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# THE DILEMMAS OF SOVIET POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

by

DOCTOR JOHN R. THOMAS

*(What are the alternatives which confront Soviet leaders in relation to the type of support to be given to certain Arab countries? What are the implications for the West?)*

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## CONSTRAINTS ON SOVIET ACTIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The treaty of friendship and cooperation concluded by the Soviet Union and the UAR this spring posits on the surface a long term Soviet presence in the UAR. Yet precisely because the agreement is intended to be in force for the next 15 years, it is appropriate to put in a longer perspective the seemingly enhanced Soviet position in the UAR represented by the treaty.

Without question, Soviet penetration into the Middle East, begun in the mid-50's under Khrushchev and now continuing with greater force under his successors, should be scored as a clear gain for the Soviets in an area where both their influence and presence had been absent before World War II, despite

long-standing historic aspirations. Clearly, too, this gain in an area vital to US interests cannot be ignored or underestimated in the hope that it will fade away. Yet, without discounting them, Soviet activities should not evoke a hysterical reaction in the West. These recent Soviet successes are balanced by the dilemmas and the reservations within the Soviet leadership to Soviet policy in the Middle East arising from those dilemmas. We have in the past overestimated Soviet capabilities, with the result that the US has often been inhibited in taking appropriate measures in its own self-interest. Many of the Soviet problems and dilemmas in the Middle East are already in evidence and others are foreshadowed by developments in the area to date; indeed, many of these dilemmas are perceived by some Soviet leaders even today, as will be indicated later.

Moreover, the Soviet dilemmas, specifically in the Middle East, are only one group of a whole array of external political-military problems facing the Soviets. These other major problems must be noted, even if only briefly, because they impinge directly on the Soviet freedom of action in the Middle East, set limits on future Soviet "successes" in the area and may in the extreme even be responsible for turning the current apparent or real successes into long-term failures.

In the early post-World War II days nationalism in the form of anti-colonialism was directed against the West; this enabled the Soviets to capitalize on it in many underdeveloped areas, including the Middle East, by establishing their presence as a "fresh, new face." This face has already worn off in some developing countries as they come to see Soviet presence and objectives as having much of what was ascribed to Western colonialism. Most relevantly in the Middle East case, this includes Soviet economic exploitation represented by such measures as

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buying Egyptian cotton at low prices and reselling it on the world market at higher prices and pocketing the difference.

The broader context of politico-military problems affecting Soviet policy in the Middle East now and limiting its future success includes a combination of massive old and new strategic problems, some of which the US does not confront. First, the Soviets face a traditional continental rival--West Germany whose strength (in their view) is likely to be increased in the future by possession of nuclear weapons and missiles. But even in the worst case of national acquisition of nuclear-missile armaments, West Germany would offer relatively little concern to the Soviets if, alone and unaided, it posed the only threat. They could handle such a threat by their superior ground forces, nuclear-missile capabilities, and the greater resources available to them in the post-World War II period.

But the potential threat posed by Red China has added another dimension to Soviet strategic problems. With the defeat of Japan in 1945 and the Communist victory in China in 1949, the Soviets assumed that they had permanently solved the two-front threat posed before World War II by Germany and Japan. Their contingency planning for the future must now assume a hostile Red China, either acting alone or in implicit collusion with West Germany. Indeed, the Soviets already view the two as possible anti-Soviet allies insofar as both have designs on Soviet-held territory.

Beyond China, Japan potentially can resurrect its challenge to the Soviets in Asia. It has greater economic potential than China today to develop large nuclear-missile capabilities. Politically, Japan has reasons to challenge the Soviets because of her territorial loss to the Soviets, currently centered on the budding Japanese demands for the return of the Soviet-held northern islands.

In addition to the traditional Eurasian threat, the US has added an entirely new dimension to postwar Soviet strategic problems. In Soviet eyes, the US challenge differs from any Eurasian threat on three counts: (a) as a non-Eurasian power the US is

beyond the reach of Soviet ground forces, unless the Soviets succeed in establishing a presence on the North American continent similar to that of the US in Europe; (b) the US still has the overall edge in the nuclear-missile arsenal if the MIRV is taken into account; and (c) most important, the US has the resources to enlarge its military capabilities that the Soviets cannot hope to match in the foreseeable future unless the US deliberately permits them to do so. Consequently, a possible US-USSR confrontation in a general war poses almost insoluble problems for the Soviets. A German attack on the Soviet Union could at least be blunted by the traditional Russian strategy of trading space for time, but a US missile attack that would eliminate the need to invade Soviet territory in order to threaten Soviet political centers cannot be met by the space-for-time solution.

