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SOVIET POLICY TOWARD SYRIA AND THE LESSONS OF EGYPT

City University of New York

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SOVIET POLICY TOWARD SYRIA AND THE LESSONS OF EGYPT

by

JONATHAN A. CHANIS

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Political Science in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The
City University of New York

1987

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Jonathan Abraham Chanis

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

SOVIET POLICY TOWARD SYRIA AND THE LESSONS OF EGYPT

by

Jonathan A. Chanis

Advisor: Professor Dankwart A. Rustow

The Soviet Union has a poor record of consolidating allied and client relationships. The failures in China, Yugoslavia, Egypt, and elsewhere reveal a marked Soviet inability to persuade and non-violently manipulate other states' elites. Of all these failures, the one in Egypt (1955-1972) is among the most interesting.

In order to minimize inter-elite friction over Soviet military, political, and economic policies, and to satisfy domestic political needs, the Soviet leadership sought to control the Egyptian elite. Hence, the concerted attempt to penetrate Egypt's political processes and to "transform" the country by creating a vanguard party from within the Arab Socialist Union.

The failure in Egypt represented the culmination of a distinct set of Soviet consolidation policies and techniques, and displayed the problems inherent in a heavy-handed attempt to dominate others. In response to this and several other failures, the Soviet Union began to modify its consolidation strategy and pursue a more sophisticated policy. This was particularly evident in Soviet policy toward Syria.

Subsequent policy toward Syria reveals a more realistic appraisal of that state's revolutionary potential, an improved handling of the inter-elite relationship, and a more patient strategy. Specifically, the Soviet Union takes advantage of transitory Syrian weaknesses to extract concessions and to penetrate the Al-Assad regime.

Through manipulation of these cycles of Syrian vulnerability the Soviet Union has created a marked Syrian dependency on Soviet military, political and economic assistance. While this dependency does not ensure the durability of the Soviet presence nor provide it with control of Syrian policies, it does present opportunities for long term Soviet gains, as well as limitedly constrain Syrian policy options.

The primary sources for this project are the memoirs of Western and Arab participants; Russian language material, especially the relevant academic literature; and neglected statistical information on the bilateral relationships.

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Throughout the writing of this dissertation, a number of people have been extraordinarily helpful. Primary among them has been my advisor, Professor Dankwart A. Rustow whose guidance, encouragement, and patience have made undertaking this project infinitely more pleasurable. Other faculty members at The Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York, especially the reader of this dissertation, Professor Donald S. Zagoria, and the members of the Supervisory Committee, Professors Robert Abrams, Abraham Bargman, and Benjamin Rivlin, have all contributed to making this a better piece of work.

Outside of The City University of New York, special thanks are given to Professors Robert Freedman, Khalid Rashidi and Elizabeth Valkenier. Additionally, the research for this project would have been more difficult without access to the resources of the W.A. Harriman Institute for Advanced Study of the Soviet Union, Columbia University, and the assistance of Professors Robert Legvold and Jonathan Sanders.

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Introduction

The General Problem

States, like individuals, do not exist in isolation. In order for either to secure their well being and obtain maximal benefits from a world best exploited through communal actions, if not cooperation, each must rely on others.

In international politics, the need for a state to join forces with others, or at least utilize the force of others, is compelling. Existing in a world of anarchy, each state pursues its self-defined interest in the absence of government and often in opposition to other states. This places a premium on the ability of any state, or more precisely, its leadership and diplomats, to rally other states to its cause. Such action minimizes opposition and provides a coalition of forces from which to overpower resistance if it is encountered.¹

In the effort to enlist the support of others, states (i.e., their leaders) may utilize two very different approaches: coercion and the actual exercise of physical

¹ For an analysis of states and state behavior in the international system, see, Hans Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973); and Kenneth N. Waltz, Theory of International Politics (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979).

violence, or reason and the give-and-take of diplomacy.

While in practice these two approaches are often combined, and indeed, cannot be separated, in theory they are polar opposites and represent two distinct ways of minimizing opposition and securing one's goals.

In evaluating the prevalence and efficacy of each approach, it is clear that reason and diplomacy are the more efficacious. Additionally, they may even be increasingly prevalent historically. While coercion and the exercise of physical force is still the hallmark of the international system, the virtues of the less fratricidal, and more economic, utilization of reason and diplomacy are increasingly clear.

Although the depreciation of force and physical violence, especially in its inter-state manifestation, has not progressed far enough to change the international system itself, it has altered substantially the manner in which states seek to protect their interests. Indeed, it was recognition of this which gave rise to a renewed appreciation of the field of political economy since the late 1960's.² But parallel to this development, and much less appreciated, is the overall shift which seems to be

² For discussion of this phenomena and a listing of major works in this area, see the Robert O. Keohane, After Hegemony (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

taking place in the utilization of both violence and diplomacy in statecraft.

The current international environment seems to demand that states and their leaders place increasing emphasis on the obtainment of political objectives through reason and diplomacy. The inordinate expense in terms of blood and treasure, as well as technological innovations in warfare, communication, and transportation, have contributed to a nation-state system which is less able to regulate its affairs through force of arms. Thus, the ability of one state to persuade or non-violently manipulate another is increasingly important.

The fundamental issue revolves around the ability of one state to elicit uncoerced support from another state's decision-makers. When the leaders of a state have such an ability, they have influence.³ Influence differs from control, not in end, but in means; the intended outcome is produced imperceptibly, without the formal exercise of power or authority. In this way, the leadership of one state can protect their self-defined interests without resorting to more costly and dangerous expenditures of political power or physical violence.

³ For an analysis of influence as a concept, see Alvin Z. Rubinstein Soviet and Chinese Influence in the Third World (New York: Praeger, 1975), Chapter I.

If an influence relationship ceases to function, however, or if a state has never been able to establish a successful influence relationship, then it often attempts to coerce another state's politically relevant actors into supporting its policies. Thus, there is a constant interaction between reason and diplomacy on the one hand, and coercion and violence on the other.

While the interaction and tensions between these variable are present in the foreign policies of most states, they are especially notable in case of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union's, and before it, the Russian Empire's, predominant experience with power has centered primarily on the ability to control other states through the overwhelming use of force. Neither the Soviet Union nor Czarist Russia have had extensive historical experience in building and exercising influence. Such relationships are more the exception in Russian history, than the rule.

The major periods of Russian and Soviet expansion have all involved overwhelming physical power. The first phase, into Siberia and central Asia, for example, was marked by war and military domination.⁴ The second major phase, into Eastern Europe, has also come through war, occupation, and periodic and violent intervention in support of that small

⁴ See, George Alexander Lensen, Russia's Eastward Expansion (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1964).

and vulnerable segment of the elite which is pro-Soviet (e.g., East Germany, 1953; Hungary 1956; Czechoslovakia, 1968; Poland, 1982).⁵

Moreover, it also seems that the Soviet Union's political culture and domestic system, as well as the understanding of power and politics which its policy-makers maintain, contribute to the tendency to dominate local partners. The Soviet Union's unique history has given its culture a distinctive view of political life and power relations. Foreign invasion, domestic autocracy and communism, not only seem to predispose most Soviet decision-makers toward "defensive expansion,"⁶ but toward a conception of power and politics which is inherently more coercive and anti-democratic than the West's.⁷

⁵ For the background on this domination, see Hugh Seton-Watson, The "Sick Heart" of Modern Europe (Seattle: University of Washington, 1975), pp.51-76.

⁶ See, Henry R. Huttenbach, "The Origins of Russian Imperialism" in Taras Hunczak (ed.). Russian Imperialism From Ivan the Great to the Revolution (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1974), pp.20-43.

⁷ For an attempt at analyzing this connection see, Alexander L. George, "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," in Erik P. Hoffman and Fredric Fleron, Jr. (eds.), The Conduct of Soviet Foreign Policy (New York: Aldine, 1980), pp.165-190; also, Nathan Leites, A Study of Bolshevism (Glencoe, IL: Free press, 1953). Some of the distinctive elements of the Soviet political culture include: a tendency toward xenophobia and messianism, and a belief that the individual should be subjugated to the state and that it is proper to transform a country from above. See, Tibor Szamuely, The Russian Tradition (London: Secker & Warburg, 1978).

This coercive political culture places a premium on authoritative and formal control at home, and seems to predisposes the Soviet leadership toward attempts to establish similarly dominant relationships abroad. While a connection between a coercive political culture internally and a coercive foreign policy externally has yet to be demonstrated conclusively, the correlation in Soviet foreign policy is readily apparent.⁸ Clearly, the Russian/Soviet leadership seem to feel more comfortable with subservient partners.

Given what seems like the Soviet Union's (domestic) need to dominate local partners, and its historical inexperience with exercising influence, the Soviet Union has had difficulty adapting to the current international environment with its depreciation of force. The Soviet Union's inability deftly to manipulate other states' elites through informal, non-coercive methods hobbles its efforts to promote its foreign policy interests, and raises serious questions over its ability to compete successfully in the international system.

⁸ Soviet behavior in Eastern Europe and Mongolia, its activities in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Syria, and elsewhere, as well as the failures in China, Yugoslavia, and Egypt, all involve the tendency (if not drive) to dominate a local partner and control its policies. Consequently, the connection between internal Soviet political culture and its external tendency to dominate local partners cannot be overlooked.

An examination of the Soviet Union's relations with past and present foreign partners reveals the Soviet tendency to seek control of local regimes and its difficulty in establishing and maintaining influence. Over the past several decades, there have been almost a dozen major instances where the Soviet Union established influence over local elites, only to be ignominiously rebuked, if not expelled, soon afterward.

The most notable states in this group include China (in the early 1960's), Yugoslavia (1948), and Egypt (1972). In each case, the Soviet Union was unable to maintain the support of the indigenous decision-makers and even aggravated the situation and hastened its own demise by blatantly attempting to dictate policies to the partner.⁹

Within this group there is also a second set of states where the Soviet Union initially secured influence but then lost it as a result of a violent internal conflict among the partner's politically relevant groups. This set includes Algeria (1965), Indonesia (1965), and Chile (1972). In each of these countries, the Soviet Union made

⁹ For China, see Donald S. Zagoria, The Sino-Soviet Conflict, 1956-1961 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963); for Yugoslavia, see Bela K. Kiraly and Wayne S. Vuchinich, The Tito-Stalin Split in Historical Perspective (Brooklyn: Brooklyn College Press, 1984); for Egypt, see Part I of this study.

significant commitments of prestige and materiel, but lost most all the influence it originally garnered.¹⁰

In examining those relationships where the Soviet Union is able to maintain a hold over a local partner's policies, it is clear that the vast majority of these relationships are maintained through coercion and periodic and occasionally violent intervention in support of the local pro-Soviet elite. In other words, they fit the historical Russian and Soviet pattern of maintaining control through overwhelming physical force, and are not influence relationships.

Members of this group includes most all states in East Europe (since 1945), and a newer set of Third World states such as Ethiopia (1976), Angola (1978) and Afghanistan (1979).¹¹ This newer set of states is especially significant because the Soviet Union seems to have refined a series of coercive techniques to ensure the survival of

¹⁰ See, Morton Schwartz, "The U.S.S.R. and the Leftist Regimes in the Less-Developed Countries," Survey, Spring 1973, pp.209-244; and Kurt London (ed.), The Soviet Union in World Politics (Boulder: Westview, 1980), Ch. 5,6,8. Additional states in either the first or second set of states include: Ghana (1966); Mali (1967); and Guinea (1968).

¹¹ For Eastern Europe, see *ibid.*, Chapter 8; for Angola and Afghanistan see Donald S. Zagoria "Into the Breach'" Foreign Affairs, Spring 1979.

a pro-Soviet leadership.¹²

The only true partnerships which the Soviet Union has been able to maintain, and which fit the description of an influence relationship, are those with Cuba and Vietnam, and, to a lesser extent, Libya and Syria. And even here, the overwhelming challenge from the United States (to Cuba and Libya), China (to Vietnam) and Israel (to Syria) may very well be the determining factor. Regardless, Soviet influence seems to be maintained without coercive intervention in support of the local pro-Soviet elite.

In examining all of the above relationships, two very interesting points are apparent. First, the Soviet Union has not suffered a major loss of influence in a Third World state (a la China and Egypt) in almost fifteen years. (Even Iraq over the last decade does not match the earlier experiences.) And second, the more recent and successful Soviet attempts to consolidate partnerships in

¹² Thus, the seven pro-Soviet governments which came to power in the mid and late 1970's (i.e., Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Laos, South Vietnam, and South Yemen). Some of the methods utilized to secure the continued pro-Soviet orientation of the local elite included the establishment or increased reliance on local communist forces, the deployment of large numbers of East Bloc combat and security personnel, and the relentless manipulation of military and economic assistance and of any internal or regional conflicts which may exist. Soviet influence seems to be maintained by encapsulating the pro-Soviet leadership in a "cocoon" of foreign advisers, bodyguards, and intelligence agents. See, Steven R. David, "Third World Interventions," Problems of Communism, May/June 1984, pp.65-71.

such locations as Afghanistan and Ethiopia have been based on the traditional Russian/Soviet use of overwhelming force, and not on persuasion or non-violent manipulation. The implications of these two points are clear.

The first indicates that the Soviet Union has been able to improve upon its influence-building techniques and consolidate relations with those partners it had not yet lost (or which it had a new opportunity to attract) without violent intervention on behalf of the pro-Soviet elite. This seems to explain the enduring Soviet success with Cuba and Vietnam, and more recently and to a lesser extent (since the partnerships are much more limited) with such countries as India, Argentina, and Peru.

The second point indicates that the Soviet Union is consolidating its partnerships, not through persuasion and non-coercive manipulation, but through the direct maintenance of a state's pro-Soviet leadership by force of arms, and proxy or direct intervention. It avoids Chinas, Yugoslavias and Egypts, by creating East Germanies, Czechoslovakias, and Mongolias.

The Central Questions

Thus, the questions can be asked: Has the Soviet Union become more adept at persuading and non-violently manipulating the elite's of other states? And (or) is its

primary pattern for consolidating local partnerships still based on heavy-handed intervention and the force of arms? If one wanted to develop this point of analysis further, one could also ask: Has the Soviet Union really learned anything from its loss of influence (and the major foreign policy reversals) in China, Egypt, etc.? Has the consolidation techniques evidenced in the mid and late 1970's become the major Soviet method of ensuring its presence? Are there a particular set of circumstances which predisposes the Soviet Union toward a particular approach in one country and another in a second? And finally, how deep and enduring is the Soviet Union's tendency to control local partners?

The Specific Problem

In an attempt to answer the above questions, an excellent test case can be found in the Soviet Union's experience in the Middle East, and specifically its relations with Egypt between 1955 and 1976, and with Syria since the mid 1960's. As noted, the Soviet leadership once exercised a great deal of influence over the Egyptian leadership, but they subsequently lost this ability.

Hence, one can ask: why and how did the Soviet Union first gain and then lose its position in Egypt? How significant where symmetric or asymmetric national interests in the

establishment and maintenance of the relationship? What type of consolidation techniques did the Soviet Union pursue? And how does the Soviet elite itself explain the loss of influence in Egypt?

The Egyptian case is especially important because many analysts view it as the last (or near last) in series of Soviet foreign policy reversals which precipitated a major change toward more interventionist consolidation techniques and renewed emphasis on traditional Russian/Soviet physical coercion.¹³

If this is the case, then a change in Soviet consolidation techniques should be clearly evident in subsequent Soviet relations with Syria. Syria is part of the same regional political system as is Egypt, and the same Soviet policy-makers, who should have learned from the failure in Egypt, controlled Soviet policy toward Syria for the next decade. Thus, if improved or more coercive consolidation techniques were going to be utilized, then Soviet policy toward Syria should be an area where they are evident.

One of the most intriguing aspects of this problem,

¹³ See, Alexander R. Alexiev, The New Soviet Strategy in the Third World (Santa Monica: Rand, 1983), pp.9-11; Francis Fukuyama, Moscow's Post-Brezhnev Reassessment of the Third World (Santa Monica: Rand, 1986), pp.2-3; Richard Pipes, U.S.-Soviet Relations in the Era of Detente (Boulder: Westview, 1981), p.189; and Adam Ulam, Dangerous Relations (New York: Oxford University, 1983), p.103, 123-6, 154.

however, is that Soviet-Syrian relations are still unconsolidated. Soviet relations with the Syrian leadership today still suffer from many of the same ills as plagued the relationship with Egypt fifteen years ago. Thus, if the Soviet Union did learn any lessons from its failure in Egypt, they are not immediately evident in the Syrian case. Additionally, the possibility cannot be ruled out that the Soviet leadership learned the wrong lesson from the Egyptian experience.

Methodology and Tentative Hypotheses

In order to arrive at a coherent explanation of Soviet consolidation techniques, the failure in Egypt and its impact on relations with Syria, this project will engage in an in-depth analysis and systematic comparison of current Soviet-Syrian relations with those between the Soviet Union and Egypt fifteen years earlier. This comparison will provide a useful framework from which to evaluate the impact of the Egyptian experience on subsequent Soviet policy toward Syria, and specifically to evaluate whether or not the Soviet Union is attempting to control Syrian policies, and if so, in what manner.

The investigation is divided into three parts: an analysis of the Soviet experience with Egypt; an analysis of more recent Soviet relations with Syria; and a concluding chapter comparing the two relationships and summarizing

and explaining the findings.

Part I details and analyzes the Soviet experience in Egypt and the failure to consolidate relations. Part II details and analyzes Soviet relations with Syria, and evaluates current policies in light of the Egyptian experience. Part III compares the relatively greater Soviet success in Syria with the lack of success in Egypt, and expands on the reasons for this greater success, and on what seems to be the Soviet Union need to dominate the policies of its local clients.

By examining these facets of the problem, it is hoped that a coherent explanation of Soviet foreign policy will be formulated, and a better understanding of its underlying tendencies and future course gained.

PART I

THE SOVIET EXPERIENCE IN EGYPT

INTRODUCTION

Since the mid-1950's, the Soviet Union has pursued an active and at times successful policy of limiting Western, and especially United States, influence in the Middle East. While this goal has always been the minimum objective, the Soviet Union often pursues a more assertive policy of attempting to gain indigenous state support in its geopolitical and ideological struggle with the United States.¹ Thus, the Soviet Union's policy toward the Middle East aims alternatively at limiting Western influence and at increasing its own.

The purpose of an influence relationship is to obtain an objective with a minimum of coercion. Its essence concerns the ability of one state to advance its national aims through the persuasion or non-violent manipulation of another state's elite. When this relationship is firmly established and not unduly subject to the vagaries of circumstance or succession, it can be considered consolidated.²

In examining the Soviet Union's experience in the Third

¹ See, Robert O. Freedman, Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970, (New York: Praeger, 1982); and Oles M. Smolansky, The Soviet Union and the Arab East Under Khrushchev, (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1974).

² For an attempt to define and utilize "influence" as a concept, see Rubinstein, Soviet and Chinese Influence in the Third World, op. cit.

World, nowhere is an influence-building policy --and its failure-- more evident than in Egypt. Indeed, the dramatic swings in the Soviet-Egyptian relationship exemplify what is increasingly recognized as a central problem of Soviet foreign policy, i.e., its inability to consolidate client relationships. While the Soviet Union is often able to initiate allied or client relationships, it has great difficulty transforming these transitory opportunities into secure, long term advances.³

The extreme anti-Western, Arab nationalist environment of the 1950's and 1960's Middle East gave the Soviet Union a perfect opportunity to form alliances with the states of the region. Mohammed Heikal even claimed that Gamal Abd al-Nasir "invited" the Soviet Union into the region.⁴ And after a decade and a half of patient and expensive effort, the Soviet Union attained a position of substantial influence in Egypt, and by 1970, became a recognized equal of the United States as a shaper of regional affairs.⁵

In order to obtain and secure this position, the Soviet Union expended not only millions of rubles and considerable amounts of hard currency, but also directly

³ See Donaldson, op. cit.

⁴ Mohammed Heikal, The Sphinx and The Commissar, (New York:Harper & Row, 1978), pp. 17, 65.

⁵ See, Lawrence Whetton, The Canal War: Four Power Conflict in the Middle East (Cambridge: M.I.T., 1974).

intervened in the 1970 War of Attrition (stationing over 17,000 troops in Egypt) and risked near nuclear confrontation with the United States during the October 1973 War.⁶ In spite of this massive investment of men, materiel, and prestige, Soviet success was very short lived.

By the mid 1970's, Soviet influence in Egypt and the region was almost negligible. In 1976, Anwar Sadat struck a near fatal blow by unilaterally cancelling the Soviet-Egyptian Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation and the remainder of naval basing rights the Soviets had enjoyed since 1970. Additionally, he ordered a ten year moratorium on debt repayment to the Soviet Union, and aligned Egypt with the United States against its former patron. The failure in Egypt was most likely the second or third most serious Soviet foreign policy reversal after the split with China in the early 1960's and the defection of Yugoslavia in 1948.⁷

In retrospect, it is apparent that the Soviet-Egyptian relationship was always unstable and inconsistent. While they were never able to compel the Egyptians to undertake

⁶ See, Strategic Survey, (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies [henceforth, IISS], various years). [1971:30-31; 1972:26-27; 1973:13-42.]

⁷ See, Zagoria, The Sino-Soviet Conflict, 1956-1961, op. cit.; and Kiraly and Vucinich, op. cit.

actions which they did not want to undertake, the Soviet leadership was occasionally able to restrain or inhibit particular Egyptian policies which they considered inimicable to their interests.⁸ The Soviets were never able to persuade the bulk of Egypt's elite that Soviet foreign policy goals were identical (or even compatible) with Egypt's own. As a result, Egyptians became increasingly disillusioned with the Soviet presence and eventually turned against it.

The key to analyzing the Soviet-Egyptian relationship is to decipher how each state's elite interpret its own national interest, and then how these elites attempt, first to manipulate and then to coerce each other into securing compatible policies when interests conflict. If both parties have a joint interest in some particular policy or action, then there is little need for one side to persuade or coerce the other to assume necessary policies. But if there is a clear conflict of interest (or even an ambiguity which allows each side to interpret its interests differently), then the influence or coercion of one side on the other is often decisively important in determining a policy outcome.

When the gap between respective interests becomes so large

⁸ Alvin Z. Rubinstein, Red Star On The Nile, (Princeton:Princeton University Press, 1977), pp.330-334.

that one side no longer believes that persuasion of non-violent manipulation of the other's elite will achieve the objective at hand, then it often reverts to a more direct and physical attempt to control the other side's decision-making structures and processes. And so it was with the Soviet Union. As the asymmetry between Soviet and Egyptian interests increased, the Soviet Union attempted to off set its declining influence by penetrating the Abd al-Nasir and then Sadat regimes.⁹

In the Soviet-Egyptian case in the late 1950's and early 1960's (see below), it is clear that both parties had a high mutuality of interest, and that "influence" was less significant. But by the late 1960's, Soviet and Egyptian interests began to diverge sharply. Thus, the stage was set for Soviet policy-makers, diplomats and in-country representatives first, to persuade and manipulate Egyptian decision-makers into maintaining pro-Soviet foreign and domestic policies, and then to coerce them into doing so by attempting to penetrate the decision-making structure and processes.

⁹ A regime is penetrated when "non-members of a national society participate directly and authoritatively, through actions taken jointly with the society's members, in either the allocation of its values or the mobilization of support on behalf of its goals." James Rosenau, "Pre-Theories and Theories of Foreign Policy," James Rosenau (ed.), The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy (New York: Free Press, 1971), p.126.

Consequently, the central questions for each of the next four Chapters are: How and when did Soviet and Egyptian interests coincide and conflict? Why, given the decade and a half long opportunity, did the Soviet Union ultimately fail to consolidate the influence relationship in Egypt? How did the Soviet Union attempt to gain control of Egypt's policies and why did it fail? And, What lessons, if any, did Soviet policy-makers learn from this failure?

The Western Academic Literature

While numerous Western works on Soviet relations with Egypt and the Middle East have been published, this researcher has not found a single work which comprehensively considers the consolidation question. While several authors have made major contributions toward an understanding of the issue,¹⁰ at this point, the literature on the subject is far from complete and often lacks a framework for the analysis of the failure. Moreover, the most significant works addressing the issue were published seven or eight years ago and do not make use of recent Egyptian and Western memoirs.¹¹

¹⁰ The three most notable works are Karen Dawisha, Soviet Foreign Policy Toward Egypt, (London:St. Martins Press, 1979); Mohammed Heikal, The Sphinx and the Commissar, op. cit.; and Rubinstein, op.cit.

¹¹ Three of the most significant are from Ismail Fahmy, Mohammed Riad, and Saad Shazly.

The relevant literature can be divided into three parts: general overviews of Soviet Middle East policy and/or U.S.-Soviet interaction in the region; regional overviews focusing on Soviet military or military-political affairs; and those few works concentrating on Soviet-Egyptian relations.

The general overview literature is useful for gaining insight and information, but it is not intended, and does not address, the specifics of the Soviet failure in Egypt. Some of the excellent works in this category have been written by Robert O. Freedman, John C. Campbell, Galia Golan, Elizabeth Valkenier, and Lawrence Whetton.¹² All of these works (and numerous others) offer the "big picture"; but the fine details of a single aspect of a problem, such as the Soviet failure in Egypt, only receive passing attention and are not a central concern.

A partial exception to the above is Galia Golan's Yom Kippur and After.¹³ Since its time frame (the early and mid 1970's) is significantly smaller than that of the

¹² Freedman, op. cit.; John Campbell, "Communist Strategy in the Mediterranean," Problems of Communism, XXVII, 3, 1979, pp. 1-17; Galia Golan, Yom Kippur and After: The Soviet Union and the Middle East Crisis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Elizabeth Valkenier, The Soviet Union and The Third World: An Ideological Bind (New York: Praeger, 1983); Whetton, op. cit.

¹³ Golan, op.cit.

other books, it does have much more to say on the Soviet failure in Egypt. But the author is also concerned with a number of other issues and states, and thus, the issue of influence consolidation does not receives her full attention. Additionally, because the situation had not completely developed, Golan spent a good deal of effort simply establishing the historical record.

An even more relevant part of the literature concerns Soviet military or military-political policy in the Middle East. Since a great deal of the Soviet-Egyptian difficulties centered on the military component of the relationship, these works often reveal interesting aspects of the problem and have contributed to an understanding of the issue. The most notable works in this genre have been produced by Jonathan Glassman and Amnon Sella.¹⁴ It should be noted, however, that consensus on some of the most basic issues of the Soviet-Egyptian military relationship (e.g., the extent of Soviet aid given to Egypt) is missing from this literature.¹⁵

The final category of literature, that specifically

¹⁴ Jon Glassman, Arms for the Arabs: The Soviet Union and War in the Middle East (Baltimore:Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975); Amnon Sella, Soviet Political and Military Conduct in the Middle East (New York:St. Martin's Press, 1980).

¹⁵ See Moshe Efrat, "The Economics of Soviet Aid to the Third World:A Case Study:Egypt," Soviet Studies, October, 1983.

devoted to Soviet-Egyptian relations, is naturally the most useful. But none of these works, with the exception of Heikal's The Sphinx and the Commissar, directly and comprehensively address the consolidation failure.¹⁶

Heikal's book (as well as several of his other works) is one of the best primary sources on the relationship. But this is both a positive and negative attribute: as a participant in the drama, Heikal has been able to reveal interesting facets of the relationship and its problems. But Heikal also often provides the reader with one-sided and self-serving interpretations of events. Moreover, like most historical participants, Heikal tends to rewrite history from the present. Consequently, his testimony, especially on controversial matters, is often unreliable and cannot be taken at face value.¹⁷ Regardless, Heikal's publications were invaluable for this investigation.

One of the first scholarly attempts to address the specific problems of the Soviet-Egyptian relationship was Alvin Rubinstein's Red Star On The Nile.¹⁸ Rubinstein's book gives an excellent and detailed analysis of the 1967-

¹⁶ Heikal, op, cit.

¹⁷ This is especially obvious in relation to Sadat's role in the relationship. Cf. Heikal, op. cit. and Mohammed Heikal, Autumn Of Fury, (New York:Random House, 1983).

¹⁸ Rubinstein, op.cit.

to-mid 1970's period. But its major flaw is that it did not go far enough in emphasizing the fragility of the "influence relationship." The book ends with little indication that the relationship was on the verge of total collapse.¹⁹

Another comprehensive attempt to evaluate the Soviet-Egypt relations is offered by Karen Dawisha.²⁰ Soviet Foreign Policy Toward Egypt is a very good overview of Soviet-Egyptian relations, but for the purposes of this investigation it has two drawbacks: first, it is less specifically concerned with the consolidation failure than is this investigation, and second, in following the "Brecher" model,²¹ Dawisha was more interested in the internal determinants of Soviet foreign policy and, therefore, did not highlight the Egyptian side. Additionally, like all of the others works above, this book was written before the most recent Arabic and Western memoirs were published. Nevertheless, Dawisha's book does contribute to a better understanding of the consolidation

¹⁹ It should be noted, however, that the problem is probably not with Rubinstein's scholarship, which after all is obviously very good, but with the fact that his initial under-estimation of the extent of the trouble was overtaken by the unfolding of the events themselves. This could have resulted from either or both a recognition and/or publication lag.

²⁰ Soviet Foreign Policy Toward Egypt, op. cit.

²¹ See Michael Brecher, The Foreign Policy System Of Israel: Setting, Images And Process, (New Haven:Yale University Press, 1972).

failure.

As is evident from the above review, the literature on Soviet-Egyptian relations contains a significant gap when it attempts to explain comprehensively the Soviet loss of influence in Egypt. The broader literature does not fully examine the consolidation failure, and the primary source material still has to be evaluated and integrated into the wider literature. It is in an effort to draw these two trends together, and to contribute to a better understanding of the Soviet failure in Egypt, that the present study is undertaken.

Central Hypothesis of Part I

As noted above, the first step in analyzing the Soviet-Egyptian relationship is to determine where conflicts of interest lie, and where persuasion, manipulation and eventually coercion were applied to attain an alteration of policy. It is clear that in the 1950's and early 1960's there was a high degree of symmetry between Soviet and Egyptian foreign policy goals. Thus, there was less need for each state's elite to prove continually the value of its own policies to the success of the other. Of course, there were sharp policy disagreements between the respective elites, but these mainly concerned tactical issues and not the overall worth of the relationship

itself.²²

The basis of this interest symmetry was found in the internal environment of both states, as well as in the larger external situation.²³ Accordingly, most of these factors were beyond the control of each side, and the opportunity provided the Soviet Union with a prolonged period of time in which to consolidate the influence relationship with the Abd al-Nasir regime. But as internal developments in both Egypt and the Soviet Union progressed, each state's interests became less coincidental and even conflicted.²⁴

As the Soviet-Egyptian relationship progressed from the mid 1950's, it could be expected that Soviet and Egyptian interests might diverge. And as this occurred, Soviet-Egyptian differences were increasingly manifested in antagonistic policy objectives. Moreover, this antagonism concerned such vital interests as Egypt's right to the "war option" and the Soviet Union's role as Egypt's

²² This does not mean that one or the other side did not raise the issue of the relationship's worth as a bargaining ploy.

²³ For a discussion of national interests and their relationships to internal and external variables, see Waltz, op. cit.

²⁴ These conflicts involved almost every sphere of the relationship from political relationship toward third parties, to the specifics of economic and military policy. The details of the original convergence and then divergence of interest will be given in Chapter I and II.

economic benefactor. As each side became more fully cognizant of the limits of what each would do for the other --and the ramifications of these limits on their own policies-- the conflicts became ever more serious and developed into a barrier to the continuance of the relationship itself.

Given the increasingly asymmetrical nature of Soviet and Egyptian interests, Soviet policy-makers had increasingly to rely on their own (and in-country Soviet personnel) efforts to sway Egypt's elite toward pro-Soviet policies. And in this they clearly failed. Thus, the conflicts grew. As it became clear that Egypt would not continue to pursue pro-Soviet policies, the Soviet Union began to shift to a more interventionist policy which attempted to directly penetrate the regime. But this only further antagonized the Egyptian elite and eventually ended in the complete collapse of the Soviet presence in Egypt.

Thus, the Soviet debacle in Egypt was caused by 1) the attempt and failure of the Soviet Union to penetrate the Egyptian decision-making structure (or conversely, Egypt's successful resistance to such Soviet attempts), and 2) general Soviet mismanagement of the relationship, especially their handling of Anwar Sadat and their rigid maintenance of maximal objectives in the face of failure.

In reviewing the Soviet-Egyptian experience and the development of asymmetrical interests, one might think that the Soviet Union was fated to lose its influence in Egypt, and that this failure was overwhelmingly probable (i.e., "inevitable") given the increasing asymmetry. But was the loss of influence primarily the result of circumstances beyond Soviet control (i.e., were the conflicts of interests incapable of being bridged?), or was the Soviet Union's own handling of the relationship the major variable responsible for the near total collapse of relations?

Based on the substantial evidence uncovered in the course of this investigation, this researcher is convinced that the Soviet Union could have managed the relationship better, and thus, prevented it from deteriorating as deeply as it did.²⁵ Of all the factors responsible for the loss of Soviet influence in Egypt, the only one entirely under Soviet control (or the one which should have been totally under Soviet control) was the management variable. Therefore, in establishing a hierarchy of causes for the Soviet failure in Egypt (or, as James Rosenau would say, a ranking of each variables

²⁵ This is not to assert that the United States managed its affairs without error; in fact, the U.S. missed a number of opportunities for defusing the Middle East crisis. See, William B. Quandt, Decade Of Decision, (Berkeley:University of California Press, 1978), pp.141-144.

"potency"),²⁶ it seems that the Soviet management and penetration failure, and not the development of asymmetric interests, should be most strongly emphasized.

Interests, and the way they coincide or conflict, are the raw materials upon which diplomacy and statecraft operate. Even if other factors were present to weaken the relationship, this researcher does not think that the relationship had to deteriorate to such an acrimonious level. While the Soviet Union could not control all the historical, geographical and other variables shaping the relationship, it could, and had, to forge a prudent foreign policy out of these environmental circumstances. And this is, in fact, what it did not do.

Besides the Soviet Union's need to lessen its maximal expectations vis-a-vis Egypt, it also could have avoided a great deal of the trouble by improving on the quality of diplomatic and inter-personal contact between Russians and Egyptians. The specifics of when to send a diplomatic note or military shipment--or of what tone to use in the note or what arms to ship--was a unilateral Soviet decision (see below). Moreover, it was the eventual Soviet attempt to dominate the Egyptian regime which really crystallized the resistance to the Soviet Union. By

²⁶ Rosenau, op. cit., p.109; also see, E.H. Carr, What is History (New York:Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), pp.113-143.

bullying the Egyptian elite, the Soviet Union became its own worst enemy. The near total loss of Soviet influence in Egypt, in many ways, was a self-inflicted wound.

In examining how the Soviet Union eventually lost its position in Egypt, it is clear that they made a number of bad policy choices and that their highly bureaucratized and inflexible domestic system often places them at a disadvantage with the Western powers. In an effort to understand these poor choices and their origins in the Soviet internal system, Chapter IV of this project will examine the Soviet internal debate (as revealed chiefly through the academic literature) on Egypt and attempt to decipher what options the Soviet Union thought it had, and why it chose the policy it eventually did. By such an approach it is hoped that the consolidation failure in Egypt will be better elucidated.

CHAPTER I

The Development Of Asymmetric InterestsPhase I: The Soviet Union & Egypt Find Each Other

In 1955, the Soviet Union began shipping arms to Egypt through Czechoslovakia. This was first time the Soviet Union had established such significant military, economic and political relations with a distant state, and it marked the end of the West's monopoly of influence on Middle Eastern affairs and the failure of its containment policy in that region. By mid 1956 and the Soviet promise to construct the Aswan Dam (which the West had shortly before denied Abd al-Nasir), the Soviet Union had established itself as a permanent and decisive actor in regional affairs, and as an increasingly attractive alternative to Western ties.

A notable, and perhaps under-appreciated, aspect of this development is that during this early period, the Soviet Union was probably the most suitable extra-regional partner for Egypt. Both states had early and mutual interest in forming the relationship, and it was, in many ways, a natural liaison. Several factors lead to this conclusion.

First, one should recall that Egypt was never colonized in quite the same manner as were most other non-European

states. It is generally accepted that the Middle East colonial legacy is substantially different from that of the rest of the world.¹ And in Egypt's case, the British (in contrast to the French in Algeria) never actually intended to make the occupation permanent.

Since Britain's system of administration and means of occupation were less destructive of indigenous institutions, Britain only obtained limited control of indigenous political and social activity, and was never able to subordinate this activity.² Consequently, it was natural (if not inevitable) that Egypt would be among the first colonial states to fight for complete independence and to come into conflict with England and the West. Thus, Egypt had a common interest with the Soviet Union (in weakening the West), and the affinity between them evolved almost spontaneously. In many ways, this was both logical and predictable.³

Unlike in Europe and East Asia, the Second World War

¹ See, Bernard Lewis, The Middle East And The West, (New York:Harper & Row 1964), pp.28-46, 115-141.

² See, John Marlowe, Arab Nationalism and British Imperialism (New York:Praeger, 1961).

³ For a discussion of alliance formation and prediction based on a balance of power analysis, see, Kenneth Waltz, op. cit., pp.102-129. For the specifics of the Middle East see, Dankwart A. Rustow, "Safety in Numbers: Reflections on the Middle East Balance of Power," in A. Yudovich (ed.), Historian of the Middle East: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1987).

failed to establish recognized superpower areas of interest in the Middle East. Consequently, the region was (and is) more disposed toward volatile swings of alliances, and the competition for advantage assumed (assumes) a more precarious and unstable character. Each local state attempts to play one external power off against the other, and Egypt's utilization of the Soviet Union against its colonial enemies was quite natural. The most active Western states in the Middle East, England and France, were in no hurry to relinquish the vestiges of empire and this was a direct threat to Egypt and the Abd al-Nasir regime.

British policy toward Egypt in the mid and late 1950's was heavily responsible for Abd al-Nasir's turn toward the Soviet Union. Both (then) Prime Minister, Anthony Eden and Chancellor of the Exchequer, Harold Macmillan, were never enthusiastic about relinquishing control of Egypt, and once Egypt's second revolution (i.e., the 1954 "Free Officers'" coup) was completed, tension with the nationalist Egyptian regime was bound to mount.

Given the colonial mentality of the British government, Whitehall reacted to Abd al-Nasir's rise with direct and immediate hostility. Moreover, this hostility included at

least two British plots to assassinate Abd al-Nasir.⁴ Thus, Abd al-Nasir had both a personal and national interest in opposing Britain.

The nationalization and confrontation over the Suez Canal was really the culmination of deep seated Anglo-Egyptian antagonisms. Egypt, because of its continued vulnerability to British power, was predisposed toward an active anti-British, anti-Western foreign policy and was behaving accordingly. Abd al-Nasir wanted full control of Egypt--including the Suez Canal, and he wanted it immediately, not twelve years hence.

When the final showdown over the Canal came, some members of the British cabinet, such as Macmillan, even speculated that if they could oust Abd al-Nasir, then "Jordan might disappear, Syria and perhaps Lebanon might be merged into Iraq, and a 'final solution' to the Israeli problem could be found."⁵ But because the United States was unwilling to condone such imperial machinations, the operation failed and Abd al-Nasir --and the Soviet Union-- were made into even greater heroes in the Arab World.

⁴ See, Anthony Verrier, Through the Looking Glass (London:Cape, 1983), p.158; and Chapman Pincher, Their Trade is Treachery (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1986), pp.205-6. For details of British policy and Eden's disdain for Abd al-Nasir, see Verrier, op. cit., Ch. 4.

⁵ London Times, January 1, 1987, p.2. (This revelation was found among a number of interesting points recently declassified by the British.)

If the colonial legacy were not sufficient incentive for Egypt to ally itself with the Soviet Union, then U.S. policy soon gave it further cause. During the mid and late 1950's, the United States, under the tendentious sway of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, was almost singularly concerned with building an anti-Soviet regional alliance.

Consequently, it was extremely insensitive to the interests of local states (e.g., the Baghdad Pact fiasco⁶) and accelerated Egypt's gravitation toward the Soviet Union.⁷ As Nikita Khrushchev himself said, "Dulles' policies backfired and help bring us and Egypt closer together."⁸ Obviously, the communist dimension complicated matters, but since the Soviet Union proved (most of the time) to be rather pragmatic on this point, both sides were able to work out a *modus vivendi*.⁹

⁶ See Dankwart A. Rustow, Oil And Turmoil: America Faces OPEC And The Middle East, (New York:Norton, 1983), pp.79-81.

⁷ See, Wilbur Crane Eveland, Ropes of Sand (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1980), especially pp.56-173.

⁸ Nikita Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers, (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1970), p.437.

⁹ See, Robert O. Freedman, "The Soviet Union and the Communist Parties of the Arab World: An Uncertain Relationship," in Soviet Economic And Political Relations With The Developing World, Roger E. Kanet and Donna Bahry (eds.), (New York:Praeger, 1975); also, John K. Cooley, "The Shifting Sands of Arab Communism," Problems of Communism, March/April, 1975, pp.22-45.

It should also be mentioned that the Western powers were sympathetic, if not directly friendly, to Israel. And in contrast to this, the Soviet Union, after 1952, took a very anti-Israeli position.¹⁰ Consequently, Egypt had another common interest with the Soviet Union.

From the perspective of the Soviet Union, the benefits of an alliance with Egypt were equally compelling. Certainly, the larger "systemic variable" gave Egypt considerable geopolitical value to the Soviet Union.¹¹ And as Khrushchev said: "it was in our interest to support Nasir's bourgeois leadership because it promised to weaken the influence of English colonialism in the Near East--and that was in the interest of the Soviet Union."¹²

While the precise importance of any single variable affecting Soviet entry into the region is still being debated (i.e., the "offensive/defensive" argument), almost all Western observers accept geographic propinquity, ethnic communality and historical affiliation (of the southern republics), and geopolitical and strategic

¹⁰ See, Arnold Kramer, The Forgotten Friendship (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974).

¹¹ See Kenneth Waltz, op. cit., pp.102-129.

¹² Khrushchev, op. cit., p.432; also see p.440.

competition with foreign powers as major determinants.¹³

The Soviet Union (and Russia) always had important national interests in south-west Asia, and even an occasional, low-level interests further south in Egypt. Surely it would be fanciful to believe that the Soviet Union suddenly awoke in 1955 and began skillfully manipulating Egypt against the West.

The Czarist Empire, for example, had a rivalry with the Ottoman Empire which lasted over two hundred years. It was only Russia's own collapse and the weakness of the new Soviet state which stopped Lenin from taking advantage of the Ottoman Empire's disintegration.¹⁴ Moreover, because of Egypt's importance to the British Empire and the "Great Game" in Asia, it would be hard to believe that the Czarist Empire was not at least carefully observing that state. And as Egypt became a center of pro-German sentiment in the 1930's, its significance cannot have escaped the Soviet rulers.¹⁵ Indeed, the 1939 Nazi-Soviet negotiations --which included discussions on the Middle

¹³ See, R.D. McLaurin, The Middle East In Soviet Policy, (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1975), pp. 15-59.

¹⁴ For the early rivalry see, Stanford H. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977), Vol. II and II; for the later period see Walter Laqueur, The Soviet Union and the Middle East (New York: Preager, 1959).

¹⁵ See, Kermit Roosevelt, Arabs, Oil and History (Port Washington [NY]: Kenniket, 1947, [reprinted 1969]), pp. 233-236.

East-- may well have been a harbinger of future Soviet interest in the region.¹⁶

Given geographical propinquity, the most crucial Middle East states for the Soviet Union were (and are) the "Northern Tier" states (Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan).¹⁷ But once this area was stabilized (especially after 1962), then Egypt assumed entirely new significance.¹⁸ The key variable restraining Soviet activity in Egypt during earlier times was Stalin's Zhdanovite, "two-camp" view of the world and Soviet resource stringency. With the recovery from W.W.II and the death of Stalin, both restraints were removed. Consequently, had Abd al-Nasir not "invited" the Soviet Union into the region, then it very well might have forced its way in. In any event, the attraction was clearly reciprocal.

In examining the 1954-1965 period, it is clear that the

¹⁶ Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941: Documents From The Archives Of The German Foreign Office, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), pp.217-259. For a more beneficent view of Soviet-Nazi negotiations over the Middle East, see Arnold Horelick, "Soviet Policy in the Middle East," in Paul Hammond and Sidney Alexander (eds.), Political Dynamics in the Middle East (New York: American Elsevir, 1972), p.560.

¹⁷ See, Malcom Yapp, "Soviet Relations With The Countries Of The Northern Tier," in Adeed Dawisha and Karen Dawisha (eds.), The Soviet Union In The Middle East (New York:Holmes and Meier, 1982), pp.24-45.

¹⁸ See, Freedman, Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970, op. cit., p.89.

Soviet Union and Egypt had a mutually accommodative, yet turbulent relationship. On the one hand, Egypt was especially receptive to Soviet tenders of support because of the tremendous military and economic aid it provided (e.g., the Czech arms deal, the Aswan Dam project, etc.), and because of its diplomatic support during the 1956 and 1958 crises. As Heikal, Fahmy and others have noted, no other country would have given Egypt as much material, financial and diplomatic assistance.¹⁹

But on the other hand, the residual antagonism (on both sides) over Egypt's domestic development and the Egyptian Communist Party, as well as Egypt's awareness that the Soviet Union was unwilling to assist it militarily in 1956 and 1958, gave Nasir and his colleagues pause when it came to the Soviet Union.²⁰ Thus, while there was a high degree of symmetry between Soviet and Egyptian interests, they were far from identical. Nevertheless, this symmetry was sufficient for Egypt to forge a mutually satisfying relationship with the Soviet Union.

¹⁹ See, Heikal, The Sphinx and the Commissar, op. cit., p.17-18; Ismail Fahmy, Negotiating for Peace in the Middle East (London: Croon Helm, 1983) p.5-7. Also see Chapter II.

²⁰ For resentment over the 1956 and 1958 crisis, see Sadat, op. cit., pp.147, 153; and Mohammed Heikal, The Cairo Documents, op. cit., pp.122-124; For the residual antagonism see, Yacoov Ro'i, From Encroachment to Involvement (New York:Wiley, 1974), pp.337-344.

From the Soviet perspective, Egypt must have been viewed in a mixed to highly positive light. The Soviet Union had to be, as Sadat remarked, "extremely happy" with Egypt because "...it found somebody to fight its battles...somebody to wake up the Third World countries and the colonies for a small price..."²¹ But Abd al-Nasir's "impetuosity," his penchant for publicly misrepresenting Soviet intentions, and his pursuit of less than socialist domestic policies must have irked them.²² On the whole, however, it is difficult to see how the Soviets could not have been satisfied with Egypt.

Phase II: The Soviet Union Targets Egypt

A major turning point in Soviet policy toward Egypt (and the region) came after the fall of Khrushchev. While tracking the intricacies of succession in the Kremlin is undoubtedly one of the most difficult aspects of Soviet studies, it does seem certain that Khrushchev's Third World and Middle Eastern policies played a major role in his ouster.²³

²¹ Sadat, In Search of Identity (New York:Harper and Row, 1977), p.143.

²² See, Heikal, The Cairo Documents, op. cit., pp.128-129.

²³ See, Morton Schwartz, "The U.S.S.R and Leftist Regimes in the Less-Developed Countries," Survey, Spring 1973, p.218.

The major weakness in Khrushchev's Third World strategy was its over-extension. Not only had the Soviet Union backed Egypt, Iraq, and other Arab states during the late 1950's and early 1960's, but it had also become deeply involved in Africa (e.g., Ghana, Guinea and Mali), Asia (e.g., North Vietnam and Indonesia) and even North America (e.g., Cuba). By indiscriminately attempting to spread influence everywhere and at all times, Khrushchev spread Soviet resources much too thin. Consequently, by the early 1960's, Soviet interests were severely threatened and major reversals resulted.

While Khrushchev was physically only in power for the Cuban missile crisis, this observer believes that the later failures in Indonesia (1965), Algeria (1965), Ghana (1966), Guinea (1968) and Mali (1968) were really the final collapse of the Khrushchev line.²⁴ After Leonid Brezhnev and Aleksei N. Kosygin assumed power in October 1964, they began moving away from this counter-productive dispersal of resources,²⁵ and took greater care to concentrate Soviet efforts on the areas which would return the greatest benefits. Notably, the Middle East and Egypt

²⁴ See, Roger Kanet, "Soviet Attitudes Toward Developing Nations Since Stalin," in Roger Kanet (ed.), The Soviet Union and Developing Nations (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1974), pp.35-42.

²⁵ Commitments, however, are often easier to establish than to break; hence, it took time for the overall policy to be completely reversed.

were two such areas. Consequently, policy toward this area and country remained the same.²⁶

The general objective of the new Brezhnev-Kosygin line was to gain military and political parity with the United States.²⁷ And any strategy which sought such a goal would find a unique opportunity in the Middle East. Outside of independent developments in the U.S.-Soviet strategic balance and major realignments on the European continent, the Middle East was rapidly becoming the "fulcrum" of the global balance of power. Hence, it would be difficult to believe that the Soviet Union did not specifically "target" Egypt and the Middle East for special attention.²⁸

In comparison to other Third World "opportunities," the Middle East was the area least securely held by "imperialist" forces: the colonial presence in sub-Saharan Africa was still very strong; the Americans were becoming increasingly involved in South East Asia; and any

²⁶ Besides overt evidence of policy continuity, Khrushchev made a revealing statement which indicates that a Politburo conflict was resolved by maintaining the old policy. He said: "I'm still convinced that my own judgments were correct -despite the grumbling of those skunks, those narrow minded skunks who raised such a stink and tried to poison the waters of our relations with Egypt." Khrushchev, op. cit., p.450.

²⁷ See, Ulam, Dangerous Relations, op. cit., pp.32-33.

²⁸ Freedman, Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East, op. cit., p.20-25.

revolutionary hopes for most of Latin America were clearly premature. Moreover, the traditional geopolitical and economic significance of the region was intensified by the increasing importance of petroleum in the world economy, and by the rising Soviet reliance on the Suez Canal as a transportation artery.²⁹ And the fact that there was a major regional conflict created additional incentive also.³⁰ But the decisive variable was probably the increasing American nuclear presence in the Mediterranean.

In 1964, the United States began deploying nuclear missile-carrying Polaris submarines in the Mediterranean.³¹ Since, at that time, the Soviet Union had no air or naval facilities in that region for anti-submarine warfare (ASW), the area provided U.S. submarines with an ideal sanctuary. Consequently, the establishment of ASW bases in the Mediterranean must have become a top Soviet objective.

In searching for ASW facilities, it is clear that the

²⁹ See, Nation, op. cit., pp.41-54.

³⁰ See, Nadav Safran, Israel: An Embattled Ally, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp.384-387.

³¹ See, Michael McGuire, "Naval Power and Soviet Global Strategy," International Security, Fall, 1979, pp.134-189.

Soviet Union did not have a long list of candidates. Certainly (at that time), Albania, Cyprus, Greece, Israel, and Turkey were not possible. Lebanon, Libya, and Tunisia (because of their pro-Western orientations) were also unlikely prospects. And Yugoslavia was unwilling to give either power preferential facilities. Thus, the Soviet Union had three possible candidates: Algeria, Egypt and Syria.

In examining these possibilities, it must have been apparent that the only viable and secure possibility was Egypt. While the Soviet Union did have some influence in Algeria, the May 1965 purge of communists from the FLN and government, as well as Boudemienne's increasing rapprochement with France and Western Europe must have made the Soviet leadership think twice.³² And as far as Syria was concerned, its chronic instability (e.g., the 1961, and 1963 coups) highlighted the precarious nature of attempting to consolidate relations with any regime coming to power. Thus, Soviet attention necessarily became riveted upon Egypt.

In retrospect, it is clear that the April 25, 1965 Soviet decisions to dissolve the Egyptian Communist Party (ECP), to replace American aid cancelled by the Johnson

³² See, Freedman, Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970, op.cit., p.25.

Administration later that year, and to have Premier Kosygin and Admiral Gorshakov visit (in 1966) represented a watershed in Soviet-Egyptian relations.³³ These acts signaled, however temporarily, a greater Soviet willingness to accommodate Abd al-Nasir. They meant that the Soviet Union was working to stabilize the Abd al-Nasir regime and not to install some alternative.

Phase III: Egypt Equivocates

In response to these alterations in Soviet policy, Abd al-Nasir was urged to reciprocate by granting the Soviet Union military "facilities," and by strengthening Egypt's "pro-socialist" foreign and domestic policies. The difficulty, however, was that he was not prepared (at that time) to accede to either request. His 1961 and 1964 nationalizations were still wreaking havoc on the economy, and Abd al-Nasir did not wish to share power with anyone (no less, the communists). Additionally, the granting of military "facilities," besides being anathema to Egypt's fervent nationalism, was also Abd al-Nasir's greatest bargaining chip. He saw little need to give it up at the present time.

³³ On the dissolution of the Communist Party, see Chapter III; on the U.S. aid cut-off and the Soviet response, see Anwar Sadat, In Search of Identity, op. cit., pp.154,164; on Gorshakov's visit (and all of the above) see, The Middle East and North Africa: A Contemporary Record, 1966/1967 (London: Europa Publications, 1968), pp.740-741,745-746.

But if Egypt would not requite the Soviet Union's increased tenders of support with additional concessions, then the more accommodative Soviet posture could not long be maintained. Indeed, within several months of the February 1966 "left Ba'th" victory in Syria, the Soviet Union began to deal more evenly with both Damascus and Cairo.³⁴

In the mid 1960's external environment, there were at least three major changes which both caused and enabled Abd al-Nasir to lessen Egypt's dependence on the Soviet Union. First, as the 1960's progressed, the threat of resurgent Western colonialism (ala 1956) became much less acute. While the British and French had not given up their "traditional" interest in the Middle East, they were preoccupied with difficulties at home, with Soviet activities on the European continent, and with other foreign embroglios. Thus, with both a relative and absolute decrease in Western imperial interests in the Middle East, Egypt's need for a staunchly anti-Western patron decreased.

Second, a new, semi-autonomous center of power in the Arabian peninsula was rising. By the mid 1960's, Saudi Arabia's increasing oil wealth provided Egypt with both

³⁴ This was most evident in the rapid diversion of economic and military aid to Damascus. See, Chapter V.

positive and negative incentives for lessening its ties to the Soviet Union. Besides the Saudi's long standing opposition to various Egyptian (pro-Soviet) actions, the increased petro-wealth now provided Egypt with an alternative source of economic assistance, --if it would distance itself from the Soviet Union and accommodate Saudi Arabian interests.³⁵ On balance, the Saudi economic (and theocratic) rise to prominence increased Egypt's interest in, and ability to, resist Soviet pressures.

A third external change also concerned intra-Arab politics. With the break-up of the "United Arab Republic" in 1961, Egypt's role as the primary force in the Arab world began to decline. As Malcom Kerr noted, after 1961 the "vitality, relevance, and credibility" of Nasserism and "pan-Arabism" begun to diminish.³⁶ (The 1967 defeat only hastened a decline which began several years earlier, it did not initiate it.)

In fact, it was Egypt's disastrous involvement in the Yemen Civil War (1962-1967) which really exacerbated the decline. And not only did the Soviet Union encourage Egypt to intervene in this war, but it also reinforced the

³⁵ See, Malcom Kerr, The Arab Cold War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).

³⁶ Malcom Kerr, "The Political Outlook in the Local Area," in A. Becker, B. Hansen, and M. Kerr (eds.), The Economics and Politics Of The Middle East (New York: American Elsevier, 1975), p.42.

polarization of the Arab world (and region) with the Soviet Union and Egypt on one side and Saudi Arabia and the United States on the other. Thus, the balance of power within the Arab world was slipping away from Egypt, and inter-Arab pressure to force Egypt away from its partnership with the Soviet Union was growing.

While the Soviet Union was able to prop up the Nasir regime after the 1967 defeat-- and thereby maintain its tenuous hold on Egypt-- the infusion of support could not reverse the mounting disillusionment with pan-Arabism and the "anti-imperial struggle." In many ways, the 1967 war was the coup de grace: Abd al-Nasir had simply squandered too much of Egypt's blood and treasure on foreign adventures.

Egypt had not only lost the ability to carry on a radical policy, but it also was becoming deradicalized itself. Thus, it no longer had quite the same ability or desire to fight the Israelis, or to uphold its claim as the leader of the "anti-imperialist" movement. Moreover, a number of states and non-state actors (e.g., the radical wing of the P.L.O. and Muammar al-Qadaffi) emerged during the post-war years to out radicalize Egypt. Abd al-Nasir no longer had the luxury of liberating Palestine, he now had to concentrate even harder on maintaining his own tenuous grasp on power, and on liberating the occupied

territories.

It was only a matter of time before the bankruptcy of Egypt's entire foreign policy--and its over-identification with the Soviet Union--became evident. While Abd al-Nasir never publicly admitted that his over-reliance on the Soviet Union could not produce favorable foreign policy results, he did express it privately. While at the Khartoum Conference (September 1967), for example, Abd al-Nasir was reportedly quite frank: Egypt was on the verge of collapse and he did not know if he could continue pursuing the policies he had been pursuing.³⁷ Egypt --the "big fish" of the Arab world-- was "on the hook" by the United States; it could either attempt to break free (which was not very promising), or it could die a slow death.³⁸

Malcom Kerr has rightfully pointed out that the June 1967 War and abd al-Nasir's later death put an end to Egypt as "Prussia" and Nasir as "Bismarck."³⁹ But a second interesting parallel is between Poland between the two World Wars and Egypt in the late 1950's and early 1960's. Egypt under Abd al-Nasir, like Poland under Pilsudski,

³⁷ Cited in Fouad Ajami, The Arab Predicament (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp.86-87.

³⁸ Ibid., p.86-87. The statement was made to, among others, Algerian President Boumedienne.

³⁹ The Arab Cold War, op. cit., pp.154-155.

refused to accept that its foreign policy was constrained by the limits of its resource base. Consequently, both brought their countries to ruin. It was a case of what Hans Morgenthau described as the disaster that occurs when inadequate means pursue grandiose ends.⁴⁰ With Egypt's increasingly fragile domestic base, it was a clear prescription for disaster.

The notable difference between the Egyptian and Polish cases, however, was that Poland was isolated by Pilsudski's policies; no major European power took Pilsudski's delusions of Poland's great power status seriously. In fact, the English and French eventually even sought to save Poland (and themselves) from his mad policies.

In the Egyptian case, however, the Soviet Union, especially under Khrushchev, did very little to dissuade Abd al-Nasir of his own pan-Arabist over-ambitions. In fact, it often attempted to utilize Nasir's grandiose ambitions in its struggle with the United States. The Soviet strategy of "Arab unity on an anti-imperialist basis" encouraged Abd al-Nasir to play the lead role in a drama for which his state was increasingly unfit,⁴¹ and to pursue vigorously policies which were not central to

⁴⁰ Morgenthau, op. cit., pp.150-154.

⁴¹ See, Khrushchev, op. cit., p.438.

Egypt's own national interest.

There is an interesting parallel between Khrushchev and Abd al-Nasir's foreign policies of over-extension. But while the other Soviet leaders were able to remove Khrushchev and refocus Soviet energy, the politically relevant Egyptian sectors were never able to do the same to Abd al-Nasir. His charismatic appeal, even after the second humiliating defeat to Israel, allowed him to remain in office. But the new Soviet leadership apparently discerned the dangers inherent in Abd al-Nasir's precarious situation and personalized rule. Consequently, Brezhnev and Kosygin increasingly and more strenuously attempted to penetrate the Abd al-Nasir regime. The growing asymmetry between Soviet and Egyptian interests had developed to such a point that the new leadership probably thought that direct control was the best means available for safe guarding Soviet foreign policy objectives. But the period after the 1967 was increasingly to demonstrate that this approach would not succeed.

Chapter II

Asymmetric Interests and their Consequences

There seems to be an emerging consensus among Western scholars that while the Soviet Union contributed --perhaps decisively-- to the June 1967 War, it actually miscalculated in its attempt to save the pro-Soviet regime in Damascus.¹ The evidence indicates that the Soviet Union (especially its diplomatic corps and KGB section in Tel Aviv) seriously underestimated the Israeli resolve to fight.² Thus, the Soviet leadership forced matters to the brink, only to find that they could restrain neither the Egyptians nor the Israelis at the last minute.

In the ensuing six days of battle, Israel undermined twelve years of patient and expensive Soviet effort. Like many wars, the 1967 Arab-Israeli war was a boundary event which fundamentally altered the immediate interests of the states involved. And in Egypt's case, the war began to reveal the limited utility of an alliance with the Soviet Union and it set in motion a series of events which further alienated the two states from each other.

¹ See, Yaacov Bar Simon-Tov, Linkage Politics In The Middle East: Syria Between Domestic And External Conflict, 1961-1970 (Boulder:Westview, 1983), pp.154-168; Glassman, op. cit., p.42; Kass, op. cit., pp.27,59; Also see Chapter V.

² See, Abba Eban, An Autobiography, (New York:Random Books, 1978), pp. 320,423; and John Barron, KGB (New York:Bantam Books, 1974), pp.11-12,69,73.

In the political-military sphere specifically, Soviet and Egyptian interests began to diverge more sharply. Since the Soviet Union's own survival was not at issue, it could consider a slow and careful negotiation process which would provide it with a legitimate regional role, guarantee its position vis-avis the United States, and return the occupied Arab land (if not establish peace in the region).

But Egypt did not have this temporal luxury. The occupied lands were needed back immediately. The Abd al-Nasir regime was increasingly unstable, and the prolonged inability to liberate Egyptian/Arab land from Israeli occupation would surely result (as it almost did) in his overthrow. Internally, it left him vulnerable to critics on both the left and right, and most seriously, it was increasingly crippling the country economically.³ Thus, the Soviet Union, which had rarely (if ever) been eager for a Mideast war, now had to deal with a local partner whose interests pushed it closer and closer to war.

³ Not only did the war force Egypt to devote even greater resources to military expenditures, it also destroyed substantial human and physical capital, and caused major and semi-permanent foreign exchange losses (i.e., the closure of the Suez Canal; the loss of the Sinai oil fields; and the decline in tourism) See, Eliyahu Kanovsky, The Economic Impact of the Six Day War (New York: Praeger, 1970), especially pp.279-289.

It should also be noted that Egypt's heightened need for Soviet economic assistance coincided with an increasingly difficult economic situation for the Soviet Union itself (see below). Thus, just as Egypt's interests called for more economic assistance, Soviet interests dictated less generous policies. Moreover, as relations deteriorated, the Soviet Union attempted to utilize the economic factor as a means of coercion. This policy of increased pressure through economic means is probably the opposite of the one the Soviet Union should have pursued. Contrary to what Sadat, Fahmy and others have insisted, economic hardship was an important cause of Egypt's turn toward America. Consequently, the increased Soviet economic pressure hastened Egyptian alienation from the Soviet Union.

All told, there was increasing asymmetry between Soviet and Egyptian economic, political, and military interests after the 1967 war. In response to this asymmetry, the Soviet Union had two choices: it could redouble its commitment to Egypt and attempt more strenuously to penetrate the Abd al-Nasir regime and control its policies, or it could minimize its losses by contenting itself (however temporarily) with second class regional status.

While it is difficult to discern how hard the choice was

for the Soviet Union,⁴ it is clear that it decided upon the former course. Within two weeks of the defeat, a 24 man Soviet delegation, headed by President Nikolai Podgornyi, arrived in Egypt.⁵ Henceforth, the Soviet Union would pursue an even more assertive policy in Egypt.⁶ But even with the more assertive policy, the Soviet Union still had to contend with the increasingly asymmetric nature of Soviet and Egyptian interests.

If one systematically lists and analyzes the major issues increasingly dividing Moscow and Cairo, then it is clear that the new policy only widened the fissures in the relationship. The two basic issues were: Soviet efforts to limit the "war option" and the arms transfer issue; and the economic aid and debt question. And the effort to penetrate the regime and force policy conformity upon Egypt only enraged the Egyptian elite and precipitated the eventual loss of almost all Soviet influence in Egypt.

⁴ The Arab defeat seems to have reverberated even in Moscow; many believe that Moscow Party Secretary Nikolai Yegorychev was dismissed after the war because of his interventionist stance. See, Pravda June 22, 1967; and John R. Thomas, "Soviet Foreign Policy and the Military," Survey Summer 1971, pp.147-153.

⁵ See, Rubinstein, op.cit. pp.18-35.

⁶ The 1967 defeat represented not only a major turning point in Soviet-Egyptian relations, but also in Soviet-Third World strategy. See, Carol Saivetz and Sylvia Woodby, Soviet -Third World Relations, (Boulder:Westview Press, 1985); and Stephen Kaplan, (ed.), The Diplomacy Of Power: Soviet Armed Forces As A Political Instrument, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1981), pp.42,166.

The "War Option" And Arms Transfer Issue

After the Six Day War, the major dilemma for the Soviet Union was to find a way to supply Egypt with arms without providing Abd al-Nasir with an opportunity to precipitate another catastrophic war. The Soviet Union had to find both a way to shape Egypt's military policy and to better institutionalize its own presence. The Soviets found the answer by rebuilding the Egyptian armed forces in a manner which minimized their capability for offensive action,⁷ and by increasingly attempting to penetrate the regime.

Although Soviet military aid poured into Egypt after 1967,⁸ the crucial fact was that the types of arms, and their delivery schedule were tightly controlled. Clearly, the Soviet Union did not want to give Egypt anything close to an ability to wage war on its own. As Sadat later remarked:

It was not part of the Soviet leaders' plan to have Nasir fight another war; they supplied him with the weapons as a courtesy gesture (in recognition of his anti-American and anti-imperialist stand, and in an attempt to secure a Soviet presence in the region), but never intended

⁷ See, Rubinstein, op. cit., pp.17-19; and Safran, op. cit., pp.261,419-420.

⁸ The magnitude of arms was unprecedented, "surpassing in both quantity and quality the aid given to North Vietnam and exceeding the rate at which aid had hitherto been given to allied or friendly countries." Rubinstein, Red Star on the Nile, op. cit. p.30.

[for him] to use them.⁹

While Sadat's view of a "Soviet military embargo" is among the most extreme, the evidence is unmistakable that, by and large, the Soviet Union did consciously set out to limit Egypt's "war option." While the consistency of Soviet attempts to limit the arms flow varied over time (e.g., the pre-1973 war rise, see below), it is clear that the Soviet Union did not seek to over-turn the regional (military) balance of power. (Whether this makes a virtue out of necessity is beside the point.)

Soviet concern over controlling the use of arms transferred to Egypt was evident from its very first shipments. Indeed, Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov told Abba Eban in 1955 that the Soviet Union was not supplying military aid to Egypt "for the purpose that Egypt should make war against Israel." It "followed," therefore, that the arms would not be used for this purpose.¹⁰

The Soviet leadership probably realized that Arab military parity (or especially superiority) would lead to an attempt to destroy Israel; a confrontation with the U.S.; or both. Since the Soviet Union most likely does not want

⁹ Sadat, op. cit., p.185-186.

¹⁰ Eban, An Autobiography, op.cit., p.193.

Israel destroyed (and has never called for its destruction), and since it does not want a military confrontation over an Arab attempt to do so, it usually attempts to maintain the balance of power between its clients and Israel.¹¹

As early as April 1959, Khrushchev cautioned Abd al-Nasir about his "impulsiveness" and said:

we feared that our unlimited support of your belligerent sentiments might have prompted you to take military action which we have always regarded as undesirable....

...we had in mind that in a state of excitement largely caused by the prevailing situation, you might have taken some undesirable action leading to war.¹²

Given Nasir's previously noted penchant for involving the Soviet Union against its will in confrontations with Israel and the West (i.e., his 1958 misrepresentation of Soviet policy), then this concern was fully warranted.

While the Soviet Union's strategy of limited transfers may have enabled it to muddle through the decade after 1955, the Israeli conquest of massive and strategically important territories in 1967 fundamentally changed the regional calculus. Henceforth, in Cairo's eyes, the Soviet Union would either have to help Egypt regain the

¹¹ For a detailed analysis supporting this position see, Jon Glassman, op. cit.

¹² Quoted in Heikal, The Cairo Documents, op.cit., p.141.

territories through either negotiations or war. If negotiations would not work, then war was the only option.¹³

Unfortunately, the Soviet Union seems to have underestimated both the will of the United States to maintain the precarious status quo, and Abd al-Nasir's increasingly desperate need to regain the occupied territories. The Soviet Union thought it could contain Egypt's frustration by carefully calibrating the supply of weapons while searching for a political solution. This was of course the "no war, no peace" situation.¹⁴ Neither Nasir nor the Egyptian people were satisfied with this situation and they increasingly held the Soviet Union and its policies accountable.

While Abd al-Nasir's increasing reliance on the Soviet Union is well appreciated, his parallel moves toward the U.S. are often overlooked. In searching for a "political" solution in the late 1960's, Abd al-Nasir knew that he

¹³ Thus, Abd al-Nasir's strategy of balancing Israel's local superiority with that of the Soviet Union, i.e., "internationalizing" the conflict. Heikal, The Sphinx and the Commissar, op. cit., p.197; Heikal, The Road To Ramadan, Quadrangle (New York:1975), p.165.

¹⁴ After the 1967 War, Nikolai Podgorny was also unusually frank: "Everywhere I arrived I found men expecting me to supply them with the means to start the war all over again as soon as possible. Everywhere I left, I left men whom I had quieted down. And Everywhere we will keep our hands on the arms we are giving." Time Magazine, July 21, 1967. (Emphasis added.)

would have to deal with the Americans; hence his cautious and noncommittal overtures to Washington.¹⁵ But Nasir also suspected that his maximal demands would be unacceptable to the U.S. (Hence, his increased dependence on the Soviet Union in an effort to play it off against the United States.) Just how Nasir thought he could maintain his maximal objectives while negotiating with the United States is puzzling.¹⁶

Regardless, with Abd al-Nasir's death the issue became moot. When Sadat came to power, he was well aware of Soviet preferences on the war option and arms transfers. Hence, he began to protest vocally and to attempt to shift Soviet priorities. In analyzing Sadat's charges of an "arms embargo," most Western researchers and several high-level Egyptians have not concurred. Indeed, some of Sadat's strongest critics are other Egyptians.

Former Egyptian Chief of Staff, General Saad el-Shazli, for example, while acknowledging that the Soviet Union was against an offense in 1971, firmly maintains that the Soviet Union gave Egypt sufficient equipment to wage war against Israel by early 1972.¹⁷ Basically, he called

¹⁵ See, Henry Kissinger, The White House Years, (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1979), pp.360-362; and Quandt, op. cit., pp.85,98,163.

¹⁶ Kissinger, Ibid.

¹⁷ Shazli, op. cit., pp.127, 273-277.

Sadat a liar whose ulterior motives have yet to be revealed.

Former Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmy, on the other hand, is more sympathetic. He is quite frank in admitting that "Soviet policy" was always "to limit Egypt's military option," but he also recognizes that this was "reasonable given the nature of the situation and larger Soviet interests."¹⁸ While the Soviet Union was a "hesitant" arms supplier in the early Sadat years, they "got the message" after the expulsion and delivered substantially more weapons.¹⁹

Mohammed Heikal's analysis of the arms transfer question is especially interesting because of his previously noted tendency to rewrite history. Before Heikal decided that Sadat's turn to the U.S. was not in Egypt's interest (1975), he spread the blame on both sides: the Egyptians exaggerated Soviet production capabilities (and they were always changing their requests), and the Soviets were frugal with the arms.²⁰ But as his attitude toward Sadat and the American connection changed, so too did his interpretation of the arms issue. Writing in 1978, the arms issue did not even rate space on a six point list

¹⁸ Fahmy, op. cit., pp.6,124.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.9.

²⁰ Heikal, The Road To Ramadan, op. cit., pp.167,181.

leading up to the expulsion!²¹ And by 1983, Heikal was defending the Soviet supply policy.²²

While differences exist among Egyptians, there is greater consensus among Western analysts. Every major Western review examined concluded that Sadat improperly blamed the Soviet Union. While acknowledging that the Soviet Union originally sought to follow a policy of restraint, Glassman maintains that the Egyptian Army was better armed at the end of the War of Attrition than it was before June 1967.²³ Sella similarly concluded that the Soviet Union was "reasonably generous" with arms transfers to Egypt.²⁴ And Rubinstein was also unsupportive of Sadat's argument.²⁵

This reviewer believes that while the consensus is correct, it is also too harsh on Sadat. Certainly, in absolute monetary terms, Soviet transfers are large enough to discredit any charge of extreme Soviet frugality (Table II.1). But relative to transfers to Israel (arms imports

²¹ The Sphinx And The Commissar, op. cit., p.238.

²² The Autumn Of Fury op. cit., pp.70-71.

²³ Glassman, op. cit., p.109.

²⁴ Sella, op.cit., pp. 34.

²⁵ Rubinstein, op. cit., pp.191-194.

for 1968-1973 are valued at \$1,612 million²⁶), they are not as massive. Additionally, given U.S./Israeli technological superiority; the better training and motivation of Israeli forces; and the need for a (rough) 3:1 force ratio of attacking to defending forces, then Soviet transfers were less than ideal.

TABLE II.1
SOVIET MILITARY AID TO EGYPT, 1967-1973 27
(Million \$ U.S.)

<u>ACDA</u>	<u>CIA</u>	<u>SIPRI</u>
1,738	2,840	2,059

Further more, an analysis of yearly deliveries schedules and weapons systems transferred indicates that the Soviet Union limited Egyptian quantitative access to a wide array of weapons and refused to deliver a number of "offense" systems (i.e., equipment which posed a strategic threat to Israel). Thus, in spite of Sadat's hyperbole, the crux of the issue was volume, quality, and timing of deliveries.

Listed in Table II.2 are types and quantities of selected Egyptian weapons systems. As can be seen form the Table,

²⁶ U.S. Arms Control and Disarmement Agency [henceforth ACDA], World Military Expenditures And Arms Transfers, 1968-1977 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), p.133.

²⁷ ACDA, World Military Expenditures And Arms Transfers, 1963-1973 op. cit., p.9; CIA, Communist Aid Activities In The Non-Communist Less Developed Countries, 1979 and 1954-1979 (Washington D.C.: Foreign Assessment Center, 1980), p.31.; SIPRI Yearbook (Stockholm: Almaquist & Wiksell, various years). [The Sipri figure contains major hardware only.]

Egypt's arsenal experienced a significant increase between the War of Attrition and the 1972 expulsion. Clearly, Egypt was better armed in 1971 than in 1967.²⁸ But as is also apparent, Egypt's arsenal also increased dramatically after 1972 and the expulsion of Soviet personnel.

TABLE II.2
Major Egyptian Weapons Systems, 1968/69-1972/73 ²⁹

	1968/69	1969/70	1970/71	1971/72	1972/73
<u>Armor</u>					
T-62's	0	0	0	0	10
T-54/55's	500	650	950	1,200	1,500
T-34's	100	150	250	250	400
APC's	800	900	900	1,200	2,000
<u>Artillery</u>					
122,130, 152 mm	600	500	1,500	1,500	1,500
<u>Aircraft</u>					
Tu-16's	10	12	15	18	18
Il-28's	40	30	28	25	10
Mig-21's	110	100	150	200	220
Mig-15,17's	120	120	165	200	200
Su-7's	40	90	105	110	120
Mi-4,6,8,'s	50	50	70	140	180
<u>Missiles</u>					
Frog-3's	15	24	24	24	24
Scud's	0	0	0	0	some
SA-6's	0	0	0	some	large numbers

²⁸ The number of tanks more than doubled and artillery pieces tripled. Armored personnel carriers (A.P.C.'s) increased by 50% and helicopters by 300%.

²⁹ IISS, The Military Balance, op. cit., various years.

In 1972/73, the Soviet Union sent Egypt 460 tanks and 800 armored personnel carriers (A.P.C.'s). This represented a respective increase of almost 30 and 80 percent in one year! The Egyptian Air Force also added 10% more Mig-21's and almost 30% more helicopters. For a state planning to attack a more powerful neighbor, these additions--especially in tanks, A.P.C.'s, and helicopters--were very significant. Heikal was obviously accurate when he later wrote that between "...December 1972 and June 1973, we received more arms from them than in the preceding two years."³⁰

On the quantity issue then, it is clear that while the Soviet Union was never excessively restrictive with the arms flow, it did attempt to restrict the transfers in order to dissuade Egypt from attacking Israel (and to not provide Israel with a pretext for a pre-emptive strike). But after Sadat forced their hand with the expulsion, they became less concerned with the consequences of a war, and more interested in maintaining their position in the Middle East. Thus, they were forced to trade off control, not even for influence but simply for presence.

To a degree, the same type of restrictive transfer policies are evident on the qualitative issue. The weapons systems at the center of the dispute were Tu-22 bombers,

³⁰ Road to Ramadan, op. cit., p.181.

Mig-25 (M-500) aircraft, and Scud surface-to-surface missiles.³¹ While Egypt did possess a number of strategic systems (e.g., Tu-16 [medium] and Il-28 [light] bombers; Su-7 fighter/bombers), they were supplied in very limited quantities. While these systems were minimally represented (and did play a crucial role in the opening hours of the 1973 War³²), Egypt's campaign, to a certain extent, was designed around this weak strategic threat capability.³³

As far as the Tu-22 is concerned, the Soviet Union (according to Gen. Shazli) agreed to give Egypt this aircraft, but then Air Force Commander (and now President) Hosni Mubarak decided that it only represented a marginal improvement over Egypt's Tu-16, and therefore, did not warrant the expenditure.³⁴ The Mig-25 transfer, however, was a different issue.

It seems clear that the Soviet Union did not want to transfer the Mig-25 for fear of it being compromised. The

³¹ Sadat, op. cit., pp.221-226.

³² See, Shazli, op. cit., pp.25-36.

³³ This is especially the case in regard to Egypt's inability to mount air interdiction operations against Israeli reinforcements moving toward the front. Also, Egypt had to assume that Israel would make full use of air attacks because the Arab forces did not have a credible strategic bombing threat with which to occupy it.

³⁴ Shazli, op. cit., p.159.

Soviet Union had already had several bitter experiences with Arab air forces: in 1956, Israel captured a fully operational Egyptian Mig-17 (its pilot had abandoned it on a Sinai airstrip); in 1965, Israeli spy Eli Cohen obtained (among other things) detailed photographs of Syrian Mig-21's. And in 1966, the Mossad (supposedly with CIA assistance) purloined an Iraqi Mig-21.³⁵ Understandably, the Soviet Union was in no hurry to transfer its most sophisticated reconnaissance and interceptor aircraft.

Soviet reluctance to release the Scud missiles seems to have been motivated by a different desire. Primarily, the Soviet Union did not seem to want to precipitate another round of U.S. arms transfers to Israel, or to risk a preemptive Israeli strike (i.e., a repeat of 1956 and 1967).

Apparently, the Soviet Union does not want an unbridled arms race in the Middle East because it lacks the technological and economic depth to compete with the United States.³⁶ Even if the Soviet Union did possess the

³⁵ See, Dennis Eisenberg, Uri Dan, and Eli Landau, The Mossad (New York:Signet, 1978), pp.51-65,116; and The Spy Masters Of Israel, Stewart Steven, (New York:Macmillan, 1980), pp.172-183.

³⁶ See, Shazli, op. cit., p.160.

where-with-all for such a competition, Egypt could not hope to absorb the transferred weapons at a rate close to that of Israel. Hence, the best policy, or so it seemed, was to restrict Egyptian access to such "offensive" weapons. The transfer of large quantities of surface-to-surface missiles to Egypt would have forced Israeli (U.S.) counter-moves to degrade the threat, and/or been offset an by increase in Israel's own strategic threat to Egypt.

Thus, the Soviet Union usually did attempt to restrict Egyptian quantitative and qualitative access to weapons. The basic interests of each state drove them to mutually contradictory policies. And it was only after Sadat "shocked" the Soviet Union by threatening to oust them entirely from Egypt, and perhaps, the region, that the Soviet Union relented and gave Sadat what he felt was necessary for making war against Israel. Since the Soviet Union was unable to attain the level of control of Egyptian policy it had been working for, it had to allow Sadat to do as he pleased while it attempted to regain even a minimal amount of influence among Egypt's decision-makers.

Unfortunately for the Soviet Union, once Sadat had won his victory through Soviet arms, he was ready to move toward the Americans (see Chapter II). The best opportunity for the Soviet Union to have penetrate Egypt's political,

military, and economic structure and processes was in the 1964-70 period. The failure of the pro-Soviet Egyptian group to overthrow Sadat in May 1970 should have signaled the Soviet Union that the time for accommodation with Sadat was at hand. Instead, it continued to follow a policy of attempting to control Egypt's policies. Unfortunately for the Soviet Union, by this time, most of its incentives were mainly negative; they consisted of the withholding of weapons or of aid. They could not deliver the Israelis or assist the Egyptian economy out of its near depression.

The Economic Aid and Debt Issue

As noted above, one of the most striking examples of changing circumstances creating asymmetries between Soviet and Egyptian interests concerns the domestic Soviet economy and its impact on foreign economic relations with Egypt. While some Western analysts dismiss the importance of economic factors in Soviet Middle East policy,³⁷ economics was, and will continue to be a significant determinant of Soviet policy in that (and other) regions.

While a full examination of domestic variables propelling the Soviet Union to alter its foreign economic

³⁷ See, Abraham Becker, "Superpowers in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1970-73," in Becker, Hansen, and Kerr, op. cit., p.78.

relationships is beyond the scope of this project, suffice it to say that the Brezhnev/Kosygin leadership redirected Soviet economic priorities toward first, increased defense, and then increased consumer expenditures.³⁸

Between 1955 and 1964, the Soviet Union had been especially generous toward Egypt. During this period, Egypt received approximately \$1 billion in Soviet economic aid (and double that in military aid).³⁹ But the diversion of such vast economic resources to Egypt, was not only costly in forgone Soviet expenditures and investments (i.e., the "opportunity costs" of the aid), but was also very unpopular among the Soviet elite (and workers). As Roy Medvedev wrote in 1967:

It is no secret to [the intelligentsia nor workers] that not millions, but billions of rubles are required to arm the UAR and to build the Aswan Dam,...as well as dozens of enterprises [thousand of kilometers from the U.S.S.R.]. Our aid to Egypt -military, financial and economic exceeds our aid to any socialist country, and possibly to all socialist countries put together. Given our many unresolved domestic problems, this quantity of aid to Egypt can hardly be considered sensible.⁴⁰

³⁸ See, U.S. Congress, Joint Economic Committee, Allocation of Resources in the Soviet Union and China (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), pp.2-91; Valkenier, op. cit.

³⁹ See, CIA, Communist Aid Activities to Non-Communist Less Developed Countries, 1979, And 1954-1979, C.I.A. (Washington D.C.:1980), pp.7,20,31.

⁴⁰ Cited in Zhores A. Medvedev, Andropov (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1983), pp.174-5.

Thus, the Soviet shift away from generous economic aid to Egypt satisfied deeply needed Soviet domestic political, economic and social goals. By turning away from one-sided trade agreements and outright subsidies for Egypt, the Brezhnev/Kosygin regime was able to meet its own increasing defense and consumer needs. The costs of diverting even a moderate share of domestic resources to foreign economic aid were apparently not worth the investment.

As a consequence of this internal shift, the Soviet Union began to increasingly emphasize cash sales (instead of barter and counter-trade) and "mutually beneficial" trade (i.e., no Soviet subsidies) in its economic relations with Egypt.⁴¹ The shift in Soviet foreign economic priorities is clearly evident in the number of aid agreements signed with Egypt: between 1955-1964, over one thousand agreements were signed, but between 1965-1974, only 440 were signed.⁴²

⁴¹ For an early Soviet statement on the "successful" development of "mutually advantageous trade" with Egypt see, FBIS-SOV, March 14, 1967, p.BB 8; for detailed Western analyses see, Valkenier, op. cit., especially, pp. 19-27; Roger E. Kanet, "Soviet Policy Toward The Developing World: The Role Of Economic Assistance And Trade," in Robert H. Donaldson (ed.), The Soviet Union And The Third World (Boulder:Westview, 1981), especially pp.347-351.

⁴² CIA, Communist Aid Activities in the Less Developed Countries, op. cit., p.7.

Moreover, the value of these agreements declined from \$1 billion during the former period to only \$440 million during the latter. And the aid that was granted was concentrated in the state sector and included a few highly publicized show projects such as the Helwan steel and iron plant.

The same less beneficial shift in the economic relationship is evident in the trade sector. During the quarter century of extensive Soviet involvement with Egypt, Soviet-Egyptian trade had grown quite substantially. According to the Soviet Union's own statistics, two-way trade increased over 15 times (Table II.3). But the statistics (no less the Soviet statistics) on trade with Egypt can be misleading. In fact, these numbers actually do give a mistaken impression of the relationship's vitality.

Table II.3
Soviet Trade With Egypt ⁴³
(Million Rubles)

	<u>1950</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1975</u>
Total	44.0	172.0	606.4	709.8
Exports	19.3	62.8	326.9	261.5
Imports	24.7	109.2	279.5	448.3

First, it is apparent from these numbers that the growth

⁴³ Ekonomika i vneshne-ekonomicheskie svyazi SSSR: spravochnik [Economic and Foreign Economic Trade With The Soviet Union: A Handbook] (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnia Otnosheniia 1983), p.286.

of Soviet-Egyptian trade had slowed drastically after 1970. During the 1960-1970 period, two-way trade increased at 13.4% per year. During the 1970-1975 period, this dropped to 3.2% per year.

Second, these figures fail to account for the change in Soviet trade and aid policy as described above. Specifically, the terms of trade (i.e., the value of what Egypt had to export in order to obtain a fixed value of Soviet imports) were increasingly negative for Egypt. It had to sell more cotton and textiles to get the same amount of arms and machinery. Thus, what may look like an increasingly beneficial relationship was actually an increasingly rancorous one.

Third, the significant trade surplus that Egypt ran with the Soviet Union every year was designed partially to remunerate the Soviet Union for the arms transfers. Consequently, there were hidden costs in the trade which did not show up in the figures. Abd al-Nasir (and later Sadat) could not react positively to this altered trade and aid strategy. Soviet aid was scaled down and trade subsidies removed just as Egypt's needs were increasing. Egypt's economic situation was desperate, and it could not afford a slow down in external assistance.

Between 1965 and 1972, for example, Egypt's population

increased by 6.23 million to 34.84 million.⁴⁴ This is a staggering increase of over 20% in seven years! Even spectacular economic progress (which Egypt did not even come close to) would have been hard pressed to keep-up with this population explosion.

Egypt's trade and current account balances were in severe deficit, and as Table II.4 reveals, Egypt's foreign exchange holdings in 1971 and 1972 were at there lowest (relative) point in years. The country was perilously close to being unable to purchase its necessary imports. Hence, the asymmetric interests of each state grew to such proportions that they increasingly began to undermine the relationship.

By the time Sadat assumed office (November, 1970), not only was Egypt not receiving foreign economic aid from the Soviet Union, but it was reportedly not receiving economic aid from any source.⁴⁵ Moreover, this niggardly Soviet posture stood in marked contrast to earlier Soviet largess (i.e., the gratis replacement of Egyptian weaponry after the 1956 and 1967 wars; the Aswan Dam project; the 50% debt cancelation after the 1965 U.S. aid cut-off.)

⁴⁴ International Financial Statistics, 1984, IMF (Washington, D.C.:IMF, 1985), p.254-256. [Henceforth, IFS, 1984.]

⁴⁵ In Search Of Identity, op. cit., p. 214.

TABLE II.4
Egyptian Foreign Exchange Holdings, Value of Imports,
and Months of Foreign Exchange for Imports

	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	46
	(million \$ U.S).								
Foreign Exchange	54	63	102	75	51	74	49	46	
Imports	406	466	344	290	277	342	400	361	
Months of Foreign Exchange for Imports	1.6	1.6	3.6	3.1	2.2	2.6	1.5	1.5	

To further enrage Sadat, by the early 1970's, the Soviet Union began to manipulate the debt repayment issue in an attempt to coerce policy conformity from him. The Soviet Union increasingly demanded that Egypt repay several billion dollars of previously granted economic and military credits.⁴⁷ The Soviet Union wanted half a billion dollars a year in repayments and it began to hound Sadat and other Egyptian policy-makers about the issue. As Fahmy describes it, the Soviet Union was obsessed with the debt question and could not have a meeting without raising the

⁴⁶ Ibid. (Months of foreign exchange calculated from foreign exchange holdings and imports.)

⁴⁷ There are a number of different estimates for total Egyptian debt to the Soviet Union. They range (in current dollars) from Heikal's low \$1.7 billion, to An Nahar Report and Memo's \$10 billion (see, Heikal, Autumn Of Fury, op. cit., pp.70-71; An Nahar Arab Report & MEMO, June 6, 1983, p.7.); The CIA estimates the debt at \$3-4 billion of which \$1.4 billion is from economic credits (see, CIA, Communist Aid Activities, op. cit., p.9).

issue.⁴⁸ It even raised the issue with Sadat during the October War!

The Soviet effort to utilize the debt repayment issue as a means of coercion stemmed not only from the continuing drive to control Egyptian policy, but also from the Soviet failure to penetrate Egypt's economic institutions, especially in strategic infrastructural area. While poor management techniques and interpersonal attitudes are partially responsible (see Chapter III), a part of the failure to penetrate Egypt's economic structure was also due to Egypt's particular economic system. The residual power of feudal landlords, the petit bourgeois nature of the peasantry, and the growing power of the merchant and middle classes all acted, spontaneously and strenuously, to limit Soviet inroads into the economy.

But the largest source of the overall economic failure stems from the Soviet inability --or unwillingness-- to ease the economic burden on the Abd al-Nasir and Sadat regimes. This is especially true after the relationship began to deteriorate in the early 1970's. In stead of being more accommodative and generous --and allowing Egypt to maintain a middle economic path between east and west, Soviet policy-makers utilized the economic relationship, and especially the debt question, as an instrument for

⁴⁸ Fahmy op. cit., p.126,135.

blackmail. Consequently, in the early 1970's when Sadat was faced with an economic choice between Soviet blackmail and American bribery, it was not a very difficult to choose.

The Soviet Union and Egypt's national interests (both in the economic and military sphere) had grown so far apart that Moscow could do very little to assist Cairo without undercutting Soviet interests. Hence, as the Soviet leadership became aware of this situation, it increasingly dealt with the problem by attempting to penetrate the Egyptian regime in order to coerce conformity to Soviet policy goals. But it failed even in this.

Chapter III

The Soviet Mismanagement and The Failure to Permeate the Regime

Although Soviet involvement in Egypt increased substantially after Khrushchev's visit in 1964 and then again after the 1967 War, the Soviet Union was never able to convince most of Egypt's politically relevant elite that there was an identity of Soviet and Egyptian interests. Moreover, and as will be brought out below, they failed in their effort to permeate Egypt's decision-making structure and thereby coerce Egypt into pro-Soviet policies. It was clear, as Arkady Shchevchenko later remarked, that the Soviet Union had "...not acquired the foundation of influence it needed in political, military, or broader circles in the country. The K.G.B. and the C.P.[S.U.] had both failed to build a strong base outside Nasser's entourage."¹

While Soviet personnel were able to gain the sympathies and support of one or two major political institutions (i.e., the intelligence service and Arab Socialist Union [ASU]), they were never able to control any of them. The Soviet Union's position was always disproportionately reliant on Abd al-Nasir personally, and however much they urged him to widening the pro-Soviet segment of his power

¹ Shevchenko, op. cit., p.171.

base, he always refused. Thus, when Abd al-Nasir died and the Soviet Union could not arrange for a pro-Soviet candidate to succeed him, the major issues dividing the two sides rose to the fore.

Besides the arms transfers, "war option," and economic aid and debt issues analyzed in Chapter II, the Soviet Union also mismanaged its handling of Sadat and other senior Egyptian officials. And this mishandling of the Egyptian elite compounded the Soviet Union's problems over the asymmetric interests and was to a significant extent responsible for the backlash against the Soviet presence and the failure to penetrate the regime. Bad personal relations between the Russians and Egyptians intensified the problems over the real issues. Had there not been this antagonism and mistrust, it is likely that disputes would have been resolved more amicably and the Soviet penetration attempt more successful. This Chapter will examine this aspect of the problem.

The Overall Soviet Management Failure

Just as the Soviet military failed to "win friends and influence people" (Chapter II), so too did the diplomatic corps mishandle the government and Anwar Sadat. While this researcher would not go as far as Thomas Carlyle and assert that the history of the world is but the biography

of great men,² he would go as far as to assert that individuals played an unusually important role in the breakdown of Soviet-Egyptian relations. This is especially true since Egypt is a personalized --and the Soviet Union (under Khrushchev and Brezhnev) a slightly larger collegial-- dictatorship.

The Abd al-Nasir-Khrushchev, Abd al-Nasir-Brezhnev, and Sadat-Brezhnev relationships all exercised inordinate influence on the state of Soviet-Egyptian relations. Additionally, during the early and mid-1970's, the evolving Vietnam and Watergate crises in the United States gave Kissinger's relationship with Sadat added importance.

While the personal element was not the decisive factor in the break-down of Soviet-Egyptian relations, Sadat's palpable, if not pathological, dislike of the Soviet Union and its leadership was a major contributory factor for the consolidation failure.³ The evidence also indicates that the Soviet Union brought a great deal of the difficulty upon itself by the way it treated him.

² Thomas Carlyle, Heroes and Hero Worship, Vol. V, The Works of Thomas Carlyle (New York: Ams, 1969), p.1.

³ For a discussion of individuals in foreign policy see, Margaret Hermann, "Effects of Personal Characteristics of Political Leaders On Foreign Policy," in Why Nations Act, Maurice A. East, S. A. Salmore, and C. Hermann (eds.), (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications 1978), pp.49-68.

Moreover, this researcher believes that Leonid Brezhnev was so antagonized by the expulsion from Egypt and by Sadat's behavior during the 1973 war (see below), that he came to hold a grudge against Sadat which colored his judgement and made maintenance of a prudent policy difficult.

After examining the copious literature on Sadat's interaction with the Soviets, it is clear that most of the Soviet leadership and relevant foreign policy bureaucrats disliked Sadat. Moreover, their visible and repeated displays of contempt indicate that they enjoyed letting him know that they disliked him.⁴

There is more than a bit of irony in the fact that the personal element favored the Soviet Union while Egypt was ruled by Abd al-Nasir, and the United States while it was ruled by Sadat. Abd al-Nasir's deep personal (and reciprocated) disdain for the United States and Lyndon Johnson was a significant reason for the vitality of the Soviet Union's alliance with Egypt.⁵ Additionally, as

⁴ Both of Sadat's memoirs (as well as other sources) are full of stories detailing Soviet mistreatment. See, Those I Have Known (New York: Continuum, 1984), pp. 52, 58-60, 104; and In Search of Identity, op. cit., pp. 212, 221, 225-226, 242-243, 247.

⁵ See Lyndon B. Johnson, The Vantage Point, (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971), pp. 289-290; and Mohammed Heikal, The Cairo Documents, op. cit., pp. 248-

Kissinger has said, "so long as Nasir was President, he paralyzed Egypt by ambivalence."⁶ Sadat would not only be decisive, but decisive in the United States favor.

It has been noted by a number of observers that the Soviet Union and its top leadership were often personally interested in Abd al-Nasir's health. But it should also be noted that the Soviet Union was as surprised as everyone else when he died.⁷ Hence, Soviet intelligence on a matter of utmost importance was, in fact, quite poor. This is especially surprising given Abd al-Nasir's frequent trips to the USSR for medical treatment.

Almost any new Egyptian leader coming to power after Nasir would have attempted to regain control of Egypt's foreign policy. Thus, the Soviet "right to speak for Egypt" would be withdrawn. Sadat had a:

...chance to move the Americans toward an understanding of Egypt's position that, to be realistic, Nasir never had. The mistrust between Nasir and the Americans ran deep. Sadat was free of that legacy.⁸

Not only was Sadat "free from that legacy," he probably

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⁶ Henry Kissinger, Years Of Upheaval (New York: Little Brown & Co., 1982), p.199.

⁷ For Khrushchev's concern see, Khrushchev, op. cit., p.446; For Brezhnev's concern see, Heikal, Road To Ramadan, op. cit., p.81; For Soviet surprise see, Shevchenko, op. cit., p.171.

⁸ Heikal, Road to Ramadan, op. cit., p.115.

suffered from its antithesis, i.e., he had excessive faith in the United States.

Sadat's hatred of the Soviet leaders can be traced to his earliest experiences in their country. While the 1960 Khrushchev lecture on the virtues of communism and Egypt's "necessary" development was surely a milestone,⁹ Sadat himself, claimed that his disdain goes back as far as 1956 and 1958.¹⁰ But by any account, Sadat did not like the Soviet leadership, and most of them did not like him. Hence, there was constant friction.

In fact, there were several incidents which were not only remarkable for Soviet rudeness and bad taste, but also for a general lack of prudence. One of these was so humiliating that Sadat could not bring himself to reveal it.

According to Ismail Fahmy, in early 1970, while Abd al-Nasir and Sadat were in Moscow, both were approached by Kosygin. Kosygin --in front of Sadat-- proceeded to ask the ailing leader (which in itself was offensive), "who is next in the succession?" Nasir answered, "Sadat." Kosygin --unsatisfied with that prospect-- asked, "who is

⁹ See, Heikal, The Cairo Documents, op. cit., pp.152-153.

¹⁰ Sadat, op. cit., pp.146,153.

after Sadat?" When Nasir answered "Ali Sabri," Kosygin was satisfied and desisted.¹¹ Not only was this an egregious insult to Sadat, but it was gratuitous. And so the incidents continued.

Typical of the slights which followed Nasir's death was the Soviet Union's "congratulatory" message to Sadat at his inauguration (October 1970).¹² In a 25 line message, only four lines were even related to Sadat; the other 21 lines were all devoted to honoring Abd al-Nasir and his policy line. While it was a transparent attempt to remind Sadat of the policy which he was expected to follow, it was clearly ill-timed and in bad taste.¹³

But Sadat, in spite of his personal disdain for the Soviet leadership, managed to maintain their uneven, yet crucial support. Ironically, immediately after Abd al-Nasir's death, Sadat even requested that the Soviet Union increase its troop presence in Egypt.¹⁴

¹¹ Fahmy, op. cit., p.135.

¹² Foreign Broadcast Information Service (henceforth FIBS), October 25, 1970.

¹³ Another telling events which antagonized not only Sadat, but the military as well, was Marshal Grechko's April 1972 "lecture" to Sadat on how the only element "missing" from the Egypt's armed forces was "courage." Neither Sadat nor the military could be pleased by such frank insults.

¹⁴ FBIS-SOV, February 18, 1977, p.F5.

Of all events in Soviet-Egyptian relations, the relative ease with which Sadat consolidated power demonstrated how superficial Soviet influence was in Egypt, and how little progress the Soviet Union had made (in spite of its strenuous efforts) in penetrating the regime. Not only was the Soviet Union woefully unprepared for the succession struggle, but it backed the wrong side, in spite of their extensive experience in Egypt.¹⁵

The Overall Penetration Failure

As is evident from the analysis in Chapters I and II, a number of forces (some of which were even beyond Soviet control) were acting to weaken Soviet-Egyptian ties. But throughout the relationship, and especially after it began to deteriorate in the mid 1960's and after the 1967 war, the Soviet Union vigorously attempted to penetrate the Egyptian regime. This is evident not only from a change in Soviet techniques, but also from the increased self-awareness of the fragility of their position.¹⁶

The Soviet penetration effort utilized both traditional influence building means (e.g., cultivating government and military contacts, etc.), and non-traditional means (e.g.,

¹⁵ In fairness, however, it should be noted that few people regarded Sadat as a serious candidate.

¹⁶ Khrushchev himself said that he realized in 1964 that the Nasir regime was in trouble. See, Khrushchev, op. cit., p.450.

urging Abd al-Nasir to purge the country of anti-Soviet elements, and form a "vanguard party" out of the ASU). The objective was to favorably dispose --or if necessary, to coerce or deceive-- Egypt's ruling elite into maintaining pro-Soviet foreign and domestic policies.

While both superpowers are confronted by the difficulties of "personalized leadership" in the Third World,¹⁷ the Soviet Union could not even get Egypt's elite to feel comfortable, no less satisfied, with its presence. In fairness, however, it should be noted that Egypt, in spite of (or perhaps because of) its millennia of foreign domination, was (in the twentieth century) a state not easily susceptible to penetration. The backlash against the West, and the growth of Egyptian nationalism had begun over a century earlier, and the state was developing comparatively strong political institutions and structures.¹⁸

Additionally, Egypt's geographic position (i.e., behind the Turkish and Iranian buffer) further limited Soviet ability to utilize coercion as the ultimate means of

¹⁷ See, Samuel P. Huntington, "Political Development and Political Decay," World Politics, XVII, No.3 (1965), pp.245-255.

¹⁸ Lewis, op. cit.; and Marlowe, op. cit.

maintaining physical presence.¹⁹ And without physical presence, it is impossible to penetrate another state's decision-making structure, or even to have influence. Regardless of the difficulties, the Soviet Union made a concerted effort to penetrate Egypt's decision-making structure and elites.

The evidence uncovered indicates that the Soviet Union failed to penetrate Egypt's military, economic and cultural institutions, but did have some success with the intelligence services and ASU.

Penetration Successes: The Intelligence Services & ASU

According to KGB defector Vladimir Nikolaevich Sakharov, the Soviet Union had approximately 50 KGB and GRU [Soviet military intelligence] officers in Cairo alone in the late 1960's.²⁰ By the standards prevailing at the time (and for a Third World country), this was a fairly large number of officers. Their primary goal was to recruit Egyptian agents from the military, security services, press, universities, and the A.S.U. (A second goal was to manage

¹⁹ See, Rustow, "Safety in Numbers: Reflections on the Middle East Balance of Power," op. cit.

²⁰ Barron, op. cit., p.63. Notably, triple agent Vitaly S. Yurchenko worked in the KGB's Egyptian residency between 1968-1972. He was responsible for preventing recruitment of Soviet advisors by Western intelligence and for recruiting agents among the Egyptian military, and collecting information. See, New York Times, November 11, 1986, A4.

intelligence and covert operations in other Arab countries.)

Interestingly, throughout most of Abd al-Nasir's later years, Soviet agents in Egypt were, reportedly, not allowed to recruit or utilize the Egyptian Communist Party in their efforts to penetrate the regime, or to conduct other operations. Since communist parties are rarely influential in Arab states (for historic and cultural reasons), this may have been a prudent Soviet strategy.²¹

Supposedly, Moscow's top man in Cairo was not Ali Sabri, but Sami Sharaf.²² Sharaf was a confidant and secretary to President Abd al-Nasir. In 1959, Sharaf was appointed Director of the President's Information Office and later Minister for Presidential Affairs. Despite the innocuous title of the former position, this office was actually part of Egyptian intelligence. Thus, Sharaf increasingly came to function as Abd al-Nasir's primary adviser on intelligence matters. (When Sadat came to power Sharaf remained as Minister for Presidential Affairs.)

Although Heikal depicts Sharaf as somewhat of a vain glorious knave, Sakharov's account should be given

²¹ See, Freedman, "The Soviet Union and the Communist Parties of the Arab World," op. cit.; and Heikal, The Sphinx and the Commissar, op. cit., pp.39-41.

²² Barron, op. cit., pp.70-71.

credence.²³ Besides being arrested and convicted in 1971 as a conspirator and Soviet agent, Sharaf's record of unswerving support for the Soviet Union and antagonism toward the United States makes him a prime candidate as Moscow's man.²⁴ Additionally, Sharaf's early and important role in the intelligence service --and the large number of anti-Sadat conspirators which were recruited in these services-- gave further credence to Sharaf as the chief Soviet asset. Regardless, even if he were not the most important KGB asset in Egypt, he certainly was one of them.

As noted above, the Soviet Union first began cultivation of controlled and other agents in Egypt in the mid 1950's. In Sharaf's case, his 1955 trip to Moscow (to assist with the "Czech" arms deal) provided even greater opportunity. And by 1959, he was a "controlled" agent, and at some unknown point began supporting Soviet efforts to penetrate the Egyptian intelligence services and government.²⁵ Hence, the Soviet success in penetrating Egyptian intelligence.

²³ Heikal, Road To Ramadan, op. cit., pp.124-125; The Sphinx and the Commissar, op. cit., pp.225-226.

²⁴ Sadat, In Search of Identity, op. cit., pp.206,216,224.

²⁵ One of Sharaf's major successes was the November 1964 mob demonstration that culminated in the burning of the United States Information Service library in Cairo. Sharaf, reportedly, planned this operation with KGB "guidance". Barron, op. cit., p.72.

In reviewing Sharaf's exploits while working for the KGB, John Barron has concluded that his greatest triumph was not a particular operation, but the fact that he was able to keep his true allegiance hidden. Thus, he could feed Abd al-Nasir KGB disinformation and Abd al-Nasir would not discount it the way he did advice from Shari Gooma and Ali Sabri.²⁶

Besides the direct attempt by the Soviet Union to recruit Abd al-Nasir's subordinates (e.g., Sharaf, Sabri and Gooma), it was also active in all other major institutions (save the Egyptian Communist Party). Moreover, beginning in the mid-1960's, it continually attempted to have Abd al-Nasir reform the structure of these institutions in a pro-Soviet direction (also see, Chapter IV). A 1970 memo prepared by Nasir's subordinates (including Heikal) summed-up the Soviet permeation through reform strategy:

The Soviet Union hopes to persuade us to alter the structure of some institutions so that it can rely on Egypt continuing to pursue an anti-imperialist, pro-Soviet policy, and at the same time isolate and weaken those forces which the Soviets designate as nationalist, but by their background and inclinations basically anti-Soviet.²⁷

The second greatest Soviet penetration success came in the ASU. But since the ASU was only a marginally important

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Heikal, The Sphinx And the Commissar, op, cit., p.200.

institution, this "success" was very limited. At some point soon after Brezhnev and Kosygin came to power, the Soviet Union launched a vigorous campaign to have Abd al-Nasir transform the ASU "from within" into a "vanguard party." Such a party would essentially mirror the C.P.S.U in organization and role. The major difference would be that Abd al-Nasir's (hopefully increasingly left-leaning) "Arab Socialism" --and not Soviet Marxist-Leninism-- would be the parties guiding light.

The goal of this strategy was to promote Egypt's progressive socialist forces and to provide them with a greater role in governing. By doing so, the Soviet Union hoped to strengthen pro-Soviet elements, and to create multiple links between these elements and Soviet officials. Not only would such steps further encourage Egypt toward a "socialist transformation," but it would also create alternative means of access to the Egyptian elite should Abd al-Nasir die or be overthrown. (For further details see Chapter IV.)

One of the Soviet Union's major means (and in retrospect, perhaps, errors) for promoting the transformation of the ASU from within, was to order the Egyptian Communist Party to dissolve itself and have its members join the ASU as individuals.²⁸ (The Soviet Union also seems to have

²⁸ See, Chapter IV.

attempted this in Algeria, before Ben Bella's overthrow in 1965, and the Sudan, after Gaafar Numeiri's coup in May 1969. But both these attempts failed.²⁹⁾

The Soviet Union attempted to dissolve Egypt's Communist Party for a number of reasons. First, since its creation in 1921, the Egyptian Communist Party had been almost totally ineffectual. Not only were they unsuccessful, but with the rise of Abd al-Nasir and pan-Arabism, they were increasingly unpopular. They "...had nothing much to look back on except a history of internal quarrels, splits, and wrong decisions. Burdened by their reputation as a party largely composed of Jews and foreigners their problems must have seemed insurmountable, and the only way to escape from them would be to draw a line under what had gone before and start afresh."³⁰ Consequently, at the time, it might not have seemed like much of a sacrifice to order it disbanded.

Second, the Soviet Union probably hoped to remove the irritating presence of the Egyptian communists from the wider Soviet-Egyptian relationship. If Abd al-Nasir was not going to stop suppressing and executing his communists

²⁹ See, Freedman, "The Soviet Union and the Communist Parties of the Arab World: An Uncertain Relationship," op. cit., pp.105-107.

³⁰ Heikal, The Sphinx and the Commissar, op. cit., p.141.

(and if the party was ineffective anyway), than Soviets decision-makers may have thought that they should make the best of a bad situation and simply get rid of the organization.

Third, and perhaps, most importantly, by ordering the communist to join the ASU (which it did on April 25, 1965), the Soviet Union was not forsaking pro-communist or pro-Soviet agitation, it was only pursuing it in a different manner. The plan was for the Egyptian communists to join the ASU as individuals and continue their work for "progressive" domestic and foreign policies. (While the ASU was not very keen on accepting the communists en masse, it did manage to integrate them into the "ruling" party.) The issue had less to do with the fate of the local communists themselves, then with the best means for promoting Soviet interests.

Besides the relatively large number of communists (perhaps several thousand) who joined the ASU, the Soviet Union also was able to count on, and cultivate, ties to other factions of the Egyptian left. One of the most prominent factions was headed by former "Free Officer" Khaled Muhyi al-Din [Mohieddine]. Besides often having compatible agendas, Muhyi al-Din (and others) were active in supporting the Soviet call to transform the ASU into a

"vanguard party".³¹

In addition to the Soviet Union's attempt to transform the ASU into a vanguard party, it also increased bilateral contacts on a state-state, and party-party (i.e., ASU-CPSU) level. This was done in the hope of institutionalizing Soviet influence through direct personal contacts, and the establishment of dependent relationships. In one of its more interesting broadcasts, the Soviets explained to the Egyptians why inter-party contacts are so important:

Contacts...between parties help to strengthen the ideological conviction of the strugglers for freedom and to help to better understand the trickery of the enemy. These contacts lead to the consolidation of the ideology of internationalism [and] a more successful struggle against bourgeois ideology.³²

Plainly, "these contacts help draw the revolutionary democrats toward scientific socialism."

And the Soviet Union did increasingly send delegations to, and receive visits from, Egypt.³³ Additionally, these contacts did not always entail "official" visits, but also cultural or "tourist" visits. As Table III.1 demonstrates, the numbers were significant and the total more than

³¹ Cooley, op.cit., p.23.

³² FBIS-Sov, May 18, 1972, p.B5.

³³ For a listing of the most important visits, see, Rubinstein, op. cit.

doubles in four years. And by the Soviet Union's own figures, the number of visitors reached 27,000 by 1974.³⁴

Table III.1
Soviet Nationals Visiting Egypt, 1969-1973³⁵

<u>1969</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1971</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1973</u>
9,034	12,838	n.a.	17,245	22,471

Unfortunately for the Soviet Union, the increased CPSU-ASU and tourist contacts did not have the desired impact. While it is difficult to gather precise information on Egyptian elite attitudes (poll-taking --even among the elite-- was not widely utilized at the time), there is overwhelming anecdotal evidence, and some more objective evidence, that Egyptian attitudes towards the Soviet Union and Russians were highly negative.

Penetration Failures: The Military & Cultural Spheres

Besides the anecdotal evidence of interpersonal differences between Egyptians and Russians (discussed above and below), an additional, and perhaps more objective, measures of negative attitudes --at least among

³⁴ Cited in Friedgut, The Domestic Image of Soviet Involvement in the Arab-Israeli Conflict (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1977), p.20.

³⁵ U.N., Statistical Yearbook, United Nations (Paris, 1970:485; 1971:474; 1972:478; 1973:472.)

government policy-makers-- can be found in the lack of translation and publication, in Egypt, of Russian language books. (In contrast to Soviet translations and publications shipped in to Egypt.) Certainly, the data in Table III.2 correlates well with shifts in Egyptian elite attitudes toward other foreign countries (e.g., the decline in German translations with the improvement of West German-Israeli relations after 1962; and in English translations after the 1967 war).

Table III.2
Book Translations In Egypt, 1959-1972 ³⁶

<u>Year/</u>	<u>Language</u>				<u>All</u>
	<u>Russian</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>French</u>	<u>German</u>	<u>Languages</u>
1959	32	160	23	11	252
1960	11	234	31	6	306
1961	17	274	26	9	367
1962	6	288	53	10	407
1963	4	205	16	6	248
1964	1	197	24	4	234
1965	6	183	36	8	249
1966	17	222	28	9	293
1967	25	332	42	15	455
1968	11	154	23	10	219
1969	9	145	18	9	186
1970	2	2	13	5	24
1971	2	7	21	2	37
1972	<u>5</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>41</u>
Total	148	2411	367	109	3218

While government control of translations and publications

³⁶ UNESCO, Statistical Yearbook (Paris:UNESCO, various years). [1963:375; 1967:437; 1971:743; 1974:759.]

probably had a great deal to do with what did and did not get published, this researcher believes that the data is still a good gauge of Egyptian elite attitudes toward the Soviet Union. For one thing, there is no indication that any significant clandestine publication of Russian materials took place, or of any large scale smuggling of pro-Soviet, or even Russian cultural works.

At the very least, the data supports the conclusion that there was very little Soviet cultural penetration of Egypt. Not only are Arab translations and publications from English almost three-quarter of the total, but they outnumber Arab translations and publications from Russian by over 16:1.

It should also be noted that the Soviet Union was far from first place among Egyptians studying abroad. In 1969, for example, there were 455 Egyptian students studying in the Soviet Union, but 1,015 in the United States and 601 in Germany.³⁷ Moreover, there was consistent evidence of the lack of Soviet cooperation, and even friction with Egypt, over the handling of student programs and accommodations for those Egyptians studying in the Soviet Union. In fact, in one such incident in 1961, two hundred and forty-one Egyptian students studying in the Soviet Union were sent directly to the United States after an acceptable solution

³⁷ Cited in McLaurin, op. cit., p.131.

to such problems was unable to be reached.³⁸

Hence, on a cultural and intellectual level, the Soviet Union failed, not only to penetrate these spheres, but even to create a favorable impression of Russian culture and civilization.

The institution which proved most resistant to Soviet penetration was the Egyptian military. While Soviet military personnel had a large amount of influence, if not actual control, of Egyptian operations between 1967 and 1972, they were never able to permeate the command structure in the true sense of the word. What they did, however, was establish a parallel structure which occasionally eclipsed the existing one. (Hence, the infamous incident where Defense Minister Sadiq ran to Sadat after a dispute with his Soviet counterpart and ask if he or the Soviet commissar was in command of Egypt's armed forces!)

The Soviet advisors were always, as Heikal said, "heavy-handed" and resented; they were rarely able to win uncoerced Egyptian support. This is not to say that there were no pro-Soviet officers, but that the Soviet Union could not seem to make the transition from sympathizers and supporters to controlled agents.

³⁸ Heikal, The Cairo Documents, op. cit., p.196.

In attempting to win the sympathies (and/or clandestine support) of the Egyptian military, the Soviet advisors had to impress upon their counterparts the value of Soviet assistance to Egypt. Not only did they not do this, but because of doubts over the efficacy of Soviet weapons and of the Soviet commitment to Egypt's goals, they convinced them of just the opposite. Moreover, their crude and boorish behavior --which extended throughout the Soviet command structure-- antagonized the entire Egyptian population, not simply the military.³⁹ Indeed, Sadat's expulsion of the Russian advisors was so popular that he significantly strengthened his domestic position by doing so.

Even a self-professed friend of the Soviet Union, General Shazli, has labeled the Russians "insensitive," and said that they do not make it easy for anyone to assist them:

I would be less than honest if I did not add that while those political concerns [weapons delivery and costs] were one determinant of Egypt's relations with the Soviet Union, the Russian character was the other. The Russians may have many qualities, but concern for human feelings was not among them. They are brusque, harsh, frequently arrogant, and usually unwilling to believe that anyone has anything to teach them.⁴⁰

³⁹ While chastising Gen. Shazli, a senior Soviet advisor once told him that Egypt was like an "unfaithful mistress" who could not choose between two men. Newsweek February 21, 1972.

⁴⁰ Shazli, op. cit., p.101. Also, see p.276.

The animosity between the Egyptian armed forces and its Soviet "advisors" seems to be a result of both the backgrounds of the Egyptian officers and the arrogant behavior of the Russians. In analyzing this antagonism, one has first to acknowledge that Egypt's armed forces are "bifurcated" along status-education and urban-rural lines.⁴¹ Thus, the Soviet Union had to cope with both the nationalist and "petit bourgeois" antagonism of the officers and the traditional religious values of the enlisted man. Russian cultural chauvinism and Soviet atheism were sure to alienate them from both groups. Hence, it is easy to see why the Soviet advisors were so disliked, and why they failed to institutionalize their presence in the Egyptian military structure.

This lack of success in the military is surprising given the continued Soviet pressure (and usual Egyptian acquiescence) for purging anti-Soviet officers after 1967. The favored Soviet solution to anti-Soviet feelings in the Egyptian armed forces was to "...liquidat[e] the elements opposed to them, especially among the senior officers."⁴²

⁴¹ Mohammed Mughisuddin, "Egyptian Policy and The Future Of Arab-Israeli Relations" in World Politics And The Arab-Israeli Conflict, Robert O. Freedman (ed.), (New York: Pergamen 1979), p.242.

⁴² This was one of the conclusions reached by a joint Egyptian armed forces, Foreign Ministry and Intelligence agency committee in June 1970 and presented to Abd al-Nasir in preparation for a trip to the Soviet Union. Cited

Moreover, throughout those years, the Soviet Union and its East European allies maintained approximately 5,000 military and technical advisors in Egypt,⁴³ and a significant number of Egyptians were trained in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (Table III.3). Even President Hosni Mubarak received first, his flight, and then his staff, training in the Soviet Union.⁴⁴ Obviously, the experience did not leave most of them with a positive appreciation of the Soviet state and its people.

TABLE III.3
Egyptians Trained in Communist Countries, 1955-1974 ⁴⁵

Soviet Union	Eastern Europe	China	Total
5,665	585	...	6,250

The Decline of Soviet Influence

The most immediate reasons for the loss of Soviet influence in Egypt were the failed permeation attempt, and the conflicting military, political, and economic interests of each side. It should be noted, however, that the Soviet Union's insistence on maintaining its maximal

in Heikal, The Sphinx and the Commissar, op. cit., p.201.

⁴³ CIA, Communist Aid Activities in Non-Communist LDC's, 1975, op. cit., p.16.

⁴⁴ New York Times, October 7, 1981.

⁴⁵ CIA, Communist Aid Activities in Non-Communist LDC's, 1975, op. cit., p.5.

policy objectives (i.e., the unmoderated utilization of Egypt in the "anti-imperialist struggle" against the U.S.), especially after Abd al-Nasir's death, also caused its Egyptian policy to fail. Had it reappraised its policy --and downgraded Soviet pressures for Egypt to follow blindly pro-Soviet, pro-communist internal and external policies-- relations probably would not have reached the depths of antagonism they later had.

When the Soviet Union intervened in the War of Attrition and provided Soviet air defense troops and equipment to protect the Abd al-Nasir regime, it is unlikely that it foresaw being expelled two and a half years later. Indeed, in an effort to consolidate and expand its regional position, the Soviet Union became increasingly active: it began the massive build-up of forces in Somalia (1970); it helped foment a coup in the Sudan (1971); and it signed a series of Friendship and Cooperation Treaties with Egypt (1971), Iraq (1972), and Somalia (1974).

Revealingly, it also began publishing the Soviet Military Review in Arabic (1970).⁴⁶ All of these developments point to a clear Soviet strategy for reinforcing existing client relations, establishing new ones, and slowly but steadily eradicating American influence from the region.

⁴⁶ Cited in Freedman, Soviet Policy Towards the Middle East Since 1970, op. cit., p.35.

Soviet policy-makers seem to have had a sense of unlimited opportunities: their own military build-up had progressed to such a point that some were beginning to ask if the Soviet Union was not now ahead in the nuclear and naval arms races⁴⁷; the Americans were increasingly drained by Vietnam and their own domestic troubles; the Chinese were almost completely inactive in the foreign policy arena because of the cultural revolution; Western Europe was increasingly accommodative to Soviet security interests; and Portuguese decolonization was breathing new life into Africa's moribund liberation struggle.

Unfortunately for the Soviet Union, while Middle East developments in July 1970 looked extremely promising, events revealed the impracticality (and inadvisability) of the Soviet Union's exaggerated policy expectations. From the zenith of its influence in July/August 1970, the Soviet Union's fortune began to decline rapidly.

The Soviet Union's prestige was first damaged by their refusal to support the Syrians and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) against U.S. and Israeli

⁴⁷ In early 1972, for example, Alexandder Kislov described how the U.S. "felt at home" in the Mediterranean and how "such a situation, however, cannot continue for long." "SShA i Sredizemnoromore: novye realnosti" ["The USA and the Mediterranean: New Reality"], SShA 4, 1972, p.35.

backed Jordan in September 1970. The failure to intervene --or at the minimum-- to be perceived as playing a positive role (as in 1956, 1958), once again raised doubts (as in 1967) about the Soviet Union's reliability as an ally.

In retrospect, it is clear that the Soviet failure to penetrate the military, political, economic and social spheres of Egypt, and the ascension of an anti-Soviet successor to Abd al-Nasir, was the turning point in Soviet Union's Middle East fortune. As noted, Sadat harbored serious doubt over the efficacy of the relationship with the Soviet Union, and their subsequent handling of the relationship confirmed his doubts.

First, the Soviet Union did not accept Sadat's ascension with equanimity. The rumored "Soviet plot" to assassinate Sadat in the spring of 1971 has definitely been confirmed. Besides the original Sakharov report,⁴⁸ a more recent KGB defector, Arkady N. Shevchenko has also verified the account.⁴⁹ It is highly likely that Sadat was aware of these Soviet designs on his life. (Thus, his later request for U.S. assistance with personal security was

⁴⁸ Barron, op. cit., p.79.

⁴⁹ Breaking With Moscow, op. cit., pp.172,251.

well founded.⁵⁰⁾

While the Sadat victory over the Sabri faction increased Soviet suspicion of Sadat and his policies, they had little choice but to accept his victory. They did not have many options. Their presence in the Egyptian intelligence services had been wiped out by Sadat's May 1971 purge, and their strategy of transforming the ASU had collapsed. All remaining Egyptian groups and institutions were overtly hostile to the Soviet Union and its policies.

While the signing of the Soviet-Egyptian treaty seemed to mark a turning point in the relationship, it probably just created a false sense of security in Moscow (after all Egypt was the first to flaunt and then denounce such a treaty). Judging from the unusually glowing Soviet press reports, the Soviet leadership thought relations were on firmer foundation. But this was surely an illusion, and events quickly dashed any such Soviet hopes.

Within six months of coming to power, Sadat opened the "back channel" to Washington through Saudi Arabia's Kamal Adham and his own advisor, Hafiz Ismail. Interestingly, the Soviet Union must have been aware that Sadat was testing other waters. Shortly thereafter, Soviet diplomats

⁵⁰ Heikal claims that Sadat asked Kissinger for assistance with personal security during their very first meeting (November 1973). Autumn Of Fury, op. cit., p.69.

began seeking significant alternatives to the status quo by approaching Israeli and U.S. diplomats with a plan for withdrawing Soviet forces from Egypt.⁵¹

The first test after the Treaty for Egypt's new ruler came in July 1971. And by Soviet criteria Sadat must have failed miserably. Egyptian support for Gafar el-Numeiri's anti-communist counter-coup in the Sudan flew in the face of known Soviet preferences. Moreover, Sadat made it clear to the Soviet leadership that he would do everything possible to avoid a communist regime in the Middle East.

This was clearly a turning point in Soviet relations with Sadat. The full significance of Sadat's rebuff of the Soviet Union in the Sudan is often over-looked.⁵² It was at that time that Sadat allegedly first contemplated expelling the Soviets advisors and that the Soviets began slowing down arms shipments.⁵³

The Sudan incident was only the first of many subsequent

⁵¹ See, Gideon Rafael, Destination Peace (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson), p.275; and Kissinger, The White House Years, op. cit., p.1276.

⁵² After Sadat was unable to stop the execution of the communist coup's leader, Ponomarev stormed out of Sadat's residence "saddened and angry." Not only had Sadat supported the counter-coup, but he was allowing Moscow's friends to be killed. Sadat, Those I Have Known, op. cit., p.60.

⁵³ Ibid., p.61.

actions whereby Sadat purposefully limited Soviet influence in the region. The full Soviet leadership soon must have realized that Sadat was not going to continue down Abd al-Nasir's path and patiently serve Soviet interests. Hence, they increased the economic and military pressure on Egypt by reducing economic aid payments; demanding exorbitant repayment for previously granted economic and military credits; slowing-down the arms shipments; and demanding entirely new terms for the acquisition of these weaponry.

Under this mounting pressure, Sadat was increasingly convinced that the Soviet Union had little to offer Egypt as a patron. The climax to Soviet-Egyptian troubles came in the spring, 1972.

On March 10, 1972 the Soviet military--without any advanced warning--informed General Shazli that henceforth, the Soviet Union would not continue to sell weapons to Egypt at a discount.⁵⁴ Under the previous terms, Egypt received its weaponry at approximately one-quarter (or maximum, one-half) the price. Thus, the Soviet Union was effectively doubling or quadrupling the cost of weapons. While Sadat was not pleased he agreed.

It was equally surprising to the Egyptians when the Soviet

⁵⁴ Shazli, op. cit. p.141.

Union suddenly reversed itself on the weapons issue two months later. While touring Egypt on May 15, 1972 (five days before the Nixon-Brezhnev summit), Marshal Grechko informed the Egyptians that they would once again accept the old terms.⁵⁵ Perhaps there was a temporary coalition in the Politburo which sought to "get tough "on the Egyptians. Or perhaps they simply wished to shock them into appreciating the extent of the Soviet support. But what ever the reason, Sadat and the Egyptian military were not impressed.

Added to the troubles over weapons acquisition, was a confrontation involving the presence of Soviet combat troops in Egypt. In May 1972, the Egyptian military requested that the Soviet Union withdraw twelve of its eighteen SA-3 missile crews.⁵⁶ For reasons of national pride and economics (Egypt had to pay the Soviet Union in hard currency to station the crews there), Sadat and Defense Minister Sadiq wanted to replace the Soviet crews with comparably trained Egyptians.

But since the request came two weeks before the superpower summit, the Soviet Union viewed it as an attempt to undermine their position in front of the Americans, and as

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ See, Heikal, Road to Ramadan, op. cit., pp. 162-163; Shazli, op. cit., p.138-139.

a manifestation of Egypt's increasing anti-Sovietism. Hence, it bristled at the request. To many Egyptians, the Soviet refusal was viewed, not only as Soviet imperialism, but as a danger to the state (i.e., what happens if the Soviet Union refuses to withdraw its 15,000-20,000 troops?).

With the passing of the May 1972 summit, Sadat and many of his colleagues had the (correct) impression that Egypt and the Middle East were very low on the Soviet list of priorities. The Soviet Union no longer seemed to believe that Egypt remained at the center of the Arab world, and that relations with it should be given top priority. There was always a perception that the Soviet Union was catering to the United States, and that Egypt's relations with the Soviet Union were therefore subject to tremendous "cold war swings".⁵⁷ (Certainly, Foreign Minister Gromyko's failure to visit Cairo during the last three years could can not have reassured them.)

Since the Soviet Union's appreciation of Egypt's importance was declining, it no longer attempted to cultivate that sense of uniqueness which Egypt's self-image demanded, if not deserved. As a result, an increasing part of Egypt's elite began to believe that the

⁵⁷ See, Fahmy, op. cit., pp.151,185; and Heikal, The Sphinx and The Commissar, op. cit., p.193.

Soviets took them for granted. Moreover, the Soviets compounded these problems by verbally neglecting Sadat.

Sadat became increasingly annoyed by the Soviet tendency to keep him in the dark as to their decisions and attitudes. Of all the Soviet management errors, the failure to communicate with Sadat was one of the most serious and unnecessary. While it is likely that Sadat, with all his requests for assistance and information, made a nuisance of himself, how difficult would it have been for the Soviets to keep him properly informed (or misinformed)?

Egyptian culture, of all Arab cultures, seems to be among the most verbal and extroverted. Had the Soviet leadership kept Sadat informed --or even better misinformed-- then they might have alleviated some of the tension. Surely it would have been worth it to avoid his displeasure and to keep those "long silences" from grating on him.⁵⁸

The Soviet unwillingness or inability to maintain a constant and high level dialogue with Sadat probably stemmed from a combination of domestic Soviet factors. Certainly, Russian political cultural's more secretive nature, and the rigidity of Soviet foreign policy

⁵⁸ Sadat, In Search Of Identity, op. cit., pp.225-226, 278.

institutions does not predispose Soviet diplomatic, military or intelligence personnel to volunteer (non-secret) information, or to undertake independent initiatives.⁵⁹ Regardless of the source, the Soviet Union paid dearly for this lack of communication.

Moreover, when the Soviets did decide to communicate they invariably said the wrong thing. If Sadat had any remaining doubts after the 1972 summit about the Soviet role in, and attitude toward Egypt, they were dispelled by a lengthy interview given by Soviet Ambassador Vladimir Vinogradov to Al-Jumhuriyah and published on June 1, 1972.⁶⁰

Besides the condescending tone, the interview mentioned at least three points which must have especially grated on Sadat: First, Vinogradov lauded the Soviet Union's disinterested economic role.⁶¹ Knowing the facts, Sadat must have viewed this charade as insult upon injury. Second, Vinogradov noted and praised the continual consultations which were taking place between the sides.⁶²

⁵⁹ Notably, both Fahmy and Heikal consider Soviet bureaucratic rigidity to be serious causes of the relationship's trouble. See, Fahmy, op. cit., p.124; Heikal, Road to Ramadan, op. cit., pp.278-285.

⁶⁰ FBIS-SOV, June 8, 1972, pp.B10-B17.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.B11.

⁶² Ibid., p.B14.

In comparison to Sadat's perception of "long silences" and of being ignored, this must have also infuriated him.

Finally, Vinogradov noted that while the Soviet Union "does not seek to export its ideology," Egypt's anti-imperialist foreign policy is "dictated" and made "incumbent" by the nature of its domestic system.⁶³ This must have reminded Sadat of his obnoxious encounter with Khrushchev in 1960. Perhaps he even concluded that the Russians will neither change nor understand Egypt and the Arabs. Within several weeks, the Soviet personnel were expelled.

The Soviet Reaction to the Expulsion

The immediate Soviet reaction to the expulsion was rather inept. In response to Sadat's offer of a mutual communique explaining the troop removal, Brezhnev opted for a unilateral Soviet statement which did nothing to minimize the damage to Soviet prestige. Moreover, public Soviet attacks on "rightist" and "reactionary" forces in Egypt did not alleviate speculation over the growing Soviet-Egyptian rift, but only added to it.⁶⁴

After the expulsion, it was clear, as Fahmy noted, that the Soviet Union "got the message." Sadat, for his part,

⁶³ Ibid., pp. B10 and B12.

⁶⁴ FBIS-SOV, July, 27, 1972, p.B5.

played his hand well: he removed the troublesome presence of so many foreign "guests"; boosted his flagging popularity at home; and "shocked" the Soviets into turning the arms flow on full throttle. He attained his immediate foreign policy objectives (the weapons), and gave up little. At least temporarily, the Soviet Union would accommodate Egyptian demands.

The Soviet-Egyptian reconciliation apparently began in October 1972 with Prime Minister Sadiq's visit to Moscow. We now also know (from General Shazli) that it was at this time that the Soviet Union agreed to supply Egypt with Mig-23's, Su-20's, and a Scud missile battalion.⁶⁵

When Sadat unilaterally renewed the Soviet-Egyptian maritime and naval accords (in December 1972, and February 1973 respectively), the Soviets understood that Egypt "did not want to break with them all together."⁶⁶ And the February communique, which for the first time, mentioned the need to "strengthen Egypt's military potential," confirmed the turn. If there were any doubts about Sadat's willingness to continue cooperating with the Soviet Union (when he found them forthcoming on matters of importance to Egypt), then these developments prove them false.

⁶⁵ Shazli, op. cit., p.172.

⁶⁶ Sadat, In Search Of Identity, op. cit. p.238.

At the end of February, 1972, Minister of War Ahamed Ali was in Moscow and concluded a new arms agreements. While it seemed that the Soviet leadership overcame the expulsion and repaired the frayed relationship, it is quite clear, in retrospect, that they did not. And as Sadat noted almost ten years later, Brezhnev "could never forget [this] blow to the Soviet Union."⁶⁷

By the summer 1973, Soviet-Egyptian relations had at least stabilized. Sadat had received his weapons and the Soviet Union still had some privileges in Egypt, as well as its overall position in the region. Significantly, each side took a diplomatically correct posture toward the other; there were no new major incidents or crises. The Soviet leadership had more or less given up their effort to control Egyptian policies. Now they were fighting to preserve even a shred of their old influence.

But just as the Soviet Union feared would happen if it flooded Egypt with weapons, Sadat launched a war. Soviet arms shipments, especially of SA-6 surface-to-air missiles, had set the stage for war: the missile "umbrella" over the Suez Canal was complete and the Soviets could not extract a change of policy or promise of

⁶⁷ Sadat, Those I Have Known, op. cit., p.104

restraint.⁶⁸ With the psychological boost of a "strategic threat," Sadat's war plans were complete. In deed, the Soviet Union gave the coup de grace to Egyptian restraint in August when the long coveted Scud missiles were delivered.

While several Egyptian accounts assert that the Soviet Union made a virtue out of necessity and turned a blind eye to the upcoming war,⁶⁹ most of the Western, no less Israeli, accounts believe that the Soviet Union encouraged the Egyptians. General Chaim Herzog, for instance, said:

The concentrated effort to supply the [surface-to-air] missiles within a short period of time, the "mix" of various types of missiles, the timing of the supply, all point to Soviet involvement in the change in concept which enabled the Egyptians to go to war at this early stage...The re-evaluation of Egypt's air policy coupled with the rapid construction of the missile system in Syria, can only give added credence to the assumption of Soviet connivance in the planning of the war and the active preparations leading to it.⁷⁰

THE OCTOBER 1973 WAR AND AFTER

When Egypt crossed the Suez Canal, the Soviet Union (like the United States) was faced with numerous difficulties.

⁶⁸ See, Rubinstein, Red Star on the Nile, op. cit., p.238.

⁶⁹ See, Heikal, The Sphinx And The Commissar, op. cit., p.221; Shazli, op. cit., p.213.

⁷⁰ Chaim Herzog, The War Of Atonement (Boston: Little Brown, 1975) p.254; also see Glassman, op. cit., p.145.

Besides the traditional crisis management aspects of the war (e.g., the air-bridge and nuclear alert),⁷¹ there are aspects of the war related to the break-down of Soviet-Egyptian relations which are worth noting.

A major lesson of the Soviet Union's involvement in the October 1973 war is that any country deeply involved in Middle Eastern affairs is inextricably drawn into the turmoil and machinations of intra-Arab politics. The deeper the external power's involvement, the more serious problems it will have with its Arab friends.⁷²

The first issue concerned the evacuation of the remaining Soviet personnel stationed in Egypt immediately before the outbreak of hostilities. In and of itself, this was not very unusual. After all, the Soviets Union did the same thing in 1956 and 1967. Of course, it displayed, as Sadat charged, a lack of confidence in Egypt, but what was most irk-some to Sadat and other Egyptians was that the Soviet Union, reportedly, did not evacuate its personnel from

⁷¹ See, William B.Quandt, Soviet Policy in the October 1973 War, (Santa Monica: Rand, 1976).

⁷² One is reminded of George Kennan's very unkind, but perhaps true, statement that given "...the passionate, volatile and intensely self-centered disposition of the Arabs, their friendship could be in many instances hardly less onerous than their hostility." Kennan, "After the Cold War: American Foreign Policy In The 1970's," Foreign Affairs, October, 1972, p.224.

Syria.⁷³ Not only did Sadat regard this as a special affront to Egypt, but he also probably interpreted it as a manifestation of a deeper Soviet commitment to the Al-Assad regime. Naturally, Sadat would not easily forget this slight.

The second issue concerned the ever increasing ill-will created between Sadat and Brezhnev by the Al-Assad cease-fire machination. In spite of the fact that a number of authors have commented on this event, its full significance is usually over-looked.⁷⁴ While it is known that al-Assad's repeated denials (to Sadat) of having requested an immediate cease-fire caused bitter and repeated arguments between Sadat and the Soviet leadership,⁷⁵ it is less appreciated that this incident--on top of the already noted grudge over the expulsion--

⁷³ Shazli, op. cit., p.213.

⁷⁴ Thus, it was not, as some analysts have concluded (e.g., Sella, op. cit., p.85), that the Arabs had "only vague ideas" about the strategy of the 1973 war, but that they each had different strategies!

⁷⁵ Al-Assad's wanted an early cease-fire in order to prevent an Israeli mobilization and counter-attack. Thus, he assured of retaining the Golan Heights. Al-Assad was pursuing, what he saw, as Syria's narrower national interests at the expense of Egypt's. Besides the fact that both Heikal and Fahmy back the Soviet version (of al-Assad requesting the cease-fire), it just would not make sense for the Soviet Union to attempt such an intrigue. Additionally, Israeli General Herzog has analyzed Syrian operational orders and time tables and concluded that the Soviet version was probably correct. (In retrospect, and ironically, both Egypt and Syria would have been better-off had the cease-fire been instituted.)

caused Brezhnev to harbor permanent ill-will toward Sadat.

Fahmy's account of all subsequent meetings with Brezhnev reveals how personally insulted Brezhnev was by Sadat's decision to "believe" Assad and not him.⁷⁶ It is highly probable that this lasting animosity colored Brezhnev's judgement at later points, and made reconciliation that much more difficult.

Given the duplicity on both the Egyptian and Syrian sides in 1973, it is remarkable that the Soviet Union was able to maintain its position between the two "allies."⁷⁷ The Soviet Union was caught in the intense personal and national rivalries between Sadat and Assad, and Egypt and Syria.⁷⁸

The Soviet experience during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war

⁷⁶ Fahmy, op. cit., p.127.

⁷⁷ Not only is it clear that al-Assad attempted to double cross Sadat (ff.109), but it is equally clear that Sadat did double-cross al-Assad. Sadat had his General Staff misrepresenting Egypt's war plans and lie about the extent of Egypt's planned advance into the Sinai. Al-Assad was told that Egypt's armies would be advancing to the Sinai Passes (i.e., "Granite II"), and not simply several kilometers into the dessert as they were planning (i.e., "High Minarets"). Sadat must have done this in order to convince al-Assad that Israel would have less time and resources to deal with the Syrian advance. See, Heikal, Autumn Of Fury, op. cit., p.50; and Shazli, op. cit., p. 37.

⁷⁸ Sadat and Assad's hatred for each other was well known. For a sample of Sadat's disdain, see Those I Have Known, op. cit., pp.100-101,116.

demonstrated the difficulty of balancing between competing local partners. While the October 1973 War is often heralded as a success for the Soviet strategy of "Arab unity on an anti-imperialist basis," it ends on a much more mixed, if not bitter, note. In many ways it was the final culmination of Brezhnev and Kosygin's attempt to maintain close relations with both Egypt and Syria after the June 1967 war (or after the February 1966 Syrian coup). The Sadat-Assad, and Egypt-Syrian, differences after the October 1973 war may just have been too deep for the Soviet Union to straddle.

U.S. Involvement Widens the Split

With Soviet-Egyptian and Egyptian-Syrian contradiction growing, U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had fertile ground for encouraging a final Egyptian split from the Soviet Union. Now that the "myth" of Israeli superiority had been broken and the Arabs had regained a bit of their lost honor, Kissinger realized that a patient strategy --which thwarted any Arab attempt to destroy Israel-- would leave the Arabs a choice between indefinite stalemate or a settlement on terms closer to America interests, than the Soviet Union's.

Besides breaking the diplomatic stalemate, the war had also confirmed the U.S. position that force would not settle the issue in Egypt's favor. The point was to get

the Arabs to realize that their demands could never be achieved through war. The Arabs would "...come to realize that it is the United States and not the U.S.S.R. that holds the keys to what they want."⁷⁹ While they can go to Moscow for war, they can only go to Washington for peace.⁸⁰

In order for this strategy to work, two conditions have to be met: 1) Arab leaders must perceive the above statements to be true, i.e., force can never end the Arab problem with Israel; and 2) the status quo must be so intolerable that the Arab participants would rather accept American conditions for peace, than be subjected to an intolerable political and economic present.

Certainly in Sadat and Egypt's case, by the mid 1970's, both these conditions were met. Indeed, Sadat was eager to believe them.⁸¹ Sadat had been extremely unhappy about Egypt's relations with the Soviet Union for at least three, but perhaps even fifteen years. After the war, when Kissinger sought to isolate the Soviet Union and

⁷⁹ Kissinger, op. cit., p559.

⁸⁰ This was what Abd al-Nasir and others meant when they said that "...American policy was aimed at leaving only one gap in the negotiating process for the Arabs --a gap which led inevitably to Washington..." (Heikal, The Sphinx and the Commissar, op, cit., p.197.) The difficulty was to get them to enter this gap without the Russians.

⁸¹ Witness Sadat's frequent comments about the Americans "hold 99% of the cards."

offered Sadat the opportunity to rid himself completely of the Russians, Sadat must have jumped at the chance.⁸²

Heikal even wrote that the Soviet Union's fate in the region was "sealed" within the first three hours of Sadat-Kissinger's first encounter in October 1973.⁸³ Later he wrote more explicitly that Sadat, without even being asked by Kissinger, revealed that he was "finished" with the Soviet Union and that it was Egypt's "real enemy."⁸⁴ While there is probably some hyperbole in this account (Kissinger's memoirs do not describe the situation that way), it probably does contain the essence of what occurred.

It is also worth noting that General Shazli supports a more conspiratorial view of Egypt's rapprochement with the U.S., and even concluded that Sadat's earlier decision to expel the Soviets was "...in fact a calculated one, prearranged with others whose role Sadat is still anxious to conceal."⁸⁵

⁸² One of the most puzzling aspects of the 1972 expulsion was that Sadat --in spite of his extensive contacts with the White House-- did not negotiate a quid pro quo from the U.S. Naturally, Kissinger was surprised but pleased. The White House Years, op. cit., p.1296.

⁸³ Heikal, The Sphinx and The Commissar, op. cit., p.263.

⁸⁴ Autumn Of Fury, op. cit., p.67.

⁸⁵ Shazli, op. cit., p.163.

In response to Sadat's policies, the Soviet Union refused to supply Egypt with any additional weapons and continually raised the debt issue. This in turn set-up a cycle of pressure and counter-pressure. Sadat would negotiate with the United States and the Soviet Union would respond by pressuring him to desist. The more they pressured him, the further toward the Americans he moved.

In the ensuing years, Soviet-Egyptian relations slide from one new low to another. While Fahmy was in Moscow in January 1974, Gromyko warned that he "was closely watching the new trends in Egypt's foreign policy, and particularly the rapprochement with the West."⁸⁶ They had a "heated exchange" over the arms and debt issues.

Incredulously, the Soviet Union was still holding out for \$500 million a year debt repayment, while Egypt was offering \$10 million.⁸⁷ Given Egypt's economic situation and the prospects of lavish American aid if Egypt continued to push the Soviet Union out of the region, it is hard to understand this figure even as an opening position for bargaining.

Regardless of Sadat comments to the contrary, the Soviet Union could not have "considered Soviet-Egyptian relations

⁸⁶ Fahmy, op. cit., p.125.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*

at "an end," because in March 1974 they sent Foreign minister Gromyko to Cairo. Indeed, this was his first visit in five years! Although both sides managed to keep their lines of communication open, none...

of the problems of Soviet-Egyptian relations was [sic] solved as a result of his visit: arms shipments were not resumed; no agreement was reached on the repayment of our debts...and Sadat's attitude toward Moscow remained as hostile as ever.⁸⁸

Given this failure, Sadat April 1974 decision to "diversify" Egypt's arms suppliers could not have come as a surprise to the Soviets. It was not until the Second Sinai Disengagement (September 1975), however, that the Soviet Union began to consider Egypt irreparably compromised by its involvement with the United States. But by that time, it would have taken a complete reversal in Soviet-Egyptian relations to stop the Soviet Union from becoming a completely marginal player in the region.

Sadat's unilateral abrogation of the Soviet-Egyptian Friendship Treaty and his debt repayment moratorium (March 15, 1976), was the culmination of six years of difficult and dissatisfied relations. While there may have been a number of direct precipitants to this act (e.g., the Soviet refusal to let India supply Egypt with surplus Soviet weapons and components), it was long in coming.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p.139.

Egypt received no Soviet arms or economic assistance since immediately after the war; the Soviet Union opposed Egypt's foreign peace and domestic economic policies; and Moscow supported Cairo's regional enemies, Syria and Iraq.

By 1974/75, the Soviet regional role was becoming increasingly marginal and Sadat was slowly pushing them out of the region. Indeed, Sadat's personal discomfort with the Soviets --and its impact on policy was plain to see. As Fahmy noted, Sadat was

...insecure and oversensitive whenever he dealt with them. With the American's it was always my 'good friend Henry' and total willingness to accept any suggestion. With the Soviets, Sadat's attitude was one of great suspicion and of readiness to interpret every statement as an attack against Egypt and an insult to himself.⁸⁹

After the Second Sinai Disengagement Agreement (September 1975), Soviet-Egyptian relations reached new lows. By April 1976, and Egypt's unilateral abrogation of the Friendship Treaty and the debt moratorium, the Soviet Union was basically excluded from a good part of the region's affairs.

The 1976 rupture must have given the Soviet Union poise. The next time Fahmy went to Moscow (November 1976), was actually the first time the Soviets did not raise the debt

⁸⁹ Fahmy, op. cit., p.

issue.⁹⁰ But with Jimmy Carter's election and the possibility of a return to Geneva, Sadat took matters into his own hands and effectively pushed the Soviet Union out of the region for the remainder of the decade.

While the speculation concerning Sadat's motives may doubtlessly continue for years, Sadat was probably motivated to a large extent by a desire to cement the U.S. relationship and to acquire significantly greater U.S. aid.⁹¹ Regardless, the Soviet Union had seen its influence in Egypt and the regions drop from a co-equal to the United States in 1970, to an almost marginal external actor in the late 1970's.

⁹⁰ Fahmy, op. cit., p.182.

⁹¹ During the 1977 Jerusalem trip, Foreign Minister Butros Ghali confided to Ezer Wietzman that he felt as if Egypt was "...like Bangladesh and Cairo like Calcutta." (Ezer Wietzman, The Battle For Peace [New York: Bantam, 1981], p.60.) Similar impressions of Egypt's "sever plight" and the importance of U.S. aid were gathered by other administration personnel. (See, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power And Principle, Farrar, Straus, Giroux (New York:1983), p.93.

Chapter IV

Illusions and Their Consequences: Soviet Analysis of
Egypt As the Source of a Policy Failure

The preceding chapters analyzed how the Soviet Union missed the opportunity to construct an enduring and mutually beneficial relationship with Egypt. The conclusion was reached that the primary source of the failure was Soviet policy mistakes. By attempting to "accelerate" a "socialist transformation" in Egypt and foist an alien ideology and social system upon Egypt, the Soviet Union alienated large segments of its elite, including several key individuals. Moreover, it was the rigid maintenance of this imprudent policy which changed a downgrading of Soviet status in Cairo into a major policy reversal.

In examining this turn of events, the question arises: what caused Soviet policy-makers to formulate and maintain such an unrealistic policy? Short of obtaining veracious testimony from the individuals involved (which is nigh impossible), an excellent method for ascertaining this answer is to fathom the internal Soviet debate on the issue, and attempt to decipher policy rationales and alternatives.

After doing so, it seems clear that the origins of the

Soviet Union's debacle in Egypt are found in its early over-optimism toward Third World revolutions in general, and Egypt in particular. It was as if they were waiting for Abd al-Nasir's Egypt to repeat the development of Castro's Cuba. Soviet policy-makers (and many academics) seriously over-estimated the revolutionary potential of Nasir and Egypt. Specifically, they misjudged the receptivity of Egypt's military and peasants to "socialism." By believing that they could win these groups over, they not only incorrectly evaluated the basic trend of Egyptian development, but also the amount of Soviet assistance (or intervention) necessary to keep the country on a "progressive" course.

In searching for the lessons which Soviet policy-makers may have learned from the experience, two major conclusions emerge: first, the obvious lesson Soviet policy-makers learned was to analyze Third World opportunities much more carefully. Henceforth, they would be more careful not to confuse their own assumptions and preferences with reality. But the second, and more important, lesson was that the best way to promote the development of states with both coincident foreign policy interests and social systems similar to their own was to intervene at the first opportunity, and with as much force

as circumstances permit.¹ The objective was to gain as much control of the local partner's decision-making structure as possible.

In order to avoid clients (or potential clients) turning out like Egypt of 1972, one had to act more decisively when states resemble Egypt of 1964. The Egyptian experience (together with reversals in Algeria, Indonesia, Ghana, Guinea, and Mali²) convinced the Soviet Union of the efficacy of an even more interventionist policy, and in some cases, of the imperative of "Marxist-Leninist Vanguard Parties" (MLVP's).

On the whole, the experience seems to have taught them to evaluate more carefully their opportunities, and to respond with more appropriate policies. Thus, when dealing with established, and by Third World standards, institutionalized political systems, they learned not to intervene cavalierly and attempt to "accelerate" the "socialist transformation."³ But when dealing with weak

¹ Hence, the rash of pro-Soviet victories in the mid and late 1970's (e.g., South Yemen, Angola, Mozambique, etc.). See, Zagoria, "Into The Breach," op. cit.

² See Carol Saivetz and Sylvia Woodby, Soviet-Third World Relations (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), pp.30-61.

³ Accordingly, Part II of this investigation will detail how Soviet policy toward Syria since the early 1970's became both more sophisticated and patient. While Soviet policy-makers learned to tolerate (indefinitely if they have to) a non-socialist Syria, they also increased their efforts to penetrate the Hafez al-Assad regime. Now,

and fragile political systems, they learned to act as forcefully as possible.⁴ Thus, two models for intervening in (non-contiguous) third world states emerged: one for relatively developed states (e.g., Egypt and Syria) and another for less developed states (e.g., Ethiopia and South Yemen).

While a complete analysis of the MLVP strategy would involve issues much beyond the present project, this Chapter will analyze the development of Soviet illusions about Egypt, and its impact on policy toward that country. Additionally, it will highlight and analyze the place of Egypt in the later MLVP literature, and will demonstrate how both MLVP opponents and proponents cite the experience as evidence for their position.

Methodological Problems

Since the publication of Myron Rush's seminal article on Soviet "esoteric communication" in 1958, Western specialists have increasingly relied upon Soviet writings as an aid in their work.⁵ Indeed, a consensus has developed which asserts that examination of such writings

however, they do so more carefully and with more traditional instruments.

⁴ For Soviet techniques toward smaller, more vulnerable states, see Stephen R. David, International Security, Summer, 1986, pp.3-36.

⁵ Myron Rush, Talmudism and Soviet Politics (Santa Monica:Rand Corp., 1958).

are an important component of Soviet policy analysis. Unfortunately, a similar consensus on how to interpret these writings and on their precise relevance to Soviet policy has not developed. In fact, some Western scholars even reach contradictory conclusions when evaluating the same material.⁶

While the limitations on Soviet intra-elite and scholarly communication are significantly greater than in the West, this researcher does think that a significant (but far from total) amount of openness has entered Soviet society since Stalin's death.⁷ Although the political discussion (by Western standards) is extremely narrow, there are several reasons why Soviet academic and media publications should be taken seriously.

First, there is usually a degree of transparency to Soviet publications and statements. Thus, in spite of numerous restrictions on political and academic freedom, a reader

⁶ Cf. George Lenczowski, Soviet Perceptions of United States Foreign Policy (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), and Morton Schwartz, Soviet Perceptions of the United States (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

⁷ See Oded Eran, The Mezhdunarodniki: An Assessment of Professional Expertise in the Making of Soviet Foreign Policy (Ramat Gan [Israel]: Turtle Dove Press, 1979); and Jerry F. Hough, The Struggle for the Third World: Soviet Debates and American Options (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1985).

often can discern a nuanced and sophisticated message.⁸ Although a good deal of confusion can arise from attempts to ferret out "esoteric" messages, the effort and information garnered is usually quite valuable. While there is a degree of subjectivity to this effort, there are a number of substantive and symbolic phrases which reveal a decided political orientation, if not position.⁹

Second, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for Soviet policy-makers and academics to maintain "two sets of books," i.e., one set for internal, intra-elite communication, and another for external consumption. This would both hinder coherent policy formulation and disrupt its execution. And as anyone who has ever spoken with Soviet academics, officials or even private intellectuals is aware, the vocabulary and mode of analysis utilized in their published materials is deeply rooted in the Soviet elite's world view. It represents not only the dominant language of discourse, but also a major factor conditioning their understanding of the world.¹⁰

⁸ This does not mean that Soviet works always contain complicated hidden messages. Clearly, over-interpretation is always a danger and must be avoided.

⁹ Such "content analysis" cannot, and will not, be reduced to a crass search for "key words."

¹⁰ See Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Remarks (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1975); and Noam Chomsky, Knowledge of Language (New York: Praeger, 1986).

Third, it should be recalled that the primary audience for most Soviet academic writing (and a good part of the press) is other academics and the larger Soviet elite. While Soviet academics usually have even less proximity to policy-making than their Western counterparts (although the academy is a viable avenue for advancing into the policy-making structure), they usually do reflect sanctioned elite opinion. And even if this opinion follows the policy debate (rather than leads it), it can still offer valuable insights into foreign policy behavior.

These writings often expose interesting details about intra-elite controversies and policy concerns. They can reveal how the elite understand a given situation; what motivates their actions; and what concerns and expectations they have. Additionally, there is usually a continuing Soviet effort to harmonize policy with ideology. While this effort is often unsuccessful (and has become less pronounced over the last several years) it still affects Soviet policy.¹¹

Fourth, in attempting to decipher these nuanced meanings, it has become clear that particular "rules of the game" have evolved. Chief among these rules are that works

¹¹ While the "ideology" vs. "great power" determinant of Soviet foreign policy debate has raged for decades, few analysts would totally reject the importance of ideology.

cannot directly discuss Soviet foreign policy; certain inviolable tenets (such as the beneficence of Soviet policy) must be maintained; and the Marxist-Leninist framework can never be challenged.¹² If there can be no discussion of Soviet foreign policy, then the second best choice must be a review of another states' policy, and by implication, the relationship with the Soviet Union.

Finally, it should not be forgotten that in spite of a penchant for dogmatism, Soviet writings often offer plausible explanations of Soviet behavior. Certainly, this is evident in the discussion of Egypt. Stripped of Marxist-Leninist jargon, the literature on Egypt offers a window on the thinking, motivation, goals and conflicts of the Soviet elite. Significantly different interpretations of the role of the Egyptian military or peasants, or of the best way for Egypt to develop economically, all imply alternative Soviet policy prescriptions. Consequently, understanding Soviet views of Egypt leads to an understanding of the debate on Soviet foreign policy toward Egypt.

While Western reviewers usually divided Soviet authors into "traditionalists" and "realists," or "conservatives"

¹² Hough, op. cit., pp.16-18. It should also be noted that these "rules" vary over time, from issue to issue, and even from journals to journal.

and "pragmatists,"¹³ it might be more useful to utilize a fourfold categorization. These four categories are: true-believers; ketmen; pragmatic-loyalists; and dissidents.

A "true-believer," as Eric Hoffer wrote, is a person with a fanatical devotion to an idea or value system.¹⁴ This person usually analyzes situations in black and white terms and is inflexible on matters of ideology. In the Soviet context, he is someone who fervently believes in the unconditional superiority of the Soviet system and virtue of its foreign policy.¹⁵ The true-believer's work is most important because it reveals the conservative ideological base-line in Soviet politics. It is the position which most often forms, if not the starting point of the debate, then the most plausible policy.

A ketman is someone who willfully writes or professes beliefs known to be false. (In common parlance, a "political hack.") In the Soviet Union, this is someone who tows the party line, in spite of the fact that he

¹³ See, Schwartz, op. cit.

¹⁴ Eric Hoffer, The True Believer (New York: Harper, 1951).

¹⁵ He also would see U.S. Middle East policy as singularly driven by a need to dominate the region in order to threaten the Soviet Union. A prime true-believer candidate is Literaturnaiia Gazeta correspondent Igor Beliaev. See, Beliaev, "Sily soprotivlennia agressora rastut" ["The Forces Opposing the Aggressor Grow"], MEiMO 5 (1970):73-78; and "Blizhnni Vostok- porokhovaia bochka" ["The Near East a Powder Keg"], Kommunist (Vilnius) no.4, 1984, pp.82-92.

knows and believes the total opposite. The term comes from Polish dissident writer Czeslaw Milosz's up-dating of Gobineau's discussion of the Shi'te Muslim notion of takiya.¹⁶

While ketman is most relevant under a complete totalitarian system (i.e., Stalin's Russia), it is still useful because it explains why an otherwise intelligent writer can produce an article or book at such variance with the facts.¹⁷ Without an intimate and thorough knowledge of an author's background and career path, it is very difficult to know if a person is or is not a "ketman." But clearly, this is the type of "scholar" whose works should be analyzed, but discounted.¹⁸

¹⁶ Takiya concerns the permissibility of a Shi'te hiding his beliefs if they jeopardize his life. Thus, if threatened (by a Sunni) because of his unorthodox views, it is legitimate for a Shi'te to become a "ketman" and lie about his actual beliefs. See, Shorter Encyclopedias of Islam (Itaca: Cornell, 1951) pp.561-562.

¹⁷ As Milosz said: "Not only must one deny one's true opinion, but one is commanded to resort to all ruses in order to deceive one's adversary. One makes all the protestations of faith ..., one performs all the rites one recognizes to be most in vain, one falsifies one's own books, one exhausts all possible means of deceit." Czeslaw Milosz, The Captive Mind, Jane Zielonko (trans.) (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), pp.57-58.

¹⁸ One possible Ketman piece is V.I. Nagaichuk's Politika SShA v otnoshenii Egipta (50-60e godi) [U.S.A. Policy Towards Egypt: The 1950's and 1960's] (Kiev: Ukrainian Academy Of Sciences, 1982). This is a crude and unbalanced attempt to emphasize U.S. antagonisms and machinations toward Egypt during the Nasir era. Nagaichuk portrays Egypt's situation during the 1950's and 1960's, in a Zhdanovite, black/white manner with the Soviet Union and Nasir as virtuous and the U.S. and most everyone else

The loyal-pragmatist category includes the large number of Soviet writers who are not radical reformers, but people of principle who wish to see meaningful alterations in domestic and foreign policies. When these authors hold positions at variance with the sanctioned view (i.e., the party line), they are sufficiently pragmatic to color and time their work so as to be acceptable to their ruling brethren. Their chief characteristics are that they are less dogmatic and usually oppose the true-believers.¹⁹

A dissident is a person who has taken a position(s) which is beyond the acceptable parameters of political debate by calling for too radical a change in Soviet policies. It is notable that a person can be both a true-believer and a dissident (e.g., Alexander Solzhenitsyn), but not a dissident and loyal-pragmatist. Loyal-pragmatists can, however, become semi-dissidents (e.g., Roy Medvedev) or unpopular gadflies sanctioned within limits (e.g., Georgi Mirski). While too much attention has probably been given to Soviet dissidents in the West, they do often help to pull the Soviet political spectrum back toward more moderate course.

¹⁹ Among this category are probably such authors as E. Primakov, Georgi Arbatov, Narodnii Simonia, and numerous others.

Soviet Sources On Egypt

When it comes to the Middle East, Soviet writers are remarkably prolific. Naturally, this literature is very selective in what it analyzes and in how it is handled, but the volume is staggering. Moreover, Egypt has always been a major area of academic interest, and there are numerous works on it.

In a recent conversation with two Soviet specialists on the Middle East, the question was asked: "What are the best Soviet work on Soviet-Egyptian relations?" The two smiled a bit amusingly at each other (and the questioners) and answered--with some embarrassment, that "there are no books on Soviet-Egyptian relations."²⁰

The answer is significant because it confirms both the "rules of the game," and the methodological problems of Soviet source material. Hence, if one wishes to understand the Soviet foreign policy debate on Egypt, one must search through Soviet material on Egypt's internal situation and external policies and deduce the Soviet author's policy preferences. Consequently, one must examine Soviet writings on Egypt and ferret out a comprehensive and coherent analysis of the Soviet debate

²⁰ Private conversation with two Soviets specialists from the the Oriental Institute, May 1986. Emphasis in original. The questioners were the author and Geoffrey Kemp.

on the proper foreign policy toward that state.²¹

The primary sources for this Chapter's investigation has been academic writings since the mid 1960's and the relevant press organs during 1965-1972.²² Since at least two Western specialists have examined the earlier press statements (but with little attention to the consolidation failure),²³ the researcher utilized this material when possible, and extended and cross-checked it with the academic publications.

The Literature And The Debate on Egypt

The Soviet literature and debate on Egypt focuses on the failure of local left-wing forces to secure the "socialist transformation". Thus, by implication, Soviet policy-makers are responsible for the failure in Egypt only in so far as they hindered or assisted in this development. If Egypt's military, peasants, "proletariat," and petite and national bourgeoisie, were hopelessly "anti-socialist," then there was little that could have been done to

²¹ Since the researcher spent both the summer of 1984 and 1985 in the Soviet Union, he was able to gather and bring back a large number of relevant works.

²² Since the loss of influence did not become fully distinct until the early and mid 1970's, the researcher paid special attention to Soviet academic writings between 1974 and the present.

²³ See, Kass, op. cit.; and Dina Spechler, Domestic Influences on Soviet Foreign Policy (Washington, D.C.: University of America Press).

maintain Egypt on such a course. But if some of these groups were receptive to socialism, then the amount of Soviet assistance --and U.S. "interference"-- become a very real issue.

The major question for Soviet policy-makers and academics in the early and mid 1960's was: should the Soviet Union support Abd al-Nasir --in spite of his anti-communist proclivities--or should it assume a more assertive posture through the Egyptian Communist Party.²⁴ Thus, there were two diametrically opposed policy options: a "united front" strategy which sought to multiply the force of the Egyptian communists by having them combine with other left-wing parties, or a more traditional state-to-state strategy which wanted to subordinate the communists in order to remove a major irritant to Soviet-Egyptian relations.

While this division can, and has been analyzed in terms of a split between the "party-first" and "non-party" orientations,²⁵ it can also be interpreted as a struggle

²⁴ This is not to assert that this was the only question debated, but simply that it was the most accessible and meaningful of those discussed semi-publicly. Other vital questions, such as the Soviet Union's military relations with Egypt, are rarely even mentioned in public. See, Theodore Friedgut, The Domestic Image of Soviet Involvement in the Arab-Israeli Conflict (Jerusalem:Hebrew University, 1977), pp.20-27.

²⁵ Eran, op. cit., p.195.

between those in favor of a more interventionist policy, and those who were not. A "united front" strategy is inherently more interventionist. It seeks to regulate the outcome of the Egyptian policy process through the direct action of its own personnel or their agents.

Predictably, the united front policy had the support of a good part of the CPSU, as well as other ideological elements and actors within the Soviet system (and even Eastern Europe). Politburo and Central Committee member Mikhail Suslov (the chief ideologist of the C.P.S.U.) and the International Department Secretary Boris Ponomarev and Deputy Chief Rostislov Ulianovski argued that the Soviet Union should support a "working class" and peasant coalition in Egypt, and give less assistance to Abd al-Nasir.²⁶

But First Secretary Khrushchev persevered over their objections and forged a policy which down played the significance of the Egyptian Communist party. In spite of Abd al-Nasir's attitude toward, and treatment of, local communists, Khrushchev sought to strengthen relations with Egypt and its non-communist government. His policy was primarily on a traditional state-to-state basis, with frequent attempts at cajoling Abd al-Nasir into permitting

²⁶ Ibid.; and Robert W. Kitzinos, "International Department of the CPSU," Problems of Communism, September/October, pp.47-67.

a "united front".

In order to maintain this policy toward Egypt, Khrushchev enlisted the aid of many academics and journalists. Foremost among these academics was Georgi Mirski, a Third World specialist at IMEMO [Institute for World Economy and International Relations]. Mirski became somewhat of Khrushchev's unofficial spokesman, and his early writings were all very optimistic about Egypt's revolutionary potential and Abd al-Nasir's virtues.²⁷ Thus, the birth, or at least academic expression, of the illusion.

In justifying Soviet support for the non-communist Abd al-Nasir, Mirski developed a very novel argument. He said that Egypt's superstructure (i.e., its political institutions) was, in fact, independent of its base (i.e., its economic institutions). Thus, the country was not controlled by the "big bourgeoisie" and landowners, but by a "bureaucratic-administrative" elite. Mirski argued that Abd al-Nasir had contained Egypt's reactionary elements, and implied that judicious Soviet support could turn Egypt toward socialism and a pro-Soviet foreign policy.²⁸

²⁷ Mirski, "Sotsializm, kapitalizm, slaborazvitye strany" ["Socialism, Capitalism, and the Less-Developed Countries"], MEiMO 4 (April) 1964, pp.116-131.

²⁸ Ibid., pp.121-124. On economic issues, Mirski also took a more pragmatic position and opposed further Egyptian nationalizations of industry, emphasis on show-case development projects, and concentration on heavy industry.

Although Khrushchev was able to maintain the "non-party" (and less interventionist) orientation toward Egypt for a good part of the early 1960's, the policy became ever more difficult to sustain, and (as noted) was probably a factor in his ouster. In reviewing the literature after his departure, it is clear that there were very sharp divisions as to what policy to follow.

At one extreme was Nodari Simoniia. Simoniia (a researcher at the Oriental Institute) believed that Egypt lacked even the "necessary preconditions" for a socialist transformation, and implied that the best policy for the Soviet Union was to jettison the ECP and to support the local bourgeois.²⁹ Simoniia was (is) a loyal-pragmatist who, if he were not so intelligent and capable of reading the internal political situation, might have slipped over into dissident status.

Clearly, most of Simoniia's positions, especially his more realistic appraisal of capitalist development, have been at variance with prevailing views.³⁰ And on Egypt, Simoniia did not believe that the 1952 Revolution and Abd

²⁹ Nodari Simoniia, "O Kharaktare natsionalno-osvoboditelnykh revoliutsii" ["On the Character of the National-Liberation Revolution"], Narodni Afriki i Azii 6, 1966, p.14.

³⁰ Hough, op. cit., pp.163-165.

al-Nasir's reign would naturally grow over into a socialist revolution. He saw Egypt as in need of a second revolution.³¹

At the other extreme was Rostislov Ulianovski, Deputy Director of the Oriental Institute (and later Deputy Chief of the Asia and Africa Department in the International Department). Ulianovski argued that the balance of internal Egyptian class forces favored the development of socialism, and that the Soviet Union should press Abd al-Nasir to accept an ASU-ECP united front. He believed that a move toward socialism was possible (in the absence of a vanguard party and a proletarian dictatorship), if the "most consistent and best trained" Egyptian communists played the role of "friend and assistant" to Abd al-Nasir.³² Ulianovski sought to foist the ECP on Nasir in order to coerce him left-ward.

With such divergent analyses of the Egyptian situation, it is no wonder that the Soviet Union's policy, and most of its academics, came to something of a middle position. This position called for a transformation of the ASU, from within, into a "vanguard party." Such a party would forge

³¹ Simonia, "O Kharaktare natsionalno-osvoboditelnykh revoliutsii," op. cit., pp.16-17.

³² Rostislov Ulianovski, "Nekatorye voprosy nekapitalisticheskogo razvitiia osvobodivshikhsia stran" ["Several Questions of the Liberated Countries Non-Capitalist Development"], Kommunist 1, 1966, pp.113-114.

links with Egypt's burgeoning peasant and "proletarian" ranks, and thus, increasingly pull it toward socialism--and a pro-Soviet foreign policy. The April 1965 dissolution of the Egyptian Communist Party marks the official beginning of the Soviet attempt to transforming the ASU, and Egypt.

The notion of forging a vanguard party out of the existing ASU structure must have been a very attractive compromise to Soviet policy-makers. It combined elements of both the party and non-party orientations, and was only moderately interventionist. Consequently, it would allow the militant-ideological elements (Suslov, Ponomarev, etc.) to claim that they were working toward a "socialist transformation," while at the same time, giving the more moderate ("non-party") faction an opportunity to rid Soviet policy of the irritating presence of the Egyptian communists. With Brezhnev's reinforcement of the (modified) "non-party" orientation at the 23rd Party Congress in 1966, the transition was complete.

In discussing the new role and duties of the ASU, Soviet academics and journalists provided their Egyptian colleagues with copious advice. Mirski, for one, stated that the chief task of the ASU was "to train a new cadre of officials and extend the political education of the

masses."³³ Although the ASU had assumed a positive role earlier, it could no longer "act as a politically conscious vanguard. Socialist development is inconceivable without a party, without ideological work among the masses."³⁴

By 1966, some authors, such as Yuri N. Gavrilov, were already writing about a "transformed" ASU.³⁵ Within a short time, prominent journalists, including Beliaev and Primakov, were following Mirski and Gavrilov's lead.

Although the Soviet Union had been urging Abd al-Nasir to initiate the transformation "from within" for over a year, the Soviets (as well as many others) were aware that no major changes were taking place, and that even if they were, the ASU was still a minor force in internal Egyptian politics. Consequently, the Soviet Union also began to focus on the military as an instrument of transformation. Unfortunately for them, even this widening of the strategy did not progress well.

With the Arab-Israeli war of June 1967 and Abd al-Nasir's increasing instability, Soviet policy reiterated, and more

³³ Mirski, New Times, 48, 1965, p.4.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ See, Yuri N. Gavrilov, "Africa: Class, Parties, and Politics," International Affairs, 7, 1966, pp.43-44.

strongly emphasized, Egypt's need for a vanguard party. But this time, the Soviet Union also demanded that Abd al-Nasir purge pro-Western, anti-socialist and "reactionary" elements from the military.³⁶ In what could only have been an authoritative Pravda article, Primakov and Beliaev discussed the necessity of the above steps, and specifically cited Nkrumah's overthrow in Ghana (two years earlier) as an example of what occurs when "anti-capitalist measures have not struck root and do not enjoy the support of the masses."³⁷

Although they argued that Egypt was already past this "dangerous phase," Beliaev and Primakov still emphasized that "part of the Army's [officer corps] has become a brake on [the revolution's] advance." While Egypt's establishment of the "Vanguard of Socialists" (in 1965) was a first step toward a vanguard party, it was insufficient for the task at hand.

With the failure of the "vanguard party" strategy ever more apparent, the interventionist level of Soviet strategy increased. The Soviet Union was attempting both to remodel and institutionalize the ASU, while at the same

³⁶ FBIS-SOV, July 20, 1967, p.BB21.

³⁷ From "The Lessons Of The 1967 Middle East Crisis," cited in Yacoov R'oi (ed.), From Encroachment To Entanglement, op. cit., pp.475-476.

time, directly weaken centers of anti-Soviet power. This represented a quantum increase in the level of intervention being utilized by the Brezhnev/Kosygin leadership.

From Khrushchev's less interventionist policy in 1964, the new leadership went on to pursue the more moderately interventionist ASU "transformation from within" strategy. But by the end of 1967, the Soviet leaders were increasingly turning to direct interference in Egypt's internal affairs. The efforts to purge the military of "anti-socialist" elements was only the most overt such undertaking (see Chapters II and III).

With the increasingly disturbing Egyptian domestic developments of 1968 (i.e., student and worker unrest and the March riots), the Soviet debate became much more intense. Ilana Kass has conducted a rather exhaustive analysis of Soviet press statements during this period, and has concluded that the Soviet press, and presumably elite, were divided over the amount of pressure which should be placed on Abd al-Nasir to reform Egypt's internal politics along pro-Soviet lines.³⁸

Pravda, and presumably the Soviet party-ideological establishment, advocated a dramatic restriction of the

³⁸ Kass, op. cit., pp.120-128.

military's privileges and a reduction in its traditional role in Egyptian politics. On the other hand, Izvestiia and Kraznii Zvezda, and purportedly Soviet military and state elements, were less adamant about Egyptian internal reform --as long as the geopolitical advantages of an alliance were secure.³⁹ Thus, the division was between hard-liners who wanted to intervene even more assertively, and those who did not. Kass believes that after August 1968 a convergence of positions -toward the less interventionist option-occurred.⁴⁰

After examining the evidence, the researcher would agree with Kass' conclusions, but would qualify them by stating that 1) it was probably easier for the Soviet military to advocate a less interventionist policy because Egypt's military had already been partially purged of "reactionary" elements in late 1967, early 1968; and 2) the notion of a "dominant" military or political line is often better understood by evaluating the balance of articles appearing for a particular policy, and not, as Kass contends, by searching for the ascendant group within the institution.

While Kass found numerous articles in the military press supporting a less interventionist line, this researcher

³⁹ Kass, op. cit., p.125.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.214.

also found a number which did not.⁴¹ Thus, the possibility cannot be overlooked that various interests within the military might have pursued contradictory aims at that time.

Clearly, at the end of 1968 and beginning of 1969, there was a noticeable lessening of calls for Egypt's "socialist transformation," and a diminution of Soviet optimism about Abd al-Nasir's regime. In addition to Kass' evidence from the press, this researcher has been able to corroborate her findings with similar evidence from the larger academic literature. Not only were many academics losing their optimism, but they were becoming deeply pessimistic.

Mirski, writing in the authoritative party organ Kommunist, focused his attention on the increasingly "reactionary" role of the Egyptian military. His major point was that after the initial victory over foreign colonialism, the army (from which Abd al-Nasir came) invariably turns conservative and is no longer willing to support progressive social forces. Mirski wanted to

⁴¹ In one of a number of articles in Krasnaia Zvezda supporting an interventionist policy, Col. Ye. Dolgopolov was very concerned with the continued reliability of the armed forces, and stressed the need to reorganize and "democratize" them by a "consistent" purge of "pro-imperialist elements. See, "Armies of the Liberated Countries" FBIS-SOV, May 24, 1968, p.A21. Also [Izvestia] FBIS-SOV, August 4, 1968, pp. A46-47.

dispel the old "illusions" about the pliability of the military:

The conception of the consistently progressive role of the army in Asia and Africa has turned out to be nothing more than an illusion. As the example of the Egyptian revolution has shown, the Army is capable of playing a progressive role at the stage of the liquidation of the feudal rule, as well as in the initial period of social transformation. But in the stage of profound social revolution, the army usually manifests conservative tendencies.⁴²

Additionally, Simonia -who had always doubted the feasibility of creating an immediate socialist revolution in Egypt- added to the disappointment over the ASU and military by declaring that Egypt's peasants would always be members of the petite bourgeois class, and act accordingly.⁴³

After the Rogers mission (June 1969), Soviet commentary began to become increasingly defensive, and assumed an almost apocalyptic tone. With the increasing prospect of Egypt joining the ranks of Algeria, Indonesia, Ghana, Guinea and Mali,⁴⁴ the Soviet Union seemed to be at a loss

⁴² Georgi Mirski, "O Kharaktere sotsial'nykh sil v Azii v Afrike" ["On the Character of Socialist Forces in Africa and Asia"], Kommunist 7, 1968, p.98. Cited in Becker, op. cit. 113. (Emphasis added.)

⁴³ See, Iurii Aleksandrov and Nodari Simonia, "Po povodu monografii 'Klassy i klassovaia borba v razvivaishchikhsia stranakh' ["On the Occassion of the Monograph 'Class and Class Struggle in the Developing Countries'"], Narodny Azii i Afriki, 1, 1969, pp.46-50.

⁴⁴ See, Saivetz and Woodby, op. cit.

to formulate a new and coherent policy toward Egypt. Given the weakness of communism in Egypt (as well as Abd al-Nasir's and the rest of the elite's anti-communist leanings), a "united front" strategy was hardly feasible.

And given the Soviet Union's ideological distaste for completely abandoning the construction of communism in Egypt, it was difficult to assume a more traditional state-to-state policy. Thus, with the failure of the middle course, the Soviet Union had either to formulate an entirely new strategy, or to redouble its efforts to sway Abd al-Nasir toward a vanguard ASU.

As the examination of Soviet behavior in Chapters II and III indicated, the Soviet Union chose the latter course. There was a strenuous Soviet effort to penetrate the Abd al-Nasir regime, and to increase the strength of its pro-socialist elements. Additionally, and on the verbal front, the Soviet Union even more stridently to calls for ASU reform.

Primakov, for example, emphasized that if Egypt's "progressive development" was to continue, then it was "essential" for the ASU to assume a "leading role." He wrote forebodingly of class struggle and the "two" Egypt's: "the Egypt of the workers and the Egypt of the

Pashas."⁴⁵

Similarly, Glukhov warned about "the presence in the UAR of the remnants of the bourgeoisie and of certain circles which fear the development of the broad masses' initiative,"⁴⁶ and of the "coming showdown" with imperialist forces. He implored Abd al-Nasir to take the necessary steps to guard against the disaster.⁴⁷ Tellingly, this was all before Abd al-Nasir's unexpected death.

It is at this point where the Soviet debate really first seems to congeal around the Marxist-Leninist Vanguard Party (MLVP) as the solution to most of the Soviet Union's Third World troubles. Mirski, for example, picked up and expanded on his earlier explication of the MLVP and declared that only a vanguard party can "wrest the masses away from the stronghold of nationalism, religious and patriarchal feudalism, and bourgeois ideas and concepts."⁴⁸ The failure of the ASU "transformation from within" strategy was leading directly to a more assertive,

⁴⁵ FBIS-SOV, June 4, 1970, p.A12-13.

⁴⁶ FBIS-SOV, June 9, 1970, p.A11.

⁴⁷ See, FBIS-SOV, October 6, 1970, p.A10; and FBIS-SOV, November 2, 1970, p.A45.

⁴⁸ Georgi Mirski, Armiia i politika v stranakh Azii i Afriki [The Army And Politics In The Countries of Asia And Africa], (Moscow:Nauka, 1970), p.219.

and more interventionist strategy.

When Abd al-Nasir did die (September 1970), the commentaries became almost shrill. In the ensuing years, there has been significant speculation over the Soviet leadership's actual concern immediately following Abd al-Nasir's death: were they most concerned with Egypt breaking away and realigning itself with the United States (after all, a U.S. Secretary of State had just visited in Cairo for the first time in 15 years), or were they most concerned with maintaining the Israeli-Egyptian cease fire while there were 20,000 Soviet troops in the country?⁴⁹

It seems that at first the Soviet Union was most concerned with a war breaking out.⁵⁰ But once this danger had passed, the Soviet leadership returned to an even more vigorous attempt to secure a pro-Soviet Egyptian ruler.

In spite of the fact that Egypt managed to adhere to the cease-fire, Soviet commentaries continued to discuss Egypt

⁴⁹ Cf. Rubinstein, Red Star On The Nile, op. cit, p.?, with Yacoov Ro'i and Ilana Dimant Kass, "Soviet Involvement in Egypt, January 1970-July 1972" (Jerusalem: Hebrew University), Soviet and East European Research Center, no. 6, pp.21-23.

⁵⁰ Evidence for this is found in the fact that the delegation to Abd al-Nasir's funeral --which was headed by Premier Kosygin and composed primarily of political officials-- reportedly discussed the need for keeping the cease-fire operative. See, Heikal, The Sphinx and the Commissar, op. cit., pp.214-215.

in very pessimistic terms. By the time Sadat moved against Ali Sabri, Sami Sharaf and other rivals in May 1971, Pravda spoke openly of a "bitter class struggle."⁵¹ There were no more "illusions;" the attempt to transform Egypt through a "vanguard party" had ended in failure.

Failed Damage Control And Soviet PostMortems On Egypt

Having failed both to institutionalize their influence or to gain more direct control of Egypt's decision-makers during the most optimum period, the Soviet leadership probably realized that it had little choice (at least temporarily) but to tolerate Sadat and his policies. Hence, relations shifted to a more traditional state-to-state basis, with a strong emphasis on traditional coercive diplomacy and covert action (Chapter III). Sadat did make it easier for them by paying lip-service to Soviet foreign policy goals.⁵² But as time passed, it was painfully clear to the Soviets that Sadat was not going to follow in Abd al-Nasir's footsteps.

As a result of the increasing divergence between Soviet

⁵¹ FBIS-SOV, May 30, 1970, p.A9.

⁵² The October 1971 Communique (which condemned anti-communism and anti-Sovietism as "prejudicing the peoples urge for liberation and their national interest, and as serving only the interests of the international imperialist forces") was evidence of this. FBIS-SOV, October 14, 1971, p.B3.

policy aims and Egyptian realities, direct and blunt Soviet criticism of the Sadat regime became more and more frequent. By January 1972, Soviet critics were vocally attacking the "stratum of new bureaucracy and technocracy which is assuming the habit of that which they replaced..."⁵³ And in an unusual article in Mezhdunarodnaia Zhizn [International Life], Y. Dimitriev criticized both the left and the right for their attempt to "move to the forefront of political life."⁵⁴

It appears that the Soviet Union, having settled for an unacceptable status quo, did not want to increase the chances of a further right-wing shift. Consequently, it was attempted to restrain the "left" in order to stem the rising tide of the "right."

When considering the source of the current difficulty, it is clear that the (published) Soviet debate focused on the failures which occurred during Nasir's reign. Pravda summed up the Soviet difficulty by pointing to the "incomplete nature of the progressive transformation, the activities of bourgeois elements, and the organizational

⁵³ Evgeni Korshhunov, editor, Za Rubeshom, on Radio Moscow domestic service, FBIS, January 17, 1972, p.A2.

⁵⁴ FBIS, 3, February 23, 1972, B16.

and ideological weakness of the ASU."⁵⁵

After the Nixon-Brezhnev Summit (May 1972), the tone of most Soviet statements on Egypt turned almost to one of relief; they began discussing the Egyptian situation in a much more relaxed and confident manner. Vadim Zagladin reminded the Egyptians of the advantages of dealing with the Soviet Union, and warned them not to be "short sighted."⁵⁶ In fact, in one of a series of Pravda articles in June, Glukhov flatly stated that "one of the most important achievements" of the July 1952 Egyptian revolution is "the consolidation of the positions of those classes which are vitally interested in the continuance of the revolutionary transformation."⁵⁷ The Soviet Union seemed content simply to maintain the status quo.

Unfortunately, Sadat was no longer willing to tolerate the "no war/no peace" situation and soon expelled the Soviet advisors. Soon articles implicitly critical of the previous policy toward Egypt increased. While Mirski further developed his notion of the "resurgent" bourgeois,

⁵⁵ FBIS-Sov, April 26, 1972, p.B13. Additionally, Izvestiia concentrated on Egypt's multi-class structure and noted that "it is no secret that elements still exist...which do not like the socioeconomic reforms." L. Koryavin, FBIS-SOV, April 10, 1972, p.B11.

⁵⁶ New Times, May 26, 1972, p.5.

⁵⁷ "The Bulwark of Social Progress," FBIS-SOV, June 27, 1972, p.B6. Emphasis added.

its pernicious effect on Egyptian development, and the need for an MLVP,⁵⁸ Ulianovski resurrected the "united front" strategy. Thus, a policy split on how to best protect Soviet interests in the Third World seems to have developed among the interventionists themselves.

In a mid-1972 article, Ulianovski wrote a detailed defense of united front tactics.⁵⁹ This article was obviously related to the failure in Egypt, and seemed designed to avoid a repetition of such a failure in Syria and Iraq. In a second article, Ulianovski spoke outright of what was in affect a complete reversal of policy toward Egypt, i.e., of building a "united front" of "progressive forces".⁶⁰ And by the end of the year, Soviet policy toward these countries did change to a united front strategy.⁶¹ Additionally, it is at this point that Soviet policy first seemed to differentiate between more and less developed states, and use united fronts and MLVP's for each respective type.

⁵⁸ "Natsionalizm i nekapitalisticheski put razvitiia" ["Nationalism and the Non-Capitalist path of Development"] MEiMO 10 (October), 1972, pp.121-123.

⁵⁹ "O edinom anti-imperialisticheskom fronte progressivnykh sil v osvobodivshikhsia stranakh" [On a United Progressive Front of Forces in the Liberated Countries"] MEiMO 9, 1972, pp.76-86.

⁶⁰ "Arab East: Problems of a United Progressive Front," New Times, 41, 1972, pp.18-20.

⁶¹ See, Freedman, Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970, op. cit., pp.91,165.

With the passage of time, the October 1973 war, and the increasingly marginal nature of the Soviet Union to Middle East politics, the lines of the internal Soviet debate stabilized, or even, hardened. Numerous academic specialists began to weigh in and conduct implicit reviews of the Soviet-Egyptian experience.

Nodari Simoniia continued to maintain that the Soviet Union could deal with non-communist, anti-capitalist third world regimes.⁶² But he was increasingly isolated in the debate, and politically, it is doubtful if many took him seriously.

In a full length book expanding on the rationale for a more pragmatic policy, Simoniia discounted the potential dangers of anti-Soviet policy shifts among non-communist Soviet partners by citing the need to analyze the "leading trends" within their "multi-structural class basis."⁶³ It is probable that Simoniia was arguing that the Soviet Union's error in Egypt was in misidentifying the military

⁶² Tellingly, he grouped Egypt with Algeria, India and Pakistan as examples of countries conducting "non-dependent economic policies. See, Nodari Simoniia, untitled chapter, Zarubezhnii Vostok i sovremennost [The Beyond the Borders East And The Present], B.G. Gafurov (ed), Nauka (Moscow:1974), pp.478-479.

⁶³ Strany Vostoka: puti razvitiia [The Countries Of The East: Paths Of Development]. Nauka (Moscow:1975), pp.170-171.

and peasants as the "leading trend." Had they supported the national bourgeoisie, as he originally argued, then the ASU-vanguard party debacle would not have taken place.

Interestingly, Simonia may have realized that future Soviet policy was not going to turn toward the more pragmatic path which he was advocating. Consequently, he warned against the "illusion" that alliances with left-wing dictatorships guarantee policy success.⁶⁴ It was almost as if Simonia were cautioning his colleagues not to go over-board and over-react to the bad experiences in Egypt and elsewhere.

At the opposite end of the Soviet spectrum, the rush toward the MLVP as the answer to Soviet Third World problems was increasingly evident. Besides strong support from Mirski and others, the MLVP was increasingly becoming the dominant theme in the literature --and in Soviet Third World policy. Ruben Andreasian was typical of a number of less dogmatic Soviet specialists who increasingly favored the MLVP.

In 1974, Andreasian wrote a detailed critique of "non-capitalist development" which stressed the continued

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.342. The notion that the Soviet Union should not place its faith in radical "leftist" regimes became a constant refrain in Simonia's writings over the next several years.

strength of petite bourgeois nationalism and the middle class. Such forces acted as "breaks" on the revolution and were the reason why a number of states failed to complete the socialist transformation. While Andreasian had now turned pessimistic about the ability of "non-capitalist path" states to carry out a socialist transformation, he drew the totally opposite conclusion as did Simoniia.

Accordingly, Andreasian cited the increasing need for a "party guided by scientific socialism" to manage the development of such states.⁶⁵ Thus, there were a large number of academics (and presumably decision-makers and members of the elite) who were arguing for even greater intervention into the affairs of a local partner in order to control the evolution of that partner's policies.

Primakov and Beliaev also supported this position, and they even added a novel twist in regard to the failed policy in Egypt. In a full length work on Egypt during Abd al-Nasir's reign, Primakov and Beliaev argued that Nasir was aware of the resurgent bourgeoisie and was moving to destroy them through the emerging A.S.U-vanguard party. The only complication was that he died before he could

⁶⁵ Ruben Andreasian, "Protevorechiia i kriterim nekapitalisticheskogo razbitiia" ["The Contradictions and Criteria of Non-Capitalist Development"], Narody Azii i Afriki 2, 1974, pp.38-49.

complete the A.S.U. transformation.⁶⁶ Thus, had he had more time, Egypt would have completed its "socialist transformation" and the debacle avoided.

The notion that Abd al-Nasir's death stopped the ASU transformation --and thus Egypt's progressive course-- would soon become a favorite refrain of those who so strongly advocated the transformation from within strategy. The implication of such an explanation was that the Soviet Union should have worked more forcefully to transform the A.S.U. and liquidate the bourgeoisie and "reactionary" elements. Naturally, this type of argument gave the MLVP supporters another weighty piece of evidence for advocating more active intervention in the Third World. That this explanation over emphasizes the role of an individual and is inherently un-Marxian seems to have eluded the notice of its proponents.

The major turning point for the MLVP debate seems to have come with a 1976 Kommunist article by Mirski.⁶⁷ In this article, Mirski details the intensifying division of the Third World into imperialist and anti-imperialist camps. While many familiar points regarding the "growth of the

⁶⁶ Igor Beliaev and Evgeni Primakov, Egypt: Vremia Prezidenta Nasera [Egypt: the Time of President Nasir], (Moscow:Mysl, 1974), pp.326-370.

⁶⁷ Georgi Mirski, "Menialushchiisia oblik 'tret'ego mira" ["The Changing Appearance of the Third World"], Kommunist 2, 1976, pp.106-115. Especially see pp.112-113.

bourgeois and comprador" classes were repeated, Mirski saw transfers in income and wealth (as a result of the first OPEC shock) as decisively altering the ability of Third world regimes to develop along the "non-capitalist path." Naturally, Egypt was at the top of this list.⁶⁸

In a full length book expanding on this theme, Mirski implicitly attacked Simonia by arguing that more should be done during the initial stages of a revolution to consolidate progressive gains.⁶⁹ (Specifically, revolutionary-democrats must do more than simply overthrow the feudal monarchs and then limit land ownership.) Second, he reiterated his view that Third World armies could never act as transforming vanguards. Thus, an appropriate political/ideological leadership, i.e., an MLVP, is necessary for safeguarding the gains of the revolution.⁷⁰

On the specifics of Egypt, Mirski said that it was Abd al-Nasir's failure to institutionalize the politics of social transformation in the army (through political officers) that allowed Egypt to depart from the pro-socialist

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.111-112.

⁶⁹ G. Mirski, Tretii Mir: obshehestvo, vlast, armia [The third World: Society Power, Army], Nauka (Moscow:1976), p.302.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp.248, 299.

line.⁷¹ The lesson was that future states on a revolutionary path must immediately move to subordinate the military to the party.

Although the dominant trend in the Soviet debate was toward the MLVP, the alternative option of a "united front" still received a great deal of attention.

In a work by V.G. Gafurov, for instance, Third World revolutions are also analyzed as a two stage process, but unlike Mirski, Andreasian and others, Gafurov called for a "tactical alliance" between local communist and ruling parties.⁷² Clearly, Gafurov reaches the opposite conclusion as does Mirski, in spite of the fact that both two stage analyses of "national liberation struggles," are almost identical.⁷³ On the specifics of Egypt, Gafurov combines Mirski's view of the reactionary nature of the army, with an emphasis on the failed agrarian reforms as the reasons for the collapse of the socialist

⁷¹ Ibid., p.112.

⁷² Aktual'nye problemy sovremennogo natsional'no-osvoboditel'nogo dbizheniia [Current Problems of the Contemporary National Liberation Movement], Nauka (Moscow:1976), p.118.

⁷³ i.e., the national bourgeoisie can, and do, play a "progressive role" during the overthrow of the feudal monarchy, but in the second stage, the period of consolidating and implementing progressive reforms, they becomes conservative and increasingly rightist. Ibid., p.115.

transformation.⁷⁴

Interestingly, some researchers supported the united front strategy on grounds totally at odds with Mirski and Gafurov. R.E. Sevortian, for instance, analyzed the role of the military in the development of socialist orientated states, and disagreed with Mirski about the fundamentally "conservative" nature of the military.⁷⁵ Accordingly, he offered a dichotomized schema where the military could continue to develop into a truly "revolutionary-democratic" force.

Sevortian emphasized that there are numerous opportunities in the development process for bourgeois forces, especially in the armed forces, to re-enter the political process and utilize their position against the revolutionary democrats.⁷⁶ In line with this view, Sevortian stressed the importance of united fronts of all progressive forces, especially those that included local Marxist-Leninist parties.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp.123-134.

⁷⁵ "The Political Role of the Armed Forces," in Sovremennaiia Azia Sprovochnik [Contemporary Handbook Of Asia], B.G. Gafurov and I.V. Gankovskii, et al (eds.), Nauka (Moscow:1977), pp.98-102.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.111.

What is most important about Mirski and Andreasian's MLVP and Gafurov and Servortian's united front policies is that none believe a non-communist government, or a government without at least a communist presence, can be trusted to maintain an alliance with the Soviet Union. In contrast to Simonia, all are arguing for a government, either run by pro-Soviet communists, or at least receptive to their presence. Thus, although there were disagreements about the best means for obtaining maximal control of the local partner's policies, there was little debate on the desirability of such a goal. Hence, the Soviet predisposition to control local partners is even manifested in the internal debate.

As the decade closed, a more detailed and sophisticated view of Egypt (and its evolution away from the Soviet Union) began to evolve. Notably, this was accompanied by a more sober assessment of the MLVP. Karen Brutants, (then a deputy in the International Department) was increasingly attempting to downplay the significance of the MLVP,⁷⁷ and was taking positions much closer to Simonia's. And in the academic literature, Primakov (temporarily) assumed a less hostile perspective toward Egypt and Sadat.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ See, Francis Fukayama, The Rise and Fall of the Marxist-Leninist Vanguard Party (Santa Monica: Rand, 1986), pp.24-25.

⁷⁸ Anatomy Of The Middle East Conflict (Moscow: Mysl, 1978). In spite of the fact that this work was published in english and presumably slanted toward a more

In a 1978 work, Primakov's analysis of Egypt became less dogmatic and managed to criticize Abd al-Nasir as partially responsible for the failure of the "United Arab Republic" in 1958.⁷⁹ Primakov focused on two main factors as the reasons for the breakdown of Soviet-Egyptian relations. First, there are the internal changes within Egypt. Primakov's position (at least in this work) seems to be much closer to Simoniia on these crucial variables.

Primakov concentrates on economic developments (or lack of developments) within Egypt, and the long term effect it had on the growth of the "comprador bourgeois."⁸⁰ He is especially disturbed by Sadat's moves to curb the government sector (especially the release of foreign trade from government control), and to dissolve the peasant cooperatives. Now, however, Abd al-Nasir's death is viewed only as the precipitant releasing these "right" wing forces.

The second variable concerns the increasing role of the

sympathetic interpretation for its foreign audience, it is clear that Primakov's analysis had been softening. See, Primakov, "Sbalansirovannyi kurs na Blizhem Vostoke ili starania politika inymi sredstvami" [A Balanced Course in the Middle East or the Old Policy by Different Means], MEIMO 12, 1976, pp.38-51.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.215.

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp.82, 277.

United States. While Soviet press commentary had always made this connection, Primakov was among the first to do so in the academic literature. Notably, Primakov asserted that the United States was conspiring with Sadat against the Soviet Union. Perhaps there is a trade-off between criticism of Sadat and of the U.S. By placing more blame on the United States --for "encouraging" Sadat to move toward a capitalist economy and to break the Friendship Treaty, there is clearly less need to focus, not only on Sadat, but on Soviet policy as well.⁸¹

By the early 1980's, the literature becomes uneven. On the one hand, the trend toward less dogmatic analysis and better scholarship continues, but on the other, there was a resurgence of primitive orthodoxies and oversimplified, manichaeian explanations.⁸² Even Simonila began gravitating

⁸¹ Sergei Rogov also picked up on this theme and asserted that the U.S. and the American Jewish community "encouraged" Sadat to break the Friendship Treaty. See Rogov, "Amerikanskaia evreiskaia obshchina i Izrail" ["The America Jewish Community and Israel"], SShA 8, 1978, pp.57-69.

⁸² A good example of the latter is A. Agarishev's Gamal Abdel Naser (Moscow:Molodaia Gvardiia, 1979). Since the book is published by "The Young Guard" publishing house and intended for a youthful audience, it would not be fair to criticize it from a scholarly perspective; but the book does distort history by overemphasizing Abd al-Nasir's accomplishments, minimizing his faults, and stretching the limits of propriety for hero worship. A bit more sophisticated is Oleg Gerasimov's Sumerki Kaira [Cairo Twilight] (Moscow:Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1980). While Gerasimov takes a black-and-white view of Abd al-Nasir and Sadat, he also brings in the United States and Israel as external factors. But it is Sadat himself who is mainly blamed for reversing Egypt's "progressive transformation."

toward the MLVP position.⁸³ Perhaps the years of opposition had finally worn him down. But the most suprising is Primakov, who reverted to his old tendency of blaming Sadat for the Soviet Union's failure in Egypt.

In his 1985 book on the Camp David Accords, Primakov reached new lows for personal attacks on Sadat. Under the relatively innocuous title "Egypt Under the Power of Sadat," Primakov's entire first chapter undertakes a vicious character assassination of Sadat.⁸⁴ Some adjectives of choice are "unscrupulous," "unprincipled," "vain" and more generally, he portrayed Sadat as recklessly impetuous, stupid, inept, and deceitful. Moreover, Primakov insinuates that Sadat had Abd al-Nasir killed, and more frankly insists that his admiration for the Nazis went deeper than his desire to use them against the British; that he covertly conspired with Rogers throughout 1971; and that he intentionally lost the 1973 war.⁸⁵

⁸³ By 1981, Simonia was writing that vanguard parties were the only possible means for socialist oriented states to secure the pro-socialist commitment of "the bulk of the population and the...machinery of state..." See, Simonia, "The Current Stage of the Liberation Struggle," Asia and Africa Today 5, 1981, p.2-3.

⁸⁴ Istoria odnogo sgovora [The History Of One Accord], Polizdat (Moscow:1985), pp.11-86, pp.19-24 are especially note worthy.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp.12, 22-23, 42-45. An earlier work which also overstated the impact of Nazi sympathies in Egypt was V.S. Koshelev's, Egipet do El-Alamena [Egypt Before El-Alamein] (Minsk:Belorussian State Press 1977). Koshelev

On the issues of the 1972 expulsion and 1976 Treaty abrogation, Primakov gives one of the more frank discussion in the Soviet literature. (In fact he even uses the word "expulsion."⁸⁶) Primakov outright denies that the Soviet presence in Egypt was "irritating," and that they did not provide Egypt with sufficient weapons. His basic position is that Sadat was anti-Soviet from his earliest days in office, that he betrayed the Arab cause, and that he acted in 1972 to please the Americans, and in 1976 because he could not maintain the Treaty while pursuing his "capitulationist" policies.⁸⁷

Given Primakov's experience with Egypt and his life long association with Middle East scholarship, it is amazing that he cannot escape from this tendency to inordinately blame Sadat. Clearly, Primakov's lapse into a more balanced analysis during the late 1970's was an aberration.

In many ways, Primakov's failure to consider the wider

analyses Egyptian history just before and after the Second World War and decries what he believes is the enormous reservoir of pro-Nazi sympathies. Notably, Nasir and several of the free officers appear (deus ex machina) after the war to save Egypt from King Farouk, the Axis armies, and Anwar Sadat who was in league with both of them.

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp.35,38.

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp.35-38.

issues involved is symptomatic of the ills in the Soviet elite. The lack of a more meaningful debate on the issues, especially their strategic dimensions, stifles clear thinking and inhibits policy review and innovation.

Indeed, throughout the early 1980's, a large number of Soviet writers continued to cite the Egyptian experience as evidence for more interventionist, MLVP policies.⁸⁸ And even those writers who continued to back the united front strategy never seemed to stop and think about the need to dominate the local partner which underlined the policy.

Even S. Losev and Y. Tyssovsky (supporters of the united front strategy⁸⁹) cannot get away from reducing the

⁸⁸ Yuri Gavrilov, who was one of the first to call for a vanguard party in Egypt, refocused attention on the issue by writing of the "critical" need for transforming "broadscale organizations" into vanguard parties which occurred after the removal from power of the "revolutionary-democrats" in Ghana (1966) and Mali (1967). (See, Yuri Gavrilov, "The Problems of the Formation of Vanguard Parties in the Countries of Socialist Orientation". Joint Publication Research Service J-8111 (Washington D.C.,:U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981) [Originally published in Narodny Azii i Afriki 6, 1980]) And in an article on the role of revolutionary parties, I. V. Irkhin specifically cited Abd al-Nasir's failure to form an vanguard party as the cause of the reversal. ("Avangardne revoliutsionnye partii trudiashchiksia v osvobodivshikhsia stranakh" [Avantgarde Revolutionary Workers in the Liberated Countries"], Voprosy Istorii 4, 1982, p.58.)

⁸⁹ Most significantly, they consider the possibility of a split in left-wing forces (which is what allowed the "reactionary" forces to seize the initiatives in Egypt) as "natural." Thus, by implication, they back a united front strategy which seeks to maintain the unity of progressive forces.

failure in Egypt, to a personality difference between Sadat and Abd al-Nasir.⁹⁰ They still cite the "inability of the revolutionary leaders to eliminate the financial power and political influence of the classes which were interested in halting the progressive development of the Egyptian revolution..." for the failure.⁹¹

Specifically, Abd al-Nasir's "inability" to convert the ASU into a vanguard party caused the failure:

Egypt's domestic situation between the wars of 1967 and 1973 was characterized by further intensification of the latent struggle of two main forces: the left-wing forces supporting the radical socio-economic measures taken by Nasir, and the reactionaries striving for the restoration of their lost rights and privileges. [At the same time, the social peace] was shattered by right-wing elements that were growing stronger every day. The progressive forces had no time to really organize the masses and to clear their ranks from opportunist and counter-revolutionary elements.⁹²

Thus, even though their analysis is one of the more sophisticated in the literature, they still cannot escape from simplistic explanation which relieve the Soviet Union of its responsibility in the failure. This inability to really analyze the causes of the Egyptian debacle are clear from a number of other, more official, sources as

⁹⁰ They are, however, mildly critical of Abd al-Nasir for "inconsistencies" in his domestic policy. See, S. Losev and Y. Tyssovsky, The Middle East: Oil and Policy, Progress Publishers (Moscow:1984), p.95.

⁹¹ Ibid., pp.95-96.

⁹² Ibid., p.87.

well. One of the most interesting concerns the more recent (and negative) thinking on the MLVP.

In Sotsialisticheskaiia orientatsiia osvobodivshikhsia stran [The Socialist Orientation Of The Liberated Countries], a book whose editorial board is a who's who of the Soviet academy and International Department (e.g., Brutents, Ulianovski, Kim, Mirski, Primakov, and Anatoli Gromyko among others), the authors again gloss over the failure in Egypt.⁹³ The work deals with the failure in Egypt by discussing Lenin's notion of the need to "break" capitalist development and reorient the economy away from capitalist economic relations is raised.

Specifically, it declares that the state sector of the economy must be transformed into a "qualitative base for the formation and development of a socialist economy."⁹⁴ Accordingly, while Abd al-Nasir was able to take a major step toward this goal in 1961, the book argues that he never "resolved this question or [he] resolved it in a less than full way." Since Abd al-Nasir was too influenced by "petit bourgeois ideology" in his approach toward party construction, Egypt was never able to make that "break"

⁹³ Sotsialisticheskaiia orientatsiia osvobodivshikhsia stran [The Socialist Orientation Of The Liberated Countries] (Moscow:Mysl, 1982).

⁹⁴ Ibid., p.79.

toward socialism.⁹⁵

As a later Soviet reviewer of the book remarked, "the authors underscored the complex nature" of the socialist oriented stage of development, and the dangers of attempting to "accelerate it..."⁹⁶ Thus, the authors do not consider the more deleterious elements underlying Soviet policy, especially its attempt to dominate the Egyptian elite and to regulate their policies.

The lessons implied in the book are either that the Soviet Union should have pushed harder for a transformed ASU (i.e., intervened even more forcefully), or conversely, that it should have been more patient and dealt with Abd al-Nasir and Egypt on a traditional state-to-state basis. And of all the Soviet authors noted in this study, the only two who seem to agree with the latter conclusion (by the early 1980's) were Simonia and Karen Brutents. The bulk of Soviet academics and published International Department specialists either were identified with the (true believer) MLVP position, or the (loyal-pragmatist) united front. Only Simonia and Brutents continue to advocate the less legitimate notion of a less interventionist policy.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p.96.

⁹⁶ M.M. Avsenev, Review of Sotsialisticheskaiia Orientatsiia osvobodivshikhsia stran, Narodny Azii i Afriki 5, 1984, p.184.

But Simonia's and Brutents' position, and the failures in a number of MLVP states, does seem to have weakened the resolve of the true believer MLVP advocates. Although Brutents was identified with the editorial board of the above book, he most probably did not have a hand in that section on Egypt.⁹⁷ The thrust of Brutents' writing over almost the last decade has been on the utility of supporting non-communist regimes, and on the ability of these states to "limit the influence of imperialism."⁹⁸ It seems clear that he wants Soviet policy to be more circumspect in supporting MLVP's.⁹⁹ Thus, the debate comes full circle to Simonia's original mid 1960's position, and a number of writers have abandoned their over emphasis on the MLVP.

Simonia, for one, backtracked to his old position on the Soviet ability to work with non-communist regimes, and he

⁹⁷ During the same year this book appeared, Brutents published several pieces asserting that states with capitalist orientations (i.e., different "socio-economic forms") can still pursue anti-imperialist foreign policies. See, Fukayama, op. cit.

⁹⁸ Kommunist 3, 1984, p.105.; see also "Dvizhenie neprisoedineniia v sovremennom mire" ["The Non-Aligned Movement in the Contemporary World"], MEIMO 5, 1984, pp.26-41.

⁹⁹ Fukuyama has even labeled Brutents a "neo-Khrushchevian." See, Fukuyama, The Rise of the marxist-Leninist Vanguard Party, op. cit., p.24.

again advocated supporting such states.¹⁰⁰ In analyzing the failure in Egypt, he said that Sadat was able to reverse course because the state did not find a "necessary compromise" which properly evaluated and responded to the "actual character" of the society. Consequently, it never had the necessary preconditions for a socialist transformation.¹⁰¹ Notably, he grouped Egypt with Somalia and the Sudan as countries able to back-out from the socialist course.

The final blow to the MLVP position seems to have come from Ulianovski himself. Clearly, his ardor for the MLVP cooled. Specifically, he wrote how the Soviet Union had over emphasized the role of earlier "bourgeois nationalists," including Abd al-Nasir, and how the crucial question is how do current revolutionary leaders obtain and secure mass support.¹⁰² The failure in Egypt (as well as in Mali, Ghana, Zaire, and the Sudan), was due to the lack of a "truly" revolutionary-democratic organization.

¹⁰⁰ He claimed that capitalist states can pursue pro-Soviet policies if they have developed internal markets and have a base for national capitalist development. See, Simonia, "Natsionalno-gosudarstvennaia Konsolidatsiia i politicheskaiia differentsiatsiia rezhivaiushchikhsia stran Vostoka" ["National Government Consolidation And Political Differentiation of the Developing Countries of the East"], MEIMO 1, 1983, p.94.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 93.

¹⁰² "O natsionalnoi i revoliutsionnoi demokratii: put evoliutsii" [On National And Revolutionary Democrats: The Paths of Development"], Narodny Azii i Afriki 2, 1984, 13-14.

But Ulianovski was not interested in pushing the MLVP's to the extreme; while they make the revolution "irreversible," they cannot be formed and utilized too quickly or irresponsibly.¹⁰³ Clearly, they were not the answer he had first thought they were.

After analyzing Soviet views of Egypt and its role in the later MLVP literature, several conclusions are in order. The over-arching conclusion (indeed, of Part I of this project, not simply this Chapter) is that the Soviet Union severely and unnecessarily damaged the relationship with Egypt through its own actions. The Soviet Union was its own worst enemy.

First, the primary source of the Soviet Union's debacle in Egypt came from the incorrect evaluation of Egypt's revolutionary potential, i.e., Soviet "illusions". The first flush of superpower equality and renewed geopolitical success seemed to have overwhelmed Soviet analysts and policy-makers. They seemed to have expected that the favorable trend engendered by de-colonialization would continue for ever.

Second, the Soviet policy-making elite was never able to rid itself of the need to control Egyptian policy. Thus, the (1965) internal compromise over the "transformation

¹⁰³ Ibid., p.16.

from within" strategy. And even after the fallacy of such a policy was evident (early 1967), the Soviet Union continued to pursue its efforts to penetrate the regime, i.e., to "accelerate the transformation". Then again, instead of backing off and allowing Sadat to assume a more equidistant relationship between both superpowers in the early 1970's, the Soviet Union had to attempt to coerce him into complete subservience to Soviet foreign policy interests.

The most pragmatic Soviet elements (e.g., Simonia) simply could not convince their colleagues of the prudence of a less interventionist policy. By the late 1960's, the less interventionist option disappeared off the Soviet spectrum of sanctioned positions. Russian political culture and history, and the need for complete control of the relationship, overpowered the rationality of working with Egyptian interests, instead of attempting to dictate them. The leadership was unwilling to allow future Soviet regional policy to be so heavily influenced by factors beyond their control.

A third conclusion from the Soviet experience and literature is that the elite, by and large, learned the wrong lesson from the failure. As the analysis of Egypt in the subsequent MLVP literature made clear, the Egyptian experience was most often cited as a reason for even more

interventionist policies.

Most Soviet analysts were of one mind as to the objective of control. The debate centered around the most efficacious means. All agreed that: the hold of petit bourgeois ideology on the peasants --and some leaders, must be broken; the military must reflect and institutionalize the progressive nature of society; that agricultural reforms must be undertaken and peasant cooperatives formed (in order to ward-off capitalist tendencies among the peasants). Additionally, the "state sector" must be predominate in the economy and foreign trade tightly controlled by the government.

All subsequent policies had to move forcefully and quickly to institutionalize the revolution in the army, and to crush the remnants of the bourgeoisie. Soviet elite cleavages centered on whether or not an MLVP or a united front of left-wing forces was the best way for doing this. It was not until the mid 1980's that most Soviet Third World specialists seemed to have learned that the rush to control local partners were not always in the Soviet Union's best interest, nor would it always succeed.

A final conclusion is that Soviet policy-makers seemed to have made so many gratuitous mistakes with Egypt, and to have learned the wrong lessons (at least partially) because

of the closed nature of the internal debate. Certainly, the fact that there was no public discussion of Egypt's strategic importance made it infinitely more difficult for those in favor of a traditional state-to-state relationship to make their point.

The excessive focus on Egypt's internal developments and the need to couch every point in these terms seriously undermined sophisticated and rapid intra-elite communication. The fact that it has taken the Soviet Union over twenty years to re-realize that a highly interventionist strategy would alienate it from local partners speaks for itself. The only question today is if the Soviet elite will be able to accept the more traditional strategy advocated by the likes of Karen Brutents, or if it will turn its back on him as they did to Nodari Simoniia in 1964?

PART II

SOVIET-SYRIAN RELATIONS

CYCLES OF SYRIAN VULNERABILITY AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

Introduction

The Soviet-Syrian relationship, like many relationships between the Soviet Union and a Third World state, is characterized by the Soviet Union's attempt to institution-alize its influence, and the partner's efforts to obtain maximal benefits with minimal loss of sovereignty. The Soviet Union seeks to establish an informal, non-violent ability to direct Syrian policies, and Syria resists this effort.

When a major Soviet-Syrian conflict of interest arises, the decisive variable affecting the Soviet Union's control of Syrian foreign and domestic policies (if they choose to make such control a priority) is the relative power balance between the Soviet Union and Syria at that moment in time.¹ Accordingly, factors such as the achievement of U.S.-Soviet nuclear parity (which decreased the external threat to the Soviet Union) and the exclusion of Egypt from the Arab-Israeli military balance (which increased the threat to Syria) strengthen Soviet influence building capability.

Conversely, the relative decline of the Soviet Union's economy (which limits its ability to extend aid) and periodic infusions of Arab or Western economic assistance

¹ For an examination of balance of power analysis, see Morgenthau, op. cit.; and Waltz, op. cit.

to Syria (which reduces Syria's need for East Bloc assistance) strengthen Syria's ability to resist Soviet policy pressures. Thus, it is the interrelationship of each side's permanent and transitory elements of power which determine the extent of Soviet influence over Syrian policy.²

In order to better understand the degree of control or influence the Soviet Union has, or does not have, over Syria at any particular time, one can isolate three distinct variables. These are:

1)The degree Soviet and Syrian interests conflict or coincide. In order for the Soviet Union to control or influence Syrian policy, there must be a conflict of interest and Syria must undertake an action(s) it would not otherwise have undertaken. (If Al-Assad carries out a pro-Soviet action or policy because it is in his own, or Syria's, best interest, it is not a manifestation of Soviet influence or control.)

2)The Soviet Union's over-all power position and its precise policy toward Syria. This includes such factors as the configuration of non-Syrian Soviet interests and options in the region and around the globe; Soviet diplomatic skill; the ability to reward or punish Syria for policy conformity; the intensity of Soviet interest in Syria; and the precise means chosen for seeking influence.

3)Syria's power position, or more precisely, its internal and external vulnerability. This includes such factors as: the state of relations with Iraq; the military balance with Israel; the situation in Lebanon, etc; and the coherence of Syria as a state and its economic situation.

² Influence differs from control by its lesser dependence on overt force or violent coercion.

While the first variable (the degree of interest conflict or coincidence) is often subject to significant and sudden shifts, it is important because it forms the starting point from which the Soviet Union seeks to direct Syrian policy. This variable determines how far apart Soviet and Syrian policy preferences are, and how great an undertaking Soviet efforts to sway or direct Syrian policy toward a more apt alignment with its own will be. Thus, the key to utilizing this variable is to decipher the precise level of relative interest conflict.³

The second variable (the Soviet Union's power position and policy toward Syria) is affected by a number of other variables. Naturally, the Soviet Union's power position is greatly affected by developments within the U.S.S.R. But since these internal factors usually change very slowly (e.g., the establishment of an effective nuclear deterrent force; the recovery of the economy after the W.W. II), the Soviet Union's regional power position is more greatly affected (in the short run) by developments within the Middle East (e.g., the alignment of regional forces in support of, or against, Soviet foreign policy goals).

³ While in theory (with full access to the minutes of both Syrian and Soviet policy-making sessions) it is possible to ascertain the precise degree of conflict, in reality it is not always clear. But an approximation can be gauged by analyzing each side's policy pronouncements and actions.

Accordingly, the Soviet Union's policy toward Syria is greatly affected by the range of other partners available in the region at a particular time, and by the anticipated (net) benefits of such a policy. Thus, if the Soviet Union can utilize Egypt (as it did in the 1960's) or Iraq (as it did in the early 1970's), then Soviet interest in Syria is necessarily less intense, and Syrian bargaining power correspondingly reduced. But since both these options had disappeared in the latter part of the 1970's and in the 1980's, then the intensity of Soviet interest in Syria (and Syrian bargaining power) increased dramatically.⁴ Consequently, its policy became more consistent.

In contrast to the Soviet power position and policy toward Syria, the third variable (Syrian vulnerability) is much more unstable and often changes from week-to-week, if not day-to-day. The degree of internal Syrian conflict, or the precise alignment of anti-Syrian regional forces exerts a tremendous impact on Al-Assad's receptivity to Soviet tenders. Thus, the logical conclusion is that (since the late 1970's) Syrian vulnerability more decisively affects Soviet influence or control of Syrian policy when interests conflict.

⁴ Although there were (are) a few non-Syrian options (e.g., Libya, South Yemen), the Soviet Union does not have the large number of possible partners it once had, and thus its policy does not experience radical swings of objective, or even means.

Cycles of Vulnerability and Their Cumulative Impact

After examining the interaction of the three determinants above, the researcher believes that Soviet-Syrian relations can best be understood as a series of vulnerable/dependent and semi-secure/independent cycles. When the Al-Assad regime is weakened by internal or external developments, the Soviet Union extracts as many concessions as possible from Syria. After Al-Assad regains some strength, he attempts to recover as many of the previously granted concessions as possible. Thus, the relationship has a cyclical ebb and flow character.

It should be noted, however, that the ebb and flow are often not of equal strength. Once a concession has been granted, or a politically relevant actor coopted, it is much more difficult to alter this development than it was to avoid it in the first place. Thus, under the Al-Assad regime, Soviet policy has had a ratchet effect: although it turns in two directions, it only works in the direction it is set. And in Syria's case, this setting is toward greater receptivity to Soviet policy preferences and greater Soviet influence over the decision-making structure.

It seems that the Al-Assad regime has witnessed a persistent and significant erosion of independence since

coming to power in 1970. Moreover, this process feeds upon itself: as Syria increases its dependence on the Soviet Union, the tension over dependence gradually diminishes.

This is not to assert that Al-Assad is a Soviet puppet, or that Syrian policy is made in Moscow, but simply that 1) Al-Assad has become more sensitive to the limits of Moscow's tolerance for particular policies and actions, and therefore, attempts to work within these parameters unless they directly contradict his own self-defined core interests; and 2) that a significant number of pro-Western, pro-capitalist policy options are very unlikely from the Al-Assad regime, and could only be expected (in the intermediate term) after a significant period of internal instability and realignment against the Soviet option, or a drastic realignment of the regional power balance in Syria's favor.

The point is not that the Soviet Union controls Syrian policy, but that it has firmly established itself in Syria by creating a dependent relationship. As will be brought out below, the existence of the Al-Assad regime itself is increasingly contingent upon continuing Soviet support.

Current Western perceptions of the Soviet-Syrian relationship seem to lag behind the actual state of

affairs. While most analysts focuses on Al-Assad's independent policies after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and his 1976 rebuff to the Soviet Union over Lebanon and the P.L.O., it would be more appropriate to examine how Syria's increased vulnerability since the end of the 1970's made it possible for the Soviet Union to extract significant foreign and domestic policy concessions (e.g., the maintenance of a rigidly socialized economy; the Friendship treaty, etc.).

Clearly, there has been a significant amount of Soviet penetration of Syria's military, economic and even political institutions since the late 1970's. The Soviet Union's greatest assets in its effort to build influence in Syria has been the persistence and patience of its policy. It waits for any opportunity to secure its military, political, economic and even socio-cultural influence in Syria, and then seizes on that opportunity to reinforce its emerging network of pro-Soviet institutions and actors.

Part II of this project will attempt to support the above analysis, and specifically to demonstrate that the cycles of dependency and accommodation --and their subsequent, and continued revision in Soviet favor, has resulted in a Syrian regime which is increasingly susceptible to Soviet influence. The investigation's dependent variable is

Soviet influence or control over Syrian policies, and the central questions are how much power and control do Hafez al-Assad and the ruling Syrian elite have over state policies, and what role does the Soviet Union play in the decision and policy-making process?

Since the Soviet academic community is much more reticent when it comes to publishing material on Syria than they are about Egypt⁵, this part of the investigation has relied more heavily on an analysis of Soviet behavior and official statements, and of what Arab and Western sources have revealed about their contacts with the Soviet figures dealing with the Middle East.

⁵ In another conversation with a specialist from the Oriental Institute, I was told that there are three researchers working on Syria in the Institutes's Arab Section, but that their findings are not for the "wider public."

Chapter V

Persistent Soviet Ambitions and Persistence Rewarded

The Formative Years of Soviet-Syrian Relations

Syria is a relatively small state of approximately 186,480 square kilometers.⁶ Geopolitically, it is not situated in an ideal location: three of its five neighbors are more powerful and most often hostile. Its position between Israel and Turkey (two of the region's most powerful states and key American allies), and next to the usually more powerful Iraq, hostile Jordan, and disintegrating Lebanon, give it a number of obvious security concerns.

The more populous and powerful Iraq is, with very brief exceptions, almost always hostile to the Al-Assad regime. Israel, while less populated, is industrially and militarily more advanced than Syria, and would, under most circumstances, welcome the fall of Hafez al-Assad. Turkey, while usually maintaining proper relations with Syria, has a number of bilateral problems including an increasingly disturbing water-rights dispute, Syrian support for Armenian terrorists, as well as a simmering territorial

⁶ This figure includes 1,295 square kilometers occupied by Israel. See, George R. Copely, Defense and Foreign Affairs Handbook (Washington, D.C.: Perth Company, 1986), p.706. In spite of Syria's relatively small geographic size, it should still be categorized as a "large" state in terms of Soviet permeation techniques. On a person per square kilometer basis, for example, it is in the same class as Vietnam, China, Yugoslavia, Cuba, and Egypt. Additionally, it is relatively well developed politically.

dispute.

Syria's weaker neighbors, Jordan and Lebanon, are both coveted and antagonized by the Al-Assad regime. While the Hussein regime in Jordan has (with the quiet assistance of Israel) been able to maintain its independence, the Lebanese have not been as fortunate. The Syrians are now, for all intensive purposes, internal actors in Lebanese affair.

The most distinguishing feature of Syrian domestic politics is its failure to develop a national consciousness capable of unifying the population into a nation-state. The political and legal entity "Syria" does not have a cohesive national identity, or even a strong sense of political community. The divisive impact of sub-national and supra-national loyalties which has plagued the state since its inception continues to dominate its politics.⁷ Listed in Table V.1 is Syria's major sectarian groups and their primary geographical concentrations. Consequently, Syria, like many other Third World states, is tenuously held together by force of arms.

Even the Hafez al-Assad regime, which is clearly the most successful regime in modern Syria history, is a narrowly

⁷ Loyalty to the state is further eroded by the historical legacy and persistent attraction among some quarters to pan-Arabism and the notion of a "greater Syria."

based collaboration of Alawis dominating the country's three major political institutions: the military, the government bureaucracy, and the Ba'th party. (Al-Assad himself is the only major figure with a power base in all three institutions.)

Table V.1
Sectarian Groups in Syria, 1980 ⁸

	<u>Approximate %</u>	<u>Major Location(s)</u>
Sunni Muslims Arabs*	65%	Throughout the country
Heterodox Muslims	14	
Alawi	11%	Latakia, Damascus
Druze	3	Al-Suwayda (Jabal al-Druze)
Isma'ili		
less than 1		Hama, Latakia province
Christians	11	
Greek Orthodox	5	Allepo, Damascus
Armenian	3	Allepo
other	3	Allepo, Damascus
Kurds	7	Taurus Mountains, Jazirah region, Damascus
Jews, Circassians, others	3	Damascus

*excludes Kurds and a few smaller Sunni groups

⁸ Computed from George Thomas Kurian (ed.), Encyclopedia of the Third World (New York: Facts on File, 1983), pp1693-1694; Richard D. Weeks (ed.), The Muslim Peoples (New York: Greenwood Press, 1984), p.906; Nicholas Van Dam, The Struggle for Power in Syria (London: St. Martin, 1979), pp.15-25. Since the Syrian Government does not recognize or release census data on the sectarian communities, Table V.1 is an approximate calculation and not exact tabulation.

The Rise of the Alawis and Hafez al-Assad

The Alawi sects in the Jabal al-Alawiyyin (or Jabal al-Nusariyyah) near Latakia, are descendants of a tenth and eleventh century heterodox Muslim group which blended a number of Islamic, Jewish, Christian and pagan religious ideas.⁹ Like their Isma'ili (Shi'ite) precursors, Alawis believe in "...an esoteric religious knowledge hidden from the masses and revealed to only a few who are initiated into the secret in a lengthy and complex initiation."¹⁰ From a political point of view, the most important feature of the religion is that it is considered heretical by most of the Sunnis in the area and in more distant lands. (Relations with the Shi'ite branch of Islam is much more cordial.)

Historically, relations with the dominant Sunni majority and other neighboring minorities have been mostly conflicting and economically exploitative. The Alawi communities have been persecuted by the stronger Sunni majority (and even occasionally, by the minority Greek Orthodox Christians), for economic, as well as religious, reasons.¹¹ Because of this exploitation and repression, as

⁹ For a summary of these ideas see, Mahmud A. Faksh, "The Alawi Community of Syria: A New Dominant Political Force," Middle East Studies, April 1984, pp.134-136.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.135.

¹¹ See, Ibid., pp.133-141.

well as their geographic concentration, the Alawis were one of the first Syrian groups to develop a communal identity.¹²

But even with the earlier and more pronounced development of Alawi consciousness, their identity is not monolithic or fully established. According to Mahmud A. Faksh, the Alawis have never been a "monolithic, cohesive group with a coherent structure." They are a:

collectivity that lacks organizational unity and political effectiveness at the community level. They are divided into tribes characterized by sectionalism and rivalries, with no overall ruling authority. Tribal affiliation is scant or non-existent among the Alawis of the plains, and is increasingly suppressed among the new educated, mobilized stratum.¹³

But even with this fractured sectarian consciousness, the Alawis went on to dominate Syrian politics and the state.

The reasons for the Alawi and Hafez al-Assad's rise are found in the development of the Ba'th Party and Syrian military, and especially in the fact that the Alawis were

¹² The Alawi collective consciousness was further aided by French colonial policy which subdivided Syria into sectarian areas and then played one sect or religious group off against the other. Additionally, French policy favored, among other minority groups, the Alawis. Naturally, the Sunni majority viewed this as collaboration with the colonial occupiers, and came to despise the Alawis even more. For details see, John Devlin, Syria: Modern State in An Ancient Land (Boulder: Westview, 1983), p.28.

¹³ Faksh, op. cit., pp.137-138. The sects are the Shamsis, Qamaris, Murshidiyyun.

not as deeply involved in Syria's numerous and violent power struggles between 1946 and 1963. The Sunni majority, because it lacked a cohesive sense of political community and a clearer vision of its own collective self-interest, decimated itself.

As successive waves of Sunni officers purged and exhausted each other, the Alawis, Druze, and Isma'ilis advanced to higher and higher positions in the military. Thus, the political field fell to the minorities, and Alawis almost by default.

Since the Ba'th Party had (has) a secular and socialist ideology, minorities, such as the Alawis, Druze and Isma'ilis were (are) disproportionately attracted to it. (The Syrian Communist Party, for similar reasons, attracted large numbers of Kurds) Consequently, the Ba'th became very strong in Latakia and Jabal al-Druze areas (and the Communists in the Kurdish northeast).

Understandably, the attraction of minorities to the Ba'th (and Communist) Party impeded its growth as a masse based, nationally organized, secular party, and polarized the country and its politics along a rigid Sunni-minority, rich-poor, and urban-rural axis (i.e., it was the urban, rich Sunnis against the poor, rural minorities).¹⁴ But

¹⁴ Faksh, op. cit., p.141; Van Dam, op. cit., p.44.

this did allow the Alawis (and other minorities) to develop a very affective organization for carrying-out their political agenda.

The origins of Alawi strength in the military can be traced originally to the negative attitude of the Sunni Damascene elite toward military service (for their sons), and their superior economic opportunities. Hence, the Alawis and other minorities were more prone to enlist in the military because of poverty and the possibility for education and of social advancement. The military was the most promising career open to minorities. (French colonial policy encouraged this trend by encouraging the minorities to enlist in order to utilize the more reliable minorities against the Sunni majority.¹⁵)

In March, 1963 the predominantly minority Ba'th Party--utilizing its sizable (and primary) base in the military--organized a successful coup against the Sunni generals who had broken from the union with Egypt in 1961. The coup overthrew an upper-class Sunnis regime, and brought in a mixed Sunni (middle class) and minority government under

¹⁵ "The French turned Syria's ethnographic and regional diversity, and its tradition of separation and communitarian rule from a fact of political life into an imperial asset." Garkinkle, "The Forces Behind Syrian Politics," Middle East Review, Fall, 1984, p.11.

the cover of the Ba'th party.¹⁶ At the time of the coup, the Ba'th Party Military Committee (which made the coup) had five Alawi members out of a committee of fourteen.¹⁷

In spite of the fact that the coup was led by Sunni officers, the Alawi and Druze were emboldened by increasing Sunni weakness, and soon "spearheaded a minoritarian-rural, radical revolutionary faction against the moderate, lower-middle-class Sunni Ba'th officers."¹⁸ The minorities (through the Ba'th) began to purge the military of Sunni officers. Of the 700 dismissed officers, the Alawis replaced approximately half of them with members of their own sect.¹⁹

The Alawis and Druze began to discriminate against Sunnis in admission to the Military Academy and other training centers, the military section of the Ba'th Party, the intelligence and internal security services, and other important institutions. Alawi, Druze, Isma'ili, and Greek Orthodox Christians were all given preferential entrance

¹⁶ The political orientation of the conspirators was anti-Western, but because of its middle class Sunni segment, not excessively radical. They did, however, nationalize all commercial banks and insurance companies in 1963, and most other large businesses in 1965. See, Richard F. Nyrop, Syria: A Country Study (Washington, D.C.: American University, 1979), p.102.

¹⁷ Van Dam, op. cit., pp.34,43.

¹⁸ Faksh, op. cit., p.144.

¹⁹ Van Dam, op. cit., p.43.

to these institutions.²⁰

Also, if a Sunni commander who remained was deemed of questionable loyalty, he was transferred away from Damascus, and/or given command of an all minority unit. Thus, in the event of a revolt, the officers would either be out- side the capital, or unable to command the loyalty of his troops.

As a result of these policies, the military, the Ba'th Party organization in the military, and the Ba'th itself all became increasingly unstable and polarized along a Sunni - Alawi/Druze/Isma'ili line. By February 1966, Alawi leader Salah Jadid and Druze leader Salim Hatum were strong enough to organize a second coup displacing their (middle class) Sunni Ba'th colleagues and finalizing the minority victory.

The Soviet Union and the Neo-Ba'th Regime

As noted in Chapter I, the Soviet leadership knew that the Abd al-Nasir regime was in trouble as early as 1964. Consequently, its policy toward the other states of the region at that time was far from neglectful. In the case of Syria in the years immediately after the February coup, it might even be described as favored. Syrian actions and

²⁰ Ibid., p.52.

ideology could only please the Soviet Union. Most specifically, as a Soviet specialist on world communist movements, A.N. Gavriushenko said: "the February 23, 1966, movement opened new possibilities for the widening of cooperation between the ruling Ba'th and the Communist Party."²¹

These "possibilities" included lifting the ban on Communist Party activities; allowing Party leader Khalid Bagdash to return from eight years of exile in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union; and giving a cabinet post to a communist.²² To Soviet Orientalist V.V. Vavilov, the coup "...completed the process of demarcation of the Ba'th Party from the circle of middle bourgeoisie, extirpating their illusions about the expedient possibilities of class and political blocs with these layers of the bourgeoisie."²³ There was none of Abd al-Nasir's reticence toward an anti-bourgeois program, and after 1966, Syria was, in fact, included in Moscow's list of states with a "socialist orientation."

²¹ A.N. Gavriushenko, "Progressivnii Natsionalnii front v Siriiskoi Arabskoi Respublike" ["The Progressive National Front in the Syrian Arab Republic"], in Iu. N. Gavrilov (ed.), Kommunisty i antiimperealisticheskoe dbezhenie [Communists and the Anti-Imperialist movement] (Moscow: Mysl, 1975), p.222.

²² See, R.N. El-Rayyes and Dunia Hahas (eds.), The Dragon and the Bear (Beirut: An Nahar Arab Report and Record, 1973), p.152-154.

²³ Vavilov, op. cit., 1972, p.6. (Emphasis added.)

While Izvestiia's initial over-optimism toward the "socialist" coup contrasted with Pravda's more cautious line,²⁴ the Soviet Union still extended substantial economic and political aid to Syria and signed contracts for the Euphrates Dam project within three months of the coup.²⁵ But Pravda's reluctance to whole-heartedly back the neo-Ba'th regime was probably caused by its awareness that the regime's hold on power was quite precarious. During the next two and a half years, the Soviet Union maintained an enthusiastic, but restrained policy toward Syria. It did not become overly identified with the regime, nor did it (during this period) attempt to decisively intervene in its internal affairs.

In analyzing the situation, the Soviets (as well as most other observers) were aware that there were two fronts to watch inside Syria: the inter-elite struggle between the "progressive" Ba'ths and the "reactionaries" (Sunni upper and middle class), and the intra-elite struggle among the Ba'th members themselves.

The Intra-Ba'th Struggle and the Syrian Communists

As the Alawis and Druze consolidated their control over the government, they increasingly began to compete with

²⁴ Kass, op. cit., p.20-21.

²⁵ See, The New Middle East 93-94 (1974), p.77.

each other for predominance. Within seven months of the coup (September 1966), the country was poised on the verge of civil war. Druze leader Salim Hatum had made (what he thought was) a deal with Alawi Air Force commander Hafez al-Assad to overthrow Salah Jadid. But Al-Assad double-crossed Hatum by withholding air force support for Hatum's uprising and Jadid beat back his attempt. Al-Assad then joined with Jadid to defeat Hatum and forced him into exile in Jordan.²⁶

After this victory (in which Jadid had proof of Al-Assad's original participation against him), friction between Jadid and Al-Assad increased. And one of the key issues in the dispute involved the Syrian Communists Party (SCP) and relations with the Soviet Union and the East Bloc. Throughout 1966, Jadid increasingly cooperated with the communists and advocated increasing reliance on the Soviet Union. His appointment of a communist to the government (as an individual and not as a representative of the Party), antagonized the less radical factions of the Ba'th, such as Al-Assad, as well as the Sunni ulama.²⁷

The Syrian Communist Party had long been one of the more established and successful parties in the region. Having

²⁶ See, Bar Simon-Tov, op. cit., pp.152-155; and Van Dam, op. cit., pp.71-75.

²⁷ Bar Simon-Tov, op. cit., p.154.

been attracted to communism through the French Communist Party, Khalid Bagdash became General Secretary in 1932 (at the age of sixteen) and over the next decades led the Party to new levels of importance.²⁸ After spending several years in a Syrian jail in the 1930's, Bagdash traveled to Moscow where he spent several years and learned Russian.

The next decade was not especially notable, except for the abuse the Party suffered after it supported the Soviet Union's pro-partition stand on the 1948 Palestine issue. After recovering from this trauma, Bagdash and the Party went on to become a significant figure in Syrian politics. In fact, Bagdash has the distinction of being the first communist in the Arab world to be elected to parliament.²⁹ When the communists (along with all other parties) were banned during the 1958-1961 union with Egypt, Bagdash went into exile in the Soviet Union.

Upon his return in 1966, it seemed clear that he would become a significant force in Syrian politics. Moreover, and in distinction to Soviet policy vis-a-vis the Egyptian communists in 1965, the Soviet Union did not advocate disbanding the Syrian Communist party after the Neo-Ba'th coup in 1966. This policy contrast is interesting and

²⁸ See, El-Rayyes and Hahas, op. cit., p.152-154.

²⁹ Ibid., p.152.

significant.

While the Soviet Union under Khrushchev often cooperated with non-communist (or even anti-communist) regimes, the Brezhnev/Kosygin leadership adopted a more traditional attitude. When confronted with a situation such as in Egypt, where the local communists were hopelessly incapable of helping themselves or Moscow, they subordinated the local communists to the ruling party. But when conditions indicated that the local communists had a base of support and could undertake some effective action, as in Syria, then Moscow did not seem interested in disbanding the party. Moreover, by 1966, it was already becoming clear that the policy in Egypt was not having the desired effect on Abd al-Nasir's regime (see Chapter III). Consequently, why repeat a failing policy?³⁰

It is probable that the Soviet leadership decided to keep the Syrian communists active because they would be useless if dissolved. Additionally, the ranking Syrian leader, Salah Jadid, had already proven himself receptive to their presence (the generous and early Soviet aid package might

³⁰ Heikal believes that the Politburo was split on the local communist issue, with Brezhnev, Kosygin and Shelepin advocating less dependence, and Podgorny, Ponomarev, and Suslov advocating more. Heikal, The Sphinx and the Commissar, op. cit., pp.155,160-161. If this is true, then the favorable decision on the SCP's fate may have made it easier for the Brezhnev faction to maintain their policy in Egypt.

have softened any of his doubts), and Syrian Communist Party leader Bagdash was not about to quietly follow his Egyptian comrades into oblivion.³¹ The SCP was probably viewed as another (usually) pro-Soviet faction or group which could be manipulated to the Soviet Union's advantage.

Even if the SCP could not take over, or even partially dominate, the government, the Soviet Union probably believed that it could help move Syrian foreign and domestic policies in a pro-Soviet direction. Additionally, the communists could act as intermediaries between Damascus and Moscow, and they were useful for local intelligence-gathering purposes.³² Consequently, the communists were not dissolved and they soon became a factor in internal Syrian politics and Syrian-Soviet

³¹ See, "The Problems of the National-Liberation Movement of the Arab People," World Marxist Review 7, no. 9 (1964), p.60.

³² Even in Egypt after the Party was disbanded, individual communists often served as conduits between Brezhnev and Abd al-Nasir. (See, Heikal, The Sphinx and the Commissar, op. cit., p195.) Moreover, Brezhnev has as much as admitted that intermediation and intelligence gathering are standard policy with local communist parties. At the 26th Party Congress in 1981 he said: "We have regularly briefed fraternal Parties on our internal developments and our actions in the field of foreign policy....Contacts with foreign communist parties enable our Party, too, to get a better idea of the situation in individual countries." (Cited in Kitrinos, op. cit., p.55.) Bagdash has also stated that he not only supports the exchange of views, advice and analysis of new phenomena, but also of direct assistance between communist parties. FBIS-SOV, June 14, 1969, p.82.

relations.

Jadid's 1966 removal of the ban on communist activity, while pleasing to the Soviet Union, also exemplified the regime's problem: the February 1966 coup and Jadid's more radical policies split the leadership, the Ba'th Party, and to a lesser degree, the military, and further narrowed the regime's base of support. The regime's increasingly sectarian composition, secularist approach, and social radicalism alienated all segments of the Sunni majority (i.e., the urban middle class, former feudal land owners, and the religious leaders). Consequently, the regime became increasingly vulnerable, to a right-wing counter-coup.

Since the neo-Ba'th regime was conscious of its vulnerability, it made a special effort to remove "reactionary" elements from the armed forces. In a 1966 secret document, Jadid spoke of having to purge the army of its "bourgeois" elements in order to avoid a similar fate as befell "Ghana and Indonesia and other countries of the Third world."³³ The parallel to Soviet thinking at that time on the need for a "political army" is obvious (see, Chapter IV).

³³ Azmat al-Hizb wa Harakat 23 Shubat [The Party's Crisis and the 23 February Movement], translated as Appendix C, in Van Dam, op. cit., p.114.

At the November 1966 "Special Congress" of the Ba'th Party, Jadid raised the issue publicly and railed against

efforts to convert the army from an ideological army into a professional army, as is the case in some developing countries where such a professional army is used by capitalism and foreign monopolies to suppress progressive movements and to stifle the aspirations of the masses.³⁴

While the "ideological army" never quite developed in the manner Jadid envisaged, it did, in fact, and much to the Soviet Union's pleasure, become a significant instrument for social change, i.e., "transformation." As Vavilov noted, the Congress "...took the decision to clean the Party of bourgeois elements and turn it into a Party of the workers, peasants, and laboring intelligentsia."³⁵

Thus, there is a second contrast to the Soviet experience in Egypt. While the Egyptians, after the 1967 war, had to be coerced by the Soviet Union to "liquidate" its bourgeois and "rightist elements" from the armed forces, the Syrians, in 1966, were actively pursuing this option on their own. All considered, Syria was making significant progress in creating the preconditions for socialism and advancing along the non-capitalist path.³⁶

³⁴ Cited in Moshe Ma'oz, "Alawi Military Officers in Syrian Politics, 1966-1974," in H.Z. Schiffren (ed.), The Military and State in Modern Asia (Jerusalem: Academic Press, 1976), p.288.

³⁵ Vavilov, op. cit., 1972, p.99.

³⁶ FBIS-SOV, July 3, 1967, p.BB13.

Unfortunately for the Soviet Union, it may have been this optimistic appraisal of the prospects for a further (and, perhaps, spontaneous) left-ward shift in Syria³⁷ which caused it to miscalculate and thereby decisively contribute to the outbreak of the 1967 war. In the spring 1967, a new and more intense round of the struggle for power broke out in Syria. As noted above, the struggle was essentially occurring on two separate levels: the intra-elite and the inter-elite.

Although the September 1966 confrontation with Hatur ended with Jadid's position strengthened, Al-Assad also coveted the top post and began behaving accordingly. If this first, more traditional (intra-elite) power struggle with Al-Assad were insufficient to endanger Jadid, then there was also the inter-elite struggle with the Sunni majority which still had not been contained.³⁸ It was this dual struggle which gave the situation its precarious and dangerous nature.

The intra-Alawi (intra-elite) conflict came to a head in February, 1967. At that time, Al-Assad demanded that Jadid

³⁷ One observer even goes so far as to assert that the Soviet Union thought that Syria was on the "...threshold of becoming the first communist state in the Arab world..." Howard Sacher, Egypt and Israel, (New York: Richard Marek, 1981), p.141.

³⁸ See, Bar Simon-Tov, op. cit., p.157-159.

expel four Ba'th ministers (one of whom, he claimed, attempted to assassinate him) and two Communists (who he thought were too radical) from the government. While the intra-Ba'th situation reached a precarious equilibrium in April (Jadid agreed to block the further expansion of the S.C.P and to minimize Nasserite representation), popular resistance to the neo-Ba'th, led by the Damascene ulama, reached new heights in May.³⁹ Clearly, the regime was on the verge of being toppled; the only question was by whom.

It was at this point when the Soviet Union made the calamitous error of seeking to utilize Abd al-Nasir and an Israeli war scare to stabilize the situation (also see Chapter III). The Soviet Union must have hoped to utilize the false external threat to unify the Syrian government behind Jadid and save their pro-Soviet friend. Unfortunately, Moscow had little idea that it would end as it did. As a result of the war, the entire geopolitical dynamics of the region were altered.

As detailed in Chapter II, the 1967 defeat exacerbated the Soviet Union and Egypt's drift away from each other. Henceforth, it was clear that Egypt would no longer be the jewel in the Soviet Union's crown. And in looking for additional --or an alternative-- base for its southern tier operations, the Soviet Union had a choice between two

³⁹ Ibid., pp.156-158.

states: Syria and Iraq.

The choice between Syria and Iraq was (and often still is) not an easy one for the Soviet Union. Understandably, and if it can, the Soviet Union prefers to remain on good terms with both states, and to knit them into a mutually reinforcing pro-Soviet security network. But given the historical, ideological, and other differences between the two states, this is rarely possible. The Soviet Union's persistent attempt over the last thirty years to do so is remarkable. Thus, in the post-1967 war environment, it kept lines open to Cairo, Damascus, and Baghdad.

After the 1967 war, the defeat led to bitter recriminations between Syria's military faction, under Minister of Defense and Air Force Commander Al-Assad, and the civilian leadership under Jadid.⁴⁰ Besides the obvious recriminations over who bore responsibility for the defeat, the struggle crystallized around two opposite policy trends: radical and nationalist.

The socialist oriented, more radical, faction led by Jadid wanted to give top priority to a "socialist transformation" of Syria and supported a "progressive front" of Communists, Nasserites, and former Ba'th leaders. Consequently, it rejected cooperation with

⁴⁰ Bar Simon Tov, op. cit., p.162.

"reactionary," rightist regimes (such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq) --even at the expense of joint Arab struggle against Israel-- and was not adverse to increased dependence on the Soviet Union and the East Bloc.⁴¹

The more nationalist trend, led by Al-Assad, called for inter-Arab cooperation in order to end Syria's isolation (including rapprochement with Iraq) and to struggle against Israel. Consequently, it sought a more moderate domestic economic and social policy, and a more limited role for the Syrian communists, as well as the Soviet Union and East Bloc.

Al-Assad's wider personal network in the armed forces, and his control of the Air Force gave him a much stronger base of support than Jadid. Ever since Al-Assad had become Commander of the Air Force in 1964, he had utilized the office to appoint followers to key positions.⁴² Additionally, as a senior leader of the Ba'th Military Committee, Al-Assad was able to cultivate ties throughout the armed forces.

Jadid, on his part, attempted to gain control of the military by strengthening Ba'th Party loyalists within its ranks, and by restricting some of its prerogatives.

⁴¹ Van Dam, op.cit., p.84.

⁴² Van Dam, op. cit., p.82.

Consequently, Hafez al-Assad rallied the armed forces against civilian dominance by Jadid and the Ba'th Party, and emerged as the champion of military prerogatives.⁴³

It should be noted that, at this time, the Syrian Communist Party was not especially useful to Moscow. In fact, during 1968, it split (once again) into a pro-Moscow and a pro-Peking faction. And it was only with Jadid's assistance that the pro-Peking faction, led by Mouayed Fayad was suppressed.⁴⁴

By October 1968, matters had come to a head: Al-Assad had out manoeuvred Jadid by removing the (pro-Soviet) Prime Minister Yusif Zu'ayyin and Foreign Minister Ibrahim Makhus. While the full details of Al-Assad's failure to oust Jadid at that time are not known, there is some indication that the Soviet Union intervened to save Jadid.

Throughout the first two and a half years of the neo-Ba'th struggle, the Soviet Union had kept remarkably equidistant from each faction. But as Jadid came close to being ousted, the Soviet military apparently became increasingly nervous about the repercussions of such an event on its position in Syria.⁴⁵ Since the June 1967 war scare

⁴³ Ibid, p.87; Bar Simon-Tov, op. cit., pp.162-165.

⁴⁴ El-Rayyes, op. cit., p.154.

⁴⁵ See, Kass, op. cit., pp.134-137.

tactics already failed once, there were few options other than letting Jadid fall or intervening (politically).

While other Soviet institutions were probably slow in recognizing, and reacting to, Jadid's possible ouster, the March, 1968 Ba'th Congress (where Al-Assad gained effective control of Syria) seemed to have crystallized their opposition. According to an April 12, 1968, United Press International report, the Soviet ambassador to Syria had, at some earlier point, given Al-Assad a note threatening to cut off the arms supply, break diplomatic relations, and demand full repayment of Syrian debt unless he "made some act of loyalty to Moscow."⁴⁶

Whether it was Assad's weakness in the Ba'th Party organization or Soviet pressure which caused him to wait until September 1970 to oust Jadid completely may never be known. But while Jadid remained in power (and the Soviets were satisfied⁴⁷), Al-Assad let them know that there limits to how far they could push him; in May 1969, he sent a high ranking delegation to China.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Cited in Kass, op. cit., p.138; see also, Nyrop, op. cit., p.170.

⁴⁷ See, FBIS-SOV, April 14, 1969, p.A37.

⁴⁸ He did so again in May, 1972. Cited in Freedman, Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970, op. cit., p34.

Jadid's final loss of power came with a futile attempt in 1970 to demonstrate that he was more militant on the Palestinian question than Al-Assad. Accordingly, when King Hussein moved his forces against the rising Palestinian "state-within-a-state" in Jordan, Jadid ordered the Syrian Army and Sa'iqah (the Palestinian brigades under Syrian command) to invade Jordan and oppose Hussein. But Al-Assad withheld air support and the Jordanian forces repulsed the Syrian-P.L.O. attack. Consequently, with Jadid disgraced, he was removed from power and Al-Assad took over.⁴⁹

It is interesting that Al-Assad actions against Jadid revealed a political style which would soon become his hallmark: Al-Assad is a patient man who is willing to bide his time waiting for his enemies to weaken themselves or become vulnerable. Once this occurs, he vigorously and ruthlessly attacks his opponents.⁵⁰ While this modus operandi is not particularly heroic, it is cunning.

After gaining the dominant position, Al-Assad probably had some very specific policy aims: first, he must have wanted

⁴⁹ See, George Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), p.353.

⁵⁰ This was his policy against Israel and the United States in Lebanon, 1983-84; against the P.L.O., especially since 1983; and against the Sunni Muslims of Tripoli in 1985. Domestically, and besides the Jadid incident, Al-Assad also displayed this style in the 1982 massacre at Hama (see Chapter V.)

to maintain his own and Alawi control of the government. Second, he probably wanted to regain the Golan Heights (either by force of arms or by coercive diplomacy). And third, he wanted to end Syria's isolation in the Arab world and assume a more active leadership role in inter-Arab affairs.

The Initial Soviet Reaction to Al-Assad

To the Soviet Union, whether or not to support Al-Assad's first goal was both a matter of tactics, i.e., who could best serve immediate policy and political interests, and strategy, i.e., who, in the long run, would both assume proper domestic policies, and be most amenable to an expansion of the Soviet role in the region. The real test of the value of Al-Assad's and Alawi dominance of Syria (and thus the degree of conflicting or coincident Soviet and Syrian interests) could only be revealed by how Al-Assad's chose to consolidate his rule.

If Al-Assad chose to consolidate his rule in a manner which maintained the "anti-imperialist" foreign policy and the "progressive" domestic course, then the Soviets would be satisfied with him. But if he began repressing the communists, supporting the bourgeoisie, and approaching the United States, then the future direction of Syrian evolution would be clear. While Al-Assad's more moderate

foreign and domestic policies before taking over were not encouraging signs for the Soviets, his immediate reshuffling of the cabinet to include a second communist could only have reassured them.

Additionally, Al-Assad's --or any minority group member-- may have been a more preferable candidate for the Soviet Union because he is more vulnerable to internal pressure from the Sunni majority and may need more external assistance in keeping himself in power (i.e., the old [French and British] colonial trick of divide and conquer). Indeed, the Soviet Union seems to do best with local clients who are estranged from their own population and therefore need greater external support to stay in power.

The second goal, regaining the Golan Heights, was also important to the Soviet Union. (After all, a Soviet client with Soviet weapons was defeated by an American client with American arms.) There were, however, differences over how to regain the occupied territories, and especially over the role of any war plans. Thus, it was the same problem as with the first goals; there was a compatibility of ends, but the means could develop into an area of dispute.

The third goal, ending Syria's diplomatic isolation, most

closely approximated Soviet ends and means. The Soviet Union had long wanted Syria to make amends with Iraq and join forces with the rest of the Arab world in a struggle against Israel and the United States. The only danger for the Soviet Union was the possibility that Al-Assad would attempt to play Moscow off against Washington. The Soviet Union was attempting to consolidate its regional position by increasing contacts with individual states and creating more profound and enduring relations with local regimes. As long as Al-Assad maintained Arab unity on a "anti-imperialist basis," all would be well.

The Progressive National Front

With his assumption of full power in November 1970, Al-Assad must have immediately realized that, if he hoped to maintain power and give the country stability, he had to widen the government's base of support. Consequently, he embarked upon a policy of mending fences with a number of opposition groups. Since these groups included members of the left and right, this was both a good and bad policy from the Soviet perspective.

First, Al-Assad did not purge other political forces except for those closely identified with Jadid.⁵¹ He allowed the communists to remain in the government, and even Nasserites were no longer persecuted as severely.

⁵¹ See, Lenczowski, op. cit., p.354.

(With Abd al-Nasir's death in 1970, Al-Assad, and a good number of other Arab leaders, breathed a sigh of relief; the charismatic pan-Arabist was no longer able to interfere in their internal affairs with relative impunity.⁵²)

Second, in May 1971, Al-Assad began preparing for a "Progressive National Front" (PNF) of local parties. This (unity) organization included the Ba'th and Communist parties, the Socialist Union Movement, and the Syrian Arab Socialist Union.⁵³ The idea was to deflect opposition by giving these parties status and limited authority, but no real power. (Only the Ba'th Party, for example, would have the right to carry out political recruitment and propaganda in the armed forces and youth organizations.) By being more receptive to them, Al-Assad was attempting to gain their support, or at least neutralize their opposition.

The Soviet Union, however, saw the PNF, as one Soviet academic phrased it, as "a deepening of the mutual understanding between the Ba'th, the Syrian Communist Party, and other of the country's progressive forces."⁵⁴

⁵² See, Kerr, The Arab Cold War, op. cit., pp.17-18,85-91,102.

⁵³ Nyrop, op. cit., p.171.

⁵⁴ Gavriushenko, op. ct., p.227.

The Soviet Union, already aware of the increasing dangers in Egypt, wanted to see the Al-Assad regime create the widest possible class basis for its anti-imperialist policies.⁵⁵

Thus, Al-Assad's movement toward a national front of progressive forces in Syria actually predates the Soviet Union's official call for such a policy by almost a year and a half. The Soviet Union could not but be pleased. It was, however, clearly a case of coincident Syrian-Soviet interests, and not of Soviet influence over Al-Assad.

One of the most sensitive areas in the Soviet-Syrian relationship at that time was Syria's economic policies. In order for Al-Assad to consolidate his rule, he knew that he had to neutralize, if not placate, the Sunni urban middle class. Without their support, or at least acquiescence, Al-Assad would have found it increasingly difficult to govern. Consequently, he began to open up the economy by liberalizing state control of industry and encouraging the private sector.⁵⁶ Naturally, the Soviet Union would not be pleased by any attempt to move away from strict state control of the economy and foreign

⁵⁵ V.V. Vavilov, and I. Simantovskii, Sotsialno-ekonomichskie problemy razvivaiushchikhsia stran: Siria [The Socio-Economic Problems of Developing Countries: Syria] (Moscow: Mysl, 1975), p.34.

⁵⁶ See, Nyrop, op. cit., p.133.

trade.

Nonetheless, as it became clearer that Al-Assad policies were not going to dismantle the socialist economy⁵⁷ or move Syria closer to the United States, Soviet-Syrian relations began to improve. Moreover, the increasing Soviet trouble with Egypt increased Syria's value to the Soviet Union both as a counter-weight and as a less troublesome client. The Soviet Union's policy became increasingly receptive to Al-Assad. An interesting example of how Al-Assad and the Soviet Union were often able to work together for joint (internal) Syrian goals, is provided by the SCP's problems at this time.

In 1971, a number of SCP members (especially among the students) were opposed to working with Al-Assad. To them, Al-Assad represented the right-wing of the Ba'th and was a step backward. While Bagdash was able to overcome this dissent temporarily (and declare the Party's support for Al-Assad), the trouble surfaced more clearly early in the next year.⁵⁸

In April 1972, after Al-Assad fully legalized the Communist Party (which had been outlawed in 1958 and never

⁵⁷ Al-Assad did not privatize any of the nationalized companies, nor did he deviate substantially from centralized economic planning.

⁵⁸ El-Rayyes, op. cit., p.155-156.

given legal status in 1966), he invited them to join the National Progressive Front. The Party could not come to a decision on the issue and split into two factions, one headed by Riad Turk, the other by Bagdash.

The Turk dissident faction opposed joining because it only gave the SCP junior status (to the Ba'th) and limited its freedom of action.⁵⁹ Joining would mean giving up efforts for revolution in Syria, and accepting a largely formal role in governing. There were also serious disagreements over policy toward the Soviet Union, the Palestinian question and commando action, the formation of a single Arab communist party, and Arab union and organizational matters.⁶⁰

The Bagdash, pro-Soviet faction was much more moderate on the above issues. He (and the Soviets) believed that participation in the National Progressive Front would give the Party legitimacy and, increasingly, secure its position in the Syrian political spectrum. Additionally, with legal status and participation in the government, propaganda and other (limited) political activities would be much easier.

⁵⁹ See, "Special Documents --the Soviet Attitude to the Palestinian Problem" Journal of Palestinian Studies, vol. 2, no. 1, pp.187-212.

⁶⁰ Ibid.; El-Rayyes, op. cit., p.155.

The issue was precariously resolved when the Soviet Union summoned both sides to Moscow and forced the Riad faction to accept the Bagdash line on membership in the P.N.F. Thus, the Soviet Union established itself as a useful force for helping to protect Al-Assad from his own extreme left-wing.

In retrospect, it is clear that the SCP's attainment of legal status in Syria was considered a major, if not the major, Soviet accomplishment in internal Syrian affairs at that time. Communist movement specialist Iu. Gavriushchenko said that the right to operate legally and have the full protection of the law is "the most important achievement of the [Syrian Communist] Party."⁶¹

Clearly, Ulianovski's post-1972 "united front strategy" was the preferred policy in Syria. And with Al-Assad's need to widen his domestic base of support (and thus the formation of the N.P.F.), the Soviet policy preference of a united front had been realized. This coincidence of interest had significantly strengthened the Soviet position. As Vavilov, writing on Syria in 1972 described it:

The socio-economic process which has elapsed in Syria has prepared the ground for a further transformation of that country. The realization of this transformation is connected with the regrouping of those classes and political forces

⁶¹ Gavriushchenko, op. cit., p.235.

which objectively help to protect the transition toward a socialist society...

Here the main role called for the immediate construction of a national progressive front which joined the ruling Ba'th party with the Syrian Communist Party, and even a series of other revolutionary-democratic organs which came out for the non-capitalist path of development and the deepening of the socio-economic reconstruction of Syrian society.⁶²

Thus, the Soviet Union (or at least a good part of the academic establishment) viewed the N.P.F. as a reliable means for unifying Syria's "progressive" forces and maintaining the progressive course through a multiplication of their strength. Consequently, the center of the problem shifted, as Gavriushchenko noted, toward ways of "strengthening the progressive patriotic fronts in the countries which have chosen the non-capitalist path."⁶³ It is the successful "resolution" of this problem which will determine if the national-liberation revolution will "grow over [pererastanie] in the future to a socialist revolution."⁶⁴

The major point about the concept pererastanie, as Seweryn Bialer pointed out, is that it "...interjects into Soviet policy thinking a note of apprehension over lost opportunities once revolutionary turmoil is permitted to

⁶² Vavilov, op. cit., 1972, .p.229. (Emphasis added.)

⁶³ Gavriushchenko, Op. cit., p.236.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.236.

yield to a stable pattern, once the opportunity of pushing it to its ultimate socialist end has passed."⁶⁵ The utilization of this notion in regard to Syrian development signifies that (at least) Gavriushchenko believed that Syria was at a critical point, and that it could continue to transform itself into a socialist and revolutionary state, if the proper means were found to channel its social and political difficulties onto a socialist course of development. Thus, the events of the next several months and years would determine Syria's political and social orientation for the indefinite future.

Consequently, the Soviet Union gave special attention to Syria. That this critical juncture in its development coincided with the Soviet Union's own difficulties with Egypt only gave the Soviet Union added incentive to provide Syria with generous economic, military and political support. Thus, the Soviet Union began to gradually increase the amount of attention it gave to Syria, and to elevate of its role in Soviet Middle East policy.

In order to requite some of the Soviet Union's increasingly significant tenders, Al-Assad also began to be a bit more accommodative. In spite of his earlier

⁶⁵ Seweryn Bialer, Stalin's Successors (Cambridge University Press, 1980), p.272.

refusal to endorse U.N. Resolution 242 (although he was not in power when it was first turned down), for example, Al-Assad qualifiedly accepted it on March 8, 1972. Naturally, the Soviet Union was pleased.⁶⁶ Additionally, in drafting the new Syrian Constitution several months later, Assad proclaimed the Ba'th a "vanguard party in a Socialist state," and attempted (unsuccessfully) to secularize the document by removing the necessity for the president to swear allegiance to Allah.⁶⁷

After Sadat's independent policies (and especially the expulsion of Soviet advisors) made a continuation of Soviet policy toward Egypt impossible, a major Soviet drive to secure the Syrian connection developed. Whether the move toward Syria was meant to supplant or shore-up the Soviet position in Egypt is still a matter of debate.⁶⁸ But the evidence seems to indicate that the Soviet Union was far from ready to write off Egypt, and that the increased attention to Syria was intended both as insurance, and as a signal to Sadat that Moscow, when it

⁶⁶ When discussing the November 16, 1970 "corrective movement," Soviet analysts began to increasingly note that it "...widened the class and political base..." of the leadership. See, Vavilov, op. cit., 1972, p.105.

⁶⁷ Additionally, this same Constitution provided the President with emergency dictatorial powers (Article 113). See, Nyrop, op. cit., p.155,157.

⁶⁸ Cf. Golan, Yom Kippur and After, op. cit., p.28 with Moshe Ma'oz, Syria Under Hafez Al-Assad: New Domestic and Foreign Policies (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1976), p.22.

wants to, could be very generous with its friends. Either way, it did move vigorously to increase its influence with the Syrians (and the P.L.O.).⁶⁹

It was at this point that the Soviet Union stepped up contacts with the Al-Assad regime and began providing Syria with substantial amounts of military and economic assistance. It is interesting that in detailing the steps necessary for furthering Syria's progressive development, Gavriushchenko topped the list with the need to increase the effectiveness of Syria's armed forces.⁷⁰ Obviously, the first Soviet priority was to ensure that Israel did not destroy this promising situation.⁷¹

Accordingly, in July 1972, Al-Assad was invited to Moscow and given a lavish reception, a new arms agreement, and \$700 million in economic aid.⁷² Al-Assad even told Sadat that after the expulsion from Egypt the Soviet Union had so "showered" Syria with weapons that "...he could no longer find any space to store them and had been compelled

⁶⁹ Direct Soviet shipments of arms to the P.L.O. began in September, 1972. See, Golan, *ibid.*, pp.32,142.

⁷⁰ Gavriushchenko, *op. cit.*, p.237.

⁷¹ The second task was for Syria to continue developing the economy, especially by strengthening the state sector and increasing cooperation with the U.S.S.R. and "the countries of the Socialist fraternity." Gavriushchenko, *ibid.*

⁷² See, Golan, Yom Kippur and After, *op. cit.* p.29.

to use some of the schools as depots during the summer holidays."⁷³

By August, the number of Soviet advisors in Syria rose from 400-700, to approximately 3,000, and Soviet crews were enlarging Syria's ports and constructing new air fields.⁷⁴ (Indeed, it is highly probable that a good number of those Soviets sent Syria were previously stationed in Egypt.) Moreover, given the fact that Al-Assad expelled ten Soviet military specialist at the end of the summer (1972),⁷⁵ it is probable that the Soviet Union made an increased effort to permeate the military and decision-making structure.

In addition to this direct effort to consolidate its influence in Syria, the Soviet Union undertook a number of other actions after the expulsion from Egypt which affected Syria. Notably, it began a massive propaganda campaign to undo the damage caused by the rupture with Egypt which accorded Syria equal stature with Egypt in the "Arab liberation movement."⁷⁶ Additionally, it paralleled its switch to a "united front" strategy within each Arab

⁷³ Sadat, Those I Have Known, op. cit., p.68.

⁷⁴ Golan, *ibid.*, pp.29-30; and Golan, "Syria and the Soviet Union Since the Yom Kippur War," Orbis 21, no.4, p.777.

⁷⁵ Cited in Golan, "Syria and the Soviet Union Since the Yom Kippur War," op. cit., p.778.

⁷⁶ Vavilov, op. cit., p.226

country, with an attempt to create a united front of Syria, Iraq, the P.L.O. It was even rumored that Brezhnev himself sent Al-Assad a letter asking him to participate in such a front.⁷⁷

According to Moshe Ma'oz, it was after this extensive Soviet courting in the summer of 1972 that Al-Assad probably decided that "there was no substitute" for a strong Syrian-Soviet relationship:

...Assad may have become convinced that cultivation of special relations with the U.S.S.R. was essential to the security and development of Syria, to the strengthening of his regime, and to the realization of its ambition to regain the Golan heights from Israel.⁷⁸

Ma'oz' analysis is probably correct. But it should be emphasized that Al-Assad probably did not look upon this relationship as one which would necessarily endure. Regardless, after deciding to draw closer to the Soviets, Al-Assad was again eager to reciprocate the attention--and to avoid a similar situation as occurred in Egypt. Consequently, he purged thirty "anti-Soviet" officers from the military.⁷⁹ If Egypt would not cooperate, at least Syria would.

⁷⁷ Golan, Yom Kippur and After, op. cit., p.29.

⁷⁸ Ma'oz, Syria Under Hafez Al-Assad, op. cit., p.21.

⁷⁹ Golan, Yom Kippur and After, op. cit., pp.29-30.

While Al-Assad was increasingly cooperative on issues of mutual interest, it is likely that the Soviet Union was far from giving Syria primary attention. In spite of the lavish receptions and the generous aid, the Soviet Union did not think it necessary, for example, to assign a top-quality diplomat to Damascus. According to Arkady Shevchenko, Soviet Ambassador Nuridin Mukhitdinov was a disgraced Central Committee member who was notorious for "inventing things" and was not trusted by the top Soviet leadership.⁸⁰ (Perhaps there was a trade-off between finding a competent ambassador and one who was both a loyal communist and a Muslim?)

Clearly, if Syria were such a crucial state, then they probably would have placed a more reliable person in Damascus. As it was, after Mukhitdinov reported the date of the impending 1973 war --as told to him by Al-Assad several days before the attack-- not only did the Soviet leadership have doubts about Al-Assad's veracity, but also of Mukhitdinov's reliability!⁸¹

In examining Al-Assad's relationship with the Soviet Union during his first three years as president, it is clear that there was never any question of the Soviet Union exercising inordinate influence over the Syrian leader or

⁸⁰ Shevchenko, op. cit., p.254.

⁸¹ Ibid.

the senior decision-makers. As detailed above, all significant (pro-Soviet) policy changes on the part of Syria were either a result of Syria's own self-interest, or a calculated quid pro quo on the part of Al-Assad.

The October 1973 War and its Aftermath

While the October 1973 War was a limited success for Syria, it also exposed the strains in the Soviet-Syrian relationship. As noted in Chapter III, during the war Al-Assad attempted to force a cease fire on Israel (and Egypt) by manipulating the good offices of the Soviet Union. Given the difficulties this episode engendered between Moscow and Cairo, it was not likely that the Soviets appreciated Al-Assad's ploy. Moreover, the Soviet Union would have much preferred to avoid the war option and the (near nuclear) confrontation with the United States.

From the Syrian perspective, Al-Assad was not very pleased with the Soviet Union either.⁸² The Soviet Union could not effect a cease-fire when Al-Assad wanted it (i.e., during the first few days when Syria controlled all the pre-1967 Syrian territory), and it acceded to one when Syria did

⁸² His failure to thank the Soviet Union for its support, in either his October 15 or 29, 1973 speeches, could only have been interpreted as an affront to the Soviet Union. See, FBIS-MEA, October 17, 1973, p.F3 and October 29, 1973. p.F1-6.

not want one (i.e., after Israel had regained the territory and before Arab reinforcements to Syria could resume the offensive).⁸³ Moreover, there were serious questions about the Soviet resupply effort.⁸⁴ Consequently, the Soviet Union had proven itself a less than ideal extra-regional partner.

Since Al-Assad was disappointed with Soviet policy during the war (and since the Soviet Union could not deal directly with Israel), he began to deal with the United States for effecting a disengagement. Al-Assad was able to snub his nose at the Soviet Union because his internal and external situation had improved markedly since November 1970.

Domestically, the war marked the beginning of a new, more secure era for the Al-Assad regime. In spite of the fact that Syria had failed to regain the Golan Heights (and in spite of the tremendous war damage), Syria demonstrated to Israel (and the world) that it was a state to be reckoned with. The quasi-victory increased Al-Assad's popularity (he had already been popular because of the P.N.F. and the economic reforms), and elevated him to the ranks of the

⁸³ See, Shazli, op. cit., p.267-270.

⁸⁴ Moshe Dayan, for example, reported that Israel began to advance on the Golan after the Syrians ran out of SA-6 missiles on October 9, 1973. For this and other details see, Glassman, op. cit., p.129.

Middle East's key statesmen (e.g., Sadat, King Faisal, etc.). The Syrian public seemed to approve of Al-Assad's foreign policy and the manner in which he conducted himself with other leaders.⁸⁵

Just as the situation improved for the Al-Assad regime at home, so too did it abroad. The war had left Israel deeply battered and its self-confidence shaken. Iraq, partially due to U.S.-Iranian efforts, was increasingly pre-occupied with its Kurdish problem (and therefore had less energy to devote to harassing Syria). And the Soviet Union, increasingly alarmed by Sadat's meetings with Henry Kissinger, was left mainly with Syria to counteract the Egyptian rapprochement with the United States. Thus, two of Syria's three powerful neighbors were seriously weakened and introspective (the third, Turkey was also preoccupied with its own internal and external problems), and its extra-regional partner was increasingly dependent on it. Clearly, Al-Assad had a very strong hand.

With both of its major Middle East clients (Egypt and Syria) negotiating with its adversary, the Soviet Union was left in an unenviable position in late 1973 and early 1974. If it reacted too vigorously, it could risk its entire regional position. Hence, it probably preferred a

⁸⁵ Adeed Dawisha, Syria and the Lebanon Crisis (London: Macmillan, 1980), p.49.

low-keyed approach to the Egyptians. Indeed, it was not until Sadat's increasingly public attacks on the Soviet Union forced the issue to a head that the Soviet Union responded by trading recriminations and cutting off Egypt's arms flow.

To once again drive home to Sadat that the Soviet Union could be generous with its friends --and to shore up the relationship with Al-Assad-- the Soviet Union began giving Syria increasing military and economic aid (e.g., the ostentatious April 1974 delivery of Mig 23's, and the twelve year debt moratorium⁸⁶). By one estimate, the Syrian share of new Soviet aid offers to Third World countries rose by almost 50% between 1974 and 1975 alone.⁸⁷ But Assad was not going to be so easily bought off.

With Al-Assad's increasing security at home, and with the Soviet Union at a comfortable distance, Al-Assad made the momentous decision to cooperate with Henry Kissinger. By the spring 1974, as William Quandt noted, Al-Assad was "obliquely" signaling that he wanted to cool down the situation on the Israeli-Syrian boarder, and that he

⁸⁶ New York Times, April 17, 1974, p.13; November 29, 1974, p.10.

⁸⁷ Cited in Dina Spechler, "The Middle East: Problems, Policies, and Prospective Trends," in Ro'i, The Limits to Power, op.cit., p.343.

wanted the Soviet Union kept out of any such negotiations.⁸⁸ After Kissinger consummated the Disengagement Agreement in May 1974, Soviet-Syrian tension increased.

The Soviet Union warned Syria to "distinguish between friend and foe," recalled eighty economic advisors from Syria,⁸⁹ and became increasingly involved with the P.L.O.⁹⁰ It did not however, close the channels of communication between Damascus and Moscow, nor did it (as it did to Egypt) reverse its military and economic aid policy.

In examining this period, it is obvious that the Soviet Union was not pleased by Syrian cooperation with the U.S., its exclusion from the negotiations in Damascus, or Al-Assad refusal to go to Geneva earlier in 1974. It is interesting that at this time the Soviet Union even had difficulty keeping the SCP in favor of going to Geneva. Once again, the Party split over the Soviet Union's more moderate attempts to convene an international

⁸⁸ Quandt, op. cit., p.237.

⁸⁹ Galia Golan, "The Soviet Union and Syria Since the Yom Kippur War, op. cit., p.787.

⁹⁰ As Heikal noted, while the P.L.O. was not even a poor substitute for the pre-1972 relationship with Egypt, "...it might at least provide them the power of veto over what went on..." in the region. Heikal, The Sphinx and the Commissar, op. cit., p.269.

conference.⁹¹

When discussing the United States' role in this process, Soviet academic Rostislov V. Borisov summed up America's "unchanging" objectives and strategy toward Syria in the 1970's, as follows:

Washington, above all, strives to place in power in Damascus a pro-Western regime to disturb the H. Assad government's course of strengthening the political and economic independence of the country and the development of relations with the U.S.S.R., and to undermine the government's carrying out its political struggle against imperialism, Zionism, and colonialism.⁹²

According to Borisov, the U.S. attempted (and still attempts) to over-turn the Al-Assad regime by catering to Syrian bourgeois circles (e.g., using aid to bribe them), and through more physically coercive tactics (e.g., sending the Israelis in to attack and cooperating with the Muslim Brotherhood).⁹³

In the year and a half following the October war, it was again clear that the Soviet Union was much more accommodative to Syria than vice-versa. Al-Assad perceived a number of core interests which compelled him

⁹¹ Golan, "Syria and the Soviet Union Since the Yom Kippur War," op. cit., p.786.

⁹² R.V. Borisov, SShA: Blizhnevostochnaia politika v 70-e gody [USA: Middle East Policy in the 70's] (Moscow: Nauka, 1982), p.74.

⁹³ Ibid.

to pursue, from the Soviet perspective, less than ideal policies. But the Soviet Union was not allowed to stand in the way of this effort. If the Soviet Union wanted to keep its position in Syria, it could protest diplomatically, but it could not interfere in any crucial way with Assad's limited reconciliation with the United States.

But in examining the U.S.-Syrian rapprochement, the Soviet Union probably realized that it had less to fear from Al-Assad's policies than Sadat's. There were differences between the situation in Syria and in Egypt, and especially between Al-Assad and Sadat.

To begin with, Syria did not have as desperate an economic interest in switching patrons; the Soviet Union was rather generous in the post war days, and Syria never suffered to the same degree from the war burden as did Egypt. And Syrian economic policy was increasingly predicated upon the Soviet connection, and there was no public manifestation of turning away from it.

Second, the years of neo-Ba'th, and then Al-Assad's own, closer control of "reactionary" elements in the Syrian armed forces and economy indicated that Syria would not experience (as did Egypt) a groundswell of anti-Sovietism and anti-communism. One Soviet academic even described the

Syrian armed forces, not only as "socially progressive," but also as the "personification" of the revolutionary forces.⁹⁴ The Russians may have been hated in Syria, but it did not seem to have reached the same heights as in Egypt.

Third, Syria was not as powerful or important as Egypt, and Al-Assad (at that time), seemed to realize that there were definite limits to his ability to act independently. It would have been quite risky (perhaps even suicidal) to get ahead of Egypt on this issue and openly join forces with the United States and Israel. Al-Assad probably viewed the encounter as a limited diplomatic opportunity to regain as much of the Golan Heights as possible. While the United States had the power to help him achieve what Soviet weaponry could not, it would have been domestically difficult, if not impossible, for Al-Assad (at that time) to consider switching patrons. His regime was still so fractured that removal of the anti-Zionist, anti-imperialist plank might very well have destroyed the regime.⁹⁵

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, Al-Assad did not share Sadat's deepening, almost pathological hatred for

⁹⁴ Sevortian, op. cit., p.98.

⁹⁵ See, Adjami, op. cit., p.101.

the Soviet leadership.⁹⁶ Thus, the key distinction between the two was that Al-Assad did not seem to be interested in ousting the Soviet Union completely from the region; Sadat was. For Al-Assad, the emerging lesson of Sadat's experience with the Soviet Union and the United States, was to never completely align your state with either superpower. Accordingly, Syria's interests would best be served by working closely with that superpower which best protected its interests at that moment --without completely turning away from the other.

In spite of the fact that the Soviet Union's relations with Syria were frustrating and often difficult, it continued to pursue a minimal policy of keeping the lines to Damascus open and underwriting Syria's military and economic policies. (The Soviets even accepted 600 Syrian pilots for training in the Soviet Union in February 1975.⁹⁷) The point was to wait for circumstance to prove more favorable to Soviet efforts.

As the year progressed, Syria's vulnerability vis-a-vis its neighbors began to increase, and it looked

⁹⁶ Al-Assad's earlier experiences of being wined and dined in the Soviet Union contrast starkly with the Soviet slights to Sadat in the 1960's. Moreover, it would be difficult to imagine a more brutal "diplomatic" experience with the Soviets than the one Sadat went through.

⁹⁷ Cited in Murphy, op. cit.; also New York Times, February 8, 1975.

increasingly likely that some additional pro-Soviet accommodations would have to be made. Specifically, there were two events in 1975 which seriously increased the Al-Assad regime's vulnerability: the Iran-Iraq reconciliation, and the Egyptian-American reconciliation.

On March 6, 1975 Iran and Iraq signed the Pact of Algiers. Besides adjudicating the Shatt al-Arab territorial dispute and ending direct Iran-Iraq tension, the Pact of Algiers also ended Iranian support for the Kurdish insurgency in Iraq, and thus freed Iraqi military forces and diplomatic attention for other problems. Given the traditional ideological conflict, the mounting Euphrates water dispute, as well as other problems such as Syrian support for Kuwait, tension between Syria and Iraq increased.

Moreover, increasing oil income was providing Iraq with additional incentive to distance itself from the Soviet Union. Increasing petroleum wealth made Iraq less dependent on the Soviet Union for military and economic aid, and more interested in trade with the West.

The importance of Iraq (and especially the Kurdish problem) is often under-appreciated. In geopolitical terms, there is a clear, inverse relationship between Iraq's strength and good relations with Syria. When Iraq is strong it is usually hostile toward Syria; when it is

weak or preoccupied, it is less antagonistic. The only time this antagonism is moderated is when Iraq is too weak to maintain it, or when some exceptional danger brings the two countries into temporary alliance (e.g., the October 1973 war against Israel, and the anti-Egypt coalition in September 1975 and November 1978).

These interludes of harmony, however, never last. As soon as the danger recedes or Iraq regains its strength, Syria once again feels threatened. And so it was in 1975, when Iraq was able to turn its attention toward Syria. Iraq was increasingly powerful and relations deteriorated between Baghdad and Damascus. The conflict came to a climax over the newly opened Syrian dam on the Euphrates and downstream water rights. Iraq went so far as to mass troops on Syria's boarder and threaten war.⁹⁸

The second major factor weakening Assad during 1975 was the increasing Egyptian reconciliation with the United States and Israel. Al-Assad's brief flirtation with the U.S. came to an abrupt end with Egypt's signing of the Sinai II Disengagement Agreement in September, 1975. Not only did Syrian perceptions of Egypt "radically change,"⁹⁹

⁹⁸ The dispute was defused temporarily by Saudi Arabian mediation and Syria's agreeing to release more water. See, Nyrop, op. cit., p.206-7.

⁹⁹ Adeed Dawisha, Syria and the Lebanese Crisis, (London: MacMillan, 1980), p.76.

but also of the United States. Al-Assad could not contenance a policy of Arab "division."

The Egyptian-American/Israeli rapprochement left Syria as the primary antagonist to an increasingly powerful Israel. With Syria isolated from a larger Arab coalition, it was unlikely that Israel would (will) ever meet Al-Assad's demands for direct Israeli-P.L.O. negotiations and P.L.O. "self-determination," and the return of Jerusalem.

It should also be noted Al-Assad's partial rapprochement with the West, and the United States in particular, was beginning to generate domestic opposition. During 1974 and 1975, the Syrian Communist Party experienced a bitter split over the rapprochement with the West. Moreover, the division was not between those opposed to the policies and those in favor, but between those violently opposed to the policy (the radicals) and those more moderately (and diplomatically) opposed to the policy. In either case, Al-Assad was in trouble.

A group calling itself the "Arab Communist Organization" split from SCP and began terrorist attacks inside Syria. Al-Assad was able to suppress the group only after numerous arrests. Fourteen were tried, and several executed.¹⁰⁰ But the trouble with the communists did not

¹⁰⁰ Nyrop, op. cit., p.208.

end there. The S.C.P., led by Bagdash, began to denounce and agitate against the rapprochement policy. Al-Assad was able to control them only after he arrested 300 party members.¹⁰¹

Given the fact that the second of these disturbances involved Bagdash, it seems likely that they were undertaken with Moscow's consent, if not instigation. The point could not be lost on Al-Assad that the Soviet Union did have at least a nuisance value to him domestically. It could encourage the SCP to agitate against his policies, and it could have the SCP look the other way when more radical leftist groups carried out terrorists actions.

Although the year came to an end with Al-Assad still refusing to sign the Friendship Treaty,¹⁰² Soviet-Syrian relations deteriorated further before they improved.¹⁰³ The crisis came over Syrian policy in Lebanon and toward the P.L.O.

¹⁰¹ New York Times, December 26, 1975, p.5.

¹⁰² Cited in Golan, " Syria and the Soviet Union Since the Yom Kippur War," op. cit., p.791.

¹⁰³ After Secretary General Brezhnev's 25th Party Congress speech (February 1976) called for preferential treatment of states adopting socialist forms of internal organization, Al-Assad could not have had any illusions about which way the Soviet Union hoped Syria to develop.

The Notion of Greater Syria and Lebanon 1976

Although Syria since the 1920's has had irredentist claims on Lebanon, Hafez Al-Assad's (and the early Ba'th Party's) notion of "greater Syria" as a coherent political (as opposed to territorial) entity ruled from Damascus has questionable historical basis. Territorially, "greater Syria" includes the area from the Mediterranean (in the West), to the Tigris and Euphrates (in the east), and from the Tarsus Mountains (in the north), to the Sinai Desert (in the south). Thus, it encompasses what is now Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Israel, as well as part of Turkey.

But politically, and in spite of the fact that Damascus may have occasionally served as the administrative center of an Ottoman province, this area has rarely been united politically. As Adam Garfinkle has stated the area:

"has rarely been administered or ruled together and it was ruled as one from Damascus only once, and that was for but nine decades over 1200 years. What stands out about Arab rule in Syria today is that it is uncharacteristic historically within any borders whatsoever."¹⁰⁴

Additionally, the claims of greater Syria just as often emanated from Amman and Baghdad and endangered Damascus' sovereignty. Thus, greater Syria opens up a host of bilateral regional conflicts between Syria and her

¹⁰⁴ Garfinkle, op. cit., p.7.

neighbors and can just as often be used against Damascus as by it.¹⁰⁵

Regardless, Al-Assad and some Syrians still believe in the concept and have hopes of gaining at least part of this territory, especially Lebanon. Diplomatic niceties (such as exchanging ambassadors) have never been observed between Beirut and Damascus, and Syria has always (correctly) felt that Lebanon was taken away from it by the French in the 1920's and given to the Christians.

Moreover, as Lebanon began to deteriorate after 1970 and finally erupted into civil war in 1975, Syrian interests became deeply threatened. Ironically, when Al-Assad did interve (on May 31, 1976 -as Soviet Premier Kosygin was en route to Damascus), he did so on the Christian side. By supporting the losing side, Syria applied a divide and rule policy so as to increase its own influence.

The situation must have been very clear to Al-Assad: if the left-wing Muslim and P.L.O. forces were victorious, Lebanon would either become a state more radical than Syria and vulnerable to excessive Iraqi, Libyan or perhaps even Soviet influence, or, more likely, it would precipitate Israeli intervention, occupation and the re-establishment of a Lebanon along pro-Israeli, anti-Syrian

¹⁰⁵ See, Lenczowski, op. cit., pp.327-329.

lines.¹⁰⁶ In intervening on behalf of the Christian forces, Al-Assad created a massive international crisis involving both superpowers, all of the Arab world and Israel, and a major internal crisis.

The intervention led to mounting unrest within Syria itself and created a bitter internal crisis. Not only was Syria's Sunni majority strongly opposed to intervening on the Christian side, but so were segments of the armed forces and the Ba'th Party. Al-Assad even had to arrest 300-400 persons, mainly from these institutions.¹⁰⁷ Nor did Bagdash and the Communist Party cooperate.

Supporting the Soviet line, they denounced the intervention. While the threat to the regime from the Communists at that time was minimal, it certainly did not make matters easier for Al-Assad.¹⁰⁸ Understandably, there was increasing concern over the nature and extent of mass support for the regime.

Ironically, on the international scene, Al-Assad was tacitly backed by the United States and Israel, and opposed by the Soviet Union and most of the Arab world.

¹⁰⁶For details and analysis see, Adeed Dawisha, op. cit.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p.112.

¹⁰⁸ According to Adeed Dawisha, Al-Assad simply excluded them from his "extensive" consultation process, and effectively removed them from any part in governing. Ibid., op. cit., p.62.

Egypt, for example, expelled Syria's diplomats and transported thousands of Iraqi troops to fight in Lebanon against the Syrian-Christian forces. The Arab world, with the exception of Jordan, completely aligned itself against Syria.¹⁰⁹

Within days of the intervention, the Soviet Union began direct and strenuous criticism of the Syrian role. Izvestiia (and presumably the less ideological segments of Soviet society) seemed to be a little less critical of the intervention.¹¹⁰ But the Soviet Union soon began officially requesting that Al-Assad withdraw Syrian forces from Lebanon.¹¹¹

All considered, the Soviet Union and Syria have a considerable conflict of interest in Lebanon. Syria wants to rid itself of the chaos on its western boarder and absorb Lebanon for geopolitical and historical reasons. The Soviet Union, for traditional reasons of balance of power and opportunism, wanted Lebanon to remain independent and to become a bastion of Soviet influence. (Additionally, an enlarged Syria-Lebanese state would seriously disrupt the regional military balance of power

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.151-152; Nyrop, op. cit., p.173.

¹¹⁰ Golan, "Syrian and the Soviet Union Since the Yom Kippur War," op. cit., p.797.

¹¹¹ New York Times August 30, 1976, p.3; September 7, 1976, p.9; October 2, 1976, p.4; October 12, 1976, p.11.

and precipitate a radical acceleration of the Syrian-Israeli arms race which the Soviet Union does not want. See Chapter VII.) The only time when the Soviet Union would probably fully support Syrian ambitions in Lebanon is if the only alternative was a rabidly anti-Soviet state which was being utilized as a Western military outpost.

The Soviet Union's decision to oppose Al-Assad in 1976 was probably based on a number of specific factors. First as a strategic prize, Lebanon had a great deal to offer the Soviet Union. At the time (i.e., before the Soviet Union finished modernizing Latakia and Tartus), Lebanon's port facilities were better than Syria's. Had the Soviet Union been able to gain access to these ports, especially after the recent loss of facilities in Egypt, it would have been a major strategic coup.

Second, it is highly probable that the Soviets leadership thought Al-Assad would back down under pressure. The Soviet Union had to know that Al-Assad's internal and external position was weak. While in retrospect it is taken for granted that Al-Assad would not reverse policy because he perceived a core interest in thwarting a PLO-left-wing Muslim take-over, at that moment it was not at all clear.

Third, Lebanon's internal weakness makes it more

vulnerable to Soviet penetration efforts (i.e., it is closer to the South Yemen situation than the Egyptian). And if they could acquired a presence, it would allowed them to lessen there dependence on the mercurial Al-Assad.

The Soviet leadership probably believed that the Lebanese civil war could create conditions for a radical, pro-Soviet, regime in Lebanon. The strength of the indigenous left-wing forces was large and growing, and had it not been for the Syrian intervention it is quite probable that some type of left-wing, pro-Soviet victory would have occurred.

Soviet influence with the P.L.O. (a major belligerent in Lebanon) was growing, the Lebanese communists, while never very large, were well organized, and the Christians were disunited.¹¹² The Soviet leadership might very well have believed that their patient and increasingly attentive attitude toward Lebanon was about to be rewarded.

In September 1974, for example, the Soviet Union sent Alexander A. Soldatov to Lebanon as their ambassador. Soldatov is believed to be a career Soviet intelligence

¹¹² See, Galia Golan, The Soviet Union and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (New York Praeger, 1980); and Fredrick F. Staar, International Yearbook of Communist Affairs, 1977 (Stanford: Hoover Institute, 1978), p.529.

officer who as Ambassador to Cuba in the late 1960's is credited with a key role in containing Fidel Castro's wander-lust and in bringing Cuban intelligence (D.G.I.) under direct Soviet control.¹¹³

Finally, after examining Soviet academic writings on Syria in the middle of the decade, it is clear that the few specialists published were enthusiastic about Syrian internal developments. Indeed, these writings exuded a confident optimism. Perhaps it was a temporary return of this optimism about Syria which caused the Soviet leadership to misjudge the true nature of Al-Assad's intentions and capabilities.

While there was concern over "reactionary" penetration of the Ba'th and the need to be "sufficiently strict in the selection of party members," there was still the feeling that Syria would continue to experience "further radicalization," and not a "rebirth of bourgeois participation in the revolutionary-democratic leadership."¹¹⁴ Similarly, the economic liberalization of the early 1970's was dismissed as necessary "maneuvers" to "mobilize and concentrate" the financial possibilities of

¹¹³ New York Times Magazine November 2, 1980, p.51.

¹¹⁴ Sevortian, op. cit., pp.105,111. Interestingly, after making the above observations, Sevortian repeatedly compared Syria's progressive trend of development with Burma's non-capitalist development. Ibid., p.115.

the private sector, "...within the limits of the general government program of development."¹¹⁵ As long as the state sector continued to expand at a faster rate, they seemed satisfied.

While the battle against the feudal landowners was not finished, the government's effort to continue with land reform and the expansion of cooperatives, and even "machine tractor stations," was increasing.¹¹⁶ Similarly with foreign trade, Syrian imports from the West were acceptable because they are "limited to products which are necessary for economic development " and cannot be manufactured because of the "Israeli aggression."¹¹⁷

All told, Vavilov was very satisfied with Soviet-Syrian economic cooperation. Syria's primary loan and credit relations are "with the socialist camp" and :

The assistance of the socialist countries has had a great significance, not only for the guarantying of the highest rate of economic development, but it renders a definite influence on the character of the socio-economic transformation in Syria, promoting the growth of the state sector of the economy and significantly strengthening the economic function of the state in the structural rebuilding of the national economy and society.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Vavilov and Simantovskii, op. cit., 1975, p.55.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp.69-77.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p.105.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p.115.

Given what seemed to be a positive Soviet evaluation of the situation in Syria and the seemingly entrenched position of the "progressive" course, perhaps the Soviet leadership thought that Al-Assad could not forsake the Soviet connection. Clearly, Syria's ability to distance itself from Soviet Union seems to be limited by its own ideological self-image and by its revisionist foreign policy.¹¹⁹ A temporary U.S.-Syrian coincidence of interest in Lebanon could not fully eclipse Syria's anti-Zionist, anti-Western orientation.

The Soviet leadership must have gambled that cancelling weapons transfers to Syria (which it did between June 1976 until April 1977) and a diplomatic and propaganda campaign against Syrian action in Lebanon would coerce Al-Assad to withdraw.¹²⁰

A further factor which probably prodded the Soviet leadership to oppose Al-Assad on this issue was that the Soviet Union's overall regional situation, with the major exception of Egypt, was not that bad. It did not have to cater solely to Syria. Relations with Iraq were only

¹¹⁹ See, Galia Golan and Itmar Rabinovitch, "The Soviet Union and Syria: The Limits of Cooperation," in Yacoov Ro'i (ed.), The Limits To Power: Soviet Policy in the Middle East (London: Croon Helms, 1979), p.228.

¹²⁰ For details of the arms cut-off and propaganda campaign see, Adeed Dawisha, op. cit., pp.107,137; and the International Herald Tribune, October 3, 1977.

beginning to deteriorate; the aftermath of the Arab oil embargo (e.g., the continuing oil shortage) poisoned U.S.-Arab relations; the Second Sinai Disengagement Agreement between Egypt and Israel further increased anti-American sentiment; and the Soviet Union had just scored a masterful triumph by switching sides in the Somali-Ethiopian war.

Unfortunately for the Soviet Union, Al-Assad was determined to uphold Syria's perceived vital interests in Lebanon. Additionally, being aware of the Soviet Union's own geopolitical designs on Lebanon, he was, first, determined to deny them such a position because it would necessarily come at Syria's expense, and second, further irritated by the Soviet attempt to cloak these ambitions in the ideological terms of providing Lebanon with the option of establishing a progressive regime.¹²¹ It seemed that Assad was especially unhappy with Soviet opposition because he believed that his, and the Syrian elite's, "...long association with the Soviet leaders should have resulted in a more sympathetic perceptions of Syrian intentions and behavior."¹²²

Consequently, Al-Assad continued the Lebanon intervention

¹²¹ Adeed Dawisha, *ibid.*, p.148.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p.107; For the details of Al-Assad's resentment see, Events (London), October 1, 1976, p.20.

(even tacitly cooperating with the Israelis¹²³), and retaliated by ordering several thousand Soviet advisors to leave Syria, (temporarily) discontinuing Syria's own program of sending Syrians to the Soviet Union for training, and reportedly, threatening to terminate Soviet privileges at Latakia and Banias.¹²⁴

The end to the crisis finally came when the Christian forces had been saved and the Saudis mediated a (temporary) halt in the fighting. Thus, it was only the dissipation of the need for vigorous Syrian action in Lebanon that allowed the relationship to recover. Moreover, it was clear that neither side had convinced the other of the benefits of its position on the Lebanon and P.L.O. issue(s).

While in the end the Soviet Union was more accommodative to Syrian core interests than vice-versa (after all the Soviet Union could have more actively intervened by supplying weapons to the P.L.O. and Muslim left, and by cooperating more closely with those Arab states opposing Syria), it is clear, in spite of the fact that relations

¹²³ See, Ze'ev Shiff and Ehud Ya'ari, Israel's Lebanon War (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), pp.19-20.

¹²⁴ Roger F. Pajak, "Soviet Arms Aid in the Middle East Since the October War," in The Political Economy of the Middle East, Joint Economic Committee, United States Congress, (Washington, D.C.:U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980), p.480.

became more cordial by mid 1978, that the difference of opinion on the subject was not resolved. Both sides, more or less, agreed to disagree on the Lebanon and P.L.O. issue, with the proviso that Moscow would not too strenuously oppose Syrian efforts in Lebanon.¹²⁵

While the major factors affecting Soviet-Syrian relations vis-a-vis Lebanon are thus largely out of either state's control, the Soviet Union does seem to have decided to continue pursuing an independent Lebanon policy which attempts to by-pass, if not under-cut, the Syrian position.

The Lebanese crisis had severely tested the Soviet-Syrian relationship. Clearly, it revealed the limits of Soviet influence over the Al-Assad regime, as well as Al-Assad's desire to maintain his independence. The Soviet gamble not only failed to win policy acquiescence from Al-Assad, but it also undermined the confidence of each state's decision-makers in the other.

But what it also demonstrated, and what was not clear at the time, was that the Lebanese intervention was most likely the beginning of a decline in the Al-Assad regime's

¹²⁵ To this researcher, this was the real significance of Brezhnev's first public meeting with Yasir Arafat in April 1977. See, New York Times, April 8, 1977, p.8.

ability to manage its own internal affairs. This was less obvious at the time because Al-Assad came out of the 1976-77 crisis stronger than he went in: he gained control of Lebanon and was on his way to becoming the arbitrator of its government; his individual status as "rational and pragmatic, yet decisive and authoritative" leader of the Arab world was enhanced¹²⁶; and Saudi and Kuwaiti economic aid restart strengthening the economy.

But the Lebanese affair also has reignited sectarian and religious strife in Syria; it has absorbed vast sums of money which weakened the economy; it has forced tens of thousands of Syrians to serve in Lebanon which has weakened the armed forces readiness and morale.

¹²⁶ Added Dawisha, op. cit., p.186.

Chapter VI

Increased Vulnerability and the Revised Accommodation

During the late 1970's, a number of internal and external developments further weakened the position of the Al-Assad regime. Internally, there was major deterioration in the economy, serious and repeated outbreaks of intra-Alawi strife, and increasingly affective opposition by the Islamic resistance, and especially the Muslim Brotherhood. These internal problems were compounded by external problems which further de-stabilized and isolated the Al-Assad regime. As a result of this internal and external weakness, the Soviet Union was able to revise the post-1976 modus vivendi, and arrange more accommodative terms by the turn of the decade.

The Economic and Social Situation in Syria in the Early and Mid 1970's

After examining the major economic and social indices, it is clear that the Al-Assad reign has given Syria a significant degree of economic and social progress. But it is also clear that this progress was based upon an untenable strategy of rigid state control of the economy, and foreign grants and debt. By the end of the 1970's, Syria's economic situation began to deteriorate rapidly.

While Al-Assad was able to stave-off the impending collapse

by obtaining aid from the Gulf states and borrowing heavily from international lending agencies and a few banks, the crisis finally came in 1980. Moreover, while the grants and debt strategy cushioned and delayed the impact of the crisis, it made its later onset (and return in 1982) that much worse.¹

For most of Syria's population, economic existence throughout the early 1970's was never particularly easy. But unless one were the poorest of the poor, or ironically, worked for the economic ministries or were a businessman, economic life was difficult, but not intolerable. Al-Assad halted, if not reversed, a secular decline in the Syrian economy, he fundamentally transformed the state sector, and vastly improved the living conditions of most Syrians.

Between 1972 and 1980, Syrian industrial production almost doubled,² and the percentage of the labor force employed in agriculture was reduced from 52.5% in 1970, to 33% in 1981.³

¹ The economic hardship was much more severe in 1980 (and 1982) because the Syrian population became acclimated to a standard of living which it not only no longer enjoyed, but which it never should have attained, given the economic realities, in the first place.

² IMF, International Financial Statistics, 1985 [henceforth, IFS] (Washington, D.C.:International Monetary Fund, 1986), pp.300-306.

³ International Bank for Reconstruction and Development [henceforth, IBRD], World Tables (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), vol. II, p.83. Approximately 700,000 Syrians out of a two million person labor force are engaged in agriculture.

Moreover, gross domestic product (G.D.P.) rose over eight-fold, from \$2.4 billion in 1972, to \$19.8 billion in 1983 (Table VI.1). The World Bank even ranked Syria sixth out of 145 countries for G.D.P. growth between 1970-1981.⁴ The 5.5% growth rate attained under Al-Assad contrasts starkly with the 2.1% growth rate attained during the 1965-1970 period.⁵

Table VI.1
Syrian Gross Domestic Product ⁶
(billion U.S. dollars)

1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
2.4	2.6	4.3	5.6	6.4	7.0	8.3	10.0	13.2	17.0	18.3	19.8

During the 1970's, the regime had vastly increased social welfare and education expenditures. While the proportional share of the budget for health care, social security and welfare was small, the absolute amount had skyrocketed from SL35 million in 1973, to SL2.3 billion in 1981.⁷ The education component of the budget rose from SL401 million in 1973, to SL2.7 billion in 1981.⁸ Additionally, Assad has succeeded in doubling the number of physicians per capita

⁴ Ibid., p.568.

⁵ Ibid, pp.341,568.

⁶ IMF, IFS, 1985, op. cit., pp.600-603. Conversion from Syrian Pounds calculated at prevailing yearly exchange rate.

⁷ IMF, Government Financial and Statistical Yearbook, 1985 [henceforth, GFSY] (Washington D.C.: International Monetary Fund, 1986), pp.797-800.

⁸ Ibid.

during his rule.⁹

But even with good G.D.P. and industrial growth rates and improving socio-economic conditions, Al-Assad's economic achievements in Syria were unbalanced and unsustainable, if not precarious. Since the economic policies were based on grants and borrowing and neglected the agricultural sector, they created a structural imbalance favoring a capital and food imports dependency.

While the agricultural dependency was capable of being met from the West's huge excess farm production, the capital flows, for political and economic reasons, were not sustainable. Moreover, even with the infusion of foreign capital and agricultural products, Syria was plagued throughout the 1970's and early 1980's by a number of additional economic problems.

The Consumer Price Index doubled between 1972 and 1978, and inflation simply exploded after 1979 (Table VI.2). By 1982 prices were 35% higher than they were in 1980. Moreover, while the population was eating well (with per capita food consumption quite high¹⁰), food prices almost doubled between 1970-1976 and then almost doubled again between 1978 and 1981 (Table VI.3). Syria (like the Soviet Union) had

⁹ IBRD, World Table, op. cit., vol.II, p.87.

¹⁰ IBRD, World Table, op. cit., p.544.

gone from a net exporter of food, to a major importer.

The need for increasing food imports --as well as the generally poor performance of the economy and its inability to export anything other than oil, began causing chronic balance of trade deficits and periodic foreign exchange crises. In 1975 and 1976, the trade deficit approximately doubled, reaching over a billion dollars in the latter year (Table VI.4).

Table VI.2
Consumer Price Index, 1973-1982 ¹¹
(1980 = 100)

1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
40	48	55	61	68	76	80	84	100	118	135

Table VI.3
Consumer Price Index for Food, 1974-1982 ¹²
(1970 = 100)

1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
146	173	198	234	246	260	310	370	425

Table VI.4
Syrian Balance of Trade 1973-1982 ¹³
(billion U.S. \$)

1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
-0.21	-0.26	-0.50	-1.04	-1.33	-1.14	-1.41	-1.90	-2.61	-1.68

¹¹ IMF, IFS, 1985, op. cit., pp. 600-603.

¹² U.N., Statistical Yearbook, 1982 (New York: United Nations, 1984), p.180.

¹³ IMF, IFS, 1985, op. cit., pp.600-603.

For a country of Syria's size and productivity, its import bill is staggering. Even at the best of times, its anemic foreign exchange reserves cannot hope to cover the outflow (Tables V.5, V.6). And as Table V.7 reveals, Syria's imports are paid for from hand-to-mouth, and the country periodically totters, and occasionally slips into, a full fledged foreign exchange crisis.

Table VI.5
Syrian Imports, 1972-1982 ¹⁴
(billion U.S. \$)

1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
.62	1.24	1.69	2.35	2.68	2.46	3.33	4.12	5.05	4.02

Table VI.6
Syrian Foreign Exchange Holdings, 1973-1982 ¹⁵
(million U.S. \$)

1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
369	456	685	271	476	374	565	315	266	185

Table VI.7
Months of Foreign Exchange for Imports, 1973-1982 ¹⁶

1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
7.1	4.4	4.8	1.4	2.1	1.8	2.0	0.9	0.6	0.6

The most notable feature of Syrian exports are its marked dependence on oil. As Tables V.8-V.11 reveal, petroleum is Syria's single largest source of hard currency, and by far,

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Calculated from Tables VI.5 and VI.6.

the single most important Syrian export. The problem, however, is that Syrian crude is heavy, and therefore, difficult to refine and market. Consequently, Syria remains a net oil importer.¹⁷

Table VI.10
Syrian Oil Production ¹⁸
(thousand b/d)

1970	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
81	183	--	174	171	158	164	164	164	168

Table VI.9
Value of Syrian Oil Exports ¹⁹
(\$ billion)

1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
.05	.07	.43	.64	.63	.62	.65	1.13	1.34	1.28	1.04	1.05

Table VI.10
Oil As A Percentage Of Total Syrian Exports ²⁰

1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
18	22	55	69	60	59	61	69	63	61	51	54

¹⁷ In the early 1980's, Syria imported approximately 140 thousand b/d of light crude, while exporting only 100 thousand b/d of heavy crude. U.S. Department of Commerce, Foreign Economic Trends and Their Implications for the United States: Syria [henceforth, FET:Syria], (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1985), p.10.

¹⁸ OAPEC Bulletin, November, 1985, p.33; OAPEC, Annual Report (Vienna: Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, various years).

¹⁹ IMF, IFS, 1985, op. cit., pp.600-603. Conversion from Syrian Pounds calculated at prevailing yearly exchange rate.

²⁰ Figures deduced from oil export and total export figure in IFS, 1985, Ibid. Conversion from Syrian Pounds calculated at prevailing yearly exchange rate.

Table VI.11
Oil As A Percentage Of Syrian Gross Domestic Product ²¹

1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
2.1	2.9	10.1	11.5	9.9	8.9	7.8	11.3	10.0	7.5	5.7	5.3

Given the overall numbers, however, the Al-Assad regime has managed the petroleum reserves shrewdly. Besides the six-fold increase in revenue between 1973 and 1974 (which resulted from the OPEC production cut-back), the figures also reveals that Syria was able to keep revenue stable in 1977 and 1978 while decreasing the volume of oil sold by 20%. Similarly, in 1980, revenue nearly doubled while volume only increased slightly.

An examination of the composition of Syrian exports in 1970 and 1980 clearly reveal the drastic transformation of the Syrian economy (Table VI.12). From a major exporter of food and non-food agriculture (grain and cotton), Syria's exports have become a mono-culture predominantly reliant on oil. In terms of commodity concentration (i.e., the three major commodities as a percent of merchandise exports), Syria is ranked by the World Bank as the 23rd most concentrated out of 145 countries.²² For a country with Syria's human

²¹ Deduced from G.D.P., petroleum export, and annual exchange rate figures in IMF, IFS, 1985, *ibid*.

²² IBRD, World Tables, *op. cit.*, pp.550-551.

capital, and agriculture and natural resource potential, this is clearly gross mismanagement of productive capability.

Table VI.12
Syrian Export Composition, 1980 and 1970 ²³

	<u>1980</u>	<u>1970</u>
Food & Beverages	4.8%	27.4%
Non-Food Agriculture	13.5	42.4
Fuels, Minerals & Metals	74.1	19.0
Machinery & Equipment	1.4	0.5
Other Machinery	6.2	10.8

Syria's Domestic Crisis at the End of the Decade

As the decade drew to a close, the economic pillars of the AL-Assad regime began to crumble. The cumulative impact of the structural weakness of the socialist economy, the drain of defence spending, the slow down in Gulf aid, the near cut-off in international lending, and two bad harvests all brought Syria to the brink of economic disaster.

The structural problems of the Syrian economy are partially related to its socialist orientation and to larger ills which plague both socialist and capitalist economies. Like many socialized economies, the economic restrictions imposed by the Al-Assad regime weakened individual initiative, and led to chronic shortages of consumer and agricultural products, and of foreign exchange. It is not so much that the economy is fundamentally unsound, as it is depressed.

²³ IBRD, World Tables, op. cit., p.488.

The inability of the economy to efficiently utilize all factors of production simply means that Syria does not make the most out of the significant resources which it does possess.

A good example is the agricultural sector. Throughout the late 1970's, the central government's under-investment in agriculture was compounded by other restriction imposed on farmers (e.g., centralized purchasing and marketing boards and administered prices²⁴). Consequently, when Syria now experiences bad weather, the harvest is not just poor, but a disaster (e.g., 1977 and 1979; Table VI.13). In the pre-socialist years, Syria was almost always able to feed its population. But with the government mismanagement of agricultural policies, bad weather led to disastrous harvests and an inability to feed its own population.

Table VI.13
Syrian Grain Harvests, 1974-1981 ²⁵
(thousand metric tons)

1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
2,324	2,197	2,919	1,639	2,456	1,763	3,883	3,559

In addition to the inefficiencies caused by the socialist economic structure, Syria has a number of economic problems which are more common to capitalist countries. Syria, for

²⁴ Nyrop, op. cit., pp.117-120.

²⁵ U.N., Statistical Yearbook, 1982, op. cit., p.504.

instance, suffers from a declining savings rate, capital flight, and as noted above, inflation. All of these problems adversely affect capital formation.

The savings rate fell precipitously from 11.4% in 1970 to 4.1% in 1981,²⁶ and while it is difficult to gauge capital flight, rapid changes in errors and omission are generally a good indicator of such a problem.²⁷ The sharp changes in direction of Syrian errors and omissions in 1976 and 1977, and then again in 1982 indicate that the inflows coincide with what would be considered Syria's more secure periods and the outflows with the periods of instability (see, Table VI.14 and below for details of these cycles).

Table VI.14
Syrian Net Errors and Omissions ²⁸
(million U.S. \$)

1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
-50	-7	-5	211	73	-491	-888	-915	-285	208

A further strain on the Syrian economy comes from the debilitating affect of the military competition with Israel. After the removal of Egypt from active confrontation with Israel (November 1978), Syria had to drastically increase

²⁶ IBRD, World Tables, op. cit., vol. I, pp.550-551.

²⁷ Since the capital is smuggled out, it does not show up in the normal reporting practices and leaves mysterious imbalances in the figures.

²⁸ IMF, IFS, 1985, op. cit., pp.600-603.

its defence spending if it hoped to maintain even a partial equilibrium with Israel (Table VI.15).

Table VI.15
Syrian Defense Spending, 1973-1981 ²⁹
(billion U.S. \$)

1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
.4	.5	.9	.9	1.0	1.2	1.6	2.3	2.5

Table VI.16
Total Syrian Government Expenditures, 1973-1981 ³⁰
(billion U.S. \$)

1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
.4	.8	.9	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.6	2.1	2.1

Table VI.17
Syrian men Under Arms, 1978-86 ³¹
(thousand men)

1978/9	1979/80	1980/1	1981/2	1982/3	1983/4	1984/5	1985/6
227.5	227.5	247.5	222.5	222.5	222.5	362.5	402.5

Accordingly, the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency estimated that Syrian arms imports increased 50, 120, and 30 per cent in 1978, 1979, and 1980 respectively.³² And even if Syria only paid for part of these weapons (which it probably did), it still represented a huge increase in government

²⁹ IMF, GFSY, 1985, op. cit., pp.797-800. Syrian pounds converted at the prevailing yearly exchange rate.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ IISS, The Military Balance, op. cit., various years.

³² Calculated from ACDA, World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1985 (Washington, D.C.: ACDA, 1986), p.125.

spending and a vast diversion of human resources (Table VI.16 and Table VI.17). In 1979 alone, government spending increased by almost 50%.

In funding the armed forces, Syria received substantial financial assistance from other Arab states during the 1976-1980 period. Indeed, after November 1978 and the so-called "Baghdad" subsidies, the amount reached approximately \$1.8 billion a year³³. All together, Syria collected over five and half billion dollars during the 1976-1981 period (Table V.18). Saudi Arabia alone contributed approximately \$528 million per year.³⁴ Thus, from negligible dependance on foreign grants in the mid 1970's, the Syrian central government, by the end of the decade, became dependent on grants for a third of its budget (Tables VI.18).

Moreover, the central government was also becoming heavily dependent on foreign borrowing. During the second half of the decade, Syria increasingly reached out to the international lending agencies. In 1976, 1977 and 1978 alone, outstanding Syrian debt grew by over 50% per year

³³ The subsidies were named after the November 1978 Baghdad summit. At this summit, a number of wealthy Arab states (mainly from the Persian Gulf) agreed to provide Syria with \$1.8 billion a year to offset the increased defense burden caused by Egypt's withdrawal from the Arab-Israeli military balance. See, An Nahar Arab Report and Memo, March 4, 1985, p.9.

³⁴ U.S. Congress, Subcommittee on Egypt and the Middle East (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), p.15.

(Table VI.19). Interest payments alone increased almost four times in 1978, and over all debt servicing by 140% and 40% during 1978 and 1979 (Table VI.20).

Table VI.18
Total Foreign Grants to Syria, 1973-1981 ³⁵
Grants as a Percentage of Total Government Revenue
(million U.S. \$; per cent)

1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
0	132	0	154	21	606	1,237	1,200	1,401
0%	11%	0%	7%	7%	30%	41%	30%	30%

Table VI.19
Outstanding Syrian Debt (to the West) ³⁶
(million U.S. \$)

1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
504	673	996	1,486	1,915	2,185	2,269	2,337

Table VI.20
Syrian Debt Servicing ³⁷
(million U.S. \$)

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Interest	17	23	29	83	98	104	108
principal	87	85	80	188	285	298	303
total	105	108	110	271	383	402	411

After Syria began to support Iran in the Gulf war (September 1980), the wealthy Persian Gulf states retaliated by

³⁵ IMF, GFSY, op. cit. pp.797-800. The percentage of total revenue received from grants is deduced from the total revenue and grants figure give in GFSY.

³⁶ IBRD, World Tables, op. cit., p.341; U.N., Statistical Yearbook, op. cit., p.333.

³⁷ IBRD, World Tables, op. cit., p.341.

reducing the amount of aid given to the Al-Assad regime. By some estimates, contributions fell to less than half the previous level.³⁸ Additionally, because of the political tension over Syrian support for Iran, a number of Arab states began to repatriate Syrian workers. Consequently, annual Syrian remittances declined seriously (Table VI.21).

Table VI.21
Syrian Worker Remittances, 1976-82 ³⁹
 (million U.S. \$)

1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
52	92	640	903	774	582	447	461

Moreover, due to the mounting inefficiency of Syria's economy and the increased political tension, the international banks became more and more unwilling to lend to Syria. By the mid 1980's, Syria was essentially closed out of international capital markets.⁴⁰ Thus, Al-Assad's grants and debt economic strategy --and the Syrian economy--plunged into an economic crisis in the early 1980's.

By the spring 1982, the general economic crisis manifested itself in a foreign exchange crisis; holdings were so low

³⁸ Middle East International, January 25, 1985, p.8.

³⁹ IMF, IFS, 1985, op. cit., pp.600-603.

⁴⁰ U.S. Department of Commerce, FET: Syria, op. cit., p.9.

that Syria could not pay for essential imports.⁴¹ When Al-Assad's decided to close Iraq's oil pipeline through Syria in the spring 1982, the move cost the Al-Assad regime hundreds of thousands of dollars in hard currency each year. By 1983, the central government had a budget deficit of \$2.9 billion.⁴² The situation became so desperate that Al-Assad invited Syrian industrialists and entrepreneurs who had left during the last few years back, and asked them to take over a number of the previously nationalized industries.⁴³

The major internal threats to Hafez al-Assad's control come from a number of sources. Similarly to the situation in the late 1960's and early 1970's, these threats can be divided into their intra-elite and inter-elite sources.

The primary intra-elite threat comes from within the Alawi community; the primary inter-elite threats comes from the Islamic opposition, especially, the Moslem Brotherhood. There are also lesser and periodic threats from Iraq (acting through the pro-Iraqi section of the Ba'th Party led by Akram al-Hourani). Additionally, while good evidence is lacking, Israel (through the Mossad) cannot be ruled out as

⁴¹ U.S. Department of State, Background Notes: Syria, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1984), p.5.

⁴² An Nahar Arab Report and Memo, March 4, 1985, p.9.

⁴³ Ibid., October 25, 1985, p.2. Notably, many did not avail themselves of Al-Assad's offer because of the restrictive socialist labor laws.

a source of internal difficulties for Al-Assad.

Of all the above threats, the intra-Alawi is the most serious and persistent. Throughout Al-Assad's tenure, various Alawi factions have been vying for the opportunity to unseat him, or to gain the most advantageous position should he die or become incapacitated.⁴⁴

As noted above, the Alawi's dominance of the state has come about primarily through their control of the armed forces. In order to perpetuate this dominance, Al-Assad continues to concentrate control of the military among Alawis by carefully regulating officer advancement. Moreover, even lower ranking members of elite military units are carefully selected, not only from the Alawis, but from Hafez al-Assad's own tribe, and if possible, local area.⁴⁵

While at first this system of control may seem adequate to maintain Alawi dominance, in reality (and as noted in Chapter IV), the Alawis are not a monolithic community. Hence, Al-Assad fears a number of immediate subordinates and

⁴⁴ Hafez al-Assad's health has always weighed heavily on the affairs of Syria and the region. It was after his heart attack in November 1984, for example, that the internal Syrian situation deteriorated, and that Syria became more vulnerable to Soviet pressure. See below, and also New York Times, April 10, 1984.

⁴⁵ See, Hanna Batatu, "Some Observations on the Social Roots of Syria's Ruling Military Group and the Causes for its Dominance," Middle East Journal, Summer 1981, p.332.

has had to disperse control of the armed forces, the intelligence services, and the internal security apparatus among a large number of Alawis. As a result, there has been a proliferation of military, para-military and intelligence organizations with an impact on regime security. Obviously, such a situation is not conducive to political stability, or military preparedness.⁴⁶

Syrian military and security services are, in fact, deeply involved in the internal politics of the regime. These forces often function as the private army of the individuals who command them. The intra-Alawi element of the power struggle and the private utilization of military and security services in this struggle will be clearer from the description below. Most of the above these forces have at one time or another assumed a significant part in the internal power struggle. And as will be discussed below, the first five forces were very active in the 1984 crisis. (Additionally, there are at least six military and government intelligence services with direct involvement in the internal struggle.⁴⁷)

⁴⁶ During the late 1970's and early 1980's, one of Syria's four armored divisions (the Third) was primarily utilized for internal security. Given Syria's external security needs, this is a significant utilization of military resources, and a clear indicator of the threat under which Hafez al-Assad feels himself. See, for example, IISS, The Military Balance, 1982/83, op. cit., p.62.

⁴⁷ For details see, Report of Amnesty International to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic (Nottingham [United Kingdom]: Amnesty International, 1983), p.12-13.

Major Syrian Forces with Impact on Internal Security ⁴⁸

Defense Companies (Saraya al-Difa): originally a 50,000 men Alawi praetorian guard formed in 1971. It was commanded until 1984 by Rifat al-Assad (Hafez al-Assad's brother), and was responsible for controlling access to Damascus and protecting the President, the administration and the revolution. Until "recently it was among the best equipped forces in the country, and included three armored companies, a mechanized infantry brigade equipped with 350 T-72 tanks, artillery, anti-aircraft, missile and paratroop units."⁴⁹ It also possessed its own intelligence service, prisons, and distinctive uniforms, and assisted in the 1980 quelling of Aleppo and the 1982 destruction of Hama (see below).

Its members were heavily involved in smuggling and paid two-three times the regular army salary. The force reportedly engaged in kidnapping, extorting, beatings and torture of Syrian citizens.⁵⁰ Defense Company activity is also reported to include actions against Syrian dissidents abroad.⁵¹ Understandably, it was hated and feared by most Syrians.

Special Forces (al-Wahadat al-Khassah): Commanded by General Ali Haydar (it is uncertain whether Haydar is an Alawi or Sunni, but he is Hafez al-Assad's brother-in-law ⁵²), the 8,000-15,000 man Special Forces are an elite regime shielding unit of commandos and paratroopers. Specifically devoted to internal security, they are utilized as a mobile strike-force with special expertise in house-to-house

⁴⁸ See, Batatu, op. cit., p.331; Gary Hammerman, Almanac of World Military Power (San Francisco: Presidio Press, 1980), p.313; IISS, The Military Balance, various years; Middle East International, July 13, 1984, p.7; Nyrop, op. cit., p.216; Report of Amnesty International to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, op. cit., p.12-13. New York Times, April 28, 1986, p.A6.

⁴⁹ Alasdair Drysdale, "The Succession Question in Syria," The Middle East Journal, Spring, 1985, p.248

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ There were strong Defence Company links to political assassinations abroad. These included the 1980 killing of Ba'th Party co-founder and former Prime Minister Salah el-Bitar, as well as a number of Muslim Brothers. See, Report from Amnesty International to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, op. cit., p.14; and New York Times, July 22, 1980, p.1; March 18, 1981, p.5; November 23, 1981, p.6.

⁵² Batatu, op. cit., p.332.

combat. They seem to have been the primary unit responsible for the 1980 quelling of Aleppo and other actions in the north at that time.⁵³

Struggle Companies (Saraya al-Sira): formed in 1973 and commanded by Adnan al-Assad (Hafez al-Assad's cousin) this 5,000 man unit is similar to the Defense Companies.

Third Armored Division: a full army division commanded by General Shafiq Fayyadh (Hafez al-Assad's brother-in-law) [and previously commanded by Ali Ja'ja], and assigned to protect the regime. The Third Division has been repeatedly utilized against the civilian population, including actions against Hama in March and April 1980 and February 1982.

Palace Guard: 2,000 man force commanded by Adnan Makhulaf (who is related to President Al-Assad's wife).

Gendarmerie: 5,000-8,000 man national force.

Palestine Liberation Army: approximately two brigades of 6,000 men each.

Sa'iqah: formerly a Palestinian force of 3,000-5,000, it currently contains approximately 1,000 Palestinians and is headed by Issam al-Qadi.

Desert Guard: frontier force of 1,500-1,800 men.

Civil Police: 1,800 member national police force.

The Islamic Opposition

The Islamic opposition, and specifically, the Muslim Brotherhood, represents the second greatest threat to the Al-Assad (and Alawi) regime. The situation is complicated by the fact that other states occasionally assist either the regime (e.g., Iran) or its opponents (e.g., Jordan).

The late 1970's and early 1980's demonstrate that these

⁵³ See, Report From Amnesty International to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic op. cit., p.30-35.

forces can lie dormant at one moment only to rise again the next. Throughout the end of the decade and into the early 1980's, there were cycles of violence and counter-violence. The net effect was to de-stabilize Al-Assad's regime, distracted the President from his external responsibilities. To a large extent, the Islamic opposition, by weakening the Al-Assad regime, created the conditions necessary for the Soviet Union to extract further concessions from the Al-Assad regime.

The Muslim Brotherhood is primarily opposed to the Al-Assad regime because it is secular, socialist, and dominated by the minority Alawis.⁵⁴ Additionally, the Brotherhood perceives Hafez al-Assad as personally "responsible" for losing the Golan Heights, saving the "Maronite state," and as being "subservient" to (both) superpowers, and more interested in "protecting the 'revolution,'" than in fighting the Zionists.⁵⁵

Reportedly, the Syrian Brotherhood is distinguished from its Egyptian counterpart by its stronger urban base and greater representation of middle and lower class members.⁵⁶ (This certainly seem to fit Syria's more urbanized population.)

⁵⁴ Umar Abd-Allah, The Islamic Struggle in Syria (Berkeley: Mizan, 1983), pp.94,179-180.

⁵⁵ Ibid, op. cit., p.32,57,63,71-72.

⁵⁶ Ibid, pp.91-92.

The Brotherhood claims that its source of funding comes from "members and contributions," but given the fairly significant degree of Jordanian and other involvement with the group, this is unlikely.⁵⁷

While the movement is contemptuous of both superpowers, it has special scorn for the Soviet Union, the Syrian Communist Party, and the perceived role both play in assisting Al-Assad to maintain his hold on power.⁵⁸ Understandably, the Soviet Union reciprocates this attitude and assists Assad in tracking down and annihilating the Brotherhood.

The Muslim Brotherhood first began to become militantly active in February, 1976.⁵⁹ Throughout the end of the decade, the group carried out mostly small-scale terrorist actions against regime supporters. But one of the Brotherhood's larger and more significant operations was the June 16, 1979, massacre of three dozen Alawi cadets at the Aleppo military academy.⁶⁰ While this action was quite a blow to Al-Assad and Alawi self-confidence, the regime still managed to detain, try, and execute the individuals involved

⁵⁷ Ibid, pp.110.

⁵⁸ Ibid, pp.69,75,166.

⁵⁹ See, Devlin, "Syria's Political Structure," Middle East Review, Fall, 1984, p.18.

⁶⁰ New York Times, June 23, 1979, p.4; June 28, 1979, p.12; June 29, 1979, p.3.

in less than twenty-four hours.⁶¹ Regardless, between April and October 1979 alone, the Brotherhood was able to assassinate approximately 200 Alawis or pro-Al-Assad supporters.⁶²

By 1980, the Muslim Brotherhood was able to unite other regime opponents into an "Islamic Front" which included a number of additional unknown groups.⁶³ Even if all the other regime opponents are not known, it is clear that the Brotherhood and its allies were increasingly successful.

On March 4-13, 1980, the Muslim Brotherhood cooperated with leftists from the professional classes to organize a general strike in Aleppo. This general strike encouraged further unrest in the northern part of the country. By the end of the month, there were strikes or job actions by various professionals, including doctors, engineers and the Syrian Bar Association.⁶⁴

President al-Assad reacted by sending in 10,000 soldiers from Rifat al-Assad's Defense Companies and Ali Haydar's

⁶¹ Report from Amnesty International to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, op. cit., p.11.

⁶² New York Times, October 16, 1979, p.5.

⁶³ Devlin, "Syria's Political Structure," op. cit., p.18.

⁶⁴ See, Amnesty International Report, 1985, (Nottingham [United Kingdom]: Amnesty International, 1986), p.337; New York Times, March 15, 1980, p.2; April 13, 1980, p.8.

Special Forces to quell the demonstrations. The suppressive measures included retaliatory actions against civilian population (especially in Aleppo), mass arrests, and a significant number of extra-judicial executions. A minimum of 50-100 civilians were killed.⁶⁵ But the unrest continued to grow.

In April 1980, the "National Progressive Rally" --an amalgam of Nasserites, Communist dissenters, and Ba'th supporters of the disposed Salah Jadid) organized a successful "national" strike in Aleppo, Homs, and Hama.⁶⁶ While the strike never spread south to Damascus, it still revealed the weakness of the regime in the north.

The Brotherhood struck another serious blow against the regime when they almost succeeded in assassinating Hafez al-Assad on June 26, 1980. Al-Assad retaliated by sending Rifat and the Defence Forces (accompanied by the 40th Army corps and the 138th Security Brigade) to Tadmur Prison to massacre defenseless prisoners. The Brotherhood claimed that approximately 1,200 people were murdered.⁶⁷ Amnesty International estimated the death toll at between 600 and

⁶⁵ See, Ibid; and Stanley Reed, II, " Date Line Syria: Fin de Regime?" Foreign Policy, pp.180-181.

⁶⁶ Reed, *ibid.*, p.182.

⁶⁷ Abd-Allah, *op. cit.*, p.85.

1,000.⁶⁸ But the massacre made martyrs out of the slain and galvanized the opposition.

In August 1980, in response to potential unrest in Aleppo, the regime sent in Ali Haydar and the Special Units. His forces assembled the residents of the al-Masharqah district in a cemetery and opened fire on the unarmed civilians. Eighty were killed and several hundred wounded.⁶⁹ While other actions in Homs were not as vicious, they were still rather brutal.⁷⁰

Beginning in 1980, matters only became worse for the regime. A wave of car-bombings broke out which the regime could not suppress for almost two years. But Al-Assad continued to battle the Islamic Brotherhood and terrorize the population. On April 24-25, 1981, for example, the Special Units entered Hama in pursuit of a Muslim Brotherhood force which had just ambushed a patrol of government troops. In the resulting fighting, 350 civilians were killed and over 600 wounded.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Amnesty International has a large amount of information on the prison massacre, including detailed reports of the arrest, detention and murder of 38 youth picked up after an anti-government demonstration in Derir al-Zor in March 1980. Report from Amnesty International to the Government of Syrian Arab Republic, op. cit., p.35.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp.35-36.

⁷⁰ New York Times, August 18, 1980, p.5.

⁷¹ Report to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, op. cit., p.36.

And so the violence continued to mount. By 1981, the government had admitted that the opposition forces had assassinated over 300 persons connected to the regime.⁷² Moreover, while there are no firm figures for civilian casualties up until this point, the figure must be at least several thousand.

While in absolute (political) terms, 300 persons is not very many people, relative to Syria's governing (Alawi) structure --and the sensational nature of many of the attacks, these episodes were very troubling for the Al-Assad regime. Clearly, as early as the fall 1979, the Al-Assad regime was in a very precarious position. There were increasing doubts over the ability of the Al-Assad regime to survive. The Western press and scholarly community were openly asking if this was the end of the Al-Assad regime.⁷³ Unfortunately for the Al-Assad regime, external developments in the late 1970's were to exacerbate this internal weakness.

Syrian Foreign Relations: 1978-1980

Contrary to the immediate post-October 1973 war and post-1976 Lebanon periods, the end of the 1970's did not provide the Al-Assad regime with a series of foreign policy

⁷² See, Devlin, Syria: Modern State in an Ancient Land, op. cit., p.73.

⁷³ See, Reed, op. cit.

successes. Indeed, the external environment compounded the regime's internal problems and further weakened it.

First, there was the Arab world's split over Egypt's peace initiatives. Second, there was Israel's ability to taunt and limit Syrian actions in Lebanon. Third, the situation with Iraq went from bad to worse. Fourth, the U.S. increasingly isolated Syria. And fifth, the Soviet Union, was not, under the post-1976 Lebanon understanding, willing to exert major efforts to bolster the Al-Assad regime.

One of the most significant blows to Syrian security came with Egypt and Israel's signing of the Camp David Accord in September 1978 and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in September 1979. As noted, these two agreements effectively removed Egypt from the Arab-Israeli military balance and markedly increased Syrian vulnerability to Israeli military power. The resulting strategic gap between Syria and Israel placed increased pressure on Syria to negotiate a settlement with Israel, or be left vulnerable to machtpolitik.

While the Baghdad subsidies helped offset some of the financial burdens of Egypt's withdrawal from direct confrontation with Israel, it was far from sufficient. Al-Assad also had to deal with Sadat's continuing political efforts to end Egypt's isolation and shift the intra-Arab agenda toward a pro-Egyptian, pro-peace stance.

While Al-Assad (and the Palestinians) succeeded in keeping Egypt isolated, he was considerably less successful in dealing with Israel's vast military superiority. The March 1978 invasion of Lebanon by Israel demonstrated the relative (military) impotence of Syria vis-a-vis Israel, and made a mockery of Al-Assad's earlier political triumph in Lebanon.⁷⁴ The invasion indicated that Israel would not allow its own perceived security interests to be jeopardized by P.L.O. or Syrian actions in Lebanon. Consequently, Al-Assad's position in the region and Arab world began to be seriously undermined.

Syria's problems with Egypt, Israel and Lebanon were further compounded by relations with Iraq. As noted, the mid and late 1970's were very successful, both politically and economically for Iraq. The Kurdish problem quieted down, as did the border problems with Iran; the domestic scene stabilized; and increasing oil revenue improved the economic situation, reduced dependence on the Soviet Union and increased economic cooperation with the West. And as Iraq became stronger and more stable, it was able to concentrate on regional opponents such as Syria.

⁷⁴ The invasion further strained intra-Arab, and Syrian-Egyptian relations causing Egypt to trade bitter recriminations with most other Arab states. See, New York Times, March 28, 1978, p.6.

Throughout the late 1970's, Baghdad was attempting to court Saudi Arabia and distance itself from the Soviet Union.⁷⁵ In line with these objectives and in an attempt to crushing an increasingly subversive internal communist opposition, the Hassan Bakr regime began executing communists.⁷⁶ And as Iraq distanced itself from the Soviet Union, it gained a freer and freer hand against Syria.⁷⁷

Ironically, as Iraq was executing communists and distancing itself from Soviet foreign policy, the Soviet Union continued to supply it with arms while simultaneously exercising restraint toward Syria. Between the fall of 1973 and the spring of 1979, the Soviet Union sent Iraq approximately 1,000 tanks and armored personnel carriers, and forty-seven new surface-to-air missile batteries.⁷⁸ In contrast to this, Syria, after the initial post-war resupply operation ended in 1974, acquired roughly half as many tanks

⁷⁵ For details see, Lenczowski, Middle East in World Affairs, op. cit., p.312.

⁷⁶ The executions began in early 1978 and continued until mid 1979. See, New York Times, January 1, 1979 and January 27, 1980.

⁷⁷ Although Soviet efforts to affect a Syrian-Iraqi rapprochement have rarely succeeded, the efforts do so do occasionally cause one or both sides to lessen its antipathy for the other. A recent example is the Soviet Union's ability to get the two feuding regimes to sit-down secretly and discuss their differences during March 1986. See, Middle East International, June 27, 1986, pp.4-5.

⁷⁸ See, "Iraq" in IISS, The Military Balance, 1973/74, op. cit., p. 32-3, and "Iraq" in IISS, The Military Balance, 1979/80, op. cit., p.40. Also See, New York Times, March 4, 1979.

and APC's, and even fewer surface-to-air missiles as did Iraq.⁷⁹

By the end of the 1970's, Iraq was more stable and powerful, and Syria was feeling the pressure of her eastern neighbor. The traditional Iraqi-Syrian Ba'th Party antagonism was now increasingly exacerbated by a host of other problems. The opening of Syria's Euphrates Dam in 1974, for example, led to a protracted and bitter dispute over Euphrates water rights.⁸⁰ Iraq also was displeased by the amount of tolls levied by Syria on trucks plying the transit trade between Iraq and the Mediterranean ports, and on oil pipeline royalty payments.⁸¹

Most significantly, Iraq was disturbed by what it considered Syrian attempts to foment rebellion among its own Shi'ite majority.⁸² As a result of these disputes and the larger ideological problems, Iraq took an interventionist approach toward Syria, and did, in fact, continually attempt to

⁷⁹ See, "Syria" in IISS, The Military Balance, 1973/74, op. cit., p. 36, and "Syria" in IISS, The Military Balance, 1979/80, op. cit., p.45.

⁸⁰ See, Zohurul Bari, "Syrian-Iraqi Dispute over the Euphrates Water," International Studies 16, 2 (1977), pp.234-244.

⁸¹ See, W.B. Fischer, "Iraq," in The Middle East and North Africa, 1979-1980 (London: Europa Publications, 1979), pp.396-399.

⁸² Ibid., p.400.

subvert the Al-Assad regime.⁸³

A temporary lessening in the Syrian-Iraqi conflict occurred in 1978 after Egypt, Israel (and the United States) signed the Camp David Accords. Indeed, for several months after the November 1978 Baghdad summit, it seemed as if Syria and Iraq would affect a rapprochement.⁸⁴ But the momentum of traditional problems, as well as Saddam Hussein's July 1979 assumption of power and subsequent accusation that Al-Assad had attempted to overthrow him, caused relations to deteriorate to a new low.⁸⁵ Indeed, Hussein retaliated by stepping up efforts to overthrow Al-Assad.

Accordingly, Iraq was implicated in a number of terrorist incidents in Syria, and even in a 1981 coup attempt (see, below). The major vehicles for Iraqi interference into Syrian affairs is its secret service and the Iraqi sponsored "National Front for the Liberation of Arab Syria." While this Front may very well be just a cover for the Iraqi secret service, its head is Akram al-Hourani and includes a

⁸³ For details see, Arab World Weekly April 12, 1975, p.3; December 11, 1976, pp.1-8; Middle East Reporter Weekly January 13, 1979, p.9; April 5, 1980, pp.18-19.

⁸⁴ See, FBIS-MEA, November 6, 1978, A13-15.

⁸⁵ See, "After the Coup Attempt," Middle East, September 1979, pp.13-14.

number of (formerly) prominent Syrians.⁸⁶

Syria was increasingly unstable internally and isolated externally. Another serious blow to Al-Assad's position came when the Soviet Union invaded (Islamic) Afghanistan in December 1979. When the vote for condemning the Soviet Union came up in the United Nations, Syria voted against condemnation and with the Soviet Union. This not only further antagonized the Western world, but more importantly, the Arab and Islamic worlds.⁸⁷ Now Syria antagonized a large number of states with which it had previously not had any conflicts.

If Syria's conflict with Iraq, Egypt, Israel and most of the Islamic world were insufficient to keep it externally vulnerable, then a further blow came with internal changes in Lebanon. In May 1980, Bashir Gemayel (leader of the Christian Phalange) killed eighty of his Christian rivals, and by July he had united the Christian forces under his own leadership.⁸⁸ Now with the Lebanese Christians unified, Al-Assad could no longer play them off against each other, and Syrian influence was seriously weakened.

⁸⁶ Including former president Amin al-Hafiz and chief of staff, General Hamund Suwaidani, as well as Shibli al-Aysami and Mahamud al-Shufi. See, Peter Janke, Guerilla And Terrorist Organizations, (New York: MacMillian, 1983), p.273.

⁸⁷ See, New York Times, January 15, 1980, p.1.

⁸⁸ New York Times, July 9, 1980, p.1; July 10, 1980, p.5; July 14, 1980, p.5.

By the time the Iran-Iraq war broke out in September 1980, Syria --being at odds with Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and a good part of Lebanon-- was already a regional pariah. Thus, when it openly supported non-Arabic Iran, it attracted additional scorn and, more importantly, financial retribution from the Persian Gulf states. Syria's support for Iran incensed the Arab world (and many of the region's other states) because Iran was a revisionist state which was attempting to carry out its overthrow of the status quo. As noted above, it was at this point that the Gulf states began to slow down financial assistance to Syria, and the Syrian economic crisis began.

The Khomeini regime did assist Al-Assad by cooperating with the Syrian regime's attempt to suppress the Sunni Islamic opposition,⁸⁹ but given its own economic woes, Iran was not in much of a position to assist Syria financially. While the Gulf war and the Syrian-Iranian alliance reduced the immediate threat to Syria, Iraq's counter-alliance with Jordan did reduce some of this advantage.⁹⁰

Throughout this period of increasing Syrian isolation, the United States was rapidly preparing for intervention in the

⁸⁹ Abd-Allah, op. cit., p.12.

⁹⁰ See, An Nahar Arab Report and Memo, March 4, 1985, p.9.

Persian Gulf. Although the Rapid Deployment Force (R.D.F.) was not designated for service so far south (and there were serious doubts about how "rapid" or effective it really was), it further increased Syrian insecurity. First, even the perception of increasing American regional force projection would make Al-Assad take notice. Second, R.D.F. planning set off a quest for greater U.S. access to regional facilities (e.g., in Israel, Egypt, Somalia, Oman, and Kenya).⁹¹ This had direct, and negative, security implications for Syria.

Clearly, when Syria's foreign policy isolation in the late 1970's is added to its extreme internal vulnerability, it is evident that the Al-Assad regime was in deep trouble by the fall 1979. Its only allies were Libya, which was long on rhetoric but short on real assistance, and Iran, which was fighting for its survival against Iraq. Of course there was the Soviet Union, but it was less than forthcoming with unqualified support.

Geopolitical Reversals and the Soviet Position at the End of the Decade

As detailed in Chapter V, the Soviet Union's regional position after the 1976 Syrian intervention in Lebanon was mixed: it had lost influence in Egypt, and was uneasily

⁹¹ See, New York Times, November 22, 1981, p.18.

involved with Syria, but it still had decent relations with Algeria, Iraq, Libya, and the P.L.O., and very good relations with Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and South Yemen.⁹²

The Soviet Union was also courting a number of the region's moderate states such as Kuwait and Jordan, and was benefiting from the flair-up of the Greek-Turkish dispute.⁹³ While its regional influence was no where near the level of August 1970, it was still very much involved in the security affairs of the area.

In spite of this mixed position, the Soviet Union maintained a correct but fairly distant policy toward Syria during the 1977-78 period. It is quite possible that the Soviet leadership thought that Syria's increasing vulnerability eventually would force Al-Assad to grant it additional concessions (e.g., the long sought Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation). Additionally, the existence of alternative Third World, and Middle Eastern clients limited the need to accommodate to Syrian interests. Consequently, the Soviet Union waited patiently for internal Syrian and/or regional affairs to force Syria to act on policy preferences which were closer to the Soviet Union's own.

⁹² The Soviet Union had even signed Friendship Treaties with Afghanistan in 1978, Ethiopia in 1978, and South Yemen in 1979.

⁹³ See Freedman, Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970, op. cit., pp.211-329.

Unfortunately for the Soviet Union, the decline in Al-Assad's position was soon matched by a concurrent deterioration in Moscow's own. Hence, a distinct mutual dependence between the two states began to develop.

The most important regional development for the Soviet Union at this time was the Camp David Accords and later the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty. Within a few days of the Accords, the "Front for Steadfastness and Confrontation"--which included Syria, Iraq, Algeria, Libya, South Yemen, and the P.L.O., had been organized in Damascus.⁹⁴ Since these events (temporarily) rallied together many of the local states (most specifically Syria and Iraq), the Soviet Union probably felt a bit more confident. Its strategy of "Arab unity on an anti-imperialist basis" was coming to life.⁹⁵

At the beginning of 1978, the Soviet Union seemed to be genuinely pleased with its regional (if not global) position. In the short-run, what the Soviet Union wanted (and still wants) is to become an equal partner with the United States in the management of the region's security affairs. Since the regional equilibrium does not provide the Soviet Union with sufficient leverage to force itself (against the will of a number of states) into the region, it

⁹⁴ New York Times, October 9, 1978, p.7.

⁹⁵ New Times 40, 1978, p.6.

both waits and works toward a change in objective conditions (i.e., a shift in the relative power balance vis-a-vis the United States) and pressures Washington to stop blocking its (re-)entry into the region.⁹⁶

Although the United States had backed out of its October 1977 promise to convene an international conference on the Middle East (in Geneva), the Soviet leadership might still have thought that they could work with the United States in the region. After all, a good number of Soviet observers did not blame the October 1977 failure on President Jimmy Carter, but on the American Jewish community.⁹⁷

Second, the Soviet Union's overall geopolitical position had significantly improved since the early 1970's. In Europe, the western alliance was increasingly divided by the intermediate range nuclear missile issue, and other bilateral problems (e.g., Greece and Turkey). And in the Third World, there were major Soviet client victories in Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Vietnam, Kampuchea, and Laos.⁹⁸ The American position in Nicaragua and Iran also was

⁹⁶ The amount of pressure the Soviet Union exerts on the U.S. depends on a number of extra-regional factors. Thus, for example, in spite of its later disappointment over the October 1977 communique, General Secretary Brezhnev seems to have sought to down play the issue because of his concern for SALT II ratification. (In many ways, this period parallels the May 1972 detached Soviet attitude toward Egypt.)

⁹⁷ See, Borisov, op. cit., pp.42-48; Rogov, op. cit.

⁹⁸ See, Zagoria, "Into the Breach," op. cit.

deteriorating rapidly.

Third, in examining the internal situation in Syria (especially in contrast to the experience with Egypt), some Soviet observers seemed to have believed that the country was past the reactionary stage of anti-communism and anti-Sovietism. Indeed, in an analysis in 1978 which the Soviet author has surely since regretted, L.M. Entin wrote that:

The evolution carried out by the P.A.S.V. [Ba'th] in Iraq and Syria demonstrates their gradual transformation from a petit bourgeois nationalism and anti-communism, to the realization of a program of revolutionary-democracy and cooperation with the communists in the national and international planes.⁹⁹

Hence, Entin (and perhaps a number of other Soviets) felt more secure about the Soviet presence in Syria.

Fifth, with its two most significant regional clients, Syria and Iraq, working toward a common goal (isolating Egypt and the peace process), there seemed to be less need for the Soviet Union to draw close to the increasingly vulnerable Al-Assad regime.

And finally, from the military perspective, increased Iraqi-Syrian cooperation reduced the need for increased Soviet arms shipments to Syria. Hence, in spite of the warmer

⁹⁹ L.M. Entin, Politicheskie sistemy razvivaiushchikhsia stran [The Political Systems of the Developing Countries], (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia, 1978), p.108.

Soviet Union attitude toward the Al-Assad regime, it did not increase arms transfers to Syria.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, Syrian chief of staff, General Hikmat Shihabi cut short his November 1978 visit to the Soviet Union when it reportedly refused to supply Syria with Mig-27 aircraft and SA-9 missiles.¹⁰¹

Thus, in 1978, the Soviet Union's overall power position was fairly strong, and its dependence on Syria lower than on many occasions in the past. Hence, the need of the Soviet Union to accommodate the Al-Assad regime (e.g., the arms relationship) was not very high. But from this temporary high point in the fall 1978, the Soviet Union soon began to experience a number of setbacks.

One of the most important reversals of Soviet fortune came from Iraq's increasingly effective policy of distancing itself from the Soviet Union. While this trend had started several years earlier, it began to dominate Iraqi policy after mid 1978.¹⁰² And when Saddam Hussein came to power in July 1979, and the front with Syria was shattered, the Soviet Union was left without a means for opposing the Camp

¹⁰⁰ And this was in spite of al-Assad's October 1978 trip to Moscow and an apparent Soviet promise to ship more arms. See, Pravda, October 7, 1978.

¹⁰¹ Christian Science Monitor, November 30, 1978; Washington Post, November 30, 1978.

¹⁰² As noted, the Bakr regime not only continued its brutal persecution of Iraqi communists, but it increasingly did so in a manner (and with ideological pronouncements) specifically designed to embarrass the Soviet Union.

David process and its regional position crumbled.¹⁰³ Moreover, even the P.L.O. was flirting with the United States (e.g., the August 1979 U.N. meeting between Andrew Young and Zehdi Terzi).¹⁰⁴

Additionally, Third World opportunities were becoming more difficult for the Soviet Union to find, and the earlier success had created a backlash in the United States, and East Asia. First, the major opportunities proved by the legacies of French colonialism in Indochina and Portuguese colonialism in Africa were no longer present. Second, after the fall of South Vietnam, East Asia began to experience a coherence which it previously had not known. As a result, further Soviet advances in the region were increasingly difficult.¹⁰⁵

Third, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (December 1979) isolated the Soviet Union from the Arab world and led the United States to an immediate return to confrontation politics, a massive force build-up, and a resurgence of support for power projection and covert operations in the

¹⁰³ Iraq even began denouncing Soviet designs on the Persian Gulf. See, New York Times January 27, 1980.

¹⁰⁴ New York Times, August 15, 1979, p.1.

¹⁰⁵ See, Joseph G. Whelan and Michael J. Dixon, The Soviet Presence in the Third World: Threat to World Peace? (New York:International Defense Publishers,1986), pp.65-68.

Third World.¹⁰⁶ It so poisoned relations with the Carter administration and U.S. Senate that the SALT II agreement was withdrawn from consideration. Thus, the Soviet Union no longer had to be concerned about the impact of unrestrained assertiveness in the Middle East on the treaty.

All told then, East Asia and Africa were less attractive targets, and the Soviet Union was faced with growing opposition to its third world policies, especially from the newly elected Reagan administration in the United States.

In the Middle East, the Soviet Union was confronted by a disintegrating regional position which was compounded by increasing global weakness. Hence, the need for dramatic action to shore up its position in the region became imperative. Unfortunately for the Soviet Union, the regional alternatives for such a course were not especially good.

The Soviet Union's primary possibilities include Syria, Libya and South Yemen. Given these possibilities, it is not difficult to understand why Syria was the Soviet Union's first choice. For one thing, Syria was the only one of these states with sufficient power and stature (no matter how isolated) to protect Soviet interests. Thus, the change in

¹⁰⁶ Contrary to the myth, the change in U.S. military and security policy began under President Carter, not President Reagan. See, Carter's rebuttal in New York Times, March 2, 1986, p.A1.

Soviet policy toward increasing ties with, and reliance on, Syria began in mid 1979.

The Soviet-Syrian Status Quo Revised: The Friendship and Cooperation Treaty

Even before President Al-Assad visited Moscow in October 1979, Soviet arms transfers to Syria increased and reached new qualitative levels. In August of that year, Syria, for the first time, received 50-70 T-72 tanks.¹⁰⁷ The T-72's were reportedly the Soviet Union's most advanced tank and never before been deployed outside Eastern Europe.

When Al-Assad arrived in Moscow (October 1979), he must have codified this arms transfers arrangement because shipments to Syria were stabilized at an entirely new quantitative and qualitative level. Within several months, Syria had, for the first time, received Mig-25 and SU-20 aircraft, the T-72 tanks, and a number of other weapons systems.¹⁰⁸

In retrospect, it appears that the decisive variables in the Soviet decision to transfer more arms are found both in the Soviet Union's own increasingly weak and isolated position and the Al-Assad regime's renewed interest in strengthening

¹⁰⁷ New York Times, August 29, 1979.

¹⁰⁸ cf. IISS, The Military Balance, 1979/80, op.cit., p.45, and The Military Balance, 1980/81, op. cit., p.48.

the Soviet connection. As would become clearer over the years, Al-Assad and his aides were increasingly offended by the American policy (after December 1977) of leaving the Soviet Union and Syria on "the side."¹⁰⁹ Al-Assad wanted a relationship with the U.S. which maintained, what he considered, due respect for Syrian interests. Moreover, he felt betrayed and bitter over the American abandonment of the Geneva peace process and the reversal of its position after Sadat's Jerusalem trip at the end of 1977.¹¹⁰

Since U.S. policy was increasingly attempting to isolate and weaken Al-Assad, the choice was between increased dependency on the Soviet Union, or acceptance of the American guaranteed status quo. Al-Assad clearly chose the former. In line with this choice, Al-Assad requested (in the spring 1980) that the Soviet Union provide fighter cover for Damascus in the event of a war with Israel.¹¹¹

Since Al-Assad's (and originally Abd al-Nasir's) usual request was for air defense assistance, and not specifically

¹⁰⁹ Brzezinski, op. cit., p.114.

¹¹⁰ As Syrian Information Minister Ahmed Iskander Ahmed described it: "He [Carter] lied to us. He spoke of a Palestinian state; of the need for an international conference with the P.L.O.; of the need for Israel to withdraw; of the need to prevent an arms race in the Middle East, and the need of a comprehensive settlement. Then he did the opposite of all this. New York Times, November 25, 1980, p.A8.

¹¹¹ New York Times, March 14, 1980.

fighter cover, Al-Assad might have wanted to push the Soviet Union to providing him with even more, and higher quality, air defense equipment, or he may have been attempting to utilize Abd al-Nasir's 1970 ploy of drawing it physically into the confrontation with Israel. Apparently, the Soviet Union learned its lesson from the 1970 experience and declined to do so. But it did finally extract the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation.

As a result of Syria's weakness and the Soviet Union's renewed interest, the Soviet Union and Syria finally signed the long deferred Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in October 1980.¹¹² Basically, Al-Assad did not have many options: he was vulnerable internally, and isolated externally. As Syrian Information Minister Ahmed Iskander stated it: "We looked around and we found that we had only one friend [the Soviet Union]. The choice was imposed upon us."¹¹³

Moreover, Al-Assad was probably concerned that the Soviet Union would interpret his vulnerability as an opportunity, or a necessity, to support some other internal group. He saw increased dependence as the only way for him to insure the survival of his regime and perhaps even himself.

¹¹² For the text see, FBIS-MEA, October 9, 1980, p.H4.

¹¹³ New York Times, November 25, 1980, p.A8.

Domestically, the Treaty was both positive and negative for Al-Assad. While it signaled to others Alawis (and a few non-Alawis), that Al-Assad had Moscow's confidence and support, it also further alienated the upper and middle classes, and the religious opposition. As one Brotherhood sympathizer (if not member) said: the "chief purpose of the Soviet-Syrian 'friendship pact' was to strengthen Assad's position in Syria in the face of mounting popular opposition, not to further the struggle against Zionism."¹¹⁴ Pointedly, he compared the Soviet-Syrian Treaty with the Soviet-Afghan Treaty and noted how the latter served as the "pretext" for the 1979 invasion.

Perhaps Al-Assad thought that he did not have much to lose by signing the Treaty. After all, domestically there was no room for accommodation with the Muslim Brotherhood. And externally, the negative reaction in the Arab world, would be off-set by the utility of the Treaty against Israel.

By formalizing the links to the Soviet Union, the Treaty, especially in the short run, complicated Israeli calculations. Article VI of the Treaty gave the Soviet military commitment to Syria greater credibility and buttressed the deterrent value of the Soviet-Syrian relationship by formalizing the calling for coordination and cooperation in the event of situations jeopardizing the

¹¹⁴ Aba-Allah, op. cit., p.75.

security of either party.¹¹⁵

From the Soviet Union's perspective, the Treaty also had positive and negative implications. On the one hand, the Treaty linked it solidly to the Al-Assad regime. If Hafez Al-Assad did eventually fall in a power struggle, the victors may not have looked kindly on the Soviet Union's earlier support for him. And in the foreign policy arena, the Treaty might (as it did) embolden Al-Assad and encourage him to antagonize Israel in Lebanon, and to link the Soviet Union to (rash) policy initiatives.¹¹⁶ (The passage above citing the need for Soviet-Syrian coordination might very well have been the Soviet method of attempting to limit Al-Assad's independent actions.)

But the Treaty helped Al-Assad stabilize his rule and minimized the uncertainties (for the Soviet Union) inherent in a regime change. Moreover, the most important aspect of the Treaty was that it legitimated the Soviet presence in

¹¹⁵ The article reads: "In case of the emergence of situations jeopardizing the peace or security of one of the parties or posing a threat to peace or violating peace and security in the whole world, the High Contracting Parties shall without delay enter into contact with one another with a view toward coordinating their positions and to cooperating to remove the threat that has arisen and to restore peace." FBIS-MEA, October 9, 1980, p.H5. Additionally, there is speculation that secret clauses were appended to the document. See, Amiram Nir, The Soviet-Syrian Friendship and Cooperation Treaty (Tel Aviv: Jaffa Canter for Strategic Studies, 1983), p.15-16.

¹¹⁶ Nir, op. cit., p.9.

the Middle East. It told the U.S., Israel and the Arab world that the Soviet Union was far from beaten in the region. Even if this was only formal, it gave the Soviet Union a more secure and legitimate presence in Syria and the region.

It is notable that in 1980, the situation with Syria, unlike the 1971 with Egypt, did not contain signs of Syrian movement toward the United States.¹¹⁷ But the Soviet Union probably did expect to utilize the Treaty as a means for further driving Al-Assad and the United States apart.

Moreover, while the Soviet Union signed the Treaty with Egypt and only increased its political support for Sadat and his policies (and did not gain any greater influence over Egyptian policies¹¹⁸), the Treaty with Syria resulted in increased Soviet political support and arms transfers.

During 1979-81 Syria imported over eight billion dollars worth of arms, and almost of these weapons came from the Soviet Union or East Bloc allies (Table VI.22; also see Chapter VII). This represented (approximately) a 120% increase in 1979, and 30% increase in 1980.

¹¹⁷ In contrast to the situation with Egypt in 1971, the Syrians were not moving to improve relations with the United States. As noted, the Al-Assad regime was furious with the Carter administration and there was no evidence that Syria was angling for a rapprochement. Thus, the Soviet Union could only hope to keep Al-Assad in power and further divide Syria and the U.S.

¹¹⁸ For a discussion of the Egyptian Treaty, see Rubinstein, Red Star on the Nile, op. cit., p.150-152.

Table VI.22
Value Of Syrian Arms Imports, 1974-1983 ¹¹⁹
 (billion U.S. \$; constant 1982 \$)

1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
1.48	.62	.97	.96	1.23	2.64	3.14	2.23	1.90	1.63

While part of these transfers had been arranged in late 1979, shipments increase markedly in 1980 and 1981. Additionally, the quality of these transfers changed dramatically (Table VI.23). And this period also marks the beginning of a serious Syrian-Israeli naval arms race.¹²⁰

It is quite probable that the Soviet Union believed that moment was the last opportunity to beat back the American advance in the Middle East. Egypt had broken away, Iraq was breaking away, Moscow had made little gains with the moderate Arab States, and now Al-Assad (while not attempting to break to the U.S.) was isolated and only tenuously in control of Syria. Consequently, the move to strengthen his regime was in many ways a desperate last act. Thus, the Soviet Union forgave a quarter of Syria's debt (\$500 million), flooded the country with arms, and directly intervened to save its partner.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ ACDA, World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1985, op. cit., p.125.

¹²⁰ See, Jane's Defence Weekly, June 21, 1986, p.1165.

¹²¹ New York Times, November 11, 1979, p.17.

TABLE VI.23
Major Syrian Weapons Systems, 1975/76-1985/85 122

	<u>1975/76</u>	<u>1976/77</u>	<u>1977/78</u>	<u>1978/79</u>	<u>1979/80</u>	<u>1980/81</u>
<u>Armor</u>						
T-34's	100	100	200	200	200	--
T-54/55's	1,300	1,400	1,500	1,500	1,500	2,200
T-62	700	800	800	800	900	600
T-72's	--	--	--	--	--	120
APC's	1,100	1,200	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600
<u>Missiles</u>						
Frog-7's	some	some	30	30	30	15
Scud's	some	some	36	36	36	36
<u>Aircraft</u>						
Mig-17's	50	80	80	50	50	60
Mig-21's	250	220	220	220	215	200
Mig-23's	45	50	45	50	16	60
Mig-25's	--	20*	--	--	--	25
Mig-27's	--	--	--	12	48	--
Su-7's	45	60	50	60	60	20
Su-20's	--	--	--	--	--	30
Mi-2,4's	12	12	12	12	12	12
Mi-6's	--	--	--	10	10	--
Mi-8's	39	35	50	50	50	70
<u>Naval Craft</u>						
Petya I's	--	2	2	2	2	2
Osa I's	3	7	6	6	6	6
Osa II's	--	--	--	--	2	6
Komar I's	3	6	6	6	6	6

*Soviet piloted

In summing-up Syria's position between the Soviet Union and the United States in 1981, one Soviet academic said:

"..the U.S.A. experience shows that the [economic and political] pressure on Syria received the necessary rebuff. Syria rejected solicitations about participation in the Camp David process; it was one of the initiators in the creation of the National Front for Steadfastness and Cooperation; it strengthened its relations with the U.S.S.R., signing...the Treaty of

122 IISS, The Military Balance op. cit. [1975/76:38; 1976/77:38; 1977/78:40; 1978/79:42; 1979/80:45; 1980/81:48.]

Friendship and Cooperation...¹²³

The increased arms flow, the assistance with internal security (see Chapter VI), and the Treaty itself had saved the Soviet position in Syria and the Middle East.

Increased Syrian Confidence and the Limits of the Treaty

Strengthened by the increased arms flow and emboldened by the formalization of Soviet-Syrian relations in the treaty, Al-Assad soon precipitated a regional crisis by massing Syrian troops on Jordan's border in November 1980. Al-Assad was displeased with King Hussein, both for backing Iraq in the Gulf war and for supporting Syria's Islamic opposition.¹²⁴ Al-Assad also wished to remind Hussein of Syria's ability to threaten Jordan militarily if he joined the U.S.-Egyptian-Israeli peace process.

The Jordanian crisis is interesting for at least two reasons. First, it reveals the perennial Soviet dilemma of transferring massive quantities of technologically advanced arms to an anti-status quo client. It cannot control the

¹²³ Borisov, op. cit., p.75.

¹²⁴ New York Times, December 3, 1980, p.14. (Hussein later admitted that he was supporting anti-Al-Assad terrorists. See Chapter VII.)

action of this client once the arms are received.¹²⁵ Just as the Soviet Union had virtually no ability to determine how Egypt utilized Soviet arms in 1969-70 and 1973, so too could it not control Syria in 1980. Clearly, it was the vast increase in the quality and quantity of Soviet armies shipments (and the Friendship Treaty) which had emboldened Syria to threaten Jordan.

Of course, the Soviet Union could completely restrict the flow of arms to Syria (as it did in late 1976, early 1977). But this would not (and did not in 1976) thwart the use of Soviet weapons already in inventory. Additionally, if continued too long, it raises the spector of having the client accommodate one's adversaries, either in order to secure an alternative source of supply, or in acceptance of a status quo which it cannot change.¹²⁶

The second interesting point about the Jordanian crisis is that it illustrated the limits of the Treaty and the manipulative dynamics of the Soviet-Syrian relationship. The

¹²⁵ See Rustow, Oil and Turmoil, op. cit., p.84-86. Moreover, Al-Assad massed his troops on Jordan's boarder as Soviet (candidate) Politburo member Kuznetzov was arriving in Damascus. This, of course, conveyed the false message that the Soviet Union supported his actions (which it did not), and presumably angered the Soviets.

¹²⁶ This is why the Soviet Union must calibrate carefully the arms transfers to Syria: it needs to assess all situations as they arise and determine at that moment whether or not it is in the Soviet interest to allow Syria to go to war.

Soviet Union made it clear from the start of the crisis that the Treaty could not be utilized as an excuse for Syria to involve it in a conflict against its will.¹²⁷ While Al-Assad must have realized that the Treaty did not guarantee unconditional Soviet support for Syrian policy initiatives, he attempted to utilize it as if it did.¹²⁸ But the Soviet Union did not allow itself to be led around by Al-Assad.

What Syria wanted and did not get from the Treaty was an expansion of the Soviet Union's commitment to include Syrian activities against Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel. But the Soviet Union was not about to provide Syria with a *carte blanche* for regional expansion. What it did provide, however, was a guarantee for Syria's physical integrity. And this was little more than reaffirm the Soviet position on protecting Damascus first enunciated at least thirteen years ago. Thus, even with the increased arms transfers, the Soviet Union may not have given up as much as it might at first seem.

One study of Soviet treaty-making in the Middle East has concluded that such friendship treaties are "devoid of

¹²⁷ During the crisis the Soviet Union did not refer to the Treaty (nor even verbally attack King Hussein). See Nir, *op. cit.*, p.15.

¹²⁸ The most perplexing part is that after the Jordan crisis (especially in Lebanon during 1982), Al-Assad's again behaved as if the Treaty guaranteed Soviet support.

obligatory significance in the eyes of both parties."¹²⁹ Hence, Syria cannot initiate hostilities with the certainty that the Soviet Union would intervene to assist it; and the Soviet Union (on the basis of the Treaty) cannot influence Syrian foreign and military policy decisions. The Treaty simply reaffirmed each party's limited commitment to the other.

The Syrian Domestic Crisis Resurfaces and Soviet
Second Thought about Al-Assad

While the Soviet-Syrian Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation permitted both the Soviet Union and Syria to reduce their external isolation, it did little to correct Al-Assad's domestic weaknesses. As Syrian support for Iran, and the strains it created with the Gulf states wreaked havoc on the Syrian economy, Syria's internal decline accelerated. It soon became apparent that the Treaty, and the increased Soviet security assistance (see Chapter VII), were not stabilizing the Al-Assad regime.

By late 1981, Al-Assad had only tenuous control of the country. Internal terrorism was far from subdued, the economy was on the verge of collapse, and the animosity with Iraq, as well as the continuing involvement in Lebanon, all sapped the regimes strength. Often when a Soviet commentator

¹²⁹ Nir, op. cit., p.32.

wishes to make a point about Soviet policy, he makes the same point about U.S. policy and lets the reader draw the parallel. So it must have been an Izvestiia article pointed out how the United States over-relied on Sadat to protect its position in Egypt. Now, with his death, the U.S. position was (temporarily) in doubt.¹³⁰

The implication for the astute Soviet reader was clear: first, the Soviet Union's over-reliance on Al-Assad could lead to disaster if he is overthrown and the Soviet Union is not prepared. Second, the Soviet Union had to widen its base of support in Syria and ensure that Egypt 1972 did not repeat itself.

It is interesting that even after the Friendship Treaty, the Soviet Union seems to have briefly attempted to abandon the Al-Assad regime. As the security situation continued to deteriorate in late 1981, the Syrian Communist Party began to shift toward a more critical evaluation of Al-Assad.

In November, the SCP attempted to publish and distribute leaflets critical of the new anti-terrorist security measures. In order to suppress the criticism, Al-Assad confiscated the leaflets. The SCP retaliated with a front page article in their party paper criticizing both the

¹³⁰ FBIS-SOV, October 10, 1981, p.H1.

restrictions and confiscation.¹³¹ In retaliation, Al-Assad expelled the Communists from the P.N.F.

Al-Assad, probably correctly, interpreted the SCP's actions as Soviet inspired and as designed to distance the Communist from his regime in the event that he should fall.¹³² With the SCP better positioned, the Soviet Union hoped to enable its supporters join any subsequent government.

Regardless of the SCP's failure (or perhaps because of it), the Soviet Union returned to a policy of supporting the Al-Assad regime. But Al-Assad's domestic (and foreign) troubles continued to mount. Ominously, on January, 23, 1982, there was a coup attempt.

The coup attempt involved several hundred military personnel from the air force, tank brigades, artillery, and reportedly, even Rifat al-Assad's Defense Companies.¹³³ Since the operation seemed to emanate from an air base near the Iraqi border, it seems most probable that there was Iraqi instigation. Approximately two hundred people were arrested, and at least thirty-five of the conspirators were executed. The situation was so precarious that the Soviet

¹³¹ Cited in Nir, op. cit., p.21. Also see, The Jerusalem Post, November 29, 1981.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ New York Times, January 31, 1982, p.4; February 6, 1982, p.6; FBIS-SOV, February 3, 1982, p.H1.

Union was concerned for its in-country personnel and began reducing the number of advisors stationed in Syria (see Chapter VII).

While civil disturbances and car bombings had increased throughout the late 1970's, early 1980's, it was at Hama, during February 2-15, 1982, that the largest, most successful, and best organized resistance to Al-Assad regime was to coalesce. (And in retrospect, it was also the peak of internal resistance until the present time.)

Hama had long been a center of religious opposition to the Ba'th. It was the site of major disturbances in 1964 and 1972.¹³⁴ In February 1982, the Islamic Front proclaimed a city- and country-wide uprising. The government responded by surrounding the city with 6,000-8,000 troops. In the process of the two weeks onslaught, 10,000-25,000 people were killed, two Syrian Army brigades mutinied, the city was destroyed, and three of the eleven Soviet advisors participating in suppression were killed.¹³⁵

While the details of the Soviet Union's role in the suppression of Hama is not known, it is certain that it played a large role in the internal security management of

¹³⁴ See, Van Dam, op. cit., p.34.

¹³⁵ Abd Allah, op. cit., p.193.; The Christian Science Monitor, April 1, 1982; New York Times, February 12, 14, 15, 29, 1982; Ha'aretz, February 28, 1982.

the regime. Daniel Pipes claims that there were 500 KGB officers stationed south of Damascus in 1980 in order to assist Al-Assad with internal security.¹³⁶

Similarly, not much is known about the Soviet Union's general attitude toward the uprising. It is clear, however, that Soviet commentators and academics blame the United States for supporting the activities of "...reactionary-Islamic groups, which under the cover of religious slogans sought to undermine the National Progressive Front and to weaken the government of Hafez al-Assad."¹³⁷

It is ironic that the Soviet academic community was divided over the threat posed by the Islamic resurgence. While Primakov (and most academics) minimized the Islamic threat,¹³⁸ Al-Assad was fighting the Brotherhood for the survival of his regime. It was no wonder then that there was a reaction to Primakov's position in the Soviet academy,¹³⁹ and that he eventually recognized that Soviet orientalists

¹³⁶ Daniel Pipes, "Syria: The Cuba of the Middle East?", Commentary July 1986, p.17.

¹³⁷ Borisov, op. cit., p.74.

¹³⁸ E.M. Primakov, "Islam i protsessy obshchestvennogo razvitiia stran zarubezhnogo Vostoka" ["Islam and the Process of Social Development of the Beyond the Border Eastern Countries"], Voprosy Filosofii 8, 1980, pp.60-63.

¹³⁹ Viktor Sheinis and Anatolii Elianov, "E.M. Primakov. Vostok Postle Krakha kilonialnoi sistemy" ["E.M.Primakov: The East After the Failure of the Colonial System"], Narodny Azii i Afriki 2, 1983, pp.181-182.

had underestimated the significance of emerging Islam.¹⁴⁰

On the Syrian side, it is interesting that Rifat al-Assad, and not Hafez, is held "personally responsible for the slaughter at Hama."¹⁴¹ While Rifat al-Assad destroyed most of the opposition in Hama, it was not completely routed.¹⁴²

Indeed, on March 11, 1982, the Muslim Brotherhood joined with the Iraqi wing of the Ba'th Party, the Muslim Front, the Arab Socialist Party, Nasserists, and independent political figures to form the "National Alliance for the Liberation of Syria."¹⁴³

The key to the future of the internal disturbances seems to lie in the ability or inability of the National Alliance to extend its opposition south from Aleppo. Since its

¹⁴⁰ E.M. Primakov, "Aktualnye zadachi sovetskogo vostokovedeniia" ["The Timely Tasks of Soviet Oriental Studies"], Narodny Azii i Afriki 5, 1983, p.11.

¹⁴¹ Middle East International, January 27, 1984, p.19.

¹⁴² A number of Muslim Brotherhood survivors were given shelter by Sheik Said Shaban, the Sunni fundamentalist leader of Tripoli, Lebanon. See, New York Review of Books, May 8, 1986, p.31. (The Sheik later played a role in the anti-Assad movement.)

¹⁴³ The Brotherhood and Islamic Front (i.e., the religious components) seem to be most the most important part of the Alliance. And while the Alliance calls for the institution of Shari'a [Islamic law] as the basis of the regime, there seems to be tension over the precise nature of religion in the struggle. Consequently, the Alliance is mainly a group of disparate organizations with little in common except their opposition to Al-Assad. See, Abd-Allah, op. cit., p.193; and Devlin, "Syrian Policy," in Freedman, Middle East Since Camp David (Boulder: Westview, 1982), p.127.

inception, the National Alliance has not been very active, and it can probably be discounted as the motor force of future change in Syria. As Elie Kedourie aptly said: "a conspiratorial and terrorist movement, thus met its match in a regime equally conspiratorial and terroristic."¹⁴⁴

It seems that Al-Assad's combined policy of minimally accommodating Sunni, Damascene middle class economic interests and brutally suppressing even the slightest dissent seems to have quelled the anti-Al-Assad fever.

The Damascene middle class reaction also highlights the position of several Syrian minorities and their ambivalent reaction to the increased repression of the late 1970's and early 1980's. Obviously, the heterodox Muslim groups as well as the Christians and Kurds are in a different position than the Sunni majority, but these groups often perceive the alternative to the repressive Alawi regime as a fanatical Islamic republic.¹⁴⁵

Hence, they tend to grudgingly support, or at least not work against, Hafez al-Assad. As John Devlin noted:

Significant as are the scale of [the Hama] uprising and the severity, not to say ferocity, with which the government put it down, even more important are its

¹⁴⁴ Elie Kedourie, "Political Terrorism in the Muslim World," in Benjamin Netanyahu (ed.), Terrorism: How the West Can Win (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1986), p.76.

¹⁴⁵ See, Middle East International, March 8, 1985, p.16.

limits. The insurgency received at most some token, verbal support in other Syrian cities and none in the countryside...The lack of support for the Islamic Movement indicates that by and large Syrian villagers and their relatives in the cities, whatever their sectarian affiliations, are not prepared to risk the material gains of the past twenty years for a movement stemming from the same societal group that they consider to have been their oppressors. The Islamic Front's claim that "all Syrians are agreed, despite their religious differences, that the Government must be based on Islam" is not accurate.¹⁴⁶

While Syria turned the corner (at least temporarily) on its internal security problems after Hama, the same could not be said for its external problems. The Gulf war still complicated Syria's relations with Saudi Arabia and the smaller gulf kingdoms, and Jordan and Iraq were still subverting Al-Assad's rule. Fortunately for Al-Assad, the course of the war began to favor Iran and the conflict soon began occupying even more of the region's attention. Thus, Al-Assad experienced a window of lessened opposition.

It is notable that even with the strains over support for Iran, Syria generally has been able to maintain acceptable relations with Saudi Arabia. In approaching the Saudis, Al-Assad takes a dual track: on one level he holds out the possibility of ever increasing dependency on (and eventual control by) the Soviet Union. Thus, if the Saudis do not pay for substantial amounts of Soviet arms, then Al-Assad would

¹⁴⁶ Devlin "Syria's Political Structure," op. cit., p.18.

have no choice but to give all to the Soviets in order to pursue the fight against the Zionists.¹⁴⁷

Second, Al-Assad utilizes the threat of Israeli expansion itself to pressure the Saudi Arabians into supporting his policies. Syria becomes the "fortress" protecting Saudi Arabia itself.¹⁴⁸ Additionally, Al-Assad has agreed not to organize the Ba'th Party in Saudi Arabia, and Rifat al-Assad is related by marriage to the Saudi royal family and has close ties with them.¹⁴⁹ But in spite of Syrian success with Saudi Arabia, its policy toward Israel, Lebanon and the P.L.O. collapsed during the 1981-1982 period.

Lebanon, Israel, & P.L.O., 1981-1982

While the 1982 Syrian-Israeli war tends to obscure the conflict's more distant antecedents, the fact is that the conflict is rooted in Lebanon's civil war and the unwillingness of Israel to allow the P.L.O. or Syria the opportunity to dominate the country. With the breakdown in the Syrian-Maronite alliance in 1978, the Christian forces were increasingly attempting to utilize, if not directly engage, Israel in a conflict with Syria.¹⁵⁰ (Of course, both

¹⁴⁷ Middle East International, November 25, 1983, p.14.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Devlin, "Syrian Policy," op. cit., p.129.

¹⁵⁰ See, Shiff and Ya'ar, op. cit.

Israel and Syria were also attempting to utilize Lebanon against each other.)

By 1980-81, the apex of this struggle moved to a single city in the center of the Bekaa Valley. Zahle is a predominantly Christian city of less than 200,000, strategically located atop Lebanon's major north/south and east/west [Beirut-Damascus] highways. After the break down of the Maronite-Syrian alliance in 1978, Syria become extremely concerned about Christian control of this city, and by October 1980 was violently attempting to take it over.¹⁵¹

Whether in reaction to Syrian pressure, or in an attempt to improve their own position, the Christian forces attempted to construct a road linking Zahle with their forces on Mount Sannin.¹⁵² If such a road were built, Lebanon's Christian would have connected their stronghold in the Bekaa, with their superior forces in the north.¹⁵³ In response, the Syrians besieged the city on April 1, 1981.

When Syrian forces utilized helicopters in their actions

¹⁵¹ William Harris, "The View From Zahle: Security and Economic Conditions in the Central Bekaa, 1980-1985," The Middle East Journal, Summer, 1985, pp.274-276.

¹⁵² Zahle, being located in the Bekaa, is a Christian island in a Shi'ite Muslim sea.

¹⁵³ The Christians were also negotiating for Israeli support. In fact, Bashir Gemayel, the new, undisputed Christian leader, was said to be "Israel's man" in Lebanon since 1977. Shiff and Ya'ar, op, cit, p.18.

against the city, Israel, fearing the weakening of its tacit Christian allies and claiming that Syrian actions violated the 1976 understanding regarding Syria inability to utilize air power in Lebanon, promptly intervened and shot down two of the helicopters. In response, Syria moved numerous surface-to-air missile batteries into the Bekaa Valley. Since the instillation of the missiles threatened Israeli operations in Lebanon, an Israeli attack seemed immanent.

Under American-led mediation, the situation was cooled down slightly and Israel temporarily acquiesced to the status quo. But because the April 1981 missile crisis was never defused, Syrian-Israeli tensions were very high and war was constantly on the horizon. It is interesting that the pattern established during the Jordanian crisis was being repeated: Syria acts --apparently without first consulting the Soviet Union¹⁵⁴-- and the Soviet Union refrains from backing its client militarily. In fact, the Soviet Ambassador to Lebanon, Alexander Soldatov, flatly stated that developments in Lebanon are "unrelated to the Soviet-Syrian treaty."¹⁵⁵ But in order to remind Israel not to become too aggressive, the Soviet Union carried out joint

¹⁵⁴ See, Robert O. Freedman, "The Soviet Union, Syria, and the Crisis in Lebanon: A Preliminary Analysis," in David H. Parrington (ed.), The Middle East Annual (Boston: G.K. Hall and Co., 1984), pp. 114-115.

¹⁵⁵ Cited in *ibid.*, p. 115.

naval landing exercises with Syrian troops.¹⁵⁶

Although the missile crisis receded throughout the rest of 1981 and early 1982, neither Israel nor Syria had forgotten about it. Al-Assad, fearing a war with Israel, was utilizing the crisis to argue for more Soviet weapons and "strategic parity" with Israel.¹⁵⁷ Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, or more properly General Ariel Sharon, utilized the crisis as an excuse to attempt to realize the grandiose ambition of establishing Israel regional dominance.¹⁵⁸

With the cooperative U.S. Secretary of State, Alexander M. Haig, Jr. in office, and the world's attention temporarily diverted to the Anglo-Argentinean conflict in the south Atlantic, Sharon thought that he could deal with all of Israel's security problems (i.e., the Palestinian, Jordanian, and Syrian conflicts) in one swift blow. Thus, he launched his operation "Peace for Galilee." And unbeknownst to Begin and the rest of the Cabinet at the start of the operation, Sharon's plan called for a direct attack on Syrian positions in the Bekaa Valley.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ See, Christian Science Monitor, July 6, 1981.

¹⁵⁷ New York Times, May 7, 1982.

¹⁵⁸ See, Robert G. Neumann, "Assad and the Future of the Middle East," Foreign Affairs, Winter 1983/84, pp.241-253; and Shiff and Ya'ar, op. cit.

¹⁵⁹ See, Shiff and Ya'ar, op. cit., pp.55,115.

After examining the war, it is clear that the Soviet Union did not want Syria to go to war against Israel in Lebanon, and that, as before, it would not move to protect Al-Assad's position in that country.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, the Soviet Union specifically seems to have told Al-Assad this; first, Marshal Pavel Kuthakov, Commander of the Soviet Air Force, traveled to Damascus in the winter 1982, and then Deputy Prime Minister, Ivan Arkhipov traveled to Damascus in May 1982. Both reportedly told Al-Assad that "he could not expect unqualified Soviet help in Lebanon."¹⁶¹ Hence, they reiterated the limits of the Treaty.¹⁶²

The Syrian Debacle in Lebanon, June 1982 and Soviet Weaponry
When Israel invaded Lebanon, Syrian air defense forces in the Bekaa Valley included:

- 2 SA-2 batteries (12 launchers)
- 2 SA-3 batteries (7 launchers)
- 15 SA-6 batteries (60 launchers)
- SA-7 missiles (hand-held)
- 200 ZSU-23-4's and ZSU-52-2's
- 130mm/150mm anti-aircraft guns.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ See, Freedman, "The Soviet Union, Syria, and the Crisis in Lebanon," op. cit.

¹⁶¹ See, Hans Maull, "The Arms Trade with the Middle East and North Africa," in The Middle East and North Africa, 1984/1985 (London: Europa Publications, 1986), p.867. Ironically, Kuthakov had also gone to Syria in May 1973, five months before the 1973 war. See Murphy, op. cit., p.279.

¹⁶² i.e., as long as Israel respected Syrian territorial integrity (and the Al-Assad regime's survival was not threatened), the Soviet Union would not intervene.

¹⁶³ Jane's Defence Weekly, August 17, 1985, p.315.

All this equipment was Soviet made, and before the conflict, the above system was thought to be adequately effective. It contained both proven modern hardware and a number of more outdated systems.¹⁶⁴ Before June 1982, few thought that the system, and especially the SA-6's (which at that time were the major force component of Syria's air defense forces, both in Lebanon and at home) would be so vulnerable.¹⁶⁵

The major problem with the air defense system and the SA-6's as configured in the Bekaa valley was that Syrian tactical usage exacerbated design failures and weaknesses. Israel was able to take advantage of deviations from standard Soviet practice to highlight the system's vulnerability and destroy it. Had the Syrian forces not deviated so substantially from standard Soviet air defense

¹⁶⁴ The SA-2's, for example, are virtually ineffective below 12,000-18,00 feet and therefore virtually useless in the current Middle East battle field environment. Reportedly, they are being phased out of service in the Soviet Air Defence Force. See, David R. Jones, Soviet Armed Forces Review Annual [henceforth SAFRA] 6, (New York: Academic International Press, 1983), p.135. The SA-3's are effective at medium and low altitudes, but can still be outwitted with proper electronic warfare (EW). (SAFRA 6, op. cit., p.155.) The ZSU-23-4's and -52-2's (radar guided, rapid fire mobile anti-aircraft artillery) are fairly effective pieces of equipment, and they were, in fact, responsible for a significant number of Israeli losses in 1973. (Herzog, The Arab-Israeli Wars, op. cit., pp.217-218; and Drew Middleton, New York Times, June 2, 1981.)

¹⁶⁵ With a 12 kilometer maximum altitude, and a minimum altitude of 50 meters, the SA-6 had a highly effective kill zone of between 4-24 kilometers. (Jane's Defence Weekly, July 5, 1986, p.1303.) These were the missiles responsible for shooting down three-quarters of the 120 planes lost by Israel in 1973. (Glassman, op. cit., p.127.)

doctrine, it is probable that they would not have suffered to the extent they did.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, the Syrians combined these tactical errors with even greater strategic ones.¹⁶⁷

Given these serious strategic and tactical deficiencies, Israel was well placed to take advantage of the SA-6's major design flaw: it is equipped with only one engagement radar per battery. Thus, if Israel could knock-out this single radar, they would render all four launch vehicles (and all twelve missiles) useless.¹⁶⁸ And they did just this by a combination of surprise, harassment, deception, and electronic counter-counter measures.

¹⁶⁶ First, Syria neglected the advantage of the SA-6's mobility. It dug in the launchers and kept them in place for long periods of time. Second, Syria insufficiently hardened the sites, and thus left them more vulnerable to attack. Third, it made virtually no use of decoy missile sites. Fourth, by operating their radars unnecessarily, they practiced poor electronic security. All these failures allowed Israel to gather vital information on the characteristics and locations of the equipment. Such vital information as radar frequencies and capabilities, air defense tactics and procedures were probably well known to Israel for months before the attack.

¹⁶⁷ They failed to equip their forces with sufficient early warning radars, and they relied on too few types of surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft artillery. (See SAFRA 6, op. cit., p.158.) According to Israeli accounts, the Syrian forces only had two early warning radars deployed for a force of nineteen missile batteries. A comparable Soviet force would have at least eight to ten radars. (See "SAM Suppression: Mid-East Lessons," Defence Update no.37, 1983, p.56.) Had Syrian forces had sufficient numbers of radar, they most likely would have had more time to react and better low altitude coverage. Thus, they would have been able to take out a number of Israeli aircraft and to maintain the integrity of their position.

¹⁶⁸ Jane's Defence Weekly, July 7, 1986, pp.1302-1303.

In planning the attack on the Syrian missile force, Israel combined a masterful mix of proven and innovative technology and tactics.¹⁶⁹ Flying out of range, Israeli Phantoms launched large numbers of drones (never before utilized in combat) which carried the radar signature of F-4 Phantoms. Since the drones were coming in with the sun behind them, the missile crews could not optically sight the crafts and had to activate their engagement radars. Once the Syrian crews activated their radars and fired their ready surface-to-air missiles at the fake targets, a squadron of Israeli F-4E's (standing-off out of range), flew-in at low altitude --while also utilizing advanced jamming equipment and firing chaff-- and fired anti-radiation rockets at the engagement radars.¹⁷⁰

As a result of the attack, most Syrian radars were destroyed. (The few radar units which were operational were, reportedly, turned off for fear of further attack with

¹⁶⁹ Israel was so confident of its ability to take-out the Syrian missiles, that the day before the operation, Deputy Commander of the I.D.F., Amos Amir, promised the cabinet "minimal" losses in the operation. (Shiff, op. cit., p.166.)

¹⁷⁰ Aviation Week and Space Technology, July 5, 1982, pp.16-19; New York Times, September 9, 1982, p.A8; September 14, 1983, p.A1; September 19, 1982, section 4, p.2. There is also some evidence that Israel utilized standard artillery fire to soften up the sites, and ground launched anti-radiation weapons to destroying radars. See, Jane's Defense Weekly, October 15, 1985, p.741; Shiff, op.cit., p.166.

anti-radiation weapons.) With the Syrian missile system effectively blinded by the loss of its engagement radars, Israel launched a series of strikes with 60-80 F-4 Phantoms, A-4 Skyhawks, and Kfir aircraft. The successive waves of attacks destroyed all nineteen missile batteries, as well as over eighty Syrian aircraft dispatched to protect them. But what General Sharon did not quite count on was that the attack against Syria would bring in the superpowers.

When Israel destroyed most of Syria's air force (and presumably the most capable squadrons of its interceptor forces), it left Syria vulnerable to further Israeli attack. In spite of the fact that Syria still had formidable ground force, uncontested control of the sky over the battle field would have insured an Israeli victory in any subsequent clash. Thus, because Syria was unable to protect itself from Israel, the Soviet Union had to enter the conflict in order to ensure that the Al-Assad regime was not destroyed. And once the Soviet Union entered, the United States also had to enter. Thus, a fragile Syrian-Israeli cease-fire was worked out within several days.

The Initial Soviet Reaction to the 1982 Syrian Defeat

The 1982 Syrian-Israeli war is significant because it again reveals the limits of Soviet support for Syria, and because it demonstrates that if the Soviet Union must intervene to protect the Al-Assad regime (in contrast to intervening to

support Syrian expansion) then it will do so. As noted, the war so increased Syrian vulnerability, that the only factor standing between an Israeli destruction of Damascus and the Al-Assad regime (for a number of months) was the Soviet promise to intervene to protect the Al-Assad and the new Soviet installed and operated air defense system.

During the course of the battle, the Soviet Union did little except give Syria verbal support, warn Israel not to take the battle onto Syrian territory, and warn the United States that the conflict could widen into a superpower confrontation.¹⁷¹ After the battle and in response to Information Minister Ahmad Iskandar's call for a "strategic union," the Soviet Union again denied that the Soviet-Syrian Treaty was relevant to Syrian actions in Lebanon and refused to grant such a union.¹⁷²

The situation in Syria after the 1982 war resembled that in Egypt in 1969: the local client's military situation was perilous, and the political situation almost as bleak. And like in 1969, high ranking Soviet military personnel began rushing to Damascus. On June 13, 1982, the First Deputy Commander of the Soviet Air Defense Force arrived in Damascus to investigate the failure of the Soviet supplied

¹⁷¹ See, New York Times, June 11, 1982; for the full details see Freedman, "The Soviet Union, Syria and the Crisis in Lebanon," op. cit., pp.118-126.

¹⁷² FBIS-SOV, June 22, 1982, p.H3.

air defense system.¹⁷³ Within days, he was followed by the Chief of Staff, Nikolai Orgakov. Moreover, a "variety of sources" reported that Al-Assad made secret trips to Moscow, in June and then probably again in July 1982.¹⁷⁴

A most interesting aspect of the conflict was the apparent Soviet willingness to intervene if Israel attacked Syria. While Soviet naval deployment in the Eastern Mediterranean was not even as large as during the 1981 missile crisis,¹⁷⁵ their interventionary forces would probably have been more than sufficient had they decided to commit them.¹⁷⁶ It is probable that the Soviet Union was serious in its repeated and often public warnings to Israel.

There have been a number of different interpretations of the reasons for Soviet quiescence to the Israeli victory in Lebanon in June 1982. Robert Freedman has written that it was Israel's formidable military power (especially virtual

¹⁷³ New York Times, January 2, 1983.

¹⁷⁴ Maull, op. cit., p.867.

¹⁷⁵ During the 1982 crisis, the Soviet Union had thirty-nine ships in the Eastern Mediterranean and only two were close by Lebanon; This was a significantly smaller presence than during 1981 missile crisis. See, Nir, op. cit., p.41.

¹⁷⁶ There are conflicting estimates of the number of Soviet divisions alerted: one estimate (from The Washington Post, July 9, 1982) asserts twenty-six divisions on the Soviet Union's southern border were alerted, and another (from Ha'aretz, June 16, 1982) asserts seven airborne divisions were alerted.

air superiority), the disquieting performance of Soviet armor and surface-to-air missiles, as well as the anticipated reaction of the U.S., which kept the Soviet Union from intervening.¹⁷⁷

It also should be emphasized that the benefits of a Soviet move against Israel just did not outweigh the cost. First, Al-Assad's goals in Lebanon contradicted the Soviet Union's own. Hence there was little reason to support him in his effort to dominate Lebanon. Second, if the Soviet Union aggressively opposed Israel politically, it was unlikely that it would accomplish much except magnify the scope of the Syrian-Soviet defeat by focusing more attention on it. And third, as Freedman points out, the Soviet military situation was not promising.

Thus, with Al-Assad seemingly not in danger of being ousted, and with the possibility of a major confrontation with Israel (and then the United States) the only other major option, the Soviet Union reiterated its guarantee of Syrian territorial integrity and began a controlled rearmament of Syria from which it hoped to gain greater control over Al-Assad's actions.

¹⁷⁷ Freedman, "The Soviet Union, Syria, and the Crisis in Lebanon," *op. cit.*, p.116.

Chapter VII

Assessing Soviet-Syrian Relations: Vulnerability,
Accommodation, And Their ImpactSoviet Involvement in Syria After the 1982 War and the SA-5
Missile Intervention

The 1982 Syrian-Israeli war severely damaged the Soviet Union's credibility and prestige. By allowing its primary regional partner to be ignominiously defeated (by American backed Israel) and not coming to its assistance, the Soviet Union raised serious questions over its willingness and ability to protect its clients. And these doubts did not just occur in Damascus, Tel Aviv, and Washington, but in numerous Third World and Western capitals as well. Consequently, unless the Soviet Union was prepared to concede the region to the United States, it had little choice but to redouble its efforts to protect Syria.

Within several months of Syria's defeat, Soviet arms transfers to Syria reached a quantitatively and qualitatively new level. By March 1983 (nine months after the war), the Soviet Union had resupplied all the equipment destroyed by Israel.¹ Some sources even maintain that by early 1983 the Syrian air force, for example, even exceeded

¹ Jane's Defence Weekly, October 12, 1985, p.793.

its pre-war order of battle by 50 first line aircraft.² Dollar estimates of the resupply range from \$2.3 billion during 1983,³ to \$3.6 billion for 1982-83.⁴ Whichever figure is accepted, it is a huge amount of weaponry.

In undertaking the resupply, the Soviet Union gave special attention to surface-to-air weaponry. Among the systems transferred were SA-5's, -9's, and -11's.⁵ Thus, Syrian air defense forces were now much better armed than before.⁶ The most significant additions to the Syrian air defense capability were the SA-11's and SA-5's.⁷

² New York Review of Books, May 8, 1986, p.32.

³ New York Times, October 7, 1983.

⁴ SAFRA 8, op. cit., p.108.

⁵ For SA-9 and -11 sightings, see Middle East International, February 18, 1983, p.9; and New York Times, May 16, 1983; For SA-5, see New York Times, May 16, 1983. With the possible exception of East Germany, (also in 1983), SA-5's had not (until then) been deployed outside of the Soviet Union. SAFRA, 7, op. cit., p.43-45.

⁶ The Air Defense Command possessed 54 SA-2/SA-3 Batteries; 25 SA-6 Batteries, 8 SA-5 Batteries; and 50,000 men. Other Syrian services had ZSU-23-4 and -57-2 anti-aircraft guns, and numerous SA-2's, 3's, 6's, 7's, 8's, 9's. See, IISS, World Military Balance, 1983/84, op. cit., p.63.

⁷ The SA-11 is a follow-on to the vulnerable SA-6 and it is designed to solve the SA-6's major defects. Like the SA-6, the SA-11 has four missiles per launch vehicle, and each battery has a separate surveillance and target acquisition radar. But unlike the SA-6, the SA-11 launch vehicle has its own radar for illuminating and tracking a target. Thus, one battery, with four launch vehicles, can track four separate targets (not one like the SA-6.) Jane's Defense Weekly, July 15, 1986, p...

While the addition of the SA-11 eliminated the technological vulnerability of Syria's SA-6's, it did not overcome the Israeli airborne warning and control advantage. Consequently, the Soviet Union attempted to deal with this problem by transferring the SA-5 missile system.

In January 1983, Israel announced that the Soviet Union had shipped and deployed SA-5 missiles in Syria. With a 150 mile range, an altitude ceiling of 95,000 feet, and a dual stage, solid fuel rocket, the SA-5 can reach speeds in excess of mach 3.5, and is designed to destroy large, airborne warning and control aircraft (i.e., AWAC's, Hawkeyes, and Nimrods).⁸

Since the missiles (at 54 feet long and 4 feet in diameter) are large and non-mobile, the Soviets deployed them at three fixed sites: Dera, on the Jordanian border; Dumeir, east of Damascus; and Shinshar, outside of Homs. Each site was equipped with advanced tracking and surveillance electronics, protected by SA-3, 6, 8, and 11 missiles, and operated by 500-600 Soviet personnel. Additionally, the sites were so closely protected by the Soviets special forces that any Syrian wishing to enter --including senior high command officers-- had to have clearance from Moscow.⁹

⁸ See, Jane's Defence Weekly, October 12, 1985, p.793; New York Times, January 1, 1983; May 16, 1983; May 21, 1983; June 19, 1983.

⁹ Jane's Defence Weekly, October 12, 1985, p.793; New York Times, January 1, 1983; May 16, 1983; May 21, 1983; June 19, 1983.

All told, several thousand new Soviet combat personnel were deployed to Syria to operate and protect the sites, and to train Syrian personnel.

While the SA-5 is a powerful system, there seems to be a tremendous amount of confusion in the Western press about its actual significance. The New York Times, for example, continually wrote that the SA-5 was the Soviet Union's "most advanced surface-to-air missile."¹⁰ Nothing could be farther from the fact; in reality, the SA-5 cannot "seriously threaten AWAC's due to the antiquity of the system and its susceptibility to jamming."¹¹ Thus, it is tactically limited to "engagements against relatively large unmaneuverable targets at long range."¹²

The SA-5 is better suited to threatening civilian passenger liners over the Mediterranean than to destroying Israeli command and control aircraft. Regardless of its limitations, three factors are still significant about the deployment.

First, the SA-5 deployment represented a major increase in Soviet resources committed to Syria, and especially of personnel. While the exact financial arrangement for the SA-

¹⁰ See, for example, New York Times, January 8, 1983, p.3; May 16, 1983, p.1.

¹¹ Jane's Defence Weekly, October 12, 1985, p.793.

¹² Ibid.

5 acquisition are not known, it is likely that the Soviet Union absorbed part of the cost (see below). And these missiles are surely not cheap. Additionally, the number of Soviet personnel in Syria almost doubled to approximately 7,000 (see below). And in contrast to the situation with Egypt in 1970, there is no indication that Syria is paying for this Soviet presence.

Second, the SA-5 deployment was probably the only way for the Soviet Union to maintain its position in Syria and the region. As then Israeli Minister of Defense, Moshe Arens said: the deployment was a "desperate and...last-ditch effort to protect their position in the one country where they still have a position."¹³ After the Egyptian experience, it is unlikely that the Soviet Union undertook this deployment without a careful consideration of the inherent risks.¹⁴ Clearly, the certainty of losing its Middle East position was less onerous than the possibility of Soviet forces becoming embroiled in a conflict with Israel and the U.S.¹⁵

¹³ New York Times, February 24, 1983.

¹⁴ Since the deployment was apparently approved during the late fall 1982, it is unclear which Soviet leader, Brezhnev or Andropov actually authorized it. Anonymous Syrian sources first claimed that Brezhnev did (New York Times, March 21, 1983), but Defense Minister Tlas later said that Andropov "personally" took the decision. (New York Times, September 14, 1984, p.A1).

¹⁵ It highly probable that the Soviet Union and Syria agreed before the deployment to a fixed schedule for the withdrawal of Soviet personnel. When the system was first

Without a dramatic Soviet move to insure that Israel would not attack Syria, it is possible (perhaps even probable) that Israel would have moved against Damascus and finished off the Al-Assad regime.¹⁶ Even the threat to do so was producing instability in Syria. The Soviet Union's deployment deterred such action. Its increased physical presence and the heightened uncertainty caused by the SA-5's protected the Al-Assad regime from Israeli attack and allowed Al-Assad to subvert Israeli-American actions in Lebanon (which coincided with Soviet interests) with relative impunity.

The third significant feature of the SA-5 deployment is that the air defense system and its supporting intelligence, surveillance, and command and control operations have become directly and permanently linked (by satellite communication and control equipment) to the Soviet high command in

deployed and the Syrians announced that they would eventually take over the sites, there was considerable doubt over whether Syrians could handle the system, and whether the Soviets would be willing to give up control. But the Soviets apparently learned from the bitter experience with Sadat and Sadeq (and the less than alacritous removal of Soviet missile crews in May 1972): when Syrian personnel were able to man the SA-5 sites, the Soviet Union withdrew its "technicians" as quietly as it put them in. See, Economist, May 3, 1986, p.52.

¹⁶ As it were, Arens already was threatening a "pre-emptive strike" against the SA-5 sites and their Soviet crews. Ibid. This was, of course, reminiscent of Moshe Dayan's threats -and actions- against the Soviets in 1970.

Moscow.¹⁷ Thus, with the system fully integrated into the Soviet Union's own air defense system in Eastern Europe, the Syrian sites now extended Warsaw Pact air defense coverage of NATO as far west and south as Incirlik, Turkey.¹⁸

Even today, after Soviet personnel are reportedly no longer manning the sites, the system is fully integrated into the Soviet air defense network. It is quite probable, if Al-Assad permitted it (if he has not already agreed), that the SA-5 sites would be utilized by the Soviets in any U.S.-Soviet or NATO-Soviet conflict. Tellingly, there is no public Soviet-Syrian understanding on the role of these sites in a any future conflict not involving Syria.

Soviet Permeation of the Syrian Military

The extensive involvement of the Soviet Union in Syria's air defence, both at present and in the past, raises serious questions about the degree of Soviet penetration¹⁹ of that

¹⁷ Economist, May 3, 1986, p.52; Jane's Defense Weekly, October 12, 1985, p.793.

¹⁸ Given the fact that the Soviet deployment coincided with NATO expansions at Ezurum and Batman, and the construction of facilities at Mus, Turkey, it was more than coincidence that the Soviet deployment took the shape which it did.

¹⁹ A service or system is penetrated when non-members of a national society not only exert influence upon "...but actually participate in the process through which such systems allocate values, coordinate goal-directed efforts, and legitimately employ coercion. They not only engage in bargaining with the system, but they actually bargain within the system, taking positions on behalf of one or another of its components." Rosenau, op. cit., p.126.

service, and of the entire armed forces.

After examining the Syrian military and Soviet activities in it, it is clear that 1) a long-term, semi-permanent dependency on Soviet equipment exists; 2) the Soviet Union often assumes more than an advisory role in the Syrian armed forces and occasionally engages in direct management and control; and 3) that a tremendous amount of Soviet activities are aimed at establishing influence relationships with higher ranking officers.

While direct Soviet control of the Syrian armed forces is not extremely large, the Soviet Union is now able to manipulate the agenda, so as to maintain a Syrian military policy which is roughly, and over the long run, compatible with its own priorities. While it cannot fine tune this agenda and insure that Soviet preferences always dominate the list, it utilizes the military relationship to attempt to insure Syrian conformity to Soviet policy objectives.

Even in the most contentious issue areas, Lebanon and the P.L.O., the Soviet Union reduces Al-Assad's range of choices by refusing to provide sufficient weaponry to enable Al-Assad to impose his will on Lebanon while at the same time opposing Israel (see below and Chapter VIII). If Al-Assad were to dominate all of Lebanon, he would necessarily come in conflict with Israel. And it is the prospect of an

ultimate confrontation with Israel which, paradoxically, protects Soviet interests in Lebanon (and the P.L.O.)

Additionally, the Soviet Union further protects its interests in Lebanon by by-passing Al-Assad on Lebanese issues and increasingly dealing directly with the parties involved. Besides the Lebanese Communists (who have almost always been pro-Soviet), the Soviets have succeeded in opening direct military links to among other groups, the Lebanese Druze.²⁰ Additionally, the Soviet Union has been able to obtain the support of a number of Palestinian factions which are willing to support Soviet policy preferences.²¹

Thus, the Soviet Union deals with Syrian policy in Lebanon by refusing to provide Al-Assad with overwhelming force, by

²⁰ New York Times, September 25, 1985. Indeed, this strategy has proven more and more effective. And as the Communist-Druze alliance (against Syrian backed Amal) in the February 1987 camp war revealed, this policy can serve to protect Soviet interests (i.e., the P.L.O.). New York Times, February 19, 1987, p.A1.

²¹ Besides the Palestinian Communist Party (which is not a member of the P.L.O.), there is Nayef Hawatmeh's Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The Soviet Union has long been a proponent of a unified (anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist) Palestinian movement which is not dominated by Hafez al-Assad and Syria. Accordingly, its Palestinian allies often serve as intermediaries between the pro-Syrian and pro-Arafat wings of the movement, and the Soviets repeatedly sponsored unity talks in Moscow, Prague and elsewhere which seek to minimize Syrian participation. (See, for example, New York Times, August 24, 1986.) Occasionally, this pro-Al-Assad/pro-Soviet split even breaks out into violent confrontation. (See, for example, New York Times, February 13, 1987.)

increasingly working with selected Lebanese and Palestinian factions, and in the last resort, by relying on Israel to contain Syrian over-ambitions.

In non-Lebanese areas, it is clear that the cumulative impact of the Soviet-Syrian military nexus has created a long term and profound Syrian dependency on the Soviet Union. And this dependency often allows the Soviets to limit Syrian military actions. The Soviet Union cannot inhibit particular Syrian military initiatives (i.e., the 1980 Jordan crisis; the 1981 Zahle missile crisis), but it often can --over the long run-- modify the outcome of these initiatives by withholding support and attempting to bring pressure to bear on the Al-Assad regime through its supporters and contacts within the Syrian system.

The Soviet Union has reached this point through a series of gradual but significant measures. These include: establishing an unparalleled and extensive dependency on Soviet weapons and military support; stationing Soviet and East European combat and advisory personnel in Syria; training Syrian military personnel in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe; obtaining Syrian conformity to Soviet military strategy and tactics, and doctrine; and last but not least, providing Al-Assad with the ultimate guarantee against Israeli destruction of his regime.

Soviet Arms Transfer Policy

Between 1971 and 1980, Syrian defense spending more than doubled. By the early 1980's, expenditures stabilized at over \$2 billion per year (Table VII.1). The precise part of this figure devoted to personnel and in-country capital costs, and the part utilized for weapons purchases is not known. Judging from estimates for the value of Syrian weapons imports (Table VII.2), it is certain that the expenditure figures represent indigenous Syrian costs, and not direct outflows for weapons.

It is especially notable that (according to the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency [ACDA]) \$9.2 billion out of \$10.5 billion --or what amounts to 87%-- of Syrian weapons imports from 1979-1983 came from the Soviet Union.²² And after an additional half a billion dollars from Poland and Czechoslovakia are included, the figure approaches 95%.

Table VII.1
Syrian Defense Expenditures, 1974-1982 ²³
(billion U.S. \$; constant 1982 \$)

	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>
ACDA	.98	1.54	1.53	1.47	1.62	1.85	2.16	2.20	2.37	2.05
SIPRI	.77	1.39	1.41	1.39	1.51	2.51	2.14	2.01	1.84	1.89

²² ACDA, World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1985, op. cit., pp.125,134.

²³ Ibid., p.83; SIPRI Yearbook, 1984, op. cit., p.119. For the official Syrian figures provided to the IMF see Table VI.15.

Table VII.2
Value Of Syrian Arms Imports, 1974-1983²⁴
 (billion U.S. \$; constant 1982 \$)

1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
1.48	.62	.97	.96	1.23	2.64	3.14	2.23	1.90	1.63

The crucial fact about this relationship is that Syria (together with South Yemen), is one of the few Middle Eastern states which has not diversified its arms supply relationships. Algeria, Iraq, even Libya do not rely exclusively upon the Soviet Union for their arms.²⁵ And this is surely a political decision by Al-Assad (and, perhaps, other top personnel). Common sense dictates the diversification of arms suppliers; the fact that Syria does not, can only be considered as a sign of its deliberate (or coerced) acceptance of the Soviet monopoly with all its implications.²⁶

A second interesting feature of the Soviet-Syrian arms

²⁴ ACDA, *ibid.*, p.125.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.131,134.

²⁶ While the United States, under current and foreseeable conditions, is obviously ruled out as an alternative supplier, there is France, Britain, and even smaller exporters such as Brazil, South Korea and Taiwan. While one might at first think that an anti-French bias persists in Damascus because of the colonial legacy, it should be noted that many former French colonies now enjoy very close arms supply relationships with Paris (e.g., Tunisia and Algeria). Additionally, West Germany has been willing, and Brazil even eager, to transfer arms to Syria. See New York Times March 29, 1987, Sec. III, p.4; and Business Week March 2, 1984, p.48.

relationship is that during the early 1980's, Soviet shipments to Syria trended upward sharply while overall global Soviet transfers trended downward.²⁷ Indeed, between 1979 and 1983, SIPRI ranked Syria as the number one global importer of arms.²⁸ (Israel was number seven.) Obviously, this reveals both Syria's crucial importance for the Soviet Union and Israel's continual destruction of Soviet equipment.

Third, a careful examination of the major weapons systems supplied to Syria between 1980 and 1986 supports the conclusion in Chapter VI (and extends the time frame) regarding the increasing quantitative and qualitative Soviet shipments to Syria. It is clear that the Soviet Union continually resupplied and modernized Syrian forces (Table VII.3).

Between 1980 and 1986, the number of Syrian tanks and armored personnel carriers increased by over 28% and the Mig force by over 23%. Moreover, transport aircraft increased by 88% and helicopters by 218%! These latter two types of weaponry are significant because they sharply increase Syrian interventionary capability, both domestically and abroad. The Soviet Union also continued the naval arms race by providing Syria with four new fast attack and six coastal

²⁷ SIPRI Yearbook, 1984, op. cit., p.185.

²⁸ Ibid., p.180.

patrol crafts. By one Israeli estimate, Syria had received twenty of its thirty-nine naval combat vessels since 1983 alone.²⁹

In examining Table VII.3, it should also be kept in mind that the Soviet Union maintained these levels in spite of the tremendous Syrian losses to the Israelis. Additionally, the relative composition changes in categories indicate a continual Syria-Soviet effort to modernize the Syrian military (e.g., the decline of Mig-21's, T-54/55's and the increase in Mig-23's, 25's, T-72's). Other examples are the already note SA-11 and the newly sighted SA-13's.³⁰

While there is little available information on the precise terms governing Soviet-Syrian arms transfers, it is "likely" that they are "highly concessional."³¹ Indeed, and in contrast to the later Egypt experience, the Soviet Union can be quite generous when it decides to be: in 1980, (as noted) it reportedly forgave \$500 million of non-military Syrian debt. Then again, after the 1982 debacle, it reportedly softened Syria's terms of credit, both by making a number of

²⁹ See, The Middle East Military Balance, 1984 (Tel Aviv: Jaffe Center for Soviet Studies, 1984).

³⁰ Jane's Defence Weekly, June 28, 1986, p.1240. The SA-13 protects Soviet operations in Afghani airports, and is not thought to be deployed in the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe. See, Jane's Defence Weekly, April 28, 1984, p.648; May 19, 1984, p.779.

³¹ U.S. Department of Commerce, FET:Syria, op. cit., p.9.

TABLE VII.3
Major Syrian Weapons Systems, 1981/82-1985/86 ³²

	<u>1980/81</u>	<u>1981/82</u>	<u>1982/83</u>	<u>1983/84</u>	<u>1984/85</u>	<u>1985/86</u>
<u>Armor</u>						
T-54/55's	2,200	2,200	2,200	2,200	1,800	1,800
T-62	600	1,000	1,100	1,100	1,200	1,300
T-72's	120	400	790	900	1,100	1,100
APC's	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600
<u>Missiles *</u>						
Frog-7's	15	15	24	24	18	18
Scud's	36	9	9	9	18	18
SS-21's	--	--	--	--	12	18
<u>Aircraft **</u>						
Mig-17's	60	85	85	85	85	85
Mig-21's	200	230	200	200	200	180
Mig-23's	60	64	82	90	110	120
Mig-25's	25	25	24	24	50	40
Su-7's	20	16	18	18	18	18
Su-20's	30	26	40	40	40	40
An-12's	2	--	--	--	--	--
An-24's	3	3	3	3	3	5
An-26's	4	4	4	4	4	6
Il-14,18,76's	--	18	16	16	4	--
Tu-134's	--	--	--	--	--	6
Mi-2's	4	10	10	10	10	--
Mi-4's	--	--	--	--	--	10
Mi-8's,	70	72	75	75	95	125
Mi-14's	--	--	--	--	--	20
Mi-17's	--	--	--	--	--	30
Mi-24's	--	12	12	30	30	40
<u>Naval Craft ***</u>						
Osa I's	6	6	6	6	6	6
Osa II's	6	6	6	6	8	10
Komar's	6	6	6	6	6	6
Zhuk	--	--	--	3	3	6
Polnocny	--	--	--	--	--	2

* surface-surface; ** Mig's: fighter/ground attack, interceptor, reconnaissance; Su's: fighter/ground attack; An, Il, Tu's: transports; Mi's: helicopters; *** Osa, Komar: fast attack craft; Zhuk: coastal patrol craft; Polnocny: landing craft.

³² IISS, The Military Balance, op. cit. [1980/1:48; 1981/2:57-8; 1982/3:62-3; 1983/4:62; 1984/5:84; 1985/6:85. For the 1975/76-1980/81 figures see Table VI.23.

shipments as "outright gifts," and by giving them "easier credit" terms.³³

Total Syrian military indebtedness to the East bloc is approximately \$10.3-11.3 billion.³⁴ This figure should include the forgiven \$500 million in 1980, the grants in 1982, as well as a \$1 billion payment made by El-Qadaffi in 1980.³⁵ But even still, "rumor has it" that Syria regularly fails "to comply with payment schedules on its military related obligations."³⁶ But in spite of any Syrian tardiness in paying for the weapons, the Soviet Union has been able to workout a very comfortable arrangement.

The major benefit to the Soviet Union is that Syria (or its wealthier friends, such as Saudi Arabia) pay for most of the weapons in hard currency. Thus, even if the figures in Table VI.2 do not represent 100% cash sales (which they surely do not), they do represent a substantial hard currency inflow. A very crude estimate on the part of this

³³ New York Times, March 21, 1983.

³⁴ The U.S. State Department estimates total Syrian economic and military debt to the East Bloc at \$12-13 billion (FTE:Syria, op, cit., p.9.) The C.I.A. list total Syrian economic debt to the East Bloc at \$1.7 billion. (Communist Aid Activities in the Less Developed Non-Communist Countries, 1979 and 1954-79, op. cit., p.31.) Hence the rough estimate of \$10.3-11.3 billion.

³⁵ See, *ibid*; and Devlin, Syria: Ancient State in a Modern, op. cit., p.93.

³⁶ U.S. Department of Commerce, FET:Syria, op. cit., p.9.

researcher would venture that the Soviet Union has already received a minimum of \$4 billion from weapons sales to Syria since 1968.³⁷ In all likelihood, this figure is probably significantly higher.

Additionally, Syria can be quite accommodating in other weapons trade issues. Indeed, of the four major types of concessional terms utilized by the Soviet Union to facilitate arms transfers, (barter, counter trade, triangular trade, political/military concessions³⁸), the Syrians seem to be utilizing three.³⁹

Syria's large and continual trade surplus with the Soviet Union seems to be part of a barter arrangement for weaponry. Large Syrian shipments of cotton and heavy crude oil are

³⁷ Total Syrian arms imports, 1968-1983 were approximately \$18 billion (See, Table VI.2 and ACDA, World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1968-77, op. cit., p.149.) Assume that 85%, or \$15 billion, worth of weapons are provided by the Soviet Union. Subtract approximately \$11 billion for military debt (which over-states the amount of weapons purchased on credit since it includes debt from as far back as 1955), and thus, the \$4 billion figure.

³⁸ William H. Lewis, "Emerging Choices for the Soviets in Third World Arms Transfer Policy," in ACDA, World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1985, op. cit., p.31.

³⁹ In order for Syria to utilize the fourth concession, counter-trade, to off-setting the weapons purchases, there would have to be large purchases of products from the Soviet Union, and this is just not the case.

never offset by Soviet exports,⁴⁰ and it seems that this large trade surplus is balanced by the massive weapons purchases. This, in addition to grants from the Gulf states, explains how Syria can import weaponry far in excess of its total defense budget (cf. Tables VII.1 and VII.2). A second technique the Syrians must utilize in their arms trade with the Soviet Union is triangular trade. Thus, Syria's export surplus with the Soviet Union is also offset by an import deficit with Eastern Europe.

By far the most significant aspect of the arms transfers (after the hard currency aspect) is the political and military concessions the Syrians have granted to the Soviet Union in return for arms. While there has never been a direct statement by either side acknowledging that such a connection exists, it is clear from the nature of the relationship and the concessions granted.

These concessions include the naval facility at Latakia and access to Tartus, as well as the de facto integration of the Syrian air defense network into the Warsaw pact system. Military-political concessions are provided to the Soviet Union as compensation for its large, and often dangerous commitment to the Al-Assad regime. Moreover, they represent

⁴⁰ Additionally, it is known that the Soviet Union has accepted Syrian crude oil (most probably bartered for weaponry or as payment for previous military debt) and re-exported this oil. Petroleum Intelligence Weekly, July 14, 1986, pp.3-4.

extremely significant gains for the Soviet Union.

First, they provide the Soviet Union with substantial intelligence, air defense and anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities in the Eastern Mediterranean and on NATO's southern flank. (Since Soviet submarine passage through the Turkish Straits is limited by treaty, the naval privileges are especially important for Soviet submarine operations.⁴¹)

Second, they provide for forward deployment of supplies and a possible staging area for Soviet trans-shipment to other countries.⁴² While the understanding governing forward deployment and staging operations -as well as other concession, such as overflight and landing rights, port visitations and pre-stocking of materiel are difficult to assess, there must be some agreement with fairly favorable terms for the Soviet Union.

A third advantage of the political-military concessions is that it usually provides a highly visible display of Soviet power, and of a physical commitment to its friends. This presence is used both to intimidate local states (e.g., Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, etc.), and extra-regional ones (e.g., Western Europe, and even the United States).

⁴¹ See, SAFRA 7, op. cit., p.219.

⁴² See, New York Times, March 14, 1980.

The importance of this physical deterrent can not be underestimated. The October 1973 warning to Israel to desist from bombing Soviet supply ships in Latakia, and American reluctance to undertake direct military action against Syria are palpable examples of this deterrent at work.⁴³

In-Country Soviet/East European Forces

The purposes of stationing Soviet/East Bloc (especially the East German and Bulgarian) forces in Syria are numerous. The primary task is both to fulfill their training/advisory/maintenance missions and to cultivate pro-Soviet attitudes. Clearly (and as the Egyptian experience demonstrated), these forces attempt to insure that local policies are in line with the Soviet Union's own, and to thwart any Syrian policy options which do not coincide with their own.

Consequently, they engage in everything from subtle indoctrination attempts to more coercive acts of withholding crucial parts from weaponry when they do not wish them to be utilized against a particular opponent, or at a specific moment.⁴⁴ In general they attempt to create favorable attitudes among the Syrian military elite toward the Soviet

⁴³ U.S. reluctance to strike out at Al-Assad in the same manner as it has struck against El-Qaddafi is primarily a result of the close Soviet-Syrian relationship.

⁴⁴ There have been, for example, reports of Soviet personnel refusing to release fuses for surface-to-air missiles to their Syrian counterparts. See, Ramet, op. cit., p.36.

Union's regional role and its domestic system. They attempt to cultivate channels of influence within the military decision-making structure, and to coopt or entrap high ranking Syrian officers.⁴⁵

Naturally, the Syrians do not react well to such heavy-handed tactics, and over the years there have been a number of expulsions. The most recent known example seems to be an incident in the summer of 1983 when a number of Soviet personnel were declared persona non grata after attempting to recruit agents in the Air Force.⁴⁶

On a tactical level the in-country Soviet forces are directly engaged in insuring the military preparedness of the regime. Continuing Soviet air defense interventions (e.g., October 1973 and after; the 1983-85 SA-5 deployment) demonstrate a persistent Soviet effort protect the Al-Assad regime from its own inadequacies.

Similarly, Soviet pilots repeatedly provide fighter cover for Syria (e.g., Mig-25's in 1975, and Mig-23's today), and often operate (helicopter) transport missions in northern

⁴⁵ It should also be noted that Syrian nationals are not the only target of in-country Soviet clandestine activities. As the recruitment of a clerk in the French embassy in Damascus demonstrated, the KGB also targets non-Syrians in their activities. See, New York Times, April 11, 1987, p.A.3.

⁴⁶ Cited in Saivetz and Woodby, op. cit., p.131.

and eastern Syria.⁴⁷ There are continual sightings of Soviet advisors accompanying Syrian units deep into Lebanon. By one estimate over 200 Soviet advisors were killed in Lebanon by early 1983 alone.⁴⁸

As Table VII.4 reveals, the Soviet military presence in Syria is extensive. The Soviet Union also makes use of a number of other East European and Cuban forces: in 1984, for example there were several thousand Bulgarian military advisors and 500 Cuban soldiers in Syria.⁴⁹ Additionally, there seems to be a continual East German presence of approximately 210 advisors.⁵⁰

Table VII.4
Soviet Military Personnel in Syria⁵¹

<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>1986</u>
4,000	2,500	6,000- 7,000	5,000- 7,000	6,000	2,000- 2,500

Table VII.4 reveals that the Soviet military presence is

⁴⁷ IISS, The Military Balance, 1976/77, op. cit., p.38; New York Times, May 16, 1983.

⁴⁸ International Herald Tribune, February 15, 1983.

⁴⁹ Cited in Ramet, op. cit., p.36, ft.2; see, also SAFRA 7, op. cit., p.82 and SAFRA 6, op. cit., p.81.

⁵⁰ SAFRA 7, op. cit., p.107; SAFRA 8, op. cit., p.81.

⁵¹ Figures for 1981: SAFRA, 6, op.cit., p.97; 1982:SAFRA, 7, op. cit., pp.106-107; 1983:SAFRA, 8, op. cit., p.79; SIPRI Yearbook, 1984, op. cit., p.185; 1984: [I.D.F. estimate], FBIS-MEA, April 1-2, 1985 and Ramet, op. cit., p.35, ft.2; 1986: New York Times, January 26, 1986.

highly sensitive to changing military-political circumstances. During Syria's mounting internal troubles, Soviet personnel were increasingly attacked by the opposition forces. Between May 1980 and May 1981, for example, there were nearly a dozen "assassinations" of Soviet personnel stationed in, or visiting, Syria.⁵² The Soviet Union became so concerned for the safety of its personnel that it eventually withdrew almost half of its force (i.e., the 1981-82 drop-off).⁵³

A second indication of high military-political sensitivity can be seen in the large increase in personnel in Syria after the 1982 war. From 2,500 Soviets in late 1982, the number rose to 4,000-4,500 in March 1983 (the SA-5 deployments began in January), 6,000 in May, and 7,000 by the end of the year.⁵⁴ This increase was primarily, if not exclusively, connected with the air defense deployment.

⁵² New York Times, May 27, 1981, p.A10.

⁵³ After the January 1982 coup attempt (see, Chapter VI), there was, reportedly, a meeting between the chief Soviet advisor to the Syrian Ministry of Defense, Lt. General Yashkin and Syrian Chief of Intelligence, Ali Duba. Yashkin wanted Duba to guarantee the safety of Soviet personnel in Syria; since Duba could not, Yashkin put him on notice that there would be a gradual reduction in the number of Soviet "experts." FBIS-SOV, February 3, 1982, H1.

⁵⁴ New York Times, March 21, 1983; May 16, 1983; SAFRA, 8, op. cit., p.79.

Syrian Personnel in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe

The purpose of bringing Syrian military personnel (and students, see below) to the Soviet Union is, at the minimum, to provide the impressionable with a favorable view of Soviet society and politics, and at the maximum, to recruited pro-Soviet activists, and even a few agents of influence and spies. This is clear from the course of study Syrian military personnel undertake in the Soviet Union.

Not only do pilots coming for one year of flight training, for example, learn intensive Russian language geared to aviation technology, but they also study ideological issues.⁵⁵ This period:

gives the U.S.S.R. an opportunity to cultivate pro-Soviet sentiments, identify controllable individuals who might be exploited to serve Soviet interests, and generally, to make inroads into the client's military establishment. As a country's dependence on Moscow grows over time, those ties become a potential means of influencing the country's national policies.⁵⁶

And the number of Syrian military personnel trained in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is far from inconsequential: according to a CIA estimate, the Soviet Union itself trained 5,500 Syrians between 1955 and 1981, and Eastern European countries trained an additional 1,200 during the 1955-78

⁵⁵ Murphy, op. cit., p.285.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.284.

period.⁵⁷

Conformity to Soviet Military Strategy, Tactics and Doctrine

In the late 1950's, Syria discarded the French organizational model for its armed forces and reconfigured itself along Soviet lines. One of the most notable features of the Soviet armed forces is that, unlike the major western military establishments, the Air Defense Troops (Voiska Protivovozdushnoi Oboroni [P.V.O.]) is a separate branch of service.⁵⁸ Consequently, the Syrians (like the Egyptians) copied this practice.

A second major Soviet-like feature is the duplication of the Soviet "Main Political Administration of the Soviet Army and Navy" (M.P.A.). The M.P.A. is the chief Soviet organ responsible for ensuring the Soviet armed forces' loyalty to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The major M.P.A. task is to indoctrinate multinational Soviet youth with "the ideal of Soviet patriotism," and to neutralize U.S./Western

⁵⁷ Soviet figure: U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, Developments in the Middle East (Washington D.C., 1983), pp.9-10. East European figure: Communist Aid Activities in the Non-Communist Developing World, 1978, op. cit., p.5.

⁵⁸ While the Soviet air force, army, and navy all have significant air defense capabilities, the major responsibility for protection of vital Soviet regions and installations is primarily with the P.V.O.

European "psychological warfare."⁵⁹

Given the similarities between Syria's problem of controlling sectarian tendencies among recruits (and insuring continued Alawi dominