The Soviet Union and the United States in the Middle East

By JOHN C. CAMPBELL

ABSTRACT: No unchanging aim or strategy ordained by geography or ideology provides a full explanation of the course of Soviet policy in the Middle East. The Soviet presence has grown, notably in the past fifteen years, through opportunistic diplomacy, the deployment of military and especially naval power, and the expansion of influence in certain states through arms deliveries, economic aid, and political support. In general, the Soviet leaders have been successful in making their country a Middle East power, at the expense of positions previously held by Western powers. In the Northern Tier it has gained by normalizing its relations with Turkey and Iran. In the Arab-Israel zone it has established preponderant influence in a number of Arab states, taking advantage of the Arab-Israeli conflict and of inter-Arab disputes. While Soviet-American rivalry in the region could lead to armed conflict, the greater likelihood is prolonged political competition. From that standpoint the Soviets may encounter many obstacles, especially the force of local nationalism. For those obstacles to be effective, however, the United States will have to maintain its own military presence and political interest in the region. The attainment of detente will depend both on negotiation and on balanced power.

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THE United States went into the Middle East after the Second World War for two main reasons, oil and the containment of the Soviet Union. The first, oil, was originally a commercial interest, but with the onset of the cold war it also took its place in a general political-military strategy. American policy, from as early as 1945, was aimed at preventing the Soviet Union from expanding its power into the Middle East. That meant helping Greece to win its civil war, backing Turkey against Soviet pressure to subvert its independence, pressuring for Soviet evacuation of northern Iran, buttressing or replacing a declining Britain in many of its historic positions, and trying to gain the co-operation of Arabs and Jews as well as of Turks and Iranians in “denying” the Middle East to the Soviets.

This was, in American eyes, a defensive policy. The Middle East was part of the free world. Its peoples deserved protection and support against aggression or subversion. Moreover, they occupied what President Eisenhower called the most important strategic territory in the world, Soviet control of which would threaten the world balance of power and the security of the West. Two big reasons for the importance of territory, from the standpoint of American strategy, were that it provided strategic bomber bases—considered vital in those early years—for the global nuclear deterrent and that it contained the world’s greatest resources in oil essential to the West in peace or in war.

FROM STALIN TO BREZHNEV

Traditional Russian policy of expansion to the south, dating from the Tsarist era and continuing under the Soviets, seemed more than adequate grounds for a policy of defense and denial. Stalin’s pressure on Russia’s southern neighbors and his reaching out for footholds in the Dodecanese, Tripolitania, and Eritrea in the Italian peace treaty negotiations confirmed it. There is no doubt that he was trying to extend Soviet control into areas adjacent to Soviet territory, as he had in Eastern Europe, and to establish the basis for a great-power role in the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East. Yet his reaction to the strong Western opposition he met, which was to relax the pressure and concentrate his attention on foreign policy objectives in Europe and the Far East, may also indicate certain things about Soviet aims and strategy that have persisted beyond his time: that the Kremlin had no schedule of advance or conquest, that the Middle East was not at the top of its priority list, that policy depended upon opportunities, and that there was no desire to risk a military showdown with the United States.

The new Soviet offensive in the mid-1950s was far more intelligently conceived and executed than was Stalin’s in the mid-1940s. Khrushchev’s strategy was primarily a manipulation of local forces to the detriment of Western positions rather than a campaign to intimidate local governments or to make gains through negotiations with other outside powers, although he did not entirely neglect these other means. In brief, the Soviets exploited the new, dynamic Arab nationalism and its distrust of the West. They supported Arab regimes that were dedicating their efforts to revolutionary change, as opposed to the more conservative regimes which were closely associated with the West. For the first time they fully endorsed Arab positions in the conflict with Israel, thus gaining favor throughout the Arab world at the expense of the United States, the patron of Israel.

Khrushchev’s strategy was bound to succeed even if the Western powers had remained united and had been more
skillful in their diplomacy. By meeting Abdel Nasser’s need for massive deliveries of modern arms in 1955, he broke the Western arms monopoly and established the Soviet Union as the leading outside power in Egypt, the strongest and most influential of the Arab states. By taking up the role of arms supplier and protector of chronically unstable Syria, he acquired a position of influence which survived several changes in the international status and internal regime of that country. In the Suez affair of 1956, Soviet policy paralleled that of the United States in helping to frustrate the Anglo-French adventure, but profited much more from the consequent decline of British and French prestige and influence. Soviet influence gained additional ground among Arab states through the Syrian crisis of 1957 and the Iraqi revolution of 1958.