The requirements of support of friendly governments outside the Soviet Bloc area or, to show the flag around the globe, confront the Soviet Union with another new postwar strategic problem: how to project its military power beyond its periphery. As in the case of missile defense to meet the US threat, a different capability than that represented by traditional ground forces is required. The Soviets are trying to solve the problem by developing airlift and sealift capabilities as well as training amphibious and airborne forces. But this task, like missile defense, adds another burden to the already overburdened Soviet economy.

In sum, the Soviets are confronted by the gigantic problem of developing separate and relatively noninterchangeable capabilities to counter a missile attack from the US, to meet a ground attack on the Eurasian continent from either or both the East and West, and to support or fight in non-peripheral national liberation wars. Given the limitation on their resources and the rising demands of domestic needs, the Soviets cannot hope to acquire *simultaneously* in the *near* future the capabilities adequate to meet all the strategic threats and requirements. Should they opt for such a solution, it could only be realized--if at all--at the expense of other important

priorities such as long-term economic growth.\*

All these strategic problems provide constraints that have and will continue to set limits on Soviet freedom of action in the Middle East. Indeed, some of the Soviet leaders were aware of these constraints from the very beginning of the Soviet "leap-frogging" into the area in the mid-Fifties under Khrushchev's leadership. This led them to have reservations about, and in some cases to openly oppose, the Soviet policy in that area. In this connection, we should recall some little-heralded history of Soviet policy in the Middle East. Even the initial Soviet involvement in the Middle East—triggered by Khrushchev in 1955 via Soviet arms shipments and economic assistance to Egypt (focused in particular on helping the Egyptians build the Aswan Dam)—met with high level internal opposition. This resistance occurred on ideological and pragmatic grounds.

#### **OPPOSITION TO SUPPORT WITHIN THE SOVIET UNION**

Opposition within the Soviet Union to the activist Middle Eastern policy initiated by Khrushchev arose in 1955 on *ideological* grounds; the point was raised that aid given to a non-Communist leader such as Nasser could and should have been better spent on Communist allies. The specific objection to helping Nasser was intensified by the fact that Nasser so repressed the Egyptian Communists—by jailing them—that Khrushchev was led to lodge an open protest in 1959. He was rebuffed by Nasser with a reminder that what the latter did with the Egyptian Communists was an internal affair, brooking no Soviet meddling.

Adding fuel to internal Soviet reservations

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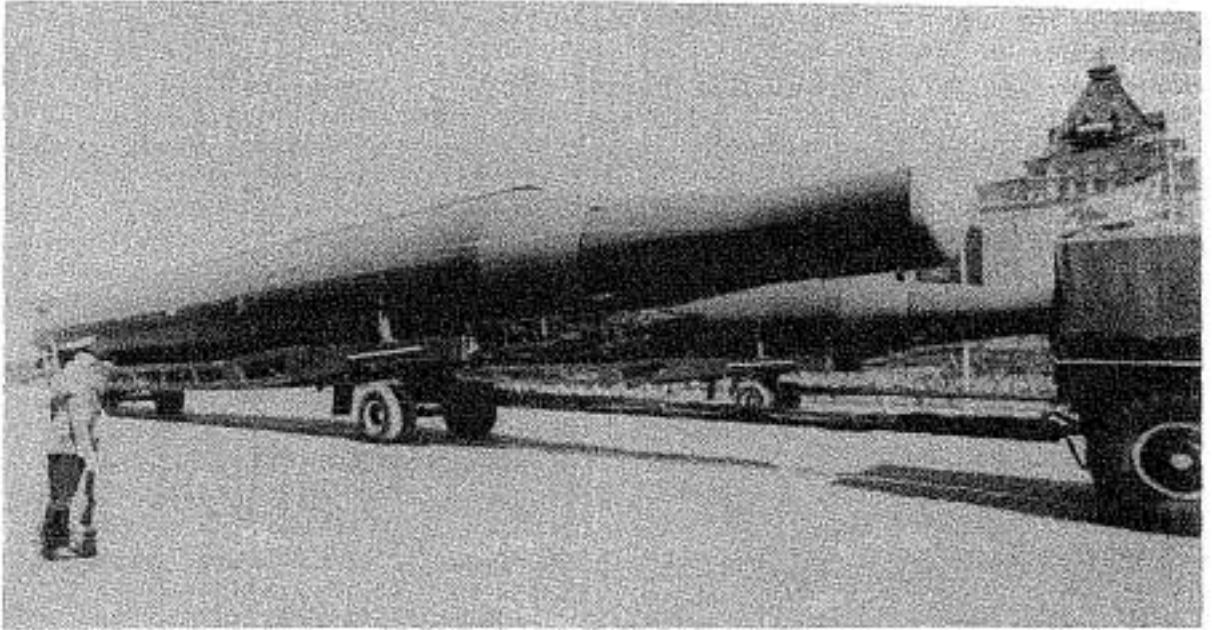
\*For a more detailed examination of the many postwar strategic and foreign policy problems and dilemmas facing the Soviet leadership which offset Soviet gains and inhibit Soviet freedom of action abroad see John R. Thomas, "Soviet Foreign Policy and Conflict Within Political and Military Leadership," RAC-P-61, Research Analysis Corporation, McLean, Virginia, Sep 70.

