CHAPTER III
CHAPTER-III

CONFLICT ISSUES AND THE INVolVEMENT OF THE SOVIET UNION IN THE WEST ASIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICTS

The attitude of the Soviet Union towards the Arab-Israeli conflict had been changing in response to the changing regional and international situations. The vicissitudes of Soviet policy may be traced through four distinct periods of Soviet involvement in this area: (1) 1947-1950 was the period during which the Soviet Union first asserted its interest to take part in deliberation over the affairs of this region. Its policy on partition of Palestine and role in consolidation of Israel by de jure recognition and arms aid was motivated by anti-colonialism and anti-feudalism. (2) 1950-1954 were the years when the Soviets were indifferent to the region and although leaning towards the Arabs they tried to maintain a stance of neutrality in the Arab-Israeli conflict. (3) 1955-1967 was the period of extension of the Cold War to the region. The main reason for Soviet rapprochement with the Arab East was the Baghdad Pact. To counter it, the Soviet pursued a policy of anti-imperialism and polarization between the Arabs and Israelis. And (4) 1967-1977 was a period during which the Soviet reappraised their attitude towards the Arab-Israeli conflict and were led to formulate a coherent and consistent policy towards the settlement of the conflict. Throughout these four periods the Arab-Israeli conflict had been subordinate to the strategic-political objectives of Soviet policy. The Soviets did not become involved in this regional conflict of their internationalist duty to resolve it but because of its anti-imperialist potential and because it ensured Arab’s dependence on the support of the Soviet Union.¹

The term “Arab-Israeli Conflict” refers to a condition of belligerency between the Arab states and Israel. The first Arab-Israeli war began immediately after the proclamation of the state of Israel on 14 May 1948 with assaults by Egypt, Jordan, Syria and elements from the Iraqi and Lebanese armies. Subsequent wars in this conflict were the 1956 Suez Crisis where Israel, Britain and France attacked Egypt followed by 1967 and 1973 Wars. In addition, border tensions and armed clashes

between Israel and Arab neighbors were frequent in the early 1950s, and in the mid-1960s, the latter contributing to the 1967 War. Two Arab states, Egypt (1979) and Jordan (1994) have signed peace treaties with Israel, but tensions remained high because of the Palestinian question and Israeli settlement expansion in the occupied territories.²

Conflict issues and the involvement of the Soviet Union in the West Asia with special reference to Arab-Israeli conflicts had been investigated with reference to four wars i.e. the 1948 war, the 1956 Suez crisis, the 1967 Six-day war, and the 1973 war. These wars compelled Soviet Union to interfere in the region due to ideological moorings–politically as well as militarily. Moreover, The Arab-Israeli conflicts were considered by the Soviet Union as the tool to compete with the West and America as emerging superpower in the world.

1. Soviet objectives with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflicts

Ronald De McLaurin pointed out that Soviet policy regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict had involved a hierarchical sequence of three principles: (i) to contain the problem and keep it from exploding; (ii) to control hostilities (and consult with the United States, where necessary) should they occur; (iii) to work toward a settlement.³

A. Containment of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Containment of the primary regional powder keg, the Arab-Israeli conflict, was a difficult task for either of the superpowers because of the limited number of participants to which their influence extended and the limited degree of that influence. Before 1973, the Soviet Union and its East European allies were virtually the sole military suppliers of Egypt, Iraq, and Syria, while the United States (and, to lesser extent, its West European allies) filled the same role for Israel and Jordan. Thus, neither Moscow nor Washington was in a position to influence the key antagonists on either side. After the October War, the military supply picture changed only in degree and to the extent that Egypt forsook its Soviet supply relationship—at least for a


while—in favor of establishing military relations with Western suppliers. This major change could prove to be quite significant in the long term, depending upon the success of Egypt’s search for arms in the West, the tenure of the Sadat regime, and the progress made in settlement talks on Israeli’s northern and eastern fronts.

The attempt to control hostilities had taken several forms. Most prominently, while Russian diplomats had not consistently supported specific peace initiatives (any more than their American counterparts had), the Soviet Union had counseled against war with what appeared to be consistency. A second and perhaps more significant manifestation of the effort to keep the conflict from erupting into full-scale hostilities had been the types of armaments sent by the Soviet Union, to its Arab clients. The Third example was in the move toward a peace settlement.

Arms transfers from the Soviet Union to key Arab clients generally had resulted in the provision of equipment that was advanced by regional standards but one to two generations behind similar equipment provided to Israel. Contrary to many press reports, the Soviet Union had not sent its most advanced weaponry to Egypt, Iraq, and Syria. Even in the field of ground-based air defense, the SAMs, air defense artillery, and associated equipment provided to the Arabs did not encompass the full range of Soviet weapons systems. Moreover, in other fields, such as aircraft, the export versions of jet combat aircraft frequently were modified in important respect. As the October War made clear, another weapon area in which some control could be exercised was ammunition, spare parts, and replacement equipment.

It should be noted that the approaches to conflict containment mentioned above are not intended to suggest that the Soviet Union would actually prevent Arab

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6 Even such Cold War analysts as the Center for Advanced International Studies at the University of Miami point out that although “the Soviet Union affirmed the right of the Arabs to resort to ‘other means,’ this had not been matched by the advice Moscow gave its clients or the Soviet arms aid program.” Foy D. Kohler et al., The Soviet Union and the October 1973 Middle East War: The Implications for Detente (Miami: Center for Advanced International Studies, University of Miami, 1974) p.40.

states from going to war, even if the capability to do so was available. Before the October War, the Soviet Union was warned by Egypt of a likely crisis with Israel, although Moscow was informed neither of the exact timing nor of the magnitude of the action.²

B. Control of Hostilities

There were four Arab-Israeli wars—in 1948-49, 1956, 1967, and 1973. In the first of these, the Soviet Union could hardly be thought to have been involved, since apart from its diplomatic support for and recognition of Israel, and its role in multilateral peacekeeping efforts, its sole concrete activity was the sending of some arms (via Czechoslovakia) to the new Israeli state. Similarly, as a new actor in the area, the Soviet Union had little influence in or impact on the 1956 crisis.⁹ Indeed, one might argue that the greatest impact of Soviet behavior in the Suez crisis was on the NATO allies in their relations with each other rather than on the West Asian actors or British or French policy.¹⁰

In 1967 and 1973, U.S.-Soviet agreement was universally recognized to be a major prerequisite for achieving a cease-fire. Moreover, the magnitude and duration of hostilities were directly affected by Soviet (and American) actions. In both conflicts, the initial outbreak of hostilities was followed almost immediately by efforts to impose a cease-fire.¹¹ The common ground of the superpowers in the early stages of Arab-Israeli wars seemed generally to be very limited: both wished to see something of the course of the conflict before committing themselves to approaches that conceded too much. Yet, both were intensely interested in avoiding a confrontation with each other. In October 1973, the United States and the Soviet Union maintained contact from a time soon after hostilities broke out. Although this

² Ronald De McLaurin, N.3, p.27.

⁹ Some question whether the Suez conflict can legitimately be included among Arab-Israeli wars.

¹⁰ Ronald De McLaurin, N.3, p.27.

¹¹ After the October War, most American writers criticized the Soviet Union for being unresponsive to American calls for a cease-fire (see Kohler et al., The Soviet Union, p. 58). In this respect, American histories differed markedly from other accounts. Arab writers (and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat) had criticized the Soviet Union for having attempted to bring about, by ruse, a cease-fire from the very first day of the conflict. Moreover, it was commonplace during the war for American commentators to remark that the U.S. government was “in no rush” to establish a cease-fire, feeling that another resounding Israeli victory might hasten a better-founded peace and the reduction of Soviet influence.
contact was primarily concerned with the discovery of a possible basis for a ceasefire, it was reasonable to assume that both superpowers used the same (and other) channels to explore perceptions about their own roles and problems relative to the conflict. There seemed to have been an early, tacit understanding that neither would take direct military action beyond resupplying its clients. Both powers seemed to accept the necessity of letting the battlefield dictate the political parameters within which a cease-fire agreement was to be constructed.\textsuperscript{12}

C. Search for a Settlement

The final element of the Soviet approach to the Arab-Israeli problem was in the search for a settlement. This aspect of Soviet policy was believed to be ambivalent and complex, subject not only to the interplay of various factions and interest in the Kremlin, but also to cyclical and self-limiting forces generated by trends within the West Asia.

Soviet policy regarding a West Asian settlement had stirred frequent debates in the United States. In academic circles, supporters of détente had tended to see the Soviet Union as favoring a settlement and acting reasonably and responsibly to bring about a resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, while those who saw the Soviet Union in a more irrevocably hostile pose generally stressed Soviet foot-dragging or, in some cases, reported Soviet impediments to the evolution of a settlement. Because of the secrecy surrounding details of Soviet diplomacy, academic experts could pick the facts that support their position and refute the opposition, disregarding contrasting

\textsuperscript{12} Ronald De McLaurin, N.3, p.27.
At the same time, the Soviet Union did urge all Arab states to support Egypt and Syria. Some observers saw this behavior as contradictory to “controlling hostilities.” The point of hostilities control was not to reduce the level of conflict, but to maintain some influence over it and, ultimately, to keep regional hostilities from leading to a superpower military confrontation. While no one was in a position to assess precisely the Arab-Israeli balance of forces, the Russians, through intimate involvement in the military programs of both Egypt and Syria, must surely have been aware of at least some vague outside limits on the capabilities of the two principal Arab antagonists to sustain offensive military operations. Consequently, Moscow was well aware that initial victories would not—could not—lead to an effective military invasion of Israel proper. Without direct Soviet involvement or any real threat to the existence of Israel—a threat that, in any event, exceeded Egyptian and Syrian objectives—the United States was not likely to intervene. If additional Arab states heeded the Soviet call to assist Egypt and Syria, their contributions (even those of Jordan and Iraq) could only marginally affect the ultimate outcome of the hostilities. Thus, the costs of such a course of action to the Soviet Union were minimal. The benefits were somewhat greater, since the Soviet appeal was further evidence of support for the Arab cause and could only be contrasted with American behavior, which appeared to support the Arab enemy.
points of view as unsubstantiated speculation. Interestingly, State Department official’s views seemed to vacillate.\textsuperscript{13}

This divergence and fluctuation reflected the ambivalence inherent in Soviet Policy. Ronald De McLaurin suggests that a concept of the Kremlin’s approach to an Arab-Israeli settlement can be diagrammed as shown below.

\[ E_1 \rightarrow E_2 \\
\downarrow \quad \downarrow \\
A \rightarrow B \]

A is the Soviet policy manifesting a determination to achieve a settlement, B is Soviet policy manifesting resistance to settlement, \( E_1 \) is the regional environment at the same time as A, and \( E_2 \) is the regional environment a later time.\textsuperscript{14}

Since 1967, existing Arab states have had tangible objectives related to the Arab-Israeli conflict: the return of the occupied Golan Heights, West Bank, and Sinai. In addition, a resolution to the Palestine problem had gained greater acceptance since the June War, as the parameters of realism had become narrower. Return of the occupied territories was a goal at the inter-governmental level, where the Soviet Union must deal. (By contrast, the sub-national and transnational pressures of the Palestinian problem were less salient.) As Arnold Horelick and others have pointed out, ‘the occupied territories constituted an unprecedented problem for Soviet Middle East relations’.\textsuperscript{15} Since their return was a sine qua non for settlement, and since settlement was probably a sine qua non of their return, the Soviet Union must move toward a settlement if it hoped to maintain close, cooperative relations with these countries. Put differently, if Moscow could not deliver, the Arab would go elsewhere. Under these circumstances, it was not surprising that the Soviet Union was disposed to make visible efforts toward settlement. However, the possibility of superpower conflict was a principal consideration of Soviet policy makers. Thus, also from the perspectives both of maintaining a détente relationship with the United States and of

\textsuperscript{13} Ronald De McLaurin, N.3, p.28.

\textsuperscript{14} Cited from Ronald De McLaurin, N.3, p.28.

avoiding a conflict, the Soviet Union was inclined to favor and move toward the establishment of a settlement.