Khrushchev’s presence in May 1964 with Nasser at the ceremony marking the completion of the first stage of the high dam at Aswan was symbolic, as was the dam itself, of the position the Soviet Union held as the friend and supporter of Arab aspirations for a brighter future. The United States had also been helping Egypt on a large scale in the early 1960s, mainly through the food-for-peace program. But the symbol of America’s position was not a huge dam, but the burned out building of the U.S. Information Agency, destroyed later in that same year of Khrushchev’s visit by a Cairo mob, presumably enraged by America’s colonialist actions in the Congo.

Khrushchev’s successors, in justifying his ouster, found him guilty of “hare-brained schemes” which they did not describe, but it was known that they resented his personal handling of relations with foreign countries, including the making of commitments to Egypt without reference to his colleagues in the Presidium of the Communist Party. Judging from their subsequent actions, however, they approved the substance of his Middle Eastern policies. At a time when they were reviewing and cutting back on involvement in many parts of the Third World, they expanded their efforts and deepened their commitments in that region. This added concentration has been evident in military dispositions, in economic outlays and commitments, and in a broad and active diplomacy. By describing in general terms what these moves have been, we may have some basis for conclusions on where the Soviet Union stands and what problems it poses to the United States.

**The Military Build-up**

The facts of the Soviet naval expansion in the Mediterranean are clear in their general outline, although of course the specifics on numbers and types of ships and facilities are always changing. Beginning in the mid-1960s the Soviet Union began to assign units, mainly from its Black Sea fleet, to the Mediterranean on a continuing basis. A permanent Mediterranean squadron thus came into being, first depending on certain sheltered spots on the high seas for refueling and replenishment, later able to make use of facilities in Alexandria, Port Said, Latakia, and other ports through the courtesy of the governments of Egypt and Syria. The squadron has ranged in size from about twenty ships to upwards of sixty, depending on the season and on the political climate. The surface ships include guided-missile cruisers and frigates, destroyers, and on occasion, one or two helicopter carriers. At any given time the Soviet navy will have a smaller number of submarines in the Mediterranean, where their movements can be coordinated with those of the surface squadron.

What does all this mean in military
terms? It cannot mean very much if one is thinking of a major war between the two superpowers. In that event, the mission of the Soviet squadron would be to do as much damage as possible before being put out of action. It has had a major handicap in lack of air power, although the use of aircraft based in friendly littoral states could provide a partial remedy. Even so, in direct combat the squadron would be no match for the U.S. Sixth Fleet, supported by allied naval forces which are not negligible. In any case, the Mediterranean would hardly be a central theater in a general nuclear war, but neither would it be a comfortable place for anyone's naval vessels.

One gets a better perception of the purposes of the Soviet ships in the Mediterranean by looking at the global strategic balance between the Soviet Union and the United States. After the Cuban fiasco in 1962, the Soviet leadership decided on a twofold arms buildup to gain a position of equality. In strategic weapons it set out to close the gap, so that it would have at least effective parity with the United States. In conventional arms and general purpose forces it undertook an expansion, largely in naval forces, so as to develop a capacity to exert military power on all the seas and all the continents. In other words, the Soviets decided to cast off the limitations of being only a continental land power and a global nuclear power. Experience had taught them that they needed something more: flexible power which could be brought to bear at points on the globe far removed from the homeland. Khrushchev had adopted a policy of competition with the West throughout the Third World, but he had been unsuccessful because he did not have the military capabilities to support it.

For such a strategy the placement of naval units in the Mediterranean was a necessary first step, because the inland sea was a corridor to the Atlantic through Gibraltar and to the Indian Ocean through the Suez Canal—whenever it might be opened. The visits of Soviet naval vessels to the Indian Ocean, which began in 1968, and the holding of maneuvers spread over several oceans at once, to say nothing of bombastic speeches of Soviet admirals, were indications of the global character of Soviet naval planning, construction, and strategy.