about Nasser was the latter's promotion of Egyptian nationalism and Pan-Arab unity. Even Khrushchev himself was angered during a visit to Cairo in 1964 by Nasser's boosting of Egypt as the leader of the Pan-Arab movement in the Middle East and his playing down of Soviet aid. On that occasion, Khrushchev vocally objected that Egypt's Pan-Arab aspirations would leave out the Russians. Instead, he argued that Nasser's policy should be anti-imperialist and anti-Western, a policy which would place the Soviets squarely in the Arab camp. The Soviet reservations about any moves in the direction of Arab unity have carried over into the current leadership. In a speech in Soviet Georgia this spring, Brezhnev tactfully gave equal stress to efforts of individual Arab states to unite "patriotic, progressive forces" in a national context at a time when the new Tripartite Federation (Egypt, Libya, and Syria) is due to become effective in September. It should be noted that Brezhnev's open refusal to bless the Federation coincided with the removal of Ali Sabry, the UAR Vice-President, for his opposition to this scheme.

Even more than for ideological reasons the objections of the Soviet elite to aiding the UAR have been based on *pragmatic* grounds of cost effectiveness and material return to the Soviets. It is in this context that the former Party Presidium member Saburov objected to Soviet aid to Nasser in Khrushchev's days, fearing that it would be dissipated without effective return to the Soviets. For opposing Khrushchev's foreign aid policy, Saburov was attacked at the 21st Party Congress in January 1959 and demoted from his high Party and governmental posts. But the reservations on the cost side were not eliminated with his removal. And after Khrushchev's downfall, the opposition extended to some Soviet military who objected to shipping arms to UAR after its disastrous performance in the 1967 six-day war.\*

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\*The reservations of the Soviet military about Soviet policy toward the UAR are discussed later in this paper.



ORDNANCE MAGAZINE

*The Soviet SCARP SS-9 Missile. Can deliver three 5-megaton warheads to a range of more than 5,000 nautical miles. Can be used also in fractional orbit bombardment system (IOBS).*

The foregoing is illustrative of the record of opposition or reservations even in the context of earlier indirect Soviet involvement in the Middle East. These reservations were intensified by the subsequent direct and greater Soviet involvement in the UAR. For now the Soviets face in the Middle East what can be called "the proxy quandary": the Soviets want an ally in the Middle East who can effectively fight his own battles, requiring only material aid and obviating the need for direct Soviet involvement. Lacking such an ally, the Soviets may be confronted in another Arab-Israeli conflict with the choice of still another costly political abstention or direct intervention at the risk of a military confrontation with the US. The Soviets have been put into this quandary as a result of the most important consequence of the six-day war in 1967: the clear-cut Israeli victory proved, beyond any shadow of a doubt, the ineffectiveness of the United Arab Republic (UAR) as an ally that could in the short run win another conflict and obviate the need for direct Soviet involvement in the Middle East.

In the face of such a quandary, some in the Soviet elite, particularly among the military,

might be driven to oppose the political leadership if the latter chooses to intervene directly and massively in another Arab-Israeli war. Even in 1967 the Soviet military undoubtedly had reservations about those political leaders advocating direct Soviet military intervention to bail out the Egyptians in the six-day war. One of these leaders was, for example, the then Moscow party apparatus secretary, Yegorychev. (As head of the most important party machinery in the Soviet Union—therefore a key political figure, who visited Cairo in April 1967 shortly before the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli conflict—he had a major voice in Soviet policy making.) Yegorychev was overruled (and subsequently fired from his post and demoted to the post of ambassador to Denmark) by other Soviet political leaders who, although seeking an expansion of Soviet influence in the Middle East, undoubtedly wanted to avoid direct Soviet involvement at that time. Premier Kosygin signaled this caution at the outbreak of the six-day war when he made it clear to President Johnson that the Soviet Union intended to abstain from that conflict. But even though Kosygin's action reflected the

opinion of the majority of the top political leaders against one extreme of direct Soviet involvement, this group at the same time overruled the probable opposition of some Soviet military by ordering the replacement of the equipment lost by the Egyptians in the 1967 fiasco with the latest Soviet weaponry.

There are precedents for the negative reaction of the Soviet military to placing the latest Soviet weaponry beyond Soviet borders because of the danger that these would fall into unfriendly hands or would promote a militarily untenable situation. In the spring of 1962—when Khrushchev made the decision to begin diverting missiles for emplacement in Cuba—Marshal Moskalkenko, then commander of strategic missile forces, and Marshal Golikov, then head of the Soviet Army's Main Political Administration, were removed and replaced by Marshal Biryuzov and General Yepishev, respectively, men more amenable to Khrushchev's views. Moskalkenko and Golikov were removed, among other reasons, for opposing the Khrushchev decision. From their viewpoint, such a move put the latest weapons, which the Soviet military have traditionally been anxious to shield from Western examination, in the US backyard where they were subject to possible US capture or destruction.\*

Similarly, in the wake of the Egyptian defeat in the six-day war, some Soviet military must undoubtedly have opposed shipping their latest weapons to the Middle East where these could be captured by the Israelis or could otherwise fall into Western hands. The current Chief of Staff, Marshal Zakharov, may have headed this opposition. During an inspection trip to Egypt in the wake of the 1967 conflict, he saw first hand the extent of the Egyptian loss of the latest Soviet equipment. As a result, he must undoubtedly have had objections to the Soviets "throwing good money after bad." His reservations might have been reinforced

by the fact that he led the criticism of other unwise moves of the political leadership such as Khrushchev's "adventurism" in the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. That crisis, in the view of Zakharov and other Soviet military, placed the Soviets in an untenable military situation: to go to the brink with the US in the face of the then overall US strategic superiority and tactical advantage in the Caribbean; here, the Soviets lacked even the tactical advantage they have enjoyed in past Berlin crises, represented by the 20 Soviet divisions around Berlin.\* Given Zakharov's earlier attack on Khrushchev's "adventurism" that resulted in his dismissal as Chief of Staff in 1963, it can be surmised that Zakharov may have had similar reservations about the new adventurism of Khrushchev's successors in the Middle East (even though they reappointed him to his former post after Khrushchev's downfall). This new adventurism resulted not only in the Egyptian debacle of 1967 but in the subsequent Egyptian loss of weapons supplied by the Soviets after the six-day war such as the spectacular Israeli capture intact of a seven-ton radar component of an anti-aircraft missile (SAM-2) system in December 1969.

The reservations of some Soviet military about the eventual success of the political leadership's Middle East policy stem from the Soviet appraisal of the Egyptian debacle. In the wake of the six-day war in 1967, the Soviet military and political press indicated that in the short run the Egyptian military would be ineffective because:

(1) The Egyptian *soldiers* were semi-literate and therefore technically incapable of handling the latest modern weapons turned over to Egypt by the Soviets;

(2) The Egyptian *officer corps* was incompetent, composed, as it still was,

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\*In reacting negatively to the "adventurism" in the Cuban missile crisis, the Soviet military were not criticizing Khrushchev's backing down during the missile crisis but rather the placement of Soviet missiles in Cuba in the first place, given their vulnerability to US action and in the face of US strategic and tactical superiority.

