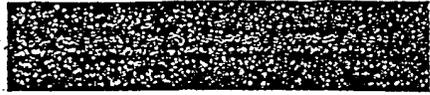


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Intelligence Report

*THE GROWTH OF THE SOVIET COMMITMENT
IN THE MIDDLE EAST*

(Reference Title: ESAU XLIX)

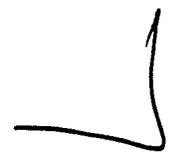
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THE GROWTH OF THE SOVIET COMMITMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

MEMORANDUM TO RECIPIENTS:

This study deserves careful attention because of the soberness of its message.

True, this examination of the sources of Soviet Middle East conduct finds no master plan, no inexorable advance, no plot to extinguish Israel. The Soviets avoid high-risk courses and seek no Middle East war with the US. There is some uncertainty and hesitance within Soviet leadership concerning an assertive course. A number of forces act to complicate and restrain Soviet ambitions. Enhanced Soviet presence does not translate into Soviet dominance of any Arab state.

Nonetheless, this study illustrates the immense advantages the USSR enjoys in the Middle East, and the success Soviet leadership has had in exploiting them.

Perhaps most importantly, this study points up the many forces which serve to restrict the USSR from reducing its Middle East bid. Each added commitment creates new defense concerns and heightens the prestige stakes. Hawkish pressures from within the Soviet military and security services sharpen Brezhnev's caution not to be found soft on capitalism. The Soviet piecemeal military commitments become steps which, once taken, cannot easily be reversed. Then, too, the USSR is to some degree the prey, and not the master, of its clients.

The study reminds us that the USSR is not fully in control of events in the Middle East: there are not only Soviet and US moves in play, but Arab, Israeli, fedayeen, and even Chinese. This does create a certain common Soviet interest with the US in preventing irresponsible

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local initiatives from embroiling the two great powers, but the Soviets have shown a fairly keen sense of what the traffic will safely bear in the way of gaining unilateral advantage. There is no apparent Soviet interest at present in an Arab-Israeli settlement not largely on Soviet terms. There is no evidence that the USSR intends any Middle East halt or major retreat.

The resulting problems for the US are of course enormous. Not least, as the study emphasizes, any major improvement in the Middle East scene and any undercutting of Soviet political capital with the Arabs probably require sufficient Israeli territorial concessions to bring about a settlement.

This study has received constructive comment from a wide number of other offices. Although there is a considerable body of agreement with the judgments of the study, its views remain those of its author, [] and of this Staff. We would appreciate receiving any comments on the study's data, argument, or conclusions. The study includes information received through 1 December 1970.

Chief,

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THE GROWTH OF THE SOVIET COMMITMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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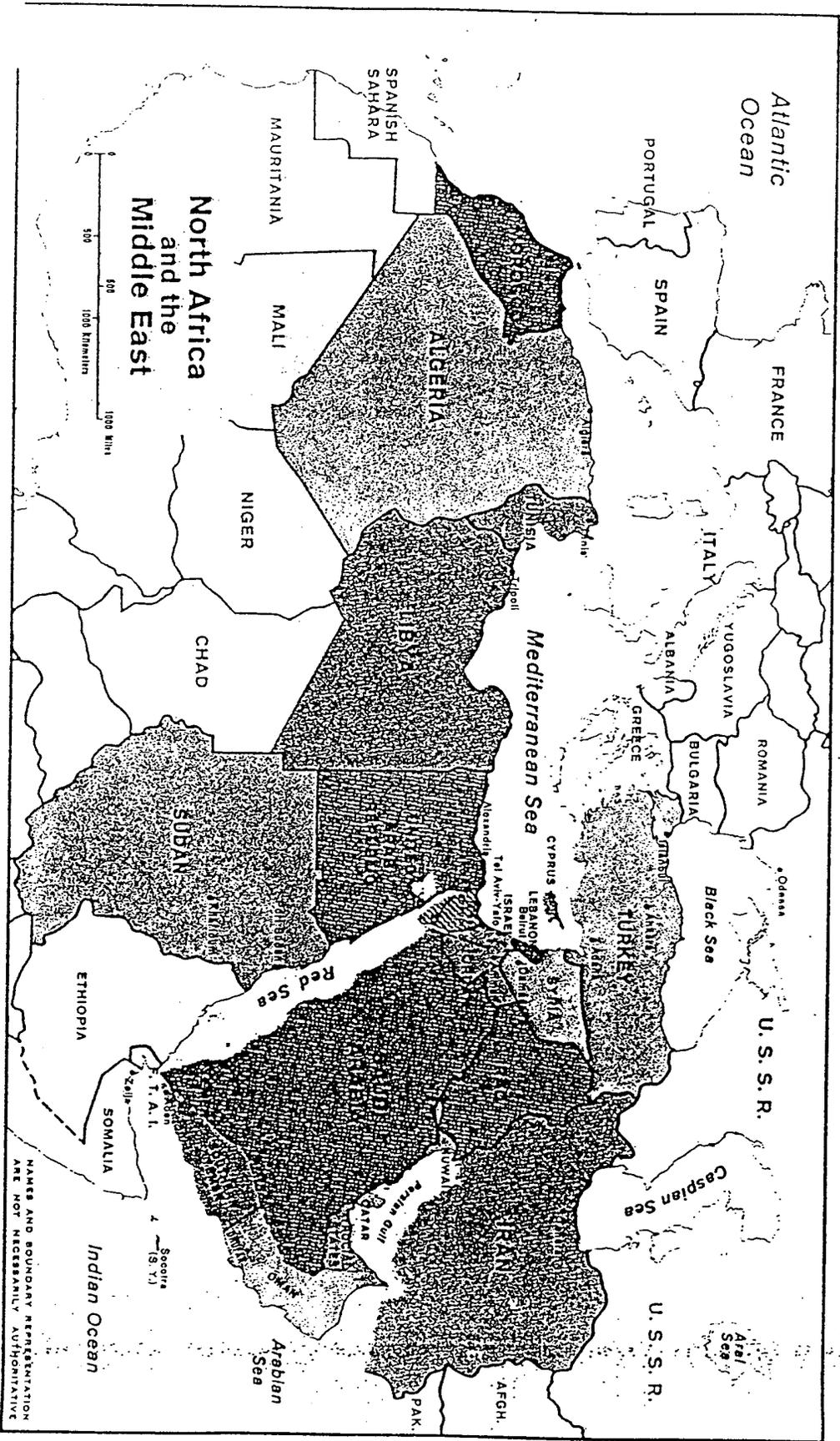
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MALI

ALGERIA

NIGER

CHAD

SUDAN

ETHIOPIA

Indian Ocean

ITALY

YUGOSLAVIA

ROMANIA

BULGARIA

ALBANIA

GREECE

Mediterranean Sea

Black Sea

U. S. S. R.

Caspian Sea

U. S. S. R.

Aral Sea

CYPRUS

LEBANON

ISRAEL

JORDAN

SYRIA

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YEMEN

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THE GROWTH OF THE SOVIET COMMITMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Summary

Russia enjoys enormous advantages in its abiding desire to expand southward. The Middle East is largely a strategic vacuum. Turkish, British, and French power no longer frustrate Russian advance. The US is a distant power beset on many fronts. The rise of radical Arab nationalism restricts US efforts to generate political capital in the Arab world.

The Soviet advance has been uncertain and has brought many new problems. Soviet policy has frequently been bedeviled by the consequences of advance into the radical Arab world: the fragmentation and mutual hostilities of many of those regimes, the complexities of their intrigues against one another, and the irrationality of many of their acts. Nonetheless, the USSR has been without economic investments in the area to defend, without ties to creaky feudal governments, and largely free of the colonial taint which has accrued to the US. And, post-Stalin leadership has shown considerable flexibility in exploiting opportunity -- and creating Soviet political strength in the area.

But, superimposed on these forces, it is primarily the Israel issue which has aggravated difficulties for the US and caused the Arabs to gravitate toward Soviet support. To the Arab radicals, the key role played by the US in the creation and support of Israel has served as the basic, irrefutable evidence of the essentially "malevolent and imperialist" intentions of the US. This alienation has been worsened over the years by the severe defeats Israel has inflicted on the Arabs -- each humiliation greater than the one before, and each creating new bitterness and new waves of radicalism.

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The Arab-Israeli issue is also one which radical Arab leaders have repeatedly used as a point of attack upon conservative Arab leaders and governments friendly to the US. Even the most moderate Arab leaders have, in self-defense, frequently succumbed to the temptation to accuse the radicals of hypocritical unwillingness themselves to challenge Israel. Rival Arab radicals -- such as Nasir and the Syrian and Iraqi Baathists -- have similarly taunted each other. Over the years, competitive demagoguery of this sort has been one of the factors that has helped to preclude a settlement with Israel. What is more, it has sometimes led to competitive displays of militancy against Israel against the better judgment of most of those involved. In 1967, the Syrian regime which precipitated the chain of events that led to the six-day Arab-Israeli war -- and which was by far the most fanatical in its motivation of the three "confrontation states" bordering Israel -- was the one which suffered the least.

Against this backdrop, the Soviet military presence was introduced into the Middle East in the 1950s and 1960s gradually, in the form of military aid advisers and technicians sent to accompany the growing quantities of military hardware with which the USSR flooded the Arab world.

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The appearance of these forerunners was matched by the introduction of what were initially small Soviet naval forces in the Mediterranean alongside what was then the overwhelming strength of the US Sixth Fleet. From these beginnings, there was a rapid expansion of the Soviet military presence following the 1967 war.

This 1967 war indeed represented a turning point for the Soviet Union in the Middle East. Paradoxically, it was from this moment of deepest humiliation for the Soviet clients and embarrassment for Moscow that the USSR began to cash in on its political and economic investment in the area, and commenced to draw important strategic dividends. The trend toward more direct Soviet participation in the Arab struggle with Israel in turn furnished a pretext for the Soviets to use part of their military presence for purposes which have much more to do with Soviet military interests, both nuclear-strategic and regional, than with Egyptian security interests. The Soviet fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean which uses UAR ports may thus be portrayed as deterring US naval forces from attack on the Arab states, but the Soviets in fact seem more concerned with creating a capability to neutralize those forces in the event of a Soviet war with the US. To some extent the Soviets may thus be said to have succeeded where the British failed, in the early 1950s, in harnessing Egypt to the military interests of a major protagonist in the cold war.

Regardless of how the political future of the Middle East unfolds, some Soviet military presence can henceforth be expected to remain in the area, if only because of the USSR's proximity and growing naval strength. And beyond this, the maximum Soviet military desires seem extensive: it is apparently now the hope of some Soviet military planners that the USSR can gradually gather together in its own hands the old British Middle Eastern "lifeline," creating a belt of Soviet military domination from the Eastern Mediterranean through the Suez Canal to the Red Sea, the western Indian Ocean, and eventually, the Persian Gulf.

It is by no means inevitable, however, that all such grandiose plans will be fulfilled. As their private designs become more apparent, the Soviets must increasingly deal with many of the same nationalist forces that made the British Middle East Defense Command scheme unfeasible twenty years earlier. It is significant, for example, that radical Arab states such as Algeria and Syria have not found the Arab cause against Israel sufficient reason to yield to the [] Soviet hints or importunities for base facilities in these countries.

