventory was also not fully replenished. See Glassman, Arms for the Arabs, pp. 105-6.


11. For the text of Section 651 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1968 see DSB, 28 October, 1968, p. 452.
However, despite these domestic pressures, and despite Moscow's formal rejection of an American proposal for regional arms control, it was not until 9 October that the President announced that he would instruct the Secretary of State to enter into negotiations for the sale of the Phantoms to Israel. And it was not until 27 December 1968 that the State Department finally announced the conclusion of an agreement to sell fifty F-4s to Israel, with the deliveries to begin before the end of 1969 and to be concluded before the end of 1970.

This concrete reaffirmation of patronage was particularly important for Israel, since it now lacked an alternative source for sophisticated weapons, and since the Soviet Union had made it clear that the Arab arsenals would not be in want of arms. Moreover, the Phantoms would prove to be a crucial element in Israel's conduct of the War of Attrition, for without them, the IAF would be unable to conduct its deep-penetration raids into Egypt. The Skyhawk may have been the first clearly offensive weapon which the United States had supplied Israel, but the Phantom, with its supersonic speed, longer range, and larger bomb-carrying capacity, represented a qualitative improvement in Israel's arsenal which would ensure its air superiority into the early 1970s.

Nevertheless, during the nine months of delay and three months of negotiations, some disturbing elements had emerged in Israel's relations with the United States - elements which were soon to be confirmed by the new Nixon Administration. First, the State Department's opposition to the arms supply was as vehement as ever, especially because of the deterioration of the American position in the Arab world following the Six Day War and the severing of diplomatic relations by Egypt, Syria and Iraq. Thus, throughout 1968 State Department officers had done their best

12. At the beginning of October Rusk had met Gromyko in New York and had discussed the question of arms limitations. At the end of the year Rusk revealed that although Washington had pressed Moscow for arms limitations "they have been very reluctant to get into it until there is a more general settlement of the political issues of the Middle East". See DSB, 23 December, 1968.
15. With a speed of Mach 2.4, an ability to carry up to 16,000 pounds of ordnance, and a fast rate of climb, the F-4 was considered to be an excellent offensive fighter-bomber, superior to the MiG-21 in its interception capabilities and to the SU-7 in its ground-attack capabilities. See Alvin J. Cottrell, "The Role of Air Power in the Military Balance of the
to persuade Egypt that the United States was objective and 'even-handed',
that it did not condone Israel's retention of, or settlement in, the
occupied territories, that it did not recognise Israel's annexation of
East Jerusalem, that it objected to Israel's policy of 'massive retaliation'
against its neighbours for fedayeen raids, and that it expected Israel
to allow Palestinians who had fled the West Bank to return.16 If this
approach were to reap dividends, it was essential that the United States
not identify itself yet again as the protector of Israel by supplying
it with weapons which would enable it to retain its hold on the occupied
territories. In fact, it was reported in Cairo that Assistant Secretary
of State Battle had pointed to the President's refusal (before October)
to sanction the Phantom sale as testimony of Washington's good faith
towards Egypt.17 Thus Israel could expect continued opposition from the
State Department over future requests for arms.

The second disturbing element arising out of the prolonged arms
negotiations was a new Defense Department reluctance to support Israel's
requests because of the fear that this would escalate the arms race in
the Middle East and lead to increased superpower involvement. Granting
the Phantom request, International Security Affairs argued, would represent
a "quantum leap forward" in the arms race - a destabilising action.18
Moreover, whereas it is probably safe to assume that Israel's nuclear
option tacitly reinforced the argument for supplying it with conventional
sufficiency, this leverage was offset by Pentagon concerns over the possible
use of the Phantom as a delivery vehicle should Israel develop nuclear
weapons. The three months of negotiations following President Johnson's

15. (continued) Middle East - the Function of the Phantom", *New Middle

16. For a summary of the various statements made by Secretary Rusk,
Ambassador Ball, and Assistant Secretary Battle, see *Middle East Record*,
1968, pp. 71-72.

17. "Middle East Trends: Danger of War or Fears of Peace", *New Middle
East*, November, 1968, p. 6. Battle, who had just retired as Assistant
Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, left for Cairo on
September 17, 1968 (*Middle East Record*, 1968, p. 78). He blamed domestic
politics for Johnson's decision and claimed that the President had conceded
to him that there was no military justification for the sale of Phantoms
at that stage. *Interview with Lucius Battle.*

18. *Interview with Robert J. Pranger.* Both Pranger and Battle felt that
General Wheeler, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was in favour
of the Phantom deal because it would keep Israel strong and thereby avoid
American involvement.
decision to sell Israel the aircraft indicated that there was some "tough bargaining" over technical details. The Pentagon was apparently insisting that Israel sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a *quid pro quo* for the Phantoms. Although this demand appears to have been quashed by the White House, and although it is possible that Israel provided some other forms of assurance (such as restraint on plutonium separation, and further American inspection privileges), Israel's nuclear option had become a double-handed lever, providing those who opposed Israel's arms requests with an argument for restricting its access to sophisticated weapons which might be used as delivery vehicles, and reason for attaching conditions to the supply of such weapons.

Finally, and probably the most disturbing element in American-Israeli relations, was the divergence in views concerning the principles of a peace settlement, and the apparent willingness on the part of the American Administration to use arms supplies as a lever for greater Israeli compliance in the settlement negotiations. Although both patron and client had accepted UN Resolution 242 as the basis for negotiations, Israel had made it clear, amongst its other principles, that it was only prepared to enter into face-to-face negotiations with its Arab neighbours and that, on the Egyptian front, Sinai would have to be demilitarised, the Gaza Strip could not be returned to Egyptian control and Israel would have to retain control of Sharm el-Sheikh. When preliminary discussions, conducted by UN envoy Gunnar Jarring, ground to a halt over Israel's insistence on direct negotiations, leading to a contractual peace, before any withdrawal, and Egyptian insistence on complete Israeli withdrawal

19. *New York Times*, 22 December, 1968; Pranger noted that the United States used the F-4 as a delivery vehicle and that, by supplying them to Israel, the U.S. was contributing to Israel's nuclear weapons capability.


22. For an exhaustive summary of Israeli statements about these principles during 1968 see "Israel: The Conceptual Approach to Peace", *Middle East Record*, 1968, pp. 242-261.
without direct negotiations or a peace agreement, the Johnson Administration began to express its own opinions about methods for resolving the impasse which were not completely consistent with the demands of its client. First, the Administration pressured Israel to proceed into substantive negotiations with the Arabs by indirect means (i.e. through Jarring). When Israel responded, that in its eyes "direct negotiations do not constitute a point of procedure, but a principle embodying the very fact of recognition for Israeli sovereignty and independence", the President replied by telling an American Jewish audience that progress towards peace depended upon the willingness of the leaders of the Middle East "to begin talking the substance of peace...How the talking is done at the outset is not very important."

American pressure apparently peaked when Eban arrived in New York for the United Nations General Assembly Plenary in October. Rusk told him that the United States held Israeli intransigence on the issue of direct negotiations responsible for Jarring's lack of progress. While there may have been no overt connection between Israel's willingness to cooperate with Jarring and American willingness to provide Israel with the Phantoms, the ten month delay in processing Israel's request, and the existence of this bone of contention between patron and client, were responsible in large measure for Eban's initiative in the UN General Assembly on 8 October. Declaring Israel's willingness to make a new effort to cooperate with Jarring, he added: "we are ready to exchange ideas on certain matters of substance, through Ambassador Jarring, with any Arab government willing to establish a just and lasting peace with Israel." One day later, President Johnson announced his decision to sell Israel the

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23. 'Reliable sources' disclosed in February 1968 that Rusk had written to Eban urging Israel to accept unequivocally Resolution 242 and to enter into substantive negotiations through Jarring. New York Times, 23 February, 1968. When Ball and Bundy visited Israel in July they were reported to have urged Israel to convey its substantive position to Jarring. New York Times, 18 July, 1968.

24. Address by Foreign Minister Eban to the Knesset, 3 June, 1968, cited in Jerusalem Post, 4 June, 1968; Address by President Johnson before the 125th Anniversary Meeting of B'nai B'rith, DSB, 7 October, 1968.

25. Cited in Middle East Record, 1968, p. 248. Eban expanded on Israel's willingness to engage in indirect negotiations on matters of substance in an interview on 11 October: "We continue to believe that there must be normal negotiations and that the refusal to meet cannot be condoned. But if in order to reach that position it is necessary to have a preliminary stage in which we exchange views, principles, ideas on certain matters, then we are prepared for that preliminary stage". He went on to point out the beneficial effect that his declaration had achieved: "...it has allayed certain apprehensions lest our devotion to principle might inadvertently lead to a deadlock". See BBC/SWB, 14 October, 1968, ME/2899/A/1.
Phantoms it had requested in January.  

The second position adopted by the United States which caused Israel considerable concern, and which could not be resolved by a verbal compromise, was that in the context of a final peace settlement, the United States expected Israel to withdraw to its pre-war border with Egypt, including withdrawal from Sharm el-Sheikh, but excluding withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. This position had been hinted at on various occasions, but it was actually set down 'in precise form' and conveyed to both Israel and Egypt in early November 1968 by Secretary of State Rusk.

It is not at all clear why a 'lame-duck' Administration, in its final days, should have embarked on a new initiative, but it certainly established a precedent for American policy which would be handed on to the new Administration, and coincided with a Soviet initiative which called for complete Israeli withdrawal. Israel rejected both proposals; the former because it did not provide for Israeli control of Sharm el-Sheikh and the demilitarisation of Sinai; the latter because it did not require a contractual peace, and made no mention of Israeli rights to transit the Canal, nor of protection for Israeli navigation in the Straits of Tiran. The Rusk proposal was also rejected by Egypt and therefore could not form the basis for negotiations at that stage. Nevertheless, the United States had made it clear to the parties that it did not support all Israel's political demands, and thus clear to Israel that, if and when settlement negotiations actually proceeded, a conflict between patron and client would be inevitable unless one or both changed their positions.

Moreover, Israeli sensitivity about the constancy of American patronage was also aroused by remarks made by Governor Scranton during his visit to

26. In a further interview on 20 October, Eban noted how different Israel's position had become when compared with the situation at the beginning of October. He noted that a "frontal dispute" was expected with the American government, that Jarring's mission was expected to come to an end, and that Israel was worried about maintaining the balance of forces, mainly in the air: "There was a certain impasse concerning one category of vital military equipment we needed". He observed that since his speech the differences with the United States had been settled. See BBC/SWB, 22 October, 1968, ME/2905/A/4.

27. New York Times, 5 December, 1968; Cf. Eugene Rostow, "The American Stake in Israel", Commentary, April, 1977, p. 45. In his address to the B'nai B'rith Johnson had stated: "...Israel must persuade its Arab neighbours and the world community that Israel has no expansionist designs on their territory...There must be secure and there must be recognised borders...At the same time it should be equally clear that boundaries cannot and should not reflect the weight of conquest. Each change must have a reason which each side, in honest negotiation, can accept as a part of a just compromise"; loc.cit., p. 349.

28. Middle East Record, 1968, p. 82; Ha'aretz, 20 January, 1969. Except where otherwise indicated, references to Hebrew, Russian and Egyptian
the Middle East in December. Scranton, who was sent by President-elect Nixon on a fact-finding mission, pronounced on his arrival in Israeli-held territory that American policy should become more "even-handed", dealing with all countries in the area "and not necessarily espousing one". Thus, by the time of the Nixon inauguration, tension already existed between patron and client as a result of the mistrust which had developed since the halcyon days of the 1967 victory.

(ii) Israel and the Nixon Administration

The first year of a new Administration has traditionally been a period of innovation and initiative in American policy towards the Middle East. It is a time when the State Department has an opportunity to propose new policies and be heard by a new President looking for new initiatives. This was particularly the case for Richard Nixon in 1969, because he had an abiding interest in foreign affairs, because he had pledged to move the United States from an era of confrontation to an era of negotiation, but, most importantly, because he regarded the Arab-Israeli confrontation as dangerous:

...I believe we need new initiatives and new leadership on the part of the United States in order to cool off the situation in the Mideast. I consider it a powder keg, very explosive. It needs to be defused...because the next explosion in the Mideast, I think, could involve very well a confrontation between the nuclear powers, which we want to avoid.

On 1 February, the National Security Council spent the day discussing position papers drafted by the new Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs, Joseph Sisco. Three options were available to the Administration: to remain relatively inactive, leaving the negotiations to Jarring and maintaining the status quo; to pursue

28. (continued) newspapers during the period 1969-1970 are based on the drafts of the Middle East Record, 1969 and 1970 which had not yet been published at the time of writing.

29. Cited in Middle East Record, 1968, p. 73.


actively a comprehensive settlement through multilateral diplomacy; to try for partial and interim agreements. Sisco argued that the Administration should adopt the second option and, in particular, engage the Soviet Union in discussions designed to test the good faith of Moscow. The fact that during the change-over of Administrations the Soviet Union had proposed a settlement formula which, although short of the American conception of a settlement, nevertheless contained some constructive points, reinforced the President's own penchant for negotiating with Moscow on the 'big issues'. The judgement was made that, because the Soviet Union shared American desires to avoid a superpower confrontation in the Middle East, it would be interested in stabilising the rivalry by sacrificing some competitive interests in the region for the sake of its cooperative interest in a settlement of the local conflict.

Beyond that, Sisco also outlined a policy for the United States which would enable it to exploit the stability that was expected to result from the superpower rapprochement to promote American influence in the Arab world. In other words, Washington sought to exploit Moscow's interest in cooperation to promote its own competitive interests. Israel would be encouraged to withdraw from occupied territory, with only "insubstantial" border changes. Even if this approach did not succeed the consequent strain in Israeli-American relations would help to persuade the Arab states that American policy was strictly objective, balanced


33. The rationale was explained by Nixon in his 4 March Press Conference: "...at the same time that the Soviet Union has gone forward in providing arms for potential belligerents...the Soviet Union recognises that if these peripheral areas get out of control, that the result could be a confrontation with the United States...And I think it is that overwhelming fact...that is giving the Soviet Union second thoughts and leads me to what I would say is a cautious conclusion at this point, that the Soviet Union will play possibly a peace-making role in the Mideast...we are going to explore that road all the way that we can, because, let's face it, without the Soviet Union's cooperation, the Mideast is going to continue to be a terribly dangerous area..." DSB, 24 March, 1969. This judgement was elaborated by John C. Campbell: "They [the Soviets] have reasons to want a settlement or at least an arrangement that will reduce tensions and check certain trends dangerous to them: they do not want to be drawn into a war; they do not want to see their present assets disappear, as would happen if the Nasser regime should lose out to the fedayeen or other local elements; and they have reason to question the magnitude of their involvement in a situation they do not control". See Campbell, "There is a new look in Washington", New Middle East, June 1969, p. 12. Cf. Robert J. Pranger, American Policy for Peace in the Middle East, 1969-1971, American Enterprise Institute, Foreign Affairs Study 1, December, 1971; Bernard Lewis, "The Great Powers, The Arabs and the Israelis", Foreign Affairs, Volume 47, No. 4, July, 1969, p.648.
and ‘even-handed’. Moscow would be encouraged to pressure its Arab clients into making some concessions to Israel in return for withdrawal, thereby hopefully causing a strain in Soviet-Arab relations which would further promote American influence in these Arab states. The inherent contradiction between cooperative and competitive interests may not have been appreciated in Washington, but it soon became clear that Moscow well appreciated it and sought to reverse the process by claiming credit with the Arab states for any changes in the American positions by charging that Washington had not gone far enough. In other words, to the extent that the policy of 'even-handedness' succeeded in promoting American influence in the Arab world, to that extent would it reduce Soviet influence. The Soviet Union could hardly be expected to cooperate in its own demise, and the policy therefore became a recipe for competition rather than cooperation.

The second and related problem which does not appear to have been considered in the National Security Council on that Saturday in February, was the amount of mistrust and opposition the new policy of superpower discussions would generate in Jerusalem, and the amount of hope and then disillusionment that the policy of 'even-handedness' would generate in Cairo. In fact two assumptions seem to have been made at the outset: that the superpowers could and would be willing to push their clients in the direction of a settlement; and that even if the new policy failed, the American position would be no worse than if it had made no effort at all. The ability of the weak states to resist the imposition of a settlement inimical to their individual interests, and their ability to play on the competitive interests of the superpowers to undermine their cooperative

34. See Rowland Evans, Jr., and Robert D. Novak, Nixon in the White House: The Frustration of Power, New York, 1971, p. 88; Marvin and Bernard Kalb, Kissinger, New York, 1975, pp. 216-7. Campbell described this policy as a "willingness to allow a sliver of daylight to appear between the position of the United States and that of Israel...it is at least possible that the period of virtually parallel American and Israeli policies following the 1967 war may be coming to an end". Campbell, ibid., pp. 11 and 14.


efforts and therefore make matters worse, seems to have been underestimated, if not ignored, in those heady days of the new Administration when everything seemed possible - even in the Middle East. 37

Thus the Administration decided to engage in Four Power Talks, between the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and France, as well as Two Power Talks between Sisco and Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin, with the professed aim: "to exercise - whatever influence it [the United States] has, in whatever way would be useful and effective, to help bring a lasting peace...". 38 Israel was put on notice immediately by Secretary of State Roger's statement to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in announcing the new diplomatic initiative:

Clearly, withdrawal should take place to established boundaries which define the areas where Israel and its neighbours may live in peace and sovereign independence. Equally, there can be no secure and recognised boundaries without withdrawal. In our view rectifications from the preexisting lines should be confined to those required for mutual security and should not reflect the weight of conquest. 39

Israel's reaction was swift and vehement. Before the talks had even begun Israel expressed its opposition to Washington on the grounds that it would divert attention from the need for direct negotiations; it was not a "balanced framework" because the Soviet Union and France supported the Arab claims, while Britain and even the United States were neutral; and it would undermine the Jarring mission. Foreign Minister Eban flew to Washington in mid-March and in meetings with Nixon and Rogers unsuccessfully tried to persuade them to abandon the talks. 40

37. The Kalbs claim that Kissinger had doubts about the willingness of the Soviet Union to cooperate and the willingness of the Arabs and Israelis to accept an imposed solution. However, he was apparently ordered by Nixon to keep a low profile on the Middle East so that Rogers could have something to keep him satisfied. Kissinger's apparent foresight is, however, probably hindsight and possibly calculation that if Rogers failed in this area, while Kissinger succeeded in others, the bureaucratic battle would be won. See Kalbs, Kissinger, p. 217.

38. Statement by Secretary Rogers before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 27 March, 1969, DSB, 14 April, 1969, p. 305.

39. Ibid.

40. New York Times, 21 March, 1969; Ha'aretz, 16 March, 1969. Eban noted later that the Israeli fear of the talks stemmed from the fact that while the Soviet Union had tied itself to the Arab position, the United States was not similarly tied to all Israel's positions: "On the territorial issue it clearly envisaged less substantial revision of the previous lines than Israel thought essential for its security". Eban, My Country, p. 259.
newly-appointed Prime Minister, Golda Meir, reiterated Israeli opposition
by claiming that "even our best friends do not have the right to decide
for us what our conditions for peace and security should be". Finally,
on the eve of the talks the Israeli Cabinet published its decision to
renounce the Two or Four Power Talks:

Israel rejects from the outset any trend towards
convening representatives of states outside the
Middle East to work out recommendations in affairs of
this region. Such an attempt is contrary to the
responsibility that falls upon all states of the
region to reach peace between them. Israel rejects
any arrangement or procedure not agreed upon by the
governments concerned in the matter. It is not and
will not be the object of the policy of a great power
or great powers, and will not accept any recommendation
that is contrary to its vital interests, rights and
security...

Given the fact that the talks had not yet begun on the substantive
issues, Israel's American supporters, in their reactive roles, could not
have much impact. Moreover, the leaders of the Jewish community were
concerned not to attempt to push Nixon too hard since he was not beholden
to the Jewish vote - he had won only 17%. Nevertheless, Rabbi Wexler,
Rabbi Shachter and Max Fisher, representing the Conference of Presidents
of Major American Jewish Organisations, met with Rogers, Sisco and Nixon
to express their concern over the Talks. They were sent away with the
enigmatic assurance that there had been no change in the principles of
American policy in the Middle East. Congress issued a declaration
in April, endorsed by 61 Senators and 243 Representatives which called for
"face-to-face" negotiations and opposed "any attempt by outside powers to
impose halfway measures not conducive to a permanent peace".

The Administration reacted with equal determination to proceed with
the talks. However, some attempt was made to allay the mistrust by

43. Near East Report, Volume XIII, 1969, p. 32. To back up Israel's
opposition AIPAC published a special edition of the Near East Report in
April which retold the story of American pressure on Israel in 1956-7 and
wondered whether those "blunders" would be repeated. See "Special Survey:
Lest We Forget...Blunder at Suez - 1957, Sequel at Suez - 1967", Near East
Report, April, 1969.
44. Ibid., pp. 35 and 38.
continuous repetition of what Nixon told the press on 4 March:

The four powers cannot dictate a settlement in the Middle East. The time has passed in which great nations can dictate to small nations their future where their vital interests are involved. Instead, the Four Powers' task was merely "to indicate those areas where they believe the parties directly involved could have profitable discussion" and then provide guarantees for the settlement. But the message was still clear: the purpose of the talks was to reach an agreement between the superpowers on the formula for a settlement and then induce their protégés to agree. Israel disagreed before any agreement had been reached. The American response: "We recognise the dangers that the Government of Israel cites; but we do think it is important to proceed along this line and we intend to do it".

(iii) Cairo and Moscow in the Aftermath of War

On the other side of the Canal, Egypt fared better in its relations with the Soviet Union despite its increased dependence and much weakened position after the 1967 defeat. Nevertheless, there was a significant divergence in the priorities of patron and client which caused considerable tension because it brought the issues of influence and resistance to the fore. However, because both client and patron were locked in a position of mutual dependence both sought compromises; neither could afford to abandon the other and thus neither was prepared to push the other beyond what it could accept without damage to its vital interests.


46. Secretary Roger's News Conference of 7 April, DSB, 28 April, 1969, pp. 360-1. In the same Conference, Rogers indicated how he expected to influence the Arabs and Israelis: "...if the world community should agree on a certain general formula for the settlement of the Middle East, then I think the governments in that area would want to think long and hard before they turned it down", p. 362. It is interesting to compare this statement with President Carter's thoughts on the issue of influence at the prospective Geneva Conference: "I think if a particular leader of one of the countries should find that his position is in direct contravention to the position of all the other parties involved, including ourselves and the Soviet Union,...there would be a great impetus on that leader to conform with the overwhelming opinion". See Time, 8 August, 1977, p. 22.
Nasser's vital interest—his preoccupation—was the withdrawal of Israeli forces from all the occupied territories, by political means if possible, by force if necessary, and without any concessions which would further weaken Egypt's position in the Arab world. Thus, beyond the rejection of recognition, direct negotiations, or peace with Israel, Egypt also insisted that not an inch of occupied territory could be surrendered (although Gaza did not necessarily have to be returned to Egypt), and that there could be no separate settlement between Egypt and Israel.47

Moscow's vital interests were the reestablishment of its reputation as the protector of the 'forces of progress' in the Middle East, the stabilisation of its position of influence in Egypt, and the avoidance of a superpower confrontation. The pursuit of the first two interests required the Soviet Union to assist Nasser in regaining the occupied territories, thereby proving the value of its patronage in undoing the consequences of 'aggression'. To that extent the interests of patron and client were compatible. However, if the "elimination of the consequences of aggression" required military action, this could conflict with the third, and overriding, Soviet interest in avoiding a superpower confrontation. Another war also ran the risk of further damaging Soviet prestige, if its clients were yet again defeated, as well as increasing the already heavy burden of Soviet patronage.

Thus while Nasser believed that "whatever is taken by force can only be regained by force", and that "political measures are only worth anything insofar as one backs them up with force or with the promise of force", the Soviet leaders argued that "the liquidation of the consequences of aggression can and must be accomplished first of all by political means".48

47. Within these strict limits Egypt was apparently prepared to grant Israel freedom of navigation in the Straits of Tiran, to demilitarise Sinai as long as the Negev was also demilitarised, and end the state of belligerency. See Middle East Record, 1968, pp. 205-214; Nasser's interview with De Borchgrave, Newsweek, 10 February, 1969.

The difference in approach lay in the divergent attitudes of patron and client to the military balance of power in the region. Nasser believed that Egypt's ends could only be achieved by political means if Israel's military preponderance were reduced and Arab military superiority achieved, since this would prevent Israel from laying down the law, and would encourage the United States to pressure Israel into conceding Arab demands for fear that they would otherwise go to war.\footnote{49} The establishment of an Egyptian position of strength, however, required Soviet military support, at levels which created too many risks for Moscow because of its fear that the negation of Israeli preponderance would either encourage Israel to fight a preventive war, or encourage the Arabs to launch an offensive to regain their territory and press the Palestinian cause. After the 1967 experience, the Soviet Union wanted to avoid an all-out war because a defeat for its clients could force it to intervene, a defeat for Israel could force the United States to intervene, and intervention could quickly lead to superpower confrontation. Thus the Soviet Union was prepared to supply Egypt with the means necessary to defend itself from Israeli attack, but it was not prepared to supply Egypt with a new offensive capability. Instead it sought to commit its client to a political effort to force Israel to withdraw.\footnote{50}

A compromise between these two approaches was apparently reached during Nasser's trip to Moscow in July 1968, after an exchange of what the communiqué referred to as "frank views".\footnote{51} According to Heikal, who was present at the talks, Nasser argued the need for military action because

\footnote{49. On the balance of power, Nasser declared on 23 July, 1968: "As long as Israel knows that we have not yet attained overwhelming offensive military power, she will remain in her positions in the hope of attaining a political victory...We are developing the armed forces to achieve superiority over the enemy...This is a lengthy business which needs patience and steadfastness until we achieve victory, until we achieve superiority over the enemy and then triumph". Address to the A.S.U., 23 July, 1968, \textit{IDOP}, 1968, Document 363, pp. 404-5. (emphasis supplied).}

\footnote{50. By mid-1968, the Soviet Union had reequipped the Egyptian armed forces to their pre-war level, but had refused to supply surface-to-surface missiles or MIG-23s which could challenge Israeli air superiority. In June, disappointment was publicly expressed in Cairo and Moscow was called upon to provide offensive weapons. \textit{New York Times}, 18 June, 1968; \textit{Akhbar al-Yom}, 22 June, 1968, cited in \textit{Middle East Record}, 1968, p. 37; Robert Hunter, \textit{The Soviet Dilemma in the Middle East}, Part I: Problems of Commitment, Adelphi Paper No. 59, September, 1969, p. 12.}

\footnote{51. The communiqué stated: "Frank views were exchanged regarding several matters connected with the development of comprehensive cooperation between the U.S.S.R. and the U.A.R., the Middle East situation, and methods of eliminating the consequences of Israeli and imperialist aggression". Radio Moscow, 10 July, 1968, in Y. Ro'i, \textit{From Encroachment to Involvement}, p. 484.}
of the pressures he faced internally and in the Arab world, but agreed first to give "ample opportunity for a political solution". Nevertheless, he insisted that the basic goal remained the withdrawal of Israeli forces without conceding an inch, without direct negotiations with Israel, and without recognition of Israel. And, if he failed to achieve this by political means, "then war will not be an option...it will be a necessity".

In return, the Soviet Union appears to have agreed to supply Egypt with additional arms, and apparently also agreed that if a political solution continued to remain out of reach the quality and quantity of arms shipments would be increased. On this basis, reported Heikal, "we agreed to try out a political settlement, accepted the 22 November Security Council resolution, and cooperation with Gunnar Jarring".

This compromise reflected the degree of mutual dependence which had developed in the Soviet-Egyptian relationship. Nasser needed Soviet political, military and economic backing for the achievement of his aims, but the Soviet Union had come to depend on Nasser for the pursuit of its objectives in the Middle East. Thus, Nasser had granted the Soviet Union naval and air facilities to support its enlarged Mediterranean squadron, had purged the top-ranking officers (who had, amongst other things, complained about dependence upon the Soviet Union), and had issued the 'March 30th Manifesto' to strengthen the Arab Socialist Union through mobilisation of "the popular forces" to provide "the speediest and safest path towards progress".

52. The arms deal was reported to involve some 150 MIG-21s and SU-7s, 500 T54/55 tanks and several hundred self-propelled artillery pieces. New York Times, 13 October, 1968; Glassman, Arms for the Arabs, pp. 68-9; Ro'i, ibid., pp. 483-4.

53. Radio Cairo, 12 July, 1968, BBC/SWB, 15 July, 1968. The communiqué stated: "The two sides again state the need for settling the Middle East crisis on the basis of the UN Security Council resolution passed on 22 November 1967. The U.A.R. has declared its readiness to implement the resolution as soon as possible and to take important and practical steps towards doing so...The Soviet Government appreciates and supports the U.A.R.'s initiative on this issue...The U.S.S.R....[has] offered and continues to offer the U.A.R. all kinds of political and economic support, as well as assistance in improving its defence capability". Ro'i, ibid., pp. 485-6.

54. See Jaan Pennar, The U.S.S.R. and the Arabs, pp. 78-80. Since the end of 1967, the Soviet Mediterranean squadron had enjoyed free access to Alexandria and Port Said; in May 1968 the land-based air arm of the Soviet Navy used the Cairo West airport for regular reconnaissance flights over the Sixth Fleet. J.C. Hurewitz, "Weapons Acquisition: Israel and Egypt", in F.B. Horton, A.C. Rogerson, E.L. Warner (eds.) Comparative Defense Policy, Baltimore, Maryland, 1974, p. 488. In the political struggle which followed the defeat, Field Marshal Amer criticised the socialisation process as leading to Communism, charged the Soviet Union with conspiracy over the
In return, the Soviet Union had reequipped the armed forces, provided some 3,000 advisors to train them, and had arranged assistance for the extension of the Helwan steelworks as well as oil prospecting teams for the Western Desert. On the political level, the Soviet Union launched its initiative on 30 December 1968 by presenting the United States with its 'action plan' for the implementation of Resolution 242: a phased Israeli withdrawal to its pre-1967 borders over a period of three months; at the time of the initial withdrawal each state would deposit documents with the U.N. declaring an end to the state of war and the recognition of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each state in the area; the principles governing freedom of navigation, the refugees, demilitarised zones, and secure and recognised borders would be worked out under Ambassador Jarring's auspices; U.N. troops would be deployed in Sharm el-sheikh and the Gaza sector "thus restoring the situation existing in May 1967"; the Security Council would confirm the principle of freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba; a Four Power guarantee of the borders was possible; and all aspects of the settlement should be dealt with together as a "package deal". 55

As Riad stated, after Gromyko had brought the plan to Cairo on 21 December: "We reached agreement in principle on the need for a political settlement and the means to implement this". 56 However, behind this formal acceptance of the Russian proposal, lay increased tension between patron and client. Having agreed to pursue a political settlement as a tactical expedient, Nasser faced conflicting pressures which made it difficult for him to comply with the compromise which had evolved. In Egypt's much weakened position, Nasser's task was somewhat akin to that which Israel faced during the May-June 1967 crisis. Lacking an alternative patron, but having secured a Soviet commitment to his aims, Nasser had to persuade Moscow that political methods would be inadequate in securing

54. (continued) war, criticised Moscow for not fulfilling its arms pledges and its undertaking to intervene in the war, and suggested that Egypt should effect a rapprochement with the United States. See Y. Ro' i, ibid., p. 470.
those aims unless Egypt's military means were boosted. So, just as Israel had allowed time for the United States to realise that its political efforts to reopen the Straits would not succeed, so too did Egypt have to support the Soviet political effort "to convince the Russians that there was no diplomatic solution and to get them more and more involved". As Nasser is reported to have told Foreign Minister Riad:

I want the Russians to be in daily touch with us so that they can see the impossibility of a diplomatic solution; that way they will increase their help to us.\(^7\)

Yet, just as Israel's leadership had been under strong pressure to take matters into its own hands before its patron had come to the realisation that it could not achieve redress, so too was Nasser under strong pressure to take military action before the Soviet peace plan had been tested and discarded.

Demonstrations in February and November 1968 had emphasised the discontent which existed in Egypt over the defeat, the dependence upon the Soviet Union, and the lack of political freedoms. For the first time the demonstrators attacked Nasser, depicting him as a tyrant and capitulator. The domestic challenge to Nasser's regime was reinforced by the challenge to his traditional position of leadership in the Arab world from the Palestinian fedayeen. In the wake of the war and the devastation of the Arab armies, the fedayeen were perceived to be the one Arab force carrying on the struggle under the banner of a popular war of liberation, while Nasser spoke of a political solution. Thus, the longer he waited for the Soviet Union to realise that a political settlement was unobtainable in the present circumstances of Egyptian inferiority, the greater the danger that he would be toppled from power.

Moreover, there was the further danger that in the diplomatic process of give and take, the Soviet Union might be persuaded to shift its position on the terms of a settlement and attempt to pressure Egypt into compromising

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58. In February students and workers had demonstrated against the leniency of the sentences meted out to those officers held responsible for the defeat; anti-Soviet slogans were given voice. Meanwhile the military began to object to the infiltration of the armed forces by Soviet advisors. In November, 1968, students demonstrated at Mansura and Alexandria, reiterating their demands for greater political freedoms and protesting Soviet as well as American imperialism. Clashes were reported between Communists and Moslem Brothers. See Mahmoud Hussein, *Class-Conflict in Egypt, 1945-1971*, New York, 1973, Chapter 8; Jean Lacouture, *Nasser*, London, 1973, pp. 318-322.
its own demands for complete Israeli withdrawal without political concessions. This was akin to the compromise danger which Israel faced in the American attempt to resolve the 1967 crisis short of war.

Thus, while the Soviet Union had to be allowed the time to test its peace plan and find it wanting, Egypt had to show that this was a matter of urgency and that in the process its aims could not be compromised. However, the situation lacked a sense of crisis, so that Moscow might not see the matter in as urgent a light as Cairo, especially because the patron was concerned with its other interests in Europe (where the dust had not yet settled over Soviet-controlled Czechoslovakia), on the Chinese border (where tensions were rising), and with the United States (where a new Administration was about to be sworn in). What Nasser needed was some means of applying pressure on both the Soviet Union and the United States to speed up the diplomatic process and produce either a superpower imposed withdrawal on Israel, or the Soviet realisation that nothing could be achieved on the political level "until the enemy comes to realise that we can force him to pull back by means of war". 59

A strategy of controlled tension suited this purpose well: by raising tension along the Canal, Nasser could demonstrate Egypt's willingness to fight for the return of its territory if the superpowers did not quickly arrive at a solution; by fighting, Nasser could answer his critics on the home front and in the Arab world and provide proof that he had not abandoned the struggle; by endless pounding of the Israeli positions, Nasser might succeed in wearing down the will of the Israelis to maintain their positions on the east bank of the Canal, forcing them to withdraw or to soften their demands for a settlement; and by taking action, Nasser might coalesce the eastern front, increasing the military pressure on Israel and the political pressure on the superpowers to accommodate Egypt's demands. Of course, launching a new war, however limited, could have costs as well as benefits: the Soviet Union, preferring stability, might not continue to provide Egypt with the means necessary for pursuing the war of attrition; if war led to a further defeat, Nasser's

domestic position might be undermined rather than strengthened; instead of withdrawing from the Canal, the Israelis might escalate the fighting, attempt to cross the Canal and fight a war which better suited their agility; defeat in a war of attrition might divide rather than unite the eastern front.

To put the military calculus to the test, Egyptian artillery bombardments and commando raids across the Canal were launched in September/October 1968. Egyptian forces succeeded in inflicting some 77 casualties on the Israelis, but were countered by the heavy bombardment of Suez, Port Said and Ismailia. Then on 31 October, an Israeli commando raid was made on Naj Hammadi in the Nile Valley which involved the blowing up of two bridges and a transformer station, cutting power supplies to a large area. This fighting led to the evacuation of those who had remained in the Canal cities and acted as a catalyst for the demonstrations which took place a few weeks later.

However, far from concluding that the costs of a strategy of attrition would outweigh the benefits, Nasser sought instead to reduce some of the costs by bolstering the defence of strategic targets in the Egyptian interior. Moreover, the prospect of benefit had grown because, by the end of 1968, both superpowers had taken initiatives aimed at a solution, which included Egyptian demands for a total withdrawal of Israeli forces from Sinai, and they were about to enter into substantive negotiations - the political solution would quickly be tested. Further, the demonstrations had increased the pressure for military action since the immediate costs of inaction outweighed the future costs of defeat. In other words, by the beginning of 1969, with the superpowers about to engage in Two and Four Power Talks, and with pressure growing for military action, the stage had been set for Nasser's launching of his War of Attrition.

Thus, in this new phase of the politics of patronage, both clients faced the familiar task of maintaining the support of their patrons while

60. *Middle East Record*, 1968, pp. 275-77.

61. Mahmoud Hussein notes: "Those who participated in these events at one of Egypt's universities...did not have the slightest doubt regarding the anti-Israeli preoccupation of the students. This was their primary concern, and the Naga Hammadi raid was the direct cause of the feverish political climate". *Class Conflict in Egypt*, p. 312.
resisting the inimical effects of superpower policies. However, the prospect of a superpower rapprochement or a reconciliation between the United States and Egypt raised new fears for Jerusalem and Moscow and new opportunities for Cairo and Washington. This competition between the superpowers for Cairo's allegiance, between the clients for Washington's support, and between the clients and their patrons to resist the inimical effects of a superpower rapprochement, determined the conduct of the War of Attrition, not only across the Suez Canal, but also in Moscow and Washington where the actions of the clients would have a marked effect on the policies of their patrons.

III - THE FIRST PHASE: MARCH - JUNE, 1969

(i) The Egyptian Message

The War of Attrition was launched in earnest on 8 March as Israeli positions were shelled by massive artillery bombardments. The purpose was soon made clear in a speech on 27 March, which Nasser addressed in part, to the superpowers. He first declared that a new phase of the crisis had been opened, "characterised by the continued escalation of military operations on the Egyptian front". Noting that the Four Power Talks were about to begin, he stated that they would do so "against a background of pressures which make it perfectly clear...that the Middle East crisis cannot possibly wait any longer for a solution". To add to these pressures, Nasser declared that the attitude adopted by each of the four powers would enable the Arab world "to distinguish between friend and foe" and would determine "the nature of its relations with the Arab nation for years to come". Addressing himself directly to the United States, Nasser held that it shared responsibility for the dangerous course the crisis was taking because its views were identical with those of Israel. Noting that the United States had "enormous interests in the Arab world", he stated that Egypt had tried and was still trying to alter the American attitude, but "so far" there were no indications of change.

If Nasser was serving notice on Washington of an expected change in its attitude towards Israel's demands, he was also serving notice on the Soviet Union that Egyptian demands were not negotiable. Repeating the principles of no direct negotiations, no peace, not an inch of territory, and no bargaining with the rights of the Palestinians, he declared: "nobody can dictate to the Arab nation anything that it regards as encroaching on justice or infringing its legitimate historical rights".
And, perhaps in case the Soviet Union was considering withholding the artillery and ordnance necessary for continuing the fighting across the Canal, Nasser heaped praise on Moscow for "supplying us with the weapons we need" without imposing any restrictions or attaching any conditions. In particular, Soviet arms had enabled Egypt to attain the present position "from which we could retaliate or repel the enemy" and "in the last few months we have benefited greatly from the Soviet experts and advisors who are with our units". In other words, Nasser was implicating the Soviet Union in the War of Attrition and implicitly warning Moscow that Egypt's attitude might change from gratitude to hostility if its patron's policy changed. Nasser's counselling of patience to his people, "we must not rush things to make the battle take place before its due time", may have also been designed to reassure the Soviet Union that at this stage Nasser was only interested in a limited conflict.