However, when there was a visible movement that suggested progress toward a general settlement in the West Asia, much of the activity involved the United States. Partly because the United States was the only state with potential leverage over Israel—the country that held the tangible keys to peace (the occupied territories)—partly because the United States had chosen to follow a highly personal approach to its negotiations with Arab government, and partly because the current Arab and Israeli leaders were inclined to improve their relations with the United States and to place considerable faith in at least certain types of American undertakings, the United States had been the primus inter pares in superpower-led peace initiatives. Thus, as the process evolved, Soviet leaders increasingly saw the possibility that a settlement might be achieved that gave only lip service (and, worse, lip service that was credible to no one) to Soviet participation; that substantially improved the American position in bilateral relations with key Arab states, and that created conditions that appeared to seriously threaten the major regional role the Soviet Union had come to play. As the shape of settlement began to become visible, the Soviet leadership was able to see more clearly its vulnerabilities to Western, and particularly American, economic, military, and political competition. This mechanism was conducive to an increasing reticence to cooperate as a settlement nears, then to a positive attempt to block settlement.

These, then, were the tensions that drive Soviet foreign policy with regard to a West Asian settlement, a dilemma that at once caused and explained the ambivalence of Soviet policy.

Notwithstanding the foregoing—and indeed emerging from it—the contention of the scholars on West Asia is that the movement toward settlement had been the stronger of the two contradictory themes in Soviet policy toward the Arab-Israeli

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19 Ronald De McLaurin, N.3, p.29.
conflict since 1969-70, and more particularly since 1973. The dominance of the settlement motif was explained by the relative sense of Soviet security, based on the level of Soviet presence and activity across a number of countries and in diverse fields; by the primacy of the determination to avoid a superpower confrontation that might lead to nuclear war, especially after the tense period of late October 1973; to a lesser extent, by the related policy to preserve détente; and perhaps by the inability to see the contradiction between regional nationalism and the concept that Soviet influence would replace an inevitably eroding Western role.²⁰

2. The 1948-49 Arab-Israeli War

The first of the Arab-Israeli conflicts took place immediately after the declaration of independence of the state of Israel on 14 May 1948. The armies of Transjordan, Egypt and Syria, backed up by Lebanese and Iraqi contingents, entered Palestine on the morning of 15 May.²¹

Clash had already begun at the end of 1947. Immediately after the UN General Assembly had adopted the Partition Plan for Palestine on 29 November, something tantamount to a civil war broke out between Palestinians and Jews.²² On the Palestinian side there was a rejection of the Partition Plan and therefore the creation of a Jewish state. On the Jewish side, if the UN’s decision was accepted, there was the belief that it might be improved to the advantage of Israel, which could occupy all or part of the Arab state, with anything left over going to Transjordan. This was also the aim of Britain, since it was relying on King Abdullah to maintain its influence in the

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²⁰ Ronald De McLaurin, N.3, p.29.


²² UN Security Council Resolution 181, passed by the General Assembly on 29 November 1947, came to known as the Partition Plan because it decided the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state, an Arab state and a zone under ‘special international regime’. In any event, the Partition Plan was never put into practice. Zionist leaders, whose support for it had been purely tactical, had never give up the dream of a Greater Israel, and wanted more than the share allocated them by the UN. Arab leaders too demanded more, much more, and rejected the very idea of a Jewish state. Britain, at odds now with the UN and hoping to take advantage of the troubles to maintain its power, encouraged Arab leaders to attack the Zionist; after increasingly serious reciprocal attacks, Arab armies entered Palestine on 15 May 1948, trigging the 1948-49 War, the first of the Arab-Israeli wars. (Alain Gresh and Dominique Videl, N.21, pp.243-244).
region. London therefore gave a green light to the agreement negotiated between Golda Meir and King Abdullah.\textsuperscript{23}

Until March 1948 the fighting went largely in favor of the Palestinians and their reinforcements from the Arab armies. They cut communication lines, surrounded Jewish settlements and cut off the major towns, including Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{24} But at the end of March, with 2000 already dead, Jewish forces helped in particular by Czechoslovakia, regained the offensive. Veritable massacres ensued, the most notorious of which steeped in blood the little village of Deir Yassin, where, on 9 April 1948, Menachem Begin's men killed 250 of the inhabitants, creating a wave of panic that spread throughout the entire Palestinian Arab community. A Palestinian historian later suggested that the number of dead was 110. The Haganah, the Jewish armed force of the time, cleared the road to Jerusalem and seized Tiberias Haifa and Safad. Jaffa fell on 12 May, two days before declaration of Israel's independence.\textsuperscript{25}

The Arab armies' entry into the war on 15 May failed to turn the tidy. Though hostilities continued, interrupted by truces, until 16 January 1949 form July onward the conflict turned in Israel's favor. Having formed the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF or Tsahal, to use the Hebrew form), Jewish troop had the advantage of unusually capable commanders, with double the manpower due to exceptional mobilization and a distinct advantage in heavy arms, coming mainly by airlift from the Czech base of Zatec. This to say that the Soviet Union, which was in favor of the Partition Plan and which recognized Israel on 17 May 1948, contributed to its first military victory. At the time, Moscow's only concern was the expulsion of Britain from the entire region.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{23} Alain Gresh and Dominique Videl, N.21, p.1.

\textsuperscript{24} Jerusalem is capital of the state of Israel according to Israelis and of the future of Palestine according to the Palestinians. Jerusalem was founded in the third millennium BC by a Canaanite tribe which had settled on one of its hills. Over more than four thousand years the city has experienced numerous changes of rule: from Jewish (around 1000BC), to Egyptian (925BC), to Roman (63BC), to Byzantine (AD629), to Muslim (AD638), to Christian (AD1099), to Arab once more (AD1187), then Ottoman (AD1517) and, four centuries later—from 1917 to 1948—to Britain. According to the Israeli archaeologist, Meir Ben Dov, in the course of its long history Jerusalem has been destroyed and rebuilt more than twenty-five times through the ages from Solomon to Suleiman the Magnificent. (Alain Gresh and Dominique Videl, N.21, p.171).

\textsuperscript{25} Alain Gresh and Dominique Videl, N.21, p.1.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.,
Soviet thinking was shrewd. Beaten and humiliated by the defeat, the Arab world was profoundly unsettled. With Israel already expanding, its Arab neighbors shaken and the Palestinians condemned to occupation or exile, the first Arab-Israeli conflict created the conditions of those that were to follow.

2.1 The Soviet Union’s role

In the autumn of 1947, Soviet ambivalence receded. By this time the Egyptian efforts regarding the Treaty had failed to pass the Security Council. More to the point, perhaps, UNSCOP had submitted its recommendations, the British had announced their intention to withdraw from Palestine, and the General Assembly was now forced to decide the issue. The Soviets were compelled to take a position, and they came out for partition. Their previous ambiguity, and the pro-Jewish nature of the new position, were attested to by the surprised as well as disappointed response of the Arabs.27

The reason for the Soviet position was most likely that, despite uncertainty over the future orientation of the Jews, and despite the long-term interest in avoiding alienation of the Arabs, the short-term soviet objective would be served by a Jewish victory. A bi-national state in all of Palestine (up to Trans-Jordan) would be Arab-dominated and, therefore, pro-British. Partition was not only the sole feasible solution given the hostility between the two local communities, but also the desirable one from the Soviets’ point of view. This did not mean that Moscow saw its own role as terminated. By having the Security Council involved in the period of transition, Moscow could obtain at least some participation in ensuring the withdrawal of the British. The Americans and British preferred British rather than United Nations supervision of the transition period. Thus it was the prospect of soviet participation which prompted the United States to favor speedy implementation of the partition, and a compromise was worked out whereby a UN committee, responsible to the Security Council but composed only of small states, would supervise the transition.28

Nor did Soviet support for the partition of Palestine mean abandonment of all interest in the Arabs. Even as Moscow expressed support for the Jews, its propaganda and official spokesmen were conciliatory towards the Arabs, arguing that the UN


28 Galia Golan, N.27, p.36.
partition decision was in the national interests of both peoples. Moscow defined the
decision as an opportunity to create two states, including an Arab state, and to achieve
independence from the British. During the 1948 war, following the attack by the Arab
states on the newly declared State of Israel, soviet propaganda attributed Arab
hostility to British provocation designed to thwart partition and provide a pretext for
the British to remain. The British were said to be aiding Arab reactionaries against the
creation of an independent Arab state despite the fact, according to Soviet
propaganda, that such a state was in the interests of the Arab peoples and the Arabs of
Palestine. Partition, as portrayed by the Soviet Union, was to mean the end of British
imperialist exploitation of the Arabs.

Despite this effort not to alienate the Arabs, the Soviet Union significantly
assisted the defense of the new Jewish state. The Soviets were the first to accord Israel
de jure recognition, on 18 May 1948, just three days after the declaration of the state.
On the practical side, the Soviets permitted the emigration of some 200,000 Eastern
European Jews, not only within the framework of settling displaced persons but even
to the point of permitting Zionist groups to organize the preparations of prospective
emigrants. These preparations occasionally included military training, as Israelis
themselves were permitted to train and conduct training in Eastern Europe. Arms and
equipment for the war were also supplied by Eastern European countries
under Soviet control beginning with some 10,000 rifles and 450 machine guns in early
1948.29 These were provided mainly by Czechoslovakia, with Soviet permission,
about the same time as the British arming of Iraq, Egypt and Trans-Jordan on the
grounds that Britain had defence pacts with these countries.30 Although an Egyptian
request for Czech arms was turned down, Czechoslovakia did sell Syria a
consignment of $11 million worth of arms. These fell into the hands of the Israelis en
route to Syria (possibly with Yugoslav collusion) and no further Soviet-bloc arms
sales were made to the Arab.31

The period of Soviet assistance to Israel was, however, short-lived. By the end
of 1948, problems began to develop in the granting of permission to Jews to emigrate.

29 Golda Meir, My Life (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1975) p.188.

30 Jon Kimche and David Kimche, Both Sides of the Hill: Britain and the Palestine War (London:

Emigration had in fact never been directly from the Soviet Union but rather from Eastern Europe or repatriation of Jews to Eastern Europe from the Soviet Union and from there to Palestine, later Israel. In December 1948, Rumania began to place obstacles in the way of the Jewish emigration; the Soviets merely responded that they could not interfere in the affairs of another state. This was to become a pattern. The arms deliveries (and with them training) suffered a similar fate, tapering off to a near halt also at the end of 1948. Contacts between Israeli diplomats and Soviet Jews were greatly restricted; commercial relations drew to a halt; and cultural relations, in any case only minimal, were nipped in the bud. In addition to all these signs, as observed by Ya'akov Ro'i, an Israeli expert on Soviet West Asia policy that the term Zionist began to find its way back into Soviet publications. This was not outright criticism of Israel, but the term Zionist itself carried with it the Soviet-bestowed connotation of bourgeois nationalism, traditionally condemned by Marxism-Leninism. Rather than redefine the term during the period of soviet-Israeli cooperation, the soviet media had simply refrained from using it. Its return, even if only in an isolated instance, was the harbinger of a change in policy.

3. The Suez Crisis 1956.

The second Israel-Arab conflict, the Suez operation, was marked by the participation of Britain and France, on Israel’s side, in an attack against Egypt. The strange intervention had its roots in the evolving alliances between the parties involved in the 1948-49 War and had profound consequences for the region.

After the end of 1948-49 war between Arab and Israel, the US involvement increased significantly in West Asian politics. The second Israeli-Arab conflict, the

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32 Marxism–Leninism is the political ideology adopted during Joseph Stalin’s rule by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Comintern, which its proponents consider to be based on Marxism and Leninism. The term was suggested by Stalin. Marxism–Leninism has sought to analyze and explain the actual processes of revolutions which have occurred throughout the world (starting with the 1917 Russian Revolution) under the auspices of Marxist movements and political parties, and has become entangled in arguments over the importance of political leadership and the use of revolutionary state power in creating a socialist (and communist) society. (Iain McLean and Alistair McMillan, The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2009) pp.334-336).

33 Galia Golan, N.27, p.38.
Suez operation, was marked by the participation of Britain and France, on Israel’s side, in an attack against Egypt.\(^{34}\)

Along with millions of other Arab, the Egyptians felt bitter about their defeat at the hands of the Israel in 1949. Egypt was the largest Arab state and it had a long proud history. It was also strategically important because it was a bridge between Africa and Asia. Even more importantly, the Suez Canal, which passed through its territory, was the main trading link between Europe and the East.\(^{35}\) It was a particularly vital link for Britain which had many military bases in the East and which depended on supplies oil from the Persian Gulf. The British had 70,000 troops stationed in the Canal Zone.\(^{36}\) This was intolerable and humiliating for Egyptians.