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\*For a discussion of Moskalkenko's and Golikov's opposition to the Cuban missile emplacement, see Michel Tatu, *Power in the Kremlin*, Viking Press, New York, 1969, pp. 236-39.

primarily of the "decadent" bourgeois class.\*

The foregoing Soviet appraisal suggested by implication that because time was needed to cure the two problems noted above, it would be wasteful and counter-productive in the short run to squander any additional modern military equipment on the UAR. This provides another basis for the earlier inference that Marshal Zakharov and others involved in the post six-day war inspection trip to Cairo probably had reservations about replacing the equipment after the June 1967 war. The Egyptian loss of latest Soviet equipment to the Israelis must have served only to reinforce those doubts.

The misgivings of the Soviet military about the risks of war in the Middle East can be inferred additionally from their warnings to the Israelis against creating the dangers of a wider conflict. This may be interpreted as an indication that the Soviet military is trying to head off the Israelis from creating a situation (such as demonstrating Egyptian ineptitude) which may force the Soviets to become directly involved to maintain their prestige or for other reasons.

The expanding presence of the Soviets in the Middle East increases the possibility of an Israeli blow to Soviet prestige that could trigger their reaction with a corresponding risk of a US-Soviet confrontation. For example, the Soviets would be profoundly embarrassed if their pilots were being lost in numerous combat missions against the Israelis. This looms as a distinct possibility because the latter have had extensive combat experience and are widely recognized as high quality pilots who could take a heavy toll of the Soviet adversary. By contrast, most of the current generation of Soviet pilots have had no combat experience.

With full awareness of the fluidity of the current situation in the Middle East, one

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\*For an initial Soviet critique of the Egyptian "military bourgeoisie," see I. P. Belyaev and Y. M. Primakov in *Za Rubezhom*, 30 June 1967. For a later critique in the same vein, see G. I. Mirskii, *Armiya I Politika V Stranakh Azii I Afriky* (Army and Politics in Countries of Asia and Africa), Nauka Publishing House, Moscow, 1970, pp. 87-95.

might nevertheless pose the following questions as illustrative of the chain of events that give rise to the reservations of the Soviet military about heavier, direct Soviet involvement in the Arab-Israeli imbroglio. If beyond the single and unacknowledged incident in the summer of 1970, the Israeli pilots began to shoot down Soviet pilots with accompanying widespread publicity, could the Soviets withstand the resultant political embarrassment? If not, would the Soviets, in accordance with their tradition of applying overwhelming numerical superiority against a foe, begin to fly jets in massive numbers in order to overwhelm the numerically small Israeli air force? And if the Soviets intervened on such a scale, would this in turn risk a US military reaction to such an intervention? Such a chain of events undoubtedly underlies much of the reservations of some Soviet military, such as Marshal Zakharov. The latter has had to plan for contingencies, including the Cuban missile crisis, and has in the past expressed views on the unpredictability of a conflict situation. (It should be noted that the same concern over the unpredictability of developments, once a military conflict breaks out, applies to Soviet views on the feasibility of limited war between the US and the Soviet Union, particularly in Europe. Many Soviet military question whether any conflict involving the US and the Soviet Union directly would not escalate to general war.)

In sum, the military have had, and undoubtedly will continue to have, reservations about the massive re-supply of the UAR as long as the weaknesses of the Egyptian military and political leaders identified by the Soviet military have not been corrected. Their reservations obviously will be reduced to the degree they are given direct control over the military weapons they are ordered to position in Egypt. But unless this is accompanied further by direct Soviet control over Egyptian military actions against the Israelis, instead of such actions being left in the hands of an unpredictable or unreliable Egyptian leadership, the increasing Soviet presence in the Middle East will not eliminate the reservations of the Soviet military about

the risks that direct and massive Soviet involvement in renewed large-scale Arab-Israeli conflict would entail in terms of a possible confrontation with the US.\*

### THE QUANDARY

Aside from the risk of a military confrontation with the US, the most important reason for the Soviet military to oppose direct military involvement in an Arab-Israeli conflict relates to the fact that any such involvement in the Middle East would divert Soviet strength and attention from areas of higher priority such as Europe and the China border.

The Soviet concern over Middle East developments represented by the proxy quandary was most recently reflected in Soviet behavior in the Jordanian crisis of September 1970. Confronted by ineffectiveness of an invading Syrian tank force, the Soviets openly let it be known that they were in touch with the Syrians, clearly in order to restrain the latter from deeper involvement which could have led to an even greater Soviet dilemma: to rescue the Syrians from defeat if the US and Israelis had acted on their warnings that they would intervene if the Syrian forces did not return home. By their efforts vis-a-vis the Syrians in not letting the situation reach this point, the Soviets made clear that they were ready neither to bail the Syrians out of trouble nor to face the embarrassment of an Arab defeat, as the Soviets had to do in the 1956 and the 1967 Egyptian debacles.

The behavior of the Soviets in the Jordanian crisis compared with the earlier crises was even more noteworthy: one would not have expected the hasty Soviet move "to call off" the Syrians in 1970, given the

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\*In the context of the risk of a Soviet confrontation with the US, the reaction of the US would—as it has all along—determine the extent of Soviet internal opposition. Thus, any indication that US was not prepared to uphold the interests in the area that it has identified and acted on in the past would obviously mute those in the Soviet policymaking circles concerned with the consequences of such a confrontation.

significant change in the US-Soviet strategic balance occurring since the Middle East crisis in 1967. And equally noteworthy was the fact that the Soviets openly acknowledged their attempts to "reason" with the Syrians. In past crises and in the face of a much greater Soviet strategic disadvantage vis-a-vis the US, the Soviets covered their retreat from a possible confrontation with the US by blustering threats to assist the Arabs, in the hope that such threats would deter US action in the Middle East. This was the Soviet calculation, for example, in the Syrian-Turkish crisis of 1957 and the Lebanese crisis of 1958. The display by the Soviets of even greater caution in the later Jordanian crisis indicates continuing recognition of their dilemmas in the Middle East and suggests a more sober attitude towards a possible confrontation with the US than was displayed by Khrushchev in his "war of words."

The Soviet dilemmas arising from the Arab-Israeli tensions are likely to be compounded by other problems. Of these, the major one is the instability of the Arab regimes, affecting Syria in the past and now seemingly spreading to the UAR as represented by a purge last spring of Ali Sabry. For even though Sadat won on this occasion, the mold of stability achieved under Nasser since the early 1950's has been weakened and may be broken in the future.

At the same time, the purge of Sabry has scuttled Soviet hopes, at least for the present, that the Arab Socialist Union (ASU) could—as the sole legal party—be infiltrated and taken over by pro-Soviet forces such as the Sabry-led faction to make it another instrument for exerting pressure on Sadat, in addition to leverage provided by direct aid on state-to-state level. (To this end the Soviets had been pressing for UAR internal political "reform" including the creation of a more disciplined party within a "transformed" ASU led by someone like Sabry.) After Sabry's purge, Sadat initiated a housecleaning in ASU to free his internal power base of pro-Soviet agents. This will limit the Soviet ability to control Sadat and influence events in the Middle East. It will also leave Sadat or others of his persuasion free to turn to the West and



away from dependence solely on the Soviets should this be found ultimately to be in the UAR's best interests. (This is the path that Sekou Toure of Guinea followed, and some Soviet leaders have not forgotten.) The Sabry affair is another reminder of how fragile Soviet presence in the UAR may be. It also illustrates a broader Soviet dilemma that aid to non-Communist regimes such as a Nasser/Sadat-led UAR to satisfy a short run requirement of using these regimes to expel Western influence may strengthen them against subsequent Soviet-instigated subversion.

In addition to problems arising directly in the UAR-Soviet context, other dilemmas are posed by the volatility and complexity of the Arab world rivalries which could also lead to unwanted US-Soviet confrontation. Foremost of these relates to the Arab guerrilla movement.

In recent years, the Soviet press, undoubtedly reflecting the views of some of the top leadership, has attacked the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and, by implication, its leader, Arafat, for being irresponsible and ineffective in advancing the Arab cause. The Soviet leaders holding such a negative view presumably believe that the PLO's terrorist strategy against Israel might trigger Israeli retaliation that could once more escalate to an all-out Arab-Israeli conflict. The latter, as in the case of the six-day war in 1967, could face the Soviets with the choice of politically embarrassing abstention or of direct military intervention in the Middle East with all the risks implicit in such an action. (By contrast, some Soviet leaders, like Shelepin, have backed the PLO, presumably because they feel that ideologically the Soviets cannot afford to repudiate the PLO and thus play into Chinese Communist hands.)\*

Again, undoubtedly reflecting some top level concern, Soviet declarations have argued for a political solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, even though Nasser--in his

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\*For his pains on this as well as other scores, Shelepin was removed from the top-level Party Secretariat and assigned to the unimportant post of head of the Soviet Trade Union Federation.



US NAVY

*The Soviet Navy Ship Moskva in the Mediterranean.*

*The Moskva has been described as a  
"true multi-purpose" ship.*

lifetime--and other Arab leaders in Syria, Algeria, and Sudan have stated explicitly or implicitly that the only solution to the problem is the military defeat, if not destruction, of Israel. It appears that some Soviet leaders are concerned once more that if this extreme Arab goal of "final solution" was pursued in action, it would, given the fact that the Israelis would fight to the death, precipitate a dangerous situation, particularly if the US intervened on Israel's side and faced the Soviets with the choice between politically damaging abstention or risky direct military response to the US move.

Yet contrary to their desire to be at arm's length from possible involvement in an Arab-Israeli war, the Soviets have, since the Jordanian crisis, increased this possibility by the Soviet-UAR Treaty concluded this spring. The treaty has the potential for deepening the Soviets' quandary regarding Israel's relation to the US, even as it seems to enhance their political position in the short run. Thus, the treaty will now make it even more difficult

for the Soviets to stand aside in the event of another Arab-Israeli war and a pending Egyptian defeat.

At the same time, the Pact should not be overrated as a factor for enhancing long-term Soviet presence. The Soviets have in the past concluded other seemingly binding long-term agreements, only to find them voided by dilemmas accompanying the Soviet effort to use these pacts as instruments for extending influence or control abroad. One need only recall the 1950 Sino-Soviet Pact which pledged automatic involvement and all out assistance by each party in case of attack by Japan or its allies, and which some 10 years later was dead as a doornail. This pact was destroyed precisely by the force of nationalism that potentially can destroy the seemingly close current ties between the UAR and Soviet Union.

Indeed, the current Soviet-Egyptian Pact has, from the Soviet viewpoint, a built-in hedge of "mutual consultation" against undesired "surprises." This gives the Soviets an out for disowning any Egyptian action because of "improper" consultation by the UAR. This hedge, designed to give the Soviets some leeway in the face of uncertainties in the volatile Middle East, precisely symbolizes the Soviets' perception of the dilemmas facing them in the long run even as they try to capitalize on the immediate opportunities and benefits which the treaty seemingly bestows on them.

In coming years, the dilemmas and problems noted above are likely to undermine Soviet influence and/or control in the Middle East, with the result that a "backlash" against the Soviets could see a return of the West on much better political terms than earlier, i.e., to be invited voluntarily by the indigenous states rather than to impose its will on the area as it did earlier. A good example of such a backlash is Guinea: originally the West, and specifically the French, were expelled in late 1950's and the Soviets were invited in. The Guineans soon discovered the inferior nature of Soviet economic assistance and the ulterior Soviet political aims designed to undermine Sekou Toure's political base. The latter resulted in the expulsion of the Soviet ambassador and the former led the Western

companies to be invited back to help Guinea's economy. Politically, the invitation frustrated Soviet aims to acquire a monopoly position in Guinea.

### SUMMARY

In sum, it can be said that the Soviet penetration in the Middle East was initially triggered by the tempting opportunity to replace western (British and French) power, which receded in the area after World War II. However, now the Soviets are trapped in a situation in which the choice of getting out or of fully controlling the events in the area is not available or has been severely narrowed. At the same time, the dilemmas and problems of continuing presence noted earlier are likely to set in motion trends that will work against the Soviet Union in the long run. These will be fueled by Arab disillusionment with Soviet "disinterest" (as the newness of Soviet presence in the area wears off, as the Soviet political designs become clearer, and as Western colonialism recedes to a memory) and by nationalism. These forces are likely to undermine Soviet influence in the Middle East as they have elsewhere in both the non-Communist and Communist world, e.g., Western Europe and Communist China.

In such a changing political context it can be argued that the Soviets will be unable to apply the Brezhnev doctrine in the Middle East unless the US and the West permit it. Indeed, the West must not only be militarily strong enough to deter the Soviet Union from using force to solve its problems and dilemmas in the Middle East, but also must offer a political alternative to Soviet hegemony even if it cannot exclude Soviet influence from the area. US and Western interests might be better served, for that matter, by not trying to exclude the Soviets totally from the Middle East; rather, by their involvement in the area, the Soviets should be exposed to the same politically debilitating process of erosion through Arab nationalism as was the West. This might in turn induce, with time, a constructive and cooperative Soviet attitude which manifests itself by their joining the West in helping the Middle East solve its many problems for the benefit of all parties concerned.