There is, moreover, an inherent conflict between Soviet military and political aims on this question of bases. The Soviet military establishment's desire to expand its use of overseas facilities runs directly counter to the old Soviet claim that only the imperialist West seeks foreign military bases, and never the USSR. It is probable that many in Moscow continue to feel that open acknowledgement of such facilities would be politically counterproductive. Besides any such ideological embarrassment involved, the Soviets may be influenced in part by past British and US experience with some military bases which proved not a source of increased influence, but instead a major drain on the political credit which allowed them to be established.

In short, before Soviet military forces had ever entered the Middle East, the Western political base in the area decayed first, and the Western military presence inevitably declined. The Soviet Union established a political base first, and a Soviet military presence has followed. But even now the Soviets do not "control" any of the Arab states they are exploiting against NATO and the US Navy, in the sense that they control, say, Czechoslovakia. For one thing, the Soviet presence is vulnerable to possible turnovers in the often volatile Arab governments. More important, the Soviets in the Middle East must always supply a quid pro quo. The Soviet military presence is dependent on continued Arab perception of common political interests, and, as the Western presence before it, is highly vulnerable to any future fundamental change in the political situation. Because

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a final settlement of the entire Arab-Israeli dispute might bring such a change, [] even the remote prospect of such a settlement is regarded with anxiety by certain Soviet military planners and intelligence officials.

A host of other ambiguities complicate the Soviet desire to expand its strategic position. One is the oil issue, and the powerful economic position occupied by the Western oil companies, which has inhibited Arab thoughts about nationalization since Mossadeq's day. Soviet lust for Middle Eastern oil is not a central factor in the Soviet policy mix. The oil of the Middle East today has some marginal significance to the Soviet Union in economic terms, particularly as a potential future source of some additional hard currency which could be used to import Western technology and equipment. But Middle East oil appears clearly to not be a vital Soviet national interest for which the Soviets would willingly sacrifice long-established political goals. Of far greater significance to the Soviet Union is the manipulation of the issue of the oil to weaken the political position of the US and strengthen that of the Soviet Union. Partly because of Soviet unwillingness to be saddled with the responsibility of guaranteeing the Arabs large-scale hard currency markets for nationalized oil, the USSR has sidestepped outright encouragement of nationalization. Compelled to avoid a frontal assault on the oil majors, the Soviets have sought instead to persuade both France and the Arabs of the advantages of gradually replacing US oil interests with those of European states -- such as France.

Another subject of perplexity with the Soviet leadership has been the question of expenditures for Middle Eastern aid. Despite the contribution which Soviet post-Stalin economic and military assistance to the Arab states has made in opening the doors of the Middle East to a Soviet presence, nagging doubts have persisted in Moscow over whether the USSR has gotten its money's worth. The conduct of some of the radical Arab states has repeatedly brought to the fore the issue of

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the degree of influence that the Soviets actually obtain for their money. To a certain extent, the Soviet position in the radical Arab states is indeed fortified by their varying degrees of dependence on the USSR and Eastern Europe for economic and military assistance. The Soviet Union's use or prospective use of bases for its own strategic purposes in the UAR and Southern Yemen is closely tied to Soviet assistance to those states. Nevertheless, while Soviet aid helps to ensure a continuing tie with sometimes recalcitrant recipients (e.g., a very strong tie with the UAR, a fairly strong one with Syria and Iraq, a weaker one with Algeria), the Soviets have been unable to translate such ties into more than very moderate leverage over radical Arab policy. At most, the Soviets have been able to tip the balance on decisions that the Arabs were already inclined to consider for other reasons. [] the Soviets spend much of their time reacting to Arab initiatives, often requiring frantic Soviet efforts -- sometimes successful, sometimes not -- to head off unilateral Arab actions carrying undesirable or dangerous overtones.