After Egyptian army was defeated by the Israeli in 1949, many of the army officers and the younger generations felt that the British manipulated Egyptian monarchy, headed by King Farouk, for exploitation of the resources as well as control over the whole heartland region. During the war, the military accused the king of supplying them with poor armaments, equipment, and incompetent soldiers. By the July of 1952, Gamal Abdul Nasser overthrew the monarchy of King Farouk and imposed army rule over the whole Egypt. A new government was formed under General Neguib as the President.\(^{37}\) However, the most powerful member of the new government was Colonial Nasser.\(^{38}\) According to the Colonel Nasser, the first part of the battle had now been won with the removal of monarchy and the second part was

\(^{34}\) Alain Gresh and Dominique Videl, N.21, p.3.

\(^{35}\) The man-made Suez Canal was excavated between 1859 and 1869 through the Isthmus of Suez, which formerly linked Africa and Asia. The opening of the Suez Canal shortened the sea trip between Britain and India by 5,000 miles/8,000 km, so the during the 1870s most world shipping shifted from the route around the Cape of Good Hope, in southern Africa to the Mediterranean-Suez-Red Sea route. (Colbert C. Held, Middle East Patterns: Places, Peoples, and Politics, 3rd edition (Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 2000) pp.232-233).


\(^{37}\) Major General Muhammad Naguib (20 February 1901 – 28 August 1984) was the first President of Egypt, serving from the declaration of the Republic on 18 June 1953 to 14 November 1954. Along with Gamal Abdel Nasser, he was the primary leader of the Egyptian Revolution of 1952, which ended the rule of the Muhammad Ali Dynasty in Egypt and Sudan. Disagreements with Nasser led to his forced removal from office, and subsequent 18 year house arrest until his release by President Anwar Sadat in 1972.

\(^{38}\) Robert Stephens and Michael Scott-Baumann, N.36.
to regain the prestige and the true independence of the Egypt by removing British troops. In 1954, Colonel Nasser became president of Egypt.

3.1 Road to the War

By a process of opposition, due essentially to anti-British feelings strengthened by Israel’s collusion with the West, Arab leaders drew closer to the communist countries. Gamal Abdel Nasser, one of the fathers of what was later called the Non-Aligned Movement, created in 1955 at Bandung, initiated this trend, which was a cause of concern to both Washington and London. Paris, moreover, had a personal score to settle with the Egyptian president, who it accused of actively supporting the Algerian rebellion, whose leaders had been made welcome in Cairo. This desire for revenge was coupled with the natural sympathy of SFIO (the French section of the Workers’ International), then in power, towards Israel, to such an extent that the French government, like that of Britain, dreamed of replicating against Nasser the operation successfully carried out in 1953 in Iran against Mosadeq by the Americans.\(^39\)

A series of acts raised tensions higher. In February 1955 Israeli troops attacked Gaza, allegedly in response to attack.\(^40\) In September 1955, having been refused arms by the West, Egypt announced that it would obtain supplies from Czechoslovakia. In October 1955, Syria, followed by Saudi Arabia, signed a military pact with Cairo, and the three countries’ forces were united under the command of the

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39 Alain Gresh and Dominique Videl, N.21, p.3

40 The Gaza Strip is a small area along the Mediterranean coast, sandwiched between Egypt and Israel that Egyptian military forces were able to hold until after the armistice that ended the 1948-1949 fighting. Separated from settled Egypt by the full width of Sinai, it remained under Egyptian military occupation after Israel was forced to withdraw from Sinai and Gaza in early 1957, but it was again taken by Israel in the 1967 assault on Sinai and remained under Israeli military occupation for the ensuing 26 years. It is a much poorer region than the West Bank, with only a few agricultural resources (citrus fruits, vegetables), and more than three quarters of the population is made up of refugees. Gaza makes up part of the Palestinian territories which includes the West Bank, and in 2012 the United Nations General Assembly "accorded Palestine non-Member Observer State status in the United Nations". For detail, see Alain Gresh and Dominique Videl, N.21, p.90; Colbert C. Held, N.35, p.327; ‘General Assembly Votes Overwhelmingly to Accord Palestine “Non-Member Observer State” Status in United Nations’, United Nations, November 29, 2012. (http://www.un.org/press/en/2012/ga11317.doc.htm) last accessed May 15, 2015.
Egyptian general Abdel Hakim Amer. In April 1956 joined the scheme. In July 1956, Nasser announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal.\footnote{Alain Gresh and Dominique Videl, N.21, p.3}

The Egyptian leader’s announcement that he would nationalize the canal, the first time that a Third World country had successfully regained possession of one of its natural resources. Nasser moved about nationalization of the canal was met with a rancorous response from London and Paris. Nasser also tried to resolve the crisis by offering compensation to shareholders and to adhere towards the Constantinople Convention on the freedom of navigation.\footnote{Constantinople Convention was a treaty signed by Great Britain, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Spain, France, Italy, The Netherlands, Russia and turkey, respecting the free navigation of the Suez maritime canal. It was signed at Constantinople, October 29, 1888.} However, Nasser’s effort was rejected by the shareholders and Operation Musketeer was executed.\footnote{Operation Musketeer was the Anglo-French-Israeli plan for the invasion of Egypt to capture the Suez Canal during the Suez Crisis. Israel had the additional objective to open the Straits of Tiran. For a survey of this operation see E. A. Pegg, Operation Musketeer: The Suez Canal Crisis of 1956: The Stories and Photographs from Those Who Were There (Blackpool: Steln Publishing, 2013); Patrick L. Neely, Operation Musketeer: A Study of Organizational Failure in Combined Operations (Kansas: School of Advanced Military Studies, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1991).}

The consequences of the rejection was that Israel invaded the Sinai Peninsula by 30 October 1956 while Britain and France demanded both Israeli and Egyptian troops to withdraw from the canal zone, as tripartite proposal had already been agreed in the secret plan.\footnote{The Sinai Peninsula or Sinai is the large triangular peninsula in Egypt about 61,000 km$^2$ in area. Sinai belongs geomorphically to the Red Sea Hills but has been separated by vigorous faulting along both sides of and beneath the Gulf of Suez. Such tectonics have in some stretches created structural conditions for accumulations of petroleum. The northern reaches of the plateau have been traversed through the centuries by armies and migrating peoples, including Egyptian and Israeli armies in 1948-1949, 1956, 1967, and 1973. (Colbert C. Held, N.35, pp.446-447).} In next six days the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) occupied the Sinai, having captured 5,000 soldiers and 10 Egyptian T-34 tanks. The opposite reaction was that British and French jets attacked the Canal Zone as well as Cairo and Alexandria on 31 October 1956. However, five days later Cairo rejected their ultimatum calling for a retreat from Canal Zone and, despite a cease fire decreed by the UN on 1 November, French and British soldiers landed at Port Said and Ismailiya. The unsophisticated London-Paris conspiracy led to international outrage and it gave the USSR the opportunity to castigate the “imperialist ambitions” of Britain and
France, and of course to move attention away from the Soviet tanks which had been sent into Hungary to crush a disobedient leadership.\textsuperscript{45}

As a measure of Soviet response a few weeks after the Suez War, the Soviet Ambassador was immediately recalled from Tel Aviv, though diplomatic relations at embassy level continued. Subsequently under the joint pressure of the US and the Soviet Union, which insisted that Israel leave the Sinai and Gaza by 14 March 1957. The operation had proved to be a fiasco.\textsuperscript{46}

3.2 Soviet Union's response to the Suez Crisis

In term of actual behavior, Moscow was slow to respond to the Egyptian's nationalization announcement and, also, to the outbreak of hostilities in October 1956. In the pre-war period of negotiations regarding the Canal, the Soviets championed Egyptian rights and action, making propaganda profit of the anti-colonial nature of the action. Moscow may have calculated, as the Egyptians claimed, that Egypt would have the Canal running and that the crisis would subside before the use of force could be prepared by Britain and France. Operating on this estimate, the Soviets presumably sought to prolong the negotiation period, while dispatching assistance to Cairo in the form of navigation pilots (and grain, for Egyptian currency, once Britain froze Egyptian accounts in Britain banks). The Soviets may also have been concerned, however, that France and Britain would strike some compromise deal with Egypt. For this reason, among others, the Soviets sought to be a party to any negotiations taking place. Moscow also had an interest in the protection of freedom of navigation, preferring an international forum even as it asserted Egyptian sovereignty and rights over the Canal.\textsuperscript{47}

The Soviets did send letters of concern and warning to the British and the French, referring to the dangers of escalation as well as to Soviet interests in the region. These communications were not in the form of a threat or commitment; nor were they particularly strongly worded. Nor was there apparently any Soviet-Egyptian coordination of actions at this time. Cairo may have been encouraged by the informal


\textsuperscript{46} Alain Gresh and Dominique Videl, N.21, p.4

\textsuperscript{47} Galia Golan, N.27, p.48.
comment regarding the possibility of Soviet volunteers made by Khrushchev at a Rumanian reception in Moscow in August. This remark was published by the Egyptian press but not by that of the Soviet Union. In fact, according to Nasser's confidante, Egyptian editor Mohammed Heikal, Nasser actually cancelled a trip to Moscow planned for August, because of the crisis. Far from seeking coordination, Heikal has claimed, Nasser purposely avoided such consultation for fear of Soviet over-cautiousness and restraint. While it seems unlikely that the Soviets would have urged Cairo to back down, Moscow did become increasingly cautious as the crisis augmented, rather than abated, and the actual use of force by Britain and France became a more immediate possibility.\textsuperscript{48}

On 29 October Israeli forces attacked Egypt and the following day, as pre-arranged, Britain and France delivered an ultimatum calling upon both side to withdraw; in this way a threat to Canal was presented as a pretext for British and French intervention.\textsuperscript{49} This begun on 31 October when the British moved on Port Said, followed by French and British air attacks on Egypt.\textsuperscript{50} With the outbreak of the fighting, the Soviets took several steps - none of which indicated an intention of becoming involved. The forty-five Ilushin-28 aircraft previously provided for Egypt, with their Soviet instructors, were transferred to Luxor in Upper Egypt, for further removal to Syria.\textsuperscript{51} Thus, the Soviets obviously sought to avoid the destruction or capture of these aircraft, as well as to avoid their possible involvement in the conflict. In so doing, however, Moscow was in effect removing Egypt's striker-bomber offensive air capability. Then, after the beginning of the British and French air attacks, the soviets transferred their approximately 380 Soviet and Czechoslovak advisers out of Egypt to the Sudan, for eventual evacuation from the region. This move followed orders issued earlier to the advisers to refrain from any involvement in

\textsuperscript{48} Galia Golan, N.27, p.48.


the fighting. This was particularly significant inasmuch as these advisers included the instructor-crews for some two hundred soviet tanks (which the British had apparently believed they would have to fight).\(^{52}\)

On 31 October, the day after the British and French ultimatum, the Soviet Union proposed that the crisis be referred to the Security Council and, on the next day, it urged India and Indonesia to activate the Bandung Conference nations. Thus, neither politically nor militarily were the Soviets prepared to take a direct role. Moreover, when asked directly for assistance, on 1 November, by Syrian President Shukri al-Quwatli visiting in Moscow, the Soviet leadership was almost contemptuous in its reply.\(^{53}\) Marshal Zhukov is reported to have pulled out a map and demanded to know how Moscow could, in fact, intervene. The Soviets' offer at this point reportedly was limited to political support, particularly through the UN. A similar message was conveyed to the Egyptian ambassador in Moscow on 2 November, that is, that the Soviets would not provide military assistance but would mobilize world opinion.\(^{54}\)

Until 5 November, the picture was one of Soviet caution, both in the message conveyed to the Arabs in the responses to such measure as closure of the eastern Mediterranean and the northern Red Sea, as well as to the alert of the US Strategic Air Command (Soviet forces had already been on the alert since the beginning of the Polish and Hungarian crises in mid-October).\(^{55}\) Soviet Political measures were indirect, even to the point of supporting an American resolution at the UN. A direct, and strong, Soviet move came only on the night of 5 November in the form of an ultimatum. The ultimatum was contained in five letter, and included

(1) To Britain and France, the threat of 'rocket attack';
(2) To Israel, the possibility of 'placing the existence of the State of Israel' in question;

\(^{52}\) Galla Golan, N.27, p.49.


\(^{54}\) Galla Golan, N.27, p.49.

