CHAPTER VII
CHAPTER VII

SUPER POWERS MUTUAL CONTACTS

The involvement of the Super Powers in the West Asian crisis, particularly in the mid sixties, added new dimensions to the crisis which threatened a direct confrontation between the two Super Powers. The nature of US and Soviet interests and involvements in Arab-Israeli conflict was such that the two powers could inadvertently be drawn into a local war. The military intervention of one Super Power on behalf of its client would almost certainly be met by counter intervention by the other Super Power. Consequently, the risk of a nuclear war seemed especially acute in the event of an outbreak of hostilities between the Arabs and Israel.

The need to avoid a confrontation thus emerged as a major preoccupation of the super powers, for after all, the only threat to the vital security interests of the Super Powers stemmed from the risk of a nuclear war. Even if the probability of confrontation was low, its consequences were considered so dangerous that its prevention became a prime objective. The problem was how to achieve the end sought. An effort was made by the US and the Soviet Union to strike
a balance between the need to keep their influence on the local
powers and the need to avoid involving themselves in a con-
frontation. The means used to achieve this end were through
minimizing the sources of local conflict and to bring about a
regional balance of power.

As between the Super Powers and their clients there
were fundamental differences in perspective and interest.
For the US, the region had a strategic importance. They had
an interest in oil, in avoiding confrontation, in nurturing
detente, in preventing Soviet supremacy and a stake in the
survival of Israel. The Soviet Union, too, had a strategic
interest, an interest in avoiding confrontation, in preserving
detente, in preventing US domination and in maintaining
influence in the Arab states.

Nasser too had no interest in initiating a war, as
after UNEF withdrawal from Gaza and the closure of Gulf of
Aqaba, he emerged as the unrivalled leader of the Arab world.
The Syrian extremist Ba'athist rulers, whose position within
the country was shaky, were raising the war cries to divert
the attention of their critics from the real internal problems.
Jordanian ruler who could not afford to ignore the Arab aspira-
tions, flew to Cairo to sign the mutual defense pact with
Nasser. Israel which had lost hopes in the US-British moves
to open the Gulf, felt threatened due to Arab moves to forge
Arab unity and encircle her. The initiative within Israeli
ruling circles slipped into the hands of 'hawks' who
planned to strike Arabs at the opportune moment.
The different perceptions of the Super Powers and the regional powers complicated the solution of the Arab-Israeli rivalry. The Super Powers remained vulnerable to their clients' behaviour and the clients ultimately depended on the Super Powers for military, logistical and diplomatic support. The Super Powers' key interest in the region remained the avoidance of direct confrontation and the maintenance of detente without giving up influence in the region.

Neither America nor the Soviet Union wanted the war. From the American point of view, preservation of the status quo, however unsatisfactory, was preferable to any violent upheaval with unpredictable consequences. There was fear that a war would adversely affect American interests in the region.

Soviet Union also did not favour war as the Arabs were not in a position to defeat Israel. Soviets knew that any threat to the existence of Israel could lead to US intervention while Arabs defeat could force Soviet intervention on their behalf and endanger Soviet prestige in third world countries. Any misunderstanding on the part of either Super Power could lead to direct confrontation. It was for achieving these ends that the Super Powers resorted to mutual contact diplomacy when the situation in the West Asia started getting out of hands.

**Super Power Moves Before June War**

When the drift towards war started during May 1967 in West Asia, direct Soviet intervention was thought unlikely
in Washington, but it was a possibility that could not be ruled out altogether. American policy, therefore, was to come to an understanding with the Soviet Union that the Super-Powers should not directly interfere. On 20 May, President Johnson in a message to Kosygin, affirmed US position of support for Israel and suggested a "joint initiative of the two powers to prevent the dispute between Israel, UAR and Syria from drifting into war". The message added:

> The increasing harassment of Israel by elements based in Syria, with attendant reactions within Israel and within the Arab world, has brought the area close to major violence. Your and our ties to nations of the area could bring us into difficulties which I am confident neither of us seeks. It would appear a time for each of us to use our influence to the full in the course of moderation, including our influence over action by the United Nations. 1

As he did not want to convey the lack of resolve of US to help Israel, he at the same time ordered the Sixth Fleet with the two aircraft carriers, the 'Saratoga' and the 'America', to the Eastern Mediterranean. This move was rendered meaningless by Nasser's step on 22 May 1967, announcing the closure of the Straits to Israeli ships and to strategic goods bound for Israel.

Midway in the crisis, Soviet diplomatic activity suddenly increased as the crisis was getting out of control and there were risks of Soviet involvement in a total war.

---

Soviet Union also realized that a diplomatic solution at this point would favour the Arabs. It sought to exert some pressure on Cairo and Damascus to prevent the initiation of hostilities immediately before the war broke out. The Soviet Union began trying to prevent war, through representations to the US, thinly-veiled threats to Israel, and missions to Nasser himself.

The situation underlined the risk that the US and the Soviet Union could become directly involved even in wars not of their own making. Soviet Union along with the US made some attempts to caution the Egyptian President against further intemperate action. On 26 May, Nasser later reported that Soviet Ambassador, Dmitri Fozhdaev, conveyed a message from his Government urging Nasser's Government "not to be first to open fire". Soviet Prime Minister, Kosygin, also sent a similar cautionary message to Israeli Prime Minister on 26 May urging his Government to settle the conflict by unwarlike means, "and avoid the outbreak of an armed conflict" which could have "serious consequences for international peace and security". Israeli Government did not take serious note of Soviet request and replied only on 1 June. But Soviet Union refused to verify the facts on Eshkol's request, who in his

2 Summary of World Broadcasts, Part IV, ME/2403/A/1, 12 June 1967. Nasser in his broadcast of 9 June also referred to a message from US President Lyndon B. Johnson which was delivered to the Egypt's Ambassador on the same day at Washington asking Egypt "to show self-restraint and not to be the first to fire or...to face grave consequences."

reply on 1 June called upon the Soviet Union to "join the other
great powers and use all its influence for a permanent peace
settlement in the Middle East."

But Soviet Ambassador got
no definite assurance from Eshkol that Israel would not resort
to war.

On 27 May, the Soviet Union asserted its own national
interest in the security of Damascus regime, stating that the
USSR "cannot and will not remain indifferent to attempts to
violate peace in a region located in direct proximity to the
borders of the Soviet Union." In urging restraint on both
sides, the Soviet Union was acting in concert with the US, at
their request. President Johnson, on 25 May had urged
Kosygin to join him in a concerted action to restrain the two
parties. Kosygin in response to Johnson's message agreed to
urge restraint on the opposing sides as the new situation
favoured its Arab friends. As a result of Super Power's joint
efforts tension eased in the last week of May. At the same
time, the Soviet Union on 27 May informed Johnson that they
had information that Israel was planning to attack the Arabs.
The President replied to Kosygin and sent a message to
Eshkol repeating the information from Moscow and warning
Israel against starting hostilities:

The Soviets stated that if Israel starts
military action, the Soviet Union will extend

4 Ibid., p. 222.
5 Pravda (Moscow), 27 May 1967.
help to the attacked state....As your friend, I repeat even more strongly what I said yesterday to Mr. Eban: Israel just must not take pre-emptive military action and thereby make itself responsible for the initiation of hostilities. 6

Johnson then suggested a two-to-three-week delay before Israel would resort to force to open the Straits. The Super Powers made frantic efforts to stop the outbreak of hostilities in West Asia. As they realized the risks involved, they decided to jointly manage the crisis.

The joint efforts of the two Super Powers reflected a real willingness on the part of the Super Powers to seek a modus vivendi in a conflict which did not directly involve their vital interests but which was recognized as being potentially dangerous. Their attempts aimed at controlling the outbreak of the war. 7 America assured the Israelis of its continued commitment to their security and survival. It ensured that the regional balance of power remained such as to obviate any perceived Israeli need for preemptive military action. The US exercised an additional degree of constraint over Israel by virtue of repeated warning that preemptive

6 Michael Brecher, Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy (New Haven, 1975), pp. 399-400.

7 Walt Rostow, Former National Security Advisor to President Johnson latter wrote about the helplessness of both the Super Powers showing that they no longer were in a position to influence the course of events in the world, which he described as "diffusion of Power". He said Johnson tried hard but failed to keep Israel from initiating hostilities on June 5. Walt Rostow, The Diffusion of Power - An Essay in Recent History (New York, 1972), pp. 415, 418.
military action could endanger American support in the ensuing conflict. President Johnson's opposition to Israel starting the war was made due to his fears that the US would be drawn into another war, possibly even involving a confrontation with the Soviet Union.

**US-Soviet Attempts to Avoid Direct Clash**

On 5 June 1967, the first day of the Arab-Israeli war, there was considerable anxiety among high-level policy makers in the US and Soviet Union over the outcome of the war. Prolonged military struggle along the closely matched antagonists would have placed both the Super Powers under heavy pressure to take action in support of their respective favourites. The Super Powers appeared to acknowledge an overriding interest in keeping the war localized and from getting out of control. Both the US and the Soviet Union did not want to involve themselves in local conflict or to run the risk of a direct clash. The crisis brought to the fore some of the political and military considerations lying at the hear of Soviet-American relations. Neither side wished to become directly involved in the fighting or to allow it develop into armed confrontation.

Though Soviet Union wanted to keep the Arab-Israeli relations in a state of sustained aggravation, she did not want the crisis to spread in a manner which would involve her in a confrontation with the United States. They supported Arabs up to a time it became imperative to part company with
then in the interest of avoiding a conflict with the United States. Once the news of the Arab-Israeli war reached Kremlin, the primary aim of the Soviet rulers was to avoid a direct clash with the United States and keep the regional conflict from becoming a global one. The war brought the Soviet Union near the abyss of the direct confrontation.

President Johnson, obviously, was anxious to convey the impression that the US was not involved in fighting. This might help to minimize the danger to US interests in the Arab world, to reduce the likelihood of Soviet intervention and to facilitate a ceasefire. It was in keeping with these objectives that the White House statement on 5 June declared US neutrality in deed and action. Three hours after the start of hostilities, Secretary Rusk, after consultations with the President, sent a message through normal channels to Moscow expressing surprise at the outbreak of war and calling for an early end to the fighting.\(^8\)

**Use of Hot-line**

At the first formal meeting on 5 June, President Johnson, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Defense Secretary McNamara, Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Walt Rostow and Press Secretary to the President, George Christian, discussed the possibility of co-operating with the Soviet Union to bring about a ceasefire.

---

Both the Super Powers were so fearful of finding themselves, through some miscalculation, at war, that on 5 June, the first day of the start of Arab-Israeli war, they made use of the "hot line" between Moscow and Washington. It was used for the first time since its installation in August 1963, following the Cuban missile crisis. As the risk of Soviet-American confrontation loomed large, the Soviet Union opted for a policy of caution. It took the initiative of establishing contacts with the US over the "hot line". Shortly after the war started on 5 June, Kosygin called Johnson on the "hot line" and conveyed that the Soviet Union was against the war and would not intervene if the US acted similarly. He hinted at Super Powers working together for bringing about a ceasefire. He informed him that the Soviet Union intended to work for a ceasefire through her influence with the Egyptians and expressed the hope that the United States would urge restraint on Israel.¹ The Soviet Union rejected military intervention and apparently sought similar restraint on the American side. She made no threats at that time, but only tried to use persuasion to gain co-operation. Nor did she repeat the Arab charge that American aircraft were aiding Israel in attacking the Arabs. Soviet Union's action made it clear that its over-riding interest was to avoid a military confrontation with the US. Kosygin's message suggested that the Soviet Union was in favour of a prompt ceasefire. President Johnson immediately responded

---

¹ Johnson, n. 1, pp. 237, 298.
on the "hot line" expressing the US willingness to encourage a ceasefire and stay out of the conflict. President Johnson appeared on television that evening and said that the Russian attitude opened a very "hopeful path away from danger" in West Asia. But the US President at the same time, moved Sixth Fleet closer to the Israeli coast and another aircraft carrier to the Mediterranean. Thus both the Super Powers assured each other that they would make every effort to end the fighting in West Asia and avoid precipitate actions which might cause an escalation of the Arab Israeli confrontation.

Understanding the magnitude of Israeli victory, Kosygin, after 36 hours of war, again sent a hot line message to President Johnson informing him that the Soviet Union would accept an unconditional ceasefire. There was some satisfaction on the American side, in seeing the Soviet Union get itself into an unwinnable position of being committed to the losing side in a local war. To remove the Soviet doubts about the Arab allegation that the US had helped Israel's airforce, President Johnson on 6 June, told the Soviet leaders on "hot line" that American planes had taken off from carriers in the Mediterranean


to investigate the Israeli attack on Liberty in the area. The White House Press Secretary, George Christian, said that the message had been sent to Moscow so that the Soviet Union should understand why carrier based aircrafts of the Sixth Fleet were scrambling and heading towards the area of hostilities. He said that President Johnson did not want Soviet leaders under any misapprehension that American planes were bound for the Israeli–Arab war zone.  

He also requested Kosygin to inform the Arabs about this. Kosygin acknowledged Johnson's message and stated that the information had been immediately passed on to the Egyptians. By allowing the Soviets to act as an intermediary with the Egyptians, the US had implicitly recognized the legitimacy of the Soviet role in the region. Nasser felt that because the message was transmitted through Kosygin "it was directed at the Russians in an effort to neutralise the Soviet Union, blinding them against an operation being conducted against Egypt".

The incident was an indication of the extraordinary degree to which Johnson was attuned to Soviet behaviour once the war actually began. If during the May crisis he had been

---


14 Johnson, *n. 1*, p. 301.

prepared to see the conflict primarily in terms of Arabs and Israelis, once hostilities were underway the main focus of his attention was the Soviet Union. With Israel secure from defeat by the Arabs, only Soviet behaviour could trigger a direct American military response. The regional dispute paled into insignificance before the danger of Super Power confrontation. Johnson was anxious to convey the impression that the US was not involved in the fighting. This might help to minimize the danger to US interests in Arab world, to reduce the likelihood of Soviet intervention and to facilitate a ceasefire.  

Soviet Threat of Intervention

On 9 June when Damascus was threatened by advancing Israeli forces, the different interests of the two Super Powers converged over the salvation of the Syrian Government in coincidence that was to become the basis of their new involvement. The Soviet Union was anxious to preserve the Left Ba'athist regime as an important element in the Soviet Middle Eastern policy and the United States ultimately agreed that, however undesirable the existing government might be, its demise would create new uncertainties at a time when the nature of her own involvement remained unclear. The risk of Soviet

16 Howe, R. S., p. 70. When the war broke, the Marine Battalion Landing Team, a part of Sixth Fleet, was deliberately on shore leave in Malta. Two carriers were stationed near Crete but were not moved closer to the area of the conflict.

intervention appeared once again before an effective ceasefire on all fronts went into effect on 10 June. On the morning of 10 June while fighting continued in Syria, the Soviet leadership made a major turn in its position and threatened unilateral action in West Asia. After the fall of Kuneitra, Kosygin used the hot line on 10 June and conveyed it to the American President that "a very crucial moment" had arrived and that the possibility existed for an "independent decision" by Moscow. The Russian communication envisaged the possibility of a "grave catastrophe" and said that unless the Israelis halted the military operations within a few hours, the Soviet Union would take "necessary action, including military".18

On receipt of Kosygin's threat, President Johnson reacted by changing cruising pattern of the Sixth Fleet. Previously ordered to remain at least 150 miles off the Syrian coast, the restriction was now reduced to 50 miles as a signal that the US was "prepared to resist Soviet intrusion in the Middle East". At the same time, the Americans reinforced the Soviet warning against further Israeli action against Syria. Johnson informed Kosygin over the "hot line" that Americans had been pressing the Israelis to make the ceasefire completely effective and had received assurances that this would be done. This American pressure probably defused the

18 Johnson, n. 1, pp. 301, 302.
crisis and Israelis did not press their attack on Damascus. On 10-11 June 1967, Israelis refrained under Soviet-American pressure from attacking Damascus and the ceasefire succeeded in terminating precisely at the stage where the danger of a Super Power confrontation appeared likely to increase dramatically. The US chose to intervene "on Moscow's behalf" due to fear that a complete Israeli victory would destroy the prospects for political settlement. American pressure thus prevented a complete Arab collapse and their unconditional surrender. Thus both the Super Powers avoided direct hostilities and also developed a degree of 'tacit coordination' of their efforts to avoid unilateral physical intervention.

Soviet Union observed a significant measure of restraint throughout the West Asian crisis. Subsequent pledges of support for the Arabs carefully avoided commitments to specific actions. Egyptians attempted to secure direct Russian military involvement against Israel by claiming that America and Britain were co-operating with Israel in her air offensive.

---

19 Ibid., p. 303. American Ambassador in Israel was instructed by the State Department to tell the Israeli Government to terminate the hostilities. Bar-Zohar, Michael, "Embassies in Crisis" (Englewood, 1970), p. 250; General Bar-Lev later confirmed that American pressure had been the determining factor in halting Israeli forces before they could attack Damascus. New Middle East (London), March 1971, p. 37.


21 In an effort to involve Soviet Union directly in the war, President Nasser and King Hussein of Jordan came out on 2nd day of fighting (6 June 1967) with the allegation that American and British planes had taken part in the attacks on the Egyptian and Jordanian air bases.
But Soviet Union refused to take the bait and kept out. She acted in accordance with her agreement with the US, not to interfere in regional conflicts. In the United Nations also the Soviet Union co-operated with the US in reiterating demands for a ceasefire. In every meeting, it insisted on the withdrawal of Israeli forces. It also felt worried for it knew that if Israel did not agree to a ceasefire, the consequence inevitably would be an East-West confrontation in West Asia, which it was anxious to avoid. Soviet Union teamed up with the US in the UN in an effort to end the fighting and after intensive behind the scene private negotiations between the US and Soviet permanent representatives in the UN, Arthur S. Goldberg and Nicholas T. Fedorenko, the Soviet Union agreed to an unconditional ceasefire resolution. The Soviet Union agreed to this in spite of Arab opposition, because the danger of the Arab-Israeli war escalating into American-Soviet hostilities had to be avoided. This, however, dealt a severe blow to the Soviet prestige in the Arab world. It was obviously, embarrassing for Moscow to appear to be letting down the Arabs after years of support in the name of anti-imperialism. Yet Moscow preferred not to be embroiled in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

22 Some Arab nations suspected that the Soviet Union will not fight unless her own national frontiers were threatened and they recalled the way in which the Soviet Union had backed out during the Cuban missile crisis. Indian Express (Delhi), 11 July 1967. Max Frankel wrote that it was of 'lasting significance' that despite its ties with the Arabs, the Soviet Union worked as hard as the US to avoid a big power clash in the Arab-Israeli war. New York Times, 11 June 1967.
But in spite of their mutual understanding to avoid confrontation the Super Powers had their stakes in the region. Because of diverse interests, the delegates of the United States and Soviet Union blamed each other's Government's policies for the crisis. The Soviet delegate extended support to the Arabs and attacked the United States and other Western powers of having backed Israel. He charged that the United States had remained in the background and had encouraged its "Israeli henchmen to carry out actual aggression". The Soviet Union claimed that their main purpose was "to topple progressive Arab regimes and to split the Arab World". Soviet Union blamed Western financial assistance that enabled Israel to build up its army which was hurled against the Arabs. It blamed Anglo-American imperialism for being directly responsible for bloodshed in West Asian region. Commenting on the US neutrality in the war, New Times blamed the United States for the part played by it "in instigating the present military conflict". It remarked that such statement would not befool anyone. Though it did not approve of the Arab charge of US-British collusion, it claimed that there can be "no doubt at all about their attitude".

The June war gave the Super Powers an interest in the settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute. Both the Super

---

23 International Affairs (Moscow), July 1967, p. 3.
24 New Times (Moscow), 14 June 1967.
25 International Affairs, August 1967.
Powers though divided by antagonism of their long term aims in West Asia as well as by their basic commitments, nevertheless, shared one paramount concern i.e., avert the catastrophe of a fourth Arab-Israeli war in which they might be directly involved. Thus both the Super Powers who had interest in some kind of settlement, kept pressing their local allies not to pursue policies which might endanger an ultimate settlement.

The Soviet Union could not allow the conflict to explode once more into open war with danger of Soviet-American confrontation. Though anxious to see a settlement of the West Asian impasse, the Soviet Union did not respond favourably to President Johnson's 19 June proposals. It rejected President Johnson’s proposal to the effect that any new arms shipment to the region "be registered with the UN as a first step towards controlling arms race in the area".26 The Arabs needed the arms immediately to recover from the defeat of June and this proposal if accepted would have indirectly benefited Israelis whose losses were negligible in the war. Soviet Union could not afford to let down the Arabs who depended on it for arms.

Glasnost Meeting

The desire to avert another war and find out an acceptable solution led to the famous meeting between Premier Kosygin and President Johnson which took place on 23 and

25 June at Glassboro. They set forth their respective views on the conflict, recognized that they were basically at variance, and yet managed to place them in wider perspective of what seemed a common desire for peaceful relations. The meeting confirmed the Soviet belief that America would on no account call for an Israeli withdrawal unless Arabs offered concessions.

President Johnson after the first meeting with Premier Kosygin informed that they had discussed "certain questions arising out of the Middle East situation. We also agreed that both of us, as well as our two nations, made some small contribution to bring about a ceasefire in the Middle East. We only regret that this contribution between us had not made it possible to prevent the outbreak of hostilities". He further added: "We would like to have the opportunity to sit down further and discuss some questions arising out of the Middle East situation." He also announced that Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko and US Secretary of State Rusk would be meeting next week in New York to continue dialogue at ministerial level to find out some solution to the West Asian crisis.

On 25 June, Kosygin in a News Conference at the United Nations, regarding the Glassboro talks, again stressed the urgency of prompt Israeli withdrawal behind the armistice line. He

---

In connection with the situation in the Middle East, the two sides set forth their respective positions. It was stated on the Soviet side that the main thing now is to achieve the prompt withdrawal behind the armistice lines of the forces of Israel, which had committed aggression against the Arab states. This question is of paramount importance for the restoration of peace in the Middle East. 28

But President Johnson on his return to White House on 25 June 1967 remarked: "I must report that no agreement is readily in sight on the Middle Eastern Crisis...." He claimed the success in finding out "elements...of common ground...in respect of such simple propositions as that every state has a right to live, that there should be an end to war in the Middle East, and that in the right circumstances there should be withdrawal of troops". There was no agreement on any aspect of the Arab-Israeli dispute but there were signs of hope that the Super Power would not let the dispute spread to other parts of the world. "There is a long way from agreement", President Johnson conceded, "but it is a long way from total difference". 29 But in spite of failure to evolve an acceptable solution, Glassboro meet produced softening of the opposite positions on West Asia.

---


29 Text from Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 3 July 1967, pp. 930-1.
It provided a measure of reassurance that East-West antagonism would not be allowed to get out of hand. The Soviet approach revealed the dichotomy that had always characterized it. Publicly, Kosygin was forthright in condemning Israel. He had even demanded that Israel should pay full war reparations to the Arabs, yet, privately at talks with President Johnson at Glassboro, he sought to avoid a direct confrontation and to promote relaxed relations between the Super Powers.

US-Soviet Diplomacy to Evolve a Compromise Resolution

After the failure of the General Assembly in mid-July to solve the crisis, Soviet Ambassador to the US took the initiative of meeting Arthur Goldberg at the US mission in the UN on 13 July. As a result of this meeting a new formula was submitted which appealed to Dean Rusk. After a week of intensive behind the scenes negotiations the US and Soviet Union reached an agreement on a compromise resolution which would have satisfied at least some of the basic requirements of Israel and the Arabs. They could reach an agreement on the precise wording of a draft proposal which they could support in the Assembly.30

30 David Kimche and Don Bawly, The Sandstorm (London, 1968), p. 202; Gideon Rafael, "UN Resolution 242", New Middle East (London), June 1973. This formula provided for unilateral Israeli withdrawal without delay from occupied territories in exchange for a declaration by all members of UN in the area that each enjoyed the right to maintain an independent national state of its own and to live in peace and security. New York Times, 21–22 July and 19 September 1967. The agreed draft was apparently linked with recognition of such Israeli essential interest as the acknowledgment of Israel's right to national existence, a termination of the state of belligerency and in consequence freedom of navigation through the Suez Canal and the Strait of Tiran.
The Super Power move was so sudden that it failed to get the Arab approval and so no draft resolution, as agreed upon, could be introduced in the Security Council. It became clear that Super Powers were interested in the substance of peace and renunciation of all acts of war rather than in the sanctity of any singular verbal formulation of a draft resolution.

On 27 July 1967, Goldberg in his address before the International Platform Association at Washington, D.C., said about the text tentatively agreed upon between himself and Gromyko:

> It provided that the withdrawal of Israel's troops would be linked with the acknowledgement by every member of the UN in the area that each enjoys the right to maintain an independent national State of its own and to live in peace and security and with a renunciation of all claim of acts flowing from an asserted state of belligerency.

There were, in fact, two operative clauses in the agreed draft: one on withdrawal and the other immediately following—and linked as Goldberg had said—on the full enjoyment of the right to statehood and the renunciation of all claims and acts inconsistent with that right. The word "belligerency" was not used in the text. Its exclusion was a verbal concession to Arab sentiments. At the same time the meaning was clear.

---

31 Lall, n. 30, p. 212.

enough and the wording fully did away with claims to any right of warlike activities or the threat of force in West Asia. This agreement between the US and the Soviet Union was not only the peak of success in negotiations in and around the emergency special session but it represented something even more significant and fundamental: a meeting of the minds of the Super Powers on one of the most dangerous and delicate international problems of the era. This gave it a memorable character and made it an indication of the possibilities that happily existed for peace in the world.\footnote{Lall, n. 30, pp. 211-12. Observer (London), 6 August 1967, reported details of the secret understanding between Washington and Moscow reached at the end of Glassboro summit. The Times (London), 8 August 1967 mentioned President Tito as the source of information of this secret agreement. Egypt asked Arab Foreign Minister in Khartoum on 4 August 1967 to consider the joint US-Soviet proposal which was rejected by Syrian and Algerian objections.}

Disappointedly, however, the agreement was too dramatic and too sudden to stimulate an alteration of intransigency among some of the Arabs. Gromyko urged acceptance of the proposal to the Arabs. The new text gave back to the Arabs all territories they had lost. It also gave them peace and security in those territories by United Nations' affirmation of their rights in this regard. These rights could be enjoyed on a reciprocal basis which would cover the case of Israel. The Arab delegates agreed to consider the matter in a caucus. There were already rumblings in the Arab world, after Gromyko-Rusk proposal that the Russians were selling out the Arabs. While Egypt and Jordan were willing to accept this proposal,
Syria and Algeria refused to agree to any solution which involved Arab acceptance of the State of Israel. They insisted on an immediate and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories. Ultimately Arabs who found these concessions much too far reaching rejected the proposal. It forced the Russians to realize that too great an insistence by them on major concessions could have lost them Arab friendship. Arab rejection of the proposal forced the Russians to deny the whole story of a joint US-Soviet plan.

Pravda flatly denied that any Soviet-American initiative, agreement or plan existed for settling the West Asian crisis. It said: "No Soviet-American plan or agreement exists on the Middle East" and described these rumours as "a mythical concordance of interests between the two countries". It concluded: "The Soviet Union's position is clear and principled. Israeli forces must leave all occupied Arab territories."  

At the UN, the Soviet delegation issued a statement describing Press reports of such an agreement as an "invention".  

US State Department spokesman on 23 September 1967, also denied that the US and Soviet Union had reached an understanding to limit arms shipments to the Middle East. He said that the reports of an agreement were "misleading and premature". Soviets were not prepared to press upon

34 Pravda, 8 September 1967.
35 Statesman (Delhi), 30 September 1967.
Arabs any set of proposals which the Arabs found distasteful, even though the Soviets may have thought the proposals reasonable. Israel which was also not happy over the US-Soviet proposal felt easy over Arab rejection of this proposal and was saved from taking any stand which could have annoyed the US. Thus a significant opportunity for peace created by the Agreement reached between the United States and the Soviet Union was lost. There was profound and even bitter disappointment among members of the General Assembly. The General Assembly after its failure to solve the problem adjourned after referring the problem back to the Security Council.

The movement toward agreement between the US and the Soviet Union was at once unexpected, belated and swift. These characteristics tended to divorce the agreement from any probability of acceptance by the Arabs. So far Soviet support for the Arab case had appeared to be so total that the Arab states had had no incentive to rethink and revise their own approach toward belligerency in their dealings with Israel. However, despite the emergence of their common interest of averting another war, tactical considerations and mutual suspicions kept the Super Powers from coming to an agreement on the issue which they could enforce on the parties to the dispute only at the cost of annoying them.

Concluding Observations

The Super Powers worked anxiously to avert an explosion by trying to ensure that neither Israel nor the
Arabs would launch an attack. Washington and Moscow exchanged assurances that the situation would not be permitted to involve the great powers in a major clash. The nationalistic interests of both Israel and Egypt made it impossible for any of the Super Powers to "control" them. The Egyptians did not ask the Soviet Union for permission to reoccupy Sharm el-Sheikh and close the Gulf of Aqaba to Israel and Israelis did not ask the United States for permission to launch an attack in order to reopen it.

The United States and the Soviet Union failed decisively to co-ordinate their positions on the developing crisis except on the limited question of the importance of avoiding direct Soviet American hostilities in conjunction with the crisis. Super Powers co-ordination would have sharply reduced the ability of the client states in the area to blackmail them. It would have increased the ability of the Super Powers to impose a settlement on the warring states. During the upswing phase of the 1967 crisis, no great power proved willing to take political initiatives at the UN on the question of UNEF, to call for a meeting of the Security Council to pass constructive resolution or to bring effective pressure on the local parties in support of a continuing UN role in West Asia. In fact, the two Super Powers seized upon the forum of the UN to air their disagreements concerning the merits of the opposing positions of the Arabs and the Israelis.
Once the war started, the Super Powers did co-operate sufficiently to bring about ceasefire between the combatants. Neither of the Super Powers was interested in escalating their own differences to such a point as might seriously lead to a direct mutual confrontation leading to a nuclear war which could lead to destruction of the Super Powers themselves. They had common interest in not allowing the war going out of control. This shared insistence on the need to contain the fighting was reflected in the unanimous votes by which the Security Council in successive resolutions (233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 240 and 242) couched in even more insistent terms, admonished the belligerents to conclude a ceasefire and desist from military action.

However, their readiness to co-operate largely ended at this point. Subject to basic understanding of not involving themselves in the war, the US and Soviet Union reserved the right to influence developments in a direction favourable to the interests of their respective proteges. In spite of Premier Kosygin's and President Johnson's mutual assurances that their governments wanted to stay out of war, both the Super Powers pursued their objectives in the region in their own way. While the Soviet Union strongly supported the Arabs in their ferocious animosity towards Israel, American side attempted to maintain at least a formal impartiality while at the same time ensured that Israel's vital interests were protected.
The risk of confrontation can be seen as one of the major factors reducing the likelihood of a Super Power clash. Since it enforced restraint and constituted one of the few interests shared by both Washington and Moscow in West Asia, considerable efforts were made to reduce the risk factor. Preventive diplomacy proved an important element in both Soviet and American West Asian policy. In the face of imminent Super Power confrontation they showed readiness to exert heavy pressure on their clients.