Another complicating factor for the Soviets has been their continuing reluctance to abandon the Communist movements of the Middle East as instruments of policy, even when support of local Communists has conflicted with the post-Stalin policy of cultivating radical bourgeois nationalists. Soviet influence on most radical Arab regimes turns essentially on a convergence of certain foreign policy interests, and despite some limited Communist gains, many Arab regimes that accept Soviet help remain acutely suspicious of Soviet efforts to exert influence in their domestic affairs. The Soviets have continued to experience difficulty in judging how far it is expedient to press the ruling left-wing nationalists for protection of the local Communists or pro-Communists or for an improvement in their political status. In the last few years, there has been some Soviet tendency to increase such pressures, with some limited success. In October 1968 and October-December 1969, a few individuals believed to be Communists were in fact admitted to the cabinets of Syria, Iraq, Sudan, and South Yemen, and a friend of the

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Party and the Soviet Union temporarily became a cabinet member in Lebanon. But Communist Party influence in each such Arab regime remained fragmentary and precarious, frequently insufficient to save the Party itself from sporadic repression and arrests or exilings. Ironically enough, despite the Soviet supply of military hardware to the radical Arab armies, opposition within the Arab regimes to cooperation with the local Communists has often been centered in the leadership of the armed forces. Most recently, a potentially serious problem has begun to arise for the Soviet Union concerning the extreme leftist regime in South Yemen, from which the USSR may hope eventually to receive an air facility at Aden or Socotra. The UAR has become increasingly exercised in recent months over what it regards as Communist influence within this regime, all the more so because it came to power at the expense of another South Yemeni faction favored by Egypt.

Two additional factors render it difficult for the Soviet Union to maintain Middle Eastern tension at a "controlled" level. One is the sharp growth in the influence of Palestinian nationalism since the 1967 war, and the consequent rise of the fedayeen. The Soviets have reluctantly adjusted their policy to the political impact of the fedayeen movement in a series of small, halting steps, moving from private disparagement of the guerrilla struggle against Israel in 1967 to public endorsement of that struggle by Politburo members two years later. The Soviets have for over two years allowed East European states to sell arms to fedayeen groups for cash, and other bloc-made weapons have been donated to the fedayeen by some radical Arab states with or without Soviet approval. But the Soviets have continued thus far to defer a publicized donation of arms to the fedayeen because the USSR is unable to control them and does not wish identification either with undiluted fedayeen goals (the abolition of the state of Israel) or with extremist fedayeen tactics (such as kidnappings and hijackings). While the Soviets have not endorsed the fedayeen demand for abolition of Israel, Soviet propaganda has become somewhat more ambiguous on this score in the last year, occasionally speaking of

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the struggle to restore unspecified Arab "national" rights in Palestine. If there is no settlement, the groundwork has thus been laid for a possible further evolution of the Soviet position in the next few years to accommodate the Palestinians.

At the same time, a succession of events in the summer of 1970 has again reminded the Soviets of the extent to which certain of their primary interests in the Middle East run counter to those of the fedayeen. These events were the outburst of fedayeen opposition to the Israeli-Egyptian ceasefire endorsed by the Soviet Union; the crisis created by the PFLP airplane hijackings engineered to counter the ceasefire; and the greater crisis surrounding the September Jordanian civil war that followed the hijackings and Syrian intervention. The net effect was to dramatize for the USSR both how dangerous the fedayeen were for Soviet efforts to control risks in the Middle East and how politically potent the fedayeen remained. In the aftermath, the Soviets have sought to claim credit for having allegedly helped to save the fedayeen from complete destruction, while continuing to court the Palestinians with aloof encouragement.

Meanwhile, since almost the first moment of Soviet intrusion into the Middle East in the 1950s, the Soviet leaders have been looking over their shoulders at the Chinese. Peking's indirect influence on Soviet conduct has been far out of proportion to the actual Chinese investment of effort in the area. Much of the Soviet tenacity in demagogic pursuit of unstable and uncontrollable forces such as the Syrians, Iraqis, fedayeen, et al. appears to derive at least in part from extraordinary sensitivity to Chinese competition for influence over these forces.

