

THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT AND THE INTERNATIONAL
STRUGGLE FOR POWER IN THE MIDDLE EAST
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by

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TO Rose and Elana

A C K N O W L E D G M E N T

I should like to express my gratitude to my Promoter, Professor Dr. C.P. van der Walt, Head of the Department of Political Science of the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education for suggesting in the first instance that I undertake this study, and for assisting me thereafter by giving generously of his guidance, advice and encouragement. I became conscious during my studies that my Promoter's spiritual affinity with national movements gave him a rare insight into, and a sympathetic appreciation of, the subject of my thesis.

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JANUARY, 1972.

"In the Middle East as elsewhere,
it is not the small power quarrels
which inflame great power conflict,
but rather the reverse".

(BERNARD LEWIS, 1971. Statement
to the Subcommittee on National
Security and International Opera-
tions of the United States
Senate).

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C H A P T E R I

INTRODUCTION

The Arab-Israeli conflict is no less than a clash of divisive nationalisms and incompatible civilisations, which finds a setting in a region of the world - the Middle East - that is particularly significant in a geostrategic and strategic-economic context. The dynamics of the conflict cannot be divorced from, or confined to, this setting since it finds its ultimate expression in a passionate and irreconcilable claim of two different peoples to occupation of the Holy Land; it evokes a response from Arabs throughout the region and Jews throughout the world who are actuated by the religious and national influences generated by their historical identification with the land; it touches upon the convictions of millions of Christians and Moslems to whom the Holy Land is a spiritual crucible of their faith.

The Middle East, because of its strategic importance, is a region of primary interest to the world powers, particularly in the bipolar struggle for power which has dominated the international political scene in the post-war world. The Eastern Mediterranean seaboard and its hinterland is a crucial factor in this bipolar struggle located as it is in the very heart of the Middle East.

The convergence of these conflicting claims to, and interests in, the Holy Land has transformed what could otherwise be a local conflict into an international problem. This problem in turn has become an insoluble dilemma with global ramifications in the context of international politics. The Arab-Israeli conflict is the manifestation of this dilemma. Its volatile and tempestuous character has created the maelstrom into which not only the immediate regional states, but also foreign interests, pressure groups and powers are drawn.

There are three distinct facets to the Arab-Israeli conflict: local, in the confrontation between the Palestinian Arabs and Israel; regional, in the confrontation between Israel and the neighbouring Arab states; international, in the interaction of the conflict with the global struggle for power.

Conversely, the Arab-Israeli conflict is pertinently affected by three other conflicts: inter-Arab relations which in turn produce internal upheavals and regional disputes

between the Arab states; the struggle between radical Arab nationalism and Western interests in the Middle East, which reached a climax during the period covered by this work; the international struggle for power, which impels foreign states in pursuit of their political objectives to become involved in, and also to exacerbate, the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Arab-Israeli conflict thereby becomes a projection of great power rivalry, and the whipping horse in the pursuit of ulterior motives.

These four conflicts occur almost continuously, but not necessarily among all the participants directly or concurrently. Nevertheless, each conflict unleashes influences and forces which profoundly affect the other spheres of conflict. The cumulative effect of the actions, reactions and interactions of conflict has increased both regional and global tensions, established and dissolved alignments and alliances, erupted into localised wars, evoked passionate response and animosity from peoples throughout the world even though they are not directly affected thereby, and has generally characterised the Middle East as a source of dangerous instability and as a veritable simmering cauldron of international politics.

It is the primary aim of this work to analyse the interaction between the Arab-Israeli conflict and the international struggle for power in the Middle East until 1958. However, any notion that the Middle East comprises a political unity is a complete fallacy. States in certain regions of the Middle East can be distinguished by their common interests and objectives from states in other regions with their own common interests and objectives. One region may have a radically different outlook from that of a contiguous region as to its national interest and may be impelled by different criteria in the pursuit of its regional and global relations. A multitude of factors influence these policies, such as geographic, strategic, economic or demographic considerations. Iran and Turkey, for instance, form border states of the Soviet Union and are located in the very periphery of the Middle East. These "Northern Tier" countries have a direct, intimate experience of Russian expansionism, and their very vulnerability to the Soviet Colossus on their borders has forced them to adopt a different

foreign policy to those states in the "Southern Tier" (Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan and the Arabian Peninsula).

The Northern Tier states form a buffer zone between the Soviet Union and the Southern Tier. A sea link through the narrow Bosphorus is the only geographical nexus between the two. As a result of their comparative geographical isolation from the Soviet Union, the Southern Tier states have had no direct experience of Soviet territorial expansionism and have had no reason to fear Soviet intrusion in the Mediterranean. This fact is of cardinal importance and it means to the West and the Soviet Union that different foreign policy objectives have had to be formulated for, and applied to, each tier. The international struggle for power in the Middle East has had to take a different course in each tier.

In this work, the interaction between the Arab-Israeli conflict and the international struggle for power in the Middle East will be approached with two aims:

Firstly: To determine to what extent the power struggle in the Northern Tier influenced the course of the power struggle in the Southern Tier, and how this in turn interacted with, and was affected by, the Arab-Israeli conflict; the problems which developed and the reactions of the regional states. It is not intended to detail all events, but only to indicate in broad strokes the main events and to extract their significance.

Secondly: To determine to what extent the Arab-Israeli conflict was exacerbated by great power rivalry and as a corollary how the conflict served as a medium for great power rivalry.

The Arab-Israeli conflict, until 1958, was aggravated by the policies of both the West and the Soviet Union. An attempt will be made to evaluate the extent to which this took place and similarly the extent to which the Arab-Israeli conflict served the aims of the wider international confrontation. Many works dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict of this period are unsatisfactory in that they tend to give an unbalanced picture of the extent to which the policies of the West and the Soviet Union, or either of them, served as instruments which exacerbated regional conflicts - particularly the Arab-Israeli conflict. Many works also fail to deal with this problem pertinently, specifically or systematically.

The present study is thus meant as a needed addition to the vast literature on the Arab-Israeli conflict. A study of international politics cannot be undertaken without paying a great deal of attention to the Middle East, and in turn the Arab-Israeli conflict. The hope is therefore expressed that this work may in some small measure contribute to a proper perspective of all facets of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Since the Holy Land is a focal point of so many converging interests, the inhabitants of this troubled land are placed in a position of grave responsibility not only towards themselves but also towards the rest of the world to resolve their differences. Similarly, the great powers have a reciprocal obligation in the interests of world peace, not only to contain the conflict, but with indefatigability, patience and statesmanship to make a positive contribution towards seeking a solution to the problem. The great powers can only do so if they objectively project the Arab-Israeli conflict to a level above that demanded by the interests of their global rivalry. It is indeed the manifest inability of the great powers to meet this standard which has transformed the Arab-Israeli conflict into a subject of such crucial importance to international politics. It is for this reason too, that the Arab-Israeli conflict has to be studied in conjunction with the geostrategic and strategic-economic significance of the Middle East, for these are the considerations which in turn instigate great power rivalry.

The strategic importance of the Middle East has stimulated a power rivalry in this region for many centuries. Since the Second World War several important changes have taken place and there has been a significant shift of emphasis: the decline of the Western European powers as factors in international politics has reduced the interplay of the power conflict from a multipolar to a bipolar confrontation; regional changes have been brought about by the emergence of the Arab states to full independence, the establishment of the State of Israel and the evolution of pan-Arabic ideals of unity; and the geostrategic and strategic-economic significance of the Middle East have assumed new nuances. All these factors have influenced the foreign policy evaluations of the great powers and the course of political development in the Middle East.

What, therefore, is the significance of the Middle East in international politics? How are all the factors which make the Middle East so significant, manifested in the

international struggle for power? How do they influence the course of the Arab-Israeli conflict? What geostrategic features in the Southern Tier influence the Arab-Israeli conflict? A seemingly endless series of questions suggest themselves to the mind.

In Chapter II of this work an effort will be made to deal with the answers to the preceding questions. However, much still remains obscure and can only be clarified by the passage of time.

Although the title of this work indicates that the inter-relation of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the international struggle for power until 1958 is being dealt with, the main emphasis will be placed on the period 1948 to 1958. The Arab-Israeli conflict did not originate with the proclamation of the State of Israel in 1948. The conflict can be traced to the nineteenth century with the development of incipient Zionism and Arab nationalism as the media of new forces of political expression. The State of Israel, in 1948, transmuted a conflict which had hitherto existed between two communities in Palestine into a conflict of nation-states. Although the scope and dimensions of the conflict broadened, the basic dilemma of the conflict remained unchanged.

It is, therefore, necessary to understand the character of the Arab-Israeli conflict to appreciate the dilemma which the conflict presents to the world. If this aim is to be achieved, the origin of the conflict must be dealt with, but its course until 1948 can be treated with the utmost brevity. After all, the Arab-Israeli conflict only reached the proportions where it was capable of exerting a powerful influence in the global struggle for power after it had become a conflict of nation-states.

Chapter III of this work is devoted to the origin of the Arab-Israeli conflict and attempts to explain why the conflict seems to be so completely intractable and insoluble. It also becomes apparent why the conflict is a perfect medium through which the ambitions of foreign powers to secure a foothold in the Middle East can be realised.

The stage has now been reached where the international struggle for power in the Middle East can be dealt with. A chapter of this work is devoted to a resumé of the background

to this struggle prior to 1948, with particular reference to events which took place after the First World War and the character of the struggle after the Second World War. By the time that the State of Israel was established, the United States had already entered the Northern Tier as the major Western power to contain Soviet expansionist thrusts in Turkey and Iran and to protect Greece from succumbing to the forces of Communist insurgency. The bipolar character of the post-war power struggle emerged initially in the Northern Tier and thereafter assumed definition in Europe. Thus began the Cold War era.

The transformation of the political influence of the bipolar and secondary powers in the Southern Tier cannot be chronologically equated with the Cold War struggle taking place in other areas of the world. The Cold War struggle between the West and the Soviet Union in the Southern Tier only reached the proportions of a struggle comparable to that taking place in Europe and the Northern Tier several years after the introduction of the Cold War into Europe. Similarly, the intensity of the Cold War was maintained in the Southern Tier as a result of the interaction of regional conflicts and global rivalry between the great powers, although a blurring of the Cold War had already become significant in Europe and the Northern Tier.

The course of the international struggle for power in the Northern Tier after 1948 will not be dealt with in this work; only the interconnection of the two tiers as indeed they do become interconnected to an increasing extent through the policies of the major powers and as a result of the expansion of the Cold War throughout the Middle East. These developments, in turn, not only exerted a profound influence on the Arab-Israeli conflict, but also in inter-Arab relations and in the conflict between Arab nationalism and the West.

The interaction between the Arab-Israeli conflict and the international struggle for power in the Middle East during the period 1948 to 1958, was as volatile as its constituent elements, but it cannot be regarded as haphazard. A discernible relationship did emerge; the demands of a local balance of power initially functioned independently of, but later synthesised with, the bipolar struggle, each serving the interests of the other and each influencing the course of the other. Insofar as it is possible, it is intended to apply

a topical approach to the study of this interaction rather than to follow a chronological formulation, and to this end a distinction has been drawn between three different stages of international confrontation in the Southern Tier, namely from the establishment of the State of Israel in May, 1948, until 1952, from 1953 until the Czechoslovakian Arms Deal in September, 1955, and again from the latter event until the Iraqi Revolution in July, 1958.

Of course, these dates have not been arbitrarily selected. The initial stage largely deals with the relationship of the Southern Tier and the West. The Southern Tier was relatively unaffected by the growing Cold War confrontation and Soviet penetration in this region at this stage was minimal.

The second stage concerns the dramatic transformation of Soviet influence in the Southern Tier - a transformation rendered possible by the incompatible interests of Western global strategy and Arab nationalism, and also by the Arab-Israeli conflict which paved the way to the Czechoslovakian Arms Deal. The second stage ended with the growing involvement of the Soviet Union in the Southern Tier.

The third stage witnessed the burgeoning of the Cold War conflict, and the pattern of events which had begun to manifest themselves in the second stage became increasingly accentuated. The Soviet Union was no longer merely a distant observer of events in the Southern Tier, but had won the right to intervene in the regional conflict between Arab and Jew and influence the course of events. The Iraqi revolution of July, 1958, marked the complete collapse of attempts by the West to embrace the Arab states in the Southern Tier within the framework of a Western alliance directed against the Soviet Union. The revolution also constituted the last major confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union in the Middle East until 1967.

It will be realised that the critical factor which influenced the selection of the three stages indicated, was the difference in the nature, degree and scope of Soviet involvement in the Southern Tier. This involvement in turn compelled the West - particularly the United States - to make major policy reassessments.

A new factor was introduced directly into a region which had become, since World War I, the exclusive preserve of Western political dominance; it served not only to destroy that dominance but eventually, with other factors, forced the

West to adopt a defensive posture to retain the remaining strongholds of its influence in this region; it thus affected the whole ambit of political development in the Southern Tier and the changes it wrought can be related to the three stages indicated.

The apposition of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the international struggle for power in the Middle East presents this work with certain problems. Inter-Arab relations cannot be disregarded. Nevertheless, it is not intended to deal with the complex and tortuous course of inter-Arab rivalry and internal disputes during the period under review, or for that matter the origin of the ideal of pan-Arabism, its development as a political theory and its impact in the realm of regional and global politics, except insofar as this is rendered absolutely necessary to the attainment of the main aim of this work. The same general remarks apply to the struggle between radical Arab nationalism and Western interests. This struggle was not confined to the area east of Egypt, but also involved states in the Maghrib and France. To an increasing extent the Arab nationalists in the Maghrib, in Egypt and to the east became linked in a general pan-Arabic struggle against Western imperial interests and this in turn exerted its influences in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Again, it is not intended to deal with the struggle of the Maghrib states for the present purposes except where relevant.

The decade which elapsed between the establishment of the State of Israel and the Iraqi Revolution was particularly significant because it commenced at a time when the Arab-Israeli conflict, as a nation-state confrontation, was still in its post-war nascency and more than a half of the decade was still to expire before the future character of the international struggle for power in the Southern Tier would become defined. This decade was not only a formative period, but also a decade of opportunity; for the Arabs and the Jews it presented an opportunity at this early stage in their nation-state confrontation to resolve a growing regional conflict by compromising at a lesser cost to all; if this were to prove impossible, it presented an opportunity for the major world powers to resolve upon a modus vivendi whereby the conflict could be confined to the proportions of a localised

conflict so that it would not constitute a future threat to the peace and security of the entire world. Is it ingenuous to suggest that a neutralised zone could be established in a growing global Cold War confrontation - as if a vacuum could be created in the turbulence of a gathering storm? Probably so, but the major role which the United Nations was called upon to play during this formative period indicated at least this fact: that the major world powers were aware of the implications of the Arab-Israeli conflict and did attempt to provide the machinery to cope with a thorny problem.

Unfortunately, during this decade it also became apparent that the Arab-Israeli conflict, together with other regional problems, offered other sinister spheres of opportunity: the conflict had the potential of continually expanding its dimensions; its issues could be exploited both in a regional and a global context; it provided a stepping-stone to the advancement of a multitude of different interests.

The very nature of this work demands an assessment of the contribution made by the participants in the Arab-Israeli conflict - local, regional and global - to the cause of stability in this region of strife.

C H A P T E R I I

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE INTERNATIONAL POWER STRUGGLE.

The significance of the Middle East in the context of global military strategy has long been recognised, and in the 20th Century this significance has acquired new and added dimensions. What, therefore, are the main factors which give the Middle East its special significance, and have so influenced the foreign policy of many nations of the world?

Before proceeding to deal with the answers to this question, it is necessary to delimit by definition the various geographical concepts continually employed in this thesis.

1. DELIMITATION OF THE MIDDLE EAST

The terms "Near East" and "Middle East" have assumed a different meaning and significance at different times in history.⁽¹⁾ To the Europe of the Middle Ages the term "Near East" defined a vast area over which the Ottoman Empire exercised hegemony. This area included regions of the European continent such as portions of Austria and Hungary, all of the five Balkan states, six Russian states, practically the entire African Mediterranean littoral from Morocco in the south, and in Asia it extended to Iran in the east. With the gradual dissolution of the Ottoman Empire from the end of the 18th Century, a number of national states in the "Near East" secured their autonomy and were excised from the area; the "Near East" began to assume a different geographical meaning.

The term "Middle East" is a 20th Century usage,⁽²⁾ and after World War I defined an area between the Ottoman Near East and the Far East, and included Afghanistan and India,⁽³⁾ but this delimitation was not consistently applied, and neither could the "Middle East" as a terminological reference be equated with the "Near East". The "Near East" is increasingly being superceded by the "Middle East" but the use of both these terms to denote ill-defined geographical areas, and their very interchangeable terminology continues to create confusion.⁽⁴⁾

(1) JACKH, E. Delimitation of the Middle East in: Background of the Middle East. New York, Cornell University Press, 1952, p.1.

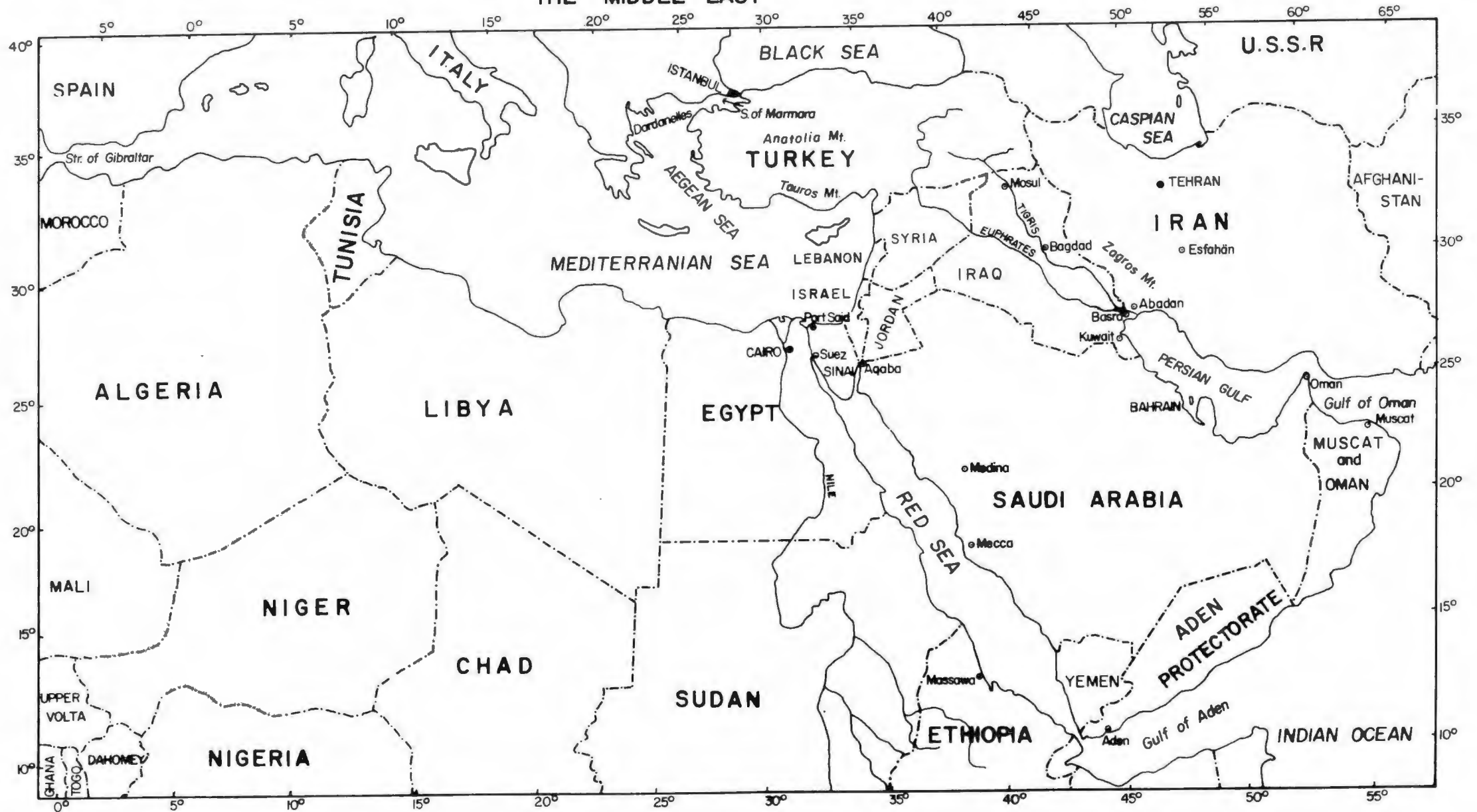
WILLIAMS, ANN. Britain and France in the Middle East and North Africa. New York, St. Martins Press, 1968, p.1.

(2) LENCZOWSKI, G.ed. United States Interests in the Middle East. Washington, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1968, p.5.

(3) JACKH, E. op. cit., p.2.

(4) PERETZ, D. The Middle East Today. New York, Holt, Rinehart, 1963, p. 3.

THE MIDDLE EAST



Generally speaking, the term "Middle East" is understood to-day to delimit a region forming the bridge between the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa, and extends from Morocco in the west to the borders of China and India in the east, and from the Indian Ocean in the south to the borders of the Soviet Union in the north. The Middle East embraces five great regions with an imposing array of heterogeneous people, differentiated mainly by language more than any other factor:

- (i) The Turanians or Turkic peoples, living in an area extending from the Mediterranean into Chinese Turkestan or Sinkiang. They have linguistic ties with the Turkmen and Uzbeks in the east and the Hungarians and Finns in the west.
- (ii) The Indo-Europeans comprising the Iranians, Kurds and Afghans.
- (iii) Europeans such as Greeks and Armenians.
- (iv) The Semites living in a relatively small contiguous area. The dominant group are the Arabic-speaking people, and linguistically related are the Israelis and the Assyrians, also called Chaldeans, who speak Syriac.
- (v) The Hamites or Berbers or Moors of North Africa living in the Maghrib along the Barbary coast to Egypt, the Sudan and Somalia.

The term "Near East" or "Middle East" implies a regional unity construed of European states in the context of Europe's geographical locality relative to that of the East. There is no inherent unity in an area as vast and as diverse as the Middle East arising from geographic, economic, social, cultural or demographic conditions, and yet from a strategic view the "Middle East" has a defined and definite notional unity related to its situation at the cross-roads of three continents.

For the present purpose, the term "Middle East" will be used in a far more restricted sense. Geographically, the Middle East will be divided into two zones: the Northern Zone, or preferably the Northern Tier, comprising Turkey and Iran, and the Southern Tier comprising all of Egypt, the Sudan, the Arabian Peninsula and to the north the territory covered by the states of Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. The "Levant" will refer to the eastern coast of the Mediterranean and its hinterland, the the "Fertile Crescent" the territory covered by Iraq, Syria, Lebanon,

Jordan and Israel.

2. STRATEGIC-ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE

In this thesis events prior to 1958 are considered in retrospect, while the significance of the Middle East in the international power struggle is viewed in a contemporary context. The apparent anomaly, however, is superficial: the factors motivating the power struggle in the Middle East to-day are no less cogent than those which influenced the world powers during the earlier period. Any difference is one of degree only, without any substantial changes.

(a) The Role of Middle East Oil in the East-West Confrontation:

Oil is no longer simply an ordinary commercial commodity. It has acquired a strategic-economic significance in the exigencies of life in the 20th Century. Oil is the most strategic raw material, being the prime source of energy in the world, without which no army can operate, even in the atomic age. In times of war, a lack of oil supply means certain defeat, and in times of peace, a lack of oil grinds the wheels of economic life to a standstill and induces a complete paralysis of national development.

Both the United States and the Soviet Union have natural oil resources and neither rely on the Middle East oil as a strategic factor. Nevertheless, Middle East oil plays an important role in the confrontation between East and West.

Oil geologists have referred to the Middle East as the "centre and the heart of the international oil production" and as having "the world's greatest reserves of oil, vast beyond imagination, within unparalleled abundance".⁽⁵⁾ Some 76 percent of the world's known reserves of crude oil are contained in the Middle East, the oil sodden Persian Gulf States and North Africa.⁽⁶⁾ Production costs in the Middle East, including payments of royalties, are so low

(5) JACKH, E. ed. op. cit., p. 18.

(6) LENCZOWSKI, G. ed. op. cit., p. 52.

As can be expected, estimates generally vary, but the general consensus appears to be that over two-thirds of the world's known oil reserves are contained in the Middle East. New discoveries are constantly being made there both within and outside traditional oil-bearing areas.

as to amount to about one-third of the costs of the oil production of the United States.

These impressive statistics, coupled with the very low production costs have created a new evaluation of the significance of the Middle East in economic-strategic terms, and have also influenced beyond measure maritime shipping routes and practices of the Western bloc.

Oil is, however, unequally distributed over the region. While oil reserves are located mainly in the Persian Gulf, Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, lesser producers are Egypt and the Sudan. Obviously oil plays a major part in the economy of the oil rich states, while its contribution to the less fortunate states is of slight or lesser importance.

The oil rich states lack the technical skills necessary to exploit their oil reserves, as well as the capital to extract the oil and transport it to refineries and overseas markets. As a result, concessionary rights of operation have been granted to foreign companies, and the oil industry is to-day the centre of Western economic interests in the Middle East. The local governments have no control over the destination to which the oil is shipped or the political ends such shipments may serve. Since there is no local market in the Middle East capable of remotely exhausting the supply of crude oil produced locally, the markets to which the oil is transported are the countries of Western Europe, Africa and Asia. However, the industrialised countries of Western Europe are the prime market. In 1969, the Middle East and North African oil producing states together supplied 81.5 percent of the total imports into Western Europe; 89 percent into Japan, to-day the world's biggest importer of oil; 72 percent into Australia; 80 percent into South East Asia.

The United States only imports about 20 percent of her oil requirements, largely from Latin America. However, in the years ahead, the United States may have to turn to the Middle East to supplement her domestic production and her imports from the Western Hemisphere. By 1980, the United States may well be importing between one-third and one-half of her oil consumption, with a half or more of that increase being supplied by the Middle East and North Africa. The dependence of the West as a whole on the oil resources of the Middle East will become increasingly evident with the passage of time, especially since the

world demand for oil is expected to increase at the average rate of 6 percent per annum into the eighth decade of this century, which means that, by 1985, the West will be consuming over 92 million barrels of oil a day, compared with between 36 and 37 million barrels of oil a day in 1969. At the same time, Middle East oil production, which has been increasing at more than 10 percent per annum for the last ten years, and is likely to continue to do so, should be supplying between 50 and 60 million barrels a day by that time, that is, between four and five times its production in 1969.

Since the oil resources of the Middle East is exploited almost entirely by the West, and is marketed largely in the countries of Western Europe and Japan, it is apparent that the economic well-being of these countries is closely linked with the Middle East. The investment of the United States, Britain and France in the production, refining, transportation and marketing of oil is phenomenal. These investments have become important sources of income, and in 1966 for instance, oil produced 45 percent of the total income from the direct foreign investments of the United States.⁽⁷⁾ Consequently, the economies of the oil producing Middle Eastern States play a central part in the international monetary system, and have a direct impact on the balance of payments of the Western states. A disruption of these economic considerations will have dire effects, not only on the economies of the Western European states, Japan and the United States, but the entire West.

While a complete or even substantial dislocation of Middle East oil supplies could be catastrophic to Western Europe and Japan, their immediate vulnerability to this contingency is in fact minimal. Apart from the royalty payments which comprise the economic mainstay of the oil producing countries, the oil companies employ local labour, create the opportunity for ancillary enterprise and generally accelerate the tempo of industrial development. The activities of the oil companies usually promote an improvement of education, housing, public health and nutrition of the local populace. Kuwait, Libya and Saudi Arabia almost exclusively depend on oil for their exports, Iraq to the extent of 92 percent and Iran to the extent of 83 percent. They are, therefore, less able and willing to maintain a prolonged oil embargo than Egypt or Syria who do not produce

(7) LENCZOWSKI, G. ed. op. cit., p. 40.

large quantities of oil, or whose exports are more diversified.⁽⁸⁾

The facts indicate that Western Europe did not suffer from the short oil embargo which followed in the wake of the June War in 1967. The availability of relatively high stocks of oil, additional oil supplied by Iran and non-Arab States such as the Caribbean, North America, Nigeria, and even, in fact, the Communist bloc,⁽⁹⁾ cushioned the impact of the dislocation of Middle Eastern oil following this war. Very efficient consultation and co-ordination among the oil companies shortly after the war also placed the future marketing of oil, during a crisis period, on a sound basis. Western Europe is taking measures to reduce its dependence on Arab - as distinct from Middle East - oil in an effort to prevent a sudden paralysis of its industrial and civil life. While it may not succeed in achieving a complete independence, its success will be considerable if it can achieve an ability to withstand an oil embargo for a sufficiently long period to force the Arab states to supply oil because of the greater harm to their economies.

The economic dependence of Western Europe and Japan on the oil resources of the Middle East is reciprocated by the oil-rich states as their economies are heavily dependent upon oil royalties, and are neither diversified nor developed to withstand the impact of an oil embargo. Even the imposition of a temporary oil embargo as an instrument of political coercion suffers from inherent weaknesses and contradictions, since the oil producing states are not able to attain the degree of political co-ordination required to achieve success and all are not prepared to accept the economic abnegation required of them.

A far greater danger is not the embargo of oil supplies to the present markets, but rather the ever-present possibility that oil producing states - particularly the more extreme Arab regimes - may in concert nationalise the oil industry. The dependence of the European countries could compel them to purchase their oil requirements directly from the oil producing states. A complete dislocation of the oil industry could occur in the resulting chaos since the

(8) GASTEYGER, C. Conflict and Tension in the Mediterranean. Adelphi Paper No. 51 published by the Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1968, p. 8.

(9) Ibid., p. 8.

transportation of the oil, the refineries and the marketing facilities of the oil companies would still be under Western control.

It is sometimes argued that Soviet aspirations in the Middle East are not economic, but may well be strategic in a design to endanger the flow of oil to Western Europe. However, the facts do not support this contention. Russia, at present, has adequate domestic oil resources not only for her own use and that of her satellite states in the Eastern bloc, but also for export to the West to earn foreign currency to pay for essential imports. The Soviet Union has been able to export oil to more than fifty markets outside the Eastern bloc, the main clients being Italy, the Federal German Republic, Finland, Japan, Sweden, France, Brasil, Austria, Greece and India. For some years Soviet oil exports have been growing by about 13 percent per annum,⁽¹⁰⁾ but because fuel consumption in the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc is steadily rising, they will either have to reduce their oil export trade, or find new resources elsewhere.

Since the Soviet Union does not at present purchase or need Middle East oil,⁽¹¹⁾ she can in the long run only cause havoc to the oil producing Arab states by dislocating their oil markets, as this move will at the very least reduce the income of the Arab oil states, and retard their economic development and their ability to repay loans contracted with the Soviet Union and others. These are facts which are cold comfort to the Soviet Union and in the eventual result the Arab oil states will not only be alienated, but the so-called policy of non-alignment of several of the Arab states can undergo a change to the prejudice of the Soviet Union.

The inability of the Soviet Union to absorb gigantic supplies of oil is only temporary, since it is estimated that by 1980 the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, even allowing for a high level of oil extraction, will be short of

(10) Ibid., p. 11.

RACHKOV, B. The Russian Stake in the Middle East, in The New Middle East, No. 8, May 1969, p. 36.

(11) BERREBY, J. Does America Need Arab Oil, in The New Middle East, No. 19, April 1970, p. 11.

oil and will need to import some 100 million tons of oil annually.⁽¹²⁾ The Soviet Union, by establishing her influence in the Middle East may be creating a base in her drive to the oil rich states with a long-term view of ensuring her future oil requirements. The growth of Soviet influence in Iran must cause some alarm in the West, since it may make it more difficult for Iran to maintain her freedom of action regarding the amount of oil she is willing and able to deliver to Western Europe in times of crisis, if such action were against Soviet interests.⁽¹³⁾ These aspects, however, are at present conjectural, uncertain and unknown.

Having considered the role of Middle East oil in the East-West confrontation, it becomes necessary to consider the ramifications of Middle East oil in the more restricted, regional context of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is axiomatic that the strategic-economic interests of states exert an influence in the formulation of their foreign policy. The pertinent problem is to analyse the extent to which the Arab-Israeli conflict is affected thereby.

(b) The Arab-Israeli Conflict and Middle East Oil

The oil resources of the Middle East is closely connected with the economic stability and strategic interests of the West. Therefore, the Western powers are all united in one common policy to maintain their economic interests in the region. This aim demands a maximum contribution by the West to achieve regional stability between the Arabs and the Jews. An overall peace settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict is not incompatible with Western outlook whereas the Soviet Union is not prompted by the same considerations. Soviet economic links with the Arab Southern Tier states are not at present based on strategic-economic factors, and a disruption of the Middle East oil industry will not exert any influence on the Soviet economy.

Soviet aims in the Arab Southern Tier are concentrated on an extension of Soviet political, diplomatic and military influence. These aims are at present neither in-

(12) RACHKOV, B. op. cit., p. 37.

BERREBY, J. Growing Oil needs Influence Soviet Policy, in The New Middle East, No. 15, December 1969, p. 44.

(13) GASTEYGER, C. op. cit., p. 11.

hibited, nor stimulated by economic-strategic interests. Insofar as the Arab-Israeli conflict is concerned, Middle East oil therefore plays a minimal, if any, part in the formulation of Soviet policy.

The same statement cannot be made in the case of Britain and France. Apart from their economic dependence on the oil resources of the Middle East, the British and French governments have a direct economic interest in oil companies operating in the Middle East. These governments are loathe to embark on any political policy in the Middle East which may prejudice their economic interests. In the case of Britain, and to a lesser degree France, Middle East oil interests exert a direct influence on the formulation of policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. The United States, however, is neither dependent on the oil resources of the Middle East, nor is the government of the United States directly interested as a shareholder in American oil companies operating in the Middle East. As a result, the United States is not as sensitive to political manipulations exerted by oil interests as its Western partners, and is able to act with greater independence in the pursuit of its global and regional policies.

The oil rich state of Iran is not affected by the Arab-Israeli conflict, and Israel, in fact, purchases her oil requirements from this Islamic state.

To what extent will Western interests in Arab oil be influenced or endangered by the Arab-Israeli conflict? Will the increasing future demands by the Western world for Arab oil produce a change in the political relationship between the Western and the Arab states?

The Arab-Israeli conflict has hitherto, for almost a quarter of a century, not endangered Western interests in Arab oil. At most the conflict has, during its crisis period, exerted a temporary disruptive influence. Western economic interests in Arab oil finds a reciprocal response in the reliance of the oil states upon the West to exploit and market the oil potential. The laws of economic necessities and supply and demand dictate over all other considerations. Two different examples can serve to illustrate the point. The Persian Gulf states, Iraq and Saudi Arabia have continued to supply the West with oil, after both the Sinai War and the June War, notwithstanding their condemnation of Britain and France in the first instance, and the United States in the second. To the extent that any state

may have decided temporarily to withhold supplies, Iran was able to increase its production to the advantage of the Iranian economy. In another context, but equally cogent, is the instance of the Iraqi Revolution in 1958. Although the new regime repudiated Iraq's pro-Western alignment and brought the Baghdad Pact to an abrupt end, they did not sever Iraq's economic links with the West.

The control of Saudi Arabia's vast oil industry by American concessionaries has never been seriously endangered, although America has attracted much wrath from the Arab states, Saudi Arabia included, over her stand towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. This wrath has at times reached proportions where American oil companies have been obliged to warn the government of the United States that the American policy in the Middle East can lead to a drastic loss of oil interest. The United States has not been entirely unresponsive to these warnings.

The oil-rich Arab states in the Persian Gulf, Saudi Arabia and Iraq are not directly affected by the Arab-Israeli conflict to the extent of Egypt, Syria and Jordan. Consequently, the oil-rich states are less prone to identifying Western policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict with Western interests in Arab oil.

The future politico-economic relationship of the West and the Arab oil states could undergo a transformation as a result of the increasing oil requirements. Although attempts to impose an oil embargo, as in the immediate aftermath of the June War, quickly collapsed, by 1985 however, the demand for oil may be so enormous, and the competition for Middle East oil so pronounced, that any one of the three biggest producers in the Persian Gulf, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait could do much damage to the world economy by withholding their individual oil supplies. In this situation, where the suppliers can stipulate conditions, they can exert leverage in their economic and political interests. As the economic dependence of the West on Arab oil increases, the ability of the Arab states to exert economic and political pressure on the West will similarly increase. In order to frustrate any attempt by the Soviet Union to gain economic interests in the Arab oil states, it will become necessary for the Western states to act with greater circumspection in avoiding political differences. An instance of political pressure exerted by economic interest could relate to the Western policy of maintaining a regional arms balance and the

Arab-Israeli conflict.

Of course, new discoveries of oil resources outside the Middle Eastern region can alleviate the problem, but unless tremendous reserves are located, these discoveries cannot provide a solution. The construction of atomic reactors to provide alternate sources of energy is at best a long-term policy; the source of energy will, until the end of the century, be principally provided by oil and natural gases.

The strategic-economic considerations referred to have this decisive influence on the policies of the East and the West towards the Arab-Israeli conflict; that the West cannot afford to alienate the Arab world and, therefore, follows an ambivalent policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict while the Soviet Union, having nothing to lose, is able to follow an unequivocal policy of complete and unconditional support for the Arab states. The United States is committed to ensure the continued existence of its pro-Western friend, Israel, but this policy invites Arab hostility and creates a dilemma. Hence the pragmatism which always characterises the political outlook of the United States in the Southern Tier, and hence the continual shift in the political nuance of each succeeding Presidential Administration.

The vast tracts of land occupied by the Arab states, coupled with their strategic advantages and natural resources are effectively exploited by them in their international relations to exact political support. They set a premium on their friendship which the foreign powers have to pay to retain any influence. In these circumstances political opinion tends to harden against Israel.

Political and diplomatic offensives launched by the Arab states against Israel year after year in the United Nations through the medium of Arab membership of the Afro-Asian bloc, and in the professed policy of Arabic non-alignment in the East-West power struggle have circumscribed Israel's status in international politics. Israel cannot hope to counteract these tendencies by matching her potential with that of the Arab states.

3. GEOSTRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE

The geostrategic significance of the Middle East in the international struggle for power has many facets, each of which constitutes a special subject: the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal, the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, the Black

Sea, the Caspian Sea, various features of the Middle East land mass and so on. The present purpose will be confined in scope to an examination of those geostrategic aspects of the Middle East in which the power struggle has become most pronounced: the Mediterranean with particular reference to the Suez Canal and the importance of the land mass in the light of present day technological concepts of modern warfare. These geostrategic considerations have manifested themselves in the power struggle in the form of naval rivalry. Finally, the geostrategic features of the Southern Tier which have so vitally affected both the course of the Arab-Israeli conflict and thereby the international struggle for power in the Middle East must be dealt with for a balanced perspective of all issues.

(a) The Mediterranean with particular reference to the Suez Canal

The geostrategic significance of the Middle East is self-evident located as it is at the hub of three continents, and inasmuch as it dominates the Northern and Eastern Mediterranean littoral.