To return to the local scene, the Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean, and on a smaller scale in the Red Sea, Persian Gulf, and Indian Ocean, has had the specific purpose of buttressing Soviet freedom of action and limiting that of the United States. For years the Sixth Fleet had been useful in a kind of aircraft-carrier diplomacy: in critical situations it had been moved to this point or that to serve as a warning to one government or as a sign of encouragement to another. The landing in Lebanon in 1958 was quick and easy because the Sixth Fleet was right there. The presence of the Soviet squadron means that the Mediterranean is no longer an American lake. Thus it might itself engage in the same kind of diplomacy through the demonstration of power, or it might by its existence or interposition make such action impossible for the Sixth Fleet.

Whether the United States could or would again do what it did in 1958 is questionable, and perhaps the presence of the Soviet squadron in the Mediterranean would not be the main factor in such a decision. The use of the Sixth Fleet as part of the political strategy aimed at discouraging Syria from moving armed forces into Jordan in September 1970, however, indicated that Washington did not feel unduly hampered.
The real value to the Soviets of their naval force, in any event, lay in its continuing political influence. It gave comfort to friends and created doubts and fears among others. It was physical evidence of the Soviet Union’s status as a Mediterranean and Middle East power, one which had to be reckoned with in any major international decisions in that area.

**The Political Strategy**

No simple explanation—whether one searches for it in geography or in Peter the Great’s will or in the doctrine of Lenin—will provide the key to the aims and the conduct of Soviet policy in the Middle East. As a great power, Russia in its tsarist and soviet forms has had strategic interests to advance and to protect in its competition with rival powers. On the defensive side, it has striven to maintain control of the Black Sea; to have the doors to its house, the Turkish Straits, in safe hands, preferably its own; and to prevent the countries on its southern borders from being used by other powers to threaten Russian security. On the offensive side, the Russian Empire had a history of southward expansion that included domination and annexation of non-Russian peoples. The Soviet Union, in its quest for friendly governments co-operating closely with the socialist states, has tried to establish with such governments positions of preponderant influence approaching control on all matters of importance to Soviet interests.

Since the Second World War, Soviet policy in the Middle East cannot be considered other than in relation to the global balance and competition with the United States. Thus, its push into the Middle East has taken place in a period when that region was a Western, increasingly an American, sphere of influence. Stalin’s attempts in the early postwar period were aimed at establishing some advance positions at a time when the Western powers were tired, uncertain of themselves, and desirous of Soviet co-operation in reaching peace settlements in Europe and elsewhere. He failed, and when his successors later returned to the charge, they faced a Middle East being organized against them.

Greece and Turkey were in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Iran, emerging from the stormy period of Mohamed Mosaddeq which demonstrated the limits of anti-Western nationalism and the weakness of Soviet influence, was making its peace with the West. The United States and Great Britain were sponsoring a new military alliance of countries of the Northern Tier—that is, the countries closest to the Soviet Union—and they were negotiating with Egypt for a basis on which to bring the Arab states into the general pattern of regional defense. American naval power was dominant in the Mediterranean, and American strategic air power with its targets in the Soviet Union had bases in several Middle Eastern countries, not to mention the nuclear punch of the Sixth Fleet. America and Britain controlled most of the oil industry of the Persian Gulf and guarded it with their military dispositions and special relations with the governments of that region.

In determining their policies, it was an academic question whether the aim of the Soviet leaders was to dominate or take over the Middle East. The problem as they saw it was to do something to modify the existing situation of American domination: to protect their own security, to build up Soviet influence and reduce that of the United States, and to tip the global balance in their favor. They adopted a strategy aimed not at communist revolution, but at finding common ground with Middle
East governments in terms of those governments' self-interests. The approach, except to Israel, was the warm sunshine of détente and co-operation, with only occasional relapses into the chilling language of nuclear threats.

The Northern Tier

Within weeks after Stalin’s death, Soviet diplomats were assuring Turkey and Iran that the Soviet government was changing old attitudes and seeking an atmosphere of co-operation. Moscow gave up claims to Turkish territory it had maintained since 1945, and to Iran it offered to settle old controversies concerning the exact location of the border and other matters. Turkey and Iran welcomed the new signs of détente, which were accompanied by no demands that would compromise their sovereignty or alter their ties with the West. They were by no means won over by friendly words, however, and cautiously awaited further developments. The gains made by Moscow in the Arab world in the next few years tended to increase their fears rather than their confidence in the benevolent intentions of the Soviet Union.

The Suez crisis of 1956 and the tension over Syria in 1957, marked as they were by Soviet threats of nuclear devastation and emphasis on the primary security interest of the USSR in the countries on its southern borders, did not encourage thoughts of neighborly détente. The revolution of 1958 in Iraq, with its apparent gain for Soviet influence, was a blow to Turkey and Iran as well as to the West, for they had been linked with Iraq in the Baghdad Pact. Even so, they were not unmindful that the Soviet Union, like it or not, was increasing its power in the Middle East and that close alignment with the West might not be the full answer to their security problems. The Shah of Iran, before signing a security agreement with the United States in March 1959, gave lengthy consideration to a Soviet counteroffer of a treaty of friendship and nonaggression.

The Soviet strategy toward the Northern Tier states became increasingly clear in the 1960s. It was, as a first stage, to establish a more normal relationship, settle irritating disputes, and build up trade; second, to weaken the military alignment with the United States and NATO through reducing fear and establishing the habit of co-operation; then, through cultivating the theme of independence, capitalizing on friction with the West, and offering diplomatic support where possible, to bring about a choice for neutrality between the blocs, a situation similar to that of the interwar period; finally, and this stage was far over the horizon, to find the means whereby Turkey and Iran would, like Egypt, move toward a general alignment with the Soviet Union against the United States.

Khrushchev did not register any striking success even with the first stage of this strategy, but his successors found the ground more fertile. The Turks had experienced a bitter disillusionment in 1964 when the United States held them back from intervening by force in Cyprus and did it in a way they found brutal and offensive. Then they found themselves alone when the U.N. debated the Cyprus question. The effects were felt immediately in Turkish foreign policy and in Turkish-Soviet relations. High-level visits took place on both sides. The Soviet Union extended credits for several large new industrial plans in Turkey, aid which was especially welcome in view of the downward trend in U.S. military and economic aid to Turkey; and the Soviets, without abandoning their support of the independence of Cyprus, found a formula
with respect to the rights of the Turkish community there which Ankara deemed favorable to its cause.

At the same time U.S.-Turkish relations were encountering rough weather owing to differences on such matters as the status of American military forces in Turkey and the anti-American campaign of left-wing groups which occasionally broke out into violence. Underneath it all was a feeling among many Turks that their country had been overloyal to America and NATO at some cost to its independence. Why should not Turkey play the game of détente with the Russians? Its NATO allies were already doing so. Both major political parties continued loyal to the Western alignment, relying on it for ultimate security against the Russians. But neutrality, a policy which had served Turkey well in World War II and before, was no longer out of mind. A decision to allow the Soviet Union to transport arms and other equipment by truck across Turkey to Syria, which the Turkish government took in 1970, would have been unthinkable in earlier years of the cold war.

Soviet-Iranian relations developed in much the same way. The large American aid program to Iran came to an end in 1967 by mutual agreement. The Shah, whose voice was decisive in both domestic and foreign policy, welcomed the advent of a new stage in which Iran's economy could go forward on its own without foreign aid—but with the help of huge oil revenues, an advantage Turkey did not have. He took pride in Iran's independent position and proceeded to demonstrate it by making his own rapprochement with the Soviet Union. He was the first head of a non-communist state to visit Moscow after the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. He concluded a series of agreements including the purchase of military equip-

ment and some rather spectacular economic deals including Soviet aid in building a steel industry near Isfahan and an arrangement for the sale by Iran of natural gas with shipment to Russia through a pipeline the Russians would help to build. The pipeline is in operation today.

Iran has continued to look to the United States for its supply of modern arms, including F-4 Phantom aircraft. It has held to its security agreement with the United States, just as Turkey has held to its similar treaty and to NATO. Both countries still look to America as the ultimate guarantor of their security, although their leaders must have wondered about America's mood of withdrawal from foreign commitments and about how the Nixon Doctrine might be applied to the Middle East.

The Northern Tier, throughout the past twenty-five years, has served as a barrier to direct territorial contact between the Soviet Union and its allies and clients in the Arab world. The Soviets have succeeded in softening the barrier, but they have not found it easy to proceed from the first step of improved relations with Turkey and Iran to the next step of their abandonment of military ties with the West and adoption of neutrality. Their striking successes have been with Arab countries of the southern tier.