Over the years, one of the principal functions of the Chinese goad has been to increase the political costs to the Soviets of not accepting high risks in crisis situations. Quick to recognize the vulnerability of the USSR's qualified position on the fedayeen, the Chinese

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have consistently attacked Soviet professions of desire for a peaceful settlement in the area, and Soviet criticism of fedayeen "extremists." Perhaps most importantly, Peking has never had diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv, and the Chinese have implied willingness to see Israel destroyed.

This Chinese attitude has a practical consequence for the Israeli evaluation of any proposed UN guarantee of a Middle East settlement. If added reason were needed for Israeli scepticism about the value of such a guarantee, this would be provided by the prospect that Communist China might occupy a Security Council seat within the next few years, championing in the most demagogic fashion the views of those militant Arab states angry over any relative Soviet restraint toward Israel, possibly inducing the USSR in turn to harden its stand toward Israel to meet this competition, and in any case vetoing any Security Council Middle East resolution not hostile to Israeli interests which the Soviets might conceivably be disposed to allow to pass.

But the most serious problem created for the Soviet leadership by their involvement in the Middle East is the risk of military confrontation with the US. In general, the more intimately the US has been involved in a crisis, the more closely US military forces have been placed to the geographic focus of the crisis, and the greater the chance that those forces might be used, the more circumspect the Soviets have been. This has been true under both Khrushchev and his successors.

Secondly, the post-Khrushchev leadership has condemned as dangerous and provocative Khrushchev's practice in the Suez crisis of 1956 (repeated in the 1957 crisis over Syria) of publicly brandishing, as an instrument of pressure in a crisis, an insincere threat to use military force. But while the present Soviet leadership in general disapproves of open bluffing, it committed another kind of bluff before the 1967 war by encouraging Arab misunderstanding of its intention to stay out of such a war, through calculated ambiguity.

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Thirdly, the Soviet willingness to take risks in the Middle East obviously also varies with the nature of the radical forces on whose behalf or at whose instigation the risks would be run. One of the reasons for the great Soviet caution exhibited in the crisis over the September 1970 Jordan civil war was clearly the lack of identification of Soviet interests with those of the fedayeen, and uncertainty concerning Chinese influence upon the most radical fedayeen groups. Unwilling to risk a collision with the United States as a result of a chain of events begun by uncontrollable Palestinians, the Soviets were only a few degrees less reluctant to become involved as a result of adventurist actions by the self-willed Syrian regime. It should be noted in this respect that the Soviets did not sponsor or encourage the Syrian invasion of northern Jordan. And in contrast to all previous Middle Eastern crises, in this case Soviet warnings to the United States were not accompanied by even a veiled or ambiguous threat to take any counteraction in the event of any specific Israeli or US move.

This particular reason for Soviet caution would apply much less, however, to a crisis directly involving the UAR, the local regime to which the Soviets have most closely tied their interests. Despite the evidence of Soviet concern lest a Middle Eastern crisis cause them to clash with the US, the Soviet relationship with Egypt has drawn Moscow into acceptance of undesired risks. In particular, the question of the degree of possible Soviet involvement in any future large-scale Middle East fighting has again been made dangerously ambiguous. [

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When in January 1970 the critical situation created for Nasir by the Israeli deep penetration raids finally induced the Soviet leadership to yield to his entreaties and send Soviet air defense units to Egypt, a turning point was reached: sixteen years after the British signed a treaty with Nasir abandoning their long-dominant military position in Egypt, forces of another great power had begun to take on combat roles. [

] By the summer of 1970 the distinction between the war and peace had long been finessed by the Egyptian abrogation of the ceasefire and the creation of an intermittent state of hostilities just below the level of all-out war. Under these circumstances, with no sharp boundaries between levels of fighting to demarcate conditions under which the USSR would cease to be involved, it became much more difficult for the Soviet Union to extricate itself from involvement if the fighting should gradually escalate to the point of all-out Arab-Israeli war.

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[Kosygin] had said that the Soviet leadership was "very worried" about the event, presumably because of the implication that the USSR might have to increase its military commitment in Egypt even further in order to deal with Israel.