(3) To the Security Council a twelve-hour deadline for cessation of the hostilities; and

(4) To the United States, a proposal for a joint force including the American Sixth Fleet.\textsuperscript{56}

The delay in the Soviets’ response, until the night of the fifth of November, has been explained by their involvement in Hungary. It was indeed true that Moscow was occupied with the Hungarian revolution, especially and acutely from the time of its first military intervention in Hungary on the night of 23-24 October, through the second intervention on 4 November. It may be, however, that the delay was due to another reason. The Soviet Union most likely awaited the American response to the West Asian crisis, acting only when relatively certain that there would be no risk of confrontation with the United States. The Soviets also awaited the passage of the critical point in the fighting in the field, when they could be relatively certain that there would be little likelihood of any necessity to carry out their threatened actions. That is, they waited until the crisis had passed its peak militarily and diplomatically, resolution was in sight, and the US was likely to support the end of the conflict (that is, restrain its allies).\textsuperscript{57}

Thus, the timing of the threats was dependent upon the Soviets’ own risk-taking propensity, rather than the Arabs’ needs or plight. The threats added another political objective, aimed, for example, at audiences in the Third World beyond the actual combatants, promising propaganda-political benefits with no need actually to implement the threats. From the Arabs’ point of view the more effective time for the Soviet threat would have been immediately after the British-French ultimatum of 30 October or the attacks of 31 October, but at this time there was no certainty on the soviets’ part that the US would not support its allies’ action. The crisis had then been at its peak, and risk-taking high. Indeed the delay in the Soviet action indicated the priority of the second Soviet objective in the war, avoidance of confrontation with the United States, over the first objective which was an improvement of Soviet positions in the Arab World.\textsuperscript{58} By the evening of 5 November, the peak of the crisis had passed:

\textsuperscript{56} Noble Frankland, N.55, pp.293-294.

\textsuperscript{57} Galia Golan, N.27, p.50.
the Egyptian air force was destroyed or crippled, Egyptian Port Said, and, most important, the United States was involved in trying to stop the British and the French. 59

3.3 The Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1957-67

Prior to the Suez War, the Soviets had supported the Arabs because of their anti-Westernism. They gave them arms against the West. They opposed the pro-Western line of Israeli government but never questioned the fact of Israel’s statehood. At this stage Soviet interest was limited to participation in any deliberations over or settlement in the region. This became clear from Soviet statement of 9 February 1956 60 and the statement of 13 February. 61 The same point was stressed in the Soviet Foreign Ministry’s statement of 17 April 62 in which the Soviets declared that (i) they were ready to render the necessary support to measures of the UN aimed at exploring ways and means for strengthening peace in the Palestine area; (ii) that in their view measures must be taken in the immediate future to ease the existing tension without interference from outside; and (iii) that if peace were to be maintained the matter must be handled in such a way as to lead to a lasting settlement on a mutually acceptable basis, taking due account of the just national interests of the parties to abstain from any action which might aggravate the situation on the Armistice Lines. The Soviets expressed their readiness to facilitate, together with other states, a peaceful settlement of the outstanding questions. This statement completely ignored the prevailing Arab position on the preconditions of a peace settlement. As observed by Walter Eytan, an Israeli diplomat, the statement aroused hopes in Israel as it came nearer to Israeli position of arriving at a settlement by direct negotiations and agreement. 63 The Arabs

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62 Ibid.,

understood the Soviet declaration in the same sense and immediately criticized it on this account.\textsuperscript{64}

The statement issued in London on 26 April 1956, after conclusion of talks between Premier Bulganin and USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium member Khrushchev and British Premier Eden went in the same direction. The Soviets were in complete accord with the Western position on the West Asian region.\textsuperscript{65}

However, as Soviet influence increased in the area in the aftermath of the Suez War, the Soviet Union abandoned this line. During the decade 1957-1967 its policy definitely relied on Arab-Israeli polarization and intensification of regional tensions as means of further consolidating Soviet influence. This line was pursued despite persisting Soviet-Arab political differences on such questions as the nature and purpose of Arab nationalism, Arab unity, Arab socialism and role of the local communist parties.\textsuperscript{66}

Despite the differences in Soviet and Egyptian position and Egyptian disappointment with Moscow's behavior regarding the Suez crisis, relation between the two countries remained warm for another two years. In January 1958, Moscow even accorded Egypt a $175 million loan, the largest it had yet granted to a Third World state, as well as $100 million for the Aswan Dam.\textsuperscript{67} Nasser made two trips to the Soviet Union in 1958, and Soviet arms flowed to Egypt. The year 1958, nonetheless, brought with it a serious crisis in Soviet-Egyptian relations. A number of factors accounted for the deterioration which ensued, including problems connected

\textsuperscript{64} M. Mahmood, N.1, p.64.

\textsuperscript{65} New Times, May 19, 1956.

\textsuperscript{66} M. Mahmood, N.1, p.64.

\textsuperscript{67} Aswan High Dam was inaugurated in 1971, it has had the greatest physical and symbolic impact of any construction project in Egypt in modern time. In its technical transformation of the country's vital resource, the dam altered the equilibrium of the Nile below Aswan, changed the rhythm of valley life, and had significant impact on crucial aspect of the valley's ecology. The completed dam, power station, and impounded lake are among the World's largest. A few statistics indicate that impressive scale of the project: The dam is 365 ft./111 m high, 2.36 miles/3.8 km long at the top, and 0.62 miles/1 km thick at the base, and it contains 17 times the volume of the Great Pyramid of Giza. The impounded reservoir is 297 miles/478 km long and an average of 6 miles/10 km wide. The power station doubled Egypt's generating capacity in 1970 but supplies 25 percent in 2000. (Colbert C. Held, N.35, p.442).
with the Egyptian-Syrian union, local Communists, Iraq and changes in Soviet ideological considerations.\textsuperscript{68}

After the turbulent events of 1958, the region seemed to relapse into an atmosphere of relative calm throughout the next two years. Taiwan and Berlin crises eclipsed this area.\textsuperscript{69} Soviet bloc's military and diplomatic support to the Arab countries continued unabated. Soviet media continued to depict Israel as a tool of Western imperialism. Reacting to stepping up of the American arms supplies to Israel— one Soviet commentator saw it as part of a world-wide arms build-up. Israel was being armed with missiles and conventional arms to enable her to realize her aggressive plans of expansion.\textsuperscript{70} During 1963 Soviet diplomatic relations with Israel were strained as Moscow sent a censorious note to Tel Aviv over its armament drive.

Khrushchev's visit to Egypt in May 1964 to inaugurate the opening part of the Aswan Dam was the high-water mark of Soviet support to the Arabs during this period. However, speaking before the Egyptian National Assembly he supported the just demands of the Arab states but stuck to the basic Soviet stand that force should not be used to settle border disputes.\textsuperscript{71} It may be understood therefore that Moscow's strong support for Cairo made it an instant champion of the Arab cause and, symbolically, the protector of the weak states against the powerful "imperialist" West.\textsuperscript{72} But Egypt was soon to discover that its interest in the relationship with Moscow— assistance in its struggle against Israel— was not Moscow's main interest in the relationship. Specifically, if and when a conflict of interests were to occur— while it was likely to draw Moscow into a direct confrontation with the West, as in the 1956 and 1967 wars— Moscow was clearly to sacrifice Egyptian interests to the greater global consideration.\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{68} Galia Golan, N.27, p.54.


\textsuperscript{70} Izvestia, October 3, 1962.

\textsuperscript{71} M. Mahmood, N.1, p.64.

\textsuperscript{72} Talal Nizameddin, N.45, p.256.
4. 1967 War

Although there was no change in Soviet policy towards the West Asia after the fall of Khrushchev, there were major changes under Brezhnev with regard to the nature of relations and some aspects of policy such as economic factors were raised on the list of priorities.75

Overall, however, only in the 1960s does hard evidence of Soviet attempts to consolidate its political role in the West Asia emerge. In 1963, for example, it requested for a base in Egypt. As the US continued to be perceived as a threat, the Soviet Union's renewed emphasis on military expansion and consolidation in the area, embodied in the establishment of the Mediterranean Squadron.76 During this period consolidation of power and the establishment of a condominium with the US based on a relationship of parity became the main aims of Soviet policy.77

As far as the Soviet Union supported the Arab confrontation with the West (though without pushing things to the point where it might itself have become involved in a conflict), and in its attempts to strengthen the Arabs' independence, armed forces and economies, Soviet policy had clear-cut parameters and was rather fruitful.78 It was observed that Egypt remained the principal ally with USSR and the two countries seemed to be moving closer. The relations between both countries were going to be much strong as underlined by Kosygin’s speech to the Egyptian

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74 Alexei Vassiliev, Russian Policy in the Middle East: From Mestanism to Pragmatism (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1993) p.62.


76 The 5th Mediterranean squadron of warships, or Fifth Eskadra, was a flotilla of ships of the Soviet Navy. It was intended for combat missions in the Mediterranean Sea during the Cold War between the USSR and the Western Bloc. The squadron's main combat adversary was the U.S. Sixth Fleet. It was disbanded on 31 December 1992. Given the continued pressure of the U.S. Fleet in the Mediterranean, the Mediterranean squadron gave the Soviet Union a limited intervention capability that could serve to support friendly regimes or deter Western military action. (Ronald De McLaurin, N.3, p.42). For a penetrating study of a role of the Mediterranean Squadron during the Cold War, see Gordon H. McCormick, The Soviet Presence in The Mediterranean (California: The Rand Cooperation, 1987).


78 Alexei Vassiliev, N.74, p.64.
parliament on 17 May 1966, "The proclamation by the United Arab Republic that its national aim is the building of socialism brings our countries still more closely together."\(^{79}\)

1967 War, Commonly known as the Six Day War in terms of the length of the military operations, was the third conflict between Israel and its neighbors. Like in the past, it ended with a victory for the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), and also brought about a profound alteration of frontiers: with the occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Golan Heights and Sinai, Israel quadrupled the area of its territory.\(^{80}\)

4.1 Road to the War

Early in 1967 the Syrians' anti-Israeli propaganda, which was prompted largely by domestic policy considerations, was increasingly being combined with military demonstrations along the ceasefire lines. The anti-Syrian rhetoric of the Israeli leaders was also accompanied by threatening military maneuvers, (whose extent may have been overstated by Syrian intelligence and the Soviet mass media), and the Israeli leaders made a series of belligerent statements. A high-ranking Israeli source was quoted as saying that if Syria continued its sabotage campaign in Israel there would be immediate military action to overthrow the Syrian regime.\(^{81}\)

Anwar Sadat, as head of an Egyptian parliamentary delegation visited Moscow on 11 May 1967, was informed by his host that Israel was concentrating forces on the Syrian border and planning for an attack between 18 and 22 May 1967.


\(^{80}\) Alain Gresh and Dominique Videl, N.21, p.5.

\(^{81}\) Alexei Vassiliev, N.74, p.67.

Soviet interest in Syria was explained by K. Ivanov in an Izvestia commentary on 2 May 1966. A Tass statement published on 28 May 1966 declared that the Soviet Union “cannot and will not be indifferent to the attempts of disturbing peace in a region that is in the immediate vicinity of the border of the Soviet Union.” The Soviet Government in a note to Israel on 12 October 1966 warned it against concentrating its troops on the Syrian border. The same day, Soviet delegate Fedorenko, speaking during the debate on an Israeli complaint against Syria at the Security Council, pointed out: “Ever since the Syrian people began to consolidate their national independence and promote their social progress, military tension has begun building up on Syria’s borders. We have seen that Israel has recently begun concentrating large numbers of troops along its Syrian border. Military manoeuvres have been conducted in areas near the Syrian border, and a large number of landing units equipped with artillery and mine throwers have been transferred there. Israel had partially mobilized its reserves. Furthermore, we have information that preparations are under way in Israel for an air attack on Syrian territory bordering on Israel to clear the way for incursion by Israeli forces deep into Syria.” (M. Mahmood, N.1, p.80).
Even though the government of Israel refuted the report, Nasser sent Egyptian Chief-
of-staff General Mohammed Fawzi to Syria to check the Soviet claims which later having ascertained that Moscow's information was false, Nasser might have interpreted the report to mean soviet encouragement of an Egyptian move against Israel.  

A number of academics are of the view that the Soviet Union not only wanted an Arab-Israeli war, it set out actively to provoke one. According to Ginor, the so-called "false intelligence report", about a supposed Israeli military build-up on the Syrian front, passed by the Soviets to the Egyptian leadership in May 1967, was part of a pattern of behavior aimed at instigating an Egyptian mobilization, and tempting Israel into a first strike against the Arab states. However, Vassiliev conversely challenged the assumption of Moscow's false report as a cause of the conflict by noting that there is no indication that any of the Soviet leaders wanted a war in the region. Moreover, the Soviet Union was compelled to support the Arabs morally and politically, and it was clear from the Soviet government's statement made on 23 May 1967 that Moscow would be on the side of the Arabs if the latter were attacked.

In 1967 the Soviets held Cairo back from a pre-emptive strike against Israel (hoping to avoid war and the accompanying risks of Soviet-US confrontation) and, as in 1956, refused any direct involvement. The aggressive actions of Egypt followed by moving its troops into Sinai on 14 May and two days later asked the UN peace-keeping forces to withdraw its forces from the border with Israel. On 22 May Egypt blockaded Israeli shipping through the Strait of Tiran. These steps were met with

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83 Nigel J. Ashton, ed., N.73, p.3.
84 Alexei Vassiliev, N.74, p.67.
87 The Straits of Tiran are the narrow sea passages between the Sinai and Arabian peninsulas which separate the Gulf of Aqaba from the Red Sea. With Egypt on the West and Saudi Arabia on the east, the Strait of Tiran is of relatively minor importance in comparison with the Suez Canal and the straits already described. Nevertheless, its closure was considered as a major justification for the Israeli preemptive attack on Egypt in June 1967. The debate over the precise international principles relating to Tiran has not yet resolved the exact status of the straits. (Colbert C. Held, N.35, p.235).
criticism from the West but Moscow’s response to Cairo was that ‘we will stand by you’. The Soviet mass media indulged in some extremely clumsy exercises, including reports that Syria was being threatened by some sort of joint invasion by Israel and Jordan directed by the CIA and oil magnates. In the meantime, King Hussein of Jordan was signing a mutual defense treaty with Nasser, on 30 May, and joining the anti-Israeli coalition. Finally on 5 June Israel attacked and wiped out the Egyptian and Syrian air defenses within forty-eight hours, and in six days achieved total victory, adding more territory and more importantly confirming its absolute military supremacy in the area.

4.2 Day by Day

In the first two days of the war that began on 5 June 1967 the Soviet press and radio carried Arab reports which had been prepared in advance and which claimed that Egyptian and Syrian troops were advancing deep into Israeli territory and that Arab air forces were attacking targets inside Israel. When it became clear on the second day that the Arabs’ air forces (Egypt, Syria, and Jordan) had been completely destroyed and that their ground forces had suffered a catastrophic defeat, the USSR was not prepared to interfere militarily in the conflict. As expected it began political and propaganda activities in support of the Arab countries. In a special statement on 5 June the Soviet government denounced “Israel’s aggression”, declared its “resolute support” for the government and peoples of the Arab countries, and urged Israel to ‘cease hostilities immediately and unconditionally and withdraw its troops behind the ceasefire line’ as the first urgent step. A similar draft was proposed to an emergency meeting of the Security Council by the Soviet representative N. Fedorenko, but the American and British representatives objected to the inclusion in the resolution of a clause concerning troop withdrawal. However, on 6 June the Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution appealing to all the governments concerned to take

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88 Talal Nizameddin, N.45, p.27.
89 Alexei Vassiliev, N.74, p.68.
90 Talal Nizameddin, N.45, p.27.
as a first step and without delay all measures necessary for an immediate ceasefire and cessation of hostilities in the West Asia. However, the Israeli offensive continued.\textsuperscript{92} One contemporary observer pointed out that Moscow sought to coordinate measures with the US so as to bring about a rapid ceasefire before Egypt was ready for one, and on the second day of the war Moscow was even willing to change its position and agree to a ceasefire without Israeli withdrawal, despite Egypt’s demand for status quo ante (a demand supported by Moscow on the first day of the war).\textsuperscript{93}

On 7 June the Security Council reconvened, at the request of the Soviet representatives, to fix the exact time at which hostilities should stop, unanimously agreeing that this should be at 8.00 p.m. GMT the same day.\textsuperscript{94} Jordan accepted the ceasefire proposal on 7 June and on 8 June as the Egyptian government informed U Thant, the UN Secretary General, that it had agreed to a ceasefire provided the other party would follow suit. On 8 June the Soviet government issued a new statement warning Israel that unless the demand for an immediate ceasefire was implemented, as required by the UN, the USSR would review its relations with Israel and consider whether or not to sever diplomatic ties. The Security Council was told by U Thant on 9 June that Egypt, Syria and Jordan had agreed to cease hostilities.\textsuperscript{95} However, Israeli forces continued their land and air operations along the front line against Syria, and although the Security Council demanded for the third time that hostilities should end immediately, Israel continued its offensive into Syrian territory and also bombed Damascus. At the Security Council meeting on 10 June the Soviet representative appealed for urgent and resolute measures to ‘stop the aggressor and condemn him with the whole gravity of international law’, but the US delegate, though appealing to both parties for a ceasefire, was opposed to condemning Israel. The USSR then severed diplomatic relations with Israel on 10 June, announcing that unless hostilities stopped immediately, the Soviet Union and other “peace-loving” countries would apply sanctions to Israel with all the consequences that would ensue. Moscow also warned Washington via the hot line that unless Israel ceased hostilities the Soviet

\textsuperscript{92} Alexei Vassiliev, N.74, p.68.

\textsuperscript{93} Nigel J. Ashton, ed., N.73, p.61.

\textsuperscript{94} \textit{Pravda}, June 8, 1967.

\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Pravda}, June 10, 1967.
Union would not rule out the use of military action. They may have hoped to expand the occupation zone even further in order to acquire more bargaining cards; however, while the breaking of diplomatic relations with Israel by the Soviet Union and most East European countries exhausted the arsenal of weapons of political pressure, it also created a state of uncertainty since future Soviet reactions would be difficult to forecast. The Israeli leaders therefore stopped, Washington too having apparently decided that it was imprudent to provoke the USSR into unforeseeable actions when Israel had already achieved success and could now go calmly away to reap the political fruits.

4.3 Soviet Union's response to the 1967 War

The Soviet Union sought credit for stopping Israel after only six days by warning the United States that it would intervene if Damascus or Cairo were invaded, but in reality Israel stopped because it had achieved its main objectives and was content to complete the war with the little losses it had incurred. The Arabs were furious with Moscow; where was their support? After the war, the Soviet leadership insisted that "we will stand by you" meant that they would have supported the Arabs if the United States had taken part in the war to help Israel. Moreover, Soviet weaponry had proved to be inferior to the US-made jets and heavy armor supplied to Israel.

The Arab's defeat was though considered by the Arabs as the Soviet Union's mistake, particularly Soviet false information about the Israeli build-up on the Syrian

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96 Lyndon Baines Johnson, *The Vantage Point* (London: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971) p.302. The hotline is a point-to-point communications link in which a call is automatically directed to the preselected destination without any additional action by the user when the end instrument goes offhook. The most famous hotline between states is the Moscow–Washington hotline, which is also known as the "red telephone". This direct communications link was established on 20 June 1963, in the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis. (Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hotline#USA.E2.80.93Russia) last accessed May 16, 2015).

97 Israeli General Haim Bar Lev later confirmed in an interview that American pressure had been the determining factor in halting Israeli forces before they could attack Damascus. See *New Middle East*, March 1971, p.37.

98 Alexei Vassiliev, N.74, p.69.

99 Talal Nizameddin, N.45, p.27.
border, which finally led to the outbreak of war. Thus, to save face, Moscow severed all diplomatic relations with Israel, and launched a huge effort to rearm its Arab partners including setting up both military and naval bases in Egypt and Syria. Nasser wanted the Soviet Union to be directly responsible for Arab air defenses, but this would inevitably have involved the United States in any future conflict, and by that stage Soviet leaders were well aware that neither they nor the United States could secure peace in the volatile and often unpredictable West Asia.

Furthermore, the Soviet media started an anti-Israeli and anti-Zionist campaign, accusing the Israelis of "barbaric actions" while Pravda used the term "genocide". The Israeli defense minister Moshe Dayan was dubbed "Moshe Adolfovich" (implying that he was Hitler's disciple), and international Zionism was variously portrayed as a band of gangsters, a tool of the Wall Street bankers, and sometimes the controller of Wall Street. Zionism was treated not as a political trend but as a criminal conspiracy directed against all peace-loving peoples. Inspired by Judaist teaching it had allegedly always been a brand of racism: its purpose was world domination. However, the Soviet media claimed that "Israeli aggression" had failed to achieve its main goal because the "progressive" Arab regimes had not been overthrown.

One can observe however that the Soviets were happy with a "no war, no peace" situation in the West Asia because it sustained Arab dependency upon them,

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100 The most plausible explanation relates to Syria's domestic political scene, where the pro-Soviet regime was close to being toppled because of economic difficulties and political opposition which included sections of the army.

101 Talal Nizameddin, N.45, p.28. The Strategic Survey, 1970 (London, 1971, pp.46-49) estimated the market value of the Soviet military equipment supplied to Egypt since the 1967 war as having increased during 1970 from 2,000 million to 4,500 million dollars. By the end of October, some 500-600 SAM launchers had been established along the Canal, about 200 of them being located within 19 miles of the ceasefire line. The forward element of the new system permitted coverage of an area extending 12 miles into the Israeli occupied Sinai Peninsula.

102 Pravda is a Russian newspaper.

103 Moshe Dayan (1915-81) was Israeli military and political leader. Dayan lost his eye in 1941 in an Allied operation against Vichy France in Lebanon. He led the IDF to victory in the Sinai Campaign then left army in 1957 to enter politics. He was Minister of Agriculture 1959-64 and Minister of Defence in June 1967.

104 Alexei Vassiliev, N.74, pp.70-71.
yet such arguments placed a heavy responsibility on Moscow for the continue tension in the area.\textsuperscript{105}

4.4 1967 War & The follow up

The global aspect of Soviet interests in the region had assumed a military as well as political nature. With the changes in Soviet military doctrine in the mid-1960s and the development of the “external function” of the Soviet armed forces, Moscow’s primary interest in the Arab world was to obtain military bases. These were to include storage and servicing facilities for the Soviet Navy’s Mediterranean Squadron, airfields for Soviet aircraft, and missile installations. These were sought in order to strengthen Soviet positions vis-à-vis the United States and NATO, among other reasons, in response to the US deployment of its nuclear-armed Polaris submarines in the Mediterranean, and until Moscow was to develop a fleet of aircraft carriers, longer-range aircraft and servicing-at-sea capabilities.\textsuperscript{106} After the 1967 war the Soviets obtained these bases, for themselves, and eventually (1968–69) they sent a newly created unit (Operation Kavkaz) of some 10,000 military personnel called “advisors” to the defeated Arab countries, plus, in early 1970 an air defense system including some 300 modern SAM-3(Surface to Air Missiles) Installations. Moreover, 150 MiG-21s were also sent to provide cover for the SAM batteries. All this was in addition to the 2,000–4,000 military advisors sent earlier (immediately after the 1967 war) to assist the reconstruction of the Egyptian and Syrian military.\textsuperscript{107}

After 1967 the Soviet leadership, however, wanted to initiate a West Asia peace process in order to enhance their country’s international standing, and to refine a system of communication and understanding with Washington so that both superpowers would have an immediate understanding and anticipation of the other’s

\textsuperscript{105} Talal Nizamoddin, N.45, pp.28-29.

\textsuperscript{106} Before 1967, the Soviet program did not seem to have emphasized effectiveness, anyway, since relatively little training, follow-on support, or the other concomitants of an effective assistance program (of any type) were provided. (Ronald De McLaurin, N.3, p.65).

\textsuperscript{107} Nigel J. Ashton, ed., N.73, p.61.

Soviet ships were given access to Egyptian ports in July 1967. A five-year agreement for access to “facilities” (read “bases”) was signed with Egypt in March 1968, and Soviet warships were permitted the use of Port Said, Alexandria, Sollum and Mersa Matruh. (M. Mahmood, Soviet Policy towards the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1948-1988 (New Delhi: Gian Publishing House, 1989) p.30). As revealed in President Sadat's speech; Radio Cairo, April 3, 1974/ BBC Summary of World Broadcasts/ Part IV (Hereinafter referred as SWB/ IV); Mohammed Heikal, The Road to Ramadan (London: Collins, 1975) pp.47 ff.
reaction should another regional crisis erupt. The superpowers embarked on difficult negotiations following the 1967 war, mainly through the United Nations, until they devised an agreed charter for peace which took the form of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. These called for Israeli withdrawal from territories it occupied during the June 1967 war in return for Arab recognition of the Jewish state. The guiding principle of the Resolutions was land in exchange for peace. This resolution seemed to be deceitful and unacceptable to the Arabs. George Breslauer pointed out that when Nasser visited Moscow in July 1968, he was to be disappointed by a Soviet stance that appeared to change in emphasis:

1. The USSR placed the highest priority on avoiding a direct clash with the United States in the Middle East;
2. Nasser was engaging in “daydreams” if he thought that a military solution was possible in the foreseeable future;
3. The Soviet Union would not meet Nasser’s request for a long list of the most advanced offensive military weapons;
4. Nasser would be better advised to moderate his demands and seek a political solution to the conflict.108

More broadly, these points were the fundamental framework which characterized Moscow’s approach to the Arab-Israel conflict until the demise of the Soviet Union and for the years under President Yeltsin.

After 1967 war, Nasser reportedly threatened to the Soviet Union to shift its foreign policy towards the Americans, if Moscow did not provide still more aid against Israel but it was not clear about what greater aid Nasser wanted at this time.109

Nasser’s successor, Anwar Sadat, was more pragmatic, composing policy solely from a national, that is to say, Egyptian point of view. The Soviet leadership was rather suspicious of Sadat, and in Syria too they were faced with a less ideological and more pragmatic Asad, who led a coup within the Ba’ath that ended the reign of the radical socialist, Salah Jadid. Despite these changes, Soviet power in the early seventies seemed to be at it zenith, rivalling the United States on a global


level.\textsuperscript{110} There were favorable relations in the West Asia with all the local powers, from Iran and Turkey to Iraq and Egypt as well as Syria. The exceptions were Israel and Saudi Arabia, who were at that time unshakably pro-Western. When Sadat went ahead with the signing of a treaty of friendship and co-operation with Moscow on 15 May 1971, it seemed to be further confirmation of this trend.\textsuperscript{111}

Since coming to power, Sadat had made several visits to the USSR. In all the meetings between Sadat and Brezhnev that took place in 1971 and 1972, Egypt’s greatest concern had been the Washington’s role in modernizing the Israeli military machine. For Cairo, there was disappointment with Moscow at the limit of its economic capabilities in providing technological and financial assistance. Moreover, Moscow appeared to hold back in providing the most advanced attack weapons which would create military parity between Egypt and Israel. It is estimated that the Soviet limitation on the supply of arms to Egypt form late 1971 till 1972 appeared to be motivated not by any Machiavellian desire for keeping the Arab dependent on the Soviet Union but by the genuine Soviet self-interest in a changing international situation.\textsuperscript{112} In the October 1971 meeting, the shrewd Sadat told Brezhnev that he believed, from his communications with the United States, that Washington had three aims: (1) an end to the Soviet presence in the area, through sowing the seeds of mistrust between Arabs and the Soviet Union; (2) to remove Egypt from its position as the main center of the Arab world; (3) the destruction of progressive movements, which after Egypt was subdued would become easy in the rest of the Arab world. Sadat also told the Soviet leaders that Washington was arming Jordan with the aim of

\textsuperscript{110} In 1968, Soviet relations with the Communist nations of Eastern Europe were observed to reach a critical stage. On 21 August Soviet troops (and forces of some of the other member of Warsaw Pact) invaded Czechoslovakia in a successful attempt to restrain the trend towards liberalization there and to indirectly reduce Czechoslovakia’s improving relations with Western European nations. On 13 November, Leonid Brezhnev announced the Brezhnev doctrine, that Warsaw Pact states only enjoyed ‘limited sovereignty’, justifying possible Soviet intervention in other Communist nations whose actions threatened the international Communist movement. (‘The Brezhnev Era’, The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6th ed., infoplease (http://www.infoplease.com/encyclopedia/world/union-soviet-socialist-republics-the-brezhnev-era.html) last accessed May 15, 2015).

\textsuperscript{111} Talal Nizameddin, N.45, p.30. The Soviet-Egyptian Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was widely seen not as an act of colonization or satellization of Egypt, but as an act of calculated control of the preservative nature. It was begotten by certain developments in Egyptian domestic and foreign policy which were seen as detrimental to the Soviet interest. (M. Mahmoud, N.1, p.108).

\textsuperscript{112} M. Mahmoud, N.1, p.108.
increasing its military capacity from 50,000 to 100,000 troops armed with the latest US weapons as a reward for its new neutral policy towards Israel and its friendship with the West. Moreover, Sadat told Brezhnev that from Presidents Truman to Nixon, the United States had made it a clear policy to preserve Israel’s military advantage. Sadat thus specified, ‘I seek a specific request that the Soviet Union stands up to this vile American policy. [...] I want a resolution with the USSR that gives me parity with Israel and one that is carried out.’ But Brezhnev was reluctant, fearing that a strong Egypt would wage war against Israel which in turn would result in a superpower conflict because of Washington’s commitment to Israel. He encouraged a peaceful resolution to the conflict. More subtly, Brezhnev also pointed out that Soviet debts to its friends had amounted to 14 billion rubles. In other words Moscow was concerned about financial considerations and was not prepared to provide large-scale Soviet aid, as in the days of Khrushchev.\textsuperscript{113}

In the meeting of April 1972 between the two leaders, relations were quickly spiraling downwards. Sadat warned Brezhnev that the ‘United States controls everything. [...] It maneuvers in the region – politically and militarily – as it pleases, and it encourages Israel to do as it wants.’ Following Sadat’s impassioned plea for more Soviet help Brezhnev, in his dry manner, responded with the following: The President has spoken much and has given the impression that the Americans are all heroes. Sadat: Only in the Middle East and not in other areas. Brezhnev: And the President suggests that we are frightened. This final remark highlighted the tension that became prevalent in relations between the two leaderships. Brezhnev, whose words were usually carefully chosen, had become uncontrollably irritated at Sadat’s constant reminders of soviet inadequacies in the region. The wording of Sadat’s demands suggested that Soviet inaction would appear as betrayal or cowardice, two of the most detestable traits for the Russian character.\textsuperscript{114}

When Sadat did not get the desired response, he sent a shocking message to Moscow on 7 July 1972, demanding that 15,000 technical advisers leave Egypt by 17 July.\textsuperscript{115} The Soviet advisers packed their bags in an orderly fashion and hastily

\textsuperscript{113} Talal Nizameddin, N.45, p.32.

departed Egypt; gladly, according to observers’ conclusions, as it was believed that Moscow had decided it was more involved in Sadat’s Egypt than it really wanted to be. The decision of Sadat finally made Cairo a key ally of the United States since then.

However, Ginor and Remez challenged the concept of the “expulsion of Soviet advisers”. In their writings in the essay entitled, *Un-Finished Business: Archival Evidence Exposes the Diplomatic Aspect of the USSR’s Pre-planning for the Six Day War*, they made it clear that first of all there was no “expulsion” because the Soviet troops who were withdrawn from Egypt in 1972 left by mutual consent. Second, they asserted that the term “advisers” was a misnomer, since the personnel who were actually withdrawn in 1972 were mainly the Soviet combat forces who had been introduced in 1969–70. The bulk of the genuine “advisers” embedded with Egyptian forces, by contrast, stayed on and helped prepare the Egyptian army for the cross-canal offensive. Moreover, Dima Adamsky argued that scholars have mistakenly defined Sadat’s July 1972 move as an “expulsion of Soviet advisers” when, in fact, the advisers remained in Egypt. He further argued that the forces which left as a result of Sadat’s decision were the combat units introduced as part of “Operation Kavkaz” during the War of Attrition. The 10,000 Soviet troops involved in this operation were rotated twice in March 1971 and March 1972, meaning that a total of 30,000 troops participated overall. Those introduced in the third rotation in March 1972 left in July 1972.

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115 Talal Nizameddin, N.45, p.30. Sadat later revealed that he announced his decision on the expulsion of the Soviet military advisers on 6 July in the presence of the Soviet Ambassador Vinogradov, who brought him a message from the Soviet leaders regarding the outcome of the Moscow summit and which made no reference to Egyptian requests for arms. The decision was executed between 7 and 16 July. For detail, see Newsweek, July 31, 1972. *Amwar-al-Sadat, In Search of Identity* (London: Harperecollins, 1978) pp.286-287.

Saad Mohamed el-Husseiny el-Shazly, an Egyptian military commander, argued that there were only 7,752 Soviet personnel in Egypt at the time, not 15,000 or 20,000 as assumed by the Americans. Some 2,590 had left by the end of July 1972. The remaining 5,162 left by the end of August. They did not return to Soviet Union but were transferred to Syria to assist in the switch preparations for the October War. For detail, see Joseph Finkelstone, N.114, p.96.

116 Talal Nizameddin, N.45, p.33.

As for Moscow's Arab partners in the conflict, Egypt from mid-1950s to the 1973 war, Syria mainly from the mid-1960s, and the PLO from the early 1970s, were to serve as cards in Moscow's deck in the Cold War. As the United States became increasingly involved in the conflict, Moscow used these cards to prove that it, the Soviet Union, was essential both to prevent war and to bring the Arabs to the peace table. To do so, however, it had to maintain its position as representative of the Arabs (and some influence over them). But to achieve and maintain this, Moscow had to support many of their more radical demands and, more importantly, provide them with the wherewithal for the use of force via arms and training. This then was the heart of the contradiction that basically forced Moscow into what appeared to be a dual policy: apparently encouraging and enabling the Arabs to fight while seeking to restrain them from doing so. Moreover, the Soviets had to prove themselves, especially if they were not supporting a policy of war, either by actually gaining the Arabs' objectives through other means or by at least demonstrating that only Soviet backing promised to bring any results. Thus, they claimed that only Soviet pressure on the US could bring the US to exercise its influence to gain concessions from Israel. So long as Moscow had some control over the situation, its dual policy might be pursued. But its actual lack of such control, the volatility of the conflict, and the dangerous risks of escalation in a situation in which both superpowers were involved, coupled eventually with increased American inroads to the exclusion of the Soviets, all ultimately led to a situation in which Soviets' interests were not being served and the cost of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a vehicle for Soviet Cold War interests was beginning to outweigh the benefits. Therefore, even before the changes brought by Gorbachev, possibly well before, the Soviet attitude towards the conflict underwent the change apparently portended by the new peace proposal floated in the early 1970s and offered more formally at the Geneva Conference of December 1973. Increasingly the Soviets appeared to seek a continued presence in the region not through a perpetuation of the Arab-Israeli conflict but by means of participating, as sponsors and guarantors together with the Americans, in an Arab-Israeli accord.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{118} Nigel J. Ashton, ed., N.73, pp.6-7.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., pp.66-67.
5. 1973 War

The 1973 war was the fourth conflict between Israel and its neighbors. Its uniqueness stems from the fact that Egyptian and Syrian troops managed to break through Israeli lines, albeit temporarily. Although followed by an Israeli military success, this provisional victory was seen by the Arabs as revenge for the humiliations suffered in the 1948-49, 1956 and 1967 Wars.\textsuperscript{120}

5.1 Road to the War

Egyptian preparations for the October 1973 (Yom Kippur) War can be traced to the period of Sadat's dispute with the Soviet Union over offensive weapons and the very idea of an armed action. The expulsion of the Soviet military advisers was not only a sign of Sadat's exasperation and anger over Soviet recalcitrance but, as he himself later proclaimed, an act to free Egypt from Soviet restraints so as to move towards the long-awaited battle. This did not mean, obviously, that Moscow was to play no role whatsoever in either the preparations or the war itself. But this role was a complex, often contradictory one clearly influenced by the conflict which had arisen between the two countries.\textsuperscript{121}

With the expulsion of the Soviet military advisers, a period ensued of what Sadat called a "freeze" in Soviet-Egyptian relations. Syrian President Asad sought to mediate between the two during a trip to Moscow in September 1972. In response to this Sadat sent Premier Sidki to the Soviet Union with the message that he still opposed a political solution but might be better inclined to talks were he to have the long-sought weapons. The Soviets responded by returning the SAM-6s to Egypt along with a few hundred advisers and the Soviet Ambassador Vinogradov. This, together with the replacement in November of Egyptian War Minister Sadek—a person known to be relatively anti-Soviet—led to rumors of Soviet-Egyptian rapprochement. In fact, as Sadat made quite clear, the "freeze" in relations continued until February 1973. (Although, in December, Sadat renewed the Soviet's naval rights for another five-year period.) The replacement of Sadek was not, as then interpreted, a sign of improving Soviet-Egyptian relations, however. Rather, it was a move by Sadat to begin military

\textsuperscript{120} Alain Gresh and Dominique Videl, N.21, p.7.

\textsuperscript{121} Galia Golan, N.27, p.82.
preparations for war. Sadek had earlier been ordered to make such preparations, but had failed to do so in the belief, according to Sadat, that without the unobtainable Soviet equipment (MIG-23s and SCUDs) an Egyptian offensive was out of the question. Angry that nothing had been done to prepare what Sadat had hoped would be a military action after the US elections of November, Sadat named Ahmad Ismail War Minister with orders to build necessary embankments on the Egyptian side of the Suez Canal in preparation for war.122

This was accomplished by January, and in February Sadat picked four possible dates for the action: end of May, August, September or October 1973. In April operative plans were set in a joint meeting with the Syrians, the offensive to begin with what were to appear as military exercises. Such maneuvers did, in fact, take place at the end of May, leading to a partial Israeli mobilization in anticipation of Egyptian attack. This mobilization may indeed have been the reason Cairo called off the offensive, although a number of additional reasons have been offered by Sadat and others. These reasons included the continued delay in Soviet arms deliveries, urgings by King Feisal to seek a solution through the Americans, and the scheduling of the Washington summit for June.123

Just how much the Soviets knew of all these plans remains unclear. These reportedly was a Soviet reassessment of policy towards Egypt in December and in January there were some signs, such as a reference in a New Times124 editorial to Israeli plans for war in 1973, suggesting that Moscow expected Sadat to act in 1973. The Soviets were not, however, directly informed by Cairo, learning of the plans apparently from their own sources in Egypt and, later, Syria. Nonetheless, a decision was taken in Moscow fully to resume arms supplies to Egypt, most likely in full knowledge that an offensive was being planned. Thus a visit to Moscow in February made by Sadat’s security adviser, Hafiz Ismail was followed immediately by that of an Egyptian military delegation under Ahmad Ismail negotiating the resumption of

122 Galia Golan, N.27, p.83.

123 Ibid.,

124 New Times is a Russian newspaper.
arms deliveries. These included SCUDs but not MIG-23s, and the return of approximately 1,500-2,000 military advisors to Egypt.  

The reasons for the Soviet decision to resume arms supplies to Egypt, thereby apparently revising the Kremlin’s opposition to military action, can only be speculated upon. The Soviet move may have been merely tactical, designed to avoid further deterioration of its position in the West Asia, particularly in view of Sadat’s developing cooperation with Saudi Arabia and the then anti-Soviet Libya, as well as the ever-present possibility of an Egyptian turn to the United States. Probably aware of Sadat’s decision to go to war even without further Soviet arms supplies, Moscow may have decided that it stood to lose too much in the region if it persisted in its uncooperative attitude. The withholding of arms had not only failed to deter Sadat from the military option, but promised to further jeopardize Soviet aspirations in the region. In this sense, the calculation may simply have been that it was preferable to be in, rather than out, inasmuch as Sadat was determined to act in any case. Moreover, it is possible the Soviets hoped that they might still be able to dissuade Sadat or at least be in a better position to restrain him were they to return to Egypt even partially. Maintaining direct control of the SCUDs and continuing to withhold some of the premised equipment may have been designed to achieve such influence. On the other hand, it is also possible that Moscow, like other capitals in the world, did not take Sadat’s threats seriously. He had been talking so long about the “year of decision” and, yet, done so little, that there was good reason to be skeptical.  

The decision to start a war against Israel was taken by Sadat and Asad in summer 1973. Both were running an enormous military and political risk, because of the lack of progress on the question of the withdrawal of Israeli troops and also because the failure to find an acceptable solution was putting them under intolerable pressure from domestic public opinion. The Egyptian and Syrian armed forces appeared to have learned a lesson from the defeat of the Six Day war in 1967 and had,

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125 Galia Golan, N.27, p.83. From late June 1967 until early 1973, the Soviet gave Egypt sufficient weaponry to defend itself but not advanced offensive weapons. The Egyptians were especially displeased that the Soviets did not provide their latest Mig-23 and Mig-25 fighters to counter Israeli F-4 Phantoms. For detail, see Spencer C. Tucker, ed., The Encyclopedia of Middle East War: The United States in Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, and Iraq Conflicts (California: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2010) pp.1146-1147.

126 Galia Golan, N.27, p.84.
with Soviet aid, restored their fighting efficiency. Morale seemed high, and at least a limited military success seemed possible. Of course the Egyptian and Syrian leadership understood that the US would not allow them totally to defeat Israel: nevertheless they hoped, as before, that in case they did not succeed, the Soviet Union would not allow its friends to be totally defeated either.\footnote{Alexei Vassiliev, N.74, p.93.}

5.2 Day by Day

At 2.00 p.m. on 6 October 1973 air attacks were carried out against the Israeli positions in Sinai and on the Golan Heights. Egyptian troops crossed the Suez Canal and secured their positions on the east bank, and Syrian troops launched an offensive on the Golan Heights.\footnote{The Golan Heights is the name given to the Syrian plateau situated to the northeast of the state of Israel, which occupied it in June 1967, on the eve of the 1967 War, and annexed it in December 1981. It was these strategic and natural assets that Israel coveted when on 9 June 1967, once the battles had ceased on the Egyptian and Jordanian fronts, the Israeli defence Forces (IDF) attacked the Golan, which fell in two days. The area occupied increased by 510 sq. km at the end of the 1973 War. The Israeli-occupied Golan Heights lies at the heart of Israeli-Syrian negotiations, which intensified after the Madrid Conference and Oslo Accords. For Syria, the territory must be returned, and no compromise is possible over the sovereignty of the plateau. For Israel, strategic considerations combine with the attraction of conserving a zone rich in water and the electoral weight of numerous settlers, largely supporters of the Labour party. Israeli Prime Ministers Yitzhak Rabin, Ehud Barak, and Ehud Olmert, announced that they were willing to exchange the Golan for peace with Syria. However, in 2010, Israeli foreign minister Avigdor Lieberman told Syria to abandon its dreams of recovering the Golan Heights. (Alain Gresh and Dominique Videl, N.21, pp.94-96, and ‘Israel's Lieberman cautions Syria’, Aljazeera, February 4, 2010. (http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2010/02/201024174859584145.html) last accessed May 15, 2015).} The Israelis concentrated all their forces to the north and having destroyed almost all the Syrian tanks engaged in the attack, moved towards Damascus, being unable, however, to achieve air supremacy because of the rapid deployment by Syria, with Soviet assistance, of a modern air-defense system. During the Israeli counter-offensive in the north, the Egyptians troops in Sinai were essentially out of action. Israel, which considered the Egyptian front its main objective, having ceased intensive operations in Syria began to transfer its main forces south. Sadat ordered an offensive on 12 October but this was frustrated and the Egyptians had to retreat to their initial positions. Possibly there was apprehension about penetrating deeper eastwards into Sinai since the air-defense system covering them was deployed on the west bank of the Canal.\footnote{Alexei Vassiliev, N.74, p.93.}
By this time however, Israel's losses in personnel and armament had become so conspicuous that its leaders addressed a dramatic request for assistance to the United States. At the point when America decided to set up a relief airlift, Israel had in fact already lost about a third of its aircraft and more than a third of its tanks, and had reserves of some types of ammunition for only a few days. On 14 October the US began massive arms deliveries to Israel, and according to Pentagon data 22,600 tons of armaments including tanks, artillery systems, missile and ammunition were sent between 14 October and 15 November, with deliveries being continued by sea.

The Soviet leadership took the reasonable course at an early stage in the conflict of proposing that Sadat and Asad should seek a cease-fire since, given the advantageous positions occupied by the Egyptian and Syrian troops, they would be scoring a net victory even if the Israelis forced them to withdraw in some sectors. A moderate blow to Israel might also have suited the Americans if it had forced the Israeli leadership seriously to seek a peace agreement. But because its failures in the first days of the confrontation turned out to be worse than anticipated, Israel's leaders decided to wage a serious war and the Americans had no alternative but to support their ally (client). The USSR had to do precisely the same, and assist Syria and Egypt. Four days after hostilities had begun the Soviet Union began one of the largest ever arms supply operations by air, and Antonov-12 and Antonov-22 transport planes made more than 900 flights ferrying weapons, combat vehicles and equipment and

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The West Bank is a landlocked territory near the Mediterranean coast of Western Asia, forming the bulk of the Palestinian territories. The West Bank was part of Palestine under the British Mandate. It was occupied by the armies of King Abdullah of Transjordan during the 1948–49 War, and officially annexed by Amman on 24 April 1950, thus giving birth to the Kingdom of Jordan. Covering an area of 3440 sq. km, the West Bank takes in East Jerusalem and the town of Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarem, Qalqilya, Ramallah, Hebron and Bethlehem. During the past 50 years, this area has progressed from being (1) part of mandate Palestine to (2) a remnant of Palestine annexed by Jordan to (3) one of the territories taken and occupied by Israel in 1967 to (4) a fragmented self-governing area under the PA on route to statehood. For interesting discussions of the West Bank see Colbert C. Held, N.35, pp.323-327.


131 Ibid.,

132 Henry A. Kissinger, Years of Upheaval (New York: Little Brown & Co., 1982) pp.469-470. According to Sadat, when he informed the Soviets about the coming war, they were so certain about Arab defeat that they evacuated the Soviet civilians from Egypt and Syria on 5 October. For detail, see Newsweek, July 31, 1972. Anwar-el-Sadat, N.115, pp.246-247.
ammunition. Additional cargoes were sent by sea but began to arrive only towards the end of the war.\textsuperscript{133}

The USSR deployed a large fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean, estimated by the end of October at 96 units including 34 warships and 23 submarines,\textsuperscript{134} which was intended as warning to Israel not to attempt any disruption of Soviet supplies (a Soviet dry-cargo ship having been sunk in Latakia just at that time).\textsuperscript{135} The Soviet ships were obviously able to collect information on the development of the military operations and to keep an eye on the movements of the American Sixth Fleet. The West interpreted the strengthening of the Soviet Mediterranean squadron as a sign that it could be used to support Soviet troops should they be sent to the conflict area. Soviet military personnel carried out the functions of non-combatants, driving tanks from the disembarkation ports to the front, operating radar-installations and repairing tanks, combat vehicles and other military equipment. As the Soviet officers were also operating the control-boards of the Syrian air-defense system which had been strengthened just after the Israeli raids on Damascus, having suffered rather considerable losses, the Israeli air force completed no further raids on the city.\textsuperscript{136}

On 16 October the Israeli forces crossed the Suez Canal at a point between the two Egyptian field armies located in the area of the Great Bitter Lakes, and started an offensive along the East Bank of the Canal towards the Red Sea. As had been the case in 1967, they ignored the UN Security Council's resolutions on a cease-fire until 25 October. It seemed likely that a couple more days would have seen them triumphing again. But the great unknown was how ready the Egyptian soldiers were to defend their territory—certainly the town of Suez was resisting heroically, while at the same time Soviet supplies were speedily restoring both Egyptian and Syrian losses in tanks and other armaments, Iraqi armored units were advancing up to Syria, and Egypt was awaiting the arrival of troops from Algeria. However, it was the position of the USSR

\textsuperscript{133} Alexei Vassiliev, N.74, p.94.

\textsuperscript{134} \textit{Middle East Journal}, no.1, Winter 1979, p.38.

\textsuperscript{135} Latakia is the principal port city of Syria, as well as the capital of the Latakia Governorate.

\textsuperscript{136} Alexei Vassiliev, N.74, p.95.
and the USA that played the main role in the ending of hostilities on the Egyptian-Israeli front on 25 October and on the Syrian-Israeli front the following day.\textsuperscript{137}

The UN Security Council discussed the West Asian situation on 8 and 12 October.\textsuperscript{138} The Soviet Union insisted that the solution lay first of all in the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the occupied Arab territories, and the USA demanded a ceasefire and withdrawal of both sides' troops to the disengagement lines that had existed before the 1973 hostilities. A. N. Kosygin, member of the Politbureau and Chairman of the Soviet Council of Ministers was in Cairo between 16 and 19 October.\textsuperscript{139} Direct contacts between Soviet and American representatives were stepped up. Henry Kissinger, US Secretary of State, conducted negotiations with Brezhnev and Gromyko in Moscow from 20 to 22 October and the US and Soviet governments submitted a draft resolution, which Egypt supported, for consideration by the Security Council on 22 October.\textsuperscript{140} On 23 October a majority of the Security Council adopted Resolution 338, which implied an immediate ceasefire and cessation of all hostilities according to the position of the troops on 22 October (the People's

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{137} Alexei Vassiliev, N.74, p.95.
\item \textsuperscript{139} Bert Chapman, 'Yom Kippur War (October 6-25, 1973)', Libraries Faculty and Staff Scholarship and Research, Purdue University, November 12, 2014. (http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1103&context=lib_fsdocs) last accessed January 24, 2015.
\item \textsuperscript{140} Karel Wellens, ed., N.138, p.450. On October 21, 1973 a meeting of the Security Council was convened at the urgent request of the USSR and the US. Resolution 338 was adopted on October 22, 1973. The Security Council called upon all parties to cease all firing, to terminate all military activity and to start the implementation of resolution 242 immediately after the cease-fire. The Security Council further decided that, immediately and concurrently with the cease-fire, negotiations start between the parties concerned under appropriate auspices aimed at establishing a just and durable peace in the West Asia.
\end{itemize}
Republic of China abstained). The appeal for a ceasefire was put together with the demand for the full implementation of Resolution 242.

Egypt confirmed its readiness to implement Resolution 338 and to cease hostilities on a reciprocal basis. Israel also signified its agreement to the Resolution. But on the night of 22-23 October Israeli troops launched their offensive against the East and West banks of the Suez Canal, managing to cut the Suez-Cairo road and to reach the Gulf of Suez thereby isolating the units of the Egyptian Third Army which held positions on both sides of the canal to the South. An extraordinary meeting of the Security Council was held at Egypt's request on 23 October at which a new resolution was proposed by the USSR and the USA and agreed (with China again abstaining) to the effect that there should be an immediate ceasefire and the ceasing of all hostilities in the region, and that troops should be withdrawn to positions occupied on 22 October. But Israel continued with its military operations.

Sadat then asked the Soviet and American governments to send observers to oversee the implementation of the ceasefire resolutions. The USSR expressed its readiness to meet Sadat's request, but the United States simultaneously rejected it. In a special declaration on 24 October the Soviet government demanded that Israel should immediately cease all military operations and withdraw to the ceasefire line of 22 October, warning of the, 'most severe consequences,' that would follow if its "aggressive actions" against Egypt and Syria continued. In addition Brezhnev sent

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On October 23, 1973 the Security Council met again at the request of Egypt to consider the non-implementation of resolution 338 and the breakdown of the ceasefire ordered by the Council. On the same day the Security Council adopted resolution 339: the forces of the two sides were urged to return to the positions they occupied at the moment the ceasefire became effective. The Secretary-General was requested to take measures for the immediate dispatch of UN observers to supervise the observance of the ceasefire between the forces of Israel and the Arab Republic of Egypt.

142 Alexei Vassiliev, N.74, p.95.
The UN Resolution 242 which secured inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in the West Asia in which every State in the area can live in security. And also referred to withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied and terminate of all claims, to acknowledge sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force.

143 M. H. Heikal, N.107; Anwar-el-Sadat, N.115, pp.258-259.

144 Alexei Vassiliev, N.74, p.96.

Nixon an urgent telegram: ‘If you find it impossible to act together with us on this problem, we shall be forced to face the necessity of urgently considering the question of undertaking the appropriate steps unilaterally.’

On 24 October seven paratroop division were put on alert in the USSR, some of whom, Western analysts believed, might have been sent to rescue Egypt's encircled Third Army, though it was no clear that the Soviet leaders were guided by such motives or that Brezhnev's warning prompted the alert, or that the possible response of the US were taken into account. More probably it was a signal to the US and Israel that the USSR would not allow an Egyptian defeat. But America's reaction was excessive, and the signal was given to put its nuclear forces on a war footing, an action which caused consternation among the allies.

The Cold War had its own unwritten rules on how to co-exist and to avoid collisions. Having peered into the abyss, both powers stepped hastily back. The Israelis stopped military operation though they did not withdraw to their 22 October positions. The Soviet paratroopers were taken off alert and the American nuclear readiness was cancelled. On 25 October the Soviet Union agreed to a Security Council proposal to end the war that troops from the five big power countries should be excluded from the UN force sent to observe the ceasefire but that Soviet and American observers would be permitted.

Finally, the war had far-reaching implications. The Arab World, which had been humiliated by the lopsided rout of the Egyptian–Syrian–Jordanian alliance in the Six-Day War, felt psychologically vindicated by early successes in the conflict. In Israel, despite impressive operational and tactical achievements on the battlefield, the war led to recognition that there was no guarantee it would always dominate the Arab states militarily. These changes paved the way for the subsequent peace process. The

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146 M. H. Heikal, N.107, p.88.


149 Alexei Vassiliev, N.74, p.96.

150 Ibid., p.97.
1978 Camp David Accords that followed led to the return of the Sinai to Egypt and normalized relations—the first peaceful recognition of Israel by an Arab country.\textsuperscript{151} Egypt continued its drift away from the Soviet Union and left the Soviet sphere of influence entirely.\textsuperscript{152}

5.3 An Assessment of the Soviet Role

Assessments of the Soviet role during the October 1973 War may be placed on two poles—on one pole is the harsh “conspiracy theory” of the cold-war warriors, which visualizes the Soviet behavior before and during the war as a result of a well-conceived, intricate Soviet master plan for deception and expansion in the area. On the other pole is the mild “detentist” explanation of Soviet behavior advanced by an Israeli scholar Galia Golan, according to which preservation of détente with the USA was the primary motivation of the Soviet policy and conduct during this crisis. Although détente was important, it did not mean abandonment of Soviet self-interest. Soviet policy remained concerned with both the preservation of détente and preservation of Soviet influence in the region. Hence, it ambivalent, uncertain, hesitant and incrementalist nature.\textsuperscript{153}

Détente was but not of Soviet interests. It could at times clash with other interests. Thus, all along, the Soviet leadership viewed détente practically, not dogmatically. After all, détente was an emerging working relationship between adversaries, not friends. It did entail some sacrificing of Soviet interests in the marginal areas. But the Soviets seemed to pursue their global and regional objectives concurrently, balancing one against the other. This dualistic approach was visible in all Soviet actions: Their airlifts of arms to Egypt and Syria and within three days of the beginning of the war and Brezhnev’s threat to intervene unilaterally to stop Israeli violations of the ceasefire and to save Egypt were at variance with détente. Yet despite the conflict of their interests they eventually cooperated with each other in

\textsuperscript{151} Camp David is the name of the summer residence of the President of the US where, on 17 September 1978, Jimmy Carter succeeded in getting Anwar al-Sadat and Menachem Begin to sign two draft treaties, one involving the ‘concluding of a peace treaty’ between their two countries, the other setting out a ‘framework for peace in the West Asia’.


\textsuperscript{153} M. Mahmood, N.1, pp.121-122.
managing the crisis by jointly sponsoring Resolution 338, 339 and 340. Similarly, when contrary to the spirit of détente the Soviet Union was excluded from West Asian peace negotiations it did not result in Soviet withdrawal from the region at least to escape the détente uncontrolled client dilemma. Rather, it hardened it postures and aligned itself with the more intransigent elements of the “steadfastness front.”

As Rubenstein has seen it, “Soviet policy in the crisis of October 1973 augured the advent of “the new Cold War”—an evolving and competitive superpower relationship that seeks stability at the nuclear level, limited cooperation in areas of mutual concern, but continued rivalry at varying levels of intensity in pivotal regions of the Third World.” Kissinger has described Soviet diplomacy during the war as ‘clumsy, heavy-handed, unimaginative opportunism...They were willing enough to fish in troubled waters but...loath to major risks; their strength was not a master plan but the exploitation of the confusion of their adversary.’ Cooperation with the United States which tended to undercut their presence or influence in the Arab world was disliked by them. Détente eventually collapse by mid-1970 and by 1980 both the superpower were engaged in a new arm race to negotiate from a position of strength.

Soviet intervention in the crisis of 1973 does not appear to be much different in intent, scope and effect from earlier Soviet interventions in the area in 1956, 1957, 1958, 1967 and 1970 which alike were defensive and preservative in nature. If Soviet intervention this time failed to secure or enhance Soviet influence in Egypt it is because its rival had made inroads into the Soviet beachhead. The Soviet Union lost its standing in Egypt when the latter realized that Soviet assistance could protect Egypt from Israeli aggression but could not make Israel give up Arab territory, while the United States had not only ensured an Israeli victory but was also in a position to

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154 In the UN Resolution 340, the Council demanded that the belligerent parties cease fire immediately and completely, and return to the positions occupied by them at 1650 GMT on 22 October 1973.

155 M. Mahmood, N.1, p.122.


158 M. Mahmood, N.1, p.123.
force Israel to make concessions to the Arabs. After the war the Soviet Union was severely criticized by the Egyptians, Syrians and Iraqis for the dualism of its policy. Mutual discord between Cairo and Moscow reached to such an extent that Soviet arms supply was halted in 1974 and Sadat unilaterally abrogated the Soviet-Egyptian Treaty in 1976 and definitely turned towards the West. Syria too has pursued a policy of assertive independence since then despite her treaty of friendship with the USSR which it signed in 1980 under regional compulsions.\textsuperscript{159}

It can be understood that from 1973 Soviet influence in the region began to wane. Even such friendly regimes as Syria and Iraq did very much as they liked when their aims were criticized for conflicting with those of the USSR. They even had very little hold over the local Arab Communist parties: the regional backlash against the Communist plot in Sudan in 1971, which the Soviets had advised against, probably meant the beginning of the end for Soviet ideological appeal in the area as a whole. Any improvement of Soviet standing that did occur was really only success by default, caused by playing one superpower off against the other.\textsuperscript{160}

Yet as a result of the war Washington grew in stature as the most likely peacemaker, in the eyes of both Israelis and Arabs. Moscow became concerned that Asad would follow the Egyptian example and break off links with the Soviet Union. Fortunately for Moscow, angry Arab opposition to Egypt's peace moves led Syria to delay any similar considerations. With Egypt forging ahead with the Camp David peace agreement alongside Israel under US guidance, Syria's role at the core of an anti-peace Arab alliance helped the Soviet Union maintain influence in the region. It came in the form of an anti-Egyptian alliance called the Arab Front of Stead-fastness and Confrontation. This temporarily brought together Iraq and Syria as well as Libya, the PLO and other Arab countries to announce that they were still committed to an armed struggle against Israel. Egypt had become the new pariah because of its peace moves towards Israel and the nail in the coffin came when Cairo abrogated the treaty of friendship with Moscow on 5 May 1975.\textsuperscript{161}

\textsuperscript{159} M. Mahmood, N.1, p.123.

\textsuperscript{160} Beverley Milton-Edwords and Peter Hinchcliffe, N.77, p.43.

\textsuperscript{161} Talal Nizameddin, N.45, p.36.
From the Soviet point of view, the dualistic policy pursued during the war failed entirely, as Moscow's main objectives proved contradictory and unobtainable. The efforts to maintain detente and, more importantly, avoid Soviet-American confrontation dictated a degree of cooperation with the Americans and even a compromise in order to obtain a cease-fire. This in turn angered the Arabs, jeopardizing the objective of improving and maintaining relations with Egypt and Syria. Pursuit of this objective, in the form of material assistance during the war and the intervention threat, was apparently insufficient to placate the Arabs while it significantly endangered detente and did, in fact, lead to Soviet-American alerts and near military confrontation. It could be argued that the contradictory, dualistic policy was the result of countervailing forces and arguments within the Soviet leadership. It is more likely, however, that Moscow believed that actions of both types were integrally connected and necessary to each other: material aid to the Arabs in order to prevent the need to intervene, with its incumbent threat to super-power confrontation. Whatever the Soviet calculations, the net result was that the end of the war saw a new period of sharp deterioration in Soviet-Egyptian relations, which culminated in Egyptian abrogation of the Friendship Treaty in 1976, and a period of broadened, successful American involvement in the West Asia. At the same time detente suffered a blow, of perhaps less serious proportions than that dealt Soviet-Arab relations but nonetheless costly at least in American public opinion, which further enhanced the ability of Washington to exclude Moscow from the sphere of the Arab-Israeli conflict.162

A study of Soviet interventionist behavior during the 1948 war, the Suez crisis 1956, June 1967 war, and the October 1973 War reveals that the threats of Soviet intervention were moderate and defensive in character. They were couched in general and imprecise terms because of the characteristic reluctance of the Soviet leaders to commit their armed forces to areas outside the Soviet orbit. However, because of the credibility of the USSR as a superpower and uncertainty created by these threats, they were always taken seriously by the other great power and thus-achieved their political objectives. Soviet conduct in the Arab-Israel arena had reflected throughout the primacy of the Soviet national interest and an orientation towards the preservation of the status quo so long as it did not jeopardize the Soviet material interest. Soviet

162 Gaila Golan, N.27. p.94.
policy regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict as estimated, during this period remain based on a hierarchical sequence of three principles: (1) to contain the problem and keep it from exploding; (2) to control hostilities (and consult with the United States, where necessary) should they occur; (3) to work towards a settlement.