The political message of the War of Attrition was first addressed to Israel by Heikal, but elaborated on by Nasser during his May Day speech. In an article published the day before the commencement of the artillery barrage, Heikal noted that Israel was satisfied with its present positions and would hesitate before attacking because further moves would bring its forces into heavily populated areas; moreover, the Arab fronts, especially the Egyptian front, were almost impossible to penetrate. Thus the Arab forces had to take action to prevent the cease-fire lines from "freezing" and becoming a fait accompli. A war of attrition on all fronts was necessary, a war which would take account of Israel's technical superiority but would inflict unbearable losses on Israel. A month later, Heikal elaborated on the strategy: while a limited war could not inflict a decisive defeat on Israel, it could inflict a limited defeat through the destruction of two or three Israeli divisions; the Israeli army could be forced to retreat even if only a few kilometres; the myth of Israeli invincibility would be destroyed and with it the philosophy of an imposed peace. Nasser repeated this line of thought on 1 May, when he declared

64. *Al Ahram*, 7 March, 1969.
that Israel's desire to turn the cease-fire lines into permanent borders was unacceptable. In these circumstances, the Egyptian forces had set their objective as the destruction of the Israeli fortifications (he claimed that 60% of the Bar-Lev line had already been destroyed): "either the Israelis withdraw from the occupied territories or fighting will continue". 66

(ii) Israel's Response

If Nasser's aim was to use military pressure along the Canal to force Israel to withdraw and to encourage the superpowers to apply political pressure in this direction, then Israel's response was designed to counteract this strategy. On the military level, the October prelude had served notice that Israel would have to decide whether it intended to defend its positions on the Canal or withdraw to positions beyond Egyptian artillery range. The Egyptian army, which had been deployed along the west bank of the Canal, enjoyed a manpower superiority of 12:1 and a fire-power superiority of 20:1 over Israeli forces. In October, the Israeli forces had been vulnerable to the Egyptian artillery barrage; had the barrages continued at that stage, Israel could well have been forced to withdraw from the Canal. However, the raid on Naj Hammadi exposed Egypt's vulnerable interior and forced it to abandon its artillery offensive on the Canal while it bolstered its defence of strategic installations. This breathing spell gave Israel time to prepare itself for the new threat.

Although the construction of a static defence line went against all the instincts of the IDF, which had always emphasised mobility, tactical ingenuity and command flexibility, it was nevertheless decided that the positions on the Canal would have to be defended for fear that a withdrawal to interior positions would enable the Egyptians to gain a foothold on the east bank and then protect this position by political action in the United Nations. Thus Defence Minister Dayan and Chief-of-Staff Bar Lev ruled out a unilateral withdrawal to less vulnerable positions and instead decided to fortify the Canal positions so that they could be maintained without sustaining heavy casualties. In the breathing space between the

incidents of October 1968 and the War of Attrition which began in March 1969 the IDF built twenty-six fortresses along the length of the Canal to protect the troops from the artillery bombardments while they prevented a large-scale Egyptian crossing. The Bar Lev Line served its purpose well, with only seven Israelis killed in March. However, as the artillery bombardments increased in intensity and were accompanied by commando raids across the Canal, Israeli casualties mounted, so that by mid-July the IDF had sustained sixty-eight dead and two hundred wounded. A raid on Naj Hammadi on 29 April, aimed at restoring tranquillity along the Canal, failed in its intent because little damage appeared to have been inflicted - the bombardments and raids continued.

Although the mounting casualties caused the Israeli leadership considerable concern, at this stage they were preoccupied with the effect that the Canal war would have on the deliberations of the superpowers. One of Egypt's purposes in launching the war had been to emphasise to the superpowers that there was "a time bomb in the shape of the cease-fire lines". Since both superpowers wished to avoid an outbreak of full-scale war because of the risks it held for superpower confrontation, this Egyptian leverage could only be neutralised by Israel if it could demonstrate its capacity to maintain stability in the region, thereby removing the necessity for superpower diplomatic intervention. However, in maintaining stability, Israel faced the same dilemma as it had before 1967 when dealing with Syrian bombardments, because the United States was opposed to the retaliatory measures necessary for forcing the Arab states to adhere to the cease-fire. Moreover, in the environment of Two Power Talks, an Israeli attempt to use retaliatory means could be counter-productive because, unlike before 1967, the United States was considering ways of dealing with the instability by devising a plan for the settlement of the conflict which would involve the withdrawal of Israeli forces. A short-term exacerbation of the conflict, aimed at restoring tranquillity, might instead produce greater pressure from Washington for an Israeli withdrawal. Thus, in the


period from March to July 1969, Israel undertook only one, surprisingly unsuccessful, commando raid against Egyptian targets.  

Instead, Israel resorted to a policy of belittling the significance of the fighting along the Canal and rebutting Egyptian charges that full-scale war was imminent. Thus on 6 April Defence Minister Dayan stated:

...by heating up the lines along the Suez Canal, the Egyptians want to provide a basis for the claim that the Middle East is like a powder keg and that war can break out at any moment. This is only a fiction; the Middle East is not on fire; there is no danger of a Soviet-U.S. confrontation in the Middle East because there is no danger of an Arab-Israeli war.  

On 12 April, Israel's military commentator, General (ret.) Haim Herzog went a little further in slighting the Egyptian activities:

...it should be clear to any trained military and political observer that the danger of war in the Middle East does not exist at the moment, because war requires somebody to wage it and that somebody does not exist today in the Middle East. Nevertheless, strange as it may seem, it is apparently possible by the expenditure of a few thousand shells to create the impression abroad that war is imminent.  

These denigrations were repeated by Foreign Minister Eban, Deputy Prime Minister Allon, and Prime Minister Meir on various occasions during this period, often accompanied by appeals to Egypt to observe the cease-fire. Meanwhile, the outcome of the Two and Four Power Talks were awaited with trepidation and Israel's opposition continued to be expressed with vehemence. However, as Golda Meir noted at the end of May, "it was

70. The political counter-productiveness of Israel's policy of retaliation was demonstrated in the reaction to the Karameh (Jordan) raid and the Beirut Airport raid in 1968. Israel was condemned unanimously in the Security Council on both occasions and severely criticised by the United States. However, at that stage the United States was still following a policy of 'containment' and had not yet embarked on its endeavour to find a settlement to the conflict.

71. Israel Home Service, 6 April, 1969, BBC/SWB, ME/3043/A/6.
72. Israel in English, 12 April, 1969, BBC/SWB, ME/3048/A/6-7.
73. See Statement by Yigal Allon, 6 April, 1969, BBC/SWB, ME/3043/A/6; Golda Meir's Objections to Four Power Talks, 12 April, 1969, BBC/SWB, ME/3047/A/5-6; Moshe Dayan on the Cease-Fire Lines, 29 April, 1969, BBC/SWB, ME/3062/A/5; Abba Eban on the Cease-Fire; 1 May, 1969, BBC/SWB, ME/3064/A/15; Golda Meir's Speech to the Knesset, 5 May, 1969, BBC/SWB, ME/3067/A/4; Statement of Abba Eban, 14 May 1969, BBC/SWB, ME/3075/A/5.
regrettable that Israel had not yet been able to bring their talks to an end".74

Although there was certainly no consensus within the National Unity government about Israel's terms for peace, there was solid opposition to any diplomatic intervention by the external powers which might seek to deprive Israel of the fruits of victory. There was also complete agreement that, since the Arab states were not willing to make peace, Israel should maintain its positions in occupied territory. The only debate in Israel at this stage was about where Israeli settlements should be established and whether the present administrative status of the territories should be maintained. Since, in the absence of peace, the status quo was thought to be preferable to any change, Israel's leadership had decided to await events and react with determination when developments threatened its interests.

(iii) The Superpower Reaction

The superpowers were less sanguine about the deteriorating situation, but remained calm in their reaction to it. The United States was preoccupied with the Two and Four Power Talks and hardly needed the added impetus of tension along the Canal to spur it into action. However, given Israel's ability to defend itself and its willingness not to escalate the conflict, there appeared to be little danger that the War of Attrition would turn out to be the prelude to all-out war and therefore little reason, at this stage, to expend energy in attempting to end it, if, instead, the patrons could reach agreement about the terms of an overall settlement. In retrospect, that attitude clearly showed an error in judgement, for events on the battlefield did much to determine the attitudes of Egypt and the Soviet Union to the Talks. However, at the time, with Nixon and Kissinger preoccupied with more momentous issues, and with Sisco and Rogers focusing their attention on the Talks in New York and Washington, the American reaction to the initial phase of the War of Attrition was limited to expressions of concern that the breakdown of the cease-fire would hinder efforts towards a settlement, and words of caution to Israel not to undertake large-scale reprisals.75

74. Prime Minister Meir's Speech at Bar Ilan University, 30 May, 1969, BBC/SWB, ME/3087/A/2.
75. See New York Times, 23 April, 7 May, 1969. Eban disclosed in June that Washington periodically advised Israel, where there were fears of a dangerous escalation, to abstain from reprisals against Egyptian provocations. Jerusalem Post, 22 June, 1969.
On the other hand, there were indications that the Soviet Union was not averse to some tension on the cease-fire lines, as long as the fighting remained strictly limited and Egypt still paid lip-service to a political solution. Thus, in February there were reports that Soviet arms shipments to Egypt were increasing, and in May, that these arms supplies included canal-crossing equipment. By mid-1969, the Soviet Union had increased Egypt's stock of medium, heavy, and self-propelled guns, from several hundred to six hundred and fifty, and had also supplied the ordnance which was being expended in such vast quantities.

Other things being equal, it seems likely that the Soviet Union would have preferred that Nasser not launch his War of Attrition since there was the danger that Israel would escalate the hostilities and that this might lead to full-scale war, an Egyptian defeat, and a superpower confrontation. However, other things were not equal, and once Egypt's defensive capabilities had been strengthened and strategic targets protected from Israeli commando raids, the risk of escalation may have appeared limited. After all, Israel's stated purpose was the maintenance of the present cease-fire lines; the occupation of more Egyptian territory could serve little purpose especially since that could only be achieved at high political as well as military cost. Rather, the danger to the Soviet position came from the consequences of trying to restrain Nasser from taking any military action. The mass demonstrations at the beginning and end of 1968 had driven home to the Soviet Union the message that anti-Soviet feeling was growing in Egypt, that Nasser was under considerable pressure to take action to reassert Egypt's pride and its leadership of the Arab world, and that therefore Nasser's position and its own influence in the region were by no means secure.

76. *Newsweek*, 16 February 1969; *International Herald Tribune*, 16 and 20 February, 1969; *Arab Report and Record*, No. 9, 1-15, May, 1969. Cf. O'Ballance who claims that while the Soviet Union was prepared to supply endless ordnance, it was tardy in sending items such as amphibious vehicles, and four-wheel drive trucks. (p. 63). It is of course possible that, while tardy, the Soviet Union did in fact start supplying this equipment in May 1969. Heikal states that Shelepin provided Nasser with a list of the arms that would be supplied on his visit to Cairo in January, 1969. Nasser is reported to have told Shelepin: "...even if the Russians are slow, in the end they give us what we want". (*The Road to Ramadan*, p. 67). It seems likely that the arms deliveries were part of those agreed to when Nasser visited the Soviet Union in July 1968.

The threat that Nasser's regime might collapse while the Soviet Union sought a diplomatic solution may have led Moscow to conclude that Soviet as well as Egyptian interests could be served if the fighting could be restricted to the Canal zone. First, and most importantly, Nasser would bolster his position domestically and in the Arab world by demonstrating that he was taking action to liberate the land; the Soviet Union would be identified with this new sense of purpose since its advisors were at the front and its weapons were being used. Second, controlled tension could prove useful in the context of the Two Power Talks, by demonstrating to the United States that the status quo was unacceptable and that Israel would have to be pressured into withdrawal; the Soviet Union could claim that without progress on the diplomatic front it might be unable to restrain its client from taking more drastic action. Third, the alternative of attempting to restrain the Egyptian forces was bound to be counterproductive; it would damage Soviet-Egyptian relations, increase anti-Soviet feeling in Egypt, and perhaps encourage its client to deal directly with the United States rather than through the agency of Moscow.

Thus, it seems likely that in the initial stages of the War of Attrition the Soviet Union not only acquiesced in Egypt's strategy, but actually supported it for lack of an alternative means of bolstering Nasser's position - a position which had come to be identified with its own. At this stage the question of who was influencing whom was not very important since there was still a modicum of convergence between the interests of patron and client and each was acting within the limits set down by the other's vital interests. However, the real test of the power of the weak came in June, when the interests of client and patron did appear to diverge.

The Talks between Ambassador Dobrynin and Assistant Secretary of State Sisco had been proceeding since March when the United States had responded to the Soviet proposals of December. Amidst reports that there was an approximation in the positions of the superpowers and positive statements from Moscow about the need for compromise and the possibility of direct negotiations, Sisco presented formal proposals to Dobrynin on 26 May, reflecting the discussions which had been held. As Secretary of State Rogers later explained the Soviet-American understanding:
...there is a general agreement that any settlement has to be a comprehensive settlement and that no part of it can go into effect until the agreement is signed, and it is a contractual agreement and the future of Israel is guaranteed. And at that point, after the comprehensive agreement is signed, then it is implemented.\(^78\)

That the agreement had to be a package - that Israeli withdrawal would be part of the settlement, but would not take place before it - seems to have been accepted by the patrons and clients alike.\(^79\) The concept of a "contractual agreement" was designed to overcome the Egyptian commitment not to sign a 'peace treaty' with Israel; it would bind each party in specific obligations to the other. It was understood, though perhaps not stated in these formal proposals, that Israeli withdrawal in Sinai would be to the pre-1967 border, and that the Gaza Strip would remain under UN control until some agreement was reached between Israel and Jordan. However, the general principle concerning Israeli withdrawal was that it should be to frontiers providing reasonable security for all states, rather than an automatic return to the pre-1967 borders on all fronts. Beyond that, the United States proposed a number of other general principles while eschewing any attempt to set out, in precise words, the terms of the contractual agreement: freedom of navigation; demilitarised zones in areas evacuated by Israeli forces; termination of the state of belligerency; Jerusalem and the refugees to be dealt with later, perhaps in direct negotiations, and a Palestinian settlement based on the principle of compensation for most in lieu of repatriation; peacekeeping forces to be placed between the states, under the control of the Security Council; and international guarantees of the settlement.\(^80\)


\(^79\). The Egyptian Ambassador to the United Nations, Mohammed Hassan el-Zayyat was reported to have announced Egyptian acceptance of the 'package' arrangement in April. See Arab Report and Record, No. 7, 1-15, April, 1969.

\(^80\). New York Times, 8 June, 1969; Le Monde, 15 and 16 June, 1969, cited in Arab Report and Record, No. 11, 1-15 June, 1969. Heikal revealed what he claimed to be the American proposals on 27 June. He said that they covered thirteen points: termination of the state of war between Israel and Egypt and replacement by state of peace; inadmissibility of the use and threat of force; the end of any form of aid for the fedayeen; the end of the Arab boycott against Israel; the end of reciprocal campaigns of incitement in the Middle East; the border between Israel and Egypt will be that between Egypt and Mandatory Palestine but territories evacuated by Israel will be demilitarised; absolute freedom of navigation; the Gaza Strip would be
These proposals were the first real test of Soviet interest in a peaceful settlement, since they reflected the consensus reached by Sisco and Dobrynin, but they did not provide either Israel or Egypt with all its demands. The United States let it be known that if the Soviet Union accepted these written principles it would be interpreted as a positive sign of Soviet intentions. The assumption seemed to be that if the superpowers now reached agreement on these principles, it would be possible for them jointly to deliver their clients. However, on 18 June, three weeks after Sisco had presented Dobrynin with the American proposals, the Soviet Union responded: its note called for Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied territories; no direct negotiations on any subject; no 'package' deal, but rather Israeli withdrawals before the declaration of an end to the state of belligerency; demilitarised zones on both sides of the frontiers rather than just in the areas evacuated by Israel; and a restoration of the political 'rights' of the Palestinians, instead of repatriation or compensation on an individual basis.

As well they might, American officials expressed disappointment at the Soviet reply, and in a press conference on 19 June President Nixon had to admit "that I see very little defusing" of tensions in the Middle East. Whereas previously the United States had spoken of getting the Soviet Union to agree to the terms of a settlement, the President now spoke only in terms of trying to get the Soviet Union to use its influence "to defuse the crisis". In those three weeks, the weary Egyptian camel had succeeded in leading the Soviet bear.

The first signs that the policies of patron and client had begun to diverge appeared at the beginning of May when Soviet officials at the

80. (continued) placed under Jarring's supervision and discussed with Israel, Egypt and Jordan; action on refugees would be taken, but would not delay the attainment of a final settlement; at some stage in the negotiations there would be direct contacts; a contractual peace would be signed; the Security Council to guarantee the settlement and station forces in the region to be withdrawn only by Security Council decision; no proposal on Jerusalem (Heikal inferred that the United States supported the idea of a united Jerusalem under Israeli control). Al Ahram, 27 June, 1969. Cf. John C. Campbell, "American Efforts for Peace", in Malcolm H. Kerr, (ed.), The Elusive Peace in the Middle East, Albany, New York, 1975, pp. 291-2.

United Nations were heard to complain that Egypt had rejected Soviet advice to reduce the artillery bombardments in order to make a good impression on the Four Power Talks. On 8 May, Soviet Ambassador Malik handed a note to U Thant which emphasised the Soviet desire for a political settlement. The note was described as unusual because it implied an admonition of Egypt and was notable for its lack of invective against Israel. At the same time Soviet commentators began to express distinctly moderate positions on the issues of direct negotiations, freedom of navigation, and the settlement of the Palestinian refugee problem. More disturbing still for Egypt were the reports in the international press that the Soviet Union was suggesting to the United States that 'minor adjustments' in Israel's borders might be acceptable if Israel committed itself to the principle of withdrawal.

The spectre of the Soviet Union compromising Egypt's demands in the Two Power Talks for the purpose of reaching a superpower agreement at the expense of Egypt raised the alarm in Cairo. Foreign Minister Riad called in Ambassador Vinogradov for talks on 10 May and again on 19 May; Kosygin met with Egyptian Ambassador Ghaleb on 13 May; and finally Nasser talked with Ambassador Vinogradov on 17 May. These talks were described as "very important" by the Egyptian press, but as "stormy" by the international press. Vinogradov is reported to have told Nasser that the United States and the Soviet Union intended to seek a Middle East settlement, that there were "reckless risks" of escalation in continuing the Canal war, and that Egyptian forces were in no condition to match the Israelis. Nasser is reported to have been "incensed" by the idea that the Soviet Union had compromised Egyptian demands in agreeing to minor territorial adjustments: if the Russians were discussing Egyptian interests with the

86. On 6 May Pravda's Beliaev endorsed the principle of direct talks. Later in the month he published an article in International Affairs which called for compromise, a peaceful settlement, Israeli use of the Suez Canal, the possible development of wasteland outside Israel for the Palestinians, and pointedly suggested that what was needed was "common sense and the urge to jettison obsolete dogmas and confrontation...". See I. Beliaev, "Ways of Ending the Middle East Crisis", International Affairs, (Moscow), No. 10, October, 1968; New York Times, 22 May, 1969; cf. Alvin Rubinstein, Red Star on the Nile, p. 83.
Americans, it would be better for Egypt to discuss these matters with Washington directly.89

The strain in relations was exacerbated by the tabling of the American proposals on 26 May. Instead of coming to realise the futility of negotiating a political solution from a position of Egyptian weakness, it appeared that the Soviet Union was about to accept a formula which would fall short of Egypt's political demands. The crucial test of Egypt's ability to resist this superpower design came on 10 June when Foreign Minister Gromyko arrived in Cairo to persuade Nasser to accept the package deal, amidst warnings in Pravda of the need for Egypt to adopt a "sober and realistic approach to the conflict's solution by political methods".90 In meetings with Nasser, Foreign Minister Riad and Mahmoud Fawzi (Nasser's assistant for Foreign Affairs), Gromyko outlined the settlement proposals and tried to convince Nasser that by agreeing to sign the accord he would recover lost territories and eliminate the effects of the 1967 defeat. Nasser apparently flatly rejected the proposals; he would accept nothing short of total Israeli withdrawal and Egyptian reoccupation of Sinai and Sharm el-Sheikh; there would be no demilitarisation of Sinai and no international force there; negotiations on the issues of non-belligerency, freedom of navigation and recognition of Israel could only follow complete Israeli withdrawal.91

In the words of Heikal: "since it is always the strong who take and the weak who give, what [was] there to prevent the conclusion of a transaction at the expense of...the Arabs in their struggle with Israel...particularly since the Arabs depend upon the Soviet Union to supply them with the arms they require...?"92 What leverage indeed did Egypt possess to prevent the Soviet Union and the United States from imposing a settlement inimical to Egyptian interests? The most potent lever in Nasser's possession was the threat of collapse as a result of the domestic and

inter-Arab reaction to Egyptian acquiescence in the superpower design. The Soviet Union was already aware of the impatience of the army officers and their resentment at not receiving the arms which they believed necessary for offensive action; Moscow was also aware that the Egyptian people were calling out for action not capitulation. Thus Nasser could claim that he was bound by army and public opinion to reject the compromise. The Soviet Union then had to consider whether, by pressuring Nasser to accept the proposals, it would precipitate the collapse of his regime and jeopardise its own position of influence in Egypt.

The second form of leverage which Nasser possessed was the threat of instability. Given that there was an intense exchange of fighting along the Suez Canal, and that the Soviet Union had become committed to supporting the War of Attrition, Nasser had the ability to escalate the fighting and bring the area back to the brink of full-scale war. As Heikal asserted in his weekly column just before Gromyko's visit: "next winter will be a hot winter of explosions, flames and fire". Thus the Soviet Union would have to choose between promoting an unacceptable compromise which might encourage Nasser to step up the Canal war, and abandoning the American proposals, which might prevent a full-scale war even if it did not put an end to the War of Attrition. In this regard, it was no mere coincidence that the apparent superpower rapprochement had been accompanied by the heaviest fighting which had yet been experienced along the Canal. Nasser was demonstrating Egypt's ability to disrupt the carefully negotiated plans of the superpowers.

Nasser's third source of leverage was his ability to play on the competitive interests of the Soviet Union. As Gromyko's visit ended, Heikal began publishing a series of editorials which revealed the argument which had presumably been put to the Soviet Union: the American proposals were part of a campaign to show that "the Soviet Union was about to sell out the Arab position in a political deal with the USA"; the aim was to

93. According to Lacouture, General Fawzi told Nasser: "If you sign, I can no longer answer for the army". This attitude was presumably conveyed to Gromyko. See Lacouture, Nasser, p. 331.


95. In May there had been 63 separate artillery exchanges reported; in June there were 311 of these incidents - the highest monthly rate for the whole period of the War of Attrition. U Thant reported to the Security Council that "open warfare" had been resumed with artillery exchanges on 86 consecutive days, and warned that it might be necessary to withdraw the UN observers for their own safety. Arab Report and Record, No. 13, 1-15 July, 1969.
drive a wedge between Egypt and the Soviet Union, between Egypt and the Arab masses and their governments; the intent of the American settlement proposals was in fact to drive the Soviet Union out of the Middle East. That Moscow took this argument seriously is demonstrated by a commentary in *Pravda* on 13 June:

...the calculations of the enemies of Soviet-Arab friendship, of the opponents of peace in the Middle East, and of all who believed that they were able to impose on the Arab people a peace settlement convenient for the Israeli aggressor and his imperialist protectors have failed.97

Finally, Nasser was also able to suggest to the Soviet Union that in the diplomatic process, its services were dispensable. In discussions with Ambassador Vinogradov, Nasser had apparently hinted that if Egyptian demands were going to be compromised it would be better for Cairo to deal directly with Washington. This same threat may have been aimed at Gromyko as well since, on the last day of his discussions in Cairo, Heikal published an article which emphasised Egypt's belief that the address for a political settlement was Washington, not Moscow:

The USA wants to embarrass the USSR before the Arabs. Since the USA alone is in a position to apply pressure on Israel why should it bring in the USSR to share in the privilege of solving the crisis or even participating in the decisive phase of settling the crisis...The USA alone can achieve a settlement: so there is no settlement, and all those concerned are kept waiting.98

This argument may have touched the most sensitive of all Soviet concerns. The Two Power Talks had accorded the Soviet Union the recognition it had long sought as America's equal in the Middle East; Cairo was now suggesting that it had no role to play in the diplomatic process because only the United States could force Israel to withdraw from occupied Arab lands.99

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99. See Lawrence Whetten, *The Canal War*, *passim*, for the argument that the Soviet Union sought equal status with the United States in the Middle East.
Under these pressures, Moscow appears to have accepted, with reservation, and for the time being, Nasser's strategy for settling the conflict: since only the United States could pressure Israel into withdrawal, the role that the Soviet Union could and should play was to pressure the United States into doing so; this pressure could only be effective if Moscow built Egypt's military strength, since "diplomatic policy in any struggle involving armed force cannot but reflect the military position on the fighting front"; any compromise on Egyptian demands would only be playing into American hands, by making it unnecessary for Washington to pressure Israel and possible for it to cause a rift between Cairo and Moscow; thus, beyond military support, the Soviet Union could best promote Egyptian interests, and therefore its own, by remaining steadfast in its support for Egyptian demands in negotiations with the United States.

Thus the Soviet Union responded to the American proposals on 19 June with the hard-line settlement formula which had in effect been dictated in Cairo, not so much by the Egyptians as by a consideration of Soviet competitive interests in the Middle East. Meanwhile, official Soviet statements and commentaries reflected the new no-concessions approach to the negotiations and a more positive approach to the Egyptian conduct of the War of Attrition, while still insisting that the conflict be solved by 'peaceful' means. Perhaps reflecting Soviet sensitivity over the Egyptian suggestion that only the United States could achieve a settlement, Moscow appears to have accepted, with reservation, and for the time being, Nasser's strategy for settling the conflict: since only the United States could pressure Israel into withdrawal, the role that the Soviet Union could and should play was to pressure the United States into doing so; this pressure could only be effective if Moscow built Egypt's military strength, since "diplomatic policy in any struggle involving armed force cannot but reflect the military position on the fighting front"; any compromise on Egyptian demands would only be playing into American hands, by making it unnecessary for Washington to pressure Israel and possible for it to cause a rift between Cairo and Moscow; thus, beyond military support, the Soviet Union could best promote Egyptian interests, and therefore its own, by remaining steadfast in its support for Egyptian demands in negotiations with the United States.

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100. Heikal, 13 June, 1969, BBC/SWB, ME/3100/A/1.

101. It is interesting to note that in articulating this policy, Heikal was careful to draw a distinction between possessing the military means to force Israel to withdraw, and actually employing those means on the battlefield: "Israel cannot possibly be persuaded to withdraw to the pre-5th June lines unless the Arabs actually prove to it that they are capable of imposing such a withdrawal, or it becomes certain...that the Arabs are capable of doing so even if they do not actually attempt it". And: "...the result will be the same whether the change is brought about by Arab force in an actual battle, or Israel is convinced that there would be this change if an actual battle took place." This was a restatement of Nasser's November 1967 formulation, possibly designed to allay Soviet fears of a full-scale war as a result of its military support. See Heikal, 6 June, BBC/SWB, ME/3094/A/1; 13 June, 1969, BBC/SWB, ME/3100/A/1.

102. See "The Soviet Press and the Middle East", New Middle East, September, 1969, p. 10. In July, Beliaev published an article which rejected direct negotiations, called for 'unconditional' Israeli withdrawal, suggested that the necessary starting point for negotiations on borders was the Partition Plan borders of 1947, and insisted on demilitarised zones and UN troops on both sides of the borders. See Asija i Afrika Severodnia, July, 1969.
the Two Power Talks were shifted to Moscow, where Sisco sought to focus
Soviet attention on the issue of arms limitations, now that the political
negotiations had reached an impasse and American Phantoms were due to be
delivered to Israel. However, the Soviet Union was less willing than ever
to consider an arms limitation agreement given the sensitive state of
Egyptian-Soviet relations. Sisco was apparently told that Soviet officials
did not believe a major explosion in the Middle East was imminent and
returned to Washington at the end of July with no sign of substantive
progress in the Two Power Talks. 103

For his part, Nasser declared that Brezhnev had assured him in July
that the Soviet Union would not agree to anything in talks with the United
States "unless the Arab nation agrees to it too", and that Moscow had
responded to all Egypt's military requests. He spoke of a new phase in
the battle with Israel, "the phase of liberation", but warned that it would
be a long battle to exhaust Israel and undermine its will, which might
take three or four years. 104 As Heikal noted: "one round of the political,
or psychological, war over the Middle East crisis ended and a new story
began...the only story with real influence". 105

104. See President Nasser's Speech to the A.S.U., 23 July, 1969, IDOP, 1969,
pp. 738-751.
PART THREE
CHAPTER TWO

THE BATTLE FOR THE CEASE-FIRE - 1970

So far Israel had been fortunate enough to benefit from Egypt's ability to prevent a superpower rapprochement on the terms of a settlement. But Israel's decision-makers were now in agreement with Heikal - the time had come for an Israeli response on the battlefield. While the prospects of a superpower agreement appeared remote, for the moment, there remained the possibility that Washington and Moscow would try again and that American support for Israel's demands might deteriorate further as Washington tried to accommodate Moscow's problems with a recalcitrant Egypt. The approximation of Soviet and American positions in May had caused considerable alarm in Israel too, and it was now necessary to shore up American support by impressing on Washington that the Talks held no prospect, that "when our problems are being dealt with it is we and our Arab neighbours that have to meet and decide...not two and not four and not fourteen and not forty will make that decision". Accordingly, Prime Minister Meir decided to request a meeting with President Nixon to put Israel's arguments directly and forcefully; it was announced that the visit would take place in September. In the meantime, there appeared to be good reason for an escalated response to Nasser's announcement of the new "liberation phase", aimed at forcing Egypt to respect the cease-fire.

1 - ISRAEL'S "SEVENFOLD" RESPONSE

First, the situation on the ground had become intolerable with the increase in Egyptian bombardments in June. Forty-five Israelis had been killed and one hundred and forty-one wounded in five months of fighting, and the lack of an effective Israeli response had apparently encouraged Nasser to believe that he was achieving his aims. Second, while the Talks had been making progress, the United States was able to persuade Israel to exercise restraint along the Canal, but now that it was clear that the negotiations were deadlocked and that Israeli restraint had only encouraged Nasser to increase Egyptian activity, the United States could hardly object

to an Israeli reaction. Third, in terms of the politics of patronage, an escalation now made good sense. Since American efforts to achieve a settlement had so far failed, Israel could argue that it was necessary to force Egypt to accept the cease-fire, that stability was the precondition for meaningful negotiations, that Egypt might become more flexible politically if its military option were foreclosed, and that a short, sharp escalation might better provide long-term stability than the exercise of restraint, which only seemed to encourage the Egyptians to take more daring actions. Moreover, an Israeli escalation might serve indirectly to emphasise to Washington that Israeli requirements would have to be met in future negotiations, that an improvement in Arab-American relations could not be achieved at Israel's expense. An escalation would emphasise Israel's ability to polarise the conflict even further by antagonising the Arab states with its use of American arms, while making Egypt even more dependent upon Soviet arms.

Thus, on 30 June, Golda Meir warned the Arab leaders that whoever disregarded the cease-fire should not be surprised if Israel responded "sevenfold". On 20 July, the Israeli Air Force was ordered to attack the Egyptian positions along the Canal. This 'aerial artillery' aimed to silence first the anti-aircraft defence and then Egyptian artillery positions. The political purpose was clear: "to hit where it hurts most... and to persevere until the cumulative effect will be such as to make the maintenance of the cease-fire more attractive to Nasser". The air raids succeeded in inflicting heavy casualties and sharply reducing the volume of Egyptian artillery fire, but they seemed to make no impression upon

2. U Thant reported in July that Egypt had been responsible for 21 out of 26 incidents along the Canal during June, thereby providing proof that Israel had exercised restraint. Abba Eban told an interviewer in July that Israel now had evidence to present to the United States that the Soviet Union was not prepared to pressure Egypt: "...the only American predicament is whether to confess their disappointment openly or half-heartedly. I know that their disappointment is authentic and profound". Jewish Observer and Middle East Review, (JOMER), 11 July, 1969.


4. Chaim Herzog on the Military Situation, 26 July, 1969, BBC/SWB, ME/3137/A/4. Chief-of-Staff Bar Lev explained that the aims were to bring home to the Egyptians that they were far from ready for war; and to increase Israeli pressure along the cease-fire line, to bring about a decrease in tension. Jerusalem Post, 27 July, 1969.
Nasser's determination to continue the war. Thus in August, while military spokesmen emphasised that Israel's actions had deterred Egypt from launching a Canal-crossing offensive, political spokesmen began to suggest that a new regime in Egypt would be more amenable to negotiations, that if Nasser did not change his conduct he might have to 'disappear', and that Nasser's removal from power would see a new opportunity for peace.

In September, Israel received the first Phantom jets from the United States under the December 1968 agreement. The IAF now devoted more of its air power to the destruction of the Egyptian air-defence system. However, far from persuading Nasser to return to the cease-fire, Israel only succeeded in increasing Egyptian antagonism towards the United States, while strengthening its resolve to fight on. Moreover, the overthrow on 1 September of King Idris of Libya, and his replacement by the Nasserite regime of Colonel Quaddafi, heightened American fears of increasing polarisation and lessening American influence in the Arab world. From Israel's perspective the threat of polarisation should have forced the United States to increase its support for Israel with the aim of lessening anxiety in Jerusalem and promoting moderation in the knowledge of steadfast American support. Viewed from Washington, the threat of polarisation in fact encouraged the United States to placate the Arab world by stressing that its position was not identical with Israel's. Thus it was an inauspicious time for Mrs Meir to argue in Washington that Israel should be supported in its use of American aircraft and ordnance to make Nasser respect the cease-fire, and that there was no need for superpower involvement in the search for a settlement.

In fact, the Israeli Prime Minister had very few levers at her disposal to achieve her three objectives: to impress upon Washington the futility of the Two Power Talks while attempting to gain full support for Israel's negotiating position; to ensure a continuing flow of military

5. Artillery incidents had dropped from 207 in July to 72 in August to 56 in September. Cf. Luttwak and Horowitz, The Israeli Army, pp. 319-320; O'Ballance, The Electronic War, pp. 84-5.


7. In August, Heikal cited the Phantom delivery as final proof that American policy under Nixon had retreated to the anti-Egyptian policy of the Johnson era. See Heikal, "Nixon and the Middle East Crisis", 15 August, 1969, BBC/SWB, ME/3154/A/3-4; "What then with America?", 29 August, 1969, BBC/SWB, ME/3166/A/3-5.
supplies, including an additional 25 Phantoms and 80 Skyhawks; and to seek American economic assistance for Israel's heavy defence burden.\footnote{New York Times, 26 September, 1969.} While Israel's economic and military requests were not rejected, the President made it clear that the United States did not feel that there was any need for an immediate decision given the fact that the first fifty Phantoms were only just being delivered. Because of the Arab reaction to this original supply, at a time when the United States was attempting to rebuild its bridges to the Arab world, the new Israeli requests were an embarrassment for the Administration. In any case, Washington believed that Israel was adequately equipped to defend itself.\footnote{The Times, 25 September, 1969; New York Times, 26 September, 1969; Jerusalem Post, 28 September, 1969.}

On the political level, Mrs Meir made little progress in attempting to convince the United States to abandon the Two Power Talks and support direct negotiations between Israel and the Arabs. Her visit happened to coincide with the convening of the UN General Assembly where Secretary of State Rogers engaged Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko and Egyptian Foreign Minister Riad in negotiations. On 24 September, a few days after speaking with Rogers, and the day before the Israeli Prime Minister's arrival in Washington, Riad had told reporters that Egypt was prepared to enter into 'Rhodes formula' talks if Israel renounced expansion.\footnote{The 1949 Rhodes Talks between Israel and its Arab neighbours had established the armistice agreements and defined Israel's pre-1967 borders (although final borders were to be negotiated). The Talks had been conducted by UN mediator Ralph Bunche who moved between the two parties, situated in separate rooms. Once agreement had been reached the Israeli and Arab negotiators met to sign the accords. The Egyptians regarded these talks as a formula for indirect negotiations, while the Israelis insisted that they implied direct negotiations. Riad's announcement appeared to be a breakthrough following the breakdown of negotiations in June. To the Israelis, however, it appeared to be a clever public relations ploy designed to undercut Golda's arguments that the Two Power Talks held no prospect. See New Middle East, November, 1969, pp. 7 and 50; Interview with Shaul Ben-Haim, Press Counsellor, Embassy of Israel, Washington (1968-1972), Tel Aviv, 23 March, 1975.} This signalled a moderation in the Egyptian attitude which provided the superpowers with a new impetus for their discussions. In this situation, Golda found it impossible in her discussions with Rogers to convince the Secretary that the Two Power Talks held no prospect, for Sisco and Dobrynin were already

...
working together on a draft proposal. Thus, although Nixon and Meir had established a personal rapport, and although the Israeli Prime Minister claimed she had received a commitment from the President that Israel would only be expected to withdraw in the context of a peace settlement, there was a "complete deadlock" on the issue of the Two Power Talks.

Nevertheless, while the Prime Minister clearly failed to persuade the Secretary of State to abandon the Talks or to adhere to Israel's positions, the IAF's action on the battlefield would soon deal the coup de grace to the American plan for a superpower settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

II - THE ROGERS PLAN

Just how far American and Israeli policies had diverged became clear on 28 October, when the United States submitted to the parties its proposals for an Israeli-Egyptian settlement. Once the Egyptians had agreed, however half-heartedly, to 'Rhodes Talks' the Soviet negotiators had argued in the Two Power Talks that, in the light of their experience in June 1969, they could only persuade Egypt to commit itself to peace if the United States committed itself to virtually full Israeli withdrawal in the context of a settlement. Since this had always been the American position, since it had already been submitted to Israel and Egypt by Dean Rusk one year ago, since the delivery of the Phantoms had antagonised and now threatened to coalesce the Arab world, since the fighting had reached a turning point and could well lead to further escalation, since Nixon was keen to make progress in these talks to 'link' them with other superpower negotiations, and since Sisco and Rogers believed that the Soviet Union had been forthcoming and was now prepared to reach agreement

11. The Soviet Union was apparently as surprised as the United States by the Egyptian announcement but decided that this new flexibility provided an opportunity to recommence the Two Power negotiations. While Dobrynin participated in the drafting of the new proposals and the text contained many of the principles which Moscow had previously supported, the Soviet Union refrained from co-sponsoring the brief. See Whetten, The Canal War, pp. 75-6.

12. *New York Times*, 27, 28 September, 1969; *BBC/SWB*, ML/3202/A/1-2, 13 October, 1969. Cf. Golda Meir, *My Life*, pp. 324-330. It is clear from Golda's speeches in Washington and her subsequent autobiography that she was overwhelmed by the reception which she received in Washington. With elections looming in October she clearly chose to obscure the differences in approach and the lack of tangible achievements by emphasising that "we have a great friend in the White House".
on a "draft of principles", the United States decided to reveal its fall-back position on the requirements for a settlement.

Setting down what Washington regarded as the basic principles for a settlement, the American proposal left only the details to be worked out between the parties in 'Rhodes Talks'; withdrawal would be conditional upon "an official state of peace", but the plan stipulated that the "secure and recognised frontier between Egypt and Israel should be the old international frontier between Egypt and the Mandated territory of Palestine. 13

Israel objected strongly to this American declaration of its position on the final border between Egypt and Israel, arguing that it would undermine Israel's negotiating position if the Egyptians thought they could get all of Sinai back and would make them reluctant to concede anything. Moreover, Israel expected to retain control over Sharm el-Sheikh, but the plan spoke only of "effective security measures" to guarantee freedom of navigation; there was no mention of direct negotiations, nor of a final, contractual, peace treaty. However, this divergence in the positions of patron and client had to be treated with care, especially if the reports that Moscow and Washington had reached agreement on most of the points in the proposal were accurate. A precipitate reaction on Israel's part might exacerbate the divergence.

Nevertheless, the battle continued over the Suez Canal, and the United States had only recently supplied Phantoms and ordnance for the IAF to carry out its sorties. Washington could not blame Israel for responding to Nasser's War of Attrition and in fact had not made any overt attempt to restrain Israel in its response; some in Israel suspected that the United States favoured military pressure as a means for softening Egypt's


political stance. In these circumstances, Israel could turn the War of Attrition to its own advantage in the diplomatic negotiations, just as Nasser had tried to do in the first place. By the beginning of November, after intensive bombardment, Israel had succeeded in destroying Egypt's air-defence system; the IAF was now free to roam Egypt's skies. To emphasise the point, on 4 November an Israeli Mirage made a low-level pass over Cairo; on 10 November, an Israeli spokesman announced that all Egyptian missile bases, from Port Said to the Gulf of Suez, had been destroyed in the last six weeks.

Given the situation at the front, Nasser was hardly in a position to tell his people that Egypt had been defeated yet again and that he was now prepared to accept the American peace proposals. Instead, on 6 November, he declared that political efforts had been to no avail, that the United States "stands against us as an enemy", that American soldiers and pilots were fighting for the Israelis, and that the only alternative was to fight "over a sea of blood and an horizon of fire". Foreign Minister Riad, in a speech to the Arab League Defence Council on 8 November, specifically rejected the American proposals (which he had apparently just received) as "even worse than the old ones" because they had raised questions of Egypt's sovereignty; were an attempt to divide Egypt from the Arab world by encouraging a separate settlement, and did not call for an unconditional Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Sharm el-Sheikh.

15. Golda Meir notes, enigmatically: "...it wasn't my skill as a cook that mattered in Washington; it was the bond of friendship between the U.S.A. and Israel and the U.S. attitude to our counter-attrition policy". (emphasis supplied). *My Life*, pp. 329-330. One Israeli Foreign Ministry official, who worked on the American Desk at the time, insisted in an interview that the United States had not opposed Israel's retaliatory methods and had supplied all the ordnance necessary to carry them out.


18. *New York Times*, 9 November, 1969. On 18 November the National Assembly rejected the proposals and charged the U.S. with adopting Israel's positions. Ghorbal gave Rogers the official Egyptian response at the end of November. It stressed that a piecemeal approach to a settlement was not acceptable. (Al Jamhuriya, 27 November, 1969; Al Ahram, 29 November, 1969). This particular objection seems strange since the American plan specifically linked an Israeli-Egyptian agreement to an Israeli-Jordanian agreement and suggested that "neither of the agreements shall come into effect until such time as a comprehensive settlement is agreed on". *IDOP*, 1969, p. 142.
The deterioration in Egypt's military position apparently determined the Soviet reaction to the American proposals as well. Given its commitment to Egypt's defence, the humiliation it would suffer if Egypt were defeated yet again by Israel, the pressure placed on the Soviet–Egyptian arms relationship by the delivery of the Phantoms, and the danger that any attempt to pressure Nasser into accepting the American proposals would only create tension between patron and client to America's benefit, the Soviet Union decided to reject the proposals. The Americans had expected that, having revealed their fall-back position, the Russians would now deliver their end of the bargain by coming out in favour of a final peace agreement. Instead, on 31 October, Leonid Zamyatin, the Foreign Ministry Spokesman, read out a long statement which blamed Israel for torpedoing a political settlement, charged the United States with supporting Israel's aggression with military and economic assistance, as well as American citizens for the Israeli army, suggested that American talk of a political settlement was merely a smokescreen for this aggression, claimed that the Two Power Talks had not led to "any tangible results", because of the obstructive attitude of Israel and the biased attitude of the United States, called for Arab unity to overcome the "web of intrigue", and pledged "comprehensive" aid to the Arab states.19

If Israel thought that the Soviet and Egyptian reactions had put paid to the American proposals, at least for the time being, it was sorely mistaken. Dismayed at the Egyptian and Soviet reactions, and suspecting that the Russians had set them up, Rogers and Sisco denied the Soviet claims and attempted to get Egypt to reconsider. On receiving Zamyatin's statement, Rogers met with Dobrynin to express disappointment and to question whether the Soviet Union really wanted a peaceful settlement.20 In response to Nasser's speech, Rogers issued a statement which denied American involvement in Israeli military actions and declared that "Nasser is mistaken in describing the United States as an enemy".21 On 8 November,

19. For the text of the statement see IDOP, 1969, Document 185, pp. 149-151.
he sent a personal note to Egyptian Foreign Minister Riad urging him to give attention to the new plan, and stressing that it was an opportunity which might be missed.22

However, by the time that Ghorbal transmitted Egypt's rejection to Rogers, it had become clear to Washington that Moscow had reneged on its undertaking and was not prepared to put any pressure on Cairo to accept the draft. On 26 November, Sisco told the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations that "the attitude of the Soviet Union in the bilateral talks and in its public expressions raises doubts regarding its willingness to play an actively constructive role on behalf of peace in the Middle East."23

If Rogers and Sisco had failed to appreciate the connexion between Egypt's losses on the battlefield and the Soviet-Egyptian attitude in the negotiations, they now realised that the effort to reach superpower agreement had all but come to an end and that, in this situation, it was necessary to salvage whatever Arab goodwill remained. This became an urgent matter by early December because of the convening of another Arab summit at Rabat on 20 December, and their fear that this would lead to further moves to reduce American influence in the Arab world. Thus Rogers decided to 'go public' with the settlement proposal and to produce a parallel proposal on a Jordan-Israel settlement, in the hope that this would convince the Arabs of American sincerity, demonstrate that Washington was prepared to distance itself from Israel, undermine Soviet charges of bias and Egyptian charges of trying to divide the Arab world, and emphasise that the United States still sought a political settlement which would return all of Sinai to Egypt.24

23. New York Times, 27 November, 1969. The following day, all the Warsaw Pact countries except Rumania published a statement on the Middle East which again charged Israel with deliberately disrupting the possibility of a political settlement, and the United States with actively encouraging Israel. These countries pledged to provide "all round aid" to the Arabs. Pravda, 27 November, 1969.
24. Concern about the damage to America's position in the Arab world had heightened after the coup in Libya because of the fighting which had broken out in Lebanon between the fedayeen and the Lebanese Army. American oil-men and financiers were also pressing the Administration to distance itself from Israel in the hope that this would forestall the nationalisation of Western-owned oil companies in the Arab world. Heikal recounts a conversation with an American businessman in November (either Robert Anderson or David Rockefeller) in which the American charged Egypt with aiming to mobilise all Arab public opinion against the U.S. by the time of the Rabat summit. See New York Times, 10 December, 1969; Near East Report, Volume XIII, 1969, p. 123; Heikal "The Crisis of U.S. Conscience", 28 November, 1969, BBC/SWB, ME/3243/A/1.
Thus, on 9 December, Secretary Rogers revealed to the Galaxy Conference on Adult Education the American view of "a lasting peace in the Middle East". In the preamble he noted that peace could not be imposed on the parties but that the superpowers could act as a catalyst, stimulating the parties to negotiate and defining the framework for an agreement. He also observed that while there had been some measure of understanding with the Soviet Union, "very substantial differences remain"; he regretted that the Soviets had delayed responding to the proposals. Then he declared that American policy "is and will continue to be a balanced one", aimed at encouraging the Arabs to accept a permanent peace based on a binding agreement and urging the Israelis to withdraw from occupied territory "when their territorial integrity is assured". Repeating the American attitude towards peace, security, territory, the refugees and Jerusalem, Rogers then addressed himself to the specific proposals for an Israeli-Egypt settlement which had constituted the 28 October plan. He rebutted the charge that the United States was seeking to divide the Arab states, emphasising that "implementation of the overall settlement would begin only after complete agreement had been reached on related aspects". He spelt out the three elements of the proposals (a binding peace, 'Rhodes Talks' to work out the detailed security provisions, and withdrawal of Israeli forces) and then emphasised that in exchange for a binding and specific Egyptian commitment to peace, Israel would be required to withdraw "to the international border between Israel [or Mandated Palestine] and Egypt". Rogers then concluded by restating the purpose of his speech:

We believe this approach is balanced and fair. We remain interested in good relations with all states in the area. Whenever and wherever Arab states which have broken off relations with the United States are prepared to restore them, we shall respond in the same spirit.26 (emphasis supplied).

The speech did nothing to alter the position on the ground and in the air over the Canal zone and so made no impression on either Egypt or its Soviet patron. An Egyptian spokesman rejected American claims to a

25. There should be a binding peace agreement which defined in specific terms navigation rights and respect for sovereignty; security arrangements should provide for demilitarised zones but this should be left to negotiations between the parties; the pre-war boundaries were armistice lines not final political borders, but any changes should not reflect the weight of conquest and should be confined to "insubstantial alterations"; a just settlement for the refugees would have to take account of their aspirations as well as the legitimate concerns of the governments in the area; Jerusalem should be a unified city with open access to all peoples and with roles for both Jordan and Israel in administrative arrangements. See "A Lasting Peace in the Middle East: An American View. Address by Secretary Rogers", Department of State Bulletin, 5 January, 1970, pp. 9-10.
26. Ibid., p. 11.
"balanced" position because of the continuous supply of Phantoms to Israel; the Soviet Union rejected the plan, point-by-point, and urged the Arabs to reject it also. Thus, the Rogers Plan had no possibility of becoming a workable formula for an immediate settlement of the conflict. Nevertheless, the American assertion of a 'balanced' position at a time when the Soviet Union was giving full support to its Egyptian protégé was a cause for concern in Jerusalem. Moreover, the Israeli government well understood that the Rogers Plan was a statement of principles rather than an action plan for a settlement. This alarmed Jerusalem for, while it was possible to disrupt an American plan for a settlement by refusing to cooperate, it was far more difficult to change the mind of the American Administration on the principles it believed were essential to a settlement of the conflict. The alarm grew even greater when, after Eban had met with Rogers and explained Israeli objections, the Administration proposed to the Four Powers a plan for a Jordan-Israel settlement about which Eban had not been informed.


28. The formal Soviet response was given to Rogers on 23 December. It termed the American proposal as one-sided and pro-Israel; rejected the idea (which it had previously accepted) of a superpower agreement on a directive for the revival of the Jarring mission; proposed a two-month timetable for Israeli withdrawal; end of belligerency to come into effect after complete Israeli withdrawal; demanded Egyptian sovereignty over Sharm el-Sheikh and control over Gaza; demilitarised zones on both sides of the border; wanted compliance with past UN resolutions on refugees rather than a plan for compensation; proposed that navigation in the Suez Canal be controlled by Egypt, which could close it to Israeli shipping; qualified the freedom of Israeli shipping in the Straits of Tiran; and rejected the "Rhodes Talks" formula. Clearly, the Soviet Union had gone back on points which had already been agreed upon in the Two Power Talks and some of which had originally been proposed by Moscow. New York Times, 13 January, 1970; cf. Whetten, The Canal War, pp. 79-80.

29. On 18 December, two days after Eban's meeting with Rogers and two days before the Arab Summit, the United States presented its proposals for an Israel-Jordan settlement to the Four Power Talks which had been reconvened for the purpose. There were twelve points: the parties would determine procedures and a timetable for Israeli withdrawal "from substantially all of the West Bank; a state of peace to be established; the permanent frontier would approximate" the pre-1967 armistice lines; a unified Jerusalem administered jointly by the two states; arrangements for the Gaza Strip to be left to the parties; demilitarised zones on the West Bank; freedom of navigation for Israeli shipping in the Gulf of Aqaba; refugees to be given a choice between repatriation or compensation; mutual recognition of sovereignty territorial integrity and political independence of each state; accord recorded in a signed document and deposited at the UN; the Security Council would endorse the accord, to go into effect simultaneously with the Israel-Egypt accord. (New York Times, 22 December, 1969). One can only speculate
However, since the Plan had been rejected by Israel's adversaries, and the divergence between the American and Israeli positions was now out in the open, Israel did not feel inhibited about responding. Eban and Rabin were called home for consultations and, after a short deliberation, the Israeli Cabinet issued a statement which was scathing in its criticism of the Rogers Plan and the Yost Document (for a Jordanian settlement): 30

The Cabinet rejects these American proposals, in that they prejudice the chances of establishing peace; disregard the essential need to determine secure and agreed borders through the signing of peace treaties by direct negotiations; affect Israel's sovereign rights and security in the drafting of the resolution concerning refugees and the status of Jerusalem; and contain no actual obligations on the Arab states to put a stop to the hostile activities of the sabotage and terror organisations...The proposals submitted by the U.S. cannot but be construed by the aggressive Arab rulers as an attempt to appease them at Israel's expense. 31

The Secretary of State responded immediately, demonstrating his determination to adhere to the principles he had espoused and his desire to curry favour with the Arab states. Asked about the Israeli charge of appeasement, he responded:

I think it is an unfortunate word. It suggests that the Arabs are enemies of the United States, and somehow we are appeasing them. Of course that isn't true. We have had friendly relations with the Arab states for a number of years, for many years...our position is that we hope the parties can begin negotiating...

29. (continued) on Rogers' motives for not informing Eban but it seems highly unlikely that such an important issue could simply have been overlooked. Rogers probably wanted to avoid an Israeli denunciation of the proposals before the Arab summit at which they were aimed. Whatever the reason, Rogers seriously embarrassed Eban in the eyes of his fellow ministers - an inept move given Eban's dovishness. But Rogers seems to have been only concerned with persuading the Arabs of American 'evenhandedness' and uninterested in the Israeli or American domestic reactions to his diplomatic initiatives.

30. This was in fact the second Israeli statement in response to the Rogers Plan. The first statement was made on 11 December. It stressed that a durable settlement would require a peace treaty reached through direct negotiations without preconditions or external pressures. The prospects of peace would be seriously damaged if external powers continued to raise territorial proposals which only encouraged Arab extremism. A durable peace would only be achieved when the Arab states were prepared to enter into negotiations with Israel for the signing of a peace treaty. See Jerusalem Post, 12 December, 1969.

In answer to the Israeli call for direct negotiations without external interference, Rogers stated clearly:

Well, we just don't agree with that. We think we have a role, as a member of the Security Council, to play in these discussions...we have a responsibility to do all we can to bring the parties together. Now that doesn't suggest that we want to impose a settlement...I can understand why Israel is concerned and why they don't necessarily agree with everything we do. But we have to conduct our own foreign policy in a way that we think is best for our national interests.  

Mrs Meir refused to accept the validity of Rogers' claims. In a resolute speech to the Knesset, she again explained Israel's objections to proposals which required the parties to negotiate on "marginal matters only"; did not require them to enter into a contractual peace agreement; did not impose on the Arabs the "positive duty" to put an end to terrorist actions; failed to insist on explicit Arab recognition of Israel's sovereignty; and endangered Israel's security:

Both [proposals], if enforced, would gravely endanger Israel's very existence. They amount to a return to the geography of 1967 and the demography of 1947...We have the right to demand that U.S. policy not be conducted at the expense of our vital interests...alienation of the U.S. from Israeli interests is tantamount to an alienation from its own principles...we unequivocally reject the direction taken by the talks of the powers and the proposals which have been made. The Government of Israel, expressing the will of the people, cannot even contemplate such proposals.

Thus, even though the Soviet Union and Egypt had rejected the American proposals and Washington was now expressing its "deep disappointment" at what was regarded as "Soviet bad faith", the year had ended in a severe crisis for relations between Israel and its American patron.


33. See "Israel Rejects Rogers' Initiative", New Middle East, February, 1970, p. 49. The Knesset endorsed Mrs Meir's rejection of the Rogers proposals by a vote of 57 to 3, with 2 abstentions. See Brecher, Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy, pp. 485-6.

34. In January, State Department spokesman McCloskey explained that the Soviet response to the Rogers Plan had been "negative and retrograde and has retarded the chance of a renewal of the Jarring mission. It constitutes a hardening of the Soviet position, notably in respect of the Rhodes formula as a form of negotiation. In other matters it marks a backward step". International Herald Tribune, 14 January, 1970.
With or without Soviet cooperation, Rogers seemed determined to pursue his attempt to settle the conflict and, if he managed to gain Egyptian or Jordanian acquiescence, Israel might be forced to accept arrangements which it clearly regarded as incompatible with its vital interests. By the end of 1969, therefore, Israel had resolved not merely to resist the Rogers Plan, but also to persuade the United States, at best to drop the plan, or at least to put it back in the State Department drawer until the Arab states were more prepared to accept Israel's demands for peace, recognition, and secure borders.

On the other side, Egypt had ended the year in a much weakened military situation but had achieved much of what it had set out to do. The Soviet Union had remained committed to Egypt's political demands and had come to appreciate the need and urgency for strengthening Egypt's military capabilities; the United States had moved towards the Egyptian position on negotiations, peace, and Israeli withdrawal, precipitating a crisis with its Israeli client. Thus despite the fact that Israel was winning the War of Attrition, it appeared to be losing the battle for patronage.

III - COMBATING ROGERS

The Israeli government decided to deal with the Rogers Plan on the two levels where it possessed the greatest leverage: in the war against Egypt, and on the level of American domestic politics. Now that the Egyptian air-defence system had been destroyed, Egyptian air-space lay open to the IAF. The General Staff, naturally wishing to exploit the new advantage which it had won and the new Phantoms in its possession, recommended to the Cabinet that Israel embark on a series of deep penetration air raids on strategic targets to bring the war home to the Egyptian people, make the costs unbearable, forestall any Canal-crossing offensive, and force adherence to the cease-fire. The political calculus had to take other factors into account: if Israel wanted the United States to shelve the Rogers Plan, it would have to offer a viable alternative which would better end the instability of continual warfare. In other words, if Israel wanted to avoid an imposed American settlement, it would have to impose its own settlement, at least to the fighting; it would have to prove that the "powder-keg" theory was false and therefore that all this American activity was unnecessary. Once this were achieved - once Nasser had been forced to accept the cease-fire - negotiations on Israel's terms
might be possible; confronted with the reality of its military inferiority, Egypt would have no alternative but to sue for peace.

Moreover, just as a short, sharp escalation had made sense after the June impasse in the Two Power Talks, so too did the time seem opportune now that the Two Power Talks had been abandoned. The first escalation, it was believed in Israel, had not achieved its purposes because Nasser had been able to shield the Egyptian people from the true situation at the front. If the war were now brought home to the Egyptian people, if they were told through Israeli bombs, "listen, people of Egypt, your leaders are not working for your good, what they say about your chances to destroy Israel are not true", then it was hoped that the chances would be improved for a negotiated settlement based on Egyptian acceptance of Israel's existence.\(^{35}\)

Although this strategy seemed to ignore all historical evidence on the morale boosting effects of bombing strategic targets, the Cabinet clearly believed that the deep penetration raids would achieve their purpose, that the only reason for Nasser's ability to continue fighting was the ignorance of the Egyptian people about the true conditions at the front. Some of Israel's leaders even hoped, at first, to bring about Nasser's downfall.\(^ {36}\) The Israelis were about to commit the same error as Nasser had made in 1967; they had underestimated Egypt's will to resist.

A further consideration was the possibility of an adverse reaction from its American patron and its Soviet adversary. Here again the Israeli government miscalculated their likely responses. Israel had already experienced the American reaction to its July escalation in the form of the Rogers Plan; if anything, the use of the IAF as 'aerial artillery' had spurred the United States into further efforts at superpower agreement on the terms of a settlement. However, the Israeli Cabinet appears to have believed that Washington, or at least influential elements within the Administration, were keen to see the American strategy of bombing Vietnam to the negotiating table applied by proxy to Egypt.

35. This message was outlined by Dayan, who also listed three objectives for the deep penetration strategy: to ease the position of Israeli troops on the front line; to show the UAR that it was no position to resume all-out war; and to bring the truth about the Egyptian regime to its people. See Jerusalem Post, 18 January, 1970.

36. In January, Mrs Meir stated that she would not waste many tears if Nasser were knocked out of power. Jerusalem Post, 14 January, 1970. Eban suggested that if a new regime were established in Egypt there would at least be a 50% chance to achieve peace, compared to zero under Nasser. FBIS, 20 January, 1970. Galili argued that no successor to Nasser could be worse than he was. Davar, 23 January, 1970.
Ambassador Rabin firmly advocated the deep penetration strategy on the basis of his understanding that the Americans were in favour of it and that it was consistent with their decision to supply the Phantoms. One senior State Department official was reported to have pointed out that, while the United States objected to Israeli activities against Jordan and Lebanon, it showed a purely technical interest in attacks on Egypt. Israel may not have received formal American approval but Rabin claimed that there was certainly tacit approval for the strategy.37

This belief in American support for the strategy lessened the fear of a forthright Soviet response. The Soviet intervention which followed the Israeli deep penetration raids was clearly not foreseen by Israel's decision-makers, although some had argued that increased Soviet involvement was a possible result.38 In this regard, Israeli claims that the Soviet Union had been planning to intervene since October 1969 and that therefore the deep penetration raids were not responsible for precipitating this action, were beside the point. If Israel had known of Soviet preparations, it would have made no sense to provide Moscow with such provocation; it could hardly have been in Israel's interests to have the Soviet Union

37. Ezer Weizmann notes that Rabin's calls for continuous bombing raids inside Egypt surprised even him: "...hit 'em hard!" he wrote from Washington. Quite correctly, he held to the view that not only didn't the Americans oppose the raids, but possibly even approved of them". Weizmann, *On Eagles' Wings*, p. 283; Ze'ev Schiff, *A History of the Israeli Army*, p. 249; Dan Margalit, "The Politics of the Phantoms", *Ha'aretz*, 8 September, 1972, reprinted in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Volume II, No. 2, Winter, 1973, pp. 151-3. Cf. Rubinstein who states that it was Sisco who argued that the Egyptians might become more amenable "if they took a further clobbering from the Israelis", *Red Star on the Nile*, pp. 99-100. Subsequently the Americans denied ever encouraging the bombing in depth (see Margalit, pp. 152-3).

involved in an operational capacity in Egypt. Thus, Israel's decision-makers must have dismissed the threat of Soviet intervention on the basis of one or more of the following calculations: that the likelihood of Soviet intervention was small because Moscow would not be prepared to risk a superpower confrontation; that the United States would deter Soviet intervention as it had done in 1967; and that the benefits of Egyptian acceptance of the cease-fire, in terms of maintaining the status quo and Israel's occupation of Sinai, outweighed the risk of a Soviet response.

In the face of common, though not concerted, pressure from both the superpowers and the Arab states to withdraw without a final peace settlement which would provide secure and defensible borders, Israel's leadership was clearly preoccupied with maintaining its hold on the occupied territories. The alternative of indirect negotiations was unpalatable, not only because it did not require Arab recognition of Israel, but also because, now that the United States had revealed its fall-back position, the value of Israel's bargaining cards had been reduced - Egypt would expect American pressure for full Israeli withdrawal, and Israel would not be able to bargain territories for peace. So, were Israel to maintain its position in the territories as well as its position on the terms of a negotiated settlement, it would have to force Egypt to accept the cease-fire and would have to persuade the United States to abandon the Rogers Plan. Because their minds were focused on these two objectives, Israel's decision-makers miscalculated the reactions of Egypt and the superpowers.

Israel's deep penetration strategy was clearly designed to achieve the first objective of a stable cease-fire, and this would in turn hopefully

39. The claim that deep penetration raids were not responsible for the Soviet intervention is put by Yigal Allon: "Some maintain that [the Soviet decision] was taken when it became clear to them that their anti-aircraft defences had failed...This is backed up by information gathered by Israel's intelligence services...Others claim that the escalation of Soviet involvement came as a direct result of the Israeli air raids deep into Egyptian territory...For my part, I think we can rely on Israel's intelligence services". However, the fact is that the Soviet intervention came after the Israeli raids, and thus if they had not caused the intervention they certainly had provided a cover for it. If Allon had been able to rely on Israel's intelligence services in January 1970 was it possible that he would still have advocated deep penetration? See Allon, "The Soviet Involvement in the Arab-Israeli Conflict", in Shamir and Confino (eds.), The U.S.S.R. and the Middle East, p. 152; cf. Uri Ra'anani, "The USSR and the Middle East: Some Reflections on the Soviet Decision Making Process", Orbis, Volume 17, No. 3, Fall, 1973, pp. 946-977.

reduce the incentive for the United States to promote the Rogers Plan. However, Israel had another form of leverage which could be used to discourage the implementation of publicly stated American policy. Since the Plan had already been rejected by Egypt and the Soviet Union, the reluctance of American domestic forces to express their opposition to the policy had been reduced. Their task was not to prevent the implementation of the Plan, since there were no prospects, at that stage, for its acceptance by any of the other parties, but rather to demonstrate the domestic opposition which would have to be overcome if the Administration attempted to promote the Plan on a more auspicious occasion, thereby helping to deter such action in the future.

Thus, in January 1970, the IAF raided supply centres and army camps on the outskirts of Cairo, close to Egypt's main industrial area of Helwan and its scientific research establishment at Inshas. Twelve such raids were carried out with impunity, inflicting heavy damage and in one case - on 12 February at Abu Zaambal - killing 68 and injuring 98 Egyptian workers. At the same time, 500 Jewish organisations converged on Washington for a National Emergency Conference on Peace in the Middle East. Amid statements of support for direct negotiations and arms sales to Israel from such public figures as Governor Rockefeller, Cardinal Cushing, George Meany (President of the AFL-CIO), and a plethora of influential Senators, both Houses of Congress issued declarations sponsored by 239 Congressmen and 60 Senators which stated:

The parties to the conflict must be the parties to the peace achieved by direct and unhampered negotiations. We emphasise these significant points of policy to reaffirm our support for the democratic state of Israel... It is not in the interest of the United States or in the service of world peace to create the impression that Israel will be left defenceless in face of the continuing flow of sophisticated offensive armaments to the Arab nations...  

41. This raid was apparently a mistake; the target should have been the air force supply base at El Khanka, two miles away. For a summary of these raids, see O'Ballance, *The Electronic War in the Middle East*, pp. 102-110.

A letter writing campaign was directed at the State Department, calling on it to reconsider its proposals, and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organisations met with Rogers and Sisco to express its "profound concern" at a policy which it believed was not in the long term interests of the United States, and which contributed neither to Israel's security nor to the cause of peace in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{43}

However, while the deep penetration raids and the mobilisation of domestic opposition to the Rogers Plan were certainly impressive signs of Israel's resistance capabilities, they would quickly be dwarfed by the Soviet and Egyptian reactions to Israel's escalation of the War of Attrition. These latter considerations altered the value of the levers at Israel's command, causing the immediate failure, but ultimate success, of Israel's strategy for resisting American policy. They were actions which Israel could not control but which it had, perhaps unintentionally, provoked, and they were actions which ultimately boosted its importance to the United States and thus its ability to resist the policy of its patron.

\textbf{IV - THE SOVIET INTERVENTION DECISION}

The chronology of events which followed Israel's raids in depth is easy to establish: on 22 January, Nasser made a secret visit to Moscow; on 15 March, the first of a large number of Soviet manned SAM-3s arrived in Egypt; and on 17 April, Israeli reconnaissance aircraft were intercepted by Russian-piloted MIG-21 fighters near Cairo, signalling that the Soviet Union had taken over Egypt's air-defence system. What is more difficult and probably impossible to establish with any certainty, is whether the Soviet decision to intervene actively in Egypt's air-defence was taken reluctantly, as a result of Egypt's leverage with Moscow, or whether it was taken on Soviet initiative, in order to expand and solidify its position in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{44}


\textsuperscript{44} There are conflicting and contradictory accounts of this decision. Heikal recounts in detail the negotiations in Moscow and makes it plain that as far as he is concerned Nasser convinced a reluctant Soviet leadership to save him from defeat and to prevent him from turning to the United States. This version appears to be the received wisdom in official circles in Cairo. Two high Egyptian officials gave the same account of the negotiations, both adding that when Nasser met with Soviet reservations he ordered his plane to be prepared for his immediate return to Cairo and threatened to inform his people that Moscow would not support them in their struggle against Imperialism. See Heikal, \textit{The Road to Ramadan}, pp. 83-90; \textit{Interview with Tahsin Bashir}, Presidential Spokesman, Cairo, 8 January, 1975; \textit{Interview with Osana el-Baz}, Advisor to the Foreign Minister, Cairo, 9 January, 1970.

On the other hand, Ra'anana has argued that the Kremlin had been discussing the intervention since July, 1969, when it had been proposed
44. (continued) by a top Soviet military delegation. According to this account, the decision to intervene was taken in principle in November, 1969. Moscow then took advantage of Nasser's plight by inviting him to visit, whereupon he was confronted "almost alone, with the full, united and awesome pressure of the Kremlin at a time when he was in dire need of Soviet help". See U. Ra'anan, "The U.S.S.R. and the Middle East: Some Reflections on the Soviet Decision-Making Process", Orbis, Volume XVII, No. 3, Fall, 1973, pp. 956-965.

Alvin Rubinstein supports the Ra'anan thesis on its main point—that the decision was taken in November, 1969. He argues that geo-strategic and bureaucratic considerations were responsible for this decision. However, he disputes Ra'anan's suggestion that it was one big Soviet ploy by pointing out that Nasser had wanted such intervention to strengthen Egypt's defence and exacerbate superpower tensions. See Rubinstein, Red Star on the Nile, pp. 103-113.

There are problems with all three accounts. The Egyptian account is too ego-centric and requires one to accept the claim that the Russians were taken by surprise by Nasser's request for Soviet personnel and pilots, but decided on the spot, after hastily convening a meeting of the Politburo, to agree. The Ra'anan account is too mechanical, lacks any supporting evidence, and is based in part on spurious reasoning. For example, he argues that Egypt's plight was already clear to the Soviet military chiefs in July, 1970, when he claims, they put their suggestion for intervention to the Soviet leadership. But that assumes considerable foresight on the part of these people, since the IAF did not begin its air raids on Egyptian positions until the end of that month and did not succeed in destroying Egypt's air-defence until November. On the one hand Ra'anan argues that the Soviet Union could not have planned and implemented its intervention "in a matter of weeks" in January 1970, but on the other hand, he expects his readers to accept his claim that the military chiefs could have worked up a proposal for intervention in a matter of weeks in July when the military outcome of the new phase of the war was by no means certain. Ra'anan also states, wrongly, that Israel's deep penetration raids began in December 1969 - they did not begin until January 1970. His suggestion that the Rogers Plan was interpreted as a sign of American weakness is totally spurious, since Moscow was well aware of this American position as early as December 1968 when Rusk had proposed it. The Rubinstein account, though backed by more evidence, glosses over, too quickly, the reasons why the Soviet Union would have been reluctant to take such a momentous decision. Although geo-strategic considerations must have been important, it seems unlikely that they alone would have outweighed the risks involved.
Certainly, Nasser had good reason for seeking Soviet intervention. The destruction of Egypt's air-defences had not only left Egyptian air space open to Israel's whims, it threatened also to expose the failure of his strategy of attrition and destroy his credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of his people. For this reason, Sadat and General Fawzi had been sent to the Soviet Union in December 1969 to request more arms, especially aircraft to defend Egypt. When Israel began its deep penetration raids in January, with the express intention of pointing out the true situation to the Egyptian people, Nasser became desperate. He was faced with the choice of capitulating to Israel or requesting Soviet intervention. The Rabat Summit in December proved that he could not depend upon any Arab support for his position, so that left the Soviet Union or the United States. To turn to Washington would be the last resort since Egypt's proven military inferiority would require him to make concessions to Israel, concessions which would damage his credibility (and his pride) perhaps more than the deep penetration raids would. Thus Nasser had to seek Soviet intervention. Part of his original strategy, in launching the War of Attrition, had been to persuade Moscow to supply him with the military equipment necessary to negotiate from a position of strength. His original calculation would not have included Soviet combat personnel, for that would have made Egypt look too much like a Soviet satellite and would have weakened his bargaining position with the United States. However, he could no longer afford to consider what would better suit his bargaining position; he needed a complete air-defence system immediately.

If Nasser had the motivation, he also possessed considerable leverage with which to pry such a momentous decision out of his Soviet patron. First, the threat of collapse was more real now than it had ever been. A refusal to meet Nasser's request would undoubtedly lead him to

45. The Arab Summit had broken up in disagreement and without issuing a communique. No agreement could be reached about concerted measures for war and the oil states were reluctant to increase their contributions. At one stage Nasser, frustrated by the arguments, walked out. See J. Gaspard, "85 Days to the Rabat Summit - Pan-Arabism at the Crossroads", New Middle East, February, 1970, pp. 10-13.

46. Nasser told a closed session of the National Assembly on 24 March that "America cannot give us a peaceful solution because a peaceful solution means full Israeli withdrawal...and this would mean that we should win a political victory...". He repeated his often-stated maxim: "there [is] no hope for agreement on a political solution until we become so strong that our enemies realise that we can use force to obtain our rights...". See Report of President Nasser's Remarks, 25 March, 1970, IDOP, 1970, pp. 773-4.
blame Egypt’s plight on the Soviet Union for the sake of his own survival; were he toppled from power, his successor was also likely to blame the Soviet Union and turn to Washington in the face of a Soviet refusal to supply the wherewithal necessary for the defence of Egypt.

Second, Nasser’s threat to swap patrons — to turn to the United States — was equally credible, given his plight. He had threatened to do so before and it was his final alternative now. Moreover, the United States had made it clear, through Rogers’ accent on American ‘even-handedness’ in announcing his plan, that it would welcome such a move and respond accordingly. There seems no reason to doubt Heikal’s account of what Nasser told the Russians in this regard:

If we do not get what I am asking for everybody will assume that the only solution is in the hands of the Americans. We have never seen the Americans backward in helping the Israelis. But Egypt is an anti-imperialist outpost in the Middle East... as far as I can see you are not prepared to help us in the same way that America helps Israel. This means there is only one course open to me: I shall go back to Egypt and I shall tell the people the truth. I shall tell them that the time has come for me to step down and hand over to a pro-American President. If I cannot save them, somebody else will have to do it... I have the courage to tell our people the unfortunate truth — that, whether they like it or not, the Americans are masters of the world.47

If Nasser did indeed present his plight to Brezhnev in this light, then he was not merely threatening the Soviet position of influence in Egypt, but also threatening implicitly to damage its reputation in the Third World as the defender of the ‘forces of progress’. If the Soviet Union refused to protect Egypt from American Phantoms, what country in conflict with the United States or its clients could rely on Moscow’s support?

Moreover, the threat to swap patrons also played on Moscow’s geo-strategic interests in Egypt. Continued access to Egyptian port facilities and air bases, which the Soviet Navy had enjoyed since 1968, was important for the effective deployment of the Mediterranean Squadron. If Nasser turned to the United States and condemned the Soviet Union he might also end these privileges or barter them for greater American support. Conversely, since the Soviet Union now had Nasser in a completely dependent

position, it could demand greater use of Egypt's air bases as a quid pro quo for intervention. 48

In making its decision, which was clearly not taken in haste and without careful consideration, the Soviet Union would have had to weigh these risks and threats to its position in Egypt and its reputation elsewhere against the dangers involved in an operational commitment to Egypt's defence.

Clearly, the greatest danger was that of a superpower confrontation as a result of American opposition to the Soviet intervention. The supply of SAM-3s would be unlikely to provoke any reaction since these were 'defensive' weapons, but the provision of Soviet crews to operate them and Russian piloted MIG-21s to protect them was unprecedented in the Middle East, or for that matter, outside the Warsaw Pact; and MIG-21s had an offensive capability as well. 50 However, Moscow appears to have calculated that it could place the onus on Israel for having provoked the intervention, while assuring Washington that its response was purely defensive, was not the first move in a joint Soviet-Egyptian campaign to oust Israel from Sinai, and that the Soviet Union remained interested in


49. Soviet publications and statements in October and November 1969 prepared the ground for the Soviet decision by accusing the United States of supplying American personnel for the Israeli forces and by singing the praises of the 'progressive forces' in the Arab world, led by Nasser. On 31 October, Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Zamyatin, declared that the Soviet Union would extend "comprehensive aid" to the Arab states "against the encroachment of Israel and its imperialist protectors". On 27 November, the Communist Parties of the Warsaw Pact (excluding Rumania) issued a statement which pledged "in the future to provide all-round aid to the Arabs, who were engaged in the struggle for the protection of the progressive achievements of their people against the inroads of Israel and its patrons". In the communique issued after Sadat's visit in December, the Soviet Union promised to combine the struggle for a political settlement "with active measures to strengthen the defence capability of the UAR and other Arab states". See Y. Ro'i, From Encroachment to Involvement, pp. 515-7, 528-9; Pravda, 27 November, 11 December, 1969; Rubinstein, pp. 100-105.

50. Only in Cuba in 1962 had the Soviet Union deployed such large numbers of its military personnel. The IISS estimated that by July 1970 there were some 55 SAM-3 sites manned by 8,000 Russian troops and some 120 MIG-21Js operated by some 150 Soviet pilots. Beyond this Moscow supplied an improved version of the SAM-2 and the ZSU-23-4 anti-aircraft gun. The estimated 'free market' value of this equipment was $2.5 billion. See IISS, Strategic Survey, 1970, p. 46-7.
peace in the Middle East. To make sure, however, the Soviet Union decided to test the American reaction in a note addressed to Nixon from Kosygin on 31 January. He warned that Israel's actions would have "highly risky consequences" both for the Middle East and "international relations as a whole"; if Israel were not restrained in its bombing of Egyptian territory, "the Soviet Union will be forced to see to it that the Arab states have means at their disposal" to rebuff the attacks; the four powers would have to compel Israel to desist and establish a lasting peace in the region.51

President Nixon responded on 4 February that "the United States has always opposed steps which could have the effect of drawing the major powers more deeply into the conflict". He noted that this "could only complicate matters further" and suggested instead that a restoration of the cease-fire and an arms limitation agreement were more appropriate means for controlling the conflict. He in turn warned that the United States was watching the balance of forces and "will not hesitate to provide arms to friendly states as the need arises".52 Implicitly, Nixon was saying that the need to provide further arms to Israel had not yet arisen, that the balance was in Israel's favour. Two weeks later, in his report to Congress on American Foreign Policy, the President repeated these points, making Washington's likely response to the Soviet move clearer: the Administration would oppose attempts by the Soviet Union to exploit the local conflict for its own advantage; it would view a Soviet attempt to seek predominance "as a matter of grave concern".53 Thus, as long as the Soviet moves were regarded as defensive, as long as the United States did not think that by committing personnel to the defence of Egypt the Soviet Union was seeking predominance in the region, the United States was unlikely to react. Moreover, if the United States reserved for itself the right to supply arms to its clients "as the need arises", it could hardly deny the same right to the Soviet Union (even if the Soviet move included personnel) when the need arose to protect Moscow's protégé.

Accordingly, beyond drawing attention to Egypt's plight, the Soviet Union apparently informed Washington that it would provide Russian crews to operate the SAM-3s it now intended to supply "for the defence of a hard-pressed protégé", and that the missiles would only be emplaced around Alexandria, Cairo and the Aswan Dam. That the United States accepted this as a defensive move, rather than an attempt to seek predominance, was attested to by Rogers on 23 March and then by Kissinger four months later:

One has to distinguish here what may be the original intention of the Soviets and what may be the long-term consequences of their actions. I consider it quite arguable that the Soviets originally went into Egypt with combat personnel in order to prevent Nasser from being overthrown by the deep penetration raids that the Israelis were launching...

It is interesting to note, in this regard, that the Soviet Union apparently did not inform the United States of its intention to provide Soviet-piloted MIG-21Js. This was probably because the United States might have regarded such a move, had it known about it in advance, as ambiguous, if not offensive, in intent. Instead, after the SAM-3s with their Soviet crews had arrived quite openly in Alexandria, and after the United States had announced its decision on 23 March to hold in abeyance Israel's request for additional aircraft, the Soviet Union must have felt that the United States did not object to the Soviet defensive deployment and thus decided that it could safely dispatch the aircraft which would be used to protect the Soviet missile system.

However, if the fear of Nasser's imminent collapse or capitulation had provided the reason for the Soviet Union to take such an unprecedented move, and if careful signalling to the United States of Soviet interests had created the right conditions for the implementation of the decision, neither of these factors proved whether the Soviet Union was reluctantly doing the bidding of its protégé, or whether it was cautiously exploiting the situation to establish a secure foothold in Egypt from which it would

54. This is reported by J.C. Hurewitz in his Changing Military Perspectives in the Middle East, Rand Corporation, September, 1970, RM-6355-FF. Hurewitz repeats this account in at least two other places, although at no time does he state his sources. See "Superpower Rivalry in the Middle East", in Confino and Shamir (eds.), The USSR and the Middle East, p. 160; "Weapons Acquisition: Israel and Egypt", in Horton, Rogerson and Warner, (eds.), Comparative Defense Policy, p. 489.


56. Hurewitz, loc.cit.
be able to probe eastward and southward towards the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean as well as to control Egypt's military policy. Nasser's plight may have forced the Soviet Union to adopt an operational role, or it may have provided the opportunity, which at least some in the Soviet leadership had been waiting for, to consolidate the Soviet position in Egypt and extend its use of Egyptian naval facilities and air bases. What is clear, however, is that, on the one hand, Nasser sought this Soviet support to protect Egypt from the Israel Air Force and his own regime from the wrath of his people; on the other hand, the Soviet Union was acting in its own interests, whether it sought to protect its position of influence, or improve it. As Henry Kissinger observed: "Intentions are irrelevant when you are talking about historical processes". Thus, if the Soviet intervention represented a case of patron and protégé both acting in their own convergent interests, the historical process which had brought this convergence about was clearly Egypt's ability in June 1969 to resist the superpower rapprochement on the terms of an Arab-Israeli settlement. Had Egypt been unable to resist the proposals brought by Gromyko to Cairo, the War of Attrition would probably have ended some time ago, Egypt would not have needed the Soviet intervention, and Moscow would not have needed to bolster its client, or alternatively, would not have had the opportunity to expand its presence in Egypt.

V - ROGERS RESURGENT

In retrospect, the American reaction to the Soviet supply of some fifty missile sites manned by 8,000 Russian personnel and some 120 MIG-21Js manned by Russian pilots may appear puzzling. The rejection of the Rogers Plan in December had been regarded as an act of Soviet 'bad faith' and the United States could be forgiven for believing that the Soviet Union was playing on its desire for a settlement to reduce American support for Israel, while Moscow stood firm in its support for Egypt's maximum demands. Since some at least in the Administration had tacitly encouraged Israel to undertake its deep penetration raids with the intention of softening

57. In a speech on 23 July 1970, Nasser explained that he had sought the January meeting in Moscow: "In fact we found out in those days that our air defences were unable to check this serious Israeli threat which also enjoyed U.S. support. To us as a command, the matter was very hard and serious because the people had been exposed to the escalation of Israeli operations. On 22 January, 1970, I sent a letter to the Soviet leaders in which I told them: I want to make a secret visit to Moscow to review with you the situation we are facing...". See Speech by President Nasser to the Fourth Ordinary Session of the A.S.U., 23 July, 1970, IDOP, 1970, pp. 866-7.

58. Loc.cit.
the Egyptian attitude to the Rogers Plan, a forthright response to the Soviet intervention might have been expected, especially because an important reason for attempting to achieve a settlement had been to woo Nasser away from his Soviet patron rather than allow Soviet lodgement in Egypt. Certainly, the Israelis expected such a response. Instead, on 23 March, Secretary of State Rogers announced that Israel's arms requests would be held in abeyance, that Israel was expected to maintain its military superiority, and that Soviet intentions in supplying the Russian manned SAMs were assumed to be defensive.

The explanation for this restraint and tolerance of Soviet actions did not lie so much in America's unwillingness to confront the Soviet challenge in the Middle East, but rather more in the fact that Rogers and Sisco did not perceive those actions as a challenge to the balance of power. And it was their perception which ensured that Israel's attempt to resist, and thereby alter, American policy failed. With the President and his National Security Advisor preoccupied with the Cambodian invasion, Rogers and Sisco had been left to implement the policy which, despite the year of war in the Middle East and the failure of the Two Power Talks, still aimed at achieving a comprehensive settlement. Determined to prove himself in the one area left to his jurisdiction, and having established what he believed were the essential terms for a settlement, Rogers had decided that if the Soviet Union was not prepared to cooperate, the United States should press for a settlement on its own.

Rogers' experience at the end of 1969 had persuaded him that the first step in the implementation of his plan was to create the right conditions for the necessary negotiations. This required him to convince the Arab states that the American approach was indeed 'balanced' and that Washington could therefore be trusted to act as an 'honest broker' in negotiations between the Arabs and Israel. The public declaration of the Rogers Plan

59. In speeches on 1 May and 23 July, President Nasser claimed that on 2 February he had received a démarche from an American envoy: "He...advised us to announce immediately that we accepted a cease-fire, and that if we did not accept, the Israeli raids deep into the country would continue on a greater scale and would increase...They thought this would frighten us and make us hesitate and accept, submit or surrender". Labour Day Speech by President Nasser at Shubra al-Khaina, IDOP, 1970, p. 789; cf. President Nasser's Speech to the A.S.U., 23 July, 1970, IDOP, 1970, p. 867.
60. Secretary Rogers News Conference of 23 March, DSB, 13 April, 1970, pp. 477-484.
61. This policy of balance was encapsulated by Nixon in January, 1970: "...as far as our own policy toward the Mideast is concerned, let me put one thing in context:...We are neither pro-Arab, nor pro-Israel. We are pro-peace". President Nixon's News Conference of 30 January, DSB, 16 February, 1970, p.174
had not achieved that purpose because of the discrepancy between American words and its deeds in supplying the Phantoms and Skyhawks which were being used to bomb Egypt. The Phantoms had become the barometer of American 'even-handedness'. Thus, if the Arabs were to be convinced of American 'good faith', Rogers could not accede to Israel's requests for additional Phantoms. However, given the pressure the President was experiencing from Israel's Congressional and domestic supporters, and their opposition to the Rogers Plan, such a manoeuvre would not be easy to implement. It was therefore decided that Israel's requests for additional aircraft would not be denied, but rather held in abeyance. This decision could be justified on the grounds that "Israel's air capacity is sufficient to meet its needs for the time being" - that the balance of power in the Middle East was still in Israel's favour.62

Israel was assured by both Rogers and Nixon that a close watch would be kept on the military balance in the area, that it would receive additional assistance if the balance tipped against it, and that in the meantime it would receive $100 million in military credits to finance earlier purchases and $30 million in PL 480 aid.63

If Israel had expected a forthright response to the supply of Soviet missiles and crews, it was sorely disappointed. The decision had in fact been made before Washington received intelligence reports of the new developments in Egypt. Nevertheless, both Rogers and Nixon admitted that they were aware of the missiles and crews, but that it was too early to say whether they would change the balance.64 In other words, the decision to defer Israel's arms requests was not based on the Soviet response to Israel's deep penetration raids, but rather on the desire to proceed with the implementation of the Rogers Plan. As the Secretary of State explained, the purpose of the restraint was to achieve a cease-fire;

62. Rogers', News Conference of 23 March, DSB, 13 April, 1970, p. 477. According to one report, International Security Affairs had made an "exhaustive" analysis of the balance of power and had concluded that the Soviet Union would not "soon if ever" supply its own pilots to fly Soviet aircraft in Egypt! Since Egypt lacked pilots and ground crews, Israel's air superiority would not be threatened by an increased supply of Soviet aircraft. See Washington Post, 26 March, 1970.

63. In a move designed to lend Presidential authority to the decision, the President briefed reporters on the background to the decision two days before Rogers announced the delay. See President Nixon's News Conference of 21 March, DSB, 6 April, 1970, pp. 437-440.

64. Nixon, ibid., p. 437 and 440; Rogers, loc.cit., p. 477.
encourage the parties "to reappraise positions which have become roadblocks to peace"; promote negotiations under Ambassador Jarring's auspices; and provide the basis for arms limitations talks. As part of this process, Assistant Secretary of State Sisco was dispatched in April to the Middle East to "deepen the dialogue" and demonstrate America's desire to be "a friend of all peoples in the area". Sisco's task was to convince Nasser that American policy was 'balanced' and 'flexible', and that only the United States could persuade Israel to withdraw. His message to Nasser was simple: "Try us".

By the time Sisco arrived in Jerusalem, the true extent of Israel's failure had been brought home. Far from being shelved, the Rogers Plan had been resurrected; far from forcing Nasser's adherence to the cease-fire, Israel's deep penetration bombing had led to Soviet involvement in the defence of Egypt, and Sisco now claimed that Israel was responsible and that the United States had never encouraged the raids; far from securing greater American support, Israel had been placed on a 'short leash'. What had gone wrong? Israel had underestimated the determination of the American Secretary of State to achieve a settlement. Israel may have had the will to resist this settlement, as evidenced by its outright rejection of the Rogers Plan, but it did not possess the ability to persuade the United States to abandon its policy. Congressional and domestic opposition had been effectively circumvented by emphasising that the Administration would be attentive to Israel's needs, but that Israel's security would be better served if the settlement initiative


succeeded. Had Israel been able to demonstrate that it could maintain a stable cease-fire by force of arms, then the urgency of a settlement might have been questioned and Rogers' determination undermined. But in the circumstances of escalating conflict and increasing Soviet involvement Rogers had an even greater incentive to press his political initiative, as well as the justification for it. Had Israel been able to demonstrate that the balance was tipping against it, then Rogers would have been unable to hold its arms request in abeyance. But Israel's deep penetration raids had vividly demonstrated Israel's complete superiority, so it could hardly object to an 'interim' deferral.

However, now that the Soviet Union had intervened in an operational capacity in the conflict, Israel could try to argue that the balance was likely to tip against it, that a deferral of supply in these circumstances was likely to be interpreted as a sign of American weakness, and that unless the United States supplied Israel with the arms it had requested, the Soviet Union and Egypt would not be deterred from launching a canal-crossing offensive. At the time of Sisco's visit to Israel, Soviet behaviour was still conforming to the American assumption that its efforts were defensive in nature; thus, Israel's arguments made little impression. However, on 17 April, Israel and the United States discovered that Soviet pilots were flying operational missions over Egypt. Consequently, Israel's deep penetration raids ceased as Defence Minister Dayan attempted

69. Thus President Nixon had sent a message to the Emergency Conference of Jewish Organisations which had convened in Washington in January, in which he stated: "The United States stands by its friends. Israel is one of its friends. The United States believes that peace can only be based on agreement between the parties... achieved only through negotiations between them... The United States will not impose the terms of peace... We would prefer restraint in the shipment of arms to the area. But... we will not hesitate to supply arms to friendly states as the need arises. The United States has as its objective helping the people of the Middle East build a peaceful and productive future". Cited in Near East Report, Volume XIV, 1970, p. 54.

Of course nothing in that statement contradicted either the Rogers Plan (which called for an agreement between the parties and negotiations between them according to the Rhodes formula) or the subsequent decision to defer Israel's arms requests (on the grounds that the need had not yet arisen).

70. In fact, Israel's objections to the decision were based on the argument that it would have the psychological effect of weakening Israel's deterrent posture in the future. See Eban's Interview, 27 March, 1970, IDOP, 1970, p. 75; Allon's Interview, 28 March, 1970, New Middle East, May, 1970, p. 45.
to establish a *modus vivendi* with the Soviet Union in Egyptian air space.\(^{71}\)

Almost immediately, fighting intensified along the Canal as Egypt became emboldened by Israel's caution and the reduction of its own vulnerability, and as Nasser announced that the initiative was now in Egypt's hand.\(^{72}\) The IAF undertook a desperate battle to prevent the movement of the SAM sites into the Canal sector where they would be able to interfere with Israeli air-space on the east bank. Clearly shaken by these events, Defence Minister Dayan called on the United States to be "a true tiger with teeth that bite in the face of Soviet pressure and expansionist tendencies".\(^{73}\) Mrs Meir argued that the Soviet intervention had implications for the "international pattern", for the "entire basis of human existence".\(^{74}\)

The United States was slow to react. While it was concerned about the Soviet involvement, it was in no hurry to make an overt response which might jeopardise the Arab goodwill it had created as a result of the arms deferral. On 1 May, Nasser had signalled his willingness to negotiate a "genuine peace based on justice" through the United States, but had declared that if the Arabs were not finally to close the door on the United States it would have to stop supplying arms to Israel.\(^{75}\) Consequently, President Nixon reacted with caution by stating, on 8 May, that if the reports of Soviet pilots flying operational missions were true, and if the Soviet role continued to increase, "this will dramatically shift the balance of power and it would make it necessary for the United States to reevaluate its decision with regard to the sale of jets to Israel".\(^{76}\)

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71. In speeches and articles Dayan delineated the line beyond which Israel would not go and the line beyond which he hoped the Russian pilots would not go. He pointed out that the IAF required "a minimum of operational space" to give ground support to the forces on the Canal front. Were they attacked by "foreign aircraft" in the Canal zone they would fight back. On the other hand, the IAF would no longer attack targets in the Nile Delta. See *Jerusalem Post*, 8 May, 1970; Radio Interview by Defence Minister Dayan, 9 May, 1970, *IDOP*, 1970, pp. 139-143.


When Eban arrived in Washington on 20 May to request Phantoms and other equipment to counter the Soviet build-up, as well as an unequivocal American commitment to support Israel against this new threat, he was told by Nixon and Rogers that an overt American commitment would only force Egypt further into the Soviet embrace, that the United States was about to undertake a new cease-fire initiative, that Israel would receive at least part of its arms requests, but this would be done quietly, and that a statement of Israel's willingness to withdraw on the basis of Resolution 242 would be helpful. Reflecting Israel's anxiety over its arms supplies, now that the Soviet Union had committed aircraft and pilots to Egypt, Mrs Meir provided the United States with the quid pro quo it had requested. On 26 May, she stated in the Knesset that Israel was prepared to enter into indirect negotiations on the basis of Resolution 242. Finally, after 73 Senators had sent a letter to the Secretary of State calling upon him to announce America's intention "to provide Israel with the aircraft so urgently needed for its defence", Rogers stated that the Administration would soon decide to sell aircraft to Israel.

However, he also made it clear that American policy had not changed:

...we have to take whatever action we think is necessary to give [the Israelis] the assurance that they need that their independence and sovereignty is going to continue. At the same time we want to do it in a balanced and measured way so that we don't signal to the Arabs that we are so behind Israel that we'll support them in no matter what they do. The reason for that is that we want to keep the door open for negotiations...

Thus, if Soviet actions had enabled Israel to pry loose some additional American aircraft, in a covert manner, they had not yet provided


78. See Speech to the Knesset by Prime Minister Meir, 26 May, 1970, IDOP, 1970, pp. 154-160. Although Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations had accepted Resolution 242 in May 1968, the Government had avoided restating this acceptance - especially the word "withdrawal" - because the Herut faction of the National Unity coalition refused to countenance Israeli withdrawal. When the vote was taken on the Prime Minister's speech, Herut abstained. See Brecher, Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy, p. 488.


sufficient cause for the abandonment of American settlement policy. On the contrary, just as the United States had sought a stabilisation of the conflict from the outset of the Nixon Administration, so too did it now seek to combine its response to the Soviet intervention with a new cease-fire initiative. On 19 June, Rogers transmitted this new proposal to Israel, Egypt and Jordan: an agreement to restore the cease-fire for at least a limited period; a commitment to enter negotiations under Jarring's auspices "taking into account as appropriate each side's preferences as to method of procedure"; the purpose of negotiations to be "the establishment of a just and lasting peace based on (i) mutual acknowledgement of each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, and (ii) Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict, both in accordance with Resolution 242"; and strict observation of the cease-fire. 81

While Israel might have been relieved that the December 1969 Rogers Plan had been excluded from the text of the agreement (there were no substantive proposals on borders, Jerusalem and the refugees) the Cabinet was deeply disturbed by the explicit links between the cease-fire, negotiations, and Israeli withdrawal. Behind the word "withdrawal" lurked the Rogers Plan, since Israel's patron had clearly defined the borders to which it believed Israel should withdraw. Moreover, since it did not believe that the Arab states had any intention of honouring the peace provision, it did not want to commit itself to the withdrawal provision. Mrs Meir also expressed the fear that if Egypt accepted the proposal it would merely provide a cover for the movement of missiles into the Canal Zone. 82 However, the greatest immediate cause for alarm was the apparent linking of Israel's arms supplies to the acceptance of the American proposal. This was especially the case, both because the United States was granting Israel's requests on a piecemeal basis, and because on 30 June two Israeli Phantoms and one Skyhawk had been shot down by SAMs which the Egyptians had managed to establish in the Canal zone, despite continual Israeli bombardments; Israel's electronic counter measures had apparently failed to protect these aircraft from a new Soviet terminal


82. These reservations were stated by Mrs Meir in a speech to the Knesset on 29 June. See Jerusalem Post, 30 June, 1970. Another consideration was that the Herut alignment threatened to leave the National Unity Government if the proposals were accepted.
guidance radar. For these reasons, Mrs Meir had wanted to reject the proposal, but had been persuaded by the American Ambassador, Walworth Barbour, and Israel's Ambassador in Washington, Yitzhak Rabin, to defer Israel's rejection until Egypt had responded; the Cabinet was apparently assured that Nasser's response would be negative.

In the meantime, the Cabinet reconsidered its position. Israel had sought a cease-fire since the start of the war, seventeen months ago. However, the cease-fire was to have been dictated by Israel's military strength rather than by its superpower patron. Nevertheless, if Israel now defied American policy, the chances of achieving a cease-fire on its own terms would be remote, both because of the Soviet intervention in Egypt (which had bolstered Egypt's military capabilities, boosted its determination to fight on, and deterred Israeli air raids) and because defiance might lead to a cut in arms supplies (which Israel needed to continue the war). Faced with a situation in which, if fighting continued, it might have to confront the Soviet Union, Israel could not afford to alienate the United States. Instead, Israel decided to rely, as it had in the past, on Egyptian and Soviet rejections of the American initiative to enable it to resist its patron. If Israel's adversaries renounced American policy, it was now clear that new possibilities were likely to develop in Israel's relationship with the United States. For on 26 June, in a background briefing, the President's National Security Advisor had stated that American policy would be directed towards "expelling" the Soviet personnel from Egypt; on that issue Israeli and American policies would converge and Israel could expect that its military position would be bolstered. This was confirmed by the President on 1 July, when

83. Jerusalem Post, 26 and 29 June, 1970; Ma'ariv, 22 and 29 June, 1970; O'Ballance, The Electronic War in the Middle East, p. 123.

84. See Brecher, Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy, p. 491; Margalit, "The Politics of the Phantoms", p. 153.

85. Kissinger stated inter alia: "The danger that arises from the persistence of a Soviet combat base in Egypt is that the Eastern Mediterranean may become a Soviet lake as a result...the oil supplies of the Middle East may become totally at the mercy of the Soviets and their radical clients...We are trying to get a settlement in such a way that the moderate regimes are strengthened, and not the radical regimes. We are trying to expel the Soviet military presence, not so much the advisors, but the combat pilots and the combat personnel, before they become so firmly established". Background Briefing by Henry Kissinger, The White House, San Clemente, 26 June, 1970, pp. 23-4 (mimeo, in the possession of the author).
...we recognise that Israel is not desirous of driving any of the other countries into the sea. The other countries do want to drive Israel into the sea...

once the balance of power shifts where Israel is weaker than its neighbours, there will be a war. Therefore it is in U.S. interests to maintain that balance of power. That is why, as the Soviet Union moves in to support the UAR, it makes it necessary for the United States to evaluate what the Soviet Union does, and once that balance of power is upset, we will do what is necessary to maintain Israel's strength vis-a-vis its neighbours, not because we want Israel to be in a position to wage war...but because that is what will deter its neighbours from attacking it.86

However, on 23 July these calculations were overturned by the completely unexpected: Nasser accepted the American cease-fire proposal. Now the onus was on Israel to decide on defiance or acquiescence. There could be no doubt that defiance would alienate the United States, for the Egyptian acceptance was the fruit of eighteen months of American labour. Moreover, despite the encouraging words emanating from the White House, both Kissinger and Nixon had made it clear that the United States would support Israel's existence, but not its conquests; that a cease-fire was important because without it there would probably be a superpower confrontation. Washington's intensity of interest in the cease-fire was conveyed to Jerusalem on 24 July when the President wrote to Mrs Meir urging Israel's prompt acceptance of the cease-fire proposal. Nixon chose carrots rather than the big stick to encourage Israeli acquiescence, but the link between arms supplies and Israeli behaviour was quite explicit, as it had been since the deferral decision of 23 March. Mrs Meir was assured that if Israel accepted the cease-fire proposal the United States would continue to maintain Israel's strength, Israel would not be expected to withdraw until a just and lasting peace had been established, and the cease-fire would be monitored to prevent either side from achieving a military advantage.87

In weighing the costs of a refusal (and the continuation of the war) against the benefits offered by the United States, the Israeli government also had to take account of the situation on the Canal front. Despite

86. President Nixon's Interview on 1 July, DSB, 27 July, 1970.
strenuous efforts to prevent them, the Russians and Egyptians had managed to deploy some missiles in the SAM 'box' which covered the Canal; in the process Israel had lost six aircraft and yet had failed to prevent the missile movements. If Israel were now to prevent Egypt and the Soviet Union from jeopardising Israeli control of the air-space over the Canal, it would need a guaranteed supply of aircraft as well as the electronic counter measures and Shrike air-to-surface missiles necessary to neutralise the SAMs. There was only one source for these arms and acceptance of the cease-fire was the price Washington demanded. Moreover, the benefits of continued warfare were now doubtful. Despite the fact that on 30 July the IAF had succeeded in downing four Soviet-piloted MIG-21Js, the prospect of continued warfare with the Soviet Union, while a side battle was fought with its American patron, could not have been appealing to Israel's leadership. In any case, the elimination of the SAM 'box' would be an extremely difficult task without American backing, whereas an effective cease-fire with standstill provisions might forestall this development. Finally, Israel was war-weary: 260 of its sons had been killed and 716 wounded since February 1969; some people were beginning to question the government's desire for peace; and the government could hold out little prospect or purpose in continued fighting.

Consequently, the Cabinet decided that there was a greater advantage in turning its acquiescence into a bargaining card to secure uncertain patronage, than in resolute defiance for doubtful gains. Thus, before acceding to the American request, Israel sought further assurances that it would receive the aircraft and equipment it required, that there would be a standstill provision in the cease-fire arrangements, that the Jarring talks would be held without preconditions (such as the Rogers Plan), and that the United States would veto any anti-Israel resolution in the Security Council.

88. As Abba Eban observed: "A negative response by Israel would not only be interpreted in much of the world as a retreat from a traditional readiness to negotiate; it would also imperil the understanding on the basis of which American reinforcement was flowing in". Abba Eban, My Country, p. 265; cf. Brecher, Decision's in Israel's Foreign Policy, pp. 467-9.

89. Amongst Israeli students and academics there was a general demoralisation caused by the continual conflict and the lack of Israeli peace initiatives. The Government's refusal to allow the President of the World Zionist Organisation, Nahum Goldmann, to represent Israel in covert negotiations with Egypt raised doubts about the wisdom of its rigidity. Letters were sent to the Prime Minister from high school students questioning the wisdom of military service. See Brecher, p. 463.
on the terms or procedures for a settlement. 90 The United
States was prepared to be responsive to some of these requests. On the
most important question of arms supplies, the United States was reported
not only to have provided assurances about the maintenance of Israel's
strength, but also to have commenced the supply of the necessary arms. 91
President Nixon also assured Mrs Meir that the United States would not
force Israel to agree to the Arab interpretation of Resolution 242
(meaning that Israel would not be expected to withdraw from every inch of
occupied territory), that Israel would not be expected to withdraw until
a peace treaty had been signed, and that the cease-fire would ensure
the prevention of missile movements. However, Israel received no
assurances about the Rogers Plan, nor about the use of America's veto in
the Security Council. 92

On the basis of the assurances received, Israel decided to accept
the Rogers initiative and the cease-fire. However, to make it quite clear
that Israel had not altered its negotiating position, the government, in
its official note of acceptance of the Rogers initiative, changed the
wording of the key paragraphs: the purpose of negotiations would be "to
achieve an agreed and binding contractual peace agreement between the
parties"; the peace agreement would have to include the termination and
prevention of all hostile acts including those committed by irregular
forces; withdrawal would be to "secure, recognised and agreed boundaries
to be determined in the peace agreements"; and negotiations should be
conducted without preconditions. In announcing the Government's decision
to the Knesset on 4 August, Mrs Meir stressed that Israel would not return
to the pre-June 1967 borders and, in lieu of peace, would retain its
positions on the cease-fire lines:

...Israel was not asked to, and did not, take upon herself
any territorial commitments. On the contrary the Government
of Israel won support for its position that not a single
Israeli soldier would be withdrawn from the cease-fire
lines until a binding, contractual peace agreement is reached...
In the formulation of the U.S. position, there have been in the
past...and there may appear in the future, definitions which are
not acceptable to us...There is no change in our negation of
these positions now... 93

91. Margalit claims that "in order to encourage Israel to agree to the
initiative, arms started pouring into Israel in such vast quantities that
the Minister of Defence was amazed and this profusion of arms induced Israel
to agree to the initiative". See "The Politics of the Phantoms", loc.cit.,
p. 153; cf. Quandt, The Arab-Israeli Conflict in American Foreign Policy,
p. 15-16.
93. Speech to the Knesset by Prime Minister Meir, 4 August, 1970, IDOP, 1970,
Nevertheless, despite the restatement of its negotiating position, and its avowal that nothing had changed, Israel had been forced to submit to America's will. Israel had wanted a cease-fire of unlimited duration, preserved by its deterrent strength. In this way, Israel had hoped to retain occupied territories until the Arab states were prepared to enter into direct negotiations for a peace settlement which would provide for Israel's withdrawal to secure and recognised borders substantially different to what it regarded as the indefensible pre-1967 boundaries. Instead, Israel had now accepted a cease-fire of limited duration, which was explicitly linked to indirect negotiations and Israeli withdrawal. Moreover, Israel's concept of secure and recognised borders had been refuted by the Rogers Plan which, despite Israel's objections, had remained its patron's policy. And Israel's deterrent strength, far from serving to maintain the cease-fire, had been weakened by the injection of Soviet troops and pilots into the conflict; its air superiority in the Canal zone had been challenged, and its ability to deter an Egyptian Canal-crossing had become moot.

Perhaps more significantly, in terms of the politics of patronage, Israel had failed to demonstrate that its military superiority could serve to maintain stability and tranquillity in lieu of a peace negotiated on Israel's terms. On the contrary, Israel's utilisation of its military capability had only served to emphasise the urgency of a settlement to prevent a superpower confrontation and a further deterioration of American influence in the Arab world. The fact that Israel's rewording of the cease-fire proposals to conform with its own negotiating positions was totally ignored by Washington, when the Israeli and Egyptian acceptances were transmitted to Jarring, was testimony to Israel's failure to resist American policy. As the newsletter of Washington's Israel lobby noted: "Israel swallowed her protest to avoid a crisis". 94

However, Israel's failure to resist American policy was not so much the result of its lack of leverage but rather the consequence of a number of factors which rendered that leverage ineffective. Nasser's determination to pursue the War of Attrition, and his ability to secure Soviet political and military support for this effort, had devalued Israel's claims to being a force for stability. Roger's determination to pursue a negotiated

settlement and to depolarise the region had enabled him to overcome, or rather ignore, the American domestic opposition to his policy, and to reject the argument that support for Israel served American interests in the Middle East. The simple truth, which would soon be demonstrated, was that Israel's power resources were worth more in a period of confrontation than they were in a period of negotiation.

VI - NASSER'S LAST STAND

If Israel had failed, Nasser appeared to have succeeded. He had initiated the War of Attrition with the purpose of resisting the fait accompli of Israel's occupation by demonstrating that there would be no stability until Israel was forced to withdraw, and that there would be no negotiations until Egypt had achieved a position of strength. He had been rewarded by American pressure on Israel to withdraw to the pre-1967 Egyptian border, by the deferral of Israel's arms requests, and by strong Soviet support for Egypt's defence. The apparent success of his strategy was reflected in his May Day speech, when he announced that the initiative was now in Egypt's hands, that the Soviet Union was giving Egypt its full support, and that if the United States wanted peace and good relations with the Arab nation it would have to order Israel to withdraw or, failing that, should give "no new support to Israel as long as it continued to occupy Arab territories". The United States responded, as we have seen, with the Rogers cease-fire initiative.

Nasser's decision to accept this cease-fire proposal has generally been credited to Soviet pressure, but there were good reasons for him to do so which were little related to considerations of Soviet patronage. First, the war had exacted a heavy price in terms of Egyptian casualties, and the effort to establish missiles in the Canal zone, in particular, had cost Egypt dearly. Heikal states that "no fewer" than 4,000 civilian engineers and workers were killed in the attempt to move the missiles.


96. See for example, IISS, Strategic Survey, p. 43; Y. Ro'i, From Encroachment to Involvement, p. 529. In a background briefing on 24 August, 1970, Assistant Secretary of State Sisco observed: "I might say that we would not have gotten this far to this date with respect to this American initiative if the Soviets had not played a role in Cairo". Background Briefing at the White House (San Clemente) with Dr Henry A. Kissinger and Joseph J. Sisco, 24 August, 1970, p. 28 (mimeo, in the possession of the author). In a long report from Moscow, Le Monde claimed that the Soviet Union exercised "considerable pressure" on Nasser to accept the proposals and respond to them positively. Le Monde, 18 July, 1970.
forward. In terms of attrition, Egypt had paid a far heavier price than Israel and the missile movements had only just begun to meet with success. A lull in the fighting would enable the completion of this task, without casualties. Although the cease-fire proposal contained a standstill provision, and although the Israelis were bound to scrutinise Egyptian movements, the uncertainty which would surround the actual implementation of the cease-fire, the fact that it would come into force at midnight when accurate surveillance would be difficult if not impossible, together with Nasser's ability to justify the movement on defensive grounds and the obvious determination of Rogers to make the cease-fire work, were all factors which favoured acceptance of the cease-fire as a cover for the missile movement. Moreover, Israeli retaliation, once the missile screen had been established in the Canal zone, was likely to be ineffectual as well as costly, both in terms of aircraft losses and its relations with the United States. As Heikal has noted, an operational pause for this purpose fitted Nasser's military strategy:

The most important thing in Nasser's view was to finish building the missile wall. When completed this would not only protect our armed forces on the West Bank of the Suez Canal, but would give protection over a strip fifteen-twenty kilometres wide on the east bank, and so give cover for our troops crossing the Canal when the time came.

Second, acceptance of the cease-fire initiative also conformed with Nasser's political strategy. The purpose of the War of Attrition had been to pressure Israel into withdrawing while avoiding any concessions on territory, peace or direct negotiations. While military pressure had not achieved that purpose, it had served to encourage the United States to move away from the attitude it had adopted immediately after the 1967 war that Israel should retain the occupied territories until the Arabs were ready to sue for peace. In his May Day speech Nasser had explained that one of his purposes had been to link the June 1967 cease-fire resolution

97. Heikal also reports Nasser's explanation to Arafat of his reasons for accepting the American initiative: "Continuing the War of Attrition while Israel enjoyed complete air superiority was simply bleeding ourselves to death...". *The Road to Ramadan*, pp. 82 and 97. Israel estimated that Egypt suffered 10,000 casualties in the war.

(which made no mention of withdrawal) with the November 1967 peace settlement resolution (which called on Israel to withdraw). The Rogers initiative explicitly linked the cease-fire with Israeli withdrawal - it was a direct response to Nasser's speech. If Nasser now turned down the American proposals he would in fact be slamming the door he claimed to have left open, forcing the United States back into Israel's room. Moreover, while the United States had deferred Israel's arms request, the Administration was under heavy pressure to change its mind because of the Soviet intervention. If Nasser refused the cease-fire, Rogers would have no grounds for resisting this pressure and Nasser's efforts to reassert the balance of power would have been to no avail.

Moreover, the Soviet involvement in Egypt's defence had raised the question in Washington as to whether there was any point in attempting to woo what appeared to be a Soviet satellite. Kissinger had said that the United States wanted to "expel" the Soviet advisors and troops; Sisco had said that the way to do this was through a political settlement. If Egypt rejected the Rogers initiative, and another American attempt at negotiation failed, then the United States might revert to confrontation and 'containment' tactics. Nasser had experienced the effect of the resultant polarisation in 1966 and 1967, when the United States had abandoned its relations with Egypt and had given full military and political backing to his adversaries. Now that a gap had been created between the positions of the United States and its Israeli client, Nasser understood that it was necessary to offer the United States some encouragement to go further; acceptance of the cease-fire was the minimum incentive. Once negotiations recommenced, relations between the United States and Israel were bound to become more strained because of Israel's objections to the Rogers Plan which now constituted the basis of American settlement policy. Moreover, Nasser had a fall-back position if negotiations became stalemated and American behaviour did not meet up to his

99. See Nasser's May Day Speech, IDOP, 1970, p. 787 and 792. In an address to the National Assembly in March he had discussed the question of a cease-fire: "...from our point of view, the cease-fire is linked with the implementation of the provisions of the Security Council resolution for withdrawal from the occupied territories". See Press Conference Report on Nasser's Remarks to a Closed Session of the National Assembly, 25 March, 1970, ibid., p. 773.

100. On 12 July Sisco had been asked to comment on Kissinger's remark: "...we are interested in reducing Soviet influence in the area. The best possible way to reduce the Soviet influence is to achieve a political settlement...". See Television Interview with Assistant Secretary of State Sisco, 12 July, 1970, ibid., p. 209.
expectations; Egypt could threaten to start another war of attrition, and if the threat failed, could actually go to war to encourage further pressure on Israel. As Nasser stated in accepting the cease-fire:

When we embark on political action we expect it to succeed. But when political action is exposed to failure, we shall only have military action before us...We can move in the political field as we like...in accordance with continuously changing circumstances. But the final word in any conflict and specifically with the enemy we are facing - Israel - will always belong to force...If political action succeeds well and good. If it fails, we the Egyptian people will have only the alternative of fighting.  

The Soviet Union also had good reason for wanting the cease-fire, although it could hardly have been enamoured by the idea that it was an American initiative designed to improve relations between Washington and Cairo, predicated in part on America's ability to pressure Israel to withdraw (something the Soviet Union had failed to do), and in part on an Egyptian willingness to court American patronage. Nevertheless, for the Soviet Union the risks of continued warfare outweighed the risks of an American-Egyptian rapprochement. The United States had made it clear, in direct correspondence and indirectly through public statements, that the Soviet attitude to the cease-fire initiative would determine whether relations would continue on a confrontation course.  

102. The first warning came on 29 April when Under Secretary of State Richardson stated in an address: "I believe that the Soviet Union should realise that any immediate gains it might make by attempting to take advantage of the troubled Middle East situation are far outweighed by the danger of stirring a wider conflict. When in such an area one of us - in this case the Soviet Union - involves itself militarily, the other will take notice and react". Address by Under Secretary of State Richardson on Controlling Local Conflicts, 29 April, 1970, DSB, 18 May, 1970, p. 629. On 26 June, Henry Kissinger spoke of the possibility of a direct confrontation between the superpowers in the Middle East with serious consequences if events got out of control: "What they are doing in the Middle East, whatever their intentions, poses the gravest threats in the long term for Western Europe and Japan and, therefore for us." Background Briefing by Henry Kissinger, The White House (San Clemente), 26 June, 1970 (mimeo, in the possession of the author). On 30 June, Assistant Secretary of State Sisco revealed: "...there is a very serious question in our minds as to whether Soviet objectives in the Middle East in fact are parallel with those of the United States...Do the Russians really want the kind of stable peace that the United States is talking about, or do they see sufficient advantage in the turmoil which, if it can be controlled, works in support of the objectives of the Soviet Union in the area and to our corresponding disadvantage?" DSB, 10 August, 1970, p. 177. On 10 July the American Ambassador in Moscow was reported to have delivered a warning to Gromyko of the possibility of a superpower confrontation if the Soviet Union increased...
Moreover, the Soviet Union shared Egypt's interest in avoiding a new commitment of American aircraft to Israel, partly because it would make the Israelis bolder in their reactions to encounters with Soviet-piloted aircraft, and partly because it would undo the semblance of balance created by Soviet intervention in Egypt's defence, increasing the pressure on Moscow to take more drastic measures.

On the other hand, a stable cease-fire carried a number of benefits for Moscow: now that a Soviet presence had been firmly established in Egypt, a cease-fire would remove the risk of superpower confrontation, leaving the Soviet Union with a more stable position of influence in the region; Nasser's position had been strengthened and the Soviet Union had gained credit in the Arab world for its forthright response to his plight - further fighting might undo all that; Egypt's heightened military dependence on its Soviet patron might give Moscow greater control over its actions and therefore more to bargain with in negotiations with the United States. 103

Thus, although Nasser spent eighteen days in the Soviet Union (some of them in a sanatorium) and conducted four sessions of negotiations at the Kremlin, there were no signs or reports of any Soviet-Egyptian disagreement about Egypt's attitude to the Rogers initiative. 104

102. (continued) Its military involvement. Emphasising the "imperative need" for a cease-fire, Moscow was informed that this might be the last chance for a settlement and that "lack of cooperation on its part might have dire consequences". New York Times, 15 July, 1970. This message was repeated by Sisco in an interview on 12 July: "...The Soviet Union, in assessing as to whether it wants a political solution or not, must weigh whatever unilateral advantage it has been deriving in recent months... against the risk of this thing getting out of control...and confronting both the Soviet Union and the United States with some very difficult choices indeed". Television Interview with Assistant Secretary of State Sisco, 12 July, 1970, IDOP, 1970, p. 211.

103. Cf. Rubinstein, Red Star on the Nile, p. 123. The Soviet Union may also have calculated that moving the missiles after the cease-fire would make it easier to bolster Egypt, while undermining the American initiative.

104. The communique avoided any mention of the proposals but emphasised that the meetings were characterised by "an atmosphere of openness, friendship and complete mutual understanding". Both sides agreed that "urgent measures" were necessary to end Israel's armed attacks and bring about its complete withdrawal in accordance with Resolution 242. Nasser expressed "profound gratitude" for the Soviet Union's decisive support in the struggle against Israel. For the text see Y. Roi, From Encroachment to Involvement, pp. 530-533.
The Soviet press applauded Nasser's courage in accepting the cease-fire, and both client and patron did their best to ignore or play down its American origin, emphasising instead Soviet-Egyptian cooperation and the importance of the United Nations, the Four Power Talks, and Resolution 242 as the appropriate framework for negotiations. Accordingly, it seems safe to conclude that unlike the American-Israeli experience, the interests of patron and client on the west bank of the Canal had remained convergent in the face of the Rogers initiative. The question of influence and resistance had not arisen.

At midnight on 7-8 August, 1970, the War of Attrition ended in a stalemate. Neither side could claim victory, for both had suffered heavy casualties and had not achieved their stated aims: Israel remained in its east bank positions; Egypt had resisted Israel's imposition of a cease-fire and, with Soviet assistance, had challenged its air superiority in the Canal zone. However, in terms of the politics of patronage, Nasser had reason to be satisfied with the results of the war. On the one side, the United States and Israel had been engaged in a bitter disagreement since the beginning of 1969; Washington had committed itself publicly to complete Israeli withdrawal from Sinai; Israel's arms requests had become linked to its willingness to negotiate and withdraw; and the United States had sought improved relations with Egypt. On the other side, Egypt had retained Soviet support for all its political demands and, with Soviet military assistance of an unprecedented nature, had turned an imminent defeat in the war into a challenge to Israel's deterrent strength. As Nasser noted in accepting the cease-fire: "we are not acting from a weak position but from a strong one". That was testimony in itself to Nasser's success in rebuilding Egypt's army and reasserting Egypt's importance after the devastation of the 1967 defeat. Yet Nasser's success had not been achieved without one very significant cost which he would, in one month, bequeath as his legacy to Anwar Sadat: the reduction of Egypt's ability to resist its Soviet patron and to take independent action.


As the authors of the *Strategic Survey* observed with considerable prescience:

In some sense...the UAR had mortgaged its freedom of military - and even political - action to its Soviet ally in return for protection against the Israel Air Force. Conversely, the Soviet Union...seemed during 1970 to have established a very real ability to constrain, if it wished, the military policy of the UAR.107

VII - EPILOGUE

It is ironical and yet typical of the nature of the game of patronage in the Middle East, that what was true on one day could be refuted on the next; that Israel's setback could be transformed into a triumph, while Nasser's success could be negated, as a result of one Soviet-Egyptian act. As soon as the cease-fire went into effect on 8 August, Egyptian and Soviet personnel began to finish the task they had only managed to start during the last three months of the war; by mid-October some 25 to 35 SAM batteries had been added to the 16 batteries which had been established in the Canal zone before the cease-fire - 500 to 600 missiles covered the air space over the west bank as well as a twelve mile area over the Israeli-held east bank.108 Militarily, the missile movements undoubtedly bolstered Egypt's strength, but politically Nasser had overplayed his hand and in one move had laid the basis for the healing of the American-Israeli rift. He had failed to account for the contradiction between the military and political tactics which lay behind his acceptance of the cease-fire. Militarily, the cease-fire gave Egypt a breathing space to consolidate its gains; but politically such consolidation could have a more adverse effect on American-Egyptian relations than a rejection of the cease-fire - it might be interpreted as cheating, an act of bad faith. Perhaps Nasser was expecting Washington to ignore the blatant violation of the standstill provision because of its desire to launch the negotiations. However, Washington was engaged in a tussle between the White House and the State Department for control of Middle East Policy and the White House was bound to see the missile movements as a Soviet attempt to exploit the situation. Moreover, the President had given a firm


assurance to Israel that the standstill provision would be respected. Nasser had ignored this assurance just as he had ignored the American commitment to freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba in 1967. Yet in the politics of patronage commitments and assurances were the sine qua non of successful resistance.

The Administration did do its best to ignore the missile movement, casting doubt on Israeli claims, and averring that what had happened immediately after the cease-fire was not important, while negotiations were. However, Israel was not about to let the matter pass. From the outset it had warned that Egypt would only accept the cease-fire in order to move its missiles, but it had been assured by Washington that the standstill provision would be respected. Now its control of the air space over its own positions had been threatened and it fully intended to seek redress. Washington was informed that unless the violations were rectified, Israel would not participate in the negotiations, and might reconsider its decision to accept the cease-fire. Unable to persuade Egypt and the Soviet Union to withdraw the missiles, the United States decided to supply Israel with the equipment necessary to neutralise their impact. Within a month of the cease-fire Israel had received Shrike air-to-ground missiles, Walleye TV-guided bombs, and sophisticated electronic counter measures, as well as an American commitment to sell Israel an additional 16 Phantoms (with delivery to start in late September).

109. In the letter which Nixon had sent to Meir requesting Israel's acceptance of the cease-fire the President had assured Israel that the cease-fire would not permit Egypt to gain any military advantage. New York Times, 25 July, 1970. In her speech explaining Israel's acceptance of the cease-fire, Mrs Meir noted that it did so "in the light of U.S. clarifications", which included the provision that Egypt and the Soviet Union "would refrain from changing the military status quo (by emplacing SAMs or other new installations in an agreed zone west of the Suez Canal cease-fire line)". See Speech to Knesset, 4 August, 1970, IDOP, 1970, p. 240.

110. The first response came from Secretary of Defence Laird who stated that the United States could neither prove nor disprove Egyptian violations. The State Department spokesman then noted that there probably had been some forward movement after the cease-fire but called for a prompt start to the negotiations which should not be delayed by Israel's charges. New York Times, 17 and 18 August, 1970. Rogers was reported to have refused to believe his own intelligence reports. As one State Department officer noted: "It was bad news, and he didn't want to hear it". Interview with State Department Official, Washington, June, 1975.

111. This warning was conveyed to Sisco by Ambassador Rabin on 31 August. See New York Times, 1 September, 1970. Israel actually engaged in preliminary discussions with Jarring in August but after continued missile movements announced its withdrawal at the beginning of September.

Israel was still on a 'short-leash', but the missile movement had enabled it to reverse the operation of arms leverage. Since the 23 March deferral decision, arms had been withheld to induce Israeli compliance, now the arms would have to be provided to get Israel back to the negotiating table. However, events in Jordan would unexpectedly put an end, for the time being, to this whole process of bargaining over arms. The movement of the missiles had raised serious doubts in Washington about Soviet intentions in the Middle East, confirming a pattern of behaviour which had started with the Soviet rejection of the Rogers Plan and which had been seriously compounded by the injection of Soviet combat personnel. Suddenly, in September, while Washington was preoccupied with the cease-fire violations, the conflict between King Hussein and the Palestinian fedayeen in Jordan erupted into a full-scale war as the army moved against Palestinian strongholds. In the midst of the fighting 200 Syrian tanks crossed into Jordan to offer support to the fedayeen. Hussein appealed to the United States for assistance and the President responded by alerting the Sixth Fleet, five American divisions based in West Germany, and Israel. 113 In the end, Hussein's army and air force dealt with the Syrians on their own, but the utility of Israel's deterrent strength for American policy in the Middle East had been demonstrated, and the doubts about Soviet motives had been confirmed (especially because, while standing to gain from the overthrow of Hussein's regime in Jordan, it continued to assist Egypt in completing its missile screen).

Consequently, Israel's importance to the United States in combating what was now perceived as Soviet expansion had been greatly enhanced. In October, the United States withdrew from the Four Power Talks stating that the Soviet and Egyptian actions had cast doubt on "whether there is a sincere desire for peace". 114 At the same time, the President announced that he would ask Congress to appropriate $500 million for military assistance to Israel in the next fiscal year. In November, the cease-fire

113. Agreement was apparently reached between Washington and Jerusalem that, if necessary, Israel would provide air support for the Jordanian army. As the crisis worsened Israeli tanks were deployed in force on the Golan Heights and the West Bank and, in return for a commitment deal with the Syrians, Israel was assured that the United States would deal with any Egyptian or Soviet moves on the western front. The Soviet Union was warned in no uncertain terms that unless its Syrian client retreated Israel and the United States would take appropriate action. See Henry Brandon, "Jordan, The Forgotten Crisis", Foreign Policy, No. 10, Spring, 1973; Kalbs, Kissinger, Chapter 8; Quandt, "The Middle East Conflict in U.S. Strategy, 1970-1971", pp. 45-48.

was extended for another three months without any commitment sought by the United States, or given by Israel, about negotiations. Instead, Israel sought specific commitments from the United States before it resumed talks with Jarring: the Rogers Plan would be shelved; military and economic support would continue; no preconceived American ideas would interfere with the peace negotiations. Nixon responded with assurances that Israel would continue to receive military and economic assistance, and that there would be no delay or deferral of requests if an impasse developed in the negotiations. While refusing to abandon the Rogers Plan, the President did agree to shelve it for the time being, stating publicly that American policy was based on Resolution 242 and that Israel's borders were "a matter for negotiation".

In other words, the link between arms supplies and Israel's stance in the negotiations had been broken, the Two and Four Power Talks had been abandoned, the cease-fire had been renewed without binding preconditions, and the Rogers Plan had been put back into the State Department drawer. A new view began to be expressed at the highest levels in Washington: "For the first time, one began to hear American policy makers reflect the Israeli view that American-Israeli relations had a strategic dimension that was more important than the sentimental ties so frequently alluded to in the past as the basis for American support for Israel". As Mrs Meir explained to the Knesset at the end of the year: "Since August 9

115. Dayan noted at the time that the cease-fire was renewed that as a result of the violations Israel was no longer bound to any of the commitments it had made in accepting the Rogers initiative. *New York Times*, 7 November, 1970.

116. These preconditions were conveyed to Rogers by Eban on 18 November. They were followed by a message from Mrs Meir to the President which repeated the preconditions and also requested a forceful declaration of America's commitment to Israel's security. *Washington Post*, 19 November, 1970; *New York Times*, 2 December, 1970.

117. In a letter to the Prime Minister, Nixon also committed the United States to use its veto in the Security Council to prevent the passing of an anti-Israel resolution; and promised that negotiations on future borders would be left to negotiations between the parties. *New York Times*, 5 December, 1970. The public statement which effectively shelved the Rogers Plan was made in response to a planted question in a news conference on 10 December, 1970. See *DSB*, 28 December, 1970, p. 771.

there has been a great improvement in our capacity to maintain our position. By steadfastly refusing to participate in negotiations until the United States had rectified the military situation and provided Israel with the assurances which it had sought, but had been unable to achieve during the War of Attrition, Israel had managed to exploit the change in the political balance in the region. Its cautious submission to the Rogers initiative had been wise given its lack of an alternative patron in the face of hostility from a superpower adversary. However, its defiant refusal to participate in the negotiations reflected Israel's understanding of the new reality, that in the face of Soviet and Egyptian actions, the United States did not have, for the moment, an alternative Egyptian client.

Although Rogers and Sisco would make one more vain attempt to negotiate a settlement (this time a partial settlement involving the reopening of the Suez Canal), and one more attempt to use arms as a bargaining lever, while the cease-fire was maintained the United States lacked the incentive and therefore the will-power to budge Israel from its positions in the territories or its attitude towards a negotiated settlement. Israel's military strength had not been responsible for the cease-fire in 1970, but the United States came to see the maintenance of its strength as the most appropriate means for preserving the stability and tranquility which the region enjoyed until the disruption in October 1973.

Circumstances beyond Israel's control had enabled this weak state, yet again, to secure the patronage of the United States - this time at unprecedented levels. However, despite this success Israel would have done well to remember that its newly acquired leverage with its American patron was contingent upon these circumstances, that beneath the surface of Israeli-American convergence lay fundamental differences, and that when

119. Mrs Meir also outlined the assurances and commitments Israel had received from the United States that it would preserve the balance of power, deter the Soviet Union, veto any Security Council resolution which dealt with matters subject to negotiations between the parties, and ensure that Israel would not enter negotiations "from a position of weakness". She claimed that the United States believed Israel was entitled to defensible borders, did not accept the Arab claim that Israel should withdraw from all occupied territory and did not agree with Arab plans on the refugee problem. Moreover, she stated that Israel had been reinforced in its attitude that "in the absence of peace, Israel is entitled to maintain the cease-fire lines on all fronts without withdrawal", and that the United States regarded the maintenance of the cease-fire as "a continuous and uninterrupted obligation" based on the June 1967 cease-fire resolution (not the Rogers initiative or Resolution 242). "It must be emphasised again and
the political environment changed - as it was bound to - those differences would emerge again. In 1971 and 1972 Israel missed the opportunity to negotiate from a position of strength and to make concessions which would have maintained the stability by increasing Egypt's stake in it. Instead, its leadership relied on military preponderance to preserve its position and its patronage and had received confirmation of the correctness of this strategy in the agreement between the superpowers that they would both seek military relaxation in the Middle East. The emerging detente seemed to be working in Israel's favour. But not for long; on 6 October 1973 and thereafter Israel would suffer the consequences of its failure to appreciate the contingent nature of the power of the weak.

119. (continued) again: the US initiative calling for talks under the auspices of Ambassador Jarring does not entail any undertaking on Israel's part to agree to proposals made by the Secretary of State". (i.e. the Rogers Plan). See Statement to the Knesset by Prime Minister Meir, cited in *New Middle East*, February, 1971, pp. 45-6.
1972 was a good year for detente. In May President Nixon and Secretary-General Brezhnev emerged from their Moscow Summit to lay down the 'Basic Principles' of the era of detente. The implications for the conduct of the Arab-Israeli conflict were regarded as manifest: the two superpowers would do their utmost to avoid military confrontations; they both recognised that efforts by either to obtain unilateral advantage at the expense of the other, directly or indirectly, were inconsistent with the objective of reaching accommodation by peaceful means; and they declared their mutual support for a peaceful settlement and military relaxation in the Middle East. These principles were reaffirmed in June 1973 when Nixon and Brezhnev added the caveat that both would act "to prevent the development of situations capable of causing a dangerous exacerbation of their relations". Yet some four months later, on 6 October, Egypt, in coordination with Syria, launched a surprise attack on Israel and within three weeks American forces were placed on global alert to prevent the Soviet Union from obtaining the unilateral advantage which the United States reserved for itself: the superpowers supposedly faced "the most difficult crisis we've had since the Cuban confrontation of 1962". The principles of detente had clearly been contradicted by the practice in the Middle East.

The critics of detente were quick to charge that the Nixon Administration had been duped by the Soviet Union, that Moscow had acted with perfidy in exploiting the relaxation of tension for its own advantage, "that if the 'basic principles' of detente had been respected, the


* This chapter has been published in a slightly different form in Australian Outlook, Volume 30, No. 2, August, 1976, pp. 171-196.
Egyptian-Syrian attack should not have taken place". In levelling these charges at the Administration and the Soviet Union, the critics made precisely the same assumptions as those whom they criticised had made at the Moscow Summit in May 1972. They all assumed that because of the dependence of regional belligerents on Soviet and American military and economic support, the superpowers would be able to exercise control over their clients to prevent an "increase in international tensions". They assumed that regional wars could be prevented by sacrificing the interests of dependent client states on the altar of detente. Thus, when principle and practice diverged in October 1973, the critics concluded that, instead of exercising control over its Egyptian and Syrian protegés, the Soviet Union had encouraged the war by supplying the military wherewithal which made it possible. The critics did not question the assumptions which had formed the foundations for the 'Declaration of Basic Principles' and were clearly confounded when Secretary of State Kissinger, in effect, denied that these assumptions had ever existed by declaring that the Soviet Union had not acted "irresponsibly" at the outset of the October War. In his subsequent defence of the 'Basic Principles' Kissinger emphasised that detente was a "process not a permanent achievement", that the principles were a "yardstick" not a "legal contract", and that competition and cooperation coexisted in what was an inherently ambiguous relationship.


5. Kissinger declared on 12 October: "We...do not consider that Soviet actions as of now constitute the irresponsibility that on Monday evening I pointed out would threaten detente". New York Times, 13 October, 1973.

In this way, Kissinger's obfuscation of what had clearly been the common assumption of the superpowers in 1972 (that detente could be preserved by sacrificing the interests of the weak clients), together with the attachment of his critics to the theory of Soviet perfidy, served to obscure the essential lessons of the October decision: that Egypt was not only able to go to war in the face of an explicit superpower agreement to prevent such action, but was also able to gain Soviet support for actions which it had previously opposed; that, as President Sadat noted, "small and medium-sized powers can, if they wish and if they are determined...bypass...the rapprochement agreements concluded between the Big Powers, can decide their own fate, can take war decisions alone"; that some weak states have the ability to resist the common policies of the superpowers.

Egypt's decision to go to war demonstrated that the politics of detente and the politics of patronage could become incompatible, that with skill and determination a weak protégé could resist the inimical effects of detente between the superpowers by exploiting their competitive interests in regional rivalry to overcome their cooperative interests in the relaxation of tensions on the global level. Conversely, Israel's decision not to pre-empt emphasised that for some weak states the politics of patronage and the politics of detente were mutually reinforcing, that the inimical effects of dependence on superpower patronage had been resisted by exploiting the cooperative interests of the superpowers in regional stability.

I - EGYPT'S DECISION TO GO TO WAR

In 1972 Sadat had awaited the results of the Moscow Summit with trepidation. Since the cease-fire of August 1970 a stalemate had enveloped the Middle East. One way or another Sadat had determined that he would reject its soporific effect by awakening Israel and the superpowers to the need for redressing the deepfelt grievances of the Arabs. He had already declared 1971 to be the 'year of decision', but despite his diplomatic initiative in February and subsequent attempts by the United States and the United Nations to achieve diplomatic movement, Israel was consolidating its hold on the occupied territories. In 1971

Sadat had placed his hopes on changing the military balance. However, his Soviet patron had delayed the supply of sophisticated offensive weapons and instead had urged Egypt to exercise caution, seek a political settlement and not embark on a military adventure. Consequently, the 'year of decision' was postponed.  

Sadat tells us that he met the Soviet leaders in October 1970, May, July and October 1971, and February and April 1972. According to Heikal and Sadat, the Russians on each occasion urged him to seek a political settlement and to concentrate on the economic and social development of Egypt. Sadat argued that Egypt would have to be in a position to negotiate from strength were it to participate in a political settlement. To conciliate him, the Russians more than once agreed to release the arms which Sadat had requested. But the arms would never be delivered. Domestically, Sadat was being driven to action by a stagnating economy, internal unrest and widespread questioning of his own credibility. If he were to achieve either military or diplomatic movement he would clearly have to alter, somehow, the policy of his Soviet patron.

8. The reason Sadat gave at the time for postponing the 'decision' was that the attention of the world was focussed on the Indo-Pakistani War of December 1971. During that war, the Soviet Union had ferried arms to India through Egypt - including some arms the Egyptians thought were intended for their use. The contrast in Soviet action on the sub-continent and Soviet inaction in the Middle East demonstrated to Sadat the direction of Soviet policy. See Ya'acov Ro'i, From Encroachment to Involvement, p. 569.


10. From late 1970 to early 1971 Egypt received an average of two shiploads of arms per month. The shipments included Frog tactical ground rockets, ZSU-23-4 anti-aircraft guns, TU-16 bombers, SU-7 fighter bombers and MIG-21 fighters. But these supplies did not meet Egypt's desire for advanced weapons to match Israel's deployment. What Sadat wanted, and what the Soviet Union would not give him, were the MIG-23 fighters and the SCUD medium-range ballistic missiles. See Roger F. Pajak, "Soviet Arms and Egypt", Survival, Volume XVII, No. 4, July-August, 1975, pp. 168-169.
At his final meeting with Brezhnev, in April 1972, Sadat had apparently secured Soviet agreement to meet his arms requests after the Moscow Summit but before November 1972, so that Egypt would be in a position to negotiate from strength after the American elections. But after the Summit Sadat received confirmation of his worst fears: the superpowers had agreed to seek a peaceful settlement and 'military relaxation' in the Middle East. Sadat wrote to Brezhnev requesting the fulfilment of the April agreement. Six weeks elapsed before the Soviet Union replied and when the answer finally arrived it made no mention of the arms agreement except to note that "war needed much preparation", especially the 'building up of morale'.

Under heavy pressure from the army and the masses for action, Sadat responded with a bold but calculated move: he ordered the immediate removal from Egypt of the 20,000 Soviet advisors and personnel together with any equipment they were not prepared to sell or surrender to the Egyptians. He had decided that if it proved necessary he would end the stalemate by military means. The first step in this plan was to convince the Soviet Union that he was indeed serious and therefore failure to comply with his requests would cost the Soviet Union dearly in the currency of Middle East influence.

The Egyptian President had found it necessary to defy the superpower decision to seek 'military relaxation' in the Middle East. In 'Al Ahram' editorials Heikal argued that the Soviet Union benefited from the 'no war - no peace' situation. The preservation of detente and the quiet growth of Soviet forward naval deployments necessitated stability in the Middle East. Since the superpowers had resolved to separate their relations from regional conflicts, Heikal argued that it was Egypt's responsibility to

13. The Russians complied with Sadat's demands quickly and quietly but they refused to sell Egypt the MIG-25 Foxbats and the radar system which together provided sophisticated reconnaissance for the Soviet forces in Egypt. Their presence had been one of the bones of contention between Egypt and the Soviet Union because the Russians refused to use the MIG-25s for Egyptian reconnaissance missions. When the advisors left they took this system with them, thereby seriously affecting Egypt's early-warning capability. See Sadat's 15th September Speech at Meeting with ASU and TU Leaders, BBC/SWB, ME/5009/A/12 - A/13, 17 September, 1975.
solve the problem of 'no war - no peace' by its own initiative. These
critical ruminations reflected Sadat's private conclusions about the
Soviet-American call for 'military relaxation':

What did this mean? It meant that if military
relaxation took place in the area at a time when
Israel was superior...the question would not be
solved. It would be a case of the stronger side
dictating conditions to us...Whether we accepted
it or not, they would say: We are staying where
we are and that is all.15

Sadat calculated that by expelling the Soviet military presence
he would demonstrate the costs to the Soviet Union of the superpower
attempt to control the Arab-Israeli conflict. The humiliation which
accompanied the Soviet expulsion, together with the damage done to
Soviet reputation by Sadat's public claim that it was not assisting
Egypt in its struggle against Israel,16 were calculated to play on the
Soviet fear of a loss of influence and prestige in the Middle East.

Sadat's aim was somehow to disrupt the status quo, thereby resisting
the effects of the Soviet-American detente, and forcing Israeli withdrawal
from occupied territories. The strategy had two branches: first he
would try to achieve diplomatic movement by threatening military action;
at the same time he would prepare for war so that if the threat of force
failed, the use of force would succeed in altering the status quo. The
military aim of the battle plan was to inflict "the heaviest losses on
the enemy, to convince it that the continuation of its occupation of our
territory was too high a price to pay".17 But the political aim was to
destroy Israel's 'security doctrine' and prove Egypt's ability to
disrupt the order which the superpowers had imposed.18 By threat of force
and then, if necessary, by the use of force, Sadat would prove to the

14. See Heikal's editorials in Al Ahram, in BBC/SWB, 24 June, 1972,
15. Sadat's Alexandria Speech, ME/4569/A/5.
16. Sadat made these charges in a mild form in a speech to the Arab
Socialist Union on 18 July 1972 (BBC/SWB, 20 July, 1972), but repeated
them in harsh terms in an interview with Arnaud de Borchgrave in
Newsweek, 7 August, 1972.
War, International Symposium on the October 1973 War, Cairo University,
27 October, 1975, p. 9.
18. See Sadat's 30th September Speech to ASU, BBC/SWB, 1 October , 1974,
ME/4717/A/3.
superpowers that Israeli military superiority would not deter Egypt from military action. Thus, there could be no 'military relaxation' in the Middle East unless Israel were forced to withdraw from the territories occupied in 1967. The strategy was designed to disprove the assumption that detente between the superpowers could create stability in the Middle East through American maintenance of Israel's deterrent strength and Russian restrictions on the arms it supplied to Egypt. Thus, in the final analysis, even if the military action failed, the political and diplomatic aims would be achieved by the mere fact that Egypt went to war. Sadat could even win by losing.

The first priority was to build Egypt's military strength to enhance the credibility of the threat, while ensuring some degree of military success if action were necessary. Thus Sadat began to exercise leverage over the Soviet Union. Having demonstrated the price Moscow would have to pay for the pursuit of 'military relaxation' in the Middle East, he began to emphasise the benefits to the Russians of renewing the relationship and supplying Egypt with arms. In December 1972, without consulting Brezhnev, Sadat announced that he would renew the three year agreement on Soviet use of port facilities in Alexandria, Mersa Matruh and Port Said. Two months later Sadat's complex gambit paid off when Moscow resumed arms shipments to Egypt, including some new and sophisticated weapons which Sadat had for so long requested.

Next, Sadat turned to the United States in an attempt to exercise leverage over his superpower adversary by threatening military action. But the Americans believed that the withdrawal of the Soviet advisors and their equipment represented a severe setback to Egyptian plans for the 'coming battle'. Their one positive response to the withdrawal, a move which was clearly in American interests, was to establish a

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21. As Dr Kissinger had explained to the press, in a background briefing in 1972: "We are trying to expel the Soviet military presence, not so much the advisors, but the combat pilots and the combat personnel, before they become so firmly established". Background Briefing with Dr Henry A. Kissinger, The White House, San Clemente, California, 24 August, 1970. (In the possession of the author).
'back-channel' of communication with Sadat. They assured him that America would renew its attempts at a negotiated settlement after the war in Vietnam had been concluded and after the Israeli elections scheduled to be held in October 1973. But Washington retained its implicit confidence in the reliability of the Israeli deterrent. Thus when, in April 1973, Sadat announced that the Russians were supplying Egypt "with everything that's possible for them to supply" and warned that the resumption of the battle was "now inevitable", the Americans dismissed this new threat as bombast. They had already agreed to supply Israel with 48 more F-4 Phantoms to maintain its deterrent strength. Because of their confidence in the Israeli army and their assumption that detente with the Soviet Union had reduced Egypt's ability to act independently, it was easy to ignore this new threat.

Sadat tried again in May 1973. This time he backed his threat of military action by mobilising the army and conducting extensive manoeuvres in the Canal zone. The Israel Defense Forces mobilised in response and the lid of stability was again clamped, apparently firmly clamped, back onto the Middle East tinderbox. The fact that no clash took place reinforced the American and Israeli belief in Israel's ability to hold the lid in place. But if Sadat's threat had no impact on the

22. See William B. Quandt, The Arab-Israeli Conflict in American Foreign Policy, 1967-1973, Shiloah Centre for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, December, 1974. Heikal reports Kissinger's reaction to the expulsion as: "I don't understand President Sadat. If he had come to me before this happened and told me about it I should have felt obliged to give him something in exchange. But now I've got it all for nothing". Heikal, The Road to Ramadan, p. 184; Cf. Edward Sheehan, "Step by Step in the Middle East", Foreign Policy, No. 22, Spring, 1976, p. 9. For Sadat, however, the expulsion was aimed at the Soviet Union, not at the United States, since he was well aware that it was an election year. He sought leverage through threatening instability not, at this stage, through a change of patrons. The timing may also have been determined by pressure from the Army. See Hottinger, op.cit., p. 151.


24. The Intelligence and Research Section (INR) of the State Department did estimate, on 31 May, 1973, that "the resumption of hostilities by autumn will become a better than even bet" if no progress were made in the forthcoming U.N. debate. However this assessment was not taken seriously because the United States secured Egyptian agreement to talks in New York in November 1973. In April 1973, U.S. Intelligence had obtained the complete Egyptian battle plan but did not believe that a date had been fixed. Evidence of new roads and bridge-building equipment in the Canal zone was also in hand, but all these signs were either ignored or misinterpreted because of the prevailing American and Israeli conception that the Arabs would not dare initiate a new war, without air superiority;
According to Sadat, the Russians decided to supply him with additional weapons and electronic equipment after the May mobilisation. Sadat now felt that he possessed the necessary ingredients to blow the lid off the tinderbox.

The 1973 June Summit between Nixon and Brezhnev brought neither an indication that the United States was about to change its policy, nor any sign that the Soviet Union was backing Egyptian policy with its political power. It was apparent to Sadat that his threat of war had become "inoperative" - "Egypt and the Arabs were taken for still corpses". It had therefore become necessary to pursue the second branch of his strategy and actually go to war - perhaps that would enable Egypt to regain some of its land and relieve the mounting internal pressure from a stagnating economy, an impatient army and dissident students. Most importantly, it would wake up the United States and the world to the need for a change in the status quo and perhaps destroy the belief in Israel's doctrine of deterrence. As Sadat stated after the war:

In the calculations we made for the battle, the important criterion was not how many square kilometres would be liberated, but the shattering of the theory of Israel's security. To destroy that theory was more important than the destruction of the Bar-Lev line; to restore the world's confidence in us, in our words and in our ability to act, was more important than crossing the Canal.

One should not underestimate the gamble and risk which Sadat was taking. Certainly by August 1973 he had reached agreement with Syria on a

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27. Sadat's 30th September Speech to the A.S.U., ME/4717/A/3.
coordinated attack that would have the advantage of surprise. He had also reached agreement with King Faisal of Saudi Arabia not only to finance Egypt's arms purchases but also to employ his oil reserves for political purposes. These factors, together with his knowledge that the army had been training for the battle for six years and now had sophisticated weapons to match Israel in some spheres, may have lessened the risks. But against this remained the much vaunted power of the IDF, the fact that Israel retained air superiority, the poor reputation and fighting record of the Egyptian Army, American opposition to military action, uncertainty as to Soviet support, and the ultimate risk that, if he failed and Egypt's army were again destroyed, his country would be in ruins and he would be in disgrace.

Thus, in the final analysis, it was Sadat's willingness to accept the risks and costs of battle - his determination to prevent Egypt's interests from being sacrificed on the altar of detente - which proved decisive. While Egypt controlled some powerful resources, they could only be used to influence events in Egypt's favour if its leadership had the will-power to defy the restraints imposed by the superpowers. Clearly, the United States and Israel did not believe that Sadat possessed this strength of will - that is why Sadat decided to go to war and why they were taken by surprise when he did. As Kissinger publicly acknowledged during the war:

If the Arab objective was...to emphasise the fact that permanent stability cannot be assumed in the Middle East and that there is an urgency in achieving a negotiated settlement...then it would be our judgement that the point has been made.28

One problem which arises from this argument is that Egyptian willingness to act alone and decisively is uncharacteristic of the expected behaviour of a weak and dependent client state. Thus, some observers have been quick to find the guiding hand of the Soviet Union behind the Egyptian action. However, an examination of the Soviet dilemma in the pre-war period suggests that it was indeed the Egyptian camel which, yet again, led the Russian bear.

Since 1970, it had been clear that the Soviet Union opposed military action as a means for forcing Israeli withdrawal. In public, as well as in the private discussions, the Soviet Union stressed the need for a political settlement in the Middle East. Moscow shared the American and Israeli perception of the low military potential of the Egyptian army and this created a serious dilemma for Soviet policy. If it supplied Egypt with the weapons necessary to go to war that might well lead to a further humiliating defeat for Soviet arms and the almost certain prospect of confrontation with the United States. Soviet involvement in the defence of Egypt was so widespread at the time that it would have been difficult for it to avoid direct involvement. On the other hand, if Egypt entered into negotiations with the United States for a political settlement, those negotiations might well lead to a lessened Egyptian dependence on Soviet military aid, which remained the currency of Soviet influence in the region. Thus, by supplying Cairo with some arms while holding out the promise of more, Moscow could prevent Egypt from going to war and also prevent it from achieving the 'position of strength' necessary for negotiations with the United States. By restricting arms supplies the Soviet Union established an escape route from its Middle Eastern dilemma which enabled it to exercise control over Egypt's belligerent aspirations while consolidating its position of influence and indeed benefiting from the 'no war - no peace' situation. The Moscow communique on 'military relaxation' could therefore be interpreted as a formalisation of this Soviet policy.

29. Thus, in May 1971, Soviet experts told a delegation of Syrian communists: "Some people maintain that the problem of eliminating the consequences of aggression must be solved through war, but without preparation this would lead to the liquidation of the progressive regimes. It could also lead to a confrontation between the Soviets and Americans. We do not conceal the fact that we are not in favour of this except in the case of extreme necessity. Our opposition is not to a military solution per se, but arises only because we are realistic". See "The Soviet Attitude to the Palestine Problem", Journal of Palestine Studies, Volume II, No. 2, Autumn, 1972, p. 188. For other statements see Robert O. Freedman, Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1975, Chapter 3; Y. Ro'i, op.cit., Sections 104, 107 and 110.

However, with the expulsion of the Soviet advisors in July 1972, the policy suddenly disintegrated and the Soviet Union had to seek a new way to escape its dilemma. Sadat had raised the stakes for the Soviet Union in the Middle East. Overnight the Soviet position in the region had deteriorated and the prospect of further deterioration now threatened. If Sadat was determined to go to war the best the Soviet Union could do was to supply Egypt with arms sufficient to obviate Soviet intervention and to prevent any new outbreak from engulfing the superpowers. The worst the Soviet Union could do was to give Sadat an opportunity to blame a new defeat on Soviet reluctance to supply arms.

Despite the humiliating expulsion and the press recriminations which followed it, all was not lost for the Soviet Union. Sadat had not abrogated the 1971 Soviet Egyptian Treaty of Friendship, nor had he turned to the United States for support. Although, following the expulsion, there had been tense moments in Soviet-Egyptian relations, Sadat had publicly reaffirmed Soviet access to Egyptian port facilities. Moreover, despite attempts to buy arms in Europe, it was evident that Sadat really had no viable alternative source for military equipment. Perhaps most significant was the fact that the withdrawal of Russian personnel had indirectly reduced the dangers of superpower confrontation since the Soviet Union was no longer involved on the ground. In these circumstances the basis existed for a rapprochement between client and patron through the resumption of arms supplies; that would serve to recoup the Soviet loss of face while not over-extending the Russian commitment and thereby threatening the superpower detente. Thus, after Sadat had unilaterally announced the renewal of the agreement on port facilities, the Soviet Union resumed the shipment of arms, this time including some of the sophisticated weapons which had previously been a bone of contention.  

31. Sadat has noted that the Soviet Union was concerned that the United States might have been behind his decision to expel the advisers. He apparently had to reassure them on this count. See Sadat's Alexandria Speech, ME/4569/A/5.


33. Monetary considerations may also have played a role in the Soviet decision, since Sadat, with the help of the Arab oil states, was now willing to pay in hard currency for Soviet arms. On this period see Alvin Z. Rubinstein, Red Star on the Nile, Princeton, New Jersey, 1977, Chapter 7; Y. Ro'i, "The U.S.S.R. and Egypt in the Wake of Sadat's July Decisions", Soviet and Slavic Studies, No.1, September, 1975.
The closer Sadat came to war the more weapons the Soviet Union supplied. The shock which Sadat had administered by expelling the Soviet advisors had been sufficient to convince Moscow that Egypt was determined to go to war, alone if necessary. In that situation Soviet interests dictated a policy of military assistance.

What were the implications for detente of Soviet acquiescence in Egypt's determination to go to war? Critics of detente have seen in Soviet willingness to supply arms a defiance of the declared principles of detente. However, such an argument can only be sustained on the assumption that detente means the maintenance of a particular world order regardless of whether the costs and benefits of that order fall unevenly on the two superpowers. It assumes that the superpowers will be willing to control their clients, at the cost of their competitive interests, to benefit their mutual interest in detente. The rhetoric of detente can certainly be cited in defence of these assumptions.

However, the reality of international relations, especially the fact that competition between the superpowers continues apace, requires a more realistic appraisal of the meaning of detente. Instead of assuming that particular national interests have given way to the interests of world order, it is more realistic to assume that the pursuit of national interest for both superpowers will take precedence and that the strength of detente will depend on the degree to which these national interests converge. It is more realistic to assume that the superpowers will not be prepared to bear, unilaterally, the costs of controlling their clients. It is more realistic to recognise that the clients do have the ability to affect the national interest of their superpower patrons and therefore have the ability to affect the degree of their mutual interest in the maintenance of a particular superpower order. Detente is not, as Sir Alec Douglas-Home would have us believe, the "essence of good neighbourliness". It is rather an agreement between bad neighbours not to destroy the fence which separates them while each attempts to move that fence and extend its back-yard.

Thus a realistic analysis of the events which led to the October war would emphasise not Soviet perfidy, but Egyptian ability to effect a deterioration in the Soviet position in the region. The blow to Soviet prestige and influence reduced the degree of Moscow's interest in the maintenance of an order which had proven costly to its position while benefiting the American position in the Middle East. In that situation the superpowers only retained a mutual interest in preventing a new outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East from escalating to the level of global confrontation. The critics of detente have argued that if this were true the Soviet Union should have warned the United States of the imminent outbreak of hostilities. Kissinger has dismissed this criticism by relegating such warning to an ideal world where the superpowers would be prepared to bear the responsibility of making known advance information. However, the evidence suggests that the Soviet Union did make some attempt to warn the United States within the limits laid down by the need to protect its interests in the Middle East.

During the June 1973 Summit, Brezhnev warned Nixon in explicit terms that the Middle East was indeed explosive and that war could occur at any time. According to Nixon, there had been a "heated" discussion on the Middle East. For three hours Brezhnev "hammered" him, conveying to Nixon the following message:

You must force the Israelis to withdraw from all occupied territories and they must do it soon. It is my concern that unless the Israelis do withdraw the Egyptians and Syrians are going to attack and they are going to do it soon.

Perhaps this warning could be dismissed, as it appears to have been at the time, as standard fare in the diplomatic exchanges between the Soviet Union and the United States. However, the vehemence of Brezhnev's remarks suggests that the Soviet Union went somewhat further than usual in warning the United States. Ray Cline, the former head of Intelligence and Research in the State Department has stated indirectly that the


36. Quandt, op. cit. (Quandt was a member of the National Security Council Staff at the time).

Soviet warning would have enabled the intelligence agencies to predict that a war was coming, had they known about it. In a letter he addressed to Kissinger after the October war, which admittedly attempted to justify the intelligence failure, he stated:

...our calculations would have crystallised earlier and been more finely tuned to your needs if we had known about the exchanges you were having with the Russians. In retrospect, the evidence of Russian concern appears to have been the missing element in the picture. You did not tell me about it, or anyone else who could have helped INR crank it into the equation. (emphasis supplied).

Cline is clearly implying that Kissinger was well aware of Russian concern about the outbreak of war. Moreover, as the war approached, the Soviet Union issued a signal which might not have been ambiguous had those apparent Soviet warnings been taken seriously: in an unprecedented move the Russians evacuated their civilian advisors from Egypt and Syria 36 hours before the surprise attack was launched. According to Sadat and Heikal, the Soviet Union was not informed of the timing of the attack until Thursday, 4 October. The almost immediate

38. Cline, "Policy without Intelligence", p. 132. Further evidence of Soviet concern emerged in the report of the Pike Select Committee on Intelligence: "NSA information indicated that a foreign nation] had become extremely sensitive to the prospect of war and concerned about their citizens and dependents in Egypt". According to this report the CIA also concurred with Cline: "If the information contained in the NSA messages had been available prior to the outbreak of hostilities we could have clearly predicted that a foreign nation] knew in advance that renewed hostilities were imminent in the Middle East." See "The CIA Report the President Doesn't Want You to Read", loc.cit.

39. The Pike Committee was unable to subpoena Kissinger's notes on his discussions with world leaders so this implication could not be substantiated by the investigation.

40. Sadat claims that he only informed the Soviet Ambassador of the decision to go to war, but not the actual timing, when he saw him on Wednesday, 3 October. It was arranged that President Assad of Syria would inform the Soviet Union of the timing on Thursday, 4 October. See Sadat's 15th September Speech at Meeting with ASU and TU Leaders, ME/5009/A/4. It is likely that the Soviet Union was aware before this date of the imminent outbreak of hostilities since it launched the first of six satellites to orbit over the Middle East on Thursday, 4 October. These satellites require two weeks to prepare. The Soviet press began discussing the possibility of war in August, and there were reports of top-level meetings between Egypt and the Soviet Union in September, which might also indicate Soviet awareness of Sadat's decision. But none of these facts suggest that the Soviet Union knew the actual date for the attack. See Insight Team of the Sunday Times, The Yom Kippur War, London, 1975, p. 112; Galia Golan, "The Soviet Union and the Arab-Israeli War of October 1973", Jerusalem Papers on Peace Problems, No. 7, June 1974, pp. 11ff; Rubinstein, Red Star on the Nile, pp. 253-6.
Russian response was to request the evacuation, in a particularly conspicuous way, of Soviet citizens. Early Friday morning six TU-144 transport planes collected Soviet advisors and their families from the Cairo military airbase; the same curious event was repeated in Syria. Both the United States and Israel were aware of this evacuation but did not interpret this move as a Soviet warning. Golda Meir has admitted that the evidence of evacuation led her to question Israeli intelligence estimates but she was reassured that war was not imminent.

This evidence again suggests that the Soviet Union was balancing its interest in avoiding confrontation with the United States with its interest in seeing that Egypt was not defeated again and the Soviet Union humiliated. The Russians did give various warnings and signals, however ambiguous, but they were either ignored or misread. If they had explicitly warned the United States on 4 October that the Arabs planned to attack on 6 October, they ran the risk that the United States would convey this information to Israel. The all-important effect of surprise would be forsaken and the likelihood of an Arab defeat would increase. They also risked the accusation of betraying the Arab cause.

The Soviet Union complied with the principles of detente only in so far as such compliance did not irreparably damage its position of influence in the Middle East. Moscow did not so much seek unilateral advantage in the Middle East, as it did seek to limit the unilateral disadvantages which arose from the fact that its Egyptian protégé was determined to go to war.

II - ISRAEL'S DECISION NOT TO PRE-EMPT

At 4 a.m. on 6 October, the Israeli Chief-of-Staff, General David Elazar, awoke to the news that Egypt and Syria intended to attack at 6 that same evening. The day before, Elazar had already discussed a pre-emptive strike to disrupt such an attack with the Commander of the Air Force, General Binyamin Peled. At 5, Elazar ordered Peled to prepare the pre-emptive strike and issued a stand-by order to attack at 1.00p.m. 43

At 9 a.m. Elazar took his plan to Prime Minister Meir for approval, but by 9.25 Mrs Meir had decided "for political reasons" to cancel the pre-emptive strike.\(^{44}\)

In the wake of the October War any analysis of this decision has been buried under the wave of investigations and recriminations concerning another question: Israel's failure to predict the surprise attack. However, Israel's decision not to pre-empt provides an important contrast with Egyptian behaviour, thereby highlighting the differing effects of detente on the politics of patronage.

Although the evidence is limited, it is clear that a pre-emptive strike would have been attractive to those few involved in the decisions taken on that Saturday morning. Pre-emption had been the basic tenet of Israel's military doctrine, and both in 1956 and 1967 Israel had undertaken pre-emptive strikes against its Arab adversaries.\(^{45}\) Defence Minister Moshe Dayan had been Chief-of-Staff in 1956 and Minister of Defence in 1967. Mrs Meir had been Foreign Minister in 1956 and had taken an active part in the decision to pre-empt at that time. Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon had developed a theory of the pre-emptive strike in his book on Israel's Army and had stated explicitly that after the 1967 war a pre-emptive air strike remained "absolutely vital" in a situation where the enemy forces were concentrating "in preparation for an offensive".\(^{46}\)

On the military side, there were strong arguments in favour of pre-emption. The standing theory of pre-emption emphasised the general objective of damaging the enemy's reactive capacities and exploiting its peace-time vulnerabilities. The theory identified several specific objectives for a pre-emptive air strike: disruption of the command and control network of the enemy forces (especially its radar system); destruction of enemy airfields and aircraft; destruction of ground-to-air and ground-to-ground missile systems; bombardment of enemy troop concentrations (including, in the case of Egypt, its canal-bridging equipment); and deep-penetration strikes on strategic targets. Given the

\(^{44}\) Agranat Commission of Inquiry into Yom Kippur War, Partial Report, Israel Government Press Office, 2 April, 1974, Chapter II, p. 10.

\(^{45}\) The first rule of Israel's military doctrine had been that "the IDF will undertake a pre-emptive attack if the security of the State is endangered". Michael I Handel, *Israel's Political-Military Doctrine*, Harvard University Center for International Affairs, Occasional Papers in International Affairs, No. 3, July, 1973, p. 66.

existing conditions on both fronts in October 1973, it is true that the value of such missions would have been depreciated. The Egyptian Air Force, housed in reinforced hangars, had a measure of protection against air strikes. The existence of alert missile systems on both fronts would have necessitated concentration on air-defence suppression before bombardment of enemy concentrations or deep-penetration bombing could be carried out.

Nevertheless, for Israel pre-emption still retained considerable advantages. Even if the Egyptian air-force could not be destroyed in a repeat performance of the 1967 strike, damage could be inflicted on the airfields and enemy air sorties disrupted accordingly. Of greater importance was the fact that the IAF could have begun the crucial task of air-defence suppression before the enemy attacked and it was forced to concentrate on the role of close air-support for the besieged Israeli army. To the extent that such suppression succeeded, the IAF would have gained greater manoeuvrability and effectiveness in its ground support role and in its interdiction of the Egyptian canal bridges once the enemy had attacked. This was precisely the strategy that the IAF had prepared for the coming war. Moreover, air-strikes on the front-line missiles and troop concentrations would have disrupted the enemy offensive and communications. One authoritative writer has argued that the IAF could have delivered three thousand tons of bombs on enemy targets before the Arab attack reached full strength. As General Peled subsequently observed:

47. According to General Peled the IAF succeeded in destroying 22 Egyptian aircraft inside their shelters. This would suggest that the IAF placed a higher value on bombing airfields and achieved a higher rate of success than is commonly believed. See Peled, "The Air Force in the Yom Kippur War - Main Moves and Lessons", in Military Aspects of the Israeli-Arab Conflict, p. 255. Moreover, it is clear that the IAF still accorded bombing of airfields a high priority in its operations, despite their hardening. On the second day of the war, while the ground forces still required considerable close air-support, seven Egyptian airfields were attacked. These attacks continued until the last day of the war. See Israeli Air Force Headquarters, The Air Force in the 'Yom Kippur War', Israel Ministry of Defence, February, 1975.

48. Chaim Herzog, Israel's semi-official military historian, has stated: "The Israeli Air Force prepared for the coming war on the assumption that at the outbreak of the conflict it would be given adequate time to concentrate on the missile threat, without being involved in interdiction or close support in the first phase...the Air Force was to enjoy a certain latitude without being obliged to care for the ground forces". See Herzog, The War of Atonement, London, 1975, pp. 254-5.

At least the conduct of the people who make decisions on the enemy side would have been influenced somewhat or perhaps severely, by the fact that...their surprise was no surprise. I would think that emotionally and psychologically maybe some things would have changed in their way of thinking and in the way the troops carried out their pre-planned orders.50

Thus Chief-of-Staff El’azar would have entered Mrs Meir’s office on Saturday morning with some persuasive arguments in favour of a pre-emptive air strike - he believed it to be "the most effective means of reaction". Pre-emption was expected to disrupt and retard the enemy offensive, allow Israel’s army more time to mobilise, and destroy at least part of the enemy air-defense systems.51 (In analysing these expectations, it is well to remember that the Israeli decision-makers would not have known at the time just how lethal the combination of missiles and anti-aircraft guns would prove to be.) Whatever the expected effectiveness of pre-emption, it is beyond doubt that Israeli casualties would have been reduced. This final argument was perhaps the most persuasive because for Israel the desire to minimise losses and casualties in any way possible was one of the principles "guiding all tactical and strategic planning".52

Elazar’s arguments were almost certainly supported by Peled and former Chief-of-Staff Haim Bar Lev who was now Minister for Commerce and Industry. However, Defence Minister Dayan disagreed. While concurring with the argument that a pre-emptive strike would disrupt Arab preparations, he did not believe that the benefits of a strike against an alert enemy protected by its missile defences outweighed the likely political damage which Israel would incur by striking first: "I feared that such moves would burden our prospects of securing the full support of the

50. Peled, op.cit., p. 255.

51. See David Elazar, "The Yom Kippur War, Military Lessons", in Military Aspects of the Israeli-Arab Conflict, p. 247. On Saturday morning the Israeli army had not yet been mobilised but the Air Force had been preparing a pre-emptive strike since Friday and its combat effectiveness was fully mobilised. The fact that the Air Force was fully prepared, while the army was not even deployed in its forward defence positions, not only increased the incentive for a pre-emptive air strike, but also provided the only means of reaction for a Chief-of-Staff keen to deny the enemy the advantage of surprise and to gain the offensive as quickly as possible.

52. Handel, op.cit., p. 68.
Political considerations had guided Dayan's military strategy since the conclusion of the War of Attrition. In the period from 1970 to 1973 the Syrian and Egyptian forces had been deployed in strength along the cease-fire lines and therefore retained the option to strike first. In this situation Israel had two strategic choices: 1) it could pre-empt at the first sign of Arab offensive intentions; and 2) it could mobilise and await the attack. While Israel retained the occupied territories and air superiority the first choice, pre-emption, was no longer a military necessity and Dayan had ordered the IDF to adopt the second option. Political considerations had determined Dayan's decision to await the enemy attack: he did not believe that a policy of preventive war would be tolerated by the United States nor would it bring a settlement closer. Thus, instead of pre-emption, the IDF relied on early-warning to allow time for mobilisation, and on the ability of the quick-reaction forces (the air force and the regular army) to deal with any enemy attack in its first stage.

However, on 6 October, Israel did not have the benefit of early-warning of the impending attack and for that very reason Elazar called for a tactical change in the original plan in order to deal with this unexpected situation. Dayan opposed the change to pre-emptive war and clung to the defensive strategy in the belief that the regular forces could hold the attack even in a situation of zero-warning when the reserves

53. Moshe Dayan, *The Story of My Life*, London, 1976, p. 376; Cf. Insight Team, *The Yom Kippur War*, p. 123. Dayan claims, in his autobiography, that the pre-emption was planned against Syria alone and only against Syrian air bases. This does not seem very credible given Dayan's own admissions later in the book, that operational plans called for the IAF to play a crucial role in close-air support until the arrival of additional reserves, that both he and the General Staff knew long before the war that the missiles presented a serious threat to Israel's battlefield air superiority, that on the first day of the war the IAF was planning to strike both the Syrian airfields and the missiles "in order to neutralise them", that the IAF knew it had to neutralise the Egyptian missiles before operating against Egyptian forces on the Canal banks, and that "standard doctrine" was to attempt first to silence the anti-aircraft missiles. These statements not only cast doubt on his claim that the IAF was only planning to pre-empt against Syrian air bases, they also provide excellent military reasons for a pre-emptive strike. From his account, it is clear that Dayan was concerned about the American attitude, doubted the effectiveness of a strike against missiles, and was confident that pre-emption was, in any case, unnecessary because of Israel's strength. See pp. 378, 381, 383, 389, 390, 391, 394, 395, 418-9.

had not been mobilised. He would later admit that he had misjudged the strength of the Arab forces, but at the time he did not consider it necessary to reassess his strategy. Having disparaged the military benefits of a pre-emptive strike, he believed the political damage Israel would incur from striking first would be far greater, and accordingly he opposed pre-emption.

The decision rested with Golda Meir. The fact that Dayan opposed the strike should not be considered as decisive since Mrs Meir had already overruled his opposition to general mobilisation. Now Elazar apprised her of the military arguments in favour of pre-emption, but drew an important distinction between the situation in 1967 and the situation in 1973. He explained that the occupied territories enabled defence-in-depth against an enemy attack so that, unlike Israel's predicament in 1967, "even if we do not strike first, we shall not lose the war." In other words, unlike 1967, pre-emption was not crucial to the survival of the state even though it carried substantial military benefits. According to Mrs Meir, she had already made up her mind:

I know all the arguments in favour of a pre-emptive strike but I am against it...there is always the possibility that we will need help, and if we strike first, we will get nothing from anyone.

The Prime Minister was concerned with the fall-out from a first strike on Israel's relations with its American patron. Secretary of State Kissinger had warned Israel long before in strong terms:

55. So strong was Dayan's belief in the ability of the regular forces, that on 6 October he opposed general mobilisation, arguing that the mobilisation of two divisions would be sufficient for defensive purposes. See Agranat Report, p. 10.

56. During the war Dayan briefed Israeli editors on the implications of the Arab attack and stated, inter alia: "It revealed to the entire world that we are not stronger than the Egyptians. The halo of superiority, the political and military principle that Israel is stronger than the Arabs and that if they dared to start war, they would be defeated, has not been proved here". See "We Cannot Push Egyptians Back Now", (Transcript of Defence Minister Dayan's briefing to Israel's newspaper editors, 9 October, 1973), Jerusalem Post, 15 February, 1974.


58. Elazar, op. cit., p. 258.

Don't ever start the war. Don't ever pre-empt!
If you fire the first shot, you won't have a
dogcatcher in this country supporting you. You
won't have Presidential support. You'll be
alone, all alone. We wouldn't be able to help
you.60

American opposition to an Israeli pre-emption was so well understood that it
was unnecessary for Mrs Meir to consult with the United States before
making the decision. 61  Tactically, it would have been wiser for Israel to
seek a restatement of American opposition to pre-emption; in that way it
might have been possible to saddle the United States with greater
responsibility in the ensuing war. 62 But there was no time for such
manoeuvring in this crisis. In the belief that Israel would be
sacrificing short-term military benefits for the sake of American patronage,
Mrs Meir decided against a pre-emptive strike. At noon, the Israeli
Cabinet met and endorsed, without dissent, the decision not to pre-empt. 63

In contrast to Sadat's daring, Meir's caution is understandable and
underlines the effect on Israel's behaviour of its dependence upon American
patronage. The fear that Israel would be isolated in this crisis and unable
to turn anywhere, other than Washington, for support, was clearly uppermost
in the Prime Minister's mind. As she subsequently explained, if Israel
had pre-empted, it would have been impossible to prove to a sceptical
world that the Arabs had indeed been planning to attack:

...we did not want to create a situation where we will
talk ourselves blue in the face saying we did not start
the war, we did not cause the war, and friends who are
not so friendly and even our best friends will say:
If only you had not done that we could have helped you
more.64

60. Cited in Malvin Kalb and Bernard Kalb, Kissinger, p. 520. The Kalbs
claim that this had been Kissinger's "constant refrain" to the Israeli
Embassy staff since his appointment as Secretary of State.

61. Mrs Meir informed the American Ambassador after the decision had been
taken and asked him to convey this to Washington. Insight Team, p. 125;
Golda Meir, p. 359.

62. Kissinger clearly understood that the Israeli decision had been taken
with regard for American interests and he quickly sought to absolve the
United States of any responsibility for it. He told the press on 12
October: "...the U.S. had no occasion to warn any country against engaging


64. Transcript of Interview with Prime Minister Meir on CBS 'Face the
In her autobiography, Mrs Meir went further in justifying her decision on the basis of considerations of patronage: "Thank God I was right to reject the idea of a pre-emptive strike! It might have saved lives in the beginning, but I am sure that we would not have had that airlift, which saved so many lives". 65

However, that explanation is based on post hoc reasoning. On Saturday morning Mrs Meir did not know that an American airlift of arms would be necessary; Dayan had even suggested that full mobilisation was not needed in the initial stages. Moreover, a pre-emptive strike would have been expected to reduce the requirements for American military assistance. Thus Mrs Meir's political reaction was based on more than just immediate considerations of world opinion or military support. It was rather based on her perception of Israel's value to the United States as a force for stability in the region. For, since 1970, with American support, Israel had elevated its doctrine of deterrence to a political formula for the maintenance of the status quo. Now that deterrence had failed to prevent another war, the whole basis of Israel's post-1970 'strategic relationship' with its American patron had become questionable. The spectre of an imposed solution, which had been laid to rest in 1970 was again raised in the minds of Israel's decision-makers.

It had not been easy to convince the United States that the maintenance of the status quo served American interests as well as Israel's. However, after the failure of the State Department's attempts to reach a comprehensive settlement in 1969 and 1970, and a partial settlement in 1971, and with the introduction of 20,000 Soviet advisors and operational personnel into Egypt in 1970, the White House had taken a greater interest in Middle East developments. The preoccupation of the President and his National Security Advisor with Soviet actions in the region altered the American perspective. Following the 1970 Jordanian crisis, Israel's strategic importance acquired a greater contingent value because the maintenance of Israel's deterrent strength could serve a number of American interests: it could promote stability by deterring war and thereby avoid a superpower confrontation; it could cause the Arabs to be dissatisfied with the military support of their Soviet patron, thereby reducing the influence of Moscow, while persuading Arab leaders that only Washington could get Israel to

withdraw; and it could help to protect the 'conservative' Arab regimes from subversion by the 'radical' states, as it had helped deter further Syrian intervention in Jordan in 1970. 66

Egyptian actions had tended to confirm the American faith in Israel's deterrent strength. In 1971, despite Sadat's promise that it would be the 'year of decision', Egypt proved incapable of taking military action. In 1972, the Soviet Union expressed greater interest in detente and was therefore content to seek 'military relaxation' in the Middle East - a relaxation which was based on Israel's military preponderance. The subsequent expulsion of Soviet personnel from Egypt together with their sophisticated equipment, was interpreted as the ultimate confirmation of the policy of bolstering Israel's deterrent strength. The spectre of superpower confrontation appeared to have been exorcised with the departure of Soviet personnel and Egypt seemed even less capable of military action than in 1971. 67 The idea that Israel served American strategic interests in the Middle East became firmly entrenched in the policy of the United States government. 68 The Rogers Plan for a political settlement had been returned to the State Department drawer 69 and the attempt to pressure Israel through the withholding of arms had been abandoned. 70

66. See H. Brandon, "Jordan, the Forgotten Crisis", Foreign Policy, No. 10, Spring, 1973; Kalbs, Kissinger, Chapter 8.
67. Abraham S. Becker, "The Superpowers in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1970-1973", in The Economics and Politics of the Middle East, p. 108. The Pike Intelligence Committee reported that the CIA, DIA and INR all believed by the summer of 1973 that "Egypt was not capable of a major assault across the Suez Canal". The Israeli perception was similar. Former Chief-of-Staff Haim Bar Lev has noted that "the eviction of the Russians by Sadat was interpreted in Israel as a sign of Egypt's withdrawal from the war". See "The CIA Report the President Doesn't Want You to Read", loc.cit; "Surprise and Yom Kippur War", in Military Aspects of the Israeli-Arab Conflict, p. 262.
69. In August-September 1971 Rogers had made a final and fruitless attempt at diplomatic movement. Heikal reports that Rogers told the Egyptians at this stage: "the United States had no means of convincing the Israelis of the need to [withdraw] or of imposing such an obligation on them". Rogers subsequent demise and Kissinger's inexorable rise reinforced the convergence of American and Israeli interests since deterrence was consistent with Kissinger's 'balance of power' perspective and his desire to limit Soviet influence in the region. See Heikal, The Road to Ramadan, p. 153; Quandt, ibid.; Becker, op.cit., p. 108 and footnote 70.
70. In her December 1971 meeting with President Nixon Mrs Meir secured American agreement to supply 42 F-4 Phantoms and 82 A-4 Skyhawks. This was the first long-term military assistance programme concluded between the United States and Israel and included aid for the development of Israel's
Thus by October 1973, the Nixon Administration had come to accept that a strong Israel provided an interim means for ensuring stability in the Arab-Israeli theatre. Israel's leaders were prepared to accept, without question, this new emphasis on the strategic dimension, partly because it was something which they had argued since 1967, and partly because it took the relationship between patron and client off the moral and ideological plain and placed it on a level where Israel could argue that it served American interests as well as American principles. It enabled Israel to gain greater American military and economic support while providing this weak state with the means to resist State Department diplomacy. Thus, in March 1973, the former Israeli Ambassador to Washington, Yitzhak Rabin, argued that Israel's relations with the United States would be better served if there were no immediate solution to the conflict. He argued that the danger of an imposed solution had passed because it was in the mutual interests of Israel and the United States to prevent war and to prevent Israel from withdrawing "a single inch" from the existing lines:

...the United States knows that removing Israel from the lines by force is not only a serious matter for Israel, but would also harm American interests...The United States knows that if it wants to prevent war the guarantee for that is a strong Israel.72

70. (continued) defence industries. American diplomacy was now to be based on a policy of building Israel's strength in the belief that this would give it the confidence to make territorial concessions. See Testimony of Hon. Joseph J. Sisco, Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South Asian Affairs, Emergency Security Assistance Act of 1973, Hearings, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 93rd Congress, 1st Session, 3 December, 1973, p. 71.

71. The following table illustrates the massive increase in aid in the 1971 to 1973 period:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Military Credit Sales</td>
<td>136.4</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>545.0</td>
<td>300.0</td>
<td>307.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic Loans</td>
<td>272.0</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>74.7</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>86.5</td>
<td>74.9</td>
<td>80.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic Grants</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>50.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>432.8</td>
<td>100.5</td>
<td>160.3</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>631.8</td>
<td>425.3</td>
<td>438.9</td>
</tr>
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1 The 1973 figure excludes the $2.2 billion in emergency military assistance granted after the October war.


72. Davar, 11 March, 5 April, 1973. Yoel Marcus summed up the Israeli view in an article in Ha'aretz: "...what we have done is to succeed in certain fields in merging our interests with American interests. Most of the fundamental arguments that we used with the Americans have been proved true,
The essential point, which was well understood by Israel's decision-makers, was that Israel gained American support for its policies as long as they served the cause of stability in the region. This was precisely the rationale behind President Nixon's understanding of the balance of power in the Middle East:

...once the balance of power shifts where Israel is weaker than its neighbours, there will be a war. Therefore it is in U.S. interests to maintain the balance of power...we will do what is necessary to maintain Israel's strength vis-a-vis her neighbours. Not because we want Israel to be in a position to wage war...but that is what will deter its neighbours from attacking it.\(^73\) (emphasis supplied)

Having failed to deter its Arab neighbours, if Israel now waged a pre-emptive war, it would contradict the very basis of American military patronage and damage the American interest in stability which Israel had sought to serve. For a short time Israel had been able to act independently and resist the effects of its dependence on the United States by claiming that its strength maintained stability. Now that Egypt intended to disrupt that stability with Soviet support, Israel retained only the traditional lever of appealing to American principles to offset the effects of its dependence on the United States. If Israel wanted American support, it would have to do America's bidding, and it was clear, without asking, that America would oppose a pre-emptive disruption of the stability that best served its interests. Israel could still rely on American support for its survival but Washington had always drawn a distinction between its commitment to Israel's existence and its support for Israel's conquests.\(^74\) On 6 October it must have been clear that the United States would not condone a pre-emptive attempt to defend Israel's conquests.

To go it alone is a crucial and risky decision for a dependent state to take. Such a decision requires a strong will and the intensity

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72. (continued) and every time we have proved the truth of our arguments, the Americans have listened to the new arguments that we have adduced", Ha'aretz, 7 March, 1973, cited in Journal of Palestine Studies, Volume II, No. 4, Summer, 1973, pp. 125-6.


74. For example, in Kissinger's 1970 background briefing he stated: "We are trying to separate the issue of Israel's conquest, to which we cannot give an American position, from Israel's existence, to which we are now committed". Loc. cit., p. 23.
of interest that accompanies it. Egypt had found the effect of detente unpalatable and consequently had a high intensity of interest and a strong determination to resist the order which the superpowers had attempted to impose. Israel had benefited from, had in fact been the instrument for, the imposition of that superpower order. None would doubt that Israel had a high intensity of interest in survival but, on 6 October, maintaining American support seemed to serve that interest better than pre-empting the Arab attack. Thus Mrs Meir made a rational decision not to go it alone, not to apply Israel's will-power, not to absorb the political costs of pre-emption while reaping its military benefits. Instead, she decided to await the Arab attack in the hope that the United States would act according to the principle of 'defending the Jewish democracy from aggression', now that its strategic interests were no longer served.

With the failure of deterrence the Middle East equation had suddenly changed and Israel's leverage over its patron had been reduced accordingly. In the ensuing war, the fate of Israel would not only depend upon its success on the battlefield, it would also depend on the price which the United States demanded for its support. And that price depended not so much on America's desire to maintain the structure of detente but rather more on its desire to seek unilateral advantage in the Middle East and improve its position in the Arab world.

III - CONCLUSION

In the future the October 1973 Middle East war may come to be regarded as the turning point for detente since it was the first real test of the principles laid down in the 1972 Moscow Communiqué and confirmed by the 1973 Summit. If the verdict of historians is that detente did not meet up to its first test then that verdict will have been based on false assumptions about the meaning of detente. For detente is not in itself a policy pursued by both superpowers, but rather the result of their individual policies. Detente is no more, and no less, than a reduction of tension in relations between the superpowers. It is, as Philip Windsor has noted, "a recipe for competitive diplomacy", rather than a recipe for the construction of a superpower world order.

75. Philip Windsor, "The Savior From the Sea", Foreign Policy, No. 22, Spring, 1976, p. 171.
By 1972 competitive diplomacy in the Middle East had resulted in a superpower agreement to seek 'military relaxation' in the region as the best way to consolidate their regional interests while protecting their global interest in a reduction of tension. This agreement not only suited the interests of the superpowers, it also suited the interests of Israel, since it enabled this dependent client to maintain its occupation of Arab territories - a position which it regarded as optimal in the absence of a peace settlement. Thus in 1972 the prevention of war in the Middle East served the national interests of the United States, Israel and the Soviet Union. However, as we have argued, the maintenance of the status quo did not at all suit Egypt’s interests. Accordingly, Sadat expelled the Soviet advisors from Egypt as the first step in his plan to resist the superpower agreement. This move in itself altered the nature of the agreement and caused a new divergence in the regional policies of the two superpowers.

Thus by 1973, while the prevention of war still served the national interests of the United States and Israel, it had only served to detract from the interests of the Soviet Union. So, while the United States pursued its interest in stability by providing arms to Israel, the Soviet Union pursued its interest in maintaining its position in the Arab world by supplying arms to Egypt (and Syria). Thus Egypt was able to go to war in October 1973 not because the structure of detente had collapsed in the face of Soviet perfidy, but rather because Egypt was able to play on the competitive interests of its superpower patron. And Israel was unable to pre-empt the Egyptian attack, not because it relied on the protection of detente, but because it too had been playing on the competitive interests of its superpower patron. The politics of patronage had resulted in a war which the politics of detente had been unable to prevent simply because they were not designed to prevent it. Only in the unlikely event that the pursuit of world order will take priority over the competitive diplomacy of the superpowers will the resultant detente be able to prevent the outbreak of regional war.
COMPETITIVE COOPERATION: HOW THE OCTOBER WAR ENDED

With the outbreak of the fourth Arab-Israeli war, the politics of patronage and the politics of detente began to merge as both superpowers confronted a similar problem: how to promote their individual interests in this regional crisis without threatening their mutual interest in the reduction of tension which had come to be known as detente? Competitive diplomacy in a regional conflict could easily escalate into a challenge to the central balance as the superpowers intervened to support their clients. In this way, as Dr Kissinger noted during the war, the Middle East could become what the Balkans were before 1914:

...an area where local rivalries that have their own momentum will draw the great nuclear powers into a confrontation that they did not necessarily seek or even necessarily start. 1

Whether superpower confrontation could be avoided in the face of competitive diplomacy in this war depended to a great extent on the degree of control which the superpowers could exercise over their warring clients.

On the other hand, both regional clients confronted their own problem: how to achieve their war aims while resisting the control of their patrons? This problem would become acute if the clients, in pursuing their interests, failed to serve the regional interests of their patrons or if their conflict threatened to escalate to a superpower confrontation. In either of these situations the patrons would attempt to exercise control and the success of their clients would depend on their ability to resist this control or turn it to their advantage.

This crisis interaction between the superpowers and their warring clients therefore provides a testing ground, in extremis, for the ability of the weak states to resist the policies of their patrons. Because, in times of war, the dependence of the clients for military and political support will be heightened, the superpower patrons might be assumed to have greater control over their actions. It might also be assumed that, given

their interests in preserving the structure of detente, the superpowers will exercise control to prevent a superpower confrontation. In the face of such concerted superpower action, the warring clients are presumed to be unable to prevent the sacrificing of their interests for the sake of the superpower detente.

However, the October War experience demonstrated that the reality of patron-client crisis interaction in an environment of superpower detente is rather more complex. Precisely because a crisis disrupts the established patterns of interaction, the superpowers face the danger that their regional interests will be damaged, but also face the prospect of increasing their regional influence if the crisis is carefully exploited. Thus, in the October War, the superpowers protected and pursued unilateral advantages, and attempted to exercise control over their clients for these purposes. In this situation, the ability of Israel and Egypt to resist superpower control depended upon the relative strengths of will in the contest between patron and client. The battlefield fortunes of the clients did much to determine their will-power; success strengthened their resistance; set-back weakened it. However, for Israel the lack of alternative patronage forced its leaders to act with caution, whereas for Egypt the prospect of swapping patrons encouraged it to act more defiantly.

On the superpower level, considerations of reputation and prestige, which were now closely linked to the fate of their clients, did much to determine the strengths of will of the patrons. However, when the conflict and competition between all four parties reached the point where the pursuit of advantage threatened to involve the superpowers in confrontation, because of the need for direct intervention to preserve their competitive interests, both patrons developed a common interest in ending the game by stopping their clients. This common interest in preserving detente provided both superpowers with the strength of will to overcome the resistance of their clients. Thus the interests of dependent clients were indeed sacrificed, but only when the common interest of the superpowers outweighed their competitive interests. At that stage the superpowers were able to impose their will on their clients. In fact, that is how the October 1973 War ended.
I - CEASE-FIRE AND RESUPPLIES

In the first week of the war, as Israel and the Arabs fought some of the largest tank battles in military history, both the United States and the Soviet Union sought an end to the fighting which would preserve or promote their regional interests. While Egypt was able to refuse the proposed cease-fires, Israel proved unable to resist the will of its patron and was forced to accept a proposal for a cease-fire on Friday, 12 October, which fell far short of its declared war aims. Egypt's successful resistance of superpower control forced the Soviet Union to resupply the Arab forces to preserve its interests and this in turn forced the United States reluctantly to resupply Israel, to preserve its interests. This discrepancy in the abilities of Egypt and Israel to resist the control of their patrons, and the resultant escalation in superpower involvement, was determined by the differing interests of the superpowers and the differing contests of will between patron and client on either side of the battlefield.

The fact that the Soviet Union was unable to exercise control over Egypt during the first week of the war was a function of the relative independence of Egypt and Sadat's strength of will at the outset of the war. The reasons for Russian inability to do other than support Egypt's battle plan in the pre-war period remained germane for the opening stages of the war. Moscow feared another Egyptian defeat at the hands of a formidable enemy with a well-earned reputation for fighting skill and tactical flexibility. The Russians and Americans alike expected that once Israel recovered from the initial surprise, its counter-attack would be fierce and determined. Another Egyptian defeat would prove costly for Soviet reputation, and if reputation required Soviet intervention to stave off defeat, superpower confrontation would become an immediate reality. Bound by its rhetoric to support "the liberation of all Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967" the Soviet Union retained as great an interest in a limited Egyptian victory as the Egyptians themselves.

Thus, when the Arab attack met with surprising success on the first day, the Soviet Union saw its interests best served by a quick cease-fire before the Israelis had time to counter-attack. The Egyptian army had reconquered the east bank of the Canal and the Syrian army had regained much of the Golan. A cease-fire at this stage would leave them in

2. For a discussion to this effect between Heikal and Soviet Ambassador Vinogradov, see Heikal, The Road to Ramadan, pp. 218-9.
possession of these acquisitions, obviate Soviet resupply and reduce the threat to detente. Accordingly, on Saturday evening, 6 October, Soviet Ambassador Vinogradov sought Sadat's acquiescence in a cease-fire. But Egypt was not yet ready to stop fighting. After all, this was an all-out war aimed at inflicting heavy losses on Israel, breaking its doctrine of security, regaining as much land as possible and convincing the world of Egyptian determination. Clearly such objectives could not be achieved in 24 hours. Sadat apparently replied to Vinogradov: "I am sorry. We are not going to have a cease-fire until we have achieved our battle objectives".

Again on Sunday afternoon, 7 October, Vinogradov sought a cease-fire, and again Sadat angrily refused. Instead, he sent the Soviet Ambassador away with a request for arms to enable Egypt to continue the battle. Yet again on Tuesday, 9 October, with the battle turning against the Syrians, Moscow sought a cease-fire, and yet again Sadat refused; this time explaining that his aim was to advance to the strategic Gidi and Mitla Passes. Moscow concurred and on Wednesday, 10 October, the Soviet airlift of arms to Syria and Egypt commenced. Thus Sadat was not only able to resist Soviet pressure for a cease-fire, he was also able to gain Soviet support for his objectives and an escalation of Soviet involvement in the war.

Clearly, the Soviet Union lacked the will-power to force Sadat to accept a cease-fire by withholding arms. On the question of arms supplies, Sadat had the measure of the Soviet Union. As he told Heikal at the time, he felt sure that the Russians would not miss the opportunity "to regain most or all of their lost prestige in the Middle East". His calculation proved correct. Moscow could only deny arms at the risk of undermining Egypt's war effort and being charged with the responsibility for an Egyptian defeat. Such a move would be inconsistent with the Soviet policy pursued since February 1973. While Sadat remained determined to fight,

6. Ibid. For an account purported to be that of Soviet Ambassador Vinogradov see al-Safir (Beirut), 16 April, 1974, reprinted in Journal of Palestine Studies, Volume III, No. 4, Summer, 1974, pp. 161-163.
the Soviet Union would have to support him. Considerations of prestige and reputation made Moscow unwilling to absorb the costs of imposing a cease-fire on Cairo by denying arms.

Instead, the Soviet Union tried to pressure Sadat into accepting a cease-fire by claiming, on both Saturday and Sunday, that Syria had requested it. While there is some conjecture about whether Assad had in fact made such a request, Sadat was not moved by the ploy. But by Tuesday the problem had become more serious for the Soviet Union. The battle was turning against Syria as the IDF forced the Syrian army back across the 'purple line' and the air force bombed oil refineries and the Army headquarters in Damascus. A cease-fire at this stage would have suited both Soviet and Syrian interests but it still held little attraction for Egypt. Two Israeli counter-attacks in Sinai had failed and, with the Egyptian bridgehead now consolidated, Sadat remained confident that the Egyptian army would soon advance to the Sinai passes.

Somehow the Soviet Union had to reconcile the conflicting needs of its two Arab clients. While Sadat remained determined to fight on, resupply provided the only solution. Arms supplies would enable Syria to continue the battle in the North and strengthen Egypt's ability to advance to the passes. Moreover, arms supplies might retard the transfer of Israeli forces from the Golan to Sinai. The only quid pro quo the Russians demanded, and apparently received, was payment in cash for the arms supplied to Egypt. Having proposed three cease-fires and failed, Moscow urged Sadat to advance to the passes immediately.

8. Vinogradov told Sadat that when Assad had informed the Soviet Union of timing of the attack on Thursday 4 October, he had also asked Moscow to seek a cease-fire within 48 hours of the start of the fighting. Sadat replied that this was not what he had agreed upon with Assad and that he would have to check with him. On Monday, 8 October, Sadat received a reply from Assad denying that he had requested a cease-fire. Either Moscow had fabricated the story, in the same way that it had fabricated Israeli troop movements on the Syrian border in May 1967, or Assad had changed his mind. See Sadat's 15 September Speech at Meeting with ASU and TU Leaders, A/4; Vinogradov's account, loc.cit., p. 161. For Assad's reply see Heikal, p. 213.

9. Moscow was worried that once Israel had repulsed the Syrians it would be able to concentrate all its force against Egypt. SAM-6's were airlifted to Syria to increase the cost to the IAF of an Israeli advance into Syria. See Heikal, p. 218; Insight Team, The Yom Kippur War, p. 277.

10. This was agreed on during President Boumedienne's visit to Moscow at the outset of the war. Washington Post, 19 November, 1973.

11. Vinogradov's account, loc.cit.; Heikal, op.cit.
However, Sadat and his War Minister, General Ahmed Ismail, had a different plan. Mindful of the defeat in 1967, Ismail was preoccupied with the security of his armed forces and regarded it as essential that he not take risks which might lead to their destruction. Now that the bridgehead had been consolidated, he planned to move the mobile anti-aircraft missiles across the Canal to provide air-defence for the advance to the passes. Thus Ismail's strategy required an 'operational pause' and this coincided with Sadat's aim of "making the enemy bleed". Accordingly, as the situation deteriorated on the Syrian front, the Egyptian forces remained deployed in defensive positions on the east bank of the Canal.

On Thursday, 11 October, the IDF launched its counter-attack against Syria. By Friday, 12 October, significant incursions had been made into Syria and the IDF appeared to be relentlessly advancing on Damascus - by nightfall the outskirts of Damascus were within Israeli artillery range. At this stage, the Soviet Union attempted a slight variant on its cease-fire proposals. Instead of approaching Sadat directly, Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin was instructed to inform Kissinger that Egypt would now accept his proposal for a cease-fire in place. Since the Syrian ploy had failed, Moscow hoped that international pressure for a cease-fire would be sufficient to persuade Sadat of the wisdom of such action. The question of what pressure the Russians thought might thereby be brought to bear, quickly became academic. On Saturday morning, 13 October, Sadat again refused the proposal, brought to him by the British Ambassador, this time because the political price was not high enough; Egypt insisted on a cease-fire based on an Israeli undertaking, guaranteed by the superpowers, to withdraw to the pre-1967 lines.

15. The Soviet Union could not itself propose a cease-fire resolution in the Security Council for fear that China would exercise its veto and claim for itself the mantle of protector of the Arab cause. Accordingly, Kissinger persuaded the British to propose the resolution.
16. Sadat's preconditions for a cease-fire had been conveyed to Kissinger on Wednesday, 10 October. He emphasised that only guarantees of a long-term settlement would persuade him to accept a cease-fire. For the details of Sadat's preconditions see Heikal, The Road to Ramadan, p. 224. The British Ambassador had to take the cease-fire proposal to Sadat twice on
Sadat had made a critical mistake. Israel had already begun to transfer its forces from the north and the Syrians were now calling for immediate Egyptian action to relieve the pressure from the IDF. In rejecting a cease-fire at this stage he had committed the Egyptian Army to a battle in Sinai which, in the words of Ismail, had to be launched "before the right time came". Moreover, as we shall see, Kissinger had managed to pressure the Israelis into accepting this cease-fire despite the fact that they had completed the plans for an Israeli crossing of the Canal and were awaiting the opportunity to implement them. If Sadat thought that the Israeli counter-attack had been broken he was sorely mistaken. Kissinger later referred to Sadat's decision as a "misassessment of the military situation".

That being the case, it highlighted Moscow's inability to persuade Sadat to act, not only in Soviet and Syrian interests, but in Egypt's interests as well. Yet again the Soviet Union confronted the reality of its relationship with Egypt. Even before Sadat had refused the British cease-fire proposal, the Soviet Union had responded to the worsening military situation by stepping up its airlift of military supplies. By Saturday morning, as Sadat was turning down the British proposal, Soviet air traffic over Cyprus had reached a peak of 18 flights per hour. The same Egyptian determination which had forced the Soviet Union to supply sophisticated weapons earlier in 1973 had proven strong enough, during the first week of the war, for Egypt to resist the Soviet cease-fire attempts and force the resupply of arms. If Moscow had possessed a greater intensity of interest in stopping the war, it would have also possessed the necessary will-power to absorb the costs of imposing a cease-fire on Egypt. However, in the first week of the war, the threat to the superpower

16. (continued) Saturday, 13 October because Kissinger preferred to believe the Soviet claim that Sadat would accept the cease-fire rather than the British report that Sadat had refused it. See Insight Team, pp. 281-2.

17. The Egyptian army had been unable to move the mobile missiles across the Canal, which meant that the air force would have to protect the advancing armour - "a task it was incapable of performing". Ismail interview, loc.cit., pp. 222-3.

18. Heikal reports that the British Ambassador told Sadat that Israel "had already been compelled to agree to the cease-fire". Heikal, The Road to Ramadan, p. 224.


20. Insight Team, p. 278.
detente proved limited. In that situation, Moscow had a greater interest in a limited Egyptian victory than it had in imposing its will on Cairo. But as the threat to detente increased, so too did Moscow's interest in a cease-fire.

On the other side of Sinai, Israel's relationship with its American patron reflected a very different reality. Whilst the Soviet position in the Middle East rested upon the success of its Egyptian client on the battlefield, the American position had come to depend on preventing the success of its Israeli protégé. Thus, whereas Russian resupply conformed to Egyptian demand, American resupply remained under the firm control of Kissinger and he used it to bend the will of Israel and to serve the American interest.

In the first days of the war, the Washington Special Action Group, under the direction of Kissinger, reached the conclusion that once Israel counter-attacked it would win a quick victory. In these circumstances they decided that the United States could adopt a 'low profile' and "avoid visible involvement" since there would be no need for American arms supplies. Such a policy minimised the risk of superpower confrontation, as well as minimising the incentive for the Arabs to impose an oil embargo. Moreover, if Israel won without American support, the United States could act as 'honest broker' between the adversaries after the war. However, by Wednesday, 10 October, the battlefield picture revealed that American policy had been predicated on a false assumption - Israel was not about to win a quick victory; were it to stave off a limited defeat it would need a large-scale infusion of arms from the United States. This unexpected setback created a new opportunity for American policy. If Kissinger could prevent an Israeli victory by delaying arms supplies, he would enhance America's standing in the Arab world and prevent increased Egyptian dependence on the Soviet Union as a result of its defeat. Moreover, by preserving Egypt's initial success, the United States might improve the chances for a settlement since Egypt could afford to be more tractable. And such a policy remained consistent with the need to avoid a confrontation and an oil embargo. Kissinger later explained his thinking in an interview with Heikal:

If Israel crushed Egypt, Egypt would turn to the USSR to rescue her, and there were two possibilities: 1) that the Soviet Union would intervene in a way that would oblige us to intervene too, which would confront us with a terrible possibility; or 2) the Soviets would not intervene but would enter Egypt in such a way that they would never leave it. This too was a possibility we did not want.\(^22\)

On the evening of the first day of the war Kissinger had attempted to prevent the expected Egyptian defeat by diplomatic means. He persuaded the British to propose a cease-fire that would end the war before Israel had an opportunity to counter-attack. As he told Heikal: "I thought that the proposal for a cease-fire was in Egypt's interests rather than Israel's".\(^23\) However, as we have already seen, Sadat had made a different calculation and rejected the cease-fire proposal brought to him by Vinogradov. Now, after four days of fighting, Kissinger developed a new means for preventing the Egyptian defeat. In public, Kissinger expressed his intentions, as he was wont to do, in a nuance: the United States aimed to "end the hostilities in such a manner that they contribute to the maximum extent possible to the promotion of a more permanent, more lasting solution in the Middle East".\(^24\) It would eventually become clear to Israel that in this war "in such a manner" meant that the United States aimed to prevent the defeat or victory of either side. The new means for achieving this aim was to delay arms supplies to Israel to ensure its compliance with American wishes.

Obviously such a policy conflicted with the aims of Israel's decision-makers, who were determined to avenge the 'treachery' of an Arab attack on Yom Kippur. By Sunday, 7 October, the Israeli cabinet had decided that Israel would not accept a cease-fire until the enemy had been driven back across the borders.\(^25\) Consequently, orders were issued for counter-attacks on both fronts. However, by Wednesday, 10 October, although the Syrians had been repulsed, two counter-attacks in Sinai had failed. Defence Minister Dayan, in a pessimistic mood, had called for a retreat to a new


\(^{23}\) Ibid., p. 212.


\(^{25}\) Jerusalem Post, 8 October, 1973. This decision was conveyed to the United States.
defence line between the passes and the Canal. The battles had cost Israel dearly in tanks, planes, ordnance and lives. Moreover, on Wednesday the Russians had begun their airlift of arms to Syria and Egypt and this posed a new and serious threat to Israel's military strategy. The installation of more SAM-6 missiles on the northern front would change the air balance which Israel had managed to assert at great cost. Any further setbacks on the battlefield might well leave Israel bare of reserves of ammunition and weapons. Thus, Israel's ability to do other than accept the Egyptian gains in Sinai now depended upon American resupply. The stage was set for a clash between patron and client.

Israel's ambassador in Washington, Simcha Dinitz, first raised the question of resupply with Kissinger on Sunday evening, 7 October. At that stage reports from Israel had persuaded both Dinitz and Kissinger that it would be a short war and the Ambassador only sought the stepped up delivery of weapons already on order. The true extent of Israel's setback was not appreciated in Washington until the evening of Tuesday, 9 October, when Dinitz requested an urgent airlift of arms. The Jewish state had many friends in Washington, as well as the active and vocal support of the Jewish community, and the popular support of the majority of Americans; these forces could easily be mobilised at a time when the Nixon Administration simply could not afford a foreign policy fracas on top of its Watergate troubles. Thus, to implement his policy of delaying arms supplies, Kissinger devised an ingenious and certainly disingenuous ploy to allay domestic and Israeli pressure.


27. The U.S. Defense Department estimated that by the end of the first seven days of fighting Israel had lost 88 aircraft, 600 tanks, and had suffered 2,000 casualties (i.e. killed and wounded). Time, 22 October, 1973.

28. On the assumption that a war would only require a few days of fighting the IDF had decided, before October, to reduce stocks of ammunition and weapons to save on capital costs. Moreover, the high rate of attrition from the fierce fighting was also unexpected. The army and air force apparently consumed some 6,000 tons of ammunition per day. Thus by the end of the first week of the war Israel was running out of many kinds of ammunition and air ordnance. See Edward Luttwak and Dan Horowitz, The Israeli Army, London, 1975, p. 362; Drew Middleton, "Importance of U.S. Munitions to Israel Assayed", New York Times, 2 December, 1974.

On 10 October, the President decided, in the light of the Soviet airlift, that the United States would resupply Israel. According to his own account, Nixon ordered the Pentagon to prepare a set of options and Kissinger "to provide the method for doing it". With Nixon's and Schlesinger's apparent concurrence, Kissinger informed Dinitz that the President had approved in principle all Israel's arms requests, but that he was experiencing bureaucratic problems from the Defense Department where Schlesinger was depicted as the man responsible for the delay. Kissinger portrayed himself as Israel's friend, working overtime to implement the President's instructions. As each day, Israel's needs became more desperate, Kissinger would devise a new scheme for resupply to divert Dinitz and the domestic pressure which was steadily mounting.

On Monday he claimed that he had managed to secure two F4-Phantoms from the Defense Department; on Tuesday Israeli planes, with their identification obscured, were permitted to collect ordinance from a base in Virginia; on Wednesday he asked Schlesinger to charter civilian airlines for the supply operation; on Thursday he told Dinitz that the President had ordered Schlesinger to charter 20 transport planes and that he had secured another four Phantoms from the Defense Department; by Friday no charters were available, so he arranged a meeting with Schlesinger where Dinitz was informed that the U.S. would only supply 16 Phantoms and would only airlift ordinance to the Azores where it would have to be collected by Israeli planes. Through this bureaucratic haze the message emerged loud and clear: if the U.S. did not mount its own resupply operation Israel would not receive the vital ammunition and spare parts to enable the IDF to go over the offensive in Sinai.


31. Kissinger's claims to 'good guy' status in the "battle of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue" are outlined in Kalbs, Kissinger, pp. 525-540.

32. Kalbs, loc.cit.

33. Whether there was a resupply crisis at all, and whether Kissinger was in fact responsible for it, has been the subject of considerable controversy since the war. The only supporters of Kissinger's account (i.e. that he was trying to get the arms out of a reluctant Pentagon) are the Kalbs, who presumably got their account from Kissinger himself. The Israelis are reluctant to talk about the crisis because, as Dayan explained, once the airlift had started "it was very important for Jewish leaders and senators to express appreciation and not criticism". (The Story of My Life, p. 444). Golda Meir makes it clear that there was a delay and that she was both furious and desperate about it. However, she notes
33. (continued) the account of Pentagon reluctance. (My Life, p. 362). Schlesinger has rebutted that charge as "preposterous". When the Kalb version was published he responded: "...the suggestion that the Department of Defense was seen to be dragging its heels in resupplying Israel is wrong; there is a difference between dragging your heels and having your shoes nailed to the floor by national policy". (Time, 1 July, 1974). After he had been dismissed as Secretary of Defense, Schlesinger repeated that it had been White House policy that Israel should only receive arms on a "cash and carry" basis. He claims that it was not until Friday, 12 October that the White House asked him to consider an airlift. (Wolf Blitzer, "Schlesinger blames State Department for delays in arms to Israel", Jerusalem Post, 10 December, 1975). The former head of US Air Force Intelligence, General George Keegan, claims that he and General George Brown, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff, had been planning and organising the airlift since the first day of the war on Brown's own initiative. Keegan blames Kissinger for the delay and claims that Schlesinger pressed repeatedly for the airlift decision. (Wolf Blitzer, "The Arab Plan to Destroy Israel", Jerusalem Post, International Edition, 9 August, 1977).

Nixon's television account, which is consistent with the account he gave to Israeli and Jewish leaders, is revealing: "...I'd asked the Defense Department, and they prepared an option paper...for Kissinger to provide the, ah, method for doing it. At first we wanted to cover the situation, or they did, and...paint some planes differently...or have a chartered plane. And I finally cut through all of the red tape...As far as Dr Kissinger is concerned, I would have to say I didn't overrule his views...the option that he presented was that the Defense Department thought we should send three of these big cargo planes and then, of course, he gave his own opinion as to their reasons and reasons which he thought I ought to have before me - that politically it would be perhaps dangerous for us to send a greater number and that it would, ah, destroy the chances for negotiations in the future if our profile was too high... And I said, "Look Henry, we're gonna get just as much blame for sending three, if we send thirty or a hundred, or whatever we've got, so send everything that flies. The main thing is to make it work". (Frost's Interview, New York Times, 13 May, 1977). Kissinger has also gone some little way towards rebutting his own version in stating that there was no "basic clash" with Schlesinger: "the differences were in tempo and nuance, but not in basic policy". (Leslie H. Gelb, "Kissinger and Schlesinger Deny Rift in October War", New York Times, 23 June, 1974).

With everybody wishing to claim credit for the resupply and no-one wanting to be blamed for the delay, the truth will have to await the release of the documents. However, it seems clear from the various accounts that a decision was taken to delay the resupply of arms on Wednesday, 10 October, after Israel had requested an urgent airlift. A four day delay may seem rather insignificant, but in a crisis situation, with the superpowers working for a cease-fire and Israel fast running out of reserves of ordnance, each day of delay made its chances of recovering from the surprise attack and dealing a blow to the Arab armies more difficult.

Kissinger's ploy proved effective. The isolation Israel had feared at the outset of the war had quickly become a reality as France and Britain placed embargoes on arms supplies, member-states of the OAU broke off their relations with Israel, and Arab states from Algeria across to Iraq as well as North Korea and North Vietnam joined the fray. Moreover, the Soviet Union had begun to airlift weapons to Egypt and Syria to enable them to continue fighting and Arab oil ministers were planning a meeting in Kuwait to decide on the implementation of an oil embargo. In the face of this opposition Israel had to fight a muted side-battle with the American Administration to secure arms supplies. Thus, when Kissinger proposed a cease-fire in place on Thursday, 11 October, the Israeli decision-makers did not possess the necessary will-power to resist Kissinger's proposal.

On that same Thursday, Israel's General Staff had completed plans for a crossing to the West Bank of the Canal and Mrs Meir had spoken to President Nixon stressing the urgent need for military equipment. On Friday the War Cabinet decided, in the face of a lack of any clear indication that American arms supplies would be forthcoming, to postpone the attack across the Canal until after the Egyptians had attempted to break out of their bridgehead. At the same time, Kissinger was speaking with Eban and specifically linking the question of resupply to Israel's acceptance of his cease-fire proposal. Kissinger has since revealed that Israel accepted the proposal with extreme reluctance: "they were furiously angry with us...but eventually they yielded". Fortunately for Israel, Sadat rejected the proposal on Saturday morning. But on Saturday night Mrs Meir was still hinting at Israel's willingness to accept a cease-fire in place. Asked whether Israel would rule out a cease-fire which left Egyptian troops on the east bank of the Canal, she replied that the Government "would not lose many minutes sitting down and dealing with such a proposal with great responsibility for everything that was involved". This statement stood in stark contrast to earlier

34. Schiff, October Earthquake, p. 166 and 192.
pronouncements which had emphasised the aim of forcing the enemy back "across the lines and beyond".  

Just as Israel had been unable to pre-empt for fear of American reaction, it proved unable to resist American pressure for a cease-fire at a time when the battle was turning in its favour and when victory no longer seemed distant. Israel's acute dependence upon American military support and Kissinger's determination to delay that support proved decisive in reducing Israel's resistance to American pressure for an outcome which would deny Israel the victory it sought. Thus, in this contest of wills between patron and client, the United States demonstrated a greater intensity of interest in a military stalemate than Israel in its attempt to gain victory. While Soviet intervention remained limited, Kissinger could afford to seek unilateral advantage by preventing an Egyptian defeat. Possessing the necessary will-power and ingenuity, and confronting a client seriously affected by its sudden isolation, military setbacks and heightened dependence, Kissinger's exercise of control over Israel proved successful.

However Kissinger only momentarily controlled one of the pawns in this complex game and events on the Middle East board as well as at home threatened to put paid to his aim of improving America's position in the Arab World. Throughout the first week of the war domestic pressure to resupply Israel had been mounting. AIPAC (the Israel Lobby) and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organisations (the roof-body of the American Jewish Community) had focused their efforts on the President and the Defense Department leaving Ambassador Dinitz to deal with Kissinger. Congressional pressure had purposely been restricted to a low-key resolution and scattered appeals for support of Israel from various Senators. The pressure had been partly stemmed by President Nixon's assurance, on Wednesday, that Israel would receive replacements.


39. 'Si' Kenen, AIPAC's Congressional lobbyist, restrained Israel's supporters in the first week because he believed that the military support would be forthcoming. In this regard Kissinger's ploy proved effective. AIPAC orchestrated a quiet campaign of pressure on the Defense Department in the belief that Schlesinger and Assistant Secretary Clements were the obstructionists. Cf. Jacob Stein's Letter to *Commentary*, December, 1974, p. 4 and p. 6. *Interview with I.L. Kenen*, Washington, 17 June, 1975; *Interview with Kenneth Wollack*, (Congressional Liaison of AIPAC), Washington, 11 June, 1975.
for all military losses. However, by Friday, Dinitz was threatening to 'go public' with the charge of deliberate delays and then the full force of Israel's Congressional support would be brought to bear. Mrs Meir was pressuring Nixon and suggesting that she should come to Washington to explain the situation. Moreover, at this stage Kissinger received advance copy of a speech that Senator Jackson would deliver on Sunday evening attacking the Secretary of State for his attitude to the Soviet Union's action and calling for immediate resupply of Israel.

Such pressures might not have proved immediately decisive had they not coincided with a changing international situation. Since Wednesday the Soviet Union had been flying military supplies to Egypt and Syria, and by the end of the week these flights had reached 'massive' proportions. Kissinger had publicly recognised Soviet interests in supporting the Arabs but had attempted, in the first week, to moderate the Soviet resupply effort. He had emphasised the common interest of both superpowers in preserving detente and preventing an escalation of the Middle East war and had been encouraged, in this respect, by Soviet efforts to achieve a cease-fire. However, there were growing doubts about Soviet behaviour. Moscow had encouraged other Arab states to join the fray and now its airlift had reached 'substantial levels' and its ships, stocked with materiel, were docking in Syrian and Egyptian ports. It was possible that the Soviet Union had interpreted the American resupply delay as a lack of resolve brought on by Nixon's Watergate troubles. Perhaps the Soviet Union sought a limited victory for its Egyptian patron and a change in the military balance in the Middle East.


41. In the speech Senator Jackson stated, inter alia: "There can no longer be any justification for withholding from Israel the arms she needs to defend herself. It's not enough for our government to promise resupply at some point in the future. The question is how soon will vital equipment be arriving at the battlefield. I say it should be there now". See "Remarks by Senator Henry M. Jackson", Congressional Record, (Senate), 93rd Congress, 1st Session, Volume 119, No. 158, 18 October, 1973.

42. To justify the delay State Department spokesmen had originally termed the Soviet airlift 'moderate', then 'substantial' and finally, to justify the American resupply, 'massive'.


44. See Brezhnev's Message to Bumadyan, BBC/SWB, 11 October, 1973, ME/4421/A/5.
Whatever the case, further delay in resupplying Israel made little sense now that Egypt had rejected the cease-fire and Soviet SAMs, ammunition, anti-tank missiles, tanks and other heavy equipment were arriving in Syria and Egypt to sustain the war effort. While Kissinger had sought to forestall an Israeli victory, he did not want to produce an Israeli defeat which would only enhance the Soviet position in the Middle East and might well require American intervention. He had to convince the Arab states that a just settlement could only be achieved through American diplomacy and not through Russian arms. Thus on Saturday, 13 October, the American airlift to Israel commenced, carrying A4 aircraft replacement parts, missiles, artillery and ammunition. The United States had decided to demonstrate its commitment to the maintenance of a military balance in the Middle East. Egypt's determination to fight on and its refusal to accept the cease-fire, which Israel would have had to accept, had forced Kissinger to reassess his policy. Paradoxically, Israel's reprieve had depended not on its ability to resist the control of its patron, but rather on Egypt's strength of will (however much it was misapplied).

II - CONTROL THROUGH NUCLEAR ALERT

By the end of the first week of the war, with their clients immersed in devastating battle, the superpowers had increased their involvement in pursuit of their regional interests. However, with both superpowers now resupplying their clients, the probability of escalation increased dangerously. The promotion of victory by one superpower would lead to the prevention of defeat by the other and this dynamic would inevitably

46. There is an interesting symmetry in the Soviet and American resupply efforts. The Soviet airlift delivered some 15,000 tons of materiel. The American airlift delivered 22,497 tons of materiel. On top of this, Israel transported 5,500 tons in its own civilian aircraft. The Soviet sealift delivered some 80,000 tons while the American sealift delivered some 64,000 tons. The U.S. Department of Defense estimates that the cost of Soviet equipment supplied was in excess of $2.6 billion while the United States set aside $2.2 billion to meet Israel's requirements.

Contrary to popular belief, the American airlift included only 72 'outsize' items such as tanks or artillery pieces. Only 14 of these items were delivered before the cease-fire of 24 October, including only 4 tanks, which were aimed at giving Israel a psychological boost rather than strengthening its offensive capabilities during the war. According to the Comptroller General's report "the quantities delivered were not significant enough to have affected the war's outcome". See Airlift Operations of the Military Airlift Command During the 1973 Middle East War, Report to
exacerbate tension and threaten confrontation. So, in this second stage of the war, the exercise of control over the battlefield fortunes of the regional adversaries became crucial were the superpowers to preserve their regional interests while avoiding a disruption of their detente. By the same token, as the threat to detente grew, the ability of the clients to resist this control or turn it to their own advantage became crucial were they to achieve the military and political victories which they both sought.

At the start of the second week of the war, Sunday, 14 October, the battlefield picture began to change. After establishing its bridgeheads on the east bank of the Canal, the Egyptian army had decided to pause and allow time for the transfer of its mobile missile screen which would then cover the next stage of the offensive - an advance to the Sinai passes. However, Egypt had come under intense pressure from its Syrian ally to mount an offensive and thereby relieve Israeli pressure on the northern front. Accordingly, on Sunday, more tanks were transferred to Sinai and the Egyptian army launched its offensive without the benefit of its missile protection. Thus, circumstances on the northern front had forced the Egyptian army to engage the IDF in mobile tank battles for which the Israelis were well prepared. By Monday morning, some 260 Egyptian tanks had been destroyed. This defeat provided Israel with the opportunity it had been waiting for. Having already succeeded in repulsing the Syrian advance, and with the guarantee of American supplies, Southern Command launched its long-awaited Canal-crossing offensive. On Tuesday, 16 October Mrs Meir announced to the world that Israeli forces had crossed


47. Heikal has been particularly critical of this 'operational pause', arguing that Egypt lost the initiative and therefore lost the opportunity to drive Israel back to the 1967 borders. Both War Minister Ismail and President Sadat have defended the strategy by arguing that they could not afford to expose the army to another devastating defeat. See Heikal's Interview with Ismail in al-Ahran, 18 November, 1973, reprinted in Journal of Palestine Studies, Volume III, No. 2, Winter, 1974, pp. 216-226; Heikal, The Road to Ramadan, pp. 217-220.

48. Heikal's Interview with Ismail, ibid. In the north the IDF had advanced into Syria and its artillery was shelling the outskirts of Damascus.

into 'Africa'. On the same day, while a still confident Sadat was publicly reiterating his demand for Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 lines, Premier Kosygin arrived in Cairo. In crossing the Canal, Israel had crossed into the realm of Soviet interests. The Soviet Union now urgently sought a cease-fire which would limit the Israeli offensive and prevent an Egyptian defeat.

Soviet satellites had conveyed an accurate picture of the disastrous defeat of 14 October, and while Kosygin was in Cairo he received more detailed information on the growing Israeli incursions on the west bank of the Canal. For three days Kosygin tried to convince Sadat that what he was witnessing was not merely "television operations" but a serious threat to the rear of the two Egyptian armies, and also to an almost unprotected Cairo. By Friday, 19 October, Kosygin had apparently managed to convince Sadat that it was in Egyptian as well as Soviet interests to seek a cease-fire as quickly as possible. By this time, the IDF had constructed three bridges across the Canal and had concentrated enough forces on the west bank for a three pronged advance to the north, south and south-west. Although the northern advance met heavy resistance and the Israeli corridor between the Egyptian armies came under heavy and constant attack, the Egyptian forces proved incapable of stemming the Israeli offensive. 

Nevertheless, Kosygin left Cairo on 19 October, with a set of unrealistic preconditions which Sadat had laid down for the cease-fire he now appeared willing to accept. The demands included an Israeli withdrawal to the 1949 lines, to be followed by a peace conference which would include all fourteen members of the Security Council and all interested parties including the Palestinians. If the Egyptian setback

50. Mrs Meir's Address to the Knesset, BBC/SWB, 18 October, 1973, ME/4427/A/1.
51. Sadat's People's Assembly Address of 16 October, BBC/SWB, ME/4427/A/8.
52. Sadat was not informed of the crossing until Tuesday evening and was apparently not aware of the extent of the invasion until Kosygin produced aerial photographs on Thursday, 18 October. According to Heikal, Sadat only decided to accept a cease-fire on Friday, 19 October, after the Chief-of-Staff, General Shazli, had returned from the front to convey the gravity of the situation. See Heikal, The Road to Ramadan, pp. 235-8.
53. Herzog, op.cit., Chapter 16.
had increased Soviet leverage over its protégé, the leverage was not yet sufficient to moderate Sadat's preconditions for a cease-fire.

However, Moscow now well understood the need for a cease-fire acceptable to the United States, since events could quickly get out of hand. Should the Israeli advance continue, the Soviet Union would be faced with the choice of intervention to save its client, or a serious humiliation stemming from another Egyptian defeat. There was no easy way out: intervention involved a serious threat to detente; an Egyptian defeat would lead to a serious loss of prestige and influence in the region. The only answer was an immediate cease-fire. The Soviet Union knew, from many years of discussions, that Sadat's demand for Israeli withdrawal as a precondition was totally unacceptable to the United States, let alone Israel. Thus while Kosygin returned from Cairo, Brezhnev decided that it was necessary to go over the head of his Egyptian client and seek a superpower settlement to this war. He dispatched a request to President Nixon to send Kissinger to Moscow "for urgent consultations on the Middle East". Brezhnev warned that the situation was now such that the Soviet Union stood on the brink of decisions "from which there could be no retreat". At 1 a.m. on Saturday, 20 October, Kissinger departed for Moscow.

Kosygin's inability to persuade Sadat to accept reasonable terms for a cease-fire forced the Soviet Union to seek a superpower agreement on the terms of a settlement which they could then impose on their clients. The exacerbation of tension caused by the Arab-Israeli conflict forced the Soviet Union to seek a moderation of tension which would, at the same time, preserve its position of influence in the Middle East. The United States concurred with the objective of a cease-fire, since that would produce the military stalemate which Kissinger had sought from the outset of the crisis. Thus with tension mounting and confrontation threatening, both superpowers aimed to salvage detente by imposing a cease-fire which would also preserve their interests in the regional conflict. However the problem of how to impose the cease-fire remained.

55. Ambassador Dobrynin gave Kissinger a draft of a cease-fire proposal which included Sadat's demand for withdrawal on Thursday, 18 October. Kissinger apparently rejected the proposal as a 'nonstarter'. See Kalbs, *Kissinger*, pp. 543-4.

56. Insight Team, p. 373.
While Egypt's military setback had increased Soviet leverage over its protégé, Israel's battlefield successes presented a problem for the exercise of American leverage. Israel, still smarting from the Arab attack on Yom Kippur, would not willingly submit to an imposed cease-fire aimed at denying it victory. However, the psychological impact of the surprise attack, the mounting death toll, the American arms delay, and the sudden diplomatic isolation, had all served to heighten Israel's perception of its dependence on the United States. Accordingly, Israel's willingness to resist the policy of its American patron had been severely reduced. Moreover, although the United States had begun to resupply Israel with arms, there is evidence to suggest that it may well have held its client on a 'short-leash'. Defense Secretary Schlesinger restricted the number of resupply flights to Israel to 23 per day, out of a possible 42 flights per day, "because of political considerations which were more important than efficient airlift management". These flights brought much needed ammunition, missiles and spare parts but, according to one quasi-official account, they were "finely tuned" to help Israel regain no more than the military initiative - only four tanks were delivered to Israel by 24 October. So, as Kissinger flew to Moscow, he must have felt confident that the United States still retained the ability to impose a cease-fire on Israel on terms negotiated with the Soviet Union.

57. According to U.S. Defense Department estimates, Israeli casualties after 14 days of fighting had mounted to some 3,900 (i.e. killed and wounded). Israeli figures released at the end of the war put the death toll at 1,854. See Time, 29 October, 1973; Jerusalem Post, 7 November, 1973.

Israel's diplomatic isolation was manifest in the British arms embargo, the breaking of diplomatic relations by almost every African nation, and the refusal of Greece, Turkey, Spain, Italy and Britain to grant the American resupply aircraft landing or overflight rights.

58. Israel's leaders continued to stress their willingness to consider a cease-fire throughout this stage of the war. In particular see "Dayan: Could Accept Cease-Fire in Place", Jerusalem Post, 21 October, 1973.

59. Report of the Comptroller General of the United States, p. 31. The report also reprints a letter from Arthur I. Mendolia, Assistant Secretary of Defense (Installations and Logistics), which states: "...the method by which support was to be provided and the rate at which the airlift could proceed, once the decision to employ MAC was made, were both due to political factors and not due to any lack...of recognition of requirements or inability to plan for the efficient movement of material once provision of such material was approved". (emphasis supplied).

60. Kalbs, Kissinger, p. 541.

61. See footnote 46 above.
For their part, the Israelis remained blissfully ignorant that their fate was being decided by Kissinger and Brezhnev in Moscow. On 16 October, Mrs Meir told the Knesset that a cease-fire would depend "primarily on the strength of the IDF".62 On 20 October, General Dayan told reporters that he saw no prospect of a cease-fire, while other high officials claimed that "Israel and the United States share the same hope - a convincing Israeli victory".63 Those misperceptions were compounded by Deputy Prime Minister Allon on 21 October, when he told Southern Command that they still had some three days to complete their missions.64 Accordingly, these missions - an advance to Ismailia in the north and Suez in the south - were carried out with caution and at a slow pace.65 Only on the morning of Monday, 22 October, when news reached Southern Command that the Soviet-American cease-fire would go into effect that night, were the forces on the west bank ordered to speed up their encirclement of the Egyptian Third Army and their advance to Ismailia.66

Clearly, Israeli leaders had failed to understand the link between the IDF's success on the battlefield and the imposition of a cease-fire by the superpowers. However, their common belief in a two or three day respite from superpower pressure is puzzling given their experience of the causal connection between Israeli battlefield advances and Arab desires for a cease-fire. They were normally well aware of the need for quick action before the superpowers and the U.N. Security Council intervened. But this time Kissinger had lulled them into a false sense of security: he had assured Eban that the United States was not urgently

62. Mrs Meir's Address to the Knesset, A/3.


64. Herzog, The War of Atonement, p. 245; Schiff, October Earthquake, p. 270. Dayan notes in his autobiography that he told the Commanders on 20 October that they had two or three days before the cease-fire was likely to go into effect. The Story of My Life, p. 440.

65. Luttwak and Horowitz, The Israeli Army, p. 387.

66. Herzog, p. 245; Schiff, p. 284; Dayan, p. 443.
seeking a cease-fire, and he had explained to Dinitz that his trip to
Moscow would not result in a cease-fire agreement, but rather would buy
Israel the two or three more days its forces needed. In fact, Kissinger's
assurances were designed to buy the superpowers time to prevent an
Israeli victory over the Egyptian forces.

By Sunday, 21 October, as the Israelis advanced north, south and
west threatening communications and supply bases in the Nile Valley, the
superpowers were reaching an agreement that would deny Israel victory and
thereby reconcile their local and global interests. The further Israel
advanced the greater the threat that the regional conflict would pose to
the superpower détente. The Soviet Union might be forced to intervene to
prevent an Egyptian defeat, and such action could well lead to American
intervention. Moreover, the stakes in the Arab world had suddenly been
raised by the declaration of an Arab oil embargo on the United States and
severe cutbacks on supply to Europe. If the United States failed to
prevent an Israeli victory it would face a severe setback to its position
in the Arab world and a further strain on relations with its European
allies as the oil embargo became a permanent feature of Arab policy.

In this environment, Kissinger and Brezhnev were able to reach quick
agreement on the terms of a cease-fire; the superpowers had a common
interest in ending the fighting before it involved them further. The
Soviet leaders at first sought a resolution which would commit Israel to
a timetable for phased withdrawal from all the occupied territories, in
accordance with Sadat's wishes. However, they were well aware that such
a demand was unrealistic, and soon abandoned it in favour of a cease-fire
in place which would be followed by negotiations "under appropriate
auspices" to implement Resolution 242 "in all its parts". Thus the
superpowers had reached a compromise at the expense of their clients'
interests: Sadat had been demanding an Israeli commitment to withdrawal;
Meir had been expecting a three day respite as well as an Arab commitment
to a prisoner exchange; neither Cairo nor Jerusalem were consulted. The
responsibility now rested with each patron to gain the agreement of its client.

Diplomacy in the Middle East, New York, 1976, pp. 73-8; Schiff, p. 264;
Kalbs, p. 544.
68. On 17 October, OAPEC declared cutbacks in oil production of 5% each
month, "until such time as the international community compels Israel
to relinquish our occupied territories". On 20 October, total embargoes
were placed on the United States, the Netherlands, Portugal, and South
Africa. See "Arab Oil - Producing Countries Resolution, 17 October, 1973",
The Soviet Union had little trouble convincing Sadat to accept these terms because he was now well aware of the danger which the IDF posed to Egyptian forces. Nevertheless, in return, he demanded a superpower guarantee to prevent Israeli violations. The problem of control rested with the United States, for an advancing Israeli army would have to be stopped in its tracks. The news of the cease-fire was broken to Mrs. Meir on the evening of Monday, 21 October, not via Kissinger in Moscow, but rather via the President in Washington. The terms of the cease-fire were conveyed to Ambassador Dinitz, followed later by a personal message from the American President to the Israeli Prime Minister urging Israeli acceptance, pointing out that the Soviet Union had for the first time agreed to direct negotiations between the parties, and assuring her of continued American support for Israel’s position of strength.

After several hours of deliberation the Israeli Cabinet agreed to accept the superpower cease-fire resolution without reservation. This acceptance stood in stark contrast to the conditions which Israel had attached to its acceptance of the 1970 cease-fire. It might be cited as evidence of a complete lack of Israeli will-power to wrest assurances out of its patron for serving American interests in ending the fighting short of achieving any major objective on the west bank of the Canal. Given Israel’s heightened sense of dependence and isolation, it would not be at all surprising that its decision-makers lacked the will to resist the concerted policy of the two superpowers. However, this decision appears to have had more to do with the rational application of Israel’s will, than with its lack of such determination.

In light of the fact that the superpowers had reached agreement on the need for a cease-fire, defiance could prove to be a costly process given Israel’s sole reliance on the American airlift and American political support in the cease-fire and settlement negotiations, as well as the unknown impact of the oil embargo on American policy and public opinion. Subversion of the cease-fire must have made better sense to the Israeli decision-makers. After all, Egypt had cheated on the 1970 cease-fire by moving the SAM sites into the canal zone and Israel had cheated on the 1967

cease-fire by consolidating its position on the Golan Heights. Meir and Dayan might well have asked themselves, what is there to stop us from exploiting the confusion and uncertainty on the battlefield to improve our position while the cease-fire is implemented on the ground? After an attempt to gain a twenty-four hour delay, Mrs Meir accepted the cease-fire, with only one reservation: the Arab states would have to accept and observe it also.  

It is not at all clear how Kissinger expected to deal with the problem of stopping the Israeli army. Perhaps he believed that once the superpowers had reached agreement on a cease-fire, a state as dependent as Israel would not dare to defy or subvert that agreement. Perhaps he hoped to convince the Israeli government that the destruction of the Egyptian army would serve neither American nor Israeli interests. These were certainly two points which he emphasised in his discussions with the Israeli leadership in Jerusalem on 22 October. He argued that if the United States were forced to choose between aid to Israel and agreement with the Arabs, it would not hesitate to dissociate itself from Israel. Moreover, Israel's routing of the Arab armies would not only destroy the basis for negotiations, it would also radicalise the Arab world and force the Soviet Union to take extreme measures.

However, it is also possible that Kissinger understood that neither of these arguments would be sufficient to convince the Israelis to respect the cease-fire as soon as it was announced. If anything they would have raised the fears of the Israeli leadership that an improvement in American-Arab relations would be bought at Israel's expense and that any extra advantage gained on the ground would improve Israel's ability to pay. Thus it is possible that Kissinger actually expected the Israelis to ignore the cease-fire until they had reached the Cairo-Suez

70. Golda apparently spoke with Nixon to test his reaction to a request for delay. She was told quite clearly that an immediate cease-fire was American policy. See Insight Team, p. 386; Golan, p. 79.


72. Dayan noted that he left the meeting with Kissinger with mixed feelings: "...I was by no means certain that an improvement in America's relations with the Arab states and the lifting of the Arab oil embargo would not be sought - at least partly - with Israeli currency, namely through pressure exerted on us for Arab benefit". p. 444.
road and had encircled the Third Army. He certainly knew that this was the IDF's objective, and he could not have forgotten that cease-fires in the Middle East were notoriously prone to violation - why else would Sadat want a superpower guarantee of the cease-fire? Moreover, the cease-fire resolution made no allowance for the observation of a cease-fire which would go into effect after nightfall, nor for the demarcation of the cease-fire lines. The curious omission of any provision for observers could not have gone unnoticed in Israel, but it also seems unlikely that Kissinger had made a mistake which the IDF then exploited. In August 1970, when the Egyptians violated the cease-fire by moving SAMs into the Canal zone, Kissinger had been furious with the American intelligence agencies for failing to monitor these movements; his biographers note that Kissinger expected cease-fire violations; and one of the State Department officers monitoring the IDF advance after the cease-fire remembers Kissinger's office continually asking him whether the IDF had yet reached the Cairo-Suez road.

Whether a tacit understanding was reached between Kissinger and the Israelis, or not, the Israeli Cabinet reconvened after the meeting with Kissinger and decided that if the Egyptians failed to live up to the cease-fire, the IDF would "repel the enemy at the gate". The cease-fire went into effect at 6.52 p.m. on Monday evening, 22 October. Two hours later, elements of the Egyptian Third Army apparently tried to break out of their positions and the IDF's Southern Command then ordered its forces to advance to Suez and encircle the city; the order was apparently approved by the Prime Minister. By Tuesday evening, 23 October, the Egyptian Third Army had been completely surrounded and its supply lines cut. The Israelis believed that the Army, lacking supplies, would eventually have to surrender, and Sadat would then have to admit defeat. For a moment it appeared that Israel had thwarted the aims of both superpowers.

73. Kissinger had been briefed by the Israeli Chief-of-Staff on the IDF's objectives in his meeting in Jerusalem. Golan, p. 86; Schiff, p. 264.
74. Kalbs, p. 549; Golan, p. 87; Interview with State Department Officer, Washington, June, 1975.
75. Dayan, p. 444.
76. Schiff, p. 286.
However, if Egypt had been defeated militarily, it still retained the ability to play on the interests of the superpowers for political gain. By projecting the Arab-Israeli conflict onto the centre stage of superpower relations, Sadat could, in effect, force the superpowers to choose between controlling Israel, or facing the consequences to their interests in the Middle East of an Egyptian defeat. On Wednesday, 24 October, Sadat urgently appealed to Moscow and Washington for a joint Soviet-American peacekeeping force to police the cease-fire. He wanted the superpowers to force Israel to return to the 22 October lines, thereby releasing the stranglehold on the Third Army.

In a way, his call was unnecessary, because both the United States and the Soviet Union had already decided to unravel Israel's military fait accompli. As soon as Kissinger learnt of the Israeli advance, and perhaps in expectation of it, he resolved to save the Third Army from surrender so as to guarantee a military stalemate, prevent the oil embargo from becoming a permanent feature of Arab policy, and "demonstrate his impartiality".78 He immediately began to pressure the Israelis to allow food, water and medical supplies through to the Third Army, warning that the airlift would be halted. However, his efforts were interrupted by a Soviet démarche. On Wednesday evening, Brezhnev called on Nixon to agree to the dispatch of Soviet and American contingents to Egypt to enforce the cease-fire. He added a serious warning:

I will say it straight, that if you find it impossible to act together 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 allowed to get away with the violations.79

To underline his meaning the Soviet Union made overt preparations for intervention. The 50,000 troops of seven of its airborne divisions, which had been moved to staging areas in Yugoslavia during the war, were now placed on alert. The airlift to Syria had been slowed, thereby theoretically freeing the necessary planes for the transportation of these troops to the Middle East, and there were now indications that those planes were destined for Cairo, possibly carrying Soviet troops. Moreover, there were indications that the Soviet Union might have deployed nuclear-tipped

79. Ibid., p. 553.
SCUDs at a base east of Cairo. It was possible that the Soviet Union intended to back its intervention with tactical nuclear weapons.  

On Wednesday night, Kissinger quickly convened the Washington Special Action Group and together with Schlesinger, in the absence of the President, decided to place detente in abeyance by responding to the Soviet threat. American forces world-wide including the Strategic Air Command and the 82nd Airborne Division, were placed on a Defense Condition 3 Alert. In the name of the President, Kissinger replied to Brezhnev that the United States could not accept unilateral intervention and that such a move would jeopardise the structure of detente. 81 Two days previously the superpowers had reached an agreement to preserve detente through the imposition of a cease-fire. Now, suddenly, their agreement had resulted in a confrontation which threatened to destroy the detente they had sought to preserve.

This strange irony cannot be explained satisfactorily by arguing, as Coral Bell does, that the Soviet Union sought to parley detente into condominium in the Middle East. 82 On the contrary, the explanation lies in emphasising the competitive rather than co-operative nature of superpower relations in this crisis. As stated at the outset, both superpowers confronted the same problem of promoting their individual interests without threatening detente. However the inevitable consequence of promoting their own interests was a greater involvement in the regional crisis, which in turn increased the threat to detente. Finally, this contradiction in superpower aims was resolved through an agreement to preserve both their individual interests in the region and their mutual interest in detente by controlling their protégés and ending the war. The cooperation evident in the Kissinger-Brezhnev cease-fire agreement was produced by the dangers of unchecked superpower competition. But the confrontation evident in the alerting of Soviet and American troops was produced by the inability of the superpowers to control their clients once they had decided to control their own competition. As Kissinger has stated, the confrontation occurred in the aftermath of a settlement and "as a

81. Kalbs, p. 556.
82. Coral Bell, "The October Middle East War, a Case Study in Crisis Management During Detente", International Affairs, Volume 50, No. 4, October, 1974, pp. 535-6. Philip Windsor has inadvertently provided the counter-argument to Bell in his statement: "Detente is not a recipe for
result of actions which could not be controlled by either of the two sides."83

Thus cooperation had resulted in confrontation because of the lack of superpower control. Because the Israelis had flouted the superpower agreement by encircling Suez and the Third Army, the Soviet Union found it necessary to threaten intervention to prevent an Egyptian defeat and to demonstrate its support for the Arab cause. For the United States such intervention was anathema to its desire to produce an American settlement which would enhance its position of influence in the Arab World. Accordingly, American forces were placed on alert to deter the Soviet Union and to exercise decisive control over Israel. Moscow had threatened intervention to stop Israel from forcing the surrender of the Third Army and perhaps also to prevent it from advancing on the Second Army. Although significant sections of the American intelligence community doubted that the Soviet Union really intended to intervene,84 if Israel were not stopped circumstances might quickly change Soviet intentions. Thus Kissinger used the Soviet threat to deter the Israelis from further action, and used the American alert to convince the Israelis of the seriousness of such a threat, as well as to deter the Soviet Union from intervention.

If Israel had any thoughts of further military action the nuclear alert certainly gave it pause. Any move on the Egyptian armies in this environment could result, not only in Soviet intervention, but also in nuclear war - the first theatre of operations would be the Canal zone. Thus, by Thursday, 25 October it had become clear that the Israeli forces had halted their advance and decided not to outface the Russians. The cease-fire had been enforced. In the face of the American alert the Soviet Union had to be satisfied with this new cease-fire and therefore dropped its demands for a Soviet-American peacekeeping force. Instead it backed a non-aligned resolution in the Security Council which provided for the dispatch of UN observers, but specifically excluded superpower forces.

82. (continued) harmonious condominium; it is a recipe for competitive diplomacy". See Philip Windsor, "The Savior from the Sea", Foreign Policy, No. 22, Spring, 1976, p. 171.


84. In Cline's letter to Kissinger he complains that the Secretary did not consult INR about Soviet intervention: "Certainly the technical intelligence evidence available to INR did not support such a Soviet intention". Cline, loc.cit., p. 133; Cf. Szulc, "Is He Indispensible?", p. 39.
The Soviet Union had backed down, the superpower confrontation had ended, almost before it had started, and the détente had been reestablished. The superpowers could return to competitive diplomacy.

Accordingly, Kissinger now staged the final act of his improvised American melodrama. Having stymied the Soviet Union, and having denied Israel the victory it sought, he resurrected his aim of delivering the Third Army from its fate at the hands of the IDF. He used a little carrot and a mighty big stick. First he tried to persuade the Israelis that their interests were best served by relaxing the siege: each side would have a 'trump card' in the disposition of their forces on the east and west bank of the Canal and this would serve as an encouragement to Egypt to negotiate a settlement. But the 'carrot' did not appear very appetising to the Israeli government. As General Dayan later revealed, the government believed that the surrender of the Third Army better served its interests:

We might only have held them for a day and let them walk out without their arms, but it would have changed the whole Egyptian attitude about whether they won or lost the war. It would have given us more cards in the practical negotiations.

That view was completely divergent with Kissinger's American perspective. The surrender of the Army would again raise the spectre of Soviet intervention. It would also dash Kissinger's hopes of playing the role of 'honest broker' between the two sides. So Kissinger wielded his big stick. First he warned Israel that the Russians were threatening to supply the Third Army with its vital requirements if the siege were not broken. Israel's decision-makers were in two minds about this threat of Soviet intervention. Dayan claims he did not take the threat seriously: "The Soviets were worried about Cairo or Aswan, not the Third

85. Nixon later explained that the American exercise of restraint on Israel was right "from their own self-interest". He claimed that the destruction of the Third Army would have brought about "a coup or worse as far as Sadat was concerned. Somebody would have come into power in Egypt, probably worse than Nasser, oriented toward the radical point of view. Egypt would have become a total Soviet satellite state, and Israel would have won a pyrrhic victory. They would have planted the seeds for a war of revenge such as you've never seen". Cited in Near East Report, Volume XXI, No. 20, 18 May, 1977, p. 79.

Army". But Shimon Peres was rather less sanguine about Soviet intentions:

When in 1956 the Russians threatened to intervene with missiles I considered their threat a bluff. But when we were told in this war that the Russian helicopters would attempt to ferry supplies to the Third Army, I believed this to be a real possibility and not a bluff.

The immediate concern, however, was not the Russian threat, but rather the American threat which came with it. As Nixon later explained, "We gave them an offer that they could not refuse"; Dayan described it as "an ultimatum - nothing short of it". If Israel did not permit the provisioning of the Third Army, the United States would intervene and supply the Army using its own aircraft; Israel would find itself in a crisis situation with the United States. Faced with the prospect of fighting its own patron to achieve its aim, Israel angrily submitted to Kissinger's demand and a corridor was opened to the Third Army. As Dayan later told the Knesset:

The soldiers may not have been aware that the shells they fired today had not even been in Israel's possession a week ago...There is only one country...that is prepared to give us equipment, and that is the United States. Whoever proposes that we conduct this war in a split with the United States is...suggesting that we will not be able to win this war. We have bitter pills to swallow... The fate of the Third Army had developed into a test of wills between patron and protégé, but the United States had at least as great an intensity of interest in saving the Army as Israel had in forcing its surrender. In that situation the test of wills became unequal because the United States could bring its far more powerful means to bear. It was therefore regarded as wiser, given Israel's heightened sense of dependence and isolation, to submit to the American ultimatum and preserve its patronage. As Dayan told the Knesset:

87. Ibid.
...the provision of food to the Third Army was not done by us as a humanitarian gesture but because we had no choice in the matter. Or, to be more precise, the alternatives to allowing the food convoy through were, in our judgement, still worse.  

The United States was now in a position to claim credit from Egypt for maintaining the Third Army in its positions on the east bank of the Canal. Kissinger had demonstrated that he could achieve, through diplomatic pressure, what the Soviet Union had failed to achieve by the threat of force. Sadat was not slow in drawing the intended conclusions: "at least 99% of the cards in this game, if not all of them, are in the hands of the United States". In November, when Kissinger made his first visit to Arab countries, diplomatic relations were restored between Egypt and the United States. At the time of writing Sadat appears to have made his break with the Soviet Union complete by abrogating the 1971 Soviet-Egyptian Treaty of Friendship, thus concluding a process which Kissinger set in motion by his denial of an Israeli victory in the October 1973 War.

III - CONCLUSION

This analysis tends to emphasise Kissinger's legerdemain in ending the October War in a way that both suited American regional interests and provided for the re-establishment of detente. It is therefore necessary to condition what might appear to be disguised adulation for the 'super' Secretary with words of caution. If anything Kissinger was lucky that the actors he could not control were prepared to acquiesce in his production. Had the Soviet Union actually intervened, rather than threatening intervention, the United States would have been presented with a fait accompli akin to the placement of missiles in Cuba in 1962. Kissinger would then have had to make some very tough decisions about the intensity of American interests in the Middle East. In fact, he might not have even had the choice, since Soviet intervention while the battle was continuing could easily have led to clashes between Soviet and Israeli forces and

93. Ibid.

94. Sadat's Speech to ASU and People's Council, 4 September, 1975, BBC/SWB, ME/5000/A/14.
and that would have required a firm American response. Thus, because the Soviet Union, at this stage in the conflict, was prepared to regard the preservation of detente as more important than the pursuit of unilateral advantage, it only threatened to intervene and that presented Kissinger with a far more manageable crisis than his predecessors faced in 1962.

Because, at this stage, the Soviet Union played the game according to the politics of detente, the United States was subsequently able to indulge in the politics of patronage. In this respect Kissinger was also lucky that Sadat understood the game of patronage better than his predecessor and was prepared to execute a volte-face in Egyptian foreign policy which opened the way for America's fence-building effort in the Middle East region. But perhaps Kissinger was luckiest of all in regard to controlling Israel. Had Israel decided to pre-empt the outcome might have been rather different. According to the commander of the IAF, General Peled, the Egyptian air defences were decimated in six different operations, over twelve days, 80% of them by air action,

95. The United States apparently was not prepared for a conventional war against the Soviet Union in the Middle East. Thus superpower involvement would have escalated very quickly to the nuclear threshold.

96. Despite Senator Jackson's description of the Soviet note as "brutal", the threat of intervention was, if anything, rather half-hearted. The note only suggested that the Soviet Union might be forced "to consider" intervention. According to Lucius Battle, "the Brezhnev note of October 24 did not strike me as threatening as earlier flares signalled it to be. Compared to Russian notes I have read in past years, it was relatively mild...". The Soviet troop movements had been known about five days before the crisis; the transport aircraft heading for Cairo could have only been sufficient for a symbolic intervention (they were in fact carrying cargo, not troops); the reports of nuclear-tipped SCUDs turned out, in fact, to be a report of the movement of nuclear materials through the Dardanelles on a Soviet ship. See Lucius D. Battle, "Peace - Inshallah", Foreign Policy, No. 14, Spring, 1974, p. 121; Galia Golan, The Yom Kippur War and After, pp. 122-3.

97. Coral Bell has argued that in each stage of the crisis - development, confrontation and resolution - the Soviet Union demonstrated greater concern for detente than for its local interests in the Middle East. While certainly disputing Soviet care for detente in the development stage of the crisis (since I have argued that Moscow sought unilateral advantage during the first stage of the war) I would concur with Professor Bell's judgement on the confrontation phase of the crisis. However, I take issue with her unfounded claim that the United States accorded higher priority to the 'vital' interests of Israel than to detente in the confrontation phase. It would be more accurate, as I have tried to demonstrate, to argue that the United States accorded a higher priority to its own regional interests than it accorded either to detente or to the interests of its client. See Coral Bell, op.cit., pp. 542-3.
for a loss of fewer than ten aircraft engaged in defence suppression. Pre-emption might therefore have been highly cost-effective in terms of air-defence suppression; this might have enabled far more effective IAF support for the ground forces as well as far fewer aircraft losses. Israel's dependence on American resupply would then not have been as great and its counter-attacks, in the early stages, might have been more successful. As suggested by the actual events, once Israel had regained the initiative it would have been far harder to stop its army. Moreover, the lessened dependence on American support, as well as the psychological strength derived from the more successful implementation of Israel's security doctrine would have made Israel's decision-makers far more determined to resist Kissinger's control than they in fact proved to be.

In the final analysis, the October War ended in a way which suited American interests, not so much because of the power wielded by the American Secretary of State, but rather because of Israel's much weakened ability and will to resist his policy, because of Soviet interest in avoiding a superpower confrontation, and because of Egypt's ability to exploit the competitive interests of the superpowers. Kissinger's determination to prevent an Israeli victory was an essential factor in the favourable outcome, but the fact that the avoidance of a superpower confrontation (i.e. the preservation of detente), took precedence over an Israeli victory, was the key determinant of the conclusion of the October War.

98. USAF 'specialists' have estimated that had the air force been permitted to pre-empt, the destruction of 90% of the SAM sites could have been accomplished in a period of three to six hours for the loss of under ten aircraft. See Uri Ra'anan, "The New Technologies and the Middle East: 'Lessons of the Yom Kippur War and Anticipated Developments", in Geoffrey Kemp, Robert Pfaltzgraff, Jr., and Uri Ra'anan (eds.), The Other Arms Race: New Technologies and Non-Nuclear Conflict, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1975, p. 84; Benyamin Peled, "The Air Force in the Yom Kippur War - Main Moves and Lessons", in Military Aspects of the Israeli-Arab Conflict, p. 241; and Ronnie Hope, "A-A missiles can't save terrorists", Jerusalem Post Weekly Edition, 9 July, 1974.
CONCLUSIONS

ADVERSARIES AND PARTNERS

...the Soviet Union and we are in a very unique relationship. We are at one and the same time adversaries and partners in the preservation of peace. As adversaries we often find ourselves drawn into potential confrontations. And each of us has friends that themselves pursue objectives that may not have been sought by either of us.

- Dr Henry Kissinger, 1974.

From Metternich to Kissinger, the architects of the international system have pursued similar purposes: the construction of an order which would preserve the interests of the most powerful nations, at the expense, if necessary, of the interests of lesser states. Yet the ambiguity which has always existed for the principal powers between the desire for stability, tranquillity and peace, and the urge to seek unilateral advantage, between the avoidance of confrontation, and the pursuit of particular interests, has privileged those lesser states fortunate and adept enough to be able to exploit these contradictions for their own purposes.

The analysis of the experiences of Israel and Egypt, in this regard, may thus have some heuristic value, not only for understanding superpower behaviour in the Middle East, but also for assessing the prospects for a superpower imposed settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Throughout this study, the United States and the Soviet Union have appeared as partners in the avoidance of superpower confrontations, and yet adversaries drawn into them by the determination of their protégés, and by their own determination, to pursue particular interests by exploiting the politics of patronage. Even now, while nominally co-sponsors of the ever-to-be-convened Geneva Peace Conference, the United States and the Soviet Union continue to compete vigorously for influence. Moreover, Israel and Egypt, while nominally engaged in negotiating a peaceful settlement, continue to pursue their objectives by exploiting their abilities to promote or impair the influence of the superpowers.

Of course, the environment of patronage has changed significantly since 1973. Under American auspices, Israel and Egypt have concluded disengagement agreements which have effectively excluded the Soviet Union from the negotiating process and converted the contest for superpower patronage into a competition for American favours. Moreover, the emergence of Syria and Saudi Arabia as regional powers, and the now recognised importance of Arab control of the oil so crucial to the Western economies, have made the dynamics more complex and the game more vital. Further, the leaders of the United States, Israel, Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia have changed. The personalities and predilections of Jimmy Carter, Menachem Begin, Anwar Sadat, Hafez Assad, and King Khaled, are rather different to those of their immediate predecessors. Nevertheless, the principles and dynamics of interaction between the superpowers and their Middle Eastern protégés remain the same, even though the resistance of the weak and the influence of the great have fluctuated in line with these changes in the power configurations. Thus the questions posed at the outset of this thesis, and the answers contained in the detailed analysis of the interaction in the period from 1962 to 1973, are still germane to the prospects of the superpowers and the weak states alike, and the chances for war or peace in the Middle East.

Five questions were posed in Part One and answered in the analysis; the sixth question will be answered once the findings have been summarised:

i) How have Israel and Egypt, as weak states, been able to resist the inimical policies of the superpowers?

ii) How have Israel and Egypt been able to cultivate amicable superpower policies or maintain patronage when their own policies were opposed by their patrons?

iii) In what circumstances have Israel and Egypt prevailed over their superpower patrons and in what circumstances have they been forced to submit?

iv) How have asymmetries in the patronage relationships affected the outcome of these conflicts?

v) How has the development of relations between the superpowers affected the outcomes of these conflicts?

Part Two examined four cases of patron-client interaction in the pre-1967 environment: the Israeli-American arms relationship; Israel's decision

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2. By regional powers I mean that they are now able to affect events in the region rather than merely within their immediate neighbourhoods. Saudi Arabia was of course a regional power in the Persian Gulf, but it has now become a power in the Middle East region as a whole.
to go to war in 1967; the Egyptian-American aid relationship; and Nasser's brinkmanship in 1967.

In the first two cases Israel could rightly claim to have prevailed over its American patron in that it succeeded in overcoming an American arms embargo and secured American support for a war which the United States would have preferred to avoid. In the third case, Egypt submitted only momentarily to American policy (in 1965), but the price of its successful resistance was the loss of American patronage. While Nasser neither withdrew his troops from Yemen, nor kept the Arab-Israeli conflict in the 'ice box', nor concentrated on economic development instead of pursuing his anti-Imperialist campaign, he also did not prevail over American policy, which found a more favourable reception from other regional clients. In the fourth case, Nasser also succeeded in resisting Soviet restraint and American attempts at compromise, but in the process lost both Soviet military assistance and American political support during the war, when he most needed them. Insofar as his brinkmanship was aimed at proving to the Johnson Administration that it would not succeed in containing his revolution, Nasser also failed to prevail over the United States. Instead, he was forced to submit to the defeat inflicted on Egypt by America's Israeli client and to accept the consequences for his regional policies. It has also been argued that his decisions to enter into the defence pact with Syria in November 1966 and to remilitarise Sinai in May 1967 were not cases of submission to Soviet policy, but rather were cases of Nasser acting in what he regarded as Egypt's interests while, at the same time, serving Soviet interests.

In explaining how weak state resistance was possible during this period, it is necessary to distinguish between resistance which circumvented the patron's policy while securing its support, and resistance which defied the patron's policy and thus resulted in the loss of support. Israel circumvented American arms policy by skilful utilisation of the leverage it acquired as a result of the competition between the superpowers for influence in the region; the failure of the American approach to Nasser's Egypt; the American commitment to Israel's integrity, enhanced by domestic support; and Israel's development of a nuclear option. Conversely, having acquired American economic assistance because of his apparent willingness to maintain a neutral stance in the competition between the superpowers, Nasser then lost this patronage by defying American policy and squandering resources, which might have been employed in maintaining American patronage,
on the other imperatives of his anti-imperialist, anti-Israel, and pan-
Arab foreign policy. Egypt was unable to maintain American patronage
because of the conflict between the politics of Arab unity and the
dictates of successful client behaviour. Although the American use
of a 'short leash' approach to its economic assistance did encourage
Nasser to sublimate this conflict, when events in the region confronted
him with a new challenge, his defiance of the United States led to the
transferral of its patronage to other clients in the region. At the
same time, Nasser was able to mitigate the effects of this loss of
support by increasing his dependence upon the Soviet Union whose interests
were served rather than debased by Nasser's regional policies.

Asymmetries in Israeli-American and Egyptian-American relations had
an important impact on the outcome of the pre-war interaction between
the superpowers and their weak clients. The basic and underlying American
commitment to support Israel's security ensured that, in the face of
Soviet support for Israel's adversary, the United States would provide
Israel with the arms it required to maintain its deterrent strength,
indirectly if possible, directly if not. On the other hand, the lack
of an underlying commitment to Egypt and the existence instead of an
underlying conflict of interest between Nasser's regional imperatives
and America's desire to protect his adversaries, made the securing of
patronage a difficult task, unless Nasser was prepared to sublimate the
conflict. The lack of an underlying commitment also made it easy for
the United States to redefine the relationship by abandoning its
recalcitrant client.

Relations between the superpowers during this period also worked in
Israel's favour, and against Egypt, in the competition for American
support. The United States perceived that the Soviet Union was exploiting
the tensions which existed in the Middle East to promote its 'penetration'
of the region. At the beginning of the period the United States had
assumed that Nasser was a nationalist opposed to all forms of foreign
influence, but as his actions - backed by Soviet military and economic
assistance - promoted tensions in the region and thus served Soviet
interests, Nasser became identified in American eyes as Moscow's Middle
Eastern agent. Consequently, the United States was less prepared to
tolerate Nasser's behaviour than it had been at the outset of the Kennedy
Administration. Conversely, Israel benefited from this growing polarisation
of the region between the Soviet-backed 'forces of progress' and the
American-backed supporters of the status quo, since its ability to assist in the 'containment' of Egypt and Syria, by virtue of its deterrent strength, was valued by its American patron.

Israel's success in gaining American acquiescence for its pre-emptive strike in June 1967, and political support for its retention of the occupied territories immediately thereafter, was partly a consequence of this new alignment with the United States, but the reasons for Israel's success had more to do with Israel's willingness to wait until the United States recognised that it was unable to fulfil its commitment to Israel. Once the United States realised that it could not achieve redress, Israel's determination to brook no compromise, and its willingness and capability to go to war in defence of its rights, ensured American acquiescence in its pre-emption. In this case the client had secured support by encouraging the patron to realise that its interests would be better served by supporting the client's policy than by attempting to change it.

In this situation, success for Israel meant failure for Egypt, because Nasser's brinkmanship was predicated on a 'zero sum' strategy. The closure of the Straits gave Nasser leverage over the United States as long as he used it with flexibility, encouraging Washington to restrain Jerusalem by holding out the hope of a compromise. Forgoing the first strike showed that Nasser understood the necessity to avoid giving the United States a pretext for supporting Israel, but his failure to provide Washington with anything to work with, and his attempt to intimidate Israel at the same time, ensured that the United States would support Israel and oppose him, and that Israel would fight rather than accept the compromising of its rights and its deterrent strength.

Nasser also miscalculated the importance of the asymmetry between the American commitment to Israel and the Soviet commitment to Egypt. The United States had publicly stated its opposition to the blockading of the Straits and had therefore committed itself to redressing the situation, by force of international opinion if possible, by force of Israeli arms if necessary. But the Soviet Union had made no such commitment to the defence of Egypt's closure of the Straits (Nasser's claims to the contrary notwithstanding). Moreover, the usual asymmetry between Israel's lack, and Egypt's retention, of alternative patronage was not operative in this crisis because Nasser had alienated the United States; if he failed to gain Soviet support he would have no superpower support at all.
It was at this point that the asymmetries in patronage and the conduct of relations on the superpower level combined to undo Nasser's brinkmanship. He had expected to neutralise the American commitment to Israel by raising the spectre of superpower confrontation. Instead, he succeeded in intimidating his Soviet patron and neutralising its commitment to support him by encouraging the superpowers to seek limited cooperation in the form of an agreement not to intervene in the fighting. This agreement might have been undone had Moscow's assessment of the likely damage to its prestige, reputation and position of influence outweighed the risks of superpower confrontation. However, the sudden collapse of the Egyptian army enabled the Soviet Union to protect its competitive interests by seeking an immediate cease-fire and picking up the tab for the defeat, in terms of greater military and political support after the danger of confrontation had passed. Thus Nasser was forced to submit to Israel's military power, not because he lacked leverage, but because he applied it rashly and wrongly, encouraging the superpowers to cooperate by sublimating their competitive interests. The superpower adversaries had become momentary partners in the preservation of peace (on the global level) at Egypt's expense, but to Israel's advantage.

Part Three examined six cases of patron-client interaction in the post-1967 environment: Egypt's conduct of the War of Attrition; Israel's conflict with American settlement policy; Egypt's resistance of the effects of the superpower detente; Israel's reliance on the impact of the detente; the prevention of Egypt's defeat; and the forestalling of an Israeli military victory.

In the first case, Nasser succeeded in securing and maintaining Soviet political support, in disrupting a rapprochement between the superpowers on the terms of a settlement, and in prevailing over his patron. In addition, he gained an unprecedented Soviet military commitment to Egypt's defence and a notable shift in the American attitude towards a peace settlement. In the second case, Israel also managed to disrupt a superpower rapprochement on the terms of a settlement, but was forced to submit to the American cease-fire initiative. However, in the aftermath of the 1970 cease-fire, Israel was able to prevail over American settlement policy, gaining an unprecedented American commitment of military and economic support. In the third case, Egypt was forced to submit, for two years, to the detrimental effects of the superpower detente, but overcame them by expelling the Soviet personnel in 1972 and launching war in 1973. In the fourth case, on the other hand, Israel's reliance on the effects of
detente to maintain its policies forced it to submit to the Arab attack. In the fifth case, Sadat succeeded in securing both Soviet and American protection for Egypt's initial gains in the war; and in the sixth case, Israel was forced to submit to American demands that it not defeat Egypt on the battlefield.

Nasser resisted the inimical settlement policies of the superpowers (which, on two occasions during the War of Attrition, approximated each other), cultivated an amicable Soviet policy and a more favourable American policy, and first maintained and then increased Soviet patronage, as a result of the careful orchestration of military and political pressures during his War of Attrition. He exploited American interest in a stable settlement and improved relations with the Arab world, and the Soviet dependence on his survival for the maintenance of its prestige, reputation and position of influence, to resist the imposition of a settlement on Israel's terms and to force its withdrawal without concessions. Because Egypt's weakness after the 1967 debacle had forced him into a sober reappraisal of his policies, Nasser's behaviour was characterised not by the defiance and impulsiveness of earlier years, but rather by the caution and flexibility of successful weak state leadership. Whether he would have actually succeeded in his aim of forcing Israel to withdraw without concessions cannot be divined because he overplayed his hand by violating the cease-fire and then died before he could undo the ill-effects of that action.

Israel's inability to prevent the United States from discussing, defining, and then publicising, an American plan for settlement of the conflict which fell short of Israel's demands, reflected the reduction in its leverage at a time when it could prevent neither Nasser from promoting instability, nor its American patron from wooing its adversary. Nevertheless, by escalating the conflict Israel did ensure that the Rogers Plan was rejected by all other parties. This escalation also unintentionally provoked Soviet intervention; a move which initially increased the American incentive for a settlement, but eventually provided Israel with greater leverage over its patron. Washington's use of the 'short leash' in deferring Israel's arms request in March 1970 (as well as in 1968) did help to persuade Israel to adopt a more flexible and compliant attitude and, in the face of Soviet intervention, forced Israel to accept a cease-fire which was linked to indirect negotiations for an Israeli withdrawal. However, the Soviet-Egyptian cease-fire violations, and American suspicions
of Soviet intentions in the Jordanian crisis, persuaded the United States to reassess its calculations of the regional balance of power and to bolster Israel's deterrent strength as the most appropriate means for combating the Soviet Union. Israel was thus able to resist further American attempts to negotiate a settlement which did not meet its maximum demands, while securing patronage at unprecedented levels, because of its increased contingent value to the United States.

Both clients were able to benefit from the fact that their patrons were committed to supporting their respective military capabilities in the War of Attrition. Egypt was able to gain ever increasing Soviet military support because it was committed, after the 1967 defeat, not to allow Egypt to suffer the same fate again. On the other side, Israel continued to enjoy American support for its deterrent strength as a means for preventing all-out war, even if it could not prevent the War of Attrition. This commitment to Israel's deterrent strength ensured American consent in 1968 to supply Phantoms the following year, in response to Soviet arms shipments to the area. However, because the United States could not control the timing of the Phantom deliveries and could not defer them, in the face of continued Soviet supply, it could not prevent these offensive weapons from undermining its diplomacy.

Asymmetries in the patron-client relationships did much to affect the outcome of the contests. Egypt's importance to both superpowers in the competition for influence and the search for a settlement which would preserve or improve their respective positions provided an environment in which, despite its losses on the battlefield, Egypt was able to succeed in the politics of patronage. On the other hand, Israel's increasing isolation and lone dependence on the United States, and the hostility it experienced from the Soviet Union, reduced its manoeuvrability and increased the need for cautious and compliant behaviour, lest it encourage the rapprochement between its superpower patron and its regional adversary.

Developments in superpower relations also had a marked impact on the outcome of these contests. The Two Power Talks symbolised the common understanding reached by the superpowers in the wake of the 1967 war, that ways would have to be found at best to settle this conflict, at least to contain it and prevent it from disrupting superpower relations. However, no matter how close the United States and the Soviet Union came to agreeing on a common formula for the settlement of the conflict, neither proved capable of delivering its client: not the Soviet Union, which failed to persuade Nasser to accept the June 1969 proposals; and not the United States,
which was unable to persuade Israel to accept the Rogers Plan. (In accepting the Rogers cease-fire initiative, Mrs Meir specifically rejected the Rogers Plan). And in the end, the imperatives of their adversary relationship put paid to their partnership in the pursuit of a peace settlement. The era of negotiation failed its first test because both Egypt and Israel were able to play on the competitive interests of the superpowers to sublimate their cooperative instincts. Nevertheless, while the Two Power Talks lasted, Egypt was able to benefit. This was because, on the one hand, the Soviet Union proved unable or unwilling to stray far from Egypt's maximum demands, while on the other hand, the United States was prepared to be flexible both because it wanted the negotiations to succeed, and because it wanted to project the image of 'evenhandedness' by distancing itself somewhat from the maximum demands of its Israeli client. By the same token, when the Two Power Talks were abandoned, Israel was able to benefit from the increased tension between the superpowers.

Developments in superpower relations were also responsible, in large measure, for the tranquillity and stability which prevailed on the Israeli-Egyptian cease-fire lines for the next three years. The development of the superpower detente had found its expression in the Middle East in the form of "military relaxation". Since the Soviet Union no longer evinced an interest in tension, now that it was ensconced in Egypt, it could afford to cooperate with the United States in maintaining stability in the region through the agency of Israel's deterrent strength. Accordingly, while the United States provided Israel with the weapons considered necessary for the maintenance of its superiority, the Soviet Union refused to supply the offensive weapons which the Egyptians felt were necessary to mount a challenge to this superiority. However, Sadat was able to circumvent this policy and secure the weapons he required by playing on Moscow's competitive interests. The expulsion of the Soviet personnel and the possibility of a further loss of facilities and influence in Egypt, together with Sadat's skilful reassurance, in the form of a unilateral decision to renew the agreement granting the Soviet navy access to Egyptian ports, was sufficient to convince Moscow to supply the necessary weapons for Egypt's war.

Because Israel had become the agent for superpower detente in the Middle East, it was able to secure increased American patronage while sublimating the American settlement policy which it had previously failed
to alter. The fact that Israel could have pre-empted the Arab attack in October 1973, but consciously chose not to, and the fact that if it had done so the outcome of the war might well have been different, emphasised both the confidence which Israel retained in its military superiority and, more importantly, its understanding of the fact that Israel's contingent value to the United States as the guardian of stability was no longer apparent in the face of an imminent disruption to the status quo.

With the launching of the October War, Sadat regained much of the leverage which Nasser had lost after the 1970 cease-fire. Egypt's demonstrated willingness to disrupt the regional tranquillity in order to press its grievances recreated the imperatives of the War of Attrition for American policy; with the added emphasis of the oil embargo this time. American desires for a settlement which would increase its influence in the Arab world, and which would better provide the stable conditions necessary for the achievement of this aspiration, reemerged. And it was of course ironical that Kissinger, the man whose balance of power approach had helped the Israelis to circumvent American settlement policy, should have been the Secretary of State to dust off the file on the Rogers Plan, and that its architect, Joseph Sisco, should have still been there to help him. Although his strategy differed from that of his predecessor, the goals remained the same: a settlement which would secure Israel's existence but not its conquests; which would enhance America's position in the Arab world by strengthening the moderate rather than the radical regimes; which would prevent the Soviet Union from reestablishing itself in Egypt; and which might not make both sides equally happy, but would at least make them equally unhappy.

With these goals in mind, Kissinger's first priority was to prevent Egypt's defeat. For rather different reasons, the Soviet Union sought the same aim. If it wanted to retain its position of influence in the Arab world it could not let Egypt be defeated yet again by Israel; if it wanted to avoid a superpower confrontation then it had to avoid a situation where it might be forced to intervene to save its client. Consequently, the interests of both superpowers in this war were focused on Egypt's fate, a fact which served to enhance immensely Egypt's value to both superpowers, and reduce Israel's ability to achieve a victory. The asymmetry between Israel and Egypt had been reasserted: once again Egypt possessed alternative patronage; once again Israel feared the consequences of a rapprochement between its patron and its adversary. Moreover, once again, the fear of superpower confrontation had turned the
superpower adversaries into partners for the preservation of peace, this
time at Israel's expense, and to Egypt's benefit. In effect, the
superpowers succeeded in October 1973 in imposing a settlement — to the
fighting — by preventing Israel's victory over the Egyptian IIIrd Army.

What then are the prospects for a superpower imposed settlement of
the Arab-Israeli conflict? To attempt to answer that question, it
remains necessary to test the hypotheses outlined in Part One:

i) the demands of certain weak states, which possess the
power of resistance, cannot always or easily be
left out of account;

ii) if the superpowers wish to maintain their dominance
of the system through the promotion of tranquillity
and stability then they will have to take account of
the demands of these states;

iii) while the great may indeed prevail on issues which
directly affect the central balance of power, their
preponderance does not mean that they will succeed
in imposing their will on issues which affect
relations between the weak and the great.

It emerges from the cases studied that Israel's and Egypt's demands
indeed have not always or easily been left out of account by the
superpowers in their management of international order. Israel's demand
for freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba in 1967, and Egypt's
demand for Israeli withdrawal in 1973, could not be ignored by the super­
powers, and had to be taken into account in their attempts to prevent a
disruption to their global relations. Although one can only cite these
two instances in support of the first two hypotheses, the evidence is
still compelling. For in both instances, because the weak
states possessed the will-power and the capabilities to resist the imposition
of an order which was inimical to their vital interests, they were able
to take actions which threatened seriously to drag their patrons into a
superpower confrontation. When one considers that, since the Cuban missile
crisis in 1962, there have been only two crises in which the United States
and the Soviet Union have moved towards a confrontation, and both have
resulted from the conflict between Israel and Egypt, it is clear that the
vital interests of these weak states can only be left out of account by
the superpowers at their own peril and therefore at the peril of global
peace.

The third hypothesis has also been confirmed by the analysis. When
the local conflict threatened to drag the superpowers into confrontation
and to disrupt the central balance of power, the United States and the
Soviet Union were indeed able to prevail over the policies of their clients. Thus Egypt was abandoned by the Soviet Union in the 1967 war and was left to face the Israeli onslaught without military support. Again in 1973, Israel was forced to submit to American and Soviet demands that it stop its advance and relax its stranglehold on the Third Army because of the threat of a superpower confrontation. However, on the issues which affected relations between the weak and the great, and did not involve a threat to the 'nuclear peace', the record of influence and resistance was determined by the relative interdependence of the patron and the client, the contingent value of the weak state's resources, the nature of superpower commitments, the relative strengths of will brought to bear on the issue at hand, and the adeptness or ineptness of the contestants.

In the cases studied here, excluding those which affected the central balance (Egypt's defeat in 1967 and Israel's 1973 submission), as well as the pre-1967 Egyptian-American break (in which neither submitted), but counting those cases where the client submitted and was then able to prevail (Israel's conflict with American settlement policy and Egypt's resistance of the effects of detente) as cases where both patron and then client prevailed, one finds that in the period from 1962 to 1973 the weak states prevailed in six cases and the superpowers prevailed in only three. More significantly perhaps, because the issues may not have been of equal value, in no case where the vital interests of the clients were concerned, was the patron able to prevail. The testimony to that is the fact that after ten years of efforts by both superpowers to achieve a settlement of the conflict based on Israeli withdrawal and Egyptian peace concessions, Israel remains in substantially all of the occupied territories, while Egypt has conceded precious little in terms of recognition, direct negotiations or its conditions for peace. (Notwithstanding the fact that there has been a marginal convergence in that Israel has withdrawn from the Canal, the Sinai oilfields and the Gidi and Mitla Passes, while Egypt has committed itself to "the non resort to use of force" for a period of three years, to Israeli cargoes but not ships in the Suez Canal, and to a peace treaty in exchange for complete Israeli withdrawal and a Palestinian settlement).
Thus it seems possible to conclude that a weak state which possesses resources of value to its patron, which can commit its patron (either through a formal commitment or through the commitment of the patron's prestige and reputation), which can exploit the competition for influence between the superpowers or gain benefit from their cooperation, and which is adept at employing the leverage in its possession, may well succeed in resisting or circumventing the policy of its patron while securing or maintaining its support. However, such resistance would not be possible without a strong will, rationally applied.

Throughout the analysis, the importance of will-power has been emphasised and the asymmetry which tends to exist between the will of the weak and the will of the great, on issues of vital importance to the weak, but of peripheral importance to the great, has been evident. Without determination, Israel would not have overcome State Department opposition to its arms requests, nor would it have secured American acquiescence in its pre-emption. Egypt could have borne neither the costs of defying the United States, nor the costs of the War of Attrition, had it lacked the will to resist. Israel would not have secured American support for its deterrent strength had it not been determined to resist the Soviet Union's intervention in Egypt and American settlement policy. Egypt would not have been able to disrupt the detente by launching the October War had it not summoned the strength of will to defy its patron and its adversaries.

Yet if will-power was a necessary ingredient in weak state resistance, its rational application was essential if the loss of patronage was to be avoided. For, maintaining patronage while resisting the inimical effects of the patron's policy was the essence of the power of the weak. In this context, the last two hypotheses, which relate to weak state behaviour, should be tested:

iv) the weak state which has no alternative patronage will act with caution up to the point where it believes that it is about to be, or has been, abandoned by its patron; at that point it may take desperate measures to dissuade its patron, or to gain alternative patronage;

v) the weak state which has alternative patrons will act with daring up to the point where it believes that it will lose, or has lost, its alternative; at this point it will act with caution.
In all but one of the cases analysed, these hypotheses were confirmed. Lacking an alternate patron, Israel continually acted with caution, but clearly possessed the potential for desperate action at times when it thought that America might not support it. Had the United States abandoned its commitment to Israel's navigation rights in 1967 - as France did - Israel would probably have gone to war, regardless. Had the United States not combined its demands for Israeli compliance with generous blandishments and assurances of support in 1970, during the October 1973 War, and indeed during the Second Sinai Disengagement negotiations in 1975, Israel might well have decided to act defiantly. On the other hand, the contrast between Nasser's defiant behaviour before 1967 and his caution thereafter reflected first, his confidence in his ability to play one patron off against the other, and then, when Egypt was abandoned by the United States, his appreciation of the need to apply his will rationally were he to regain American support and lessen his dependence on the Soviet Union. And at the point where he thought the Soviet Union was about to abandon Egypt's political demands (in June, 1969) and military demands (in January, 1970) he was prepared to take desperate measures to dissuade Moscow.

Similarly, Sadat was prepared to act with caution while he believed that the Soviet Union would be persuaded to support Egypt's aspirations. Yet at the point where he perceived that the Soviet Union had abandoned any intention of supporting an Egyptian military operation, he was prepared to take the desperate measure of expelling the Soviet personnel and then launching war - actions which secured Egypt the alternative patronage of the United States.

However, unlike Nasser's behaviour before 1967, Sadat now appears to understand well the need to apply his will-power rationally. Thus, whereas Nasser failed to sublimate the conflict of interest between the United States and Egypt, and while he failed to act cautiously when it became clear that the United States was about to abandon him (although he did make the attempt in 1965), Sadat appears determined to sublimate the conflict of interest (by keeping the Arab-Israeli conflict in the 'ice-box' and by promoting, rather than debasing, American interests in the Middle East and in Africa) in order to secure American patronage and

3. In fact Israel did say 'No' to Kissinger in April, 1975 in part because it believed that the price being offered for its compliance was not high enough.
to reduce American support for Israel's political demands. This caution is reinforced by his belief that he has little alternative, since Soviet patronage is perceived to be unable to secure his twin goals of Israeli withdrawal and Egyptian economic recovery. Nevertheless, should the Egyptian rapprochement with the United States fail to achieve these goals, as a result of what Egypt might perceive to be insufficient American support, Sadat (or his successor) is likely to take less cautious and more desperate measures to persuade Washington to be more forthcoming or to regain the Soviet patronage which has so far been spurned in favour of its more attractive alternative.

Israel, on the other hand, perceiving that its American patron and its Egyptian protégé are building their relationship, in part, on the assumption that the United States can pressure Israel to withdraw, is drawing closer to the point where it believes that its basic requirements will not be supported by its patron. As this fear mounts, the new Likud government seems more disposed than its predecessor to take increasingly defiant actions. The United States continues to allay this fear by providing Israel with generous economic and military support. However, should the United States decide to withhold its patronage in order to force Israel to comply with its policy, the weak client is likely to take desperate measures to dissuade the United States from this course. This is not to suggest that keeping Israel on a 'short leash' in regard to its arms requests will not encourage compliant behaviour - as it did in 1970, 1973, and 1975. But it is to suggest that on matters of vital interest, where Israel believes that it cannot afford to be compliant, the 'short leash' will not achieve its purpose, and withholding patronage will not achieve it either because Israel, fearing abandonment, will become more defiant and more prepared to take desperate measures to maintain what it regards as vital to its security and survival.

In other words, since both Egypt and Israel retain the ability to disrupt or damage American interests, the United States must operate within the bounds of their basic requirements if it is to achieve a settlement by means of its patronage. In these circumstances, any attempt to impose a settlement on these two clients which is perceived to jeopardise the vital interests of one or both, is likely to be counter-productive as long as the clients possess the will to resist and the means to do so.
However, as regional tranquillity and security of oil supply become increasingly vital to the United States and its allies, the superpower's will to absorb the costs of forcing its protégé to comply is likely to be bolstered. Should the politics of patronage, in combination with other conflicting pressures in the region, lead to the outbreak of another war, then the interests of both superpowers will be engaged. And, as we have seen, on matters which affect the central balance between the superpowers, the great can indeed prevail over the weak. For, in the circumstances of another war, the asymmetry between the will of the weak (on matters vital to them) and the will of the great (on matters no longer peripheral to them) will disappear, while the asymmetry between the power of the patrons and the inherent weaknesses of the clients is likely to be reasserted. In these circumstances, the great are likely to prevail and the weak will be forced to submit.

To conclude that the interests of both protégés would therefore be better served by avoiding a war which would threaten to disrupt superpower relations and would thereby create the necessary conditions for a superpower imposed settlement would, however, be misleading. For the 1967 and 1973 experiences have taught both Israel and Egypt that, as long as the settlement is imposed on the adversary rather than on itself, the protégé can in fact gain advantage from war. Thus, whether the politics of patronage will lead to a new era of peace and tranquillity in the Middle East or to yet another war remains uncertain. What is certain, however, is that while the superpowers may dominate the international system, they cannot preserve the peace by controlling the dynamics of the Arab-Israeli conflict unless their regional protégés comply; and Israel and Egypt will not comply unless their basis interests are secured.
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