Thus, although the Soviet forces sent to Egypt had in fact accomplished their primary mission of deterring Israel from staging further deep-penetration raids, the Soviet leadership had reason to grasp the opportunity for a restoration of the ceasefire offered by the US proposals in the summer of 1970. This ceasefire halted, for the time being, a growing trend toward more direct Soviet combat with Israeli forces which might soon have led to an escalation of the Soviet combat presence in Egypt. [] about possible US reactions to such escalation in Soviet grappling with Israel, the USSR also has reason to want Egypt to continue to accept a ceasefire indefinitely.

Unfortunately for the Soviet leaders, while they can influence the Egyptian decision in this matter they do not have the decisive say. The Soviet need to pay a policy price for every Egyptian policy concession was illustrated after the ceasefire began by Soviet willingness to assist the UAR in placing SAM missiles near the Suez Canal in violation of the ceasefire agreement. []

The real risk accepted by the Soviets when they placed air defense forces in Egypt in 1970 was not the moderate one posed by the immediate prospect of conflict with Israeli pilots. Rather, it was the fact that this Soviet involvement would make it more difficult for the USSR to avoid increasing its involvement when and if the

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present situation should change for the worse. In short, the Soviets risk having entered a whirlpool, and if they are drawn in further they will no doubt protest at each stage that it is the US and the Israelis who are forcing them to take untoward risks. This process of greater and greater acceptance of risks through small, discrete steps could ultimately bring the Soviets willy-nilly into a situation of serious risk of war with the US which their leaders would not have accepted if it had been offered as a single large choice, all at one time.

A central consideration in the matter of Soviet risk-taking in the Middle East is of course the Soviet reading of US intentions and capabilities. If the Soviets were to become convinced, for example, that for political reasons (domestic or external) the US Government is more inhibited than formerly from taking a given action in response, risks formerly considered out of the question by the Soviets might now be somewhat downgraded. The Soviets seem at present to be doubtful of the degree to which any political considerations hinder the Presidential ability to use force in response to concrete Soviet actions in areas where the US already has both a commitment and armed forces in being. The Soviets have good reason to believe that the Middle East is such an area. Further, the net effect of the US incursion into Cambodia in the spring of 1970 was apparently to shake Soviet confidence in the predictability of US conduct and the power of domestic restraints on Presidential action. And, in any event, during and since the September 1970 crisis over Syrian intervention in the Jordan civil war, the Soviets have spoken and acted, publicly [] as if they give a high rating to the possibility that the United States might act forcefully in the Middle East.

Soviet actions in the Middle East -- and Soviet response to US actions -- are impelled by the world view of most of the Soviet leadership requiring the maximum possible advance consistent with the safety of the Soviet state. This urge to keep pressing as far as

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seems practicable (but no further) is driven in the first place by an underlying, implacable ideological hostility toward the US which a majority of the post-Khrushchev leaders feel more strongly than did Khrushchev. It is reinforced by awareness of the degree to which Soviet strength has increased since Khrushchev's day, both absolutely and in relation to the US. And finally, the Soviets appear particularly reluctant to retreat in the Middle East because of the special importance they assign to the advances over the US which they have made there and are now trying to consolidate.

The degree to which such attitudes are held undoubtedly varies within the Soviet leadership, and many of the leaders -- particularly General Secretary Brezhnev and his long-time adversary Shelepin -- also seem to be swayed in advocating particular Middle East policies by judgments about their own personal political interests at each juncture, as much as by their opinions of Soviet interests. Brezhnev seems to be governed in large part by his perceptions of the prevailing political wind among his colleagues and the forces immediately below them; Shelepin, by his desire to offer a vigorous alternative program, tempered by his fluctuating view of the political risks. But while Brezhnev has often vacillated between the poles of Politburo opinion on foreign policy, Shelepin has appeared to be one of those in the Politburo who are most in favor of a dynamic, "forward" strategy of maximizing pressure abroad, and who therefore seem likely to rate the Soviet interest in the Middle East most highly, to favor the acceptance of greater risks than others would feel justified, and -- most important -- to lean toward the sanguine side in evaluating the evidence of US determination whenever that evidence is ambiguous.

On the other hand, those Politburo members who seem less strongly motivated by either Soviet great-power chauvinism, ideological hostility, or a mixture of both, who are less enamored of a "forward" strategy, and who are generally more sensitive to the economic advantages of detente may feel the acceptance of large Middle Eastern risks to be less natural for overall

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Soviet interests, and also may be somewhat more alarmist in measuring US capabilities and intentions. There is some evidence that Premier Kosygin is the leading figure on this side.

Actual Soviet policy, reflecting a Politburo consensus, has wobbled between these extremes, trying to have the cake and eat it too; that is, attempting to find an arrangement which would preserve some intermediate level of Arab-Israeli tension, sufficient to safeguard Soviet influence yet somehow not sufficient to bring about a Soviet-US clash. [

] that some forces [are skeptical about the feasibility of this balancing act. They insist that a settlement of any type -- even, apparently, one acceptable to UAR interests -- would be perilous for the Soviet position in the Middle East because it would reduce Arab dependence on the Soviet Union. Such people apparently also consider others in the Soviet regime as inclined to exaggerate the latent risks if no settlement at all is reached.

The discordant advice furnished the Politburo has an effect on policy to the degree that it affects the political atmosphere within the upper reaches of the Party to which individual Politburo members are acutely

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sensitive. Even if an attempt to reshape policy to reflect such pressures fails utterly for the time being, it may have some ultimate effect if it modifies the climate of top opinion within which the Brezhnev leadership operates. Reverberations of the June 1967 Middle East crisis seem to have had such an effect on the Soviet Politburo.]

] The cumulative effect of the Soviet refusal to take risks to defend the UAR in the 1967 debacle, of the predictable subsequent Chinese sneers, of the vociferous Arab complaints, and]

] appears to have been to make the Brezhnev leadership somewhat more sensitive to the political consequences of inaction in defense of the USSR's primary Middle Eastern interests. Brezhnev has become increasingly concerned to demonstrate -- both to the Party and to the military -- that his hand did not, and would not, tremble. Part of the groundwork for the Politburo's unprecedented decision to send some Soviet forces to Egypt early in 1970 was thus almost certainly created by the disturbances]

While permitting themselves to be led by the parallel evolution of Nasir's needs and Brezhnev's needs into this unprecedented commitment on the military side, the Soviet leaders have also allowed themselves to follow most of the fluctuations in the Egyptian negotiating posture. Despite the opposition to any agreement from some Soviet quarters, Brezhnev and the leadership majority seem sufficiently worried about the risks to prefer a settlement which would reduce tensions to, say, the pre-1967 level -- but only if it is a settlement acceptable to their heterogeneous Arab clients, or at least to the

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UAR, their primary client. Nevertheless, the military risks still do not impress most Soviet leaders enough to justify either the personal political risk or the joint political sacrifice involved in exerting untoward pressure upon the Egyptian leaders to accept any settlement formula the Egyptians find politically intolerable.

It is true that the more moderate elements in the Soviet leadership appear to have been considerably alarmed by the events of 1970 and may -- to the extent that their influence and political courage permits -- make stronger attempts in the future to push the leadership consensus away from the acceptance of additional risks and toward a settlement.

It nevertheless continues to appear improbable that the present Politburo can reverse the momentum of Soviet policy and avoid taking greater risks if worse comes to worst -- if no settlement is reached, if the ceasefires eventually cease to be extended, if the Egyptians feel obliged to resume their "war of attrition," and if the Israelis feel obliged to respond strongly in some fashion. The weight of the existing Soviet military involvement in the UAR would then be likely to impose itself heavily upon Soviet policy and to reduce Soviet options.

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