**Arab Nationalism and Soviet Policy**

Soviet policy and Arab nationalism began to discover each other when it became apparent that they had some common enemies. Khrushchev showed the Arabs that the Soviet Union could be an alternative to the West, as a source of arms and other aid, a balancing factor against Western domination, and an ally against Israel. Abdel Nasser was delighted, when the opportunity
came, to bring Soviet influence into the Middle East. He did so for Egyptian and Arab purposes as did the leaders of Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and other Arab states. But the Soviets were extending their influence for their own purposes. It was a working relationship from which both sides profited, but neither had full faith and trust in the other.

The Soviet Union made Egypt the center of its Middle Eastern strategy. At the land bridge between Asia and Africa and in control of the water link from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, its location had made it a key strategic area throughout history. The most populous of the Arab states, it had a political and cultural primacy which Nasser had asserted vigorously. A strong position in Egypt and a close tie with Nasser would obviously serve Soviet interests well. Syria also was the subject of the Kremlin's special attention, for though it lacked strength, it had a strong tradition of Arab nationalism going beyond its borders, and its radical politics opened it up to communist influence. The Soviet leaders swallowed the merger of Syria with Egypt in 1958, although they did not like it; and after Syria broke away again and later fell under Ba'ath party leadership, they were back again displaying a considerable interest in Syrian politics and an extraordinary sensitivity concerning its international position.

After the happy combination of Soviet diplomacy and Arab nationalism produced a series of political victories in the 1950s, relations between Nasser and Khrushchev struck some sour phases at the end of the decade because of the activities of communists—Nasser called them "agents of a foreign power"—in the new United Arab Republic. Yet both sides were wise enough to limit the dispute to random insults. The marriage of convenience was worth preserving. The Soviet leadership, without committing their country to support of all Nasser's adventures—for example, his intervention in Yemen in the 1960s—kept the position of main supplier of arms and patron of the Arab peoples in the conflict with Israel.

The events of 1967 were decisive, both in exposing the weakness of the Soviets' position and in confirming their intention to increase their involvement rather than scale it down. The origins of the Six-Day War have not been entirely clarified, but it is evident that Soviet representatives stimulated Nasser's early moves which brought on the crisis, apparently in the expectation of a gaudy political victory for both Cairo and Moscow. But the game got out of hand; Nasser went too far and suffered a crushing military defeat which the Kremlin, by proving unable to prevent it, shared with him. The Soviets then decided to start again, to replace Egypt's and Syria's lost equipment and restore some semblance of a balance against Israel, and at the same time to confirm their dependence on the USSR as the one mighty friend of the Arab cause.

**Does the USSR Want an Arab-Israel Settlement?**

The history of the efforts to turn the cease-fire of June 1967 into a durable peace settlement are fairly well known, but the policy of the Soviet Union through all the ups and downs of that process remains cloaked in some mystery. After its early and unsuccessful attempts in the U.N. to get a resolution calling for Israel's unconditional withdrawal from all occupied territories, the Soviet government voted for Security Council Resolution 242 of November 1967 which tied withdrawal to other agreements, including the ending of any state of war or belligerency and the ac-
acceptance of the right to exist of all states in the area.

On several occasions, while the U.N. Representative, Gunnar Jarring, has been pursuing his mission of working for an agreement between the parties and while the subject has been up for discussion among the four powers—the USSR, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France—or directly between the two—the USSR and the United States—Soviet spokesmen have specifically said yes, they do want a political settlement. They have listed some of the terms, including provision for a withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied territories in stages, tied to actions and obligations undertaken on the Arab side.

At the same time a succession of governmental and press statements have put the Soviet government squarely behind the Arab demand for immediate acceptance by Israel of the obligation to withdraw from all territory taken in 1967; this demand is accompanied by unrestrained denunciations of Israel’s past and continuing aggressions, its criminal violation of Arab rights, and its collusion with American imperialism. Policy statements carry more weight than propaganda, but the latter may give some clue to what the former may mean. It appears highly unlikely that the Soviets will push the Arab states, in particular Egypt, to accept any compromise settlement the Egyptian leadership itself does not like. This was the conclusion that had to be drawn from the Soviet-American negotiations of 1969, and there seems no reason to change it.

The Soviet willingness to see a real settlement is at least open to question. The initiative taken by the United States in 1971, aimed at getting an interim agreement to include a limited Israeli withdrawal and a reopening of the Suez Canal, evoked interested responses from both sides. It showed that the Egyptian government was ready to explore the possibilities for reasons of its own, and that because the United States could deal with both sides and the Soviet Union with only one, the Soviet position was not invulnerable. The U.S. initiative ran into snags with both Egypt and Israel and never came to a test of Soviet policy. But the Soviet reaction to it seemed to indicate that only by the continuance of conflict and thereby of Egyptian dependence could Moscow count on consolidating and extending its gains. This factor has overshadowed even the obvious Soviet interest in the reopening of the Canal.

The Puzzle of Soviet Policy

The record of Soviet action in the Middle East has been subject to widest interpretation among Western observers. Some see a pattern of penetration moving consistently to domination of the Mediterranean, establishment of bases and satellite states there and in the Middle East, control over the area’s vast oil resources, and envelopment of Western Europe from the south. Others see the Kremlin as essentially opportunistic, pushing ahead where doors are open, trying to cut down American influence while increasing its own, but always counting the risks and costs and keeping its eye on its own priorities, which are at home, in Europe, and in the Far East.

What are the consistent lines of Soviet conduct? First, they have staked a great deal on the regime in Egypt. When in 1970 Israeli raids shook Nasser’s rule to its foundations, the Soviets came to the rescue by sending their own pilots and missile crews along with new deliveries of Soviet equipment. We can assume that the same commitment runs to the government of Anwar Sadat. The Soviet-Egyptian treaty of May 1971, without saying it in so many words, confirms it. Second, however, is
the element of restraint. The Soviet leadership has not encouraged Egypt to resume the war against Israel. It wants neither to risk the consequences of a fourth round, nor to see a settlement reached under U.S. auspices. Third, Soviet responses to American proposals on the main principles of an Arab-Israel peace and on the need to control arms shipments to the contending parties have been consistently negative.

The Middle East has been a region of extraordinary opportunities for the Soviet Union. It has exploited those opportunities and will exploit others that appear. Its leaders are undoubtedly encouraged by the American public mood of weariness with overseas commitments and involvement, but they cannot count on an open road. They know from their own experience with Arab states that their whole position rests on regimes which have proved unsuccessful in war and unstable in peace.

The Soviet search for a more solid institutional basis for durable ties and lasting influence goes on. The alliances with radical Arab leaders seeking help in their campaigns against the West and against Israel have paid dividends, but they grew out of circumstance and can be changed by it; even the fifteen-year treaty with Egypt, an attempt to give continuity to the relationship, was the product of a special and perhaps transitory situation. Elaborate Soviet theories about the historic role of progressive elements or national democratic states in the Middle East taking the noncapitalist path have proved more useful as ideological justification for Soviet foreign policy than as an accepted basis for common action. The socialism of Egyptians, Syrians, or Algerians bears little resemblance to the "scientific" variety practiced in the Soviet Union. The mass organizations organized in Arab states have never served either those regimes or the Soviets in the manner of a proper, Soviet-style, ruling party.

As for the local communist parties, they have proved to be weak reeds. Their participation in politics has been on the sufferance of nationalist leaders, and when they have come near to seizing power, as they did in Iraq or Sudan, they have been chopped down. As new nationalist leaders have appeared on the scene—Qadhdaif, Boumedienne, Numayri, or even Sadat—the Islamic strain appears stronger than the socialist, and the distrust of Russia as an imperialist power may begin to match that felt for the United States.

The very uncertainty about Soviet policies increases the difficulty for the United States in determining its own. The détente in Soviet-American relations marked by the strategic arms limitation talks and by the Berlin agreement has not spread to the Middle East. In that region, moreover, no such clear line of division between blocs exists as in Europe: while some countries are formally aligned with one side or another, most of them are not, with resulting uncertainty or danger. American fatigue over foreign responsibilities and reconsideration of commitments may lead the Soviet Union or Middle Eastern governments to question this country’s resolution or staying power. The situation contains elements of surprise and of overnight crisis, partly because the two outside powers are not sure how far their own and each other’s vital interests and commitments go, partly because they do not exercise control of local forces and conflicts which can draw them into confrontation. But crisis diplomacy will be no substitute for long-term steadiness of purpose and flexibility of means. The Soviet Union is in the Middle East to stay. The real question is how to make sure that its presence takes forms that are tolerable to the security of others.