The central geostrategic feature of the Middle East is the Mediterranean Sea, and the importance of the Mediterranean rests on two factors. Firstly, it links Western Europe, North Africa and the Middle East and Turkey. Secondly, with the construction of the Suez Canal it has been transformed from an inland sea to a link between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. It, therefore, forms an important nexus in the communication network between the West and the East. Prior to the Arab-Israeli War in June 1967, the Mediterranean was a major commercial waterway from Europe to the East, and particularly so in the transportation of oil, both through the Suez Canal and also by oil pipeline as the terminals from the oil fields in Iraq and the Persian Gulf are located on the Eastern Mediterranean littoral.

At the same time the Mediterranean is vulnerable since its three entrances are controlled by narrow waterways, namely the Straits of Gibraltar linking the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, the Bosphorus linking the Mediterranean to the Black Sea, and the Suez Canal which is the outlet to the Red Sea. The Suez Canal, and any of the straits for that matter can be easily closed, or access

through the waterways can be prohibited to certain shipping. Both the Sinai War of 1956 and the June War of 1967 have amply demonstrated the strategic weakness of the Mediterranean.

The Mediterranean constitutes the southern flank to Western Europe, and also controls the northern approach to the African continent. It is, therefore, a vital area in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation network. The British withdrawal east of Suez has also focussed attention on the future significance of the Suez Canal in view of the possibility of an extension of the naval confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union into the Indian Ocean. In this situation the opening of the Suez Canal will greatly facilitate Russian transit into the Indian Ocean and the balance of power in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf could rapidly change. Control of the Suez Canal and the Straits at Bab el Mandeb linking the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean will become a focal point of policy for the major powers, and, conversely, the restricted use thereof can seriously prejudice global power.

The Suez Canal, and consequently the Mediterranean, because of regional political instability, has become a declining asset to the West as an economic link between Europe and the East. The indefinite closure of the Suez Canal since the June War has indicated clearly that the importance of the Suez Canal to the economy of Western Europe had been overrated. In fact, the Canal has almost become expendable to the economy of Western Europe,⁽¹⁴⁾ and predictions of the dire consequence which would follow its closure have not materialised. In 1966, apart from a wide range of other commodities, forty percent of Europe's oil supply (153 million tons) passed through the Canal.⁽¹⁵⁾ The closure of the Canal has compelled the oil companies to redirect the transportation of oil from the Persian Gulf to Europe around the Cape of Good Hope, and to use supertankers for this purpose. Ships of 200,000 tons and more cannot pass through the Canal even in ballast, but are able to deliver oil cargoes to Europe at a lower freight cost per barrel than would be involved in shipment by smaller tankers paying canal revenues.⁽¹⁶⁾ Apart from a short oil embargo, the closure

(14) GASTEYGER, C. op. cit., p. 9.

(15) Ibid.

(16) Ibid.

of the Canal has not disrupted in any prolonged manner the Western European economy, and Western Europe, while remaining dependent on Middle East oil has become less dependent on the Canal and on the Mediterranean as a commercial highway.⁽¹⁷⁾

The closure of the Suez Canal has restricted the efforts of the Soviet Union to expand into the Indian Ocean. The long circuitous haul through the Mediterranean and around the Cape of Good Hope into the Indian Ocean involves the deployment of additional naval units and weakens Soviet striking capability and control. If the Canal were re-opened following an interim settlement between Egypt and Israel, and even if the Soviet Union controlled the traffic in the Suez Canal and restricted Western shipping in time of peace, the results would not be catastrophic to the West; it would at most be merely awkward. However, the probability of any restriction against Western shipping in the Suez Canal in time of peace can be entirely ruled out not only for economic reasons but because any restriction would be pointless. Nevertheless, the vulnerability of the Suez Canal to Soviet control will compel the Western powers to establish more naval bases on friendly territory in the Indian Ocean.

(b) The Middle East Land Mass

The strategist and master tactician Napoleon refers to geography as "the mother of politics", since it is a basic military factor. Nevertheless geography is an invariable factor whereas strategic concepts are variable. The advance of modern technological methods of warfare have influenced strategic evaluations and the Middle East during the period 1948 to 1971 provides a fine example of the interaction of technology and geography.

The development of intercontinental offensive and defensive strategic weaponry has had a profound impact on conventional warfare. Conventional military bases have become less valuable and to this extent at least the strategic importance of the Middle East land mass has been reduced. Naval power in the Mediterranean as the instrument of military and political objectives has largely replaced land-based military and air installations. These land bases complement naval power.

The innovation of long range ballistic missiles persuaded the United States in 1962 to withdraw intermediate range ballistic missiles from Turkey.⁽¹⁸⁾ Polaris submarines

(17) GASTEYGER, C. op. cit., p. 10.

(18) LENCZOWSKI, G. ed. op. cit., p. 25.

with the means of delivering long range missiles had become available to the American Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean, rendering land based missile pads on the periphery of the Soviet Union obsolete.⁽¹⁹⁾

The topography of the Middle East land mass provides effective geographical barriers against Soviet overland thrusts. The Black and Caspian Seas together with the high mountains that stretch in a continuous chain from Anatolia to the Pamirs provide an excellent physical defense line immediately along the Soviet frontier. The inhospitable terrain presented by the Eastern Turkish mountains or the "Armenian knot" lies directly athwart the shortest route from the Soviet Union to Suez. To the south-east and south-west, the Tauros and Zagros mountains form a second defensive area connecting this central mountainous region with the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf.⁽²⁰⁾ These girdles of natural defenses, as already indicated, only enjoy a lesser advantage because of the technological methods of modern warfare, but they do provide a physical barrier against any overland thrust not only towards the Mediterranean, the flank of Europe, but also towards the Indian Ocean and the African continent.

(c) Geostrategy Manifested in the Power Struggle in the Mediterranean

The Mediterranean has never been subject to a balance of power pendulum, but has always been an area of exclusive domination by a single power.⁽²¹⁾ For decades British naval power controlled the Mediterranean. At the end of the Second World War, as a result of her weakened state, Britain was no longer able to maintain her historic role as the protector of Greece and Turkey from Russian expansionism, and was obliged to turn to the United States for support.⁽²²⁾ The response of the United States to Soviet threats against Turkey and Soviet support for Communist rebels in Greece projected America into the role of

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- (19) HUREWITZ, J.C. ed. Origins of the Rivalry in Soviet-American Rivalry in the Middle East (a publication issued by The Academy of Political Science, Columbia University, New York). Vermont, Montpelier, Vol. 29, No. 3, 1969, p. 14.
- (20) RUSTOW, D.A. "Defence of the Near East in Foreign Affairs, Vol. 34, No. 2, January 1956, p.276.
- (21) GASTEYGER, C. op. cit., p. 1.
MARTIN, L.W. The Changing Military Balance in Soviet-American Rivalry in the Middle East (HUREWITZ, J.C. ed.), p. 62.
- (22) Cf. Chapter IV, p. 67.

a Middle Eastern power for the first time and to the extent of replacing Britain as the dominant Mediterranean power.⁽²³⁾

As a result of the exigencies of the Cold War confrontation, the Mediterranean became a key sector in the Western alliance system, namely the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which encircled the Communist world, but the interest of the United States in the Mediterranean was confined to her policy of containment of the Soviet Union and was largely deployed against possible Soviet aggressive actions. At the same time control of the Mediterranean by the United States provided a base for air operations within striking distance of the industrial heart of the Soviet Union, and consequently the policy of the Soviet Union was in turn formulated to counteract this threat.

The American Sixth Fleet projects American naval and air power throughout the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The jurisdiction of the Sixth Fleet is confined essentially to the Mediterranean, and east of Suez a vacuum in the defense structure of Western interests has hitherto resulted following the withdrawal of Britain from Aden and the Persian Gulf.

The American Sixth Fleet has a dual mission: to act as a direct deterrent to Soviet expansionism and influence, and to support American diplomacy in the Middle East broadly interpreted to include general regional conflicts.⁽²⁴⁾ As a deterrent to the Soviet Union, the Sixth Fleet maintains close liaison with North Atlantic Treaty Organisation members in the Mediterranean area through its naval headquarters at Gaeta, Italy. As will be presently seen, the diplomatic role of the Sixth Fleet has become increasingly important following the relegation of Britain and France as naval powers in the Mediterranean and the projection of the United States as the primary protector of Western interests.⁽²⁵⁾

The Sixth Fleet is a highly effective, ubiquitous combatant force which enjoys the freedom of the Mediterranean Sea. It refuels, replenishes underway and effects repairs at sea. Since it does not require naval base facilities in the Middle Eastern countries, it is not subject to the ideological resentment and hostility of ultra nationalist local elements who would regard a naval base as a violation of sovereign rights, as a manifestation of neo-colonialism, or as the introduction of alien conflicts in their region.

(23) Cf. Chapter IV, p. 67.

(24) HUREWITZ, J.C. ed. op. cit., p. 14

(25) Cf. Chapter VII, p. 136.

The United States strategy in the post war world has demonstrated the advantages of naval rather than land power. While naval power is capable of conspicuous and persistent presence, it can be discreetly withdrawn.⁽²⁶⁾ Not only does it unite the three instruments of military power, that is, land, sea and air, by being able to land troops and equipment on hostile territory, but it also provides the ability to launch long-range missiles while remaining essentially mobile as well.

Soviet-American rivalry in the Middle East, a post war development, is still gathering momentum. It resulted as an inevitable aftermath of the bipolar struggle between the East and the West, and the progressive decline in post war years of British and French influence throughout the Middle East.

In her desire to establish outlets and ports in the warm waters of the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, Soviet Russia was renewing a historical drive dating back many centuries and was resuscitating the ambitions of Peter the Great and the many Czars who succeeded him.⁽²⁷⁾ Soviet penetration of the Indian Ocean, by thrusting southwards to the Persian Gulf through Turkey, Iraq and Iran still represents the shortest route, but a flanking movement southwest to North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean also provides a dual purpose of establishing a naval presence in the Mediterranean and creates an alternative route to the Indian Ocean through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea.⁽²⁸⁾

To Russia, a naval presence in the Mediterranean -

(26) MARTIN, L.W. op. cit., p. 68.

(27) In 1940, for instance, Soviet leaders declared in secret negotiations with Nazi Germany that Soviet "territorial aspirations center south of the national territory of the Soviet Union in the direction of the Indian Ocean". Quoted from paragraph 4 of the undated Draft Secret Protocol No. 1 of the agreement between Germany, Italy, Japan and the Soviet Union. Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East. Washington, American Enterprise Institute, 1969, p. 55.

(28) BLOOMFIELD, L.P. and LEISS, A.C. Arms Transfers and Arms Control in Soviet-American Rivalry in the Middle East. (HUREWITZ, J.C. ed.) op. cit., p. 49.

an area contiguous to the Black Sea and the very heart of Russia - is also convenient in times of peace as an adjunct to a national policy of promoting Soviet prestige and diplomatic influence.⁽²⁹⁾ An impressive armada in a region of conflict such as the Middle East could only be regarded as an exhibition of power necessary for the proper execution of Soviet political and diplomatic objectives. A naval power could also create a balance of military power in the Mediterranean, and it would break the grip of Western domination. It would increase the sense of exposure and isolation of NATO's southern flank,⁽³⁰⁾ and it would provide a means of out-flanking NATO and threatening its soft underside.⁽³¹⁾ On the other hand, the Soviet fleet in the Mediterranean will be vulnerable in its supply lines, since the Soviet Union has no direct control over the three points of access in the Mediterranean - the Straits of Gibraltar, the Bosphorus and the Suez Canal,⁽³²⁾ thus serving to emphasize the strategic significance of the control to those waterways.

The Straits of Gibraltar are under the effective control of two NATO powers with Britain at Gibraltar and the United States maintaining a large naval base in Spain at Rota near Cadiz, approximately 50 miles west of the Straits of Gibraltar. The Montreux Convention on 20th July 1936, to which the Soviet Union was a signatory, confirmed the absolute sovereignty of Turkey over the Bosphorus.⁽³³⁾ The treaty is binding on signatories only for 20 years (article 28), and since 1956 the Soviet Union has enjoyed the right of denouncing it and pressing for revision. The Soviet Union, it appears, is more anxious to improve her relations with Turkey rather than to press for a change in the status of the Straits,⁽³⁴⁾ even though the present control of the Straits may be unsatisfactory to her in view of the growth of her influence in the Middle East since 1954.

However, the close proximity of the Mediterranean to the Black Sea has the advantage that within a matter of 2 or 3 days the Soviet fleet in the Mediterranean can be reinforced dramatically. In contrast the United States - as distinct from NATO - has to face the disadvantage of a naval voyage across the Atlantic Ocean from the distant eastern

(29) MARTIN, L.W. op. cit., p. 63, 66.

(30) Ibid., p. 65.

(31) Ibid., p. 63.

(32) GASTEYGER, C. op. cit., p. 6.

(33) Cf. Chapter IV, p. 65.

(34) GASTEYGER, C. op. cit., p. 6.

seaboard of the United States for substantial reinforcements, unless some other naval combatant force can be deployed to the Mediterranean in an emergency.⁽³⁵⁾

Soviet military power in the Middle East was relatively weak during the period 1948 to 1967. The Soviet Union had no defense treaty with any of the countries of the Middle East during this period.⁽³⁶⁾ Neither did the Soviet Union enjoy air power or conventional military land bases in the Middle East countries, other than the presence of limited numbers of military experts to render technical and training guidance in terms of military assistance programmes.⁽³⁷⁾ The United States, on the other hand, has bilateral treaties with Turkey and Iran, and until 1967, military-base agreements with Morocco, Libya and Saudi Arabia.⁽³⁸⁾ In 1967, the Soviet Union had virtually no capacity whatsoever to support her political objectives in the Middle East, and could only rely on polemics both within and outside the United Nations to influence the course of events. That polemics - containing the implicit and explicit threat of a military and nuclear confrontation with the West - have been successfully applied from time to time cannot be doubted. However, in the ultimate analysis polemics are no effective substitute for a military presence; the humiliating experience of the Soviet Union in the Cuban Crisis of 1962, and her complete inability to influence the lightning course of events during June 1967 have demonstrated the importance of a direct mobile and credible military or naval power as a means of exerting political pressure.

Naval rivalry in the Mediterranean between the United States and the Soviet Union was not a phenomenon in the Middle East until after the June War of 1967, when the real thrust of Soviet naval strength became a feature.⁽³⁹⁾

The interest of the Soviet Union to establish a naval power in the Mediterranean seems to reflect an important change in the strategic evaluations of the Soviet Union. In the period immediately following World War II, the Soviet

(35) Jerusalem Post Weekly Overseas Edition, No. 549, dd. 11th May, 1971, p.9. An interview with the Admiral of the American Sixth Fleet discusses the problem of American naval reinforcement in the Mediterranean in an emergency.

(36) KEMP, G. Strategy and Arms Levels, 1945-1967 in: American Rivalry in the Middle East. (HUREWITZ, J.C. ed.) op. cit., p. 21.

(37) Ibid., p. 21.

(38) Ibid., p. 22.

(39) HUREWITZ, J.C. op. cit., p. 12.

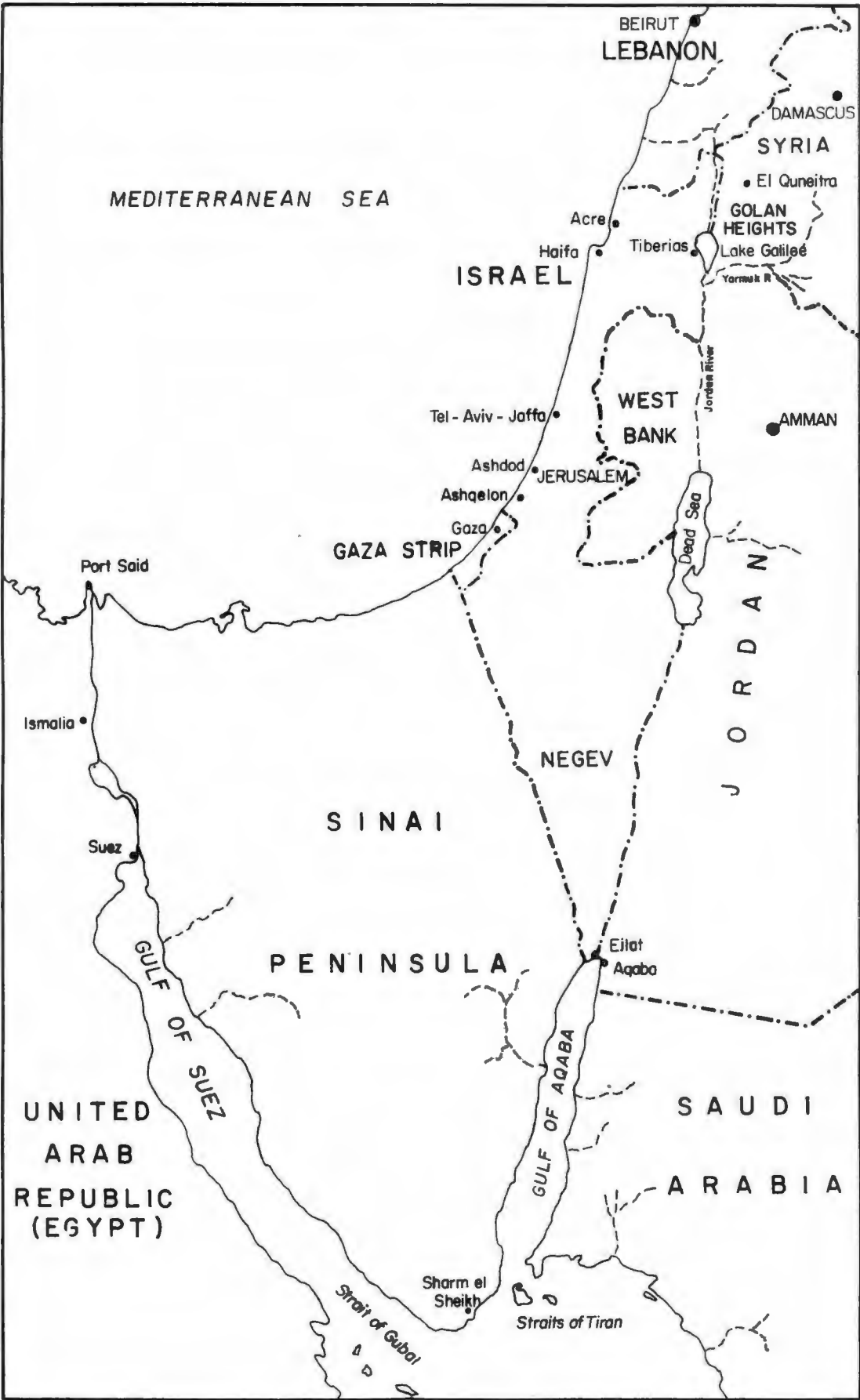
Union concerned itself primarily as a land power, and the tremendous increase in its naval power was only a later phenomenon. Until the middle sixties the policy of the Soviet Union was primarily designed to defend the homeland and the periphery of satellite states from a "worldwide Western encirclement".⁽⁴⁰⁾ Western and especially American defence policies relied on the establishment of distant military bases through bilateral or multilateral defence treaties. Those bases were both politically and militarily vulnerable. On the other hand, the Soviet Union was able to organise her defence on her own territory or within her immediate sphere of influence. To the Soviet Union, the disadvantage of being unable to exert political influence in far-removed global regions became manifest in the sixties. A naval power capable of strategic deterrence and of large-range intervention had become an essential attribute of global power. The United States had already grasped the strategic importance of naval power operating at a distance and capable of largely sustaining itself while at sea. This difference in policy was effectively exploited by the United States, but a balance of naval power since the middle sixties has become a criterion of Soviet strategic thinking. By establishing a regional naval balance of power in a strategically important area such as the Mediterranean, a global balance of power between the Soviet Union and the United States is complemented.

Regional conflict in the Middle East had two important interrelated ramifications in the strategic evaluations of the Soviet Union. Firstly, it emphasized the impotence of the Soviet Union to exert an effective political influence in a regional conflict because a naval presence in the Mediterranean had not been established, and secondly it provided the modus vivendi for a naval intrusion.

The Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean was not regarded with alarm by radical Arab nationalists such as President Nasser. Soviet naval power was actually welcomed by them. On the 23rd July 1958 at the National Congress of the Arab Socialist Union held at the Cairo University, President Nasser stated: "I may say that the states of the region, all the liberated states in the region, welcomed the appearance of the Soviet Navy in the Mediterranean Sea as an element to balance the United States Sixth Fleet, which sought

(40) GASTEYGER, C. op. cit., p. 3.

THE SOUTHERN TIER



to turn the Mediterranean into an American Sea".⁽⁴¹⁾

This attitude on the part of President Nasser was not inspired by the bitterness of defeat at the hands of Israel a year earlier, but confirms a far more profound Arab attitude towards Soviet intrusion in the Middle East. The Arab states do not regard the Soviet Union as a threat to their security, and neither are they concerned with the struggle between the West and the East. Any overt Western military or naval presence, however, is regarded by radical Arab nationalists as a resurgence of imperialism, and as an obstacle in the progress of pan-Arabic aspirations.

The geostrategic features of the Southern Tier have received a heavy emphasis in three Arab-Israeli wars since 1948, with eventual repercussions in the international struggle for power. These features, in spite of the arms race between Israel and the Arab states and the deployment of more sophisticated weaponry, have not lost any significance whatsoever.

(d) Southern Tier Geostrategy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict

In the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the geostrategic uniqueness of the Middle East is manifold. Israel is surrounded on three borders in the north, east and south by Arab states while the Mediterranean seaboard comprises the entire length of her western border.

Israel is regarded as a foreign enclave in the midst of an Arab hinterland; as a heterogeneous element disturbing the pan-Arabic (and in a wider sense the pan-Islamic) unity they strive for. Israel is the only non-Arabic speaking constituent in a continuous geographical belt extending from Morocco in the west to Iraq in the east (disregarding the Kurds, the Armenians and the Syriac-speaking remnants); it is the only non-Muslim and non-Arabic enclave between the Maghrib and Pakistan, again disregarding the Armenians and minority groups of lesser political importance.

Israel, therefore, constitutes a barrier separating Egypt, the Sudan and the Maghrib geographically, economically and militarily from the Fertile Crescent. The formation of the United Arab Republic between Egypt and Syria, for instance, was inspired by the pan-Arabic ideal of unity of Arab

(41) Excerpts from a speech by President Nasser reprinted in The Israeli-Arab Reader, ed. LAQUEUR, W., London, Pelican, 1970, p. 287.

states,⁽⁴²⁾ but the geographical separation of the states made it an anomaly. After the formation of the United Arab Republic it was within Egypt's power to ferment a revolution in Jordan and to enlarge the United Arab Republic by a federal union within Jordan.⁽⁴³⁾ For security reasons, Israel was bound to intervene militarily to prevent an occupation of the West Bank by the united array of these three countries, and consequently President Nasser of Egypt was deterred from grasping the opportunity.⁽⁴⁴⁾ During 1963, following the Ba'ath coups in Iraq and Syria, a great opportunity again arose to create a federal unity with Iraq, but again the opportunity was forfeited since Egypt was unable to establish a direct link with Iraq because of the physical barrier presented by Israel. A wide flanking movement from a base in Yemen, through Arabia, Iraq and Syria would create a land bridge, but Israel's presence deterred Nasser from committing all his troops in Yemen to bring the revolution there to a successful conclusion.⁽⁴⁵⁾

In all these instances, the geographic locality of Israel, and the resulting military and strategic considerations posed by the existence of Israel have frustrated Egypt's efforts to achieve a regional unity of Arab states. Paradoxically, while Israel acts as a physical barrier, it does provide a bond of common hostility which contributes towards preventing the complete eclipse of pan-Arabic ideals under the impact of inter-Arab conflicts. Obviously, a primary consideration in any future Arab-Israeli peace negotiations will involve the possibility of securing a land bridge between Egypt and Jordan through the Negev in the southern area of Israel.⁽⁴⁶⁾ If Egypt is to realise her ideal of becoming the mentor of the Arab world, a land link through the Negev will be an indispensable asset.⁽⁴⁷⁾

The absence of any natural geographical features to separate the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Desert from the western borders of Israel, creates security problems for Israel.⁽⁴⁸⁾

(42) Cf. Chapter VIII, p. 143.

(43) Cf. Chapter VIII, pp. 144, 145.

(44) SAFRAN, N. From War to War. United States, Western Publishing, 1968, p. 87.

(45) Ibid., p. 87.

(46) KHOURY, F.J. The Arab-Israeli Dilemma. New York, Syracuse, 1968, p. 302.

SAFRAN, N. op. cit., p. 38.

BEN-GURION, D. Israel: Years of Challenge. London, Anthony Bland, 1964, pp. 72, 146 - 149.

(47) KHOURY, F.J. op. cit., p. 295.

(48) Cf. Chapter VII, 114.

Artificial lines drawn on a map to separate states create strategic problems, and with an explosive relationship such as that which exists between Egypt and Israel, an Armistice Agreement is no substitute for militarily defensible borders. Clandestine military incursions from the Gaza Strip and Sinai desert into Israel by para-military organisations were in fact to constitute one of the causes of the Sinai War in 1956.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Artificial armistice lines are also a feature of the Israeli-Jordanian borders to the west of the Jordan River, and sections of the Israeli-Syrian border. In the years prior to 1967 these borders were to provide a constant source of friction.

In the period which has elapsed since the June War in 1967, the de facto borders between Israel and her neighbours have eased Israel's security problems. Egyptian and Israeli troops are respectively encamped on the western and eastern banks of the Suez Canal, which provides a natural military barrier. In the north-east Israel controls the Golan Heights, a formidable chain of dominating ridges, thereby depriving the Syrians of the strategic advantages hitherto enjoyed by them. Israel's control of the West Bank has meant that the Jordan River constitutes a more defensible border than the haphazard armistice lines of the pre-war era.

Israel's foreign policy, particularly since the June War of 1967, has been fundamentally influenced by a desire to establish secure and defensible borders in the face of Arab intransigence and the Arab refusal to recognise Israel's existence. This need for secure and recognised borders received international consensus in the terms of the United Nations Security Council Resolution passed unanimously on the 22nd November, 1967, and unless satisfied, border problems will continue to provide a *raison d'être* for future conflict.

The Sinai War secured Israeli shipping the right of navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba⁽⁵⁰⁾ - at least for as long as the United Nations Emergency Force was stationed at Sharm el-Sheikh commanding the narrow Straits of Tiran between the Gulf and the Red Sea - and this waterway has become a factor of critical significance to Israel's economy, particularly her oil interests, and to the very existence of the Port of Eilat. In many ways, a blockade of the Gulf of

(49) Cf. Chapter VII, p. 113 et. seq.

(50) Cf. Chapter VII, p. 115.

Aqaba is more damaging to Israel than the blockade of the Suez Canal.⁽⁵¹⁾ The Gulf of Aqaba constitutes Israel's only southern outlet to the Indian Ocean and the East. While it certainly only accounts for a small percentage of Israel's shipping traffic and trade, the expansion of trade from Eilat has steadily increased over the years particularly because of the growing chemical industry in the area around the south of the Dead Sea. Altogether about 20 percent of Israel's export trade passed through Eilat in 1966.⁽⁵²⁾ The Gulf provides the route for the maritime transportation of oil from Iran to Israel over a relatively short distance, rather than the extended route around the Cape of Good Hope, or the long haul from Venezuela through the Mediterranean, which a blockade of the Straits of Tiran would entail. In 1966 about 90 percent of Israel's oil requirements was imported through Eilat.⁽⁵³⁾

Eilat itself has been a major growth point in the south of Israel since the end of the Egyptian blockade of the Straits of Tiran in 1956, and has developed from a garrison settlement of a thousand people to a thriving port of about 13,000 people in 1967.

The expansion of Israel's economy would be severely curtailed by a blockade of the Straits of Tiran, but Israel would certainly not collapse as a result thereof. Eilat was and still is the one highly sensitive spot in Israel's geographic location, and it is therefore apparent that Israel has a vital interest in both the control of the Straits of Tiran and the Straits at Bab el Mandeb. Israel has, since 1956, frequently proclaimed that any attempt to blockade the Straits would be regarded as an act justifying war.⁽⁵⁴⁾

The significance of the Middle East in the international struggle for power can be summarised as follows:-

- (1) The alternate sources of oil supply constantly being exploited and developed, the elementary economic fact that hitherto the oil supply has exceeded the oil demand,

(51) BEN-GURION, D. op. cit., p. 92.

(52) JACKSON, H. Egyptian blockade would close Israel's oil port in Israel and the Arab World, edited by DODD, C.H., and Mary Sales. London, Routledge and Kegan, 1970, p. 155.

(53) Ibid., p. 154.

(54) Cf. Chapter VII, pp. 116, 131.

and the past and current dis-interest of the Eastern bloc in the oil trade of the Middle East are all factors which reduce, but do not eliminate, the importance of Middle East oil in the conflict between the West and the East.

- (2) The West will become increasingly vulnerable to the strategic-economic significance of Middle East oil as the demand for oil increases. Consequently the foreign policy of the world powers, particularly the United States, towards the Arab-Israeli conflict is bound to be influenced by this consideration.
- (3) The Northern Tier and the Southern Tier, although diverse, have a geostrategic unity because of their situation at the crossroads of three continents and as they converge in the Mediterranean Sea.
- (4) The Middle East is an area of vital geostrategic importance to both the West and the East, and this fact manifests itself in a naval rivalry in the Mediterranean and in a struggle for influence and prestige. For this reason, the presence of the Soviet Union in the Mediterranean must be accepted as a permanent feature.
- (5) The Middle East is a declining asset to the West in its traditional role as a communication link, as the West has largely shed its military commitments east of Suez and is developing alternate routes for trade and oil.
- (6) The opening of the Suez Canal will facilitate Soviet naval expansion into the Indian Ocean. The possibility thus exists that the naval rivalry between the West and the East in the Mediterranean will spread into the Indian Ocean.
- (7) At best Egypt and Syria will be unreliable allies of the West in any confrontation with the East. On the other hand, the eclipse of Israel would create a power vacuum in the eastern Mediterranean which could further impair the NATO southern flank.
- (8) Regional stability and peace serve the Western interests in the Middle East, whereas regional conflict provides the Soviet Union with the modus vivendi to intrude into the Mediterranean and increase Soviet prestige and influence in the Southern Tier.

C H A P T E R I I I

THE ORIGIN OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

The Soviet Union has been able to convert the Southern Tier from an area of exclusively Western influence into an area of bipolar confrontation within the space of a few short years. What were the reasons which motivated Egypt to conclude an arms agreement with Czechoslovakia in 1955, to cause President Nasser in 1958 to welcome the appearance of Soviet power in the Mediterranean⁽¹⁾ and to enter into a 15 year Treaty of Friendship with the Soviet Union in 1971? Egypt and the Soviet Union have no historical precedent for a treaty of this nature, and yet Russo-Egyptian rapprochement from the middle fifties onwards has a particular warmth and attraction. The formal codification of this rapprochement in 1971 could have been concluded a decade earlier. To understand the circumstances which made these developments possible, it is necessary to focus attention on the interaction of regional conflicts and the international struggle for power in the Middle East.

The Arab-Israeli conflict is described as a clash of divisive nationalisms and incompatible civilisations.⁽²⁾ Does this necessarily rule out any form of peaceful co-existence between Arab and Jew except on the basis of complete domination by one national group over the other? Why, for instance, was the parity between the two national groups postulated by a binational state regarded as unrealistic, and the partition of Palestine, which gave full recognition to divisiveness, accepted as the ultimate solution to the problem?

In this chapter an effort will be made to determine the intrinsic nature of the conflict and to sweep aside illusions so that the full extent of the dilemma can be appraised. This will necessarily involve a reference to the origin of the conflict and its course until the Zionists emerged victorious in 1948. It will also serve to explain why the conflict remains insoluble after more than half a century and why hopes of peaceful co-existence between Arab and Jew have not been realised. Finally, the ramifications of the Palestine War will be dealt with as a background to subsequent developments in the international struggle for power in the

(1) Cf. Chapter II, p. 29.

(2) Cf. Chapter 1, p. 1.

Middle East.

1. THE DILEMMA OF THE CONFLICT

(a) A Clash of Rights

It is customary for the Arab and Zionist protagonists to justify with some conviction and in understandably emotional overtones their prior or stronger claim to Palestine on historical grounds, and, as the inevitable backlash, to decry the claim of the other to any title.⁽³⁾ The Jews, on the one hand, resort to the irrefutable evidence presented by biblical history to identify Palestine geographically, politically and historically with the Jewish people until they succumbed to Vespasian's legions in the First Century. It cannot be gainsaid that the Jews, who are now pictured as foreign intruders in the Middle East, actually lived intermittently as a nation in Palestine for more than a millenium and a half before the Arabs emerged from the Arabian Peninsula in the 7th Century A.D. to establish a vast and truly remarkable Arab empire from the Atlantic Ocean to the borders of India, and which included Palestine.

Jewish historic claims to Palestine do not cease with their defeat at the hands of the Roman legions in Jerusalem or in the 2nd Century A.D. at Masada, or as a result of the forcible expulsion of the bulk of the Jews from the land. The Jews seek to establish a direct historical continuity with Palestine by contending that a minority of Jewish people have always dwelt in Palestine and have maintained a continuous physical link with the land. Furthermore, notwithstanding their dispersion throughout the world, the Jews have never relinquished their deep emotional attachment to their ancestral home - an attachment which they have renewed daily in their prayers and nourished in a messianic dream of redemption and restoration.

The potency of these forces, so deeply imbedded in Jewish consciousness was translated not in a national, but in a religious sense, and in this sense was transmitted from one generation to the next. During the course of the centuries a modest number of Jews, actuated by their faith, have returned to Palestine.

(3) It is certainly a manifestation of this outlook to describe the capture in 1948 of Arab centres in Palestine - centres which have been settled by Arabs for hundreds of years - as a process of liberation. (See ALLON, Y. The Making of Israel's Army. London, Valentine, Mitchell, 1970, pp. 30, 33, for a description of Arab displacement in these terms).

The Arabs, on their part, claim a cessation of Jewish identity over Palestine following the expulsion of the Jews from the land. In the wake of their conquest, the Arabs settled in Palestine and have lived there uninterruptedly for 1300 years⁽⁴⁾ during which period they have imprinted on the land the character of their civilisation and all its values. This continuous occupation, they argue, has created a prescriptive right which provides a stronger historic title than the one which terminated 2000 years ago. The world would be thrown into chaos legally and politically if every group were permitted to lay claim to an area its ancestors had possessed at one time or another in history. Furthermore, the Islamic world could not be legally or morally bound by the religious beliefs of Judaism or be expected to concede claims generated by Judaism. As for humanitarian considerations, which are almost instinctively attracted by Zionism, the Christian world connived at the establishment of a Jewish State in 1948, as an act of expiation for the genocidal atrocities perpetrated against this tormented and defenceless people during the Second World War. But the problem of Jewish persecution, or of Jewish unassimilability, has no cogency in the Middle East, and the Christian world was attempting to right an unhappy situation created by Christian intolerance at the expense of unoffending Arabs. This disregard of Arab rights, it is contended, was not only a phenomenon in 1948, but can be traced back to the iniquitous Balfour Declaration.

The Palestinian Arabs too, have a deep emotional attachment to the land equal to the intensity of the Jews, and the Holy Land is sacrosanct in the Islamic faith. In 691, A.D., with the building of the Mosque of Omar, Jerusalem became the third city sacred to the Moslems after Mecca and Medina. An Arabic Palestine was accepted as part of a Moslem world which, despite almost continuous foreign political domination, extended from Morocco in the west to the borders of India in the east.

(4) The historical authenticity of this claim does not go unchallenged, and the exact opposite is also contended. The Palestinian Arabs are claimed to be the original, pre-Islamic, pre-biblical inhabitants of the country, and Jewish occupation "simply a biblical episode in the long history of Palestine". (See CATTAN, H. Palestine : The Road to Peace. Longmans Group, London, 1971, p. 8.) But see also The Arab Case for Palestine ; Evidence submitted by the Arab Office, Jerusalem, to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, March 1946. Reprinted in: The Israel-Arab Reader. LAQUEUR, W. ed. United States, Pelican, 1969, p. 123.

ZURAYK, C. The Conflict between Principle and Force in the Palestine Problem. Reprinted in: Israel and the Arab World (Dodd, C.H. and Mary Sales ed.) London, Routledge and Kegan, 1970, pp. 50, 51.

The Zionist and Arab assertions, equal in merit, can only be described as a clash of rights, and hence the dilemma of the conflict. The demand to recognise these rights became an integral feature of Zionism and Arab nationalism, and hence the reason why it is now necessary to deal with the struggle between these two nationalisms.

(b) A Clash of Nationalisms

(i) Zionism

The mystical yearning of the Jews to return to Zion was transformed into a political movement as a result of the persecution to which the Jews were subjected in the main centres of Jewish life in Eastern Europe during the nineteenth century, and also as a result of the impact of a nationalist temper which swept the world with its cardinal lessons of national regeneration, pride and independence, and with its emphasis on a racial rather than a religious entity. Political Zionism was evolved as the product of this new nineteenth century nationalism, and as the answer to a search for a new secular Jewish national identity. The renaissance of the Jews required, in the definition of an early Zionist philosopher, L. Pinsker, "the creation of a Jewish nationality, a firmly rooted people, the self-emancipation of the Jews, the acquisition of a land of their own where the nation might live amongst other nations and equal with other nations". These words were written in 1882 when Zionism and Jewish resettlement in Palestine were still embryonic, groping and uncertain, and yet they defined with great insight the need for a Jewish national identity in juxtaposition to their religious identity.

The anomaly of Zionism is even more striking than the singularity of Jewish ethnic and spiritual survival during centuries of fragmentation and dispersion. Neither can be defined according to the customary norms of national evolution. For a coherent and cohesive political movement to develop among a politically anonymous people, dispersed and divided, assimilated in the emancipated society of the Western world and unassimilable in the compact ghetto confines of Eastern Europe, lacking any governmental organisation around which a political unity could be developed, and physically detached from a land that seemed more an article of faith than an actuality, is a profound miracle of contemporary history. The paradox of Zionism is the fact that its secular and national character developed from events and forces far removed from the physical object of its aspirations: that Zion, in hypothesis only, was the centrifugal force of

Zionism. The conditions of the nineteenth century Europe had a far greater reality for Zionism than the circumstances prevailing in the nineteenth century Palestine.

However, Zionism was by no means embraced with enthusiasm by all Jews. In its nascency, particularly, it struggled against indifference or hostility, and was not regarded by all Jews as a unifying force in the Jewish world, but as a wholly disruptive influence. It presented a dilemma to those Jews who tended to assimilate in the national life of the countries in the Diaspora by abnegating that assimilation in its demand for an exclusive national identification according to the concept of Zionism; it conflicted with the literal interpretation of Judaic tenets that the restoration of the land would be accomplished with a messianism divinely engineered.

As Diaspora Jewry had perpetuated their ethnic-religious identity, they now assumed leadership of the new political movement, Zionism. In 1896 Theodore Herzl, an Austrian Jew, galvanized the new Jewish national renaissance with his publication "Der Judenstaat", and provided an effective, dynamic leadership to the Zionist Movement. A congress of prominent Jewish leaders from all communities and organisations of any significance was convened at Basle, Switzerland, and resulted in the formation in 1897 of the World Zionist Organization with Herzl as the First President. This organisation spearheaded the drive to resettle the Jewish people in its ancient homeland, and set itself the task of establishing a Jewish national home in Palestine.

Jewish resettlement in Palestine proceeded along parallel lines with the development of Zionist political aims. Immigrants from Eastern Europe, inspired by their Zionist ideals, had already started to settle in Palestine from 1882, and created the precedent for subsequent waves of immigrants. Palestine had little to offer these early pioneers except hardship in barren, desolate wastes, and a mere trickle of idealists were attracted in contrast to the multitude of Jews who found a haven from persecution, and an opportunity to lead a better life, in the New World and other countries in the West.

Zionist ideologists also realised that the emancipation of the Jews required not only statehood or a "national home", but a return to normality by the abolition of all those artificial norms and socio-economic structures developed in Jewish society during the years of their dispersion as a

result of restrictive and discriminatory practices against them. Centuries of urban existence and the impulse of the Jews towards certain vocations had alienated them from a direct, peasant contact with the soil. Resettlement in Palestine required, and provided, an ideal of physical labour with soil.

All these forces, the mysticism and ancient love, the Zionist ideologies and philosophies, the desire for national regeneration, the dedication to an ideal of physical labour, interacted and created an irresistible momentum which reconstructed a desolate and backward land, and revived biblical Hebrew as a daily language to spearhead a new cultural and educational renaissance.

Early Zionists laboured under an illusion that Zionism would be fostered in Palestine by peaceful infiltration, and it is often pointed out by Zionists that the embryonic Jewish resettlement in Palestine was not regarded by the Palestinian Arabs as a fundamental menace to their interests, or as an act of dispossession. This attitude disregarded a pertinent fact of history pointed out by Herzl: that infiltration could not succeed.⁽⁵⁾ It continued until the inevitable moment when the native population felt itself threatened, and forced the government to stop a further influx of Jews.⁽⁶⁾ There was no reason to believe that the Arabs would react differently, or view the prospect of unrestricted Jewish immigration with equanimity. They were bound to react to the danger of Jewish penetration - and they did.

It is a fallacy to suppose that Zionist ideals and Arab interests could ever be synthesised, and yet Zionist theoreticians advance several reasons to support this contention. Some of these reasons are still advanced to-day.⁽⁷⁾ The common racial origin of the Jews and the Arabs - both Semitic, both sons of Abraham in the Bible and the Koran - is cited as evidence of a fraternal link. "The Arab is a Jew on horseback" according to the famous dictum of Disraeli.

(5) HERZL, T. The Jewish State. Reprinted in: The Israel-Arab Reader. LAQUEUR, W. ed. op. cit., p. 28.

(6) Ibid.

(7) See, for instance, an article by Press, Z. Jews and Arabs in Transition in New Nation, December 1969, p. 4.

The bitter division between Arab and Jew is blamed upon the Hamitic Egyptians, who have assumed an Arabic guise to advance their sinister political ambitions in the Arab world.⁽⁸⁾ And what better evidence that Israel will gain acceptance among its fellow Semitic neighbours as "sons of the East", than the long history of past- co-existence.⁽⁹⁾

As further evidence of a synthesis of interests and as tangible proof of the potential for a harmonious relationship between Arab and Jew, the Zionists cite the Faisal-Weizmann Agreement concluded on the 3rd January, 1919. Dr. Weizmann, then President of the World Zionist Organisation, signed a compact with Emir Faisal, the son of the Sherif Hussein of Mecca, leader of the Arab Revolt of 1916 who had assisted the Allied countries to liberate the Levant from Ottoman hegemony, later King of Iraq, and in fact an Arab leader who had at the time the unquestionable authority to speak for Arab interests.⁽¹⁰⁾ In this compact, recognition is given to the "racial kinship and ancient bonds" between Arab and Jew.⁽¹¹⁾ Faisal further concedes Zionist claims to Palestine as defined in the Balfour Declaration,⁽¹²⁾ and accepts that all measures shall be taken to encourage and stimulate immigration of Jews into Palestine on a large scale.⁽¹³⁾ Two months later Faisal wrote to Justice Felix Frankfurter, then an American member of the Zionist delegation at the Peace Conference, that "we will wish the Jews a most hearty welcome home",⁽¹⁴⁾ and he reiterated his support of the Zionist programme.

It is inadequate to suppose that the prospect of peaceful co-existence can simply rest on the foundation of a

(8) Ibid., p. 5.

(9) Ibid.

(10) SYKES, C. Cross Roads to Israel. London, New English Library, 1967, p. 39.

Also Report of the King-Crane Commission on Syria and Palestine, 28th August 1919. Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East published by American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, July 1969, pp. 31, 32.

This work is hereinafter referred to as Documents on the Middle East.

(11) FAISAL-WEIZMANN Agreement, 3rd January, 1919. Reprinted in: The Israel-Arab Reader. LAQUEUR, W. ed. op. cit., p. 36.

(12) Ibid., p. 37 (vide Article 3).

(13) Ibid. (vide Article 4).

(14) FAISAL-FRANKFURTER letter dated 3rd March, 1919. Reprinted in: The Israel-Arab Reader. LAQUEUR, W. ed. op. cit., p. 39.

common racial origin, or through a common heritage created by such racial origin. Caine was not thereby dissuaded from his fratricidal slaying of Abel; roots of conflict, generated by a multitude of varied causes throughout history, erupt into civil war in spite of a common heritage. This attitude also disregards or underestimates the force of modern nationalism as the dominant impulse. A common racial heritage has not served to prevent the creation of twin forces of nationalism among the Jews and the Arabs, each of which excludes the other.

If a common heritage, or a racial link, between Arab and Jew were sufficient to create a culturally integrated society as the basis of peaceful appreciation and co-existence, a binational state, in which neither Arab nor Jew would find it necessary to aspire to dominance, would be plausible; yet the concept of a binational state was rejected by both the Arabs and the Jews, because greater recognition was given to their incompatibility. Each racial group had to dominate in an area of its exclusive sovereignty. The partition of Palestine was the only answer in the long term.

Furthermore, the Arab nationalist, and not necessarily the Egyptian at that, denies the Semitic character of the modern Jew. The imprint of the Diaspora, they state, has left its mark on the Jew. He is no longer a part of the Middle East, but he has become, for instance, an English Jew or a French Jew, European in his outlook, and he has returned a stranger to a strange land.

Finally, it is necessary to point out that the so-called evidence of a synthesis of interests, the Faisal-Weizmann Agreement, had no practical significance. The motives of Faisal are suspect in its dictation of self-interest. Faisal attached a guarded and conditional rider to the pact, thereby attempting to use the pact to secure international sanction for an independent State of Syria which would include Palestine and the modern country of Jordan.⁽¹⁵⁾ He evidently hoped to ally himself to Weizmann and Zionism thereby harnessing what he conceived to be the enormous international power of Jewish influence, to force British support of the Greater Syria plan.⁽¹⁶⁾ The British Government could hardly be expected to welcome the Faisal-Weizmann agreement whose obvious purpose (on Faisal's side) was to establish a Greater Syrian Kingdom. This plan would bring France and Britain into confrontation. The British and French were committed to the implementation of the Sykes-

(15) SYKES, C. op. cit., p. 41.

(16) Ibid., p. 41.

Picot Agreement in which Syria was to fall under French hegemony.⁽¹⁷⁾ Also, in 1920, Faisal suffered an eclipse of power in Syria and the Faisal-Weizmann Agreement became defunct. In any event, the Arab nationalists decry its validity and its historical importance. Even Faisal later appears to have considered it prudent to disclaim all knowledge of the Agreement.

The finding of the King-Crane Commission on Syria and Palestine on the 28th August, 1919 is a more authentic reflection of the intractable hostility of the Arabs towards Zionism. This Commission was sent to Palestine by President Wilson of the United States to determine the opinion of the people in the area, and reported that the Arabs of Palestine were emphatically opposed to the Zionist programme.⁽¹⁸⁾ This attitude was generally shared by the people throughout Syria, who regarded the Zionists as a grave peril to the Arabs from the national, economical and political points of view.⁽¹⁹⁾

It is also frequently argued by the Zionists that the Arabs would benefit in a material sense from Zionist activities and enterprise in Palestine,⁽²⁰⁾ and to this extent Zionist ideals synthesize with Arab interests. However, the superior capital resources at the disposal of the Jews, and their greater experience of modern economic technique were regarded by the Arabs as instruments of a political policy of domination of Palestine.⁽²¹⁾

The Zionist backlash decrying Arab claims is oft repeated; that the national home of the Arabs is in Damascus

(17) Cf. Chapter 3, p. 45.

(18) Report of the King-Crane Commission. Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East, p. 33.

(19) Ibid.

(20) This argument was referred to in the Declaration adopted by the Extraordinary Zionist Conference, Biltmore Hotel, New York, on the 11th May, 1942, commonly known as the Biltmore Programme. Reprinted in: The Israel-Arab Reader. LAQUEUR, W. ed. op. cit., p. 105. (vide Article 5).

(21) The Arab Case for Palestine; evidence submitted by the Arab Office, Jerusalem, to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, March, 1946, Reprinted in: The Israel-Arab Reader. LAQUEUR, W. ed. op. cit., p. 125.

and Baghdad, and in a religious sense, in Mecca and Medina; that the Arab nation flourished in these centres, not in Jerusalem; that the creation of a National Home in Palestine for the Jews will not affect the world status of the Arab people; that the Arabs possess extensive tracts of land in relation to which the loss of Palestine will scarcely be felt. Therefore Arab and Jewish claims to Palestine are "like the claims of appetite versus the claims of starvation".⁽²²⁾ These arguments, however, are poor palliatives to the Palestinian Arabs, to whom Palestine, and nowhere else, is a homeland.

(ii) Arab Nationalism

Arab nationalism, like its Zionist counterpart, was a product of contact with the West and became a force in the Middle East only in the twentieth century. In conformity with its customary pattern, Arab nationalism presents a challenge to traditional social and political institutions and cultural aspirations. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Arab society was organised on a traditional religious basis,⁽²³⁾ and the whole teaching and outlook of Islam was formulated on the dogma of the unity of man and the oneness of God. Thus, the Koran states: "Surely, this, your nation, is but a single community, and I am your God, so serve me". (21:92)

This supranational community of Islamic civilisation, a brotherhood of the faithful, was maintained until the twentieth century, and was more intense in its feeling of unity than medieval Christianity had been,⁽²⁴⁾ even though a multitude of Islamic sects somewhat diffused this unity.

Arab nationalism in the nineteenth century was basically cultural, and affected only a handful of Syrian and Lebanese intellectuals, but with the passage of time it became politically orientated and spread to other Arab areas.⁽²⁵⁾ At the outbreak of the First World War there was already an incipient Arab nationalist movement that hoped to secure Arab independence from the disintegrating Ottoman Empire, already engulfed in the disastrous war.⁽²⁶⁾ Britain

(22) JABOTINSKY, V. A Jewish State Now. Evidence submitted to the Palestine Royal Commission, 1937. Reprinted in: The Israel-Arab Reader. LAQUEUR, W. ed. op. cit., p. 81.

(23) KOHN, H. Nationalism in: Background of the Middle East (JACKH, E. ed.) New York, Cornell, 1952, p.145.

(24) Ibid., p. 146.

(25) KHOURY, F.J. The Arab-Israeli Dilemma. New York, Syracuse, 1968. p. 302.

(26) SAFRAN, N. From War to War. United States, Western Publishing, 1968, p. 87.

realised the advantages of Arab co-operation to weaken Turkey militarily,⁽²⁷⁾ and set about securing the Arab support of the Allied struggle against Turkey. The most effective military leadership among the Arabs arose in the Hejaz section of the Arab Peninsula led by the Sherif Hussein of Mecca, but it was generally felt by Arab nationalists that they should not participate in an "Arab Revolt" unless Britain made satisfactory promises to the Arabs.⁽²⁸⁾ The Arab demands and British concessions were contained in an exchange of ten letters between the Sherif and Sir Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner to Egypt. In this correspondence Britain promised the Sherif Hussein and his son Faisal to support Arab independence in most of the Ottoman controlled areas, but whether Palestine was included or excluded from this definition has always been a bone of contention.⁽²⁹⁾ Although the indications are most strong that both Hussein and Faisal were aware in 1915 that the British Government intended to maintain control over Palestine, this fact is not clearly indicated in the correspondence. It is probable that the British government was merely meeting each situation as the need arose to safeguard in a general way the vital interests of Britain. There was at this crucial stage no long term planning. On the strength of McMahon's promises, the Arab Revolt began on the 5th June, 1916, but in the meantime, on the 16th May, 1916, the British and French governments had signed the Sykes-Picot Agreement defining French and British areas of control, and providing for an international control of Palestine. If the McMahon correspondence can be construed as a promise to Arab nationalists of an independent Arab Palestine, then the Sykes-Picot Agreement is clearly an inexplicable act of perfidy on the part of the British government, and inexplicable too is the subsequent pledge of the Balfour Declaration in November 1917. Equally inexplicable

(27) KHOURY, F.J. op. cit., p. 6.

(28) KHOURY, F.J. op. cit., p. 6.

(29) BULLARD, Sir R. The Middle East. London, Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 14.
British White Paper of 1939. Reprinted in: The Israel-Arab Reader. LAQUEUR, W. ed. op. cit., p. 93, in which the British government states that for their part "they can only adhere, for the reasons given by their representatives in the Report to the view that the whole of Palestine west of Jordan was excluded from Sir Henry McMahon's pledge, and they, therefore, cannot agree that the McMahon correspondence forms a just basis for the claim that Palestine should be converted into an Arab state".

KIRK, G.E. A Short History of the Middle East. London, Methuen, 1948, p. 146. In a letter published in The Times in 1937 McMahon contended that he never intended to include Palestine in the territory promised to Hussein.

is the failure of Hussein or Faisal to repudiate later either the Sykes-Picot Agreement or the Balfour Declaration. The Arab nationalists, however, find it expedient to place heavy reliance on the McMahon correspondence.

The Arab Revolt gave impetus to Arab nationalism as a political force,⁽³⁰⁾ and by the end of World War I, the Arab nationalists explicitly reasserted Arab claims over Palestine.

The increasing intensity of Zionism and Arab nationalism, expressed in a fierce assertion of title that "this land is mine", finally joined issue during the British Mandate of Palestine.

2. THE BRITISH DILEMMA : PALESTINE UNDER MANDATE

World War I created an opportunity for the Zionists to advance their cause, and the British Government was persuaded to sponsor the establishment of a national home for the Jews in Palestine in the terms of the Balfour Declaration of the 2nd November, 1917.⁽³¹⁾ The reasons which motivated the British to support Zionism are still surrounded by an air of mystery,⁽³²⁾ and will probably never be resolved. Whether these motives were based on self-interest⁽³³⁾ or whether British motives were altruistic in fulfilment of a moral commitment to Zionism inspired by British humanitarianism⁽³⁴⁾ or a compound of both reasons need not detain us here. Suffice it to state that the British could not but be aware of the

(30) PARTNER, P.A. Short Guide to the Arab World. London, Pall Mall, 1960, p. 106.

(31) The Balfour Declaration was expressed in the following terms:
"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country". Reprinted in: The Israel-Arab Reader. LAQUEUR, W. ed. op. cit., p. 36.

(32) ANDERSON, M.S. The Eastern Question. London, MacMillan, 1966, p. 346.

SYKES, C. op. cit., p. 12.

(33) ANDERSON, M.S. op. cit., p. 346.

(34) MONROE, ELIZABETH. British Interests in the Middle East in Middle East Journal, 1948, p. 129.

undoubted strategic advantages to be gained in having a British stronghold in Palestine, but whether or not the British government planned to use Zionism as a means of securing control over the country in the post-war world for strategic reasons, remains obscure.⁽³⁵⁾ However, the common cause between Zionist aspirations and British policy seemed to the Arab mind to link Zionism as part and parcel of British imperial interests.

The Balfour Declaration - no less than a charter to a Zionist transformation of Palestine - has been acclaimed both an act of magnanimity such as is rare in the history of governments, and deplored as the most heinous blunder in the long record of British policy in the Middle East.⁽³⁶⁾ Whatever the British motives may have been, and irrespective of the subjective attitudes which may be adopted towards the Balfour Declaration, one thing is clear: a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine could not be achieved without thereby prejudicing the interests of the Palestinian Arabs. The inexorable demands of Zionism, Jewish immigration and resettlement in Palestine, the growth and dominance of Jewish economic interests, supported by world Jewry, in a viable Palestinian economy - in sum, the fulfilment of Zionist ideals - could not but cause a displacement of the Palestinian Arabs. The dilemma of the conflict had embraced within its fold a third party, the British.

The disregard of the Palestinian Arabs was deliberate and ruthless. In August 1919, less than two years after the Declaration, Arthur Balfour wrote as follows:

"The four great powers are committed to Zionism and Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long tradition, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land".⁽³⁷⁾

Apart from ignoring the interests of the Palestinian Arabs, the force of Arab nationalism was underrated and it was assumed that in Palestine it could never be of importance. This assumption in 1917 may not have seemed as ludicrous as it does now. The Palestinian Arabs were then politically inarticulate, lacked political dynamism, were leaderless and content to be administered as part of Syria in the Ottoman Empire.

(35) SYKES, C. op. cit., p. 15 et seq.

(36) Ibid., p. 11.

(37) BALFOUR, A. Documents on Foreign Policy, First Series, Vol. IV. Reprinted in: Cross Roads to Israel. SYKES, C. op. cit., p. 13.

The disastrous consequences of Zionism to the Palestinian Arabs can be traced back to the Balfour Declaration, and it is hardly surprising that the British Government is blamed as the prime cause of their subsequent plight.⁽³⁸⁾

In April, 1920, at the Conference of Allied Powers in San Remo, Italy, the fate of the dismembered Turkish Empire was sealed and the Mandate for Palestine, incorporating the essence of the Balfour Declaration, was assigned to Great Britain. In July, 1922, the Council of the League of Nations officially endorsed the Mandate, and thus Zionist aspirations received international recognition and approval.

The British government retained a mandatory control over Palestine during the inter-war years and was faced by the cruel dilemma of a conflict which was gathering momentum in its intensity and manifestations. British policy was still committed to its mandatory obligation to fulfil the Balfour Declaration and an intransigent Arab nationalism could not persuade them to reverse this policy altogether. But British national interests were inconsistent with the humanitarian criterion which had partly induced the British government to subscribe to a Zionist programme in the first instance, and with the passage of time this would become increasingly evident. The policy of the British government became more pragmatic, indecisive and vacillating. The dilemma of the British government was expressed in the formulation of a policy towards Jewish immigration. By imposing a limitation on this immigration, or conversely, by allowing unrestricted immigration, they incurred the hostility of either the Zionist or the Arab nationalists respectively.

In the immediate years after the First World War, the Arabs in Palestine achieved little unity due to factional bickering and produced few effective leaders.⁽³⁹⁾ Arab nationalism in a broader context too, did not present a unified front as it had broken up into weak segments following the division of Arab territory into British and French areas of control. Each segment became absorbed in its local struggle. Nevertheless, the growing forces of Arab nationalism found in Zionism a rallying point for Arab nationalists everywhere, and by 1936 the independent Arab governments began to lend growing support to the Palestine Arab cause.

(38) ALAMI, M. The Lessons of Palestine in Middle East Journal, October 1949, p. 374.

(39) KHOURY, F.J. op. cit., p. 20.

As the Mandate proceeded, there were sporadic outbursts of Arab violence, such as the outbursts in 1920, 1921 and 1929. These eruptions, however, were always confined to particular localities, and were focused on specified issues so that a broader interpretation of Arab nationalist opposition to the Mandate and its purpose could be avoided.⁽⁴⁰⁾ It was not until 1937, when the Palestinian Arabs, organised by the Arab Higher Committee, finally rose up in arms over the entire country in an explicit revolt against British authority, that a Royal Commission of Enquiry came to the conclusion that the Mandate could not be executed without constant and massive use of force against the Arabs. The commission reported that the underlying cause of Arab unrest was their desire for national independence, and their fear of a Zionist national home. The conflicting claims of two strong nationalist movements could only compel the Royal Commission to conclude that the partition of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state with a British enclave to control Jerusalem was the only solution. In 1937 the Zionist Congress agreed to accept the principle of partition, but only on condition that the Jews received a sufficiently large area of a partitioned Palestine, while the Palestinian Arabs strongly objected to the idea of partition.

In the meantime, the inter-war years following the Balfour Declaration were not wasted by the Jews. Jewish immigration into Palestine continued steadily, and the Jewish community organised itself intensively. The Jewish Agency represented the Jewish community and became a quasi-governmental authority with extensive powers in its sphere of influence. In fact, it became the embryonic authority of the future state. The Jews created a vast all-embracing labour organisation, their own defence militia, new agricultural settlements and so on. Above all, the Jews produced astute, high calibre, sophisticated political leadership.

The Second World War largely provided an incubation period and the same basic problems emerged at the war's end. Britain's pro-Arab policy, manifest from the White Paper of May, 1939, and her maintenance of the status quo in Palestine, evoked a strong and violent reaction from the Jews. Arab pro-war violence was substituted by Jewish post-war terror.

The intensity of Jewish resistance to British policy increased and found a response in a wave of sympathy for the Jews when the genocidal policy of the Nazis with its tragic consequences became known.

(40) SAFRAN, N. op. cit., p. 25.

A further feature of the post-war Arab-Israeli conflict also became apparent in the inability of the Palestinian Arabs to produce effective leadership due to their factional bickering. As a result, the initiative in Palestine Arab politics was exercised to an increasing extent by the heads of the neighbouring Arab States, and in particular by the League of Arab States. This League was formed in 1945 comprising the Arab states of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. The League considered Palestine "legally" an independent Arab state which could not as yet exercise its rights, and empowered itself with the right to choose a representative for Palestine until the anomaly of the Palestinian status was rectified. By the end of the war, Arab nationalism had, for the first time, a legal, though loosely constituted body to represent it against the Zionists.

However, the Arab League suffered from certain inherent weaknesses. The charter lacked effectiveness because of a provision that majority decisions only bound those member states which had voted for them. This provision was designed primarily to provide obstacles against Hashemite Fertile Crescent ambitions rather than to promote inter-Arab co-operation. In spite of the facade of unity which it presented, the League did not constitute a genuine and efficient factor unifying and co-ordinating the policies of its member states.⁽⁴¹⁾ The League itself was split into rival, mutually antagonistic "bloc's" whose differing attitudes to one another and towards some of the most vital problems of the Middle East, rendered any real co-ordination impossible in most cases. Consequently the member states supported or neglected the League and displayed enthusiasms or indifference towards its programme according to their shifting concerns.⁽⁴²⁾

Nevertheless, the Arab League is an important landmark in any survey of pan-Arabism and inter-Arab relations.⁽⁴³⁾ The League gave pan-Arabic aspirations its first practical expression, albeit the only expression, of pan-Arabism that is universally shared by all Arab states.

(41) SHIMONI, Y. in The Middle East Journal, July 1950, p. 278.

(42) Ibid., p. 278.

(43) SAFRAN, N. op. cit., p. 63.

Although Britain emerged from the Second World War as the paramount foreign power in the Middle East, the Second World War had been a disaster and she did not possess the strength to maintain that paramouncy. Britain was too weak economically and politically to continue with her difficult Mandate, and after trying to suppress Jewish resistance in vain for two years, formally requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the 12th April 1947 to place the problem before the General Assembly.

Great Britain had finally arrived at the inevitable conclusion that the insoluble and unending Palestinian conflict had ceased to be a regional conflict, and as Britain had accepted the mandatory obligation from an international body, she therefore submitted these mandatory problems to an international body for a solution.

The Palestinian problem now assumed a new urgency and course. The problem was no longer to be viewed in the light of British national interests. All members of the United Nations, remotely or directly connected with the Middle East, were to adjudge the problem and in doing so would be influenced by political, national, religious and humanitarian factors.

3. THE UNITED NATIONS AND PALESTINE

On the 29th November 1947, the United Nations by a two-thirds majority voted in favour of the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states as a compromise solution. The resolution was based on an entirely unwarranted assumption that it would be peacefully accepted and enforced by the Arabs and the Jews. The whole theoretical basis of the resolution demanded the utmost co-operation from the parties since the partition boundaries were a military absurdity, and the partition contemplated an integrated economic union of the separate states. In the face of the Arab rejection of partition⁽⁴⁴⁾ and their repeatedly announced intention of nullifying the resolution by force,⁽⁴⁵⁾

(44) Palestine Affairs, October 1947, p. 106.
Middle East Journal, January 1948, pp. 62, 71
United Nations Bulletin, 1st February 1948, p. 106

(45) United Nations Bulletin, 1st March 1948, p. 169
(Report by the Palestine Commission to the Security Council on 18th February, 1948).

the hopes of peacefully implementing the resolution were indeed utopian and yet seriously accepted.⁽⁴⁶⁾ The Arab opposition to partition was expressed in terms of a threat of military action even before the British withdrew from Palestine.⁽⁴⁷⁾

The United Nations did not provide the machinery required to implement the resolution,⁽⁴⁸⁾ although a military confrontation was unavoidable. On the 14th May, 1948, the State of Israel was proclaimed, and was immediately recognised by the United States, Russia and other states. The new state survived the conflict of arms as a viable entity. A third Jewish Commonwealth had emerged after a political eclipse lasting almost two millenia.

The Arab states, having decided to resolve the issue by test of arms, emerged the poorer for their decision and this being the case, they thereafter adopted the political expediency of ignoring the outcome of the Palestine War and advocating the acceptance of the Partition Resolution. In this way they hoped to regain some of their loss. Even the acceptance of the Partition Resolution would be negated if the Arab states believed they could successfully initiate an armed confrontation against Israel.

A striking feature of the international character of the conflict at this stage, was the almost complete unanimity between the United States and the Soviet Union in their support of partition, with the paramount regional power, Great Britain, remaining aloof and non co-operative with the United Nations. The traditional policy of the Soviet Union towards Zionism from the Lenin area was one of hostility, but a departure from this position became increasingly evident in the United Nations from the 14th May, 1947, when the Soviet delegate announced before the General Assembly that, although his government preferred Palestine as a single Arab-Jewish state, it would be willing to consider the partition proposal if a binational state proved impossible. The Soviet Union did not definitely endorse partition until the 13th October, 1947, and thereafter was consistent in its pursuit of this policy, even in the face of a change in the American attitude. At the 271st meeting of the Security Council on the 19th March, 1948, the United States, alarmed

(46) TRUMAN, H.S. Memoirs. New York, Garden City, 1956, p. 157.

(47) United Nations Bulletin, 1st March 1948, p. 169.

(48) Ibid., p. 171.
United Nations Bulletin, 1st April 1948, p. 280.
United Nations Bulletin, 15th April 1948, p. 307.

at the outbreak of violence in Palestine, proposed that a temporary trusteeship for Palestine should be established under the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations, and that the Security Council should convene a special session of the Assembly.⁽⁴⁹⁾

The American proposal was supported by Britain, Egypt, Syria and Lebanon, and was opposed by the Soviet Union and the Jewish Agency.⁽⁵⁰⁾ The Security Council approved of the latter part of the American proposal, and on the 16th April, 1948, the Second Special Session of the United Nations referred the partition resolution to the Political Committee for review.⁽⁵¹⁾ This Committee became paralysed by a deadlock and postponed its decision.⁽⁵²⁾ The strong Russian support for partition at all debates of the Second Special Session of the Security Council and the Political Committee, was pronounced,⁽⁵³⁾ and, but for such support, the American Trusteeship Resolution may well have carried the day.

It is obvious that the Soviet Union hoped to gain political advantages through a partition of Palestine.⁽⁵⁴⁾ The inevitable outcome of partition, they foresaw, would be an increase in tension and strife in the region, accompanied by a withdrawal of British control and influence. The creation of a highly nationalistic, anti-British Jewish state could create a possible basis for Soviet friendship, but even if the Jewish state would not respond to Soviet overtures, at least a general anti-Western feeling would be intensified. In the eyes of the Soviet Union, in 1947, the Arab regimes were pro-British and the Arab League was a "tool of British imperialism".⁽⁵⁵⁾ The volatile situation could provide the Soviet Union with opportunities to exploit regional difficulties and penetrate the Southern Tier.

In the early weeks of the General Assembly Session, the position of the United States towards partition was uncertain and groping, but eventually the United States

(49) Ibid., p. 283.

(50) Ibid., p. 281.

(51) United Nations Bulletin 15th April, 1948, p. 310.

(52) United Nations Bulletin 1st May, 1948, p. 352.

(53) Ibid., p. 356.

(54) United Nations Bulletin 1st April, 1948, p. 281.
United Nations Bulletin 1st May, 1948, p. 356.

(55) KHOURY, F.J. op. cit., pp. 43, 51.
DAGAN, A. Moscow and Jerusalem. London, Abelard-Schuman, 1970, p. 23 et seq.

(56) Ibid., p. 22.

supported partition wholeheartedly until, as already pointed out, the trusteeship proposal. When the trusteeship proposal floundered and the Jewish state became a reality, the United States was the first state to extend its recognition. The vacillation of the United States can be attributed to conflicting points of view; the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the State Department opposed partition for fear that it would endanger Western political and strategic interests in the area while promoting the growth of Russian influence; on the other hand President Truman's religious and humanitarian feelings had already influenced him to adopt a sympathetic attitude towards Jewish aspirations and he agreed with the Zionist contention that a Jewish state would help improve the economic well-being of the Arabs throughout the Middle East. He accepted that partition was a practical solution that could be achieved without bloodshed.

The achievements of the United Nations were not insubstantial. While it could not prevent the outbreak of the Palestine War, it did manage to confine the armed conflict and to lead the parties first to a truce, and then to an armistice agreement. However, the United Nations has been unable to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict. The United Nations partition resolution, while an important landmark in the conflict, did not resolve the conflict. A partition arrangement clearly recognised that a Jewish state in Palestine had become, by 1948, an inexorable national necessity, and it was beyond the capacity of Britain or the Arabs to prevent its establishment; to this extent, the partition resolution was an act of realism.

The partition of Palestine, sanctioned by the test of military power, had far-reaching consequences, although many of them had not yet become apparent. What were the regional and global ramifications of the Palestine War?

4. THE RAMIFICATIONS OF THE PALESTINE WAR

(a) Local

The proclamation of the State of Israel in 1948 ended the first phase of the Arab-Israeli conflict; the struggle between the two communities of Palestine. Palestine ceased to be a political unit, and the Arabs of Palestine - scattered and divided - ceased to form an active body politic for a decade and a half. The Palestine War introduced the

second phase of the conflict: the struggle between the nation states.

The irony of the situation was that an Arab Palestinian state did not emerge as a national state to participate in this struggle. The Palestinian Arabs, in contrast to the Jews, were not geared for the military confrontation that followed the partition proposal, and rested their hopes on the regular militia of the neighbouring Arab states to establish an independent, single, unitary, autonomous, Palestinian state. Thus on the 16th March, 1948, the Lebanese representative to the United Nations voiced popular Arab opinion when he declared that the Security Council was not entitled to use force to implement the Assembly's recommendations, nor was the Palestine situation a threat to international peace which might necessitate eventual Council intervention. The threat existed only as a result of the desire of those who wanted that threat to come into existence, he declared. The situation in Palestine, he continued, concerned only Palestine itself; upon the Mandate's termination, it would automatically become a sovereign state.⁽⁵⁶⁾ The Palestinian Arabs suffered the added ignominy that their remaining land was annexed by the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan and the Gaza Strip became an Egyptian administered area. The Jewish state, on the other hand, far exceeded in area the extent contemplated in the partition resolution. The war also uprooted hundreds of thousands of bitter, resentful and restless Arab refugees living in crowded camps near the borders of the new state of Israel. Over the years the bitterness and discontent of the refugees have intensified and their political influence has spread throughout the Arab world. This influence would add new dimensions to the problem.

One unique result of the war was the conclusion of armistice and not peace agreements between the victor and the vanquished. The continuation of war was merely suspended at the behest of the Arabs. Victory for Israel was only partial, and her existence was not recognised by her enemies. A policy of harassment, boycotts, embargos, blockades, bitter denunciations and threats of destruction became a general pattern of Arab policy towards Israel.

The absence of natural geographic borders between Israel and the Egyptian-controlled Gaza Strip and Sinai Desert were to have particularly grave implications in the years ahead.⁽⁵⁷⁾ Furthermore, the blockade of Israeli

(56) United Nations Bulletin 1st April, 1948, p. 280.

(57) Cf. Chapter VII, p. 113 et seq.

shipping in the Suez Canal and Gulf of Aqaba had the effect of cutting Israel off from the Indian Ocean, the Asian continent, Africa, and more important, the oil resources of Iran.⁽⁵⁸⁾ The Israeli government considered the blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba to be so injurious to Israel economy, that it was to decide in the years ahead to resort to war to remove it.⁽⁵⁹⁾

The Jews were able, through statehood, to consolidate their tenuous hold of a portion of Palestine, but in the process the scope of the armed confrontation, broadened from that of an internal, local conflict, into a regional conflict. This development in turn was to involve the Arab-Israeli conflict in the rivalries of the Great Powers.

(b) Regional

The Palestine War had far-reaching regional implications. Arab pride had been dealt a major blow and mounting discontent with Arab political, economic and social conditions resulted in the rise of revolutionary movements⁽⁶⁰⁾ which in turn led to a series of coups d'etat and political assassinations in Arab states. Inter-Arab relations were also affected, and the disunity which characterised the Arab military campaigns in Palestine was symptomatic of the greater political disunity in the ranks of Arab nationalists after the war.

The Palestine War presented the Arab League with its first major test. The result was no less than disastrous. The League emerged from the war with its image tarnished and any facade of unity was shattered. The member states engaged in bitter recriminations, denunciations and accusations of treachery against each other.

(c) Global

The international character of the conflict has already been remarked upon. This peculiar nature of the conflict was always a consistent principle; the League of

(58) Cf. Chapter II, pp. 18, 33.

(59) Cf. Chapter VII, p. 116.

(60) Manifesto of the United Arab Republic, April 1963.
Reprinted in: The Israel-Arab Reader, edited by
LAQUEUR, W. London, Pelican, 1970, p. 163.
Middle East Journal, Vol. 5, 1951, pp. 71, 75.
Middle East Journal Vol. 6, 1962, p. 457.

Nations embodied the Balfour Declaration into the British Mandate. The British government, by convening a conference in 1938 to consider the problem, invited not only the Jewish Agency and representatives of the Palestinian Arabs, but also representatives of the Arab states - even Yemen - and world Jewry. The intervention of a number of sovereign states and an international community in the affairs of a territory under British mandatory control was conceded as a political right. The call of Zionism is the same to Jews throughout the world, and to the extent that the Jews were prepared to accept the obligations of the Zionist programme, they were concerned with the Arab-Israeli conflict. To this extent they formed pressure groups of varying influence. The Palestinian Arabs extended the character of the conflict by involving the Arab League and the neighbouring Arab states, and by accepting the leaders of these Arab states as the spokesmen of their cause. The United Nations, like the League of Nations before it, through the consensus of its members, became directly involved in seeking a solution to the conflict; after 1948 the United Nations continued to remain involved in the conflict to a far greater extent and for a far longer period, than its involvement in any other crisis in the world.

The British decision to abandon their mandatory obligation in Palestine was not a cause of the decline of British influence in the Middle East, but a manifestation of the decline of British post-war power. The retrenchment by Britain of her power over Palestine conformed to her actions in India, Greece, Turkey and Iran. Her post-war decline in power is further underlined by the implementation of the Truman Doctrine and the growing involvement of the United States in the Middle East. The pattern of change which had already been set into motion prior to 1948 would continue after the state of Israel had come into existence. Egypt would obviously increase her agitation for a fully implemented sovereign national independence because of these developments, and because of the post-war surge for recognition of national sovereignty.

The emergence of a weakened Britain and an infinitely stronger Soviet Union from the most devastating war in the history of mankind, created regional problems for the West in both the Northern and Southern Tier, but the traditional pattern of the East-West power struggle in the Middle East did not change its character. The critical problem of the West, in the post-war years in the Southern Tier, was to arrive at

some modus vivendi with the Arab states whereby Western paramouncy could be assured. It would be a fallacy to attribute the manifest failure of the West to arrive at such modus vivendi to the conflict between the Jews and the Palestinian Arabs, and its later transmutation into the conflict between Israel and the Arab states. Undoubtedly the reaction of this conflict and the bitterness it evoked against the West were factors which contributed to the alienation of the Arab states. However, the West was simply not equipped to meet the challenge of the socio-political forces shaping the post-war Arab Southern Tier. Arab nationalism embodied these forces and Britain and France in the defence of their imperial interests inevitably became interlocked in conflict with Arab nationalists.⁽⁶¹⁾ This conflict was not in any way connected with the struggle between the East and the West.

In terms of global policy, the West was interested in containing Soviet expansionism; the Arab states were concerned about their national independence; the West about alignments and the Arabs about non-alignment. Arab aspirations and Western global policies simply operated on different levels and did not have a common outlook. The alienation of the Arabs resulted to a large extent from these differences.

From the viewpoint of international politics the outcome of the Palestine War must be considered a setback for the West in its relations with the Arab nationalists, and particularly Egypt, which had assumed leadership of the Arab cause against Israel. Britain, assisted by the Americans and the Russians, was blamed as the prime cause of their disaster. However, the full ramifications of the Arab-Israeli conflict in international politics had yet to crystallise. Russian intrusion in the Middle East at this period was minimal, and would continue to be so for the next half a dozen years. The Cold War had not yet spread to the Southern Tier and Britain was still the paramount power in the Southern Tier of the Middle East. Of more serious and direct concern to the Arabs would be the Egyptian and Algerian struggle against Western imperialism.

Russian political support for Israel in the United Nations, and the supply of weapons to Israel by the Communist bloc during the Palestine War did not go unnoticed by

(61) Cf. Chapter VI, p. 122 et seq.

the Arabs, and yet Arab bitterness against Russia was not as profound as its anti-Western feeling, since it was not compounded by an anti-imperialist nationalist sentiment. Russia was simply a remote foreign power without a tangible actuality in the Middle East.

The United States, in supporting the creation of Israel, placed the West in the role of a precarious balancer of Arab-Israeli regional military power as the only feasible *modus operandi* for maintaining the status quo and a modicum of regional stability. The crux of this policy was to be the maintenance of an arms balance.

5. CONCLUSION

The problem of presenting a symmetrical view of the Arab-Israeli conflict can be attributed to the very nature of the conflict: in essence a clash of rights which cannot be resolved without an injustice being inflicted to one side. To argue, as Dr. Weizmann does, that the conflict can only be solved on the lines of least injustice, perfect justice being impossible, is essentially a pragmatic approach demanding an obfuscation of moral issues. The pragmatic approach may well be expedient since the conflict occurs between protagonists whose fear of domination and ascendancy by the other produces an obduracy that precludes any subscription to principles of compromise or settlement. However, the essential weakness of a pragmatic approach is the problem of establishing which side will suffer - or rather rejoice in - the least injustice.

It would seem to be that in a clash of rights, particularly of intractable proportions, the conflict proceeds according to precepts and principles of its own creation: thus force creates the *fait accompli* which vests rights and safeguards these rights. Justice depends upon the outcome of force and is assured only to the extent that a vested right can be safeguarded by force. The cry of national self-determination or irredentism imposes its own standards of rectitude, and the dictates of expediency eclipses all moral norms. When the conflict functions in a twilight world where both total peace and total war are absent, the status quo during which these vested rights are enjoyed, is merely the *interregnum* before further conflict. The conflict, therefore, evolves from one status quo to another, and generates its own peculiar brand of fatalism, resignation and morality. In what other context can the demands of survival in the harsh political climate of the Middle East be explained?

Neither the Zionists nor the Arabs can be accused of nursing any illusions about the measures demanded of them to survive; they have an intimate experience of these demands after decades of conflict; it is thus necessary to judge their actions against the character of the realities which they face, and not according to the illusions of a morality or the demands of ethics which have no real application to the conditions of constant strife.

The response of the Zionists to any situation is dictated by the demands of survival in a neighbourhood of hostility, and the condemnation of Zionism as having expansionist tendencies disregards this truth. The nature of the conflict creates a prior demand for border security to ensure greater territorial defensibility. Security, and not land hunger, is the postulate. The same truth, for instance, is equally pertinent insofar as the Palestinian Arab refugees are concerned. The plight of the Palestinian Arab refugees is the unfortunate consequence of the broader framework of the power conflict within which Zionism struggles for its existence. The settlement of hundreds of thousands of Arabs in Israel would not only transform the character of the new state, but would create a potentially explosive internal element whose avowed purpose would be directed at the destruction of the state. In either case the problem of survival becomes paramount and the demands of survival dictates the measure of expediency.

The conflict between Israel and her neighbours was to be exacerbated by a callous disregard of the fate of the unfortunate Palestinian refugees, not only by the Israelis (partly because of the demands of Israel's existence already referred to), but also by the Arab states to whom they became a useful pawn in the ensuing political phase of the conflict. They were an effective propaganda instrument for domestic consumption when popular support to bolster a tottering regime was required. In inter-Arab relations they provided an emotional issue among the Arab masses by providing charismatic leadership in the Arab world with a fruitful source of personal aggrandizement. The problem of the Arab refugees would, therefore, assume ramifications extending beyond the ambit of the conflict between Arab and Jew.

It is a cardinal truth that the denial by the Arab states of Israel's right to exist, generally precipitates a backlash reaction which, to the extent that any injustice is perpetrated thereby, is attributable to, or compounded by, such denial.

Such are then the exigencies of the struggle for power between Arab and Jew - a struggle in which acts of dispossession become the mutual object of the conflict and are part of the continuous historical process which has always been the fate of the Promised Land.

Like most nationalisms Zionism and Arab nationalism are racially exclusive, both have apocalyptic visions which are similarly exclusive, and when in confrontation each lacks tolerance and understanding and becomes destructive towards the other. The tragedy of Arab nationalism is its uncompromising refusal to co-exist with Zionism; to recognise that the urge to national determination in Palestine is integral to Zionism and that it is necessary to come to terms with these forces; to acknowledge that Zionism, like Arab nationalism, is nurtured by the forces of contemporary existence; to accept that the traditional prototype of the Jew has been transformed by these forces; to realise that the future of Arab nationalism in Palestine is inextricably bound up in a compromise solution, and consequently that a policy oriented towards the attainment of total victory, is unrealistic. In the end, the cause of Arab nationalism suffered a complete loss because of its intractability and its underestimation of Zionism. These deficiencies, too, account for the continued failure of the Arab states in their confrontation against Israel.

Zionism, it is true, accepted a compromise solution to the extent that it was prepared to concede a partitioned Palestine with a Jewish state closely linked structurally to a Palestinian Arab State and by undertaking that a displacement of the Arab inhabitants of a Jewish state would not follow as a consequence of unrestricted Jewish immigration. However, Zionism is imbued with European notions and prejudices and is wholly orientated to European and not to its regional setting; initially knew little about the Palestinian Arabs, and cared about them less; regarded them as backward, primitive and incompetent; invited Arab hostility because the Zionist settlers set about the task of creating in Palestine a new and essentially a parochial and restricted society, and not a pluralistic society in which Arab and Jew could share alike and equally in the benefits of the socio-economic forces of change. The tragedy of Zionism lies in its failure to recognise the fact that the nationalism of the Palestinian Arab is rooted in Palestine, and not in Mecca or Medina or Baghdad or Cairo. The cohesion of the Palestinian Arab entity, notwithstanding their dispersion

throughout the Levant and further afield and their refusal to become submerged in a wider Arab entity is significant and, like Zionism, Palestinian Arab nationalism demands not only understanding but recognition.

The significance of the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1948 in the international struggle for power in the Middle East can be summarised as follows:-

- (1) The conflict increased regional instability and, therefore, provided a modus vivendi for Soviet intrusion into the Southern Tier.
- (2) However, the full significance of the conflict in these terms was not immediately apparent, and the ramifications of the conflict in the struggle for power had yet to crystallise.
- (3) Soviet foreign policy during and after the Palestine War sought an accommodation with Israel rather than with the Arab nationalists as the most promising means of reducing British paramouncy in the Southern Tier.
- (4) The West, particularly the United States, was well disposed towards Israel.
- (5) In their confrontation with Israel, the Arab nationalists enjoyed very little support from the major world powers.

C H A P T E R I V

THE FOREIGN POWER STRUGGLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST PRIOR TO 1948

In the context of the international struggle for power, the Northern and Southern Tiers, although constituting a geographical unity as the Middle East, in fact represent two completely different worlds. The nature and degree of the international struggle for power in these two regions were distinct, as was the role that the regional states played in the wider conflict.

The Northern Tier was the initial area of confrontation between East and West after the Second World War, and the extension of this confrontation into the Southern Tier was slower to develop. While Arab and Jewish hostility smouldered in Palestine, events were unfolding in the Northern Tier which portended the bipolar post-war struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union. The historic power conflict between Russia and the West emerged in the Northern Tier immediately after the war. In spite of revolutionary Communist ideology, with its disdain of territorial annexation and economic imperialism, the post-war policy of the Soviet Union in the Northern Tier was influenced by the very same traditional imperial and national Russian objectives which had been a perennial occupation of every Russian Czar from Peter the Great. By the same token, Western interests in the Northern Tier were a continuation of traditional policies, and Western reaction to threats of Soviet penetration also followed a classical course.

It is desirable, therefore, to focus attention on the historical background of foreign power interests in the Northern Tier and thereafter in the Southern Tier in order to arrive at a final assessment of their position in the Middle East by 1948.

1. THE POWER CONFLICT IN THE NORTHERN TIER PRIOR TO 1948

(a) Turkey

This historical drive thrusting Russia southwards towards the Black Sea, Crimea and inevitably the Dardanelles and the Mediterranean was an amalgam of many traditional forces:

- (i) During the regime of Czarist Russia a messianism inspired by Christianity was directed against the Moslem Ottoman Empire.

- (ii) Imperial traditions which considered the Czar to be the heir to the prestige and religious and temporal authority of the Byzantine emperors.
- (iii) A pan-Slavic nationalism directed at a minority of Slavs living under Moslem domination.
- (iv) The desire to secure warm-water ports for strategic and commercial reasons.

Initially, the Ottoman empire was strong enough to counter Russian penetration, but the Ottoman star had already started setting: the historical process of Ottoman downfall and disintegration began to evolve in a series of military defeats and loss of territory. The vexed Eastern Question had arrived on the international scene to exert its impact on the European balance of power politics for almost two centuries.

By intervening in the struggle between Turkey and Russia, Britain entered the area as the major adversary to the Russian desire to control the strategic Middle East. Britain could only fulfil this role by ensuring the continued existence of the Ottoman Empire to act as a barrier to Russian expansion, and without this British support the whole fabric of the Ottoman empire in the East would have collapsed through internal corruption and weakness. The same basic policy, as will be presently seen, was followed by Britain in Iran to prevent a Russian thrust southwards to the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf through Iran.

There were several objectives to British policy. Britain was traditionally committed to the maintenance of a balance of power in Europe, and although Britain realised that it was inevitable that the Ottomans would lose their European provinces, the crux and dilemma of the Eastern Question was to ensure that these provinces were so divided under the influence of the rival European states that no power could obtain an advantage and disturb the precarious balance.

The focal point of Russian and British confrontation in the Middle East was the problem posed by the strategic importance of the Straits. Britain felt compelled to prevent access of Russian warships to the warm waters of the Mediterranean and Indian Oceans, and consequently Russian ability to establish a sea power to challenge Britain's naval supremacy.

After the First World War, the emergence of the

THE NORTHERN TIER



Bolsheviks to power created a strange interlude in the traditional clash of interests between Turkey and Russia. A strange rapprochement, based on Soviet renunciation of traditional Russian imperial and national interests, evolved between the two traditionally hostile neighbours. The provinces of Kars and Ardahan adjoin the Georgian and Armenian Soviet Socialist Republics. These areas were under Russian control between 1878 until 1917. On the 3rd December, 1920, the Soviet Union restored Kars and Ardahan and a large portion of Eastern Asia Minor to the Turks and on the 16th March, 1921, a treaty of friendship and collaboration was concluded. In this treaty, the present boundary between the two countries was defined, and Turkish sovereignty over the Straits was recognised. In Paris in 1925 Turkey and the Soviet Union signed the Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality which constituted the basis of relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union for 20 years.

The vexing problem of the Straits was settled at the Montreux Convention in 1936. In time of peace warships were allowed freedom of passage in the Straits, but the transit of such warships was to be preceded by a notification to the Turkish Government (Article 13). In time of war, in which Turkey was a belligerent or considered herself threatened by imminent danger of the war, the passage of warships was to be left to the discretion of the Turkish government (Articles 20 and 21). In time of war in which Turkey is neutral, freedom of passage for warships is prohibited. This provision is necessary, for only thus can Turkey prevent the Straits from becoming a field of active operation and causing Turkey's inevitable involvement in a war. In any case, as long as Turkey is neutral and guards the Bosphorus, the Black Sea powers are adequately protected. For instance, the Italian fleet was prevented by the Montreux Convention from entering the Black Sea during the Second World War. If the Axis Power could have gained control of the Black Sea, their land operations in the east would have been greatly facilitated.

The Montreux Convention, binding for 20 years, did not please the Soviet Union, and the friendship between this country and Turkey began to cool.⁽¹⁾

During the Second World War relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union were correct but cool, and Rus-

(1) ESMER, A.S. The Straits : Crux of World Politics in Foreign Affairs, Vol. 25, No. 2, January 1947, p. 296.

sian criticism of Turkey became more and more pronounced as the war progressed and prospects of victory for the allies improved.⁽²⁾ Finally the Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality was denounced by the Soviet Union in March, 1945, and in March, 1946, the Soviet Union demanded "a common defense of the Straits". This demand was obviously unacceptable since it would limit Turkish sovereignty over the Straits and would lead to the establishment of Russian bases on the Straits. Turkey's control over the Straits would simply become a facade and Turkey would be no more than a Soviet satellite state.⁽³⁾ Russian control of the Straits would also leave the Mediterranean powers exposed to Black Sea naval power.

The policy of the Soviet Union in the immediate post-war years clearly followed the classical pattern of Czarist policy: the urge to gain a foothold on the Straits at all costs. During the First World War, Czarist Russia negotiated successfully the Sykes-Picot pact with Britain and France to this end, but the accession of the Bolsheviks to power and the withdrawal of Russia from the war nullified this Pact insofar as Russia was concerned. During the Second World War, the Soviet Union bargained with Hitler to secure this foothold, and after the war demanded a revision of the Montreux Convention for the same reason. In the eyes of the Soviet Union, Turkey was regarded, with some realism, as a possible enemy base, and therefore an offensive threat.

Before the end of the Second World War, the Soviet Union demanded the return of Kars and Ardahan. With England, Turkey's traditional ally, weak and impoverished, and unable to provide any aid, Turkey became apprehensive of Russian designs. Relations between the United States and the Soviet Union were still dominated by the war-time détente. In a regional context, the civil war in Greece promised to end successfully for the Communists. The Soviet army occupied northern Iran and the independence of a so-called Kurdistan was proclaimed at the instigation of the Soviet Union. The rebellious Kurdish tribesmen had become a pliable instrument at the behest of devious Soviet imperial connivance. The Turks began to feel vulnerable, isolated and encircled by Russia. The timing of Russian demands, under all these conditions, was masterly. Turkey did not hesitate to reject Soviet demands, and to withstand Soviet pressure. To meet any military threat from the Soviet Union, Turkey was obliged to

(2) Ibid., p. 297.

(3) Ibid., p. 302.

keep almost a million men under arms.⁽⁴⁾ At this crucial stage the United States, realising the perilous state of Turkish independence and aware of the inability of Britain to provide Turkey with any traditional support and disillusioned by the overt and implied threat of Soviet expansionism in Europe and the Middle East, promulgated the historic congressional resolution of the 12th March, 1947, which came to be known as the Truman Doctrine. By virtue of this Doctrine the United States pledged itself to be "willing to help free people to maintain their free institutions and national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes". The United States clearly perceived its foreign policy as having a dual purpose: to assume leadership for all nations willing to resist the aggression of the Soviet Union and to provide the actual means to meet Soviet aggression. This Doctrine provided the material and moral support required by Turkey to resist Soviet expansionism. It broke the sense of isolation experienced by Turkey⁽⁵⁾ and inevitably and irrevocably propelled the United States into the Middle East for the first time as a Middle East power. By her readiness to prevent the Soviet Union from controlling Istanbul and the Straits, the United States replaced the weakened Western European states as the other pendulum in the balance of power system. The bipolar character of the future power struggle had become apparent.

The Truman Doctrine established the basic containment policy of Soviet territorial expansionism in the Middle East and in the world as a whole.⁽⁶⁾ It signalled the start of the Cold War.⁽⁷⁾ To this end, the Truman Doctrine aimed at arousing the American people and the American Congress to the dangers of Soviet expansion, and the fact that the war time détente with the Soviet Union, based on trust, could no longer be sustained. It also served to give notice to the Soviet Union that the United States would no longer be content with diplomatic protests in cases of Soviet aggression.⁽⁸⁾

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- (4) ARMAJANI, Y. Middle East Past and Present. New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1970, p. 192.
- (5) SADAK, N. "Turkey faces the Soviets", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 27, No. 3, April 1949, p.461.
- (6) MAGNUS, R.H. "Political - strategic interests" in United States Interests in the Middle East. Washington, American Enterprise Institute, 1968, p. 15.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) MAGNUS, R.H. Documents on the Middle East, p. 61.

The Truman Doctrine paved the way for Turkey to join the Western nations as a European power,⁽⁹⁾ and this sense of identification became so strong that Turkey declined an invitation by Nehru of India to send delegates to an "Asian Conference". Although Turkey is partly Western and partly Asian, its contiguity with Europe lends itself to a greater cultural exchange with the West than would have been the case if Turkey had been hedged on all sides by Asiatic people. Turkish orientation to the West is not a matter of temporary political expediency. This development was well under way for at least a generation before either the Marshall Plan or the Truman Doctrine was conceived. After the Western countries and the United States had formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (in 1949), Turkey and Greece were admitted to membership in 1951. Turkey was to become an important link in a line of defense extending along the perimeter of the Soviet Union to Pakistan.

(b) Iran

The Soviet Union borders Iran both in the Southern Caucasus and in Central Asia, and shares with Iran the navigation of the Caspian Sea. Russian interest in Iran in the Nineteenth Century was based on the perennial desire to control the warm-water ports which were available in the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf region. In addition there always lurked the danger of a Russian drive through Iran (which in the Twentieth Century included Afghanistan) to India. As a result, the cornerstone of British imperial policy was to prevent a Russian annexation of Iran since British interests in India could be endangered thereby. The history of imperialism in Iran became focussed on an Anglo-Russian rivalry - between the thrust of a Russian power urge from the north and the pressure of Britain from the south.

The main history of Iran in the Nineteenth Century is the record of a slow, but sure, territorial advance of Russia from the north-east and Great Britain from the south-east. That most of Iran was spared from annexation was not attributable to Iranian strength, but because neither Russia nor Great Britain would allow the other to annex the country.⁽¹⁰⁾ Incapable of presenting any form of defense against a powerful aggressor, Iran owes her survival as an independent state to her unique geographical position as a buffer state.

The Anglo-Russian rivalry in Iran that had started

(9) ARMAJANI, Y. op. cit., p. 361.

(10) ARMAJANI, Y. op. cit., p. 224.

during the Napoleonic Wars ended its annexation phase with the beginning of the Twentieth Century. The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia temporarily ended Anglo-Russian rivalry over Iran. In the absence of Russian restraint, Britain grasped the opportunity to extend its influence throughout Iran, thereby controlling the land and sea approaches to India as well as the newly-discovered oil fields.

During the Second World War Iran declared its neutrality. However, the German invasion of Russia changed the strategic significance of Iran drastically. Iran was the only all-weather route for the transportation of war material from the West to the Soviet Union, and after an Iranian refusal to accede to an Allied demand for trans-Iranian transportation facilities, Great Britain and the Soviet Union simultaneously invaded Iran in 1941 and occupied their "respective spheres of influence" in the south and north respectively. A tripartite Treaty of Alliance was concluded on the 29th January, 1942, between Iran, the Soviet Union and Britain which provided for the withdrawal of foreign troops within six months after the end of hostilities.

The Second World War also introduced a third power into Iran, namely the United States, when American troops were stationed in the British zone of Iran. The bolstering of British strength in Iran had already become necessary.

During the war two important political parties were organised in Iran. One was the Tudeh supported by the Soviet Union, and the other the National Will supported by the British. On the 2nd September, 1945, in the north-west province of Azarbaijan, an anti-government uprising, which demanded autonomy for Azarbaijan, was organised by the Tudeh Party at the instigation of the Soviet Union.⁽¹¹⁾ It soon became evident that the Soviet Union was using its predominance in the north to exact oil concessions similar to those granted by the Iranian government to Britain in the southern area of the country. When a contingent of the Persian army was dispatched to Azarbaijan to suppress the rebellion, the Red Army refused them entry into the province. At the same time the Kurds of Iran were instigated by the Soviet Union to form a republic of their own - Kurdistan - with Mohabad as their capital. Finally, the Soviet Union showed a marked reluctance to withdraw her troops from Northern Iran - the Soviet "sphere of influence" - by the agreed date on the 2nd March, 1946.

(11) EAST, W.G. The New Frontiers of the Soviet Union in Foreign Affairs, Vol. 29, No. 4, July 1951, p. 603.

Iran appealed to the Security Council and pressure of world opinion and demands by Great Britain and the United States were factors which ultimately compelled the Soviet Union to evacuate Iran, but only after they had been assured of an oil concession in Northern Iran. The Soviet puppet regime in Azarbaijan was overthrown, and the Iranian army regained control of Kurdestan. The dismemberment of Iran was avoided. In the face of public opinion and power pressure, the Soviet Union, in fact, betrayed the "national liberation movement" it had professed to support in Azarbaijan and Kurdestan for the price of an oil concession.

To President Truman, Soviet moves in Iran and Turkey "all seemed to add to a planned move on the part of the Russians to get at least northern Iran under their control. Together with the threat of a Communist coup in Greece, this began to look like a giant pincer movement against the oil-rich areas of the Near East and the warm-water ports of the Mediterranean".⁽¹²⁾

In the exigencies of the twentieth century politics, Iran is a vital strategic area for both the Soviet Union and the West. For the Soviet Union it is not only the gateway to an overland military conquest of the entire Middle East, but it will also provide warm-water port facilities for the growing industrial empire of Asian Russia. To the West it is situated on the perimeter of the Soviet Union and provides an important military base from which Soviet industry in Central Asia can be neutralised and from which Russia's own vital oil fields in the Caucasus could be destroyed. Most important of all to the West, is Iran's vast oil reserves.

By 1948 the Northern Tier states had moved towards closer relations with the West, particularly the United States. The United States had always tacitly accepted British and French domination in the Middle East. American interests prior to the Second World War were primarily economic and cultural but the events of the Second World War projected the United States into the Middle East for the first time as a major power with strategic interests in the area. The United States found it necessary to maintain military forces in the Middle East and to provide assistance under the Truman Doctrine, but in executing this policy, the United States was

(12) TRUMAN, H.S. Memoirs. New York, Garden City, 1956, p. 380.

the unwilling recipient of British responsibility in the area.

2. IMPERIALISM IN THE SOUTHERN TIER PRIOR TO 1948

In the Southern Tier, the First World War destroyed the remaining vestige of Ottoman hegemony, and the Arab provinces became pawns in the Great Power struggle for war spoils. The fate of the Arab people was decided upon by Western politicians without any consideration of the wishes of the inhabitants or the rising tide of Arab nationalism.

The Peace Conference of 1919 set about the task of dividing the remnants of the Ottoman Empire in the Southern Tier, roughly along the lines of the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, between France and Britain.⁽¹³⁾ The essence of the Sykes-Picot Agreement was to give Britain control of the southern area and France the northern area of the Southern Tier. Soviet Russia, having precipitously withdrawn from the war and renounced all claims to territory in the Middle East, was excluded from the spoils of victory.

By virtue of the Peace Conference of 1919, and the San Remo Conference of 1920, Syria and Lebanon were placed into mandated areas under French control, while Britain acquired a mandatory control over Iraq, Palestine and Trans-Jordan.⁽¹⁴⁾ Egypt's official status was that of a Protectorate of Britain. In Arabia, Hussein in the Hejaz and Ibn Saud in the Nejd became independent rulers.

The mandatory principle was introduced as a system of temporary administration by the League of Nations. This system was based on the idea that the Arabs were not ready for self-government and would be tutored by a mandatory power. President Wilson, who espoused the principle of popular self-determination for all peoples in their national territory and "no spoils for the victors", accepted the mandatory idea because it was not a rejection of the principle of self-determination, but only a postponement of it. In fact, the principle of self-determination was never seriously applied in the Southern Tier, and the mandate system enabled the European powers to carry out their imperialist activities with international sanction. It entrenched France and Britain as Middle Eastern powers, and served as the means whereby much of the Sykes-Picot Agreement

(13) Cf. Chapter III, pp. 45, 46.

(14) Cf. Chapter III, p. 48.

could be implemented.

The inter-war years were in a sense an armistice between the foreign powers in their rivalry in the Middle East. For the first time in over a century, the interests of Great Britain and France were no longer actively opposed by Russia. Britain and France too were not engaged in any intense rivalry in the Middle East, since they were too closely connected with events in inter-war Europe and the growing threat of Hitler's Germany, to permit any discord.

The inter-war years also witnessed the rising tide of nationalism in the Southern Tier and the repeated concessions of Britain and France to the forces of such nationalism. The crux of the situation was the fact that national movements could hardly be satisfied with the vestige of power, while Western interests remained the repository of power.

The course of events in the several territories of the Southern Tier during the inter-war years can be summarised as follows:-

(a) British Mandated Territories

(i) Iraq

Britain appointed Feisal, son of Sherif Hussein of Mecca as the King of Iraq as a reward to Hussein for his part in engineering and leading the Arab Revolt against the Turks in 1916.⁽¹⁵⁾ To give Feisal the kingdom of Iraq was artificial to say the least since Feisal was unknown to Iraq and the opposition of nationalist elements had to be suppressed.

The Anglo-Iraq Treaty of Alliance of 1922 recognised Iraq's formal independence while giving Britain substantial control over the country. In the face of nationalist demands, Britain, in 1930, abandoned her mandate in Iraq in exchange for a treaty of alliance which guaranteed her the use of an air base near Baghdad, and a naval base in Basra on the Persian Gulf. Iraq agreed to place its resources at the disposal of the British in time of war.

(ii) Jordan

Abdullah, another son of Hussein, was given emirate of the completely artificial state of "Trans-Jordan" with port facilities at Aqaba.

(15) Cf. Chapter III, p. 45.

(iii) Egypt

Egypt's official status as a "Protectorate of Britain" was ostensibly terminated in 1922 when Lord Allenby declared Egypt an "independent sovereign state" contradicted, as in the case of Iraq, by the powers reserved to Britain such as defence, foreign policy, communication and the Sudan, together with the continued British military occupation of the country. In 1936 a new treaty was concluded which modified the 1922 treaty, but nevertheless continued to limit the sovereignty of Egypt. Great Britain retained responsibility for the defence of Egypt in time of war, and in addition was permitted to station not more than 10,000 troops and 400 pilots in the Suez Canal area for its defence. The agreement was contracted to last for a period of 20 years.

(b) French Mandated Territories

French interest in Syria and Lebanon was both imperial and cultural. Among the imperialistic powers, perhaps France alone had a strong sense of mission to bestow the blessings of French culture on the non-Western world. France had indeed sacrificed economic and political advantages for the sake of cultural supremacy, something Britain never did. The best example is found in the Middle East, where in countries like Egypt and Iran, Britain enjoyed political and economic advantages, but the French language and culture were paramount.⁽¹⁶⁾

(i) Syria

In Syria, the French at the outset came into conflict with a powerful Arab nationalism. Arab nationalism was and remains stronger in Syria than in any other part of the Arabic speaking world. This nationalism was never able to reconcile itself to the severance of Lebanon and Palestine from the Ottoman territorial version of Syria, and neither were the nationalists able to adjust themselves to the idea of Christian domination. The history of Syria until independence in 1946 is a story of riots, uprising and war against the French.

(ii) Lebanon

Of its two mandated areas, Lebanon was more amenable to French administration, chiefly because the Maronite Christians favoured the French. There were nationalists in Lebanon, Christians, Muslims and Druzes, who wanted independence, but who were as unsuccessful in their demands as the

(16) ARMAJANI, Y. op. cit., p. 306.

Syrian nationalists. Nevertheless the situation in Lebanon was far less volatile than the violence which characterised French rule in Syria.

During the Second World War, in Lebanon and Syria, the French, weakened by defeat in 1940, were unable to contain the tide of Arab nationalism. The puppet French Vichy government created by the Germans established its suzerainty over Syria and Lebanon, but in July, 1941, Vichy rule capitulated to the combined invasion of the British and Free French forces. The Free French under de Gaulle proved no different from other Frenchmen in their reluctance to relinquish power to Arab nationalists. It was an open secret that the British were encouraging the Lebanese and Syrian nationalists in their demand for independence,⁽¹⁷⁾ and in 1946 France was obliged to withdraw completely from Syria and Lebanon. The dominant position enjoyed by France for nearly four centuries in the Levant had ended, although French cultural influences particularly in Lebanon, remained strong. For the next decade, France would not be an important factor in the Southern Tier.

After the Second World War, Britain emerged as the paramount Western power in the Middle East, but Britain's withdrawal, albeit less precipitous, could no less be warded off than that of France. Even during the Second World War, it had become apparent that the old international political order in the Southern Tier and elsewhere had become obsolete as a result both of the change in the power relationships among European states, Russia and the United States, and also the powerful nationalist upsurge that swept through the world.

Britain, as the dominant Middle Eastern power, received the full brunt of nationalist wrath both in Palestine and in the Arab Middle East. Apart from terrorism in Palestine, Britain was confronted by violent Egyptian and Iraqi nationalist rejection of treaty rights.

In Egypt, the government of Nahas Pasha was pressing the British to evacuate the Suez Canal Zone and to cede the Sudan to Egypt. Negotiations between Britain and Egypt dragged on indefinitely. In Iraq, a pro-British government could only maintain itself against attempted coups by emergency measures. Britain was adopting an inflexible attitude notwithstanding growing Arab intransigence, thereby, in the

(17) Ibid., p. 341.

long term, undermining her paramouncy. However, the hostility of Arab nationalism was not confined to Britain in particular, but extended to the West in general.

The facade of British paramouncy in the Middle East would shortly be exposed and the clash of regional and global interests would transform the entire image of the pre-1948 Middle East.

3. CONCLUSION

The Second World War détente between the Western powers and the Soviet Union soon crumbled under the impact of an aggressive Soviet territorial expansionism and ideological onslaught. A truncated Germany and the periphery states of Turkey and Iran were the immediate foci of Soviet post-war foreign policy. However, while the Soviet Union was able to gain immeasurable political strength in the heart of Europe as a result of its wartime westward military occupation, in the Middle East the Northern Tier states of Turkey and Iran had maintained a position of strict neutrality towards the Soviet Union during the war, thereby undermining any *raison d'être* for an occupation of their states on the parallel of Soviet occupied post-war Europe. The Northern Tier states emerged relatively intact from the Second World War, and since a military solution to Soviet designs was out of the question, the character of Soviet pressure in the Northern Tier was political and diplomatic.

The momentous events which unfolded in the Northern Tier states after the Second World War were remote from and unconnected with the conflict between the Arab and Jewish communities in Palestine. The religious bond of the Moslem countries is not a primary and overriding unifying force.⁽¹⁸⁾ Any ideal of a recrudescence of Islamic power, a pan-Islamic ideal, does not find a response in the Northern Tier, and pan-Arabism, of course, is an alien concept. There is little, if any, national or political nexus between the Southern and the Northern Tier. Consequently, the course of events in the Northern Tier from the Second World War until roughly 1950 developed along parallel lines to the course of events in the Southern Tier, but were not linked to any great extent. With the spread of the Cold War from Europe and from the Northern Tier to the Southern Tier, an interconnection took place

(18) ARMAJANI, Y. op. cit., pp. 251, 252. See also p. 287.
PARTNER, P. A Short Guide to the Arab World, London, Pall Mall, 1960, p. 9 et seq.

between the two regions, but again this was artificially stimulated by global considerations and was not prompted by regional affinities.

The geostrategic differences between the Northern and the Southern Tier in relation to Europe accounts for the very different course of political development in these two areas. The geographical locality of the Northern Tier states adjacent to the borders of the Soviet Union accounts for their very real fear of Soviet designs to establish a more secure southern frontier at their expense.⁽¹⁹⁾ This may be considered the Soviet aim in securing control of the Bosphorus, and the Soviet attempted annexation of parts of Turkey and Iran. Where territory cannot be militarily or politically annexed, a weak, pliant, isolated puppet regime can serve the same end. In Turkey, the Soviet Union attempted to annex Kars and Ardahan, and in Iran the second method was employed of establishing a puppet regime in Azarbaijan or Kurdistan responsive to the dictates of the Soviet Union. In this way the Soviet Union attempted to prevent these territories from becoming the base of a potentially hostile, powerful state. By thus expanding beyond her borders, and by creating a ring of satellite states around her perimeter, the Soviet Union can establish a defence system based on territorial depth, and provide added protection to the nerve centre of the Soviet interior. The Soviet attempt to create a ring of satellite states on her southern border along the pattern of her western border in Europe did not succeed.

By 1948 the Soviet Union had not gained a foothold in the Southern Tier and could only endeavour to exclude or diminish Western influence in the Arab Southern Tier states and Israel.

(19) ROBINSON, R.D. The Lesson of Turkey in Middle East Journal Vol. 5, 1951, p. 425.
(As an indication of the continuous external pressures which threaten the very existence of Turkey, it can be pointed out that thirteen times over the past three centuries Turkey has been involved in conflict with Russia).

C H A P T E R V

STATUS QUO IN THE SOUTHERN TIER : 1949 - 1952

When the Arab-Israeli armistice agreements were signed in 1949, the world was already facing the beginning of the Cold War. The world had witnessed the implications of the Truman Doctrine, the trauma of Czechoslovakia, had suffered the crisis of Berlin, and the Korean War shortly to erupt would expose to the world anew the dangers of Soviet global policy.

The purpose of the present chapter will be to determine the extent to which the Southern Tier was affected by the growing Cold War confrontation during the years 1949 to 1952. What conclusions can be drawn from events which took place during this period insofar as they relate to the central theme of this thesis: the interaction of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the international struggle for power in the Middle East?

Global events in the East-West confrontation compelled Western powers to review the Western defence system in the Southern Tier of the Middle East, and the picture which emerged in 1949 was by no means reassuring.

1. WESTERN DEFENCE IN THE SOUTHERN TIER

The Southern Tier defence system rested upon relatively small British forces in the area, and upon bilateral British treaties with Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Iran. Britain had established a network of land, sea and air bases centred on the huge Suez Canal base complex and also enjoyed the facilities of naval and air bases on Bahrein Island, while the United States enjoyed the limited use of an airfield in Saudi Arabia. British rights and bases under these treaties were deeply resented by nationalist elements in the Arab states. With the increasing anti-British sentiment in Egypt, the Suez Canal Base was no longer a secure base for British power in the Middle East, and this accounts for the dilemma of Western strategic policy in the Southern Tier.

The key to any successful defence alliance in the Southern Tier was Egyptian co-operation. Apart from the geostrategic significance of Egypt in any regional alliance, the support of Egypt would ensure a sympathetic response from other Arab states. Egypt is the most advanced of the Arab states. Her statesmen played a leading part in the formation of the Arab League in 1945. Owing, among other things, to the

existence of El-Azhar University, the highest seat of Moslem learning, Egypt has always aspired to spiritual and political leadership in the Arab world.⁽¹⁾

Egypt was determined above all, to secure a revision of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1931. The two points of special grievance were the presence of British troops in Egypt, and British condominium in the Sudan. Insofar as the defence of the Suez Canal was concerned, Egypt did not feel herself threatened in any way, was not concerned by Great Power rivalries and regarded the presence of British troops in Egypt as a restriction of Egyptian sovereignty. As for the Sudan, Egypt claimed that condominium was a screen for complete British supremacy, and insisted on the cession of the Sudan to Egypt. In 1947 Egypt laid the issue before the Security Council of the United Nations but failed to gain any satisfaction. The issues between Great Britain and Egypt became a festering sore and by 1951 negotiations between Egypt and Britain for a revision of the Treaty of 1936 had virtually ended in a stalemate.⁽²⁾ Anglo-Egyptian relations during these crucial years were characterised by acrimony and sporadic acts of violence. The frustration and bitterness of the Egyptian nationalists formed the background to Egyptian foreign policy and, in particular, to the Egyptian outlook towards Western defence interests in the Southern Tier.

The divergent attitude between Egypt and the West in regard to the expanding Cold War had also become apparent over the Korean crisis in the United Nations. On the 27th April, 1950, the United States proposed a resolution in the Security Council whereby all members of the United Nations were requested to furnish assistance to the Republic of South Korea. Egypt, then a member of the Security Council, abstained from voting on the resolution. Three reasons for Egypt's conduct were advanced:

- (i) The Korean War was merely a new phase of the East-West struggle which unfortunately endangered world peace but was not the concern of Egypt, and in which Egypt refused to take sides.
- (ii) Since Egypt had been rebuffed by the United Nations in 1947 to secure support for a revision of her treaty relations with Great Britain, Egypt saw no reason to join the United Nations in going to the aid of South Korea.

(1) LENCZOWSKI, G. The Middle East in World Affairs. New York, Cornell, 1952, p. 337.

(2) Middle East Journal 1951, Vol. 5, pp. 70, 484.

(iii) Unexpressed, but clearly implied was Egypt's resentment against Great Britain and the United States for their failure to support the Arab cause in Palestine.⁽³⁾ Nevertheless, Egypt declared that it regarded the spread of Communism with concern and hoped that Communist aggression would be halted.⁽⁴⁾

The forces which influenced Egyptian policy at this stage were threefold: neutrality or a reluctance to become involved in an East-West struggle; a direct struggle with Western imperialism and the resentment created by the Western action over the Arab-Israeli conflict. There was in fact no nexus between the aggression of North Korea against the Republic of South Korea and the Egyptian struggle with Britain or Israel, but nevertheless Egypt interrelated all the issues.

The Egyptian attitude of neutrality was not followed by Saudi Arabia and the northern Arab states of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Iraq, who one by one announced their adherence to the United Nations action because of their "basic long-range need of Western support". Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iraq made use of the occasion to refer to the Palestine issue.

The inability of the Arab states to present a common front on foreign policy had the result of weakening the Arab League. For the West, it added doubts already prevalent as to the extent to which any united Arab support might be relied upon in case of a crisis.

2. ARAB DEFENCE PACT

The disunity and disorganisation among the Arab states, exacerbated when defeat at the hands of Israel left them blaming each other for their humiliation, received a new dimension in the years following the Palestine War. The traditional rivalry between Egypt and the Hashemite kingdoms of Iraq and Trans-Jordan soon reappeared.

At the centre of the contest for influence in the Arab world was Syria, and the principle contestants were Iraq and Egypt. The contest was not ideological, but a geopolitical struggle, which had its precedent in the perennial history of struggle between the rulers of the Nile and Mesopotamian Valleys to assert a title to the area between

(3) Middle East Journal, October 1950, p. 467.

(4) Ibid.

them.

In more immediate terms, the contest for influence dates back to the end of the Second World War. With the termination of French authority, Syria became free to follow her own path in the Arab world, and similarly the other Arab states were free to influence Syrian inter-Arab relations.

The context between Egypt and Iraq was accentuated by the relationship of these states to Britain.⁽⁵⁾ The Iraqi regime wholly identified Iraq with Britain, while Egypt confronted Britain in her endeavours to secure the end to British imperial interests in Egypt. A constant object of British Middle East policy was to maintain a strong and friendly Iraq, and the interests of Iraq and Britain in the future of Syria were closely associated.⁽⁶⁾

The successful enlargement of Abdullah's Jordan through the annexation of the western portion of Arab Palestine acted as a spur to re-invigorate Hashemite ambitions to unify the region in the terms of the Fertile Crescent Plan. The area of the Fertile Crescent embraces the Palestinian, Syrian and Mesopotamian plains and constitutes a natural geographical and economical, if not an ethnic, unit.⁽⁷⁾ A political unification of Lebanon, Syria and Iraq under Hashemite leadership would enhance Iraq's bid for primacy and leadership in the Arab World. These ambitions were regarded as a threat not only to Lebanon and Syria, but also to Egypt since it challenged Egyptian leadership of the Arab world. Saudi-Arabia did not view with favour a Hashemite-dominated Arab western Asia either.

Consequently when Iraq proposed entering into a military alliance with Jordan, the Arab world became distrustful of this pact as the first link of a chain to implement the Fertile Crescent plan. Egypt, in order to check the Hashemite plan, proposed a general inter-Arab collective defence pact. No member of the Arab League felt able to refuse, and on the 13th April, 1950, the Arab Defence Pact came into being.

The Arab Defence Pact was meaningless as a yardstick in inter-Arab relations, and did not serve to create a unity among the Arab states. It was simply one of a number of sentimental or theoretical unification plans,⁽⁸⁾ produced

(5) KERR, M. The Arab Cold War 1958 - 1967, London, Oxford, 1967, p. 2.

(6) Ibid.

(7) RONDOT, P. The Changing Patterns of the Middle East. New York, Praeger, 1961, p. 117.

(8) Ibid.

by the Arab League under the ostensible guise of Arab ideals, but in fact designed to promote the interests of its sponsoring states. The Arab Defence Pact could be enforced against Israel as the enemy common to all Arabs, but no practical steps were taken by the Arab states to make such a pact a military reality.

If the Western powers understood the Arab Defence Pact to be a collective regional security organisation, or to be the blueprint of such an organisation, they completely misread not only the nature of inter-Arab relations but also the commitment of Arab states to Western defence plans. The Arab states such as Egypt and Syria had already adopted a steadfast policy of neutrality against the currents of Western global defence strategy - a strategy which required an Arab political and military commitment to the alliance system. Nevertheless the United States pressed ahead with this global strategy. A Middle East Defence Organisation centred in Egypt could be linked to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and South-East Asia Treaty Organisation through the Northern Tier states and this was regarded as a highly desirable arrangement.

3. TRIPARTITE DECLARATION

However, it was necessary to enunciate a Western policy in regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the Tripartite Declaration on the 25th May, 1950, by the United States, Britain and France provided the answer. A developing arms race between Israel and her Arab neighbours had become one of the manifestations of their conflict. During August 1949, Dr. Bunche, then Acting Mediator, urged foreign powers to adopt a restrained arms policy in the Southern Tier. Dr. Bunche recommended that arms exports to the Southern Tier states should be strictly limited to such war materials as were necessary for legitimate security requirements of the states concerned. The United States, Britain and France supported Dr. Bunche in the Security Council by approving the principle of an arms embargo as a means of preventing an arms race from developing in the Southern Tier.⁽⁹⁾

The Tripartite Declaration was a re-affirmation of the stand taken by the three Western powers in the United Nations - in fact a unilateral co-ordination of Western policy taken without prior consultation with Israel or the Arab states.⁽¹⁰⁾ Declaring "their deep interest in and their desire to promote the establishment and maintenance of peace and

(9) United Nations Bulletin, 1st September 1949, p. 224-226

(10) DAGAN, A. Moscow and Jerusalem. London; Abelard-Schuman, 1970, p. 49.

stability in the area and their unalterable opposition to the use of force or threat between any of the states in the area", the three major Western powers "recognise that the Arab states and Israel all need to maintain a certain level of armed forces for the purposes of assuring their internal security and their legitimate self-defence and to permit them to play their part in the defence of the area as a whole".⁽¹¹⁾

The principles of the future Western arms policy in the Southern Tier were clearly expressed in terms of the requirements of internal security and legitimate self-defence. Equally important, however, was the clear implication that arms would be provided for purposes of regional security arrangements. Already in the Tripartite Declaration the Western powers, by implication, contemplated an extension of the American containment policy of Russia into the Southern Tier area. Within the ambit of the same Declaration, an ambivalent arms policy was actually enunciated with regard to two entirely separate issues - the Arab-Israeli local conflict and the Western global policy in a Cold War confrontation against the Soviet Union. That the "level of armed forces" contemplated in the Tripartite Declaration required the same yardstick and standards, the same quantity and sophistication of armaments capable of being applied to both situations seemed unquestionable.

Nevertheless, the principle of an arms balance in the Southern Tier was and is a sound policy as a means of ensuring stability and peace, and defusing the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is obvious that if a state feels its existence or security threatened by the overwhelming quantitative or qualitative armed superiority of an aggressive neighbouring state only a pre-emptive (and essentially defensive) attack can result. This simple military fact is not unique to the Middle East. The good intentions of the Western powers to contain the Arab-Israeli conflict on the lines of a regional balance of power clearly emerged in the Declaration and this policy has been consistently applied by one or more of the Western powers since then.

Apart from the pledge by the three Western powers to achieve a measure of stability between the Arab states and Israel by means of an arms balance, they committed themselves that if "they find that any of these states was

(11) Tripartite Declaration, 25th May 1950. Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East. American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. Washington, 1969, p. 163.

preparing to violate frontiers or armistice lines"⁽¹²⁾ to take action to prevent such violation. The Western powers in effect guaranteed each Southern Tier state the frontiers defined by the armistice agreements. This vague and in effect political guarantee was principally important only to the extent that the Western powers recognised the frontiers of Israel created by the Palestine War and not by the United Nations partition resolution.

The Tripartite Declaration was formulated to maintain the status quo in the Southern Tier. While this state of affairs could satisfy Israel,⁽¹³⁾ it could hardly be viewed with approval by Arab nationalists who found the status quo of Israel's existence an anathema. It follows that the Tripartite Declaration, viewed against a background of Western support of Zionism from the days of the Balfour Declaration and culminating in the passage of the partition resolution in the United Nations, was considered by Arab nationalists as being directed against the Arab cause by ensuring Israel's continued existence.

On the other hand, it may be contended that the Tripartite Declaration could hardly satisfy Israel either, because the status quo in fact confined Israel's expansionist tendencies. This argument presupposes that Israel has expansionist tendencies. It is indeed ironic that on each occasion Zionism has adopted a flexible attitude towards a compromise solution of the territorial issue, the Arab position has been inflexible and uncompromising. This lack of realism and political ineptitude on the part of the Arabs have inevitably redounded to their disadvantage. The resulting advantage to the Zionist position - brought about by the Arab action - is then explained in a simplification as Zionist expansionism, and the Zionists are expected to abandon their gains. The restoration of the status quo is unconditionally demanded by the Arabs to set the clock back to the stage preceding their last refusal to compromise. On each successive occasion, the intransigence of the Arabs has

(12) Tripartite Declaration, 25th May 1950. Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East, p. 163.

(13) Statement by the Israeli Prime Minister to the Knesset on 31st May 1950. Reprinted in: Suez and Sinai. A collection of documents (Browne H. ed.) Longmans, London, 1971, p. 16. The Tripartite Declaration actually compromised Israel's relations with the Soviet Union. The reference to a regional security arrangement germinated Soviet doubts about Israel's neutrality in the East-West conflict. (See DAGAN, A. op. cit., p. 49).

intensified the need Israel feels to ensure her security. In 1936 the British Partition White Paper was accepted by the Zionists and rejected by the Arabs. In 1947 the partition proposals, again accepted by the Zionists and rejected by the Arab states, enlarged the area allocated to the Zionists. The Arab rejection of partition followed by the military confrontation, resulted in further advantage to the Zionists. Unlike the Zionists, the Arab states, in conformity with the pattern of their political outlook, had no reason in 1950 to accept the status quo. In 1950, and certainly later, the Arab states - probably as a political strategy - were prepared to accept the 1947 partition boundaries. However, by their own actions, these boundaries had become merely of historical interest. The further progression of the same pattern is discernible in the outcome of the June War in 1967 precipitated by Arab intransigence. Egypt, having been forced back to the Suez Canal, and Jordan to the East bank, were prepared to recognise the pre-June 1967 boundaries (as distinct from the 1947 partition boundaries). Israel's obsession with secure borders had reached added dimensions as a result of the Arab intransigence and refusal to co-exist with her. Secure borders, backed by Israel's military strength had, by this time, become of greater importance than any Egyptian and Jordanian peace stratagem. The conclusion of a peace treaty had come to be regarded by the Israelis, after twenty years of Arab intransigence, as an insufficient guarantee for peace.

Arab nationalists, particularly in Egypt, also regarded with antipathy the participation of Arab states in any regional alliance with the West in its confrontation with the Soviet Union. The dual purpose of the Tripartite Declaration was, therefore, rejected by Arab nationalists, and Western powers failed to perceive that an ardent Arab nationalist such as Nasser would have very little difficulty in destroying the whole fabric of the policy. The fate of the Tripartite Declaration would be its ultimate application, in a completely different context, to the situation which prevailed at the time of its formulation.

On the 21st June, 1950, the Arab states rejected the Tripartite Declaration on the grounds that it implied recognition of Israel, and they were hardly concerned with the suggestion that they should associate themselves with the general defence of the area.

The practical application of the arms balance contemplated by the Tripartite Declaration angered Israel,

and was considered by the Israeli Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, to be meaningless and unfair,⁽¹⁴⁾ since Britain refused to sell arms to Israel while continuing to supply arms to Jordan and Iraq, and heavy tanks to Egypt. The United States refused to supply arms to Israel, and in addition advised Canada and France to sell Israel a limited number of jet aircraft. The United States continued to supply weapons to Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Egypt acquired arms from France and Italy. The Tripartite Declaration in effect meant the continued denial to Israel of arm supplies, while the Arab states suffered no such restrictions.⁽¹⁵⁾

In spite of these arms sales it is clear that the Western powers had commitments to the individual Arab states and by ignoring these commitments, Western interests in the states would have suffered serious setbacks. Also, in assessing the relative military power of Israel and her Arab neighbours, the quantitative supply of arms is not the only criterion and this cardinal fact was amply illustrated in the light of subsequent events when the relative military power of Israel in relation to Egypt was glaringly exposed.

Until the conclusion of the Czechoslovakian Arms Deal in September, 1955,⁽¹⁶⁾ the arms race between Israel and the Arab states was, in relation to what was to follow after 1955, restricted and confined to obsolescent weapons (by Western standards), and even those in comparatively small quantities.⁽¹⁷⁾ This was the ultimate criterion by which the success of the Tripartite Declaration had to be judged.

4. MIDDLE EAST DEFENCE ORGANISATION

In November, 1950, Egypt requested the withdrawal of all British troops from the Suez Canal Zone,⁽¹⁸⁾ a demand which Great Britain rejected immediately,⁽¹⁹⁾ declaring that world tension, the uncertainty of Egyptian co-operation in time of crisis and the strategic importance of the Suez Canal

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- (14) BEN GURION, D. Israel : Years of Challenge. London, Anthony Bland, 1964, p. 71.
Statement by Ben Gurion to the Israel Knesset on 31st May 1950. Reprinted in: Suez and Sinai (BROWNE, H. ed.) op. cit., p. 16.
- (15) PERES, S. David's Sling. London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970, p. 34.
- (16) Cf. Chapter VI, p. 103 et seq.
- (17) PERES, S. op. cit., p. 35.
- (18) Middle East Journal, 1951, Vol. 5, pp. 70, 484.
- (19) Ibid.

were primary and overriding considerations. Iraq, too, declared that the treaty of alliance with Britain had become obsolete and that no foreign power should have peacetime bases in Iraq.⁽²⁰⁾

Nahas Pasha adjudged the time to be opportune to denounce the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty in the belief that Great Britain, beset with the major problem of the nationalising of the Iranian oil concession, would be at her most vulnerable. On the 8th October, 1951, Nahas Pasha publicly denounced the treaty, unleashed a guerilla war against British garrisons in the Suez Canal Zone, and incited mob violence in Cairo against British establishments.

While tension was mounting in Egypt and amid sporadic acts of violence, the Western powers made their forlorn bid to internationalise the vital Suez Canal Base, by means of a proposed Middle East Defence Organisation.

Notwithstanding all the manifest indications that Egypt regarded a regional defence arrangement with hostility, the United States was unperturbed and boldly proceeded with its plans. It was hoped that Egypt would accept the idea of an equal partnership in a regional security defence organisation to replace the unequal bilateral Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936.⁽²¹⁾ In actual fact, a regional security defence organisation would ensure the continued enjoyment by the West of the British Suez Canal Base facilities under the cloak of Western, rather than British, interests. By these means it was hoped to provide for the needs of the American containment policy in the Southern Tier while ending the hated British occupation.⁽²²⁾

On the 13th October, 1951, the United States, Great Britain, France and Turkey presented Egypt with an invitation to participate in the defence of the Middle East together with Australia, New Zealand and the Union of South Africa. Egypt's participation was solicited on the basis that Great Britain would be willing to agree to a novation of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. She would furthermore be willing to withdraw from Egypt such British forces as were not allocated to a proposed Allied Middle East Command by agreement between the

(20) Ibid.

(21) MAGNUS, R. Political - Strategic Interests in Documents on the Middle East, op. cit., p. 17.

(22) SAFRAN, N. From War to War. United States, Western Publishing, 1968, p. 100.

Egyptian Government and other members of the Defence Organisation.⁽²³⁾ It was also made quite clear that Egypt would be expected to grant the forces of the proposed Allied Middle East Command the use of Egyptian ports, airfields and means of communication.⁽²⁴⁾

The stationing of any foreign troops on Egyptian soil was regarded with complete antipathy by all ardent Egyptian nationalists⁽²⁵⁾ - well before the accession of Nasser to power - and these nationalists simply regarded any new defence organisation as a subterfuge to continue British domination and Western imperialism in Egypt.

Apart from the lack of understanding or experience of Arab aspirations, or the deliberate attempt to subordinate these aspirations to American global policy, the Americans failed to take cognisance of two other factors which were to impede any co-operation between the Arabs and the West.

- (i) The West was blamed for the creation of Israel, and hated for its continued support of Israel.
- (ii) The Southern Tier states had no direct experience of any Soviet territorial designs, no tradition of hostility and suspicion towards the Soviet Union, and no reason to view future Soviet overtures with alarm. Indeed, Western imperialism, with its actual military bases in the Southern Tier was regarded by the Arab nationalists as a greater danger than the distant, off-hand interest of an anti-colonialist Soviet Union. Many Arabs, in fact, regarded the Soviet Union as a possible friend rather than a potential enemy by reason of a mutual hostility to Western imperialism.

Egypt's idea of a regional defence system was to create a neutral bloc, predominantly Arab, but strengthened by Turkey. Turkey, however, was at this stage endeavouring to join NATO and was unwilling to compromise her status as a pro-Western state by adhering to a bloc dominated by a neutralist and largely anti-Western Egypt.⁽²⁶⁾

The reaction of the Egyptian government was categorical and instantaneous. On the 15th October, 1951, the

(23) Middle East Command Negotiations. Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East, p. 75 (vide point VI)

(24) Ibid., p. 76.

(25) Middle East Journal 1951, Vol. 5, p. 70.

(26) LENCZOWSKI, G. op. cit., p. 337.

royalist government of Nahas Pasha rejected the invitation to join the proposed Middle East Defence Organisation with the total approval by the entire Arab world.⁽²⁷⁾

The Soviet Union also denounced the establishment of the Middle East Defence Organisation as an act in preparation of aggression against her. The Soviet Union furthermore warned Israel and the Arab states that the participation of any regional states in a Western sponsored defence organisation would seriously damage existing relations.⁽²⁸⁾

The significance of the period 1949 to 1952 in the interaction of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the international struggle for power in the Middle East can be summarised as follows:-

- (1) The Southern Tier was relatively unaffected by the growing Cold War confrontation, although the Cold War did exert pressures on the regional states.
- (2) Britain was still the paramount power in the Southern Tier and in the context of the struggle for power, this fact had its implications: it meant to the United States that this paramouncy should not be disturbed, but only supported when necessary; it signified to the Soviet Union that no more than a policy of neutrality from regional states in the Cold War confrontation could be demanded.
- (3) The struggle for power in the Southern Tier between the United States and the Soviet Union had not yet assumed dimensions, and this fact contributed to the relative stability and peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict.
- (4) For the reason referred to in paragraph 3 above, relations between Israel and the Arab states on the one hand, and the Great Powers on the other, remained reasonably static.
- (5) The status quo was thus maintained.

(27) RONDOT, P. op. cit., p. 135.
Middle East Journal 1951, Vol. 5, p. 70.

(28) DAGAN, A. op. cit., p. 58.

C H A P T E R VI

THE SOUTHERN TIER IN TRANSITION : 1953 - 1955

Between 1952 and 1954 a completely new array of political leaders eventually transformed the entire situation in the Middle East. The British labour government of Attlee and Bevin had already been supplanted by a Conservative Government with Churchill as Prime Minister and Anthony Eden as his Foreign Secretary. Dwight Eisenhower became President of the United States in January, 1953 and appointed John Foster Dulles as his Secretary of State. In March, 1953 Josef Stalin died and for a brief period Georgi Malenkov held the reigns of Soviet power. In July, 1952 an event of tremendous importance took place in the Middle East when a military junta under General Naguib seized power in Egypt, and in February, 1954 Gamal Abdel Nasser replaced Naguib as head of the Egyptian government. The Egyptian revolution unleashed forces that began to transform the pattern of social life in the Middle East,⁽¹⁾ and with a keen sense of historical insight a noted authority and scholar suggested that "-- in the perspective of history the Egyptian revolution will be to the Middle East what the French Revolution was to Europe".⁽²⁾

The Southern Tier now entered a crucial period - a period of transition with far-reaching consequences for the Western powers in their confrontation against the Soviet Union. Many forces of change were interacting, including those initiated by the "New Look" foreign policy of the Eisenhower Administration.

1. FOREIGN POLICY OF THE EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION

The Eisenhower Administration was eager to adopt a completely new approach to American foreign policy, and this attitude called for a major re-assessment of American global strategy and regional commitments. The policy that emerged became known as the "New Look". The significance of this policy was its divergence from the purely defensive nature of the policy of containment.⁽³⁾ The "New Look" postulated the notion that the United States was no longer bound to confront Communist aggression at the point of its occurrence

(1) BADEAU, J.S. The Middle East : Conflict in Priorities in Foreign Affairs, Vol. 36, No. 2, January 1958, p. 240.

(2) Ibid.

(3) SAFRAN, N. From War to War. United States, Western Publishing, 1968, p. 104.

or to use only conventional weapons. Instead it declared that the United States would meet such aggression with massive retaliation by means, and at places, of its own choosing.⁽⁴⁾

Under the nomenclature of the "New Look" policy, the United States sought to extend its air bases around the perimeter of the Soviet Union and Communist China from which American bombers could launch attacks, and to extend the regional defence system in both the West and the East. The Middle East was viewed as an area vulnerable to Communist influence and vital to the recovery of Europe.

The Truman Administration had already secured the inclusion of Turkey in the defence belt of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and this inclusion had predisposed the Turkish government to co-operate in establishing a general Middle East defence system. The Northern Tier states were precariously situated on the border of the Soviet Union, and an extension of the defence system into the Southern Tier would provide for a defence in depth, and would also serve to protect the right flank of the strategic disposition of NATO forces. Nevertheless, Dulles, while deeply conscious of the strategic importance of Egypt and its value as the centre of a defence system for the entire Middle East, was initially wary of extending the system to the Southern Tier because of the Arab posture of "non-alignment" in the Cold War.

Dulles reported the result of his re-assessment of the role of the United States in the Southern Tier in a major policy statement on the 1st June, 1953. He reached the conclusion that "the United States should seek to allay the deep resentment against it that has resulted from the creation of Israel".⁽⁵⁾ He re-affirmed the United States support of the Tripartite Declaration, and pledged an impartial American stand over the Arab-Israeli conflict. He recognised that the Arab states were not ready to join any proposed Middle East Defence Organisation, and that "no such system could be imposed from without".⁽⁶⁾

The United States had perceptibly shifted its attitude in the Arab-Israeli conflict from a pro-Israeli to a neutral position. Taken by itself, this was insufficient reason to pave the way for an Arab reconciliation with the

(4) Ibid.

(5) Excerpts from a speech by Dulles known as "Six Major Policy Issues" delivered on 1st June, 1953. Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East, p. 78.

(6) Ibid.

West. If the Arab states, under Egyptian leadership, were to be prevailed upon to enter into a Western regional defence system to link up with the Northern Tier, the vexed problem of British interests had to be resolved.

The United States, therefore, urged the British to settle their differences with the Egyptian government by relinquishing their condominium rights in the Sudan and by evacuating the Suez Canal Base. These terms involved substantial British concessions to Egypt. Bowing to pressure exerted by the United States,⁽⁷⁾ the British terminated their condominium in the Sudan in February, 1953, and on the 19th October, 1954, Britain entered into an Anglo-Egyptian Treaty for the withdrawal of British troops from the Suez Canal Base, with the right of re-occupation in the event of war or the threat of war against the Arab countries and against Turkey. By thus including a Northern Tier state in the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, the Suez Canal Base was still being linked to Western global strategy, and this provision was considered onerous by the Egyptian government.⁽⁸⁾

During the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations there was a palpable intensification of the American desire to win over completely the Arab states, and particularly Egypt.⁽⁹⁾ Demonstrations of friendship, sometimes naive, were multiplied.⁽¹⁰⁾ The overtures of the United States to Egyptian nationalism in fact produced no tangible results, and the little goodwill earned by Dulles and Great Britain was soon to be lost by their subsequent Middle East political strategy.⁽¹¹⁾

There appears to be some difference of opinion as to whether the United States or Great Britain were responsible for conceiving the idea of a Western defence system in the Northern Tier in the form of the Baghdad Pact.⁽¹²⁾ Irrespective

(7) SAFRAN, N. op. cit., p. 107.

(8) RONDOT, P. The Changing Patterns of the Middle East. New York, Praeger, 1961, p. 138.

(9) Ibid., p. 139.

(10) Ibid.

(11) WARBURG, J.P. Crosscurrents in the Middle East. London, Gollancz 1969, p. 167.

(12) Ibid.

RONDOT, P. op. cit., p. 139

MAGNUS, R. Political - Strategic interests in United States Interests in the Middle East. Washington, American Enterprise Institute, 1968, p. 18.

BULLARD, R. The Middle East. London, Oxford University Press, 1958, p. 200.

of the identity of its authors, the Baghdad Pact was approved by both countries for different reasons, and was no less a disaster for the United States than for Great Britain and the West in general.

2. THE BAGHDAD PACT

On the 24th February, 1955, a pact of mutual co-operation between Iraq and Turkey (the Baghdad Pact) was concluded. After recalling the Treaty of Friendship and Good Neighbourhood concluded between Iraq and Turkey on the 29th March, 1946, the preamble of the Baghdad Pact proceeds to record that peace and security between the two countries is an integral part of the peace and security of all nations of the world, and in particular, of the nations of the Middle East.⁽¹³⁾ The preamble further notes that the joint defence treaty of the Arab League provides that no provision of that treaty can in any way affect any of the rights and obligations accruing to the parties from the United Nations Charter, and that as members of the United Nations they bear responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security in the Middle East. The preamble further declares that the Baghdad Pact is consistent with these responsibilities, and accordingly the parties resolve to co-operate in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter with the object of safeguarding their security and defence (Article 1). They affirm that the pact does not contradict any international obligations contracted by either of them with any third state, or does not detract any such international obligations. The parties further undertake not to enter into any international obligations incompatible with the pact (Article 4). They provide that "this pact shall be open for accession to any member of the Arab League or any other State actively concerned with the security and peace in this region and which is fully recognised by both of the High Contracting Parties" (Article 5). When at least four Powers become parties to the pact, a Permanent Council at ministerial level will be created to supervise the pact (Article 6). The pact was to remain in force for a period of five years and was renewable indefinitely for further five year periods (Article 7).

On the 5th April, 1955, Britain acceded to the Baghdad Pact under Article 5, and at the same time entered into a special defence agreement with Iraq to substitute the treaty of 1930. By this agreement Britain assumed the

(13) The Baghdad Pact. Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East, p. 81.

responsibility for the pact's Western connections and received the privilege of giving military aid and advice to Iraq. Britain undertook to go to Iraq's assistance in the event of an attack or the threat of an attack. Britain abandoned her bases in Iraq but retained transit facilities which, together with British training missions and maintenance tasks, preserved for Britain a significant military status in Iraq.⁽¹⁴⁾

On the 23rd September, 1955, Pakistan acceded to the Baghdad Pact, and on the 25th October, 1955, Iran, after much hesitation and after carefully conciliating the Soviet Union by emphasizing the defensive nature of the pact, followed suit.

The Baghdad Pact not only linked a Southern Tier Arab state in a regional defence treaty with members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, but also with the South-East Asian Treaty Organisation through Pakistan.

Such are the bare facts, but what were the motives of the various states in joining the pact, and equally important, what was the outcome thereof?

Turkey and Iran favoured any plan which would increase the flow of Western aid, thereby strengthening them against their traditional Russian enemy and against Communism.⁽¹⁵⁾ At the same time, the Baghdad Pact would enhance Turkish political influence in the Arab world.

The Hashemite monarchy in Iraq and its leading statesman Nuri as-Said Pasha welcomed the idea of a collective security link with the West generally, and also with her non-Arab neighbours. This attitude was not shared by any Iraqi opposition elements. Nuri Said also wished to retain some form of alliance with Britain but he was afraid of arousing a radical nationalism opposition to any such alliance.⁽¹⁶⁾ He had some fear of Soviet aggression, mainly through Soviet support of the Kurdish minority in Northern Iraq.⁽¹⁷⁾ Iraq was also keen to receive arms in order to increase its standing in the Middle East and its claim to leadership of the Arabs of which, in bitter competition with Egypt, it never ceased to dream. However, unless some other Arab states could be brought into the Pact - particularly Syria and

(14) RONDOT, P. op. cit., p. 142.

(15) RONDOT, P. op. cit., p. 140.

(16) KERR, M. The Arab Cold War 1958 - 1967. London, Oxford 1967, p. 5.

(17) Ibid.

Jordan - and Egyptian hostility warded off, Iraq faced the prospect of isolation in the Arab League.⁽¹⁸⁾ The Syrian coup of 1954, which had removed the pro-Egyptian dictatorship of Brigadier Adib Shishakli and established a civilian parliamentary regime made the hope of drawing Syria into the Pact seem plausible.⁽¹⁹⁾ In fact, a combination of Egyptian, Suadi Arabian and Soviet blandishments swung Syria away from the Pact, and before the end of 1955 Syria had signed a military alliance with Egypt. Finally, Nuri as-Said felt that an alliance and the aid that would follow would strengthen the Iraqi Hashemite monarchy against its numerous domestic enemies.

Great Britain saw in the Baghdad Pact a golden opportunity to secure a favourable revision of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930. The 1930 treaty had already become outmoded with the passage of time and the tide of events, and was considered inequitable and restrictive by the Iraqis. Britain had long been faced by demands for a revision of the treaty, but a treaty formula acceptable to both sides could not be arrived at. The British were only too aware of the urgent need to replace the treaty since it was due to expire in 1957, and they arrived at the conclusion that the best way of achieving this purpose would be to create a wider military alliance and to contract a new treaty with Iraq within the framework of such an alliance.⁽²⁰⁾

The provisions of the Baghdad Pact were tailor-made to suit the British requirements. In its wider concept and scope the Baghdad Pact is a multilateral military alliance between the member states, but Article 1 and Article 5 recognises bilateral agreements between the member states. These bilateral agreements are described as "special agreements" on such measures which they may agree to take or give effect to in pursuit of their co-operation for their security and defence.

Britain was able to contract a new treaty with Iraq under the provisions of Article 5 of the Baghdad Pact, and thereby used the guise of the Pact as a regional collective

(18) Ibid.

(19) Ibid.

HUREWITZ, J.C. Regional and International Politics in The United States and the Middle East edited by STEVENS, Georgiana, G. New York, Prentice Hall, 1964, p. 102.

(20) RONDOT, P. op. cit., p. 140.

CAMPBELL, J.C. From Doctrine to Policy in the Middle East in Foreign Affairs, Vol. 35, No. 3, April 1957, p. 452.

defence system to prolong British influence in Iraq. Britain, in short, was able to keep her much-resented bases in Iraq under the auspices of the pact, and to this extent still retain her major role as a Middle East power.

Pakistan was interested in securing military and economic aid and support from the United States in her dispute with India over Kashmir.⁽²¹⁾ Iran may have been concerned about possible Soviet aggression, and the hesitant manner in which Iran joined the pact, and the conciliatory Iranian attitude towards the Soviet Union seems to support this possibility. The Shah of Iran may well have bowed to American pressure to join the Baghdad Pact.

The United States approved of the Baghdad Pact since it formed an additional link in the defence system to contain the Soviet Union. The United States did not join the Baghdad Pact and was content to allow Britain to play the leading role. The United States may have decided against formally joining the pact to allay Israel's fear over the new alignment of forces.⁽²²⁾ In any event, the United States had already entered into a number of bilateral agreements with various members of the Baghdad Pact such as the Iraqi-American military agreement of the 21st April, 1954, and the Pakistan-American military agreement of the 10th May, 1954. In addition, the United States was interested in the Middle East as a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and had clearly enunciated her policy in the Truman Doctrine. It seems clear that although the United States was not a formal member of the Baghdad Pact, the Americans were providing significant and valuable support which amounted in effect to open patronage.

These then were the motives of the various states who had become members of the Baghdad Pact; hybrid motives in fact, some of which were completely extraneous to the threat of Communism. They were patently devised, and it is astounding that neither the British - for all their experience as a Middle Eastern power - nor the United States, were able to foresee the grave implications of the Baghdad Pact in its regional setting and the effect this, in turn, would have on Western influence in this vital region.

3. CONSEQUENCES OF THE BAGHDAD PACT

(a) Inter-Arab Relations

The Baghdad Pact counterpoised the interests of the

(21) MAGNUS, R. op. cit., p. 19.

(22) HUREWITZ, J.C. op. cit., p. 102.

(22) SAFRAN, N. op. cit., p. 105.

two traditional centres of Arab power, each vying for leadership in the Arab world: the conservative Hashemite kingdom of Iraq firmly committed to the West and the dream of a Hashemite Fertile Crescent, and the revolutionary, socialist republican state of Egypt firmly committed to a pan-Arabic nationalist vision and a policy of neutrality in the East-West struggle. The division between Egypt and Iraq in the Arab world is one of the permanent geopolitical facts of the Southern Tier.⁽²³⁾ Another division exists between the Hashemites and the Saudis, and unless Saudi Arabia feels itself secure, it aligns itself with Egypt against a Hashemite.⁽²⁴⁾ The response of Saudi Arabia in siding with Egypt was, therefore, predictable.

Egypt considered that the Baghdad Pact was directed against her and tried to form a coalition of other Arab states against Iraq within the Arab League.⁽²⁵⁾ The charter of the Arab League required decisions to be unanimous with the result that Iraq had no difficulty in defeating Egypt's move, but the Arab League itself was plunged into a crisis which weakened it.

In the hands of a charismatic leader of the calibre of Nasser, the Baghdad Pact became a potent instrument since it provided the issue he needed to expand his influence throughout the entire Arab world. Nasser inaugurated a new era in inter-Arab relations in the system he employed to attack the Baghdad Pact and isolate Iraq.⁽²⁶⁾ He appealed over the heads of the Iraqi government directly to the Iraqi people, thereby virtually placing the existence of the Iraqi government on trial.⁽²⁷⁾ The Iraqi government was presented as a tool of imperialism and as a defector from the Arab cause, for exaggerating the threat of Soviet and Communist danger. These arguments not only appealed to the Arab masses, but also met with the approval of the Soviet Union.

No other Arab state joined the Baghdad Pact. Syria and Lebanon had good reason to fear that their independence would be threatened by Iraq, and they viewed Iraqi Fertile Crescent ambitions with considerable disquiet. The Baghdad Pact was considered to be the instrument which would serve Iraqi ambitions in the Arab world, and also the means by which her military strength could be increased. On the

(23) Cf. Chapter V, p. 79.

MALIK, C. Call to Action in the Near East in Foreign Affairs, Vol.34 No.4, July 1956, p. 637.

(24) Ibid.

(25) RONDOT, P. op. cit., p. 142.

(26) SAFRAN, N. op. cit., p. 68.

(27) Ibid

20th October, 1955, Syria and Egypt entered into a mutual defence pact and on the 27th October, 1955, this was followed by a Saudi-Egyptian mutual defence pact - both of which must be regarded as the logical reaction of Arab states to the alignment of forces under the Baghdad Pact.

Iraq is part of the Arab world. Its isolation from that world was unnatural, and could not be permanent. In the long run, therefore, the relations of the West with Iraq must be considered in the context of relations with the Arab states rather than exclusively with the Northern Tier.

The Baghdad Pact, therefore, was considered by Arab nationalists as a divisive and imperialist force in the Arab world - as a British and Hashemite trick to continue Britain's military bases and political influence in Iraq.

To Dulles, all signs seemed to point to a favourable Egyptian response to the Baghdad Pact and he regarded Egypt as a potential member of the pact. Nasser had undoubtedly placed him under this impression as part of his political strategy to use the United States to exert pressure on Great Britain to relinquish her condominium rights in the Sudan and to evacuate the Suez Canal Base. The Egyptian leader had stated on the 3rd August, 1954 - two and half months before the signature of the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement - that Egypt wanted American aid and in the event of aggression, military support. This meant that Egypt regarded itself as openly at war with Russian-inspired Communism and would in future orientate its foreign policy towards the West rather than towards the East.⁽²⁸⁾ On several occasions Nasser explicitly stated that Egypt's place was naturally with the West. Also, shortly before the conclusion of the Baghdad Pact, Nasser himself proposed that the Arab countries constitute an all-Arab alliance linked to the West politically, economically and militarily.⁽²⁹⁾ Such an alliance, sponsored and led by Egypt, would enhance Egyptian political strength, and would bestow upon Egypt and its leader great prestige. Nasser was confident that the West would accept this proposal for lack of a better alternative.⁽³⁰⁾

The premise of Dulles not only proved false but created havoc. His political manoeuvres had brought to the surface all the traditional divisions of inter-Arab relations. The reasoning behind the Baghdad Pact disclosed a total lack

(28) RONDOT, P. op. cit., p. 138.

(29) SAFRAN, N. op. cit., p. 105.

(30) SAFRAN, N. op. cit., p. 80.

of understanding of the delicate balance of forces within the Arab world. The Baghdad Pact destroyed any hopes Nasser may have had of leading an Arab alliance since it elevated Egypt's arch-enemy Iraq as the Arab intermediary of the West.

The Baghdad Pact may also have exerted a considerable influence on Nasser when he attended the Bandung Conference in 1955 and subscribed to the non-alignment policy enunciated by the so-called Bandung Principles. The policy of non-alignment was certainly at variance with Nasser's public pronouncements of support for the West during the preceding year.

(b) Arab-Israeli Conflict

The Baghdad Pact not only exerted a disruptive influence in inter-Arab relations, but also in the Arab-Israeli conflict.⁽³¹⁾ Israeli accession to the pact was completely out of the question, since Article 5 restricted new membership to states who were recognised by both Iraq and Turkey. The Baghdad Pact, insofar as Israel was concerned, was a collective security treaty for the Middle East states from which she was effectively excluded. The Israelis feared that the pact would attract greater British and United States military support for Iraq, and this in turn would make Iraq a more dangerous enemy. They were aware that since the pact aimed at attracting the accession of other Arab states this could not only strengthen their enemies, but could also cause a cooling of Western attitudes towards Israel for the sake of attracting Arab membership.

Israel reacted to the pact by applying to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation,⁽³²⁾ and by strengthening her relations with Turkey.⁽³³⁾ When Turkey discouraged Israeli moves, preferring to consolidate her relations with the Arab world, and after Israeli attempts to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation had failed, Israel renewed her attempts to conclude a bilateral mutual defence treaty with the United States. The American reluctance to enter into a treaty of this nature is understandable since it would jeopardize American relations with the Arabs. The Baghdad Pact and Israel's apparent and growing international isolation began to create in Israel a sense of insecurity.

(31) Ibid.

(32) Ibid., p. 104.

(33) COHEN, A. Israel and the Arab World, London, Allen, 1970, p. 507.

(c) East-West Confrontation

The peculiar problems posed by the Baghdad Pact insofar as the United States was concerned, also serve to explain the reason why the United States did not join the pact although participating in the major working committees of the pact organisation. It has already been mentioned that the United States wished to allay Israeli fears of an alignment of states directed against her. The United States was thus on the one hand, desirous of supporting the pact because of her interest in resisting any Russian advance into the area, but on the other hand was reluctant to join it formally because it excluded Israel while arming some Arab states. The antagonism of Nasser towards the Baghdad Pact must also have decided the United States not to join, although this decision certainly did not pacify Nasser. Neither was the pact viewed with approval by Saudi Arabia, and an American estrangement of Saudi Arabia could adversely affect her vital military and economic interests in this country.

The Egyptian opposition to a Western regional defence system directed against the Soviet Union had already emerged from the Middle East Defence Organisation, and was re-affirmed by their stand towards the Baghdad Pact. Their attitude was consistent, and they attracted the attention of the Soviet Union.

Since the death of Stalin, a new flexibility had influenced Soviet policy towards the Middle East and the Afro-Asian world in general.⁽³⁴⁾ No longer did the Soviet Union look upon genuine nationalist but anti-Communist leaders as puppets of the West. As long as Soviet national interests were promoted, the Soviet Union was willing to lend support. The Soviet Union, in turn, would be the first to benefit by so-called Arab neutrality.

Initially, the Soviet Union wanted no more than to encourage Egypt to stay out of the Baghdad Pact. Arab neutrality was sufficient to foil Western plans since the West aimed at active Arab participation in a Western regional defence system. However, it soon became apparent that the Soviet Union could gain far more political capital out of the situation that had developed in the Southern Tier. A new Soviet policy of support for the Arab states in their struggle

(34) MAGNUS, R. op. cit., p. 19.

DAGAN, A. Moscow and Jerusalem. London, Abélard-Schuman, 1970, p. 88.

against the West was required. A Russo-Egyptian rapprochement was bound to follow as an inevitable result of the Baghdad Pact and Iraqi-Egyptian hostility.⁽³⁵⁾

Egypt, Israel and the Soviet Union all opposed the Baghdad Pact for different reasons. Egypt because it posed a threat to Egyptian pretensions to leadership of the Arab world, Israel because it increased her sense of isolation and insecurity, and the Soviet Union because it was primarily directed against her. Neither Egypt nor Israel was concerned about the effect of the Baghdad Pact in the power conflict. They both assessed the Baghdad Pact for its regional and local effect. The Soviet Union was unconcerned with Nasser's motive in attacking the Baghdad Pact. Nevertheless, there was an affinity of interests between Egypt and the Soviet Union which impelled Egypt to move towards a rapprochement with the Soviet Union while Israel moved towards an alliance with the West. As these tendencies gained definition, the Soviet Union became more virulently anti-Israel, and even given a common cause such as the Baghdad Pact, the Soviet Union had become too partisan towards the Arab cause to be acceptable to Israel as a constructive influence in the Southern Tier.

It has now become necessary to retrace our steps to investigate the causes of the growing estrangement between the Soviet Union and Israel as these factors also exerted an influence over Soviet involvement in the Southern Tier, and the course of events to follow.

4. THE COLLAPSE OF ISRAEL'S NEUTRALITY

External pressures over which Israel has had little control have always been major factors determining her foreign policy. Consequently Israeli foreign policy cannot be judged on the basis of subjective intentions, since it is formulated by the outcome of causes and effects, of actions and reactions. The single constant and enduring background factor dominating Israeli foreign policy is an unremitting Arab hostility towards her - a concomitant refusal to acknowledge the existence of Israel, and all the inevitable manifestations of this attitude:- blockade, boycott, armed encounters and the constant threats of destruction. Israel's reaction to Arab hostility found an immediate response in Israeli foreign

(35) RUSTOW, D.A. Defence of the Near East in Foreign Affairs, Vol. 34, No. 2, January 1956, p. 282.

policy which in turn exacerbated her relations with the Arab states,⁽³⁶⁾ and so created a vicious circle.

Israel, in common with all states, found it necessary to take a stand in the conflict between the world powers. Israel aspired to follow a policy of neutrality in her foreign policy,⁽³⁷⁾ while preserving her own form of government - a social democracy shaped according to Western patterns and rejecting Communism and any dictatorial regime.⁽³⁸⁾

Since all factors militated against it, Israel's professed policy of neutrality was brief. Israel was deeply committed to the principle of unlimited immigration of Diaspora Jewry⁽³⁹⁾ both from the West and the East and faced by the colossal task of absorbing 700,000 Jewish immigrants within the first four years of its existence,⁽⁴⁰⁾ more than double the original Jewish population of Israel at the inception of the State. The economic problems created by providing for these immigrants, who were for the most part penniless, forced Israel to seek aid from the United States government and from Jewry in the affluent Western countries. This financial dependence increased Israel's reliance on the West, and to that degree compelled Israel to deviate from its neutral position in the big power conflict.⁽⁴¹⁾ In addition, Israeli social and political institutions, philosophical orientation and sense of identification belong unmistakably to the West - a fact which becomes more stark with Israeli juxtaposition to the oriental world of its neighbours.

Israel was also prone to identifying her policy, and openly sympathising with the Western viewpoint on all major

(36) COHEN, A. op. cit., p. 506.

FLAPAN, S. Three Problems of Israel's Foreign Policy in GENDZIER, IRENE. A Middle East Reader. New York, Pegasus, 1969, p. 250.

(37) Middle East Journal, July 1950, p. 339.

DAGAN, A. op. cit., p. 41.

(38) SHIMONI, Y. Israel in the Pattern of Middle East Politics in The Middle East Journal, July 1950, p. 280.

(39) BEN GURION, D. Israel : Years of Challenge. London, Anthony Bland, 1964, p. 59.

Israeli Law of Return of 5th July 1950. Reprinted in: The Israel- Arab Reader, ed. LAQUEUR, W. London, Pelican, 1970, p. 162 ("Every Jew has the right to immigrate to the country")

DAGAN, A. op. cit., p. 57.

(40) BEN GURION, D. op. cit., p. 57.

(41) Middle East Journal, 1951, Vol. 5, p. 70.

problems of the area, such as the Persian oil crisis, the issue of British evacuation of the Suez Canal and the developing Algerian crisis.⁽⁴²⁾ The support of Israel of the forces in conflict with Arab nationalism, was the obvious reaction of a state threatened by the militant attitude of that nationalism. In the Arab world Israel was identified as an opponent to Arab national liberation and independence, and this in turn strengthened the anti-Israeli character of the Arab national movement.

The first serious difference between Israel and the foreign powers occurred over Israeli relations with the Soviet Union. These differences led to increasing attacks, first noticeable in the Soviet press, and then at governmental level. The Soviet Union became convinced that Israel was seeking to advance its interests by joining a Western regional defence pact. In addition, the Soviet Union found that the enthusiastic response which Israel evoked from Soviet Jewry created a dilemma for her in her internal relations with these Jews.

The virulent attacks by the Soviet press and at governmental level became accentuated in the last days of the Stalin regime as a result of the anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli Slansky trial in Prague, and the absurd and contrived "Doctors Plot" - involving mostly Soviet Jews - charged with conspiring to liquidate a number of Soviet political and military leaders by medical means. Soviet newspapers linked this "Doctors Plot" with a "Zionist espionage organisation"⁽⁴³⁾ thereby giving it sinister international connotations and anti-Zionist overtones. The whole affair was designed exclusively for internal consumption as part of a program of intimidation.

During February, 1953, a small bomb exploded in the garden of the Soviet legation in Tel Aviv. The Soviet government immediately charged Israel with responsibility for the deed and broke off diplomatic relations.⁽⁴³⁾ The Soviet attitude towards Israel was intemperate in its hostility. These relations were renewed in July 1953, four months after Stalin's death, and after Israel had given assurances that it would not join any aggressive alliance against the Soviet Union. However, the severance of diplomatic relations is generally regarded as the point of no return.⁽⁴⁴⁾

(42) FLAPAN, S. op. cit., p. 25.

(43) DAGAN, A. op. cit., p. 66.

(44) Ibid., p. 71 et. seq.

This very noticeable shift in the policy of the Soviet Union had also become apparent in the United Nations in matters affecting the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Soviet Union had begun to realise the advantage of courting the favour of the Arab states by exploiting the struggle between Arab nationalism and Western imperialism, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. The first stage of the Russo-Egyptian rapprochement had, in fact, been reached with the Baghdad Pact and received confirmation with the conclusion of the Czechoslovakian Arms Deal.

5. CZECHOSLOVAKIAN ARMS DEAL

The policy of the Soviet Union in the fifties was singularly simple: it was poised to exploit the mistakes of the West. The inability of the West to deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict was one great area of opportunity. However, the Baghdad Pact acted as the medium through which the Soviet Union was able to establish an influence in the Arab states, and they seized the opportunity all the more eagerly since this Pact was directed against themselves. While the Baghdad Pact acted as the medium, the Arab-Israeli conflict provided the actual means whereby the Soviet Union could promote its own interests. The balance of military power between the Arabs and Jews largely revolved around the supply of arms. The policy of the West to maintain an arms balance and the status quo in the confrontation between the Arabs and the Jews, could easily be exploited by an outside power with selfish aims or ulterior motives. The Czechoslovakian Arms Deal can only be described as a venture of this nature. Regional problems were not examined by the Soviet Union with objectivity according to the requirements of peace, security and stability - in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations to which the Soviet Union had subscribed - but solely according to the aims of a new brand of Soviet neo-colonialism, which relied upon the exploitation of one of the most profound motive forces in history, the very nationalism which Marxist doctrine decries.

In 1954 border incidents between Israel and Egypt multiplied, and it became glaringly obvious that the Egyptian forces were no match for the Israelis. Nasser became anxious to secure arms to match the more advanced and sophisticated weapons procured by the Israelis. This need became an immediate necessity because of the angry pressure from the young military officers upon whose support the regime depended,⁽⁴⁵⁾ and also to

(45) NOLTE, R.H. U.S. Policy and the Middle East in The U.S. and the Middle East (ed. STEVENS, G.G.) United States, Prentice Hall, 1964, p. 161.

inaugurate a new phase in the conflict, by arming and training the Arab irregular forces known as the fedayeen.⁽⁴⁶⁾ Furthermore, the Baghdad Pact was regarded by Egyptian nationalists as the instrument by which the West intended building up the military power of Iraq to compete with Egypt for leadership with the Arab world. The period preceding the Arms Deal was particularly fraught with latent possibilities because the anger of the Egyptians had been heightened by these considerations. These developments forced Nasser to seek arms.

To secure these arms, Nasser intensified pressure on the United States. The United States was only prepared to supply arms under certain stringent conditions, namely that a large American military mission be established to supervise the use of these arms on the basis of a mutual security agreement, or in token amounts for cash in dollars, a commodity which Egypt lacked.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Nasser found this condition completely unacceptable.⁽⁴⁸⁾ The difference in attitude between the United States and Egypt towards the supply of arms served to emphasise the completely antithetical position taken by each side over the two crucial issues of the day - the Arab-Israeli conflict and the extension of a Western defence system in the Southern Tier. Egypt's vitriolic denunciation of the Baghdad Pact made her an unlikely candidate for any alliance with the West, and her policy of non-alignment could not impel the United States to view her request for arms with any real appreciation. It was clear that any arms would only be used against Israel towards whom the United States was well disposed.

On the 27th September, 1955, President Nasser announced the unconditional sale of large quantities of arms by Czechoslovakia, payable in cotton of which Egypt had an unsold surplus. The sale of arms engineered by the Soviet Union through a satellite member of the Soviet bloc seems to have been considered prudent policy by the Soviet Union.

The Arms Deal was followed by a sharp increase in trade between Egypt (later Syria) and Russia, suited to the policies of these countries. The Arab states would barter primary products such as cotton and cereals in exchange for military and industrial equipment. This arrangement could only

(46) KHOURY, F.J. *The Arab-Israeli Dilemma*, New York, Syracuse, 1968, p. 436.

(47) NOLTE, R.H. *op. cit.*, p. 161.

(48) Nasser's announcement of the Arms Deal on 27th September, 1955. Reprinted in: *Suez and Sinai. A collection of Documents.* (BROWNE, H. ed.) London, Longmans, 1971, p. 20.

be preparatory to the grant of military bases and facilities.

The Arms Deal created a tremendous impact in three contexts: The Arab-Israeli conflict itself, in inter-Arab relations and in the context of international relations.

6. CONSEQUENCES OF THE CZECHOSLOVAKIAN ARMS DEAL

(a) Arab-Israeli Conflict

To the Israelis, the Arms Deal was the clearest possible indication of a radical switch of Soviet policy to full support of the Arabs and as a corollary a policy of hostility towards Israel.⁽⁴⁹⁾ The Arms Deal was regarded by the Israelis as a threat to their security,⁽⁵⁰⁾ and it signalled the start of a greatly-accelerated arms race.⁽⁵¹⁾ Furthermore, Israel felt an urgent need for a security pact - "not one dependent on a parallel agreement with Egypt, but a defensive agreement made with Israel to meet the strengthening of the offensive potential of Egypt".⁽⁵²⁾

The supply of arms to Egypt compelled the United States to take steps to strengthen the Baghdad Pact. Israel, whose interests were compromised by both the Arms Deal and the Baghdad Pact must have felt wedged between two potential forces of destruction. These developments, therefore, had the effect of increasing regional tensions and bringing to the surface latent forces stimulated by an increasing sense of insecurity.

On the 18th October, 1955, Israel applied to the United States to conclude a security pact. Dulles replied that he would give the matter his sympathetic consideration. The ultimate failure by Israel to conclude a bilateral treaty to bolster the existence of the state from the hostility surrounding it, compounded with the sense of isolation experienced because of their exclusion from any multilateral alliance such as the Baghdad Pact, or the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation,

(49) BEN GURION, D. op. cit., p. 77.

(50) Ibid., pp. 69, 76.

Statement by Moshe Sharett, Israeli Prime Minister to the Knesset on 18th October, 1955. Reprinted in:-Suez and Sinai (ed. BROWNE, H.) London, Longmans, 1971, p. 22 et. seq.

(51) PERES, S. David's Sling. London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1970, p. 35.

(52) Statement by Moshe Sharett to the Israeli Knesset on 18th October, 1955.

the new threat which had emerged as a result of the re-orientation of Soviet policy in the Southern Tier and the resulting Czechoslovakian Arms Deal, had the reaction of compelling the Israelists to become introspective, to gauge anew their strength and weaknesses, and to seek direction.

The Arms Deal exacerbated Arab-Israeli tension and the frail armistice between the two sides could no longer withstand the pressure of mounting border violence.⁽⁵³⁾ The train of events which culminated in the Sinai War of 1956 were undoubtedly influenced by the Arms Deal.

(b) Inter-Arab Relations

To the Arab masses, the Arms Deal as well as the implicit promise of Soviet political support was seen as a triumphant confrontation with Israel. Nasser's prestige in Egypt and throughout the Arab world was strengthened. Even the Iraqi government commended the Arms Deal, directed as it was against Israel, towards whom Iraq had hitherto shown a hostility much more uncompromising than that of Egypt.⁽⁵⁴⁾ This elevation of Nasser's status in Arab eyes would in turn intensify pan-Arabic ideals and with it inter-Arab friction and rivalry for leadership within the Arab world.

(c) East-West Conflict

The American view of the Arms Deal was also limited at first.⁽⁵⁵⁾ The United States resented the fact that the Arms Deal had destroyed all hope of luring Egypt into a Western alliance, but was also irked by its disruptive effect on the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, it soon became apparent that a major re-alignment had taken place in the Southern Tier and the United States became fearful that the Arms Deal might lead to a Soviet economic and technical control of Egypt. The United States reacted to the Arms Deal by sending a special emissary to Nasser to warn him to resile from the agreement. When Nasser took a defiant stance, the United States and Britain responded, not with retaliatory measures, but with an offer of support for the construction of the Aswan Dam in order to counterbalance Soviet influence.⁽⁵⁶⁾

The Achilles heel of the West in the Arab-Israeli conflict is its arms policy, and since an arms race by its

(53) DAGAN, A. op. cit., p. 101.

(54) BULLARD, R. op. cit., p. 201.

(55) Ibid., p. 109.

(56) Ibid., p. 202.

Cf. Chapter VII, p. 123.

very nature is a repetitive vicious circle, this weakness of the West tended to remain continuously in the forefront. The West was still committed to a policy of maintaining a modicum of stability through an arms balance, but if the Soviet Union assumed the role of supplying the armament requirements of the Arabs - as indeed the Arms Deal augured - then the West would necessarily have to supply the armament requirements of the Israelis in order to maintain that balance. Insofar as the West was concerned, the weakness of this policy was manifest, since neither the United States nor Britain wished to alienate the Arabs. In the Arab Maghreb, France was encountering colonial problems in Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria. The revolt faced by France in Algeria was becoming particularly violent and uncontrollable. The Algerian Liberation Front was receiving encouragement and assistance from most Arab states, particularly from Nasser. These events had the effect of stimulating a closer relationship between France and Israel,⁽⁵⁷⁾ which found practical expression in the supply of arms largely to counterbalance Soviet supplies to Egypt and Syria. The relationship between France and Israel was very much a case of the old adage that the enemy of my enemy must be my friend.

Stalin's policy of promoting Soviet interests in foreign states on ideological grounds and through the support of local Communist parties and the Comintern had proved sterile. By projecting herself into the Southern Tier through a policy of economic and military support of Egypt, the Soviet Union achieved success hitherto denied to her. In one single bold diplomatic stroke, brilliantly timed and perfectly executed, the Soviet Union had established herself as a power in the Arab Southern Tier.

The Arms Deal marked the beginning of a new epoch, since Soviet penetration of the Southern Tier not only intensified the Cold War conflict in the Middle East, but also served to exacerbate local conflicts. The ultimate success of Soviet policy of exploiting regional difficulties - both among the Arab states and between the Arabs and Jews - cannot be gainsaid, but the price paid by both the Arabs and the Jews is phenomenal. The failure by the Arabs and Jews to find a solution to the problems of their co-existence was to become

(57) PERES, S. op. cit., p. 45.

greatly aggravated by the support for intransigence given by the Great Powers.

7. CONCLUSION

The period 1948 - 1955 witnessed a full cycle of events. The climactic days of the Palestine War marked the commencement of the cycle, but for some time thereafter the struggle of Arab nationalism in Egypt and Iraq took precedence over the Arab-Israeli conflict. As soon as these issues reached a further stage which Egypt found satisfactory (necessarily involving a further British retreat from the status quo), the Arab-Israeli conflict came to the fore again as the dominant issue by which all events were judged by the Arabs. The cycle concluded with the Arms Deal, which is regarded by the Arabs as a victory of their cause against Israel, against the iniquity of the Tripartite Declaration, and against Western global policy.

The West consistently misunderstood - or ignored - Egyptian neutrality. This policy of neutrality was formulated by Nasser's predecessors, adhered to by him, and received a renewed strength through the impact of the Bandung Conference. By attempting to organise the Middle East within the framework of the Containment Policy against the tide of this neutrality, the West brought to the surface the latent attraction between the Egyptian nationalists and the Soviet Union. In fact, it is an irony of history that the attempts of the West to harness the support of the Arab states in the Cold War conflict would have precisely the opposite effect intended, for the proposed Middle East Defence Organisation and the Baghdad Pact paved the way to a closer relationship between Egypt, and later Syria, and the Soviet Union.

Russo-Egyptian rapprochement can be ascribed to more deep-rooted causes. In a broader sense, the Arms Deal was a landmark in the process of the alienation of Arab nationalism from the West and which had begun almost forty years earlier with the Balfour Declaration. This process had gained momentum after the First World War and reached a crisis after the Second World War as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the refusal of Egypt, which spearheaded the forces of this Arab nationalism, to accept the role assigned to her by the West in the Cold War conflict and also as a result of the aversion with which Arab nationalism regarded Western imperial interests in the Southern Tier. All these forces interacted and produced a final result which made it possible for a country to re-orientate its policy with such facility.

The Arabs are hardly concerned with the ideological conflict between Communism and Liberal Democracy. Both ideologies are alien to the Arab mind. Communism is certainly incompatible with Islamic religious dogma and the basic cultural traditions of the Arab world. Nevertheless, Arab nationalism is able to make common cause with the Soviet Union against Western imperialism. President Nasser, on the 23rd July, 1968, was to define this common cause as follows: "We have one common aim with the Soviet Union - to resist imperialism. We do not want foreign influence in our part of the world. For its part the Soviet Union is most anxious to oppose imperialism and to liquidate the imperialist concentrations to the south of its borders. Our ideological and nationalist interests are against imperialism; the Soviet Union's ideological interests and strategy is against imperialism".⁽⁵⁸⁾

The existence of Israel in the Southern Tier is also regarded by the Arab states as a transplant of Western imperialism. It is probably correct that in the Arab mind the symbol of Israel's existence attracts all the pent-up anti-imperial resentments of generations.⁽⁵⁹⁾

The developing bond of friendship between Egypt and the Soviet Union is understandably remarkable for the rapidity and warmth of its embrace. The West, after decades of influence and endeavour in the Southern Tier, could never muster the same enthusiastic Arab support. The same rapport simply never existed. Of course, the policy of the Soviet Union was opportunist inasmuch as it supported a non-Communist Moslem country classified in Soviet terminology as "progressive" but who views with complete antipathy all internal Communist influence. The proscription of Egyptian (and Syrian) Communists by these "progressive states" made no difference to the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, although that foreign policy was basically doctrinaire in its outlook and application.

The policy of the United States in the Southern Tier was naive in its approach to Arab nationalism and the Arab-

(58) NASSER, A. Speech at the National Congress of the Arab Socialist Union at Cairo University, 23rd July, 1968. Reprinted in: The Israel-Arab Reader. LAQUEUR, W. ed. United States, Pelican, 1969, p. 286.

(59) BADEAU, J.S. The Middle East : Conflict in Priorities in Foreign Affairs, January 1958, Vol. 36, No. 2, p. 239.

Israeli conflict, pragmatic and contrived in its reaction to the problems resulting therefrom. As a result of the United States proceeded from one strange contradiction to another. Having attempted to confine the Arab-Israeli conflict within the ambit of the Tripartite Declaration, thereby antagonising Arab nationalist sentiment, the United States then proceeded to court this sentiment by pressing for a retreat of British interests in Egypt in the belief that it would influence the Arabs to abandon their policy of neutrality and non-alignment in the global struggle between the great powers. In the process of reconciling Arab nationalism by sacrificing British interests in Egypt, they then antagonised the same nationalism with the clumsy and ill-advised Baghdad Pact. Not only was the United States confused by the conflicting currents within the Southern Tier, but they attempted to deal with each of these currents without having first determined their position on a basis of principle, and consistency.

The significance of the events which took place during the period 1953 to 1955, for the purpose of this thesis, can be summarised as follows:-

- (1) The Cold War forcefully intruded into the Southern Tier as a result of two phenomena: the incompatible interests of Western global strategy and Arab nationalism, and the Arab-Israeli conflict.
- (2) The Cold War in the Southern Tier was linked to the Cold War confrontation in the Northern Tier by the Baghdad Pact.
- (3) Concomitantly the Soviet Union became a factor in the Southern Tier. Soviet support of Egypt in 1954 was actually consistent with Soviet support of Israel in the period following 1948, directed as it was throughout at the elimination of British (and Western) influence as the principle goal, and to establish a foothold in the Middle East as an allied aim.
- (4) Soviet support of Arab nationalism in Egypt and Syria, and the need of these states for Soviet economic and political support were quite compatible. Both found common ground in their antagonism to Western interests in the Southern Tier, while the Arab-Israeli conflict became a useful adjunct to the Soviet Union to further its interests.

- (5) The international struggle for power in the Southern Tier became closely linked to a regional balance of power in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The regional balance of power was expressed largely in an arms race, and the supply of arms became a pawn in the East-West struggle. The Arms Deal thus vitiated the Tripartite Declaration.
- (6) The Arab-Israeli conflict was exacerbated by the Baghdad Pact, a prerogative of the West, and the Arms Deal, a prerogative of the East.
- (7) The transition of influence in the Southern Tier was sudden and durable. The pattern for the future was established during the years 1953 to 1955.

THE HOT AND COLD WAR : CONFLICT IN SINAI
AND SUEZ

The Arms Deal, taken by itself, was insufficient to exacerbate the smouldering Arab-Israeli conflict into a war; other stimuli were necessary. In order to understand why the Sinai War broke out in 1956, it is necessary to examine local circumstances in the Southern Tier between Arab and Jew, as well as international political factors since both interacted in a move towards war.

This chapter is consequently devoted to the perennial analysis of armed conflicts: the cause and effect rationale.

In reviewing the events which led to the outbreak of the Sinai War, it is necessary to retrace the evolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict from the Palestine War.

1. BACKGROUND TO THE SINAI WAR

The Arab-Israeli conflict developed four major aspects of confrontation after the Palestine War: border terrorism, the arms race, the Arab policy of boycotts and blockade against Israel, and finally the political struggle expressed in the United Nations and in the interaction of local and great power relations. In justification of the stand taken by the Arabs in their post-war policy towards Israel, they contend that under international law, armistice conventions only end the military phase of a war. Therefore, a technical state of war continued to exist between them and the Israelis, and both sides retained all the rights under the international law of war except those involving the use of force. On the basis of the armistice agreements and their contentions, the Arabs sought to justify:

- (i) Their refusal to deal directly with Israel, but through the intermediation of the United Nations.
- (ii) Their refusal to allow Israeli ships to use the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aqaba.
- (iii) Their application of an economic boycott.
- (iv) Their view that the demarcation lines and demilitarised zones were provisional and subject to change in any final peace settlement.

The Israelis, on the other hand, deny the existence of a state of war, and point out that the armistice agreements expressly state that their purpose was to promote "the return of permanent peace in Palestine". Also the Charter of the United Nations subscribed to by the Arab states, requires all member states of the United Nations to live together in peace with each other as good neighbours and to adjust all international

disputes by peaceful means. The Security Council in its resolution of September, 1951, expressly denied the right of either party to the Armistice Agreement to "assert that it is actively a belligerent".⁽¹⁾ From these submissions, and on the basis of international legal precepts, the Israelis refute the legality of Arab belligerency and policy of blockade of the Suez Canal and Gulf of Aqaba.

No less diametric were and are the views of the Arabs and the Jews on the fundamental question of making peace. The Arabs insisted that Israel, as a precondition to talks, accept in principle all United Nations resolutions bearing on Palestine, including the key measure that all Arab refugees, who wished to return to Palestine, were free to do so and payment of compensation to those who chose to settle outside. Israel, on the other hand, demanded a direct conference between both sides, without prior conditions, at which all these problems could be discussed and finalised by mutual negotiation.

The immobility of the Arab-Israeli conflict is borne out by the fact that the respective views of the parties on the possible foundation for peace have remained virtually static since the Palestine War in 1948, notwithstanding the interludes of military confrontation.

The reasons submitted by Israel for embarking on the Sinai War are pertinent since they involve all the aspects of the Arab-Israeli confrontation, both in a local context and insofar as tensions were exacerbated by the policy of the foreign powers. These reasons are fourfold:

(a) Border Terrorism

In the years following the Palestine War, an uneasy status quo was maintained between Israel and her Arab neighbours, not because of any regional balance of power, but because Israeli military supremacy could frustrate any Arab move to destroy the new state. The armistice agreements between Israel and her neighbours stabilised the military dispositions of the confronting armies by demarcating armistice lines and demilitarised zones. These detailed armistice provisions were concluded in anticipation of "the return of permanent peace in Palestine",⁽²⁾ and the armistice demarcations

(1) Security Council Resolution. Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East. American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. Washington, 1969, p. 165.

(2) UNITED NATIONS Bulletin, 15th March 1949, pp. 226, 227.

were delineated without prejudice to the rights, claims and position of any of the parties in relation to the ultimate settlement of the issues between them.

Shortly after the Armistice Agreements had come into effect in 1949, the Arabs and Israelis started to wrangle over the various provisions, and numerous incidents erupted along the demarcation lines.⁽³⁾ Israel adopted the attitude that the demarcation lines were the permanent legal borders, not negotiable, and that all the demilitarised zones were part of her sovereign territory.⁽⁴⁾ The Israeli claim to sovereignty over the demilitarised zones was refuted by the United Nations on the basis that ultimate sovereignty over these areas was to be established by future peace treaties.⁽⁵⁾ However, it would be a profound misnomer to equate border terrorism with these local border incidents. The unnatural demarcation lines agreed upon, and the inadequate armistice machinery designed as a provisional and not a permanent arrangement, promoted the outbreak of border incidents as a manifestation of border wrangling, whereas border terrorism does not owe its driving force to any disputes of frontier delineation⁽⁶⁾ or conflicting occupational claims in or over demilitarised zones. Border terrorism constitutes a series of planned and systematic campaigns of terror developed as a challenge to the security and existence of Israel, and which would come to be regarded by the Israelis as a threat to the existence of the state. Border terrorism in the light of Arab military inadequacy was the only method by which Arab frustration and dissatisfaction with the fact of Israel's existence could be physically expressed and direct pressure exerted on Israel.

Although not the crux of the Arab-Israeli issue, border incidents eventually became difficult to divorce from the other political elements of the dispute, as acts of terrorism provoked more serious acts of Israeli retaliation thus creating a vicious circle of terrorism and retaliation.

Border terrorism became more and more penetrating and thus more exacting in its toll of human lives. After the accession of Nasser to power, terrorist activity was sponsored by

(3) KHOURY, F.J. The Arab-Israeli Dilemma. New York, Syracuse, 1968, p. 182.

(4) Ibid.

ELLIS, H.B. The Arab-Israeli Conflict To-Day in The United States and the Middle East, edited by Georgiana G. Stevens, New York, Prentice Hall, 1964, p. 123.

(5) U.N. Order of Security Council, 4th August, 1949.

(6) DOUGLAS-HOME, C. The Arabs and Israel. London, Bodley Head, 1968, p. 27.

Egypt and Egyptian territory was used as training centres for the fedayeen.⁽⁷⁾ Consequently border tension increased on the Israeli-Syrian border in the Golan Heights, and the pattern of Arab raids and Israeli counter raids became systematic. In 1951, border terrorism killed or wounded 137 Israelis, in 1952 the figure increased to 147, in 1953 to 162, in 1954 to 180, and in 1955 to 258.⁽⁸⁾ In 1956 the Israeli casualty figures increased dramatically with the participation of Egyptian forces in border fighting. In the first 20 days of April, 1956, for instance, there were 82 casualties.⁽⁹⁾

(b) Arms Race

The abundance and superiority of weapons supplied by the Soviet Union to Egypt and Syria following the announcement of the Czechoslovakian Arms Deal,⁽¹⁰⁾ the concentration of a major part of those arms in the Sinai, added to the intensification of penetrating raids by the fedayeen into Israel territory, all served to increase tension. Each aspect of confrontation assumed a more threatening significance and began to be regarded by the Israelis as a major casus belli.⁽¹¹⁾ Ben Gurion, who had retired from Israeli politics, returned to the post of Minister of Defence in February, 1955, and as Prime Minister in July, 1955, because of the grave security risk faced by the State of Israel.⁽¹²⁾ The storm clouds of war were gathering.

For the Arabs, the return of Ben Gurion as Defence Minister and his accession as Prime Minister presaged the beginning of a more aggressive Israeli policy. The awareness that Israel had obtained advanced military weapons added to Arab fears.⁽¹³⁾ The Israeli policy of punitive retaliation on an increasing scale to meet the challenge of increasing border violence had the effect of increasing border tension to the pitch where the status quo became difficult to maintain.

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- (7) BEN GURION, D. *Israel : Years of Challenge*. London, Anthony Bland, 1964, pp. 66, 146.
ALLON, Y. *The Making of Israel's Army*. London, Valentine, Mitchell, 1968, p. 54.
ELLIS, H.B. *op. cit.*, p. 126.
KHOURY, F.J. *op. cit.*, p. 190.
- (8) BEN GURION, D. *op. cit.*, p. 82.
- (9) *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- (10) *Ibid.*, p. 111.
- (11) *Ibid.*, p. 148.
ALLON, Y. *op. cit.*, p. 56.
- (12) BEN GURION, D. *op. cit.*, p. 68.
- (13) KHOURY, F.J. *op. cit.*, p. 200.

(c) Embargos and Blockade

The policy of trade sanctions, embargos and blockade initiated by the Arab League is also given as a casus belli.⁽¹⁴⁾ In the latter part of 1953 the Suez dispute flared up again. In 1954 the Soviet Union vetoed a Security Council resolution expressing "grave concern" that Egypt had failed to adhere to the 1951 resolution.

With the approval of Saudi-Arabia, Egypt, in 1950, occupied the islands of Tiran and Sanafir near the Red Sea entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba, and established a powerful garrison at Sharm el-Sheikh on the Egyptian mainland close to the two islands. The United States received an express undertaking that occupation of the two islands was not intended to obstruct navigation in the Straits of Tiran,⁽¹⁵⁾ but it seems, in the light of subsequent Egyptian action, that this undertaking was not extended to Israeli shipping, since they immediately imposed a blockade against such shipping from passing through the Straits. It is clear, therefore, that the stationing of Egyptian troops at Sharm el-Sheikh was directed solely at Israel. Egypt considered that the Straits were wholly within the territorial jurisdiction of Egypt and could not be considered an international strait since it did not actually connect two portions of the high seas. In any case Egypt also relied on the argument that a state of war continued to exist and the United Nations Charter gave nations the right of self defence. Accordingly Egypt considered herself legally justified in restricting the use of the gulf by enemy ships and by neutrals carrying contraband goods to Israel.

The Egyptian blockade of the Straits of Tiran, restricting Israel's trade and other contacts with the countries of Asia and East Africa, was considered so harmful by Israel that the removal of the blockade became a casus belli.⁽¹⁶⁾

(d) Political Struggle

The fourth aspect of confrontation related to the political struggle between the Arabs and Israel involving other states, and the use of the United Nations as the political focal point of the conflict. Tedious, sterile and unending

(14) BEN GURION, D. op. cit., p. 72.

(15) AIDE MEMOIRE from Secretary of State to the Israeli Ambassador dated 11th February, 1957. Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East, p. 181.

(16) ALLON, Y. op. cit., p. 72.

charges and countercharges were levelled by Arabs and Jews against each other in the debating chamber of the United Nations with the great powers participating according to the dictates of their interests.

More important was the efforts of the United Nations to construct a peace formula acceptable to both the protagonists. During the Palestine War, Israel had begun to develop a suspicious and hostile attitude towards United Nations officials, agencies and resolutions. Since then the Israelis frequently sought to weaken, while the Arabs sought to strengthen, United Nations involvement in the Southern Tier.⁽¹⁷⁾ This policy had become particularly manifest in Israel's participation in the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) and the Mixed Armistice Commission (MAC). Israel sought to bypass the United Nations as much as possible and to encourage direct contacts with the Arabs which might ultimately lead to de facto recognition of Israel and the existing boundaries, while the Arabs on the other hand opposed dealing directly with Israel in any way and insisted upon United Nations involvement in the implementation of United Nations resolutions. The interposition of the United Nations as a third party in the Arab-Israeli conflict provided Arab policy with the means by which it could deal indirectly with the Israelis without implying recognition of either Israel or the existing borders. At the same time it removed pressure on the Arabs to consider peace talks.⁽¹⁸⁾

The United Nations pursued its peace efforts, and a United Nations Reconciliation Commission was established under the General Assembly Resolution 194 (iii) of the 11th December, 1948, but the efforts of this Commission were fruitless. The ostensible reasons for the inability of the Arabs and Israelis to arrive at a peace formula are ascribed to insoluble differences over refugee and territorial issues. Countless efforts were made from time to time to resolve the conflict between Arabs and Israelis on the basis of this premise, and when these efforts failed, the conclusion was drawn that the problem was intractable rather than that the premise was wrong.⁽¹⁹⁾ A more realistic analysis would show that the conflict had

(17) ELLIS, H.B. op. cit., p. 126.
KHOURY, F.J. op. cit., p. 186.

(18) Ibid., p. 276.

(19) SAFRAN, N. From War to War. United States, Western Publishing, 1968, p. 36.

become insoluble not because of these problems - which are rather symptoms and not the cause of conflict - but because the key Arab countries had no desire for peace for reasons which have varied over the years, and could not be compelled to make peace in view of the peculiar circumstances of the Arab-Israeli conflict.⁽²⁰⁾ The peace negotiations between Israel and Jordan during 1949 did not reach finality because of the opposition to peace in Jordan and in the other Arab countries. The assassination of King Abdullah in July, 1951 for pursuing the attempt was a symptom of this opposition. Nevertheless, these negotiations were particularly significant since the majority of the refugees were located in Jordan and the boundary differences were more pronounced there than along the Gaza Strip which was actually isolated from Egypt by the Sinai peninsula.

The peculiar circumstances of the Arab-Israeli conflict relate to the fact that the Arab states were not exposed to the normal consequence of defeat. The Arab states had discovered that a de facto situation could be created by an armistice agreement which did not have to be followed by a peace treaty. An armistice agreement could be an interlude until the next military confrontation. Normally, a vanquished nation is obliged to conclude a peace treaty because of the implicit power of the victor to resume the armed struggle and thereby impose its will on the vanquished. However, Israel, the victor, was restricted by the United Nations and other powers such as Britain, the United States and later Russia, from applying the inevitable sanction of complete and total victory to compel the conclusion of a peace treaty. The intervention of the United Nations and foreign states during the Palestine War of 1948 to prevent a total Arab defeat was to be repeated again in the Sinai War of 1956 and the June War of 1967. In all these instances the aftermath of defeat did not lead to a peace treaty, since the Arab defeat was not total and the Arab governments had little to gain and much to lose by making peace.⁽²¹⁾ The Arab-Israeli conflict is a conflict sui generis,⁽²²⁾ and cannot be equated to the stereotype of most other international conflicts.

In 1948 any reason for the Arab states to conclude peace was less pressing than after the subsequent wars, since

(20) Ibid.

(21) Ibid., p. 38.

(22) MALIK, C. Call to Action in the Near East in Foreign Affairs, Vol. 34, No. 4, July 1956, p. 642.

the integrity of Egyptian or Jordanian or Syrian territory was not at stake. The Palestinian Arabs, who should have played a dominant role in arriving at a compromise solution to their problems, played no role at all. Jordan had expanded at their expense into the West Bank and Egypt secured control of the Gaza Strip. In 1948 it was the Palestinian Arabs and not the Arab states who were the actual losers in a territorial sense, and inevitably the sanction of peace can only be imposed by a complete loss of territorial and national integrity, or the imminent and immediate threat of such loss.

The refugee problem did not create a direct pressure on Egypt in 1948 to conclude a peace treaty, since international agencies assumed the financial burden of supporting the refugees, and in any event Egypt segregated the refugees in the Gaza Strip far away from its population centres. The first time the Egyptian government would be faced by a displacement of Egyptian refugees from Egyptian territory would only occur in the Suez Canal region in 1967.

In addition to the internal pressures against peace were those resulting from inter-Arab relations. Arab unity was strong enough to present a united stand against a peace treaty, and in fact strong enough to justify interference of various Arab countries in each others affairs to prevent peace. On the 1st April, 1950, the Arab League Council voted to expel any of the Arab League States, who made a separate peace with Israel, from the Arab League and further empowered the League to take punitive measures against such a state.⁽²³⁾

Apart from the revulsion experienced by the Arabs against the implanting of what is considered to be a European colonial outpost in their midst, the Arab fear of Israeli territorial expansionism is very real. John Foster Dulles, in his major policy statement of the 1st June, 1953, described this fear in the following terms: "They (viz. the Arab states) are more fearful of Zionism than of communism ..."⁽²⁴⁾ Arab solidarity in the face of Israel is demonstrated by the driving power of this fear. The Arab states are inclined to rely on collective security arrangements to contain Israel, such as the fiction of the Arab Defence Pact, but more particularly in bilateral or multilateral defence arrangements.

(23) Middle East Journal, July 1950, p. 334.

(24) Six Major Policy Issues. Speech delivered on 1st June 1958. Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East (ed. MAGNUS, R.H.). American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, 1969, p. 79.

By concluding a peace with Israel, the Arab states would also introduce Israel far more actively as a power into the Arab political arena. Israel could align itself with some Arab states against others and promote its suspected expansionist designs. A peace treaty with Israel would complicate the highly-intricate pattern of inter-Arab relations. From this point of view, refusal to recognise Israel's existence would serve to isolate it from the Arab world, and a measure of caution could be imposed on outside powers in their dealings with Israel.

The refusal by Egypt and Syria to conclude a peace treaty with Israel had the further merit of allowing the Arab states to initiate military operations against Israel at a time of their own choosing. In the words of Assam Pasha, the Secretary General of the Arab League: "As long as we do not make peace with the Zionists, the war is not over, and as long as the war is not over there is neither victor nor vanquished".⁽²⁵⁾ Time in this sense was regarded as being on the Arab side in view of the great disparity between the size, resources and vast reservoir of human material of Israel and the Arab states. After all, it is an historical fact that the Moslems were only able to drive away the Crusaders from Palestine after a struggle which spanned nearly 200 years and the Arabs consider themselves to have a historical precedent of patience and tenacity.

By the same token, the refusal of the Arab states to negotiate directly with Israel and to conclude a peace treaty, provided Israel with a justifiable excuse for disregarding United Nations resolutions on the return of the refugees and partition boundaries. Israel maintained it could not implement these resolutions without jeopardizing the Israeli existence.

Thus the deadlock and the dilemma of the Arab-Israeli conflict continued, and as a necessary corollary the Arab and Israeli distrust and fear of each other, magnified because of a lack of contact other than in confrontation, and a refusal to compromise on any basis or to any degree whatsoever by negotiation. This unique and unreal state of suspended belligerency was, and is, accepted by the nations of the world as a tolerable state of affairs and is based on the premise that, from the point of view of world peace, the fact that there

(25) SAFRAN, N. op. cit., p. 39 (SAFRAN quotes the interview with a journalist from Wolfgang Bretholz, "Aufstand per Araber", Munich, 1960, p. 215).

is no actual fighting is in itself a very great gain.

To summarize, Israel's motives for attacking Egypt were therefore:

- (i) Israel's increasing concern about violent fedayeen border incursions and the Israeli hope that the destruction of these bases - and possibly control of the Gaza Strip - would discourage further attacks.
- (ii) The large amount of new arms arriving from the Soviet bloc and the massing of a substantial portion of these arms in border areas.
- (iii) The desire to secure Israeli shipping through the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran.
- (iv) The added possibility that Egypt might be compelled to negotiate a settlement, and the belief that once the leading Arab country was obliged to sue for peace, the remaining Arab countries would quickly follow Egypt's example.

Also, on the 24th October, 1956, Egypt concluded a military alliance with Jordan and Syria, establishing a joint military command with an Egyptian officer as commander-in-chief. Israel regarded this military alliance with alarm since its primary purpose was considered by the Israelis to be directed at the destruction of Israel,⁽²⁶⁾ and because it could, in time, bring about a major shift in the balance of power in favour of the Arabs. The Israelis realised that, under these circumstances, it would be to Israel's advantage to act before Egypt could build up her military strength and before the Egyptian alliance could become effective.⁽²⁷⁾ On the other hand, perhaps the military alliance was not primarily directed against Israel, and was simply a countermove by Egypt to frustrate Iraqi attempts to solicit Jordanian and Syrian support for the Baghdad Pact, but if this ~~were~~ the case, then the alliance was certainly not viewed by the Israelis in this context.

It had become apparent that the status quo could no longer be maintained and that a military confrontation had become imminently explosive - a fact recognised by the Security Council. On the 4th April, 1956, the Security Council passed a resolution requiring the Secretary-General to proceed to the Southern Tier to endeavour to reduce tension along the demarcation lines. However, persuasion and reason could not provide

(26) BEN GURION, D. op. cit., pp. 116, 117.

(27) ALLON, Y. op. cit., p. 56.

(27) KHOURY, F.J. op. cit., p. 212.

a permanent remedy or even act as a restraint.

The international situation favoured an Israeli attack against Egypt. The Soviet Union was pre-occupied with the revolt in Hungary and a threatened uprising in Poland. The United States was involved in a Presidential election, but most important of all was the temporary convergence of British, French and Israeli interests resulting from the Suez crisis, and the atmosphere of strong hostility towards Nasser manifested in Western reaction to Egyptian policy. The series of diplomatic setbacks which had left Israel isolated and insecure, underwent a profound change as a result of this temporary convergence of interests, and the Israelis were not slow to exploit the situation.⁽²⁸⁾

The Arab-Israeli conflict and the parallel conflict of Anglo-French imperialism and Arab nationalism merged at this unique moment in history. The common issue was a hostility towards Nasser and a desire to secure his removal from the scene. Otherwise, the two conflicts had nothing in common and in a basically artificial and unholy alliance, each participant sought simply to manipulate the other towards its own ends.

Britain and France were determined to reassert their rights and base privileges at the Suez Canal, and the overthrow of Nasser's regime would contribute towards the attainment of this object.

Egypt, on the other hand, had many reasons for avoiding peace with Israel, and no real compulsion to seek a resumption of the war. Neither did Egypt contemplate any invasion of Anglo-French forces, although the brinkmanship already practised so successfully by Nasser at this early stage in his career, aggravated by a dogmatic refusal to compromise in any way engendered a resort to gunboat diplomacy by a frustrated Britain and France.

2. WESTERN DEBACLE AT SUEZ

The new Egyptian regime, adopting a modus vivendi typical of many other authoritarian regimes, sought to capture the public imagination by introducing a capital project so vast and magnificent in concept, and so dedicated to the public weal that it could become a revolutionary symbol of hope and could idealise the social Utopia about to be introduced. The project should in essence symbolise the dynamic character of the regime. The Aswan Dam answered this

(28) KHOURY, F.J. op. cit., p. 215.

revolutionary need. In the words of Nasser: "When we build the High Dam, we are also building the dam of dignity, freedom and grandeur. We are eliminating the dams of humiliation and servility --"(29) Nasser was placing at stake his popular image in the Arab world and the future of his revolutionary regime in facing the challenge of building the Aswan Dam, and the successful conclusion of a financial loan required for this purpose.

(a) The Aswan Dam Project

By storing the floodwaters of the Nile, an additional estimated 850,000 hectares could be cultivated, drainage would be more efficient since the seasonal Nile flooding could be eliminated, and the river would be navigable from one end of Egypt to the other.(30) Finally, it would provide 10 million kilowatt hours of low cost electricity and thereby multiply ~~thirty-fold~~ the industrial potentialities of the Nile Valley.(31) These statistics are truly formidable, and the Aswan Dam could become of crucial agricultural and industrial importance to Egypt in view of her population explosion (2.6 percent per annum) and static resources.

The undertaking, which would take 12 to 16 years to complete, was estimated to cost 1,300 million dollars.(32) The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank where United States influence was paramount) agreed to advance two hundred million dollars contingent upon American and British support, and the United States and Britain each agreed to advance on loan 56 million dollars and 14 million dollars respectively. These offers of aid in response to Egypt's appeal for assistance were made at the very moment of a dangerous intrusion into the Southern Tier by the Soviet Union, and would serve to counteract that Soviet influence. The offer of aid was not prompted by altruistic motives, but as instruments of the foreign policy of the United States and Britain in conformity with the principle established by the

(29) NASSER's announcement of the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company, 26th July 1956. Reprinted in: Suez and Sinai. A Collection of Documents. (BROWNE, H. ed.) London, Longmans, 1971, p. 34.

(30) RONDOT, P. The Changing Patterns of the Middle East. New York, Praeger, 1961, p. 154.

(31) Ibid.

(32) United States Department of State announcement on 19th July, 1956, withdrawing from Aswan Dam Project. Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East, p. 103.

Truman Doctrine, albeit without the same sense of imminent disaster as in the case of post-war Greece and Turkey. Not only was the inter-relation of aid and foreign policy appreciated by the two Western states, but also by Nasser. He inter-related the acceptance of aid and the orientation of Egyptian foreign policy; Egyptian friendship had a price, and the mechanics of East-West competition for Egyptian favours would establish the value thereof. The Soviet Union likewise appreciated the realities of the situation. Nasser's policy of "positive neutralism" which in effect amounted to the "balanced exploitation"⁽³³⁾ of both sides was undoubtedly fruitful.

The policy of "balanced exploitation" had its particular perils for the United States. It seems evident that the policy of the United States should not have been to compete with, or to oppose, Soviet aid. In the first case, competition opened the door to blackmail; in the second case, opposition could be construed as an attempt to oppose development. The only basis on which any offer of aid could be evaluated, therefore, was the subjective realisation defined by President Eisenhower in announcing the Eisenhower Doctrine:⁽³⁴⁾

"But any free nation, which is the subject of Soviet enticement, ought, in elementary wisdom, to look behind the mask". This truth was not, and continues not to be, wholly apparent to Egyptian leaders.

However, a strong hostility in the West had been developing towards Nasser from the latter part of 1955, for many reasons. Dulles had become highly incensed over Nasser's foreign policy. Nasser's purchase of arms from the Soviet bloc created shock and outrage in the United States. In May, 1956, Egypt, at the cost of extreme American displeasure, recognised Communist China as a reaction to the American approval of the sale of Mystère jet aircraft by France, and twenty Sabre jets by Canada, to Israel. Furthermore, Nasser was creating tremendous unrest in the Arab world by broadcasting inflammatory radio invective against the Baghdad Pact and the pro-West Iraq. His prescription for dealing with the pro-West Israel was to intensify Arab intransigence thus increasing regional instability. Dulles, who was increasingly committed

(33) NOLTE, R.H. United States Policy and the Middle East in the United States and the Middle East, edited by Georgiana G. Stevens, New York, Prentice Hall, 1964, p. 162.

SAFRAN, N. op. cit., p. 69.

(34) Cf. Chapter VIII, p. 141.

to a rigid Cold War delineation of alignments, who was prone to assess situations and policies according to the requirements of this confrontation, who had expected a sympathetic Egyptian response instead of antithetical reactions and defiance, who deeply resented Nasser's modus of pursuing a policy of neutrality while at the same time exploiting Cold War issues to the advantage of Egypt and the detriment of the West, accepted that an American retaliation to mark American displeasure had become necessary. Prompted by these reasons, Dulles wished to withdraw from the loan, but as a result of a British warning not to be precipitate, he decided to adopt tactics of delay. A warning by the French Ambassador in Washington to "beware how you handle the situation with the loan, because a most likely consequence of a refusal is the seizure of the Suez Canal", was disregarded.⁽³⁵⁾

The interest of the other riparian states, especially of the Sudan, now faced by the prospect that some of the Sudanese territory would become inundated as part of the giant lake, was to be advanced as the reason for delay. It was necessary that a general agreement on the division of the Nile waters ought to precede the conclusion of the loan.

On the 19th July, 1956, Dulles held a consultation with the Egyptian ambassador in Washington, and the proceedings had a touch of comic opera. While Dulles was summarising various reasons why the loan should not be granted (intended no doubt as a preamble so that the announcement of the final decision to delay the loan would be accepted by the Egyptian ambassador with relief), the Egyptian ambassador became worried and agitated, and interrupted to state: "Don't please say you are going to withdraw the offer, because we have the Russian offer to finance the Dam right here in my pocket".⁽³⁶⁾ This threat struck a raw nerve in Dulles, and he retorted by withdrawing the offer of a loan. On the same day, the Department of State published a guarded and qualified withdrawal of the American offer of financial aid for the ostensible reason that agreement had not been reached with all the riparian states on the "effective utilization of the water resources of the Nile for the benefit of the peoples of the region."⁽³⁷⁾ The decision reached by the United States purported to be in no way a reflection on and did not involve "any alteration in the friendly

(35) BROWNE, H. ED. Suez and Sinai. London, Longmans, 1971, p. 29.

(36) Ibid., p. 30.

(37) Department of State announcement on 19th July 1956. Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East, p. 103.

relations of the Government and people of the United States towards the Government and people of Egypt".⁽³⁸⁾ It was quite apparent that the United States contemplated a renewal of the American offer of aid if approached by a more pliant and a wiser Nasser.

The withdrawal of American aid compelled the World Bank and Great Britain to follow suit. Almost at the same time it also became clear that there would be no immediate Soviet aid, although the Russians repeated their willingness to assist Egyptian industrial development.⁽³⁹⁾

The retaliatory policy of Dulles seemed to be vindicated by the collapse of the Aswan Dam project, and in turn the revolutionary image of Nasser, attached as it partly was to the Aswan Dam, would suffer a severe setback. However, Dulles underrated the Egyptian leader, whose reaction was both unexpected and dramatic.

(b) Nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company

Angered at what he considered to be an insult to Egyptian pride, Nasser reacted on the 26th July, 1956 by brusquely nationalising the Suez Canal Company. Stockholders' were to be compensated to the value of the shares held by them according to the closing quotations on the Paris Stock Exchange on the day preceding the publication of the nationalisation order.⁽⁴⁰⁾ The assets and rights of the nationalised company were frozen.⁽⁴¹⁾

The nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company had in fact become a danger irrespective of the Aswan Dam issue. The evacuation of British troops from the Suez Canal area must be regarded as a step in the process of such eventual nationalisation. The foreign control of the Suez Canal Company was regarded with hostility by Egyptian nationalism as a vestige of imperialism and foreign domination, and the refusal by the United States to finance the Aswan Dam project had merely been grasped by Nasser to implement a program which probably would have been initiated sooner or later. After all, the United States, who was responsible for the decision to withdraw aid for the Aswan Dam project, and against whom Nasser was reacting, had no financial stake in the Suez Canal Company and

(38) Ibid.

(39) RONDOT, P. op. cit., p. 156.

(40) Decree of the Egyptian Government, 26th July, 1956.
Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East, p. 167.

(41) Ibid.

American traffic through the Suez Canal was very slight. Consequently American interests were not prejudiced by Nasser's action, whereas with Britain and France, the contrary was true. They were deeply involved with the Suez Canal and had to bear the brunt of Nasser's action. British and French reaction was one of bitter frustration and enragement at Nasser.

The major Western powers condemned Nasser's action and claimed that it violated the 1888 Constantinople Convention and posed a threat to freedom of navigation. The control of the Canal by a single country without any international control was deemed to be intolerable.⁽⁴²⁾ In August, 1956 an international conference in London, despite the opposition of the Soviet Union and other countries, recommended the establishment of an international authority to administer the Suez Canal. Egypt refused to agree and rejected this recommendation as the establishment of "collective colonialism" in Egypt. In October, 1956 the issue was referred to the Security Council, but predictably Russia vetoed a Security Council resolution. During the crisis period following the nationalisation decree, the Soviet Union was not slow in giving Egypt full political and diplomatic support, but was cautious not to commit itself to any pledge of military support. Obviously, since there was no other method by which British and French interests could be peacefully reasserted, the only solution for Britain and France was to accept the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company as a *fait accompli*, or to resort to force to re-occupy the Canal. The attitude of the United States towards the use of force, however, was ambiguous and equivocal.⁽⁴³⁾ It seemed that the primary aim of the United States was to use economic measures and world opinion against Egypt. After the nationalisation of the Suez Canal, the United States and Britain stopped economic aid, froze Egyptian foreign exchange and instituted an economic blockade. These efforts were partially neutralised by an arrangement of the Communist bloc to purchase Egyptian cotton and to ship wheat, oil, machinery and medicines to Egypt.

The nationalisation of the Suez Canal also led to

(42) SIR ANTHONY EDEN's record of the view of Dulles at a meeting on 1st August, 1956. Reprinted in: Suez and Sinai, p. 39.

(43) Ibid. The United States did not exclude the use of force if all other methods failed, but see DULLES speech at a Press Conference on 13th September 1956. Reprinted in: Suez and Sinai, in which the United States become vague and uncertain and McDERMOTT, G. The Eden Legacy and the Decline of British Diplomacy. Leslie Frewin, London, 1969, pp. 135, 140, (that the United States would not support the use of force).

increasing British and French disillusionment with American policy in Egypt. The United States not only followed an ambiguous and equivocal policy in the Arab-Israeli conflict, but also compromised the interests of Britain and France in the face of pan-Arabic hostility. The divergence between the United States on the one hand, and Britain and France on the other, in following a common policy, now ripened to the ultimate stage where Britain and France secretly agreed to disregard the United Nations and the United States⁽⁴⁴⁾ and to take matters into their own hands by resorting to force.

The interest of France to topple Nasser was motivated by a multiplicity of reasons. The struggle of French imperial interests in the Maghrib against Arab nationalism involved Nasser. From Radio Cairo came voluble and violent support for the Arab nationalists in Algeria; from Egypt, so the French claimed, came arms for the Algerian insurgents.

French co-operation with Israel was open and official. The French no longer had friends in the Arab world, but the British were still involved with Jordan and Iraq and British economy relied heavily on Arab oil.

Nasser was supported by every Arab government except Lebanon, who followed a non-committal policy, and the Iraqi government, who followed an ambivalent policy by endorsing the legal right of the Egyptian government to nationalise the canal, while carefully refraining from expressing open criticism of British policy. Of course popular Arab opinion throughout the Arab world was enthusiastic in its support of Nasser, and Nasser's prestige soared. An immediate effect of this sudden surge of support expressed itself in Jordan with the election of an almost wholly pro-Egyptian parliament on the 21st October, 1956 and two days after the Jordanian elections the new government concluded the military alliance with Egypt and Syria to which an earlier reference has been made.⁽⁴⁵⁾ The die was now cast, and the stage set for military operations.

(44) KHOURY, F.J. op. cit., p. 212.

Speech by Eisenhower to the American people on 31st October, 1956. Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East, p. 170. ("The United States was not consulted in any way about any phase of these actions. Nor were we informed of them in advance").

McDERMOTT, G. op. cit., p. 143.

(45) Cf. Chapter VII, p. 121.

3. SINAI WAR

The Sinai War, described by Israeli sources as a so-called pre-emptive war,⁽⁴⁶⁾ was launched by Israel on the 29th October, 1956, in collusion with Britain and France,⁽⁴⁷⁾ and for the two Western Powers the venture ended in a complete debacle.

During the course of the military operations the United Nations was galvanised into a period of diplomatic frenzy, with the United States assuming a leading role in marshalling opposition to the Western participants of the war. The United States submitted a severe motion of censure against Britain, France and Israel. Britain and France vetoed this resolution. The majority of the Security Council thereupon convened an emergency session of the General Assembly, which, on the 2nd November called for an immediate cease-fire and demanded that Britain and France should evacuate their forces from Egyptian territory, and that Israel should withdraw her forces to the demarcation lines established in the armistice agreement. On the 5th November, the General Assembly also resolved to establish a United Nations Emergency Force "to secure and supervise the cessation of hostilities".

On the 6th November, Great Britain and France, bowing to the international storm created by their ill-conceived assault, to American pressure, as well as intense internal political opposition, agreed to a cease-fire and to withdraw as soon as their forces could be replaced by the United Nations Emergency Force. On the 8th November Israel conditionally agreed to withdraw from most of the territory it had occupied.

The Soviet Union, ever vigilant to exploit the mistakes of the West, and realising that, since the policy of the United States aimed at containing the Sinai War and undoing its damage, the danger of any United States involvement in a

(46) ALLON, Y. op. cit., pp. 56, 57.

(47) WILLIAMS, A. Britain and France in the Middle East and North Africa. London, MacMillan, 1968, pp. 127, 128.

SAFRAN, N. op. cit., p. 51.

See also details of the Anglo-French meeting in Paris, 16th October, 1956, and the SÉVRES Agreement. Reprinted in: Suez and Sinai (BROWNE, H. ed.) p. 53 et. seq.

McDERMOTT, G. op. cit., p. 145.

military conflict was minimal, became increasingly threatening to the undoubted gratification of Nasser. Apart from an infamous threat to Great Britain and France to use rockets against them if they did not desist immediately,⁽⁴⁸⁾ the Soviet Union threatened Israel's continued existence.⁽⁴⁹⁾

The Sinai War only involved the Egyptian front, and Syria and Jordan did not come to the assistance of Egypt notwithstanding the military alliance concluded less than a week before the outbreak of the war. Iraq's passivity is not surprising since Iraq was not only allied to Great Britain but hostile to Egypt, and Lebanon of course has little inclination to become involved in the conflict.

The Sinai War, like any major military operation, had far-reaching consequences in a local, regional and global context.

4. THE AFTERMATH OF THE SINAI WAR

(a) Arab-Israeli Conflict

The Sinai War did not end in a complete debacle for Israel since the United Nations Emergency Force was stationed in the Gaza Strip to prevent its future use as a base of armed infiltration and aggression and Israel secured the removal of the Egyptian blockade to the Gulf of Aqaba. Israel, however, failed to prevail upon the United Nations to resolve to demilitarise the Sinai peninsula, or to prevent the return of Egypt to the Gaza Strip. Israel, in fact, was not greatly reassured that she was to be secure from an Egyptian attack in the future. Nevertheless for several years after the Sinai War, the Arab-Israeli armistice lines were to remain relatively quiet, and the war did relieve Israel of the intolerable situation of mounting violence on the Egyptian border.

Israel reluctantly agreed to withdraw Israeli troops from Sharm el-Sheikh on the 1st March, 1957, following a declaration by the United States that it "believes that the Gulf comprehends international waters and that no nation has the right to prevent free and innocent passage in the Gulf and through the Straits giving access thereto" and that "in the absence of some overriding decision to the contrary, as by the

(48) Letter by Bulganin to Eden on 5th November, 1956.
Reprinted in: Suez and Sinai (BROWNE, H. ed.) p. 70.

(49) BEN GURION, D. op. cit., p. 137 (Quoting verbatim the contents of a letter by Marshal N. Bulganin, then President of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union dated 5th November, 1956).

International Court of Justice, the United States, on behalf of vessels of United States registry, is prepared to exercise the right of free and innocent passage and to join with others to secure general recognition of this right.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Israel's right of passage as embodied in this declaration, was affirmed by the world's leading maritime states including France, Argentina, Holland, Norway, Belguim, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Canada, Portugal, Italy and Denmark. Furthermore, as a precautionary measure to ensure Israeli freedom of navigation, the United Nations Emergency Force was moved into the Straits area following the withdrawal of the Israeli forces.

In the declaration of the 1st March, 1957, the Israeli agreement to withdraw from the Sinai and Sharm el-Sheikh, expressly stated that "interference, by armed forces, with ships of Israeli flag exercising free and innocent right of passage in the Gulf of Aqaba and through the Straits of Tiran will be regarded by Israel as an attack entitling it to exercise its inherent right of self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter and to take all such measures as are necessary to ensure the free and innocent passage of its ships in the Gulf and in the Straits".⁽⁵¹⁾

Israeli misgivings that her free and unobstructed rights of navigation in the Straits of Tiran had not been properly secured, were clearly apparent from the negotiations between Israel and the United States preceding the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Sharm el-Sheikh. The seeds of the next Arab-Israeli conflict were well and truly planted in 1957. Israel's warning that recognition of the right of undisturbed passage in the Straits of Tiran did not itself guarantee that right for Israel, as had been shown in the case of the Suez Canal, went unheeded. The Israeli demand that an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the Straits of Tiran be preceded by an effective settlement of the problems confronting her, were compromised to Israel's detriment. Israel was assured by the United States that it would use its influence, in concert with other members of the United Nations, to protect Israeli interests by the implementation of measures in the United Nations. Israel was exhorted to accept that "a tranquil

(50) Aide Memoire from Secretary of State Dulles to Abba Eban the Israeli Ambassador to the United States on 11th February, 1957. Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East, p. 181.

(51) Excerpts from a statement by the Israeli Foreign Minister Golda Meir in the United Nations General Assembly, 1st March, 1957. Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East, p. 181.

future for Israel is best assured by reliance upon that fact, rather than by an occupation in defiance of the overwhelming judgment of the world community".⁽⁵²⁾ This soothing, diplomatic glibness would be exposed as a sham a decade later in the events leading to the June War. The United Nations is probably the last body capable of ensuring "a tranquil future for Israel", since the effectiveness of this body is paralysed by procedural weaknesses inherent in the use of a veto power; national interests override pledges to uphold to the principles of the Charter, and Great Power rivalry dominates all other considerations. Guarantees to secure rights by friendly states operating outside the United Nations have proved valueless. Why, therefore, should they be any more effective under the aegis of the United Nations?

The right of Egypt to withdraw its consent to the stationing of the United Nations Emergency Force on its territory, was allowed to remain enveloped in ambiguity and uncertainty.⁽⁵³⁾ Israel with prophetic foreboding expressed her concern about the situation which would arise if the Force, having taken up its position in the Straits of Tiran, were withdrawn in conditions which might give rise to interference with free and innocent navigation and, therefore, to the renewal of hostilities.⁽⁵⁴⁾ It was pointed out that such a premature cessation of the precautionary measures taken by the United Nations for the prevention of belligerent acts would prejudice important international interests and threaten peace and security.⁽⁵⁵⁾ Israel, however, accepted the assurance of the Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold that any proposal for the withdrawal of the Force would first be submitted to the General Assembly for prior considerations, and in "the light of these doctrines, policies and arrangements by the United Nations and the maritime Powers my (the Israeli) Government is confident that free and innocent passage for international and Israeli shipping will continue to be fully maintained after Israel's withdrawal".⁽⁵⁶⁾

(52) Aide Memoire from Mr. Dulles to Mr. Eban on 11th February, 1957. Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East, p. 182.

(53) Secret aide memoire prepared by Dag Hammarskjold on the 5th August, 1957, relating to the presence and functions of the United Nations Emergency Force. Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East, p. 176 et. seq.

(54) Statement by Golda Meir on 1st March, 1957, p. 183.

(55) Ibid.

(56) Ibid.

The right of Israel to free and unobstructed navigational rights in the Straits of Tiran was, in the absence of agreement by the littoral states Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, simply asserted factually, and as long as passage could be guaranteed by the United Nations Emergency Force. Egypt, in consenting to the stationing of the Force at Sharm el-Sheikh, could not be said to have thereby bound itself to any juridical acknowledgment that the Straits was an international waterway or that Israeli shipping was entitled to navigational rights. Egypt, in fact, had conceded nothing except a factual situation imposed upon her and that Egypt would not withdraw its consent to the stationing of the United Nations Emergency Force on Egyptian territory until their task, as defined in the Resolution of the General Assembly on the 5th November, 1956 (draft Resolution A/3290), had been completed.⁽⁵⁷⁾ If a difference should develop as to when the presence of the Force on Egyptian Territory was no longer required, the matter "should be brought up for negotiation with the United Nations" and Egypt.⁽⁵⁸⁾

Nevertheless, Israeli shipping was still denied the use of the Suez Canal - a fact which continued to embitter Israel - and Israel had been unable to force Egypt to conclude a peace treaty. Israel, as a result of the pressures of international political activity, had been unable to achieve any of her major objectives notwithstanding the success of Israeli military operations during the Sinai War.

The Sinai War neither resolved the Arab-Israeli conflict, nor did it transform the character of the conflict. Indeed, instead of bringing peace nearer, the Sinai War served to exacerbate the Arab-Israeli conflict. The war served to increase Arab hatred and fear of Israel, stimulated the Arab desire for revenge and stiffened the Arab resolution never to conclude a peace with Israel. The manifest Israeli collusion with Britain and France gave substance to the Arab conviction that Israel was a tool of Western imperialism, thereby making the eradication of Israel all the more desirable.

(b) Egypt and Inter-Arab Relations

The Sinai War did not seriously inconvenience Egypt,

(57) Secret aide memoire by Secretary-General on the 5th August, 1957, Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East, pp. 176, 177, 180.

(58) Ibid.

notwithstanding the temporary occupation of Port Said and Suez by Anglo-French forces. The Sinai peninsula was not an area of Egyptian settlement and no refugee problem arose. The temporary loss of control of the Gaza Strip meant nothing to Egypt. The war did not seriously affect Egypt's economy involving only a temporary loss of canal revenues and of military equipment in the Sinai to the Israelis. The Canal was soon cleared of obstructions and resumed an efficient service under exclusive and undisputed Egyptian control. The loss of military equipment was soon replaced, and in any event Egypt replenished her arsenal by seizing the huge British military stores in the Canal Zone.

With the withdrawal of the much-chastened Britain and France from Egypt, all the circumstances were opportune for Nasser to pursue his ambitions to reshape the entire Arab world. Nasser basked in the popular acclaim of the Arab masses who were enthralled both by the drama and the astuteness of his political strategy, and captivated by his dynamic leadership. The dismal performance of the Egyptian army was overlooked, and the Sinai War was regarded as a great victory for Arab nationalism, engineered by the greatest nationalist of them all. As a result, Nasser was able to appeal directly to the Arab masses across political frontiers and over the heads of hostile governments - that is, governments deemed to be hostile to Nasser's revolutionary Arab Socialism. Neither were the Arab heads of government, designated to be the opponents, slow to realise that their leadership was being undermined by Nasser.

Revolutionary Arab Socialism was projected as the ideological concomitant to Arab unity, and increasingly the enemies of Arabism were held to be the "reactionary" Arab states, the hereditary monarchs, oligarchic politicians and wealthy landowners, who found it easier to obstruct reforms by keeping the Arab world divided.⁽⁵⁹⁾

The stage was set for the post-Sinai confrontation, between the so-called "progressive" Arab states and the "reactionary" Arab states supported by the East and the West respectively, a period during which the Arab-Israeli conflict was relegated to the sidelines.

(c) East-West Confrontation

The Sinai War, from the point of view of the West,

(59) KERR, M. The Arab Cold War 1958 - 1967, 2nd edition, London, Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 1.

was an exercise of frustration which gained absolutely nothing for the West. British prestige and influence in the Southern Tier had been dealt a major blow, and the Sinai War marked the complete eclipse of British power and influence in Egypt. If Britain, and to a lesser extent France, had been able to retain their great prestige and influence in the Southern Tier, they might have been able, in the years ahead, to play a powerful role in support of the United States or to act as mediators or balancers in the bipolar struggle developing between the two major powers along the pattern of the classical Eastern Question before 1914.

The American reaction to the Sinai War remains enigmatic, and for a brief period the United States and the Soviet Union shared the unique experience of a convergence of political outlook and diplomatic activity. The conduct of the United States must have been motivated by the conviction that Britain, France and Israel had to withdraw from Egyptian territory if the United States, in particular, and the West in general, were to retain any influence in the Arab world and to counter Soviet intrusion. However, while the eventual withdrawal of British, American and Israeli forces was inevitable, the reaction of the United States was far too hasty and the West did not gain simply because of the immediate withdrawal of Anglo-French forces so precipitously engineered by the United States. The Soviet Union did not possess any military strength in the Mediterranean to influence the course of events, and in any event the Soviet Union was not prepared to become involved in any confrontation with the West over Egypt. The United States was not required to participate in the fighting, such as there was, to oppose the Anglo-French landing.

American diplomatic activity, instead of allying itself to Russia against Western friends, could have played a far more constructive role by acting as an intermediary or referee in the dispute between Anglo-French interests and Egypt, and by helping Britain and France to save face rather than by administering them a humiliating rebuff. The Sinai War, having been launched, may not have resulted in a complete debacle had the United States not over-reacted.

The equivocal and vacillating attitude of the United States towards the interests of Britain and France and Israel emboldened Nasser and allowed the Soviet Union to penetrate the Southern Tier with a minimum of risk to itself. An equally equivocal attitude has never been discernible in the conduct of the Soviet Union in the assertion

of Soviet rights and influence in Eastern Europe. American or Western penetration in this sphere of Russian influence has never been allowed to take root.

Unfortunately American diplomacy had never asserted itself forcefully in its confrontation with Nasser's Egypt, and instead the United States sought to counter Russian influence by competing for Egyptian favours. The irony of the situation is this: that although the United States was prepared to sacrifice British treaty rights in Egypt in the interests of the bipolar struggle, American efforts on behalf of the Arab states earned her very little goodwill or lasting benefits. The United States did not succeed in neutralising the effect of the Sinai War in the bipolar struggle because the Soviet Union, in her support of the Arab cause, had enhanced her status and prestige in the eyes of the Arab world and had won recognition of her right to intervene in the Southern Tier and exercise a voice in its affairs.

The United States, in forcing a retreat of British paramouncy in the Southern Tier, now had to assume a vast load of added responsibility. Hitherto the United States was content to play a subsidiary role to Anglo-French political paramouncy in the Southern Tier although desirous of extending the regional security system to the Southern Tier. The retreat of British paramouncy now meant that the remaining vestige of British influence in the Southern Tier had to be supplemented by the diplomatic support of the United States and the military capacity of the Sixth Fleet. Soviet-Western rivalry was actually transformed into Soviet-American rivalry. This development conformed to the political phenomenon in the Middle East in the post-war world: the general decline of British power, and the emergence of the bipolar confrontation. In the Northern Tier Britain accepted the retrenchment of power. In the Southern Tier, Britain attempted to resist that retrenchment by the use of force, but the end result remained the same.

Britain and France, in launching an attack on Egypt, had failed to realise the significance of the Arms Deal. No longer could the Southern Tier of the Middle East be regarded as the exclusive preserve of Western paramouncy. The intrusion of Russia and the United States in the Southern Tier had transformed the character of the political confrontation in the Southern Tier into a global Cold War issue, to which British and French interests were subordinated.

Soviet support of Egypt in the aftermath of the

Sinai War was purely diplomatic and can hardly be said to exceed the diplomatic support which Egypt enjoyed from the United States. The Soviet threat to use rockets against Britain and France had no practical effect, since they would, in any case, have withdrawn because of pressure exerted by the United States, and in the case of Britain, the internal opposition of the Labour Party became extremely vehement. The irony, therefore, of Arab reaction to the United States and the Soviet Union - of indifference and gratitude respectively - in a situation where both powers had acted in concert, can only be attributed to the fact that the United States was identified in Arab eyes as a Western power whose policies were closely allied to that of Britain, France and Israel. By the same token the United States failed to realise that pan-Arabic hostility towards the West in general, and Egyptian nationalist hostility to Britain and France in particular, possessed the same basic anti-Western motivations, and that in the long term the United States would have to counter this hostility, instead of competing with the Soviet Union for its favours.

The Arab reaction was understandable, since apart from the anti-Western character of pan-Arabic sentiment, American diplomacy was inconsistent and pragmatic. America opposed the nationalisation of the Canal in diplomatic and political moves preceding the Sinai War, possibly because it regarded nationalisation as being directed not only at Britain and France, but also as an anti-Western move in the Cold War. The opposition of the United States to a military solution of the problem implied her acceptance of the fait accompli of nationalisation, but the American attitude must have been ambiguous even to Britain and France. The American reaction during the Sinai War may have seemed to the Arabs to be somewhat belated, but consistent with American and Russian competition for their favours.

The significance of the Sinai War can be summarised as follows:-

- (1) The Sinai War served to illustrate the fact that war between Israel and the Arab states is always an immediate possibility.
- (2) Israel, in the political settlement following the Sinai War, was forced to abandon all military gains.

- (3) The political settlement was completely unsatisfactory as to its terms and definition. The more obscure provisions of the settlement inhibited its effectiveness as a means of circumventing any future military confrontation.
- (4) Britain and France were administered a humiliating rebuff and British paramouncy suffered a severe setback. Henceforth the United States would be drawn directly into the regional conflicts as the major Western power.
- (5) Nasser emerged as a leader of international stature and as the foremost proponent of Arab nationalism. This development portended the struggle between pan-Arabic aspirations and the West.

C H A P T E R VIII

INTER-ARAB COLD WAR AND THE POWER STRUGGLE

The period which followed the Sinai War until the Iraqi Revolution in 1958 largely concerns the bitter struggle between pan-Arabic aspirations directed by Nasser and supported by the Soviet Union and the remaining pro-Western bastions in the Southern Tier. The inter-relation of these events with the Arab-Israeli conflict is only marginal.

The main aim of the present chapter will be to determine the extent to which the Arab-Israeli conflict, although excluded from the main stream of these events, was influenced by the struggle between pan-Arabic nationalism and the West. It is desirable to focus attention on this aspect for the purpose of obtaining a proper perspective of all features of the Arab-Israeli conflict particularly during the second stage of confrontation in the burgeoning Cold War conflict.⁽¹⁾

Although Arab nationalism is violently hostile in its confrontation towards Israel and does not find a response to this attitude from the West, these twin facts do not wholly alienate Arab nationalism from the West. Undoubtedly the Arab-Israeli conflict is an aggravating factor in the relationship between Arab nationalism and the West, but merely so. What, therefore, are the cardinal factors which brought the West into confrontation with the forces of Arab nationalism and strengthened Soviet influence in the Southern Tier after the Sinai War?

1. ARAB NATIONALISM AND THE EISENHOWER DOCTRINE: A
BACKGROUND STUDY

Although nationalism is a comparatively recent development in the Arab world, it has progressively acquired a new depth of meaning. Initially it represented little more than a desire for independence; to this was added the pan-Arabic ideal of a fusion of all the Arab states into a single political union to give concrete expression to the close ethnic and linguistic affinity of the Arab people.

However, the political revolution had to be accompanied by its social counterpart. The beginning of industrialisation, rapid urbanisation, the population explosion and the growth of a working class required a new ordering of society, a transformation in the social institutions and cultural values of the Arab world. Arab Socialism, heavily emphasising

(1) Cf. Chapter I, p. 7.

an indigenous Socialist character, was presented as the ideological counterpart of Arab nationalism through which a new social Utopia could be realised.

In their attitude towards states outside the Arab world, the Arab nationalists sought to avoid entanglements, to be neutral while profiting from the East-West conflict.

Nasser provided the main impetus to these forces. There is probably a logical rationale for his preoccupation with Arab nationalism.⁽²⁾ Since Egypt cannot hope to prosper by its own meagre resources, a political union with such states as Libya, Kuwait or Iraq would redound to Egypt's economic advantage. By combining Egypt's valuable human resources in the form of highly skilled labour with the material riches of the Arab oil states, the Egyptian economy would be bolstered. Moreover, the realisation of Nasser's pan-Arabic ideals would result in his political hegemony over the entire Southern Tier.

Nasser could rely on sympathy and support from the Soviet Union, since Arab nationalism and Soviet foreign policy enjoyed a primary common aim of eliminating all Western influence from the Southern Tier. This identification of interests does not result in the equation of Arab nationalism and Communism, since both movements are not only distinct entities, but are basically antithetical and can at times even come into conflict if the Arab nationalists, or the Soviet Union, deem it to be in their national interests. Consequently, the nexus between Arab nationalism and Soviet foreign policy based as it is on the expediency of national interests rather than on some deeper affinity, is bound to be tenuous and, in the long run, uncertain as to the extent to which either will be prepared to commit itself in support of the other.

Nonetheless, the eradication or weakening of Western influence in the Southern Tier had the inevitable adjunct that Soviet influence would be promoted. This, in turn, became the criterion by which all events were judged both by the West and the Soviet Union.

The United States policy towards the radical Arab nationalism personified by Nasser was at first not hostile, and it was hoped that Nasser's regime could become a valuable ally. However, Nasser was soon adjudged to be hostile to the West and far too susceptible to Soviet overtures. The United

(2) HARBISON, F. Two Centers of Arab Power in Foreign Affairs, Vol. 37, No. 4, July 1959, p. 678.

States now realised with alarm that there was little opposition to Nasser's ambitions in the Arab world. The other Arab governments were intimidated by his popularity and divided among themselves.

To ward off the threat of increasing Russian influence, and as a necessary corollary, Nasser's ambitions in the Southern Tier, the United States formulated the Eisenhower Doctrine by which the United States sought to rally the so-called "reactionary" Arab governments against the twin threat.

2. THE EISENHOWER DOCTRINE

The Eisenhower Doctrine was announced on the 5th January, 1957 and was formally ratified by the American Congress on the 9th March, 1957. The Eisenhower Doctrine was based on the contention that the instability in the Middle East "has been heightened, and, at times, manipulated by International Communism",⁽³⁾ and "International Communism, of course, seeks to mask its purposes of domination by expressions of good-will and by superficially attractive offers of political, economic and military aid. But any free nation, which is the subject of Soviet enticement, ought, in elementary wisdom, to look behind the mask".⁽⁴⁾

The new programme envisaged economic aid and military assistance including not only the supply of arms but also the employment of the armed forces of the United States to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of any country which requested such aid and was faced by "overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by International Communism".⁽⁵⁾ The Doctrine contemplated the use of American armed power to confront the Russian military machine, that is, a clash of armies, if this became necessary. The Doctrine thereby considerably extended the American commitment in the region.

The Eisenhower Doctrine was equivocal about the circumstances in which a country falls under the "control of International Communism", and this equivocation made for a flexibility of interpretation. It cannot be doubted that President Eisenhower was aware, at the outset, of the broader implications of the Doctrine as presenting a confrontation with

(3) Message from President Eisenhower to Congress, 5th January, 1957. Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East, p. 87.

(4) Ibid., p. 88.

(5) Ibid., p. 91.

radical Arab nationalism, but he was obliged to underlie its purpose as being directed solely against the threat of International Communism. The United States could not wish to assume the open and direct role of an opponent of Arab nationalism, except when it was forced to do so if that nationalism was employed by Nasser as an instrument of indirect aggression against the pro-Western Arab states in the Southern Tier.

The Eisenhower Doctrine clearly recognises that its programme is not intended to solve all the problems of the Middle East, which includes the Arab-Israeli conflict. These problems, it is stated, are aggravated by International Communism, but they would exist quite apart from this threat.

It is now necessary to examine the outcome of the Eisenhower Doctrine insofar as it affected the position of the Western powers and the Soviet Union.

3. SEQUELS TO THE EISENHOWER DOCTRINE

The "reactionary" Lebanese, Libyan and Saudi Arabian governments publicly endorsed the Eisenhower Doctrine, and condemned Egypt for opening the door to the spread of Communism in the area. On the other hand Hussein was faced with the opposition of a pro-Egyptian parliament and could not adhere formally to the Eisenhower Doctrine. Syria at this time was moving towards a closer relationship with Egypt and the Soviet Union, with whom they had already concluded an arms agreement, and unhesitatingly rejected the Doctrine stating that "the Eisenhower Doctrine and the Baghdad Pact were one and the same thing".⁽⁶⁾

The endorsement of Saudi Arabia and Lebanon was particularly important since Saudi Arabia had sided with Egypt against the Baghdad Pact and Lebanon had been neutral in inter-Arab affairs.

A series of crises followed the endorsement of the Eisenhower Doctrine, and the price paid for this support was high. The Soviet agreement on the 6th August to provide massive aid for Syrian economic development and Syria's appointment of a pro-Soviet chief-of-staff were interpreted as serious defeats for United States policy.⁽⁷⁾ An attempt

(6) RONDOT, P. The Changing Patterns of the Middle East. New York, Praeger, 1961, p. 166.

(7) NOLTE, R.H. and POLK, W.R. Towards a Policy for the Middle East in Foreign Affairs, July 1958, Vol. 36, No. 4, p. 645.

by pro-Western elements supported by Iraq and the United States failed to overthrow the Syrian government, and the United States thereupon sought to invoke the Eisenhower Doctrine against Syria in September, 1957, by suggesting that Syria was slipping towards communism and constituted a threat to its neighbours. Turkish troops were massed on the Syrian northern border and the Sixth Fleet was deployed in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Soviet Union warned that it would not tolerate aggression against Syria, and Egypt followed up an offer of military assistance by landing Egyptian troops at Latakia on the 13th October. In addition Egypt launched a massive propaganda campaign designed to arouse the Arab people against the governments who had endorsed the Eisenhower Doctrine.

The crisis was defused when the Arab governments adhering to the Doctrine, from fear of war and public opinion, denied that they viewed Syria as a threat and joined with Egypt and Syria in declaring their opposition to any interference in the domestic affairs of another country. The United States was able to extricate itself from a difficult situation but certainly did not enhance American prestige in the Arab world. Egypt and the Soviet Union grasped the opportunity to accuse, with telling effect, the United States of using imperialist aggression and force and the Soviet Union gained credit as the protector of Syrian independence from American aggression.

On the 1st February, 1958, Syria and Egypt merged to form the United Arab Republic. Syria had a number of motives in forming a union with Egypt:

- (i) A union gave practical expression to the ideological urge for pan-Arabic unity and revolutionary socialism subscribed to by both Nasser and the ardent Ba'ath Party in Syria.
- (ii) The Syrian regime had developed a sense of insecurity and isolation resulting from its encirclement by pro-Western states, and in its reaction turned to Egypt and the Soviet Union for protection.
- (iii) The strongly oriented Syrian nationalists preferred preserving Syria's entity by a union with Egypt to continuing to expose Syria to the danger of absorption in Iraq's Fertile Crescent Scheme.
- (iv) They also hoped that their union would, in turn, exert pressure on Jordan (where public opinion was

on their side, and on Lebanon, thus precipitating the avalanche of a more comprehensive Arab unity.⁽⁸⁾ Finally, an intricate tangle of internal political power struggles involving several parties and factions influenced the Syrian merger with Egypt.

The Eisenhower Doctrine had crumbled at its first major confrontation with Egypt, and the countries that the Doctrine had intended to protect (viz. the Syrian neighbours), had denied the need for such protection. Henceforth American opposition to Egypt had to be pursued directly and openly, and without resorting to the ambiguity of the Eisenhower Doctrine.

Neither Jordan nor Iraq tried to conceal their disgruntlement at the birth of the United Arab Republic, and their answer, as though to illustrate the strength of the movement for Arab unity, took the same form; the two Hashemite kingdoms announced their federation as an "Arab Union" so as to create a "new pole of attraction".⁽⁹⁾ However, this so-called union quickly proved to be insubstantial in conformity with the patent nature of the motives of its subscribers.

More serious was the effect of the popular support for the United Arab Republic, heightened to a fever pitch during demonstrations in parts of Lebanon, in Jordan, Jerusalem, Nablus and Salt, Kuwait and various places in Iraq. In the end a civil war was triggered off in Lebanon by the assassination in Beirut on the 7th May, 1958, of a leading opposition journalist. The Americans, however, worried by the complexities of Lebanese politics and the probable reaction of Lebanese nationalists, hesitated for a long time before intervening.

The Iraqi revolution on the 14th July precipitated the developing crisis between the pro-Western Arab states and Nasser. On the same day the United States received an urgent request from President Chamoun of Lebanon requesting that United States troops be stationed in Lebanon. The United States was advised that without "an immediate showing of United States support, the government of Lebanon would be unable to survive".⁽¹⁰⁾ It became necessary for the Western powers to forestall a chain reaction that would overthrow these regimes. In his message to Congress, explaining the background to the Lebanese crisis,

(8) KERR, M. The Arab Cold War 1958-1967, 2nd edition, London, Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 22.

(9) SAFRAN, N. From War to War. United States, Western Publishing, 1968, p. 71.

(10) Special message from President Eisenhower to Congress on the sending of United States Forces to Lebanon, July 15, 1958. Reprinted in: Documents on the Middle East, p. 95.

President Eisenhower accused the United Arab Republic of supporting the "insurrection" in the Lebanon "to overthrow the legally constituted government of Lebanon and to install by violence a government which would subordinate the independence of Lebanon to the policies of the United Arab Republic".⁽¹¹⁾ Although, he stated, there had been a basis for hope that difficulties in Lebanon could be peacefully resolved, the situation was radically changed by the revolution in Iraq, which was supported by elements "strongly sympathetic to the United Arab Republic". The President concluded that it "is clear that the events which have been occurring in Lebanon represent indirect aggression from without, and that such aggression endangers the independence and integrity of Lebanon".⁽¹²⁾

The Eisenhower Doctrine was invoked to justify the intervention of the United States in Lebanon against instigation by the United Arab Republic, although neither Egypt nor Syria can be described as states dominated by International Communism. President Eisenhower, in justifying American intervention, did not make any reference to International Communism either.

On the 16th July the Americans landed forces in Lebanon. On the same day the British landed forces in Jordan, at the invitation of Hussein, to ward off the threat to Hussein's regime. Although Nasser denounced the British occupation, he, paradoxically enough, indirectly benefited thereby.⁽¹³⁾ Egyptian hostility to Jordan was (and still is) faced by the dilemma that the overthrow of Hussein, while it might promote the cause of Arab unity, would exacerbate the Arab-Israeli conflict and present Israel with a justifiable excuse to intervene in inter-Arab affairs. The problem confronting Egypt, therefore, was to determine the extent of Israeli reaction to the overthrow of the Hashemite regime. Israel was, and is, interested in Jordan's continued existence as a viable state and in Hussein's control thereof if only for the reasons that Hussein's relatively moderate approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict facilitates the problems of co-existence, in addition to which Hussein is a divisive force in the pan-Arabic vision of a political union. The United Arab Republic, Iraq or any other Arab state certainly lacked the

(11) Ibid., p. 96.

(12) Ibid.

(13) KERR, M. op. cit., p. 27.

means to assure the future of Jordan against Israeli intervention if Hussein were to be overthrown, and consequently it is an acceptable proposition that the British response of stationing troops in Jordan averted a disaster for the United Arab Republic and Israel. The best guarantee for Hussein's survival is the confusion which would follow if he were overthrown. On the other hand, the intervention of Britain in the domestic affairs of Jordan acted as an inhibition of the Arab-Israeli conflict and frustrated the movement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in finding its own ultimate solution.

The gravest crisis in the Southern Tier for the West was undoubtedly the Iraqi Revolution, and the success of this revolution was the clearest indication that the Eisenhower Doctrine had been formulated in terms which rendered it inadequate to protect Western interests against the new forces operating in the Arab world. Why could the Eisenhower Doctrine not have been applied to a state such as Iraq to frustrate the revolutionary forces operating against the pro-Western Hashemite regime?

4. THE IRAQI REVOLUTION

The Eisenhower Doctrine could not be applied to the Iraqi situation since the Iraqi revolutionaries had effectively destroyed the Hashemite regime of Faisal II and his perennial supporter and mentor, Nuri as-Said. A request for aid from the United States in the form of direct military intervention could not be made. This requirement of the Eisenhower Doctrine is an incontrovertible fact and does not lend itself to any equivocal or flexible interpretation.

Turkish troops began to mass on Iraq's borders and would probably have been used to suppress the revolution in Iraq if the opportunity had presented itself.⁽¹⁴⁾ The reaction of Nasser and the Russians was directed particularly at the danger of Western intervention in Iraq.⁽¹⁵⁾ In Damascus Nasser made public an order for general mobilisation, and he proclaimed his intention to support the Iraqi revolution without reservation. Simultaneously the Russians announced manoeuvres on their southern borders and began to mass troops and equipment in the Caucasus.

Thus a second crisis arose within ten months but

(14) SAFRAN, N. op. cit., p. 116.

(15) Ibid.

again a direct confrontation was avoided and the crisis defused when it became apparent that there was no support left in Iraq for the Hashemite regime. The United States too refused to use Hussein's claim to be the constitutional head of the Arab Union of Iraq and Jordan, as an excuse to intervene. Needless to say, Iraq repudiated the Arab Union and was proclaimed a Republic.

The civil war in Lebanon and the Iraqi revolution brought pan-Arab expectations to their height, and momentarily it seemed as if the predestined day was at hand,⁽¹⁶⁾ but the expectations turned sour. The Lebanese crisis was settled peacefully, and President Chamoung was succeeded by a compromise regime acceptable to the various Lebanese factions. The continuation of Lebanese independence was also secured. The danger in Jordan to Hussein's regime was averted. American and British troops in Lebanon and Jordan were withdrawn. The Iraqi revolution, it transpired, was not an ideological eruption engineered by radical Arab nationalists of the Nasser ilk, but was an explosion brought about by the discontent of many political and social elements of Iraq's fragmented society against the old oligarchy: Kurds and Shi'ites as well as Sunni Arabs, Communists as well as Nationalists.⁽¹⁷⁾ For the United Arab Republic the strange new Iraqi coalition regime headed by General Kassem defied conventional revolutionary expectations and explanations. He failed to co-operate in the march towards Arab unity, or even to pay Nasser any of the respect that other revolutionary leaders did. Kassem, in addition, suppressed all signs of pro-Nasser activity in Iraq, and in the process imprisoned Nasser's suspected admirers by the thousands. Kassem emerged as an avowed enemy of Nasser and as a powerful competitor for leadership in the Arab world. He had somehow to be countered, and Nasser reacted by delivering bitter speeches denouncing Kassem as a traitor to Arab nationalism and a "stooge" of International Communism.

The imagination boggles at the thought that Nasser would subscribe to the literal wording of the Eisenhower Doctrine if it were capable of removing his arch-enemy, Kassem.

The geopolitical division in the Arab world between Egypt and Iraq remained a constant factor in spite of the transition of a monarchical Iraq into a republican Iraq.

By the end of 1958, the relations between Iraq and the United Arab Republic was even worse than it had been in

(16) KERR, op. cit., p. 22.

(17) Ibid.

the days of the Hashemite regime. This enmity was to grow to a dreary and inconclusive cold war between the United Arab Republic and Iraq in which incitement to insurrection and interference in each others internal affairs was considered legitimate enterprise.

The Iraqi Revolution completely eliminated British interests in Iraq, and Iraq lost its status as a bulwark of Western influence in the Arab Southern Tier. With the eclipse of Nuri as-Said, the Baghdad Pact came to an abrupt end and the remaining signatories of the Pact were reconstituted, without a Southern Tier Arab state, as the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO). As such it became a far more realistic alignment of forces since its members were far more genuinely concerned about the possibility of a Soviet attack than in the case of Iraq.

With the dissolution of the Baghdad Pact, the Western policy of organising the Arab Southern Tier within the framework of a Western regional defence system, and of linking the Northern Tier with the Southern Tier was finally abandoned, and the United States - as it should have done from the outset - sought to develop different objectives for each region.

Kassem's regime showed no inclination to nationalise the oil industry, and remained on friendly terms with the West.

Again and again the Soviet Union had lent maximum political support to Egypt (and later the United Arab Republic) but at no stage did it ever commit itself to any participation in a war with the West over events in the Southern Tier. Even the holding of manoeuvres in the Caucasus and the massing of troops can only be regarded as sabre rattling. Nasser, on the other hand, was fully prepared to implement his Damascus commitment and take risks that the Soviet Government was not prepared to take.⁽¹⁸⁾

The period 1955 to 1958 constitutes the high-water mark in the conflict between the Western powers and radical Arab nationalism. Thereafter tension was reduced, and it became accepted that although radical Arab nationalism could still present problems for the United States and its allies, it was nevertheless an entity distinct from International

(18) SAFRAN, N. op. cit., p. 117 (Safran quotes as his authority an article by M.H. Heikal, editor of the semi-authoritative Egyptian newspaper Al Ahram in its issue on the 22nd January, 1965, entitled "The Loneliness at the Summit and its Tortures").

Communism, and would ally itself to any movement which would serve its interests. The West was excluded from this possibility because the immediate victims of these interests were pro-Western states. By the end of 1958 the danger of Nasser's usurpation of the pro-Western states had receded and, since the scope of the Eisenhower Doctrine in the Southern Tier area of anti-Communist states was essentially restricted, the Doctrine had outlived its usefulness.

What, however, is the significance of all these events insofar as the Arab-Israeli conflict is concerned, both as a regional conflict and as a factor in the international struggle for power in the Middle East?

5. INTER-ARAB CONFLICTS AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

Certain general observations can be made in answer to the preceding question, and certain general conclusions can be drawn, although all do not necessarily arise from events related in this chapter. They are equally cogent nevertheless:

- (a) The Arab-Israeli conflict is a useful, if not an indispensable, pawn to be exploited in inter-Arab relations as the one common issue over which the otherwise divided Arab states could present a semblance of unity. Conversely the Arab-Israeli conflict is exploited with another twist. For a number of reasons it cannot be expected that all the Arab states will participate in the Arab-Israeli conflict to the same degree or with the same intensity, and this fact is sometimes seized upon as a factor in inter-Arab disputes to question the loyalty of an Arab regime to the cause of Arab nationalism, or to whip up the Arab masses against their government.
- (b) Generally speaking, the weaker the internal authority of an Arab leader, the more unstable his government or the more intense the rivalry he faces at the instance of other Arab leaders, the more he is enslaved to popular pressures, and the more vehement the anti-Israel stand he feels he has to take to bolster his authority. The traditional position of Syria vis-a-vis Egypt over the Israeli issue is a classical example of this point. Syrian regimes, wracked by a series of coups following the Palestine War, divided by internal dissention and upheavals, have always taken a position to the left of Egypt, and Syrian belligerency towards Israel is carefully

devised to be more uncompromising and more intense than Egyptian belligerency. As a result of these exigencies, Arab leaders find it difficult to make any concessions in Arab-Israeli issues. The Arab leaders, for the most part, retain the spirit and the method of revolutionaries.

The intensity of the Arab-Israeli conflict is thus influenced to a large measure by the intensity of inter-Arab conflicts, both between states and also in domestic political conflicts within a State. Inter-Arab conflicts may or may not have an actual nexus with the Arab-Israeli conflict. When they relate to pressures within an Arab state created by the Palestinian refugees, they certainly have a nexus. Jordan and the Lebanon are classical examples. On the other hand, when inter-Arab conflicts are manipulated by Nasser and the Arab-Israeli conflict is exploited in the process, the two issues only bear a fabricated, patent relationship.

- (c) By the same token, even a strong leader such as Nasser was enslaved to his revolutionary image. He had to act the role of a modern Saladin in which Arab imagination had cast him. He had to nurture a dynamic image and act boldly and dramatically. This strategy drew enormous response from the Arab masses, but it reduced his flexibility in dealing with the complex issues of the Arab-Israeli conflict.
- (d) Radical Arab nationalism with its ideological concomitants such as Arab socialism and republicanism is an anathema to the conservative Arab monarchical states. Israel, too, has been unable to come to terms with Arab nationalism. Although anti-Israel sentiment cuts across Arab political divisions, in an inter-Arab crisis conceivably involving a life and death struggle, will there not be a natural affinity of interests between Israel and the threatened monarchy? Clearly the issue can only relate to Hussein's Jordan. The possibility should never be ruled out that in an inter-Arab confrontation of states involving a military struggle, Israel could conceivably intervene because of the greater danger of Arab nationalism.
- (e) During the interregnum of its military confrontation the Arab-Israeli conflict freezes into a status quo which is relatively stable, but each crisis assumes proportions which are widespread. Notwithstanding the ebb and flow of the conflict, its international

character⁽¹⁹⁾ and its interaction in the other spheres of conflict means that it continually demands attention and interest throughout the world. In contrast, inter-Arab conflicts have a more confined, regional character and may, or may not, interact with the international struggle for power in the Middle East.

This major difference between the Arab-Israeli and inter-Arab conflicts serves to create two popularly accepted illusions about the Middle East, both of which are dispelled by a study of inter-Arab relations: that the Arab states are wholly absorbed with the conflict against Israel, and that the Arab-Israeli conflict is the only, or the dominant source of instability in the Middle East. In reality, the Arab states are equally, if not to a greater extent, concerned with their internal Cold War involving shifts in political, diplomatic and ideological alignments. These rivalries were to erupt into a military confrontation in the years ahead.

The parallel between the Arab-Israeli conflict and inter-Arab conflicts is constant in that the world powers, in pursuing their political objectives, have become involved in both conflicts by supporting the Arabs or the Israelis, or one Arab regime against its rivals, or by backing one Arab faction against another, both in internal and external power struggles. This activity in turn intensifies inter-Arab conflicts and converts local conflicts to extensions of the great power struggles. The vicious circle of instability and tension continues. Even projecting a theoretical hypothesis that the Arab-Israeli dispute is eliminated as a factor of Middle Eastern politics, the Arab Southern Tier would still be an area of dangerous instability by reason of the violent and diatribic inter-Arab quarrels, not only between the so-called progressive republican states and the conservative monarchies but also between republican states or the monarchical states or any other combination according to the exigencies of the situation.

The struggle between pan-Arabic nationalism and the West reveals that the Arab nationalists can at best be uncertain allies of the West in any confrontation against the Soviet bloc. Hitherto ideological considerations deemed by

(19) Cf. Chapter I, p. 1.

the West to be important factors in the alignment of forces have not been persuasive factors in the minds of the Arab nationalists.

The struggle between pan-Arabic nationalism and the West serves to throw into sharp relief the position of Israel as the most stable and staunchly pro-Western state in the Southern Tier and its continued existence as such is a matter of vital concern to the West.

6. CONCLUSION

Inter-Arab politics is a study of labyrinthian mazes of intrigue, duplicity and bitter rivalries in which the instability of Arab regimes, both in the domestic sphere and in inter-state relations reaches new dimensions. The United States may be forgiven if at times they seemed to be out of their depth in dealing with the vagaries of local situations.

The United States and Britain - whether or not they purported to act under the aegis of the Eisenhower Doctrine - were successful in protecting the pro-Western states of Jordan and Lebanon, but failed to prevent the merger of Syria with Egypt to overcome the Iraqi Revolution.

The Sinai War, the Iraqi Revolution, the Eisenhower Doctrine and the collapse of the Baghdad Pact are all indications of the extent of the collapse of Western influence in Egypt, Iraq and Syria. Britain and France, of course, were discredited powers in the Southern Tier. The Eisenhower Doctrine, in accepting sole American responsibility to contain Soviet intrusion, recognised that any association with Britain and France could only be a handicap, and the process that began with the Truman Doctrine in the Northern Tier ended with the Eisenhower Doctrine in the Southern Tier.

C H A P T E R IX

CONCLUSION

In the Introduction certain aims were explicitly defined. It now remains to evaluate the meaning and the significance of the years 1948 to 1958 in relation to these aims.

It was suggested at the outset that the interaction of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the international struggle for power during this decade, could be distinguished by three different stages of confrontation corresponding to the difference in the nature, degree and scope of Soviet involvement in the Southern Tier. It is now intended to summarise the salient features of these three stages and to relate them to Western and Soviet policy in the Middle East. In this manner the interaction of the power struggle in the two tiers can be assessed. Thereafter the exacerbation of the Arab-Israeli conflict by great power rivalry, can be dealt with.

A. STAGES OF CONFRONTATION IN THE SOUTHERN TIER

(i) The Period of Status Quo

The initial stage of confrontation covered the years 1948 to 1952 during which period the Southern Tier, in common with every region in the world, was affected to a greater or a lesser degree by the growing Cold War confrontation.

The Cold War confrontation in the Northern Tier was particularly intense during the years 1948 to 1952. The hostility which characterised the relations between the Soviet Union and the Northern Tier states was attributable to Soviet attempts to intimidate its neighbours. This, in turn, compelled Turkey and Iran to move closer to the West by concluding multilateral and bilateral defence agreements.

These events, and the Cold War confrontation throughout Europe and the East in general, had their repercussions in the Southern Tier. They were expressed in the Tripartite Declaration insofar as it implied the need for a regional defence alliance.⁽¹⁾ They were further expressed in the efforts of the West to replace the Anglo-French Treaty of 1936 with a regional defence arrangement in the form of

(1) Cf. Chapter V, p. 82.

the Middle East Defence Organisation. However, the degree of Soviet intrusion in the Southern Tier hardly merited an extension of the Western policy of containment in this region.

The Southern Tier was thus relatively unaffected by the growing Cold War confrontation. Although Cold War issues such as the Korean crisis and recognition of Communist China did intrude into the area and create problems in expressions of differences between the West or the Soviet Union and regional states, these differences were not allowed to burgeon. How then, was it possible that the status quo in the Southern Tier could be maintained in spite of the growing Cold War confrontation?

The comparative geographical isolation of the Southern Tier from the Soviet Union is expounded as a reason why Soviet interests were slower to develop. The Northern Tier was always the primary region of interest to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union accepted that the Southern Tier was subject to unquestionable Western paramouncy. This necessarily implied, in the Soviet view, that states in the Southern Tier could not really follow an independent line in their foreign policy, that all the crucial positions in the economic and military hierarchy in these states were subject to the control of Western imperialism and were, therefore, in essence simply puppet governments. The idea of a neutral bloc to which Egypt and Syria were to aspire had not yet been adopted. The demands of the Soviet Union of the regional states at this stage were minimal: to frustrate, as far as possible, the participation of regional states in any anti-Soviet alignment and to force a policy of neutrality on the regional states.

The policy of the West in the Southern Tier must be juxtaposed with that of the Soviet Union. The West demanded regional alignment and the Soviet Union regional neutrality. Obviously any involvement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Cold War struggle during this period could only be a prerogative of the West.

The Western powers were intent on maintaining a status quo in the Arab-Israeli conflict and did not allow this conflict to develop into a Cold War issue. However, the intrusion of the Soviet Union in the Southern Tier would necessarily attract the Arab-Israeli conflict as a Cold War issue and would extend the dimensions of the conflict.

If the Southern Tier was relatively unaffected by the growing Cold War confrontation during the period of the status quo, it must necessarily follow that the Arab-Israeli

conflict cannot be said to have exacerbated great power relations in Europe or in the Middle East. The Arab-Israeli conflict neither promoted nor retarded the extension of the Cold War in the Middle East or elsewhere.

(ii) The Period of Transition

The second stage in the political transformation of the Southern Tier covered the years 1953 to the Arms Deal in September, 1955 and may be described as a period of transition during which the Soviet Union secured an important foothold in the Southern Tier.

The interacting factors and events which contributed to this transition are described in some detail in Chapter VI. During this period the Cold War forcefully intruded into the Southern Tier and was directly linked to the Cold War confrontation in the Northern Tier through the disruptive Baghdad Pact. The extension of the Cold War into the Southern Tier introduced the Soviet Union into the region as a political factor of profound importance. For the Soviet Union it provided a chism in the belt of Western encirclement.

The deterioration in the relations between the Soviet Union and Israel was consistent with new political and ideological arguments developed by the Soviet Union to ally itself to "progressive" national movements in the Arab world. This change of Soviet policy would have been insufficient to reap such a political harvest if there had not been a parallel trend in the Southern Tier, that is, the emergence of a revolutionary situation in the Arab world unrelated to any Soviet or Communist influence but motivated by new social and political forces to replace old institutions. The accession of the revolutionaries to power portended an intensification of the Arab-Israeli conflict and ultimately a deterioration in the confrontation between Arab nationalism and the West. The total effect of all these concurrent elements, together with the lack of any hostility underlying the relationship between the Arab world and the Soviet Union provided the basis for a rapport between Egypt and Syria and the Soviet Union.

The re-alignment of Soviet policy in the Southern Tier cannot be said to be an act of inconsistency. On the contrary, Soviet policy, if viewed in broad perspective, was completely consistent. This policy was executed in two stages:

(a) To weaken British influence by supporting Israel and

later Egypt.

- (b) To eradicate all Western influence in the Arab world by supporting the Arabs in their struggle against both the West and Israel.

Israel, by 1953, had proved itself to be an inadequate instrument for Soviet policy needs in the Southern Tier. Israel neither could nor would do anything to further weaken British paramouncy in the Southern Tier.

The Arms Deal was an important landmark in this transitional period. It was not only the harbinger to the end of British (and Western) paramouncy in Egypt, but to the need of an Eisenhower Doctrine.

The Arms Deal initiated a process of political re-alignment in the Southern Tier. The trend of this re-alignment was quite apparent and the consistent thread was the growing alienation of Egypt and Syria coupled with their increasing dependence on the Soviet Union politically, economically and in the supply of weapons. Egypt's policy of neutrality in the Cold War confrontation could not endure and had to be replaced by a policy of "positive neutralism" - a policy which amounted to an exploitation of Cold War issues in the Southern Tier. The United States attempted to counter Soviet influence by competing for Egyptian favours. In the end, this neutrality was positive only in its response to the overtures of the Soviet Union and deteriorated into open hostility of Egypt and Syria towards the West and a close alliance with the Soviet bloc. The Arms Deal in September, 1955, and the Soviet-Egyptian Treaty of Friendship in May, 1971, are merely strands in the same thread. The basic problem in dealing with this relationship is relatively simple to define: to what extent could Egypt ultimately remain impervious to Soviet machinations and retain its independence?

(iii) The Period of Soviet Consolidation

The third and final stage in the political transformation of the Southern Tier during this decade may be described as a period when the Soviet Union consolidated the foothold it had secured in the Southern Tier.

Thus, three events bolstered the consolidation of Soviet influence: the Arms Deal, the Sinai War and the subsequent conflict between Arab nationalism and the West.

Apart from these events, there were other less traumatic factors which furthered Soviet consolidation of its influence. These cannot be ascribed to any single cause. Some of these causes have already been dealt with. (2)

(2) Cf. Chapter VI, p. 108 et seq.

It can also be mentioned that the Soviet Union was able to reap the benefit of its absence from the Southern Tier for forty years, in contrast to the continuous presence of the Western powers and the friction this presence created. The Soviet Union could be critical from a distance without finding it necessary to become actually involved in any incident or event; the Western powers could hardly avoid involvement. The Soviet Union demanded only a policy of neutrality from the regional states and this demand coincided with the wishes of the Arab nationalists. The Soviet Union could, in sum, assume the guise of a disinterested and benevolent onlooker. This guise was made all the more feasible because the Soviet Union was not dependent on Middle East oil resources.

In contrast to the goodwill which Russia had earned through its political support of the Arab causes and generous aid programmes, the West suffered a corresponding decline in prestige among the so-called revolutionary Arab states. Nevertheless, in the final analysis, the West was successful in preventing both the Soviet Union and Nasser from intruding further into the Southern Tier.

The events in the Southern Tier hardly affected the Cold War in the Northern Tier. The Iraqi Revolution had a marginal effect on Turkey. The abrogation of the Baghdad Pact meant that the umbilical cord between the Northern and Southern Tiers was permanently severed and could pass into limbo.

B. STAGES IN THE EXACERBATION OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

The exacerbation of the Arab-Israeli conflict by great power conflict during the decade 1948 to 1958 can be directly related to the three stages of Soviet involvement in the Southern Tier.

(i) The Period of Status Quo

During the period of the status quo the Arab-Israeli conflict operated under the umbrella of Western paramouncy in the Southern Tier and consequently the course of the conflict was influenced by the prerogatives of the West. Regional stability and peace served Western strategic interests in the Middle East and conversely regional strife compromised Western interests. If, therefore, the Arab-Israeli conflict could not be resolved, the maintenance of the status quo seemed the best alternative. This policy required a local balance of power to ensure maximum regional stability. For

the West, this in effect meant a co-ordinated arms embargo to confine the ambit of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Tripartite Declaration underlined the attempts of the Western powers to maintain a status quo and to promote a local balance of power. This Declaration, by its unilateral character, also signified that the Soviet Union was not a factor to be considered in the Southern Tier.

A feature of great power rivalry in the Southern Tier during this initial stage was the fact that the major powers were not arrayed against each other on opposite sides in the regional conflicts. The power struggle was relatively muted, with the Soviet Union demanding only neutrality from the regional states. While the West required a commitment to Western regional defence from the Southern Tier states, the Arab-Israeli issue was not exploited towards this end. Although the reference in the Tripartite Declaration to a regional defence system did not exacerbate the Arab-Israeli conflict, the relations between the regional states and the Soviet Union were aggravated. The proposed Middle East Defence Organisation attempted to replace the much-hated British occupation with an international defence arrangement, but this proposal was abandoned in the face of Egyptian opposition.

The struggle for power in the Southern Tier between the big powers had not yet assumed any alarming dimensions and the scope of the Arab-Israeli conflict, despite border violence, blockades and embargos, remained relatively confined.

(ii) The Period of Transition

During the second stage of confrontation, the period of transition, the Arab-Israeli conflict was exacerbated by the policies of both the West and the Soviet Union, but there were important differences.

The Baghdad Pact exerted a disruptive influence on the Arab-Israeli conflict⁽³⁾ to a lesser extent than the Arms Deal. The Baghdad Pact, too, was not a pact directly related to the Arab-Israeli issue but to the Cold War confrontation. The Arms Deal, on the other hand, greatly accelerated the arms race, increased regional instability and the concentration of a major part of these arms in the Sinai served to increase regional tension. These were factors of tremendous importance in assessing the causes of the Sinai War.

(3) Cf. Chapter VI, p. 98.

The intrusion of the Soviet Union in the Southern Tier signalled a new level of regional instability. Soviet intrusion not only expressed itself in the arms race but also in the political confrontation. By giving the Arab states unlimited political support in the Security Council - necessarily involving an unbalanced assessment of events and their causes - the Soviet Union was giving the Arab states a sense of immunity and stimulating their belligerency. The Soviet Union, for instance, condemned Israel for every border violation while refusing to accept that the Arab states or para-military irregulars (the fedayeen), sponsored by the Arab states, were provoking border violence. The Soviet Union used its veto powers to prevent any censure of Arab belligerency without regard to the findings of the Armistice Commission and even when the Arab states were palpably in the wrong. Israel's inability to find any redress in the United Nations, even in the mild expressions of a censure, increased its determination to deal with its security problems by massive counter-raids.

Soviet policy also brought the United Nations into disrepute. The United Nations had become an instrument to promote Soviet national interests. Its procedural weaknesses paralysed any effectiveness it may have been able to exert in dealing with international problems, and this fact became most noticeable in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The unstinting Soviet political support of the Arab states weakened the ability of the West to exert pressure on them. The Soviet Union was able to cushion these pressures. Arab dependence on the West thus decreased at the cost of increasing dependence on the Soviet Union. With the passage of time this unstinting Soviet friendship could only lead the Arab states to overrate the support they could expect to receive from the Soviet Union in a time of crisis. Nasser was yet to discover that Soviet declarations of friendship and dedication to the cause of Arab aspirations was not as unconditional as he had been led to believe.

All these facts served to exacerbate the Arab-Israeli conflict and to elevate it to the forefront of global problems. What is equally important is that Soviet support has encouraged them not to accept anything less than the total annihilation of the State of Israel.

(iii) The Period of Soviet Consolidation

The pattern established during the period of transition continued during the last stage and throughout the period preceding the June War in 1967. The Soviet Union continued to

provide Egypt and Syria with unlimited political support coupled with hostile propaganda against Israel. In addition Soviet arms supplies and economic assistance was available to any Arab state prepared to accept the political implications of such Soviet aid.

Great power rivalry was an important factor which contributed to the outbreak of the Sinai War. The effect of the Arms Deal has already been mentioned. In addition, Soviet political support of Egypt against Western interests at Suez encouraged Nasser to adopt an uncompromising attitude towards Britain and France. This attitude contrasted strongly with his attitude during the compromise settlement in October, 1954 prior to the Arms Deal.⁽³⁾ The United States was prepared to relegate the interests of these European states in the Suez Canal in the interests of the bipolar struggle to prevent a further deterioration of relations between the West and Egypt. However, the inconsistent policy of the United States after nationalisation of the Canal and during the Sinai War merely served to aggravate the situation.

The Soviet Union did not have a restraining influence on Egypt and Syria. Any such restraint would have incurred Arab displeasure. The Soviet Union, sensitive to the slightest sign of possible danger to their friendship with Egypt and Syria, had to avoid exerting any pressures which could create chisms in their relations with these Arab states. Although the Soviet Union did not go so far as to identify itself with Arab demands for the liquidation of Israel, they did not use their influence to induce the Arabs to adopt a less intransigent attitude towards Israel either. Their unstinting and uncritical support of Egypt and Syria in the Arab-Israeli conflict not only stimulated a policy of brinkmanship by the Arab states towards Israel but also led the Arab states to accept that the Soviet Union would support them in extreme actions against Israel.

The Soviet Union did not desire any armed conflict between Israel and the Arab states which could lead to a military confrontation with the West and thus a global war. Soviet support of the Arab cause was restrained by this danger, but by this only. Unfortunately, as already indicated, Nasser did not always appreciate the significance of this restraint, probably because the express and implied avowals of Soviet support over the years had created illusions. These facts were of tremendous significance in the events which

⁽³⁾ Cf. Chapter VI, p. 91.

preceded the June War in 1967.

The intrusion of the Soviet Union in the Southern Tier had the effect of inflating the dimensions of the Arab-Israeli conflict beyond the national capacity of the regional states to cope with the new definitions given to the conflict. In economic terms this meant that the cost of sustaining the conflict was completely out of proportion to the amount which the regional states could afford. As a result their economic development was retarded and they became more and more dependent on foreign aid and great power support. In human terms the price paid by the Arabs and the Jews can no longer be calculated by statements of the loss and wastage of human life.

C. PORTENTS OF THE DECADE

The decade under review presaged certain events in the Arab-Israeli conflict and in great power rivalry in the Southern Tier. What follows is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all these factors but merely certain cardinal features which would be demonstrated again in the interregnum of the conflict and in the cycle of events which were to lead to the June War in 1967.

The Sinai War had exposed the fact that neither of the two major powers had determined the policies of Egypt and Israel prior to the war and neither power was capable of controlling the actions of these two states. Israel had embarked on military operations being impelled thereto solely by the requirements of its own interests and without securing any sanction from the United States. Israel did not consider itself answerable to the United States when its vital interests were at stake and similarly neither did Egypt require Soviet endorsement of her ouster of British and French imperial interests as a prior condition thereto.

The Sinai War had also shown that a local war did not necessarily spread and would not entangle the great powers. The great powers were not prepared to go to war over the Arab-Israeli issue. Contrary to popular belief, the Arab-Israeli wars did not endanger world peace.

The Sinai War and the crises in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and Iraq had also demonstrated the military inadequacy of the Soviet Union to influence the course of events. Political objectives could not be attained only through political support and economic favours. The Soviet policy

of seeking political gain by bluff and polemics had its limitations which would be exposed again during the June War in 1967. The Soviet Union, if it were to play a credible role in the Southern Tier, had to support its political objectives by military power when challenged by the United States. The Soviet Union had to deal with the United States from a position of military parity.

In 1967 when a new crisis erupted - the cause of which was in no small measure due to Soviet actions - the Soviet Union was faced by the same basic flaw in its political strategy, but probably for the last time.

Thus, the Soviet Union had little alternative but to establish naval and military forces in the Southern Tier on a scale approaching that of the United States. The United States would either have to accept the principle of a military parity with the Soviet Union or increase its power to maintain its supremacy. In effect, therefore, the situation carries with it the potential of two struggles operating at different levels - the local version in the Arab-Israeli conflict and the bipolar version. The local struggle cannot but synthesise with the bipolar struggle.

The decade had also exposed the Soviet strategem of "polarising" the Arab-Israeli conflict into a simplification of Soviet support for the Arabs and Western support for the Israelis. The arms policy forced on the West by the Soviet Union in the Arab-Israeli conflict would always make this strategem seem credible. The Soviet policy enabled it to adopt an unequivocal and consistent policy of support for the Arab cause whereas the policy of the Western powers was equivocal rather than to the contrary.

The significance of the Middle East to the West did not escape the attention of the world powers in the aftermath of the Suez War. The Western powers had to take effective action to reduce their dependency on the Suez Canal and Arab oil in view of the volatile character of regional conflicts. The effect of this preparation would become manifest in June 1967.

Probably the greatest question mark left by the decade was the value of political guarantees as an effective substitute for military guarantees. Israel had withdrawn its forces in 1957 from Sharm El-Sheikh under a guarantee from the maritime powers to ensure its freedom of navigation in the Straits of Tiran. Could Israel, by compromising its strategic interests in the cause of the bipolar struggle, be assured of a "tranquil future"?⁽⁴⁾

⁽⁴⁾ Cf. Chapter VII, pp. 131, 132.

D. THE INTERREGNUM BETWEEN WARS

At the closing stages of the decade, the world was already on the threshold of a transformation in the Cold War confrontation. The Sino-Soviet rift was a major factor which compelled the Soviet Union to reconsider its relations with the United States. The fearsome destructive potential of nuclear warfare imposed the need to reduce the level of hostility and limit the conflict relationship between the East and the West. Peaceful co-existence and détente had become popular phrases. The United States was, and remains, essentially a status quo power and was not unresponsive to a détente which did not prejudice Western interest.

After the Iraqi Revolution a period of relative calm and stability settled on the Southern Tier which lasted for nine years. The status quo in the region was maintained and co-existence between the East and the West in the Southern Tier became a reality. Although internal tensions did not abate by any means and regional inter-Arab conflicts erupted, and although there was not a decline in Soviet interest in the region, the major world powers were to become preoccupied with more pressing crises in Africa, the Far East and the Caribbean.

From the end of the Palestine War until the Sinai War the Arab-Israeli conflict had simmered within the confines of a status quo which the major world powers had found acceptable. The same state of affairs continued during the interregnum between the Sinai War and the June War. This state of controlled belligerency suited the policy requirements of the Arab states as a means by which the conflict could be maintained, at the same time avoiding a large-scale military confrontation. For the Soviet Union it continued to provide the opportunity of maintaining its influence in Egypt and Syria. For the West it meant the containment of a conflict which could imperil Western interests in the Middle East. Thus, although the status quo was relatively stable, the roots of the Arab-Israeli conflict retained its inherently unstable and explosive character.

In truth, it can be re-affirmed that the political transition of the Southern Tier during the decade 1948 to 1958 had transformed the Arab-Israeli conflict from a local and regional conflict into the powder keg of international politics. This transformation had as its motive power the interaction of regional

conflicts and great power rivalry, which is aptly summed up in the observation that:

"In the Middle East as elsewhere, it is not the small power quarrels which inflame great power conflict, but rather the reverse".⁽⁵⁾

(5) LEWIS, B. Conflict in the Middle East in Survival, Vol. XIII, No. 6, June 1971, p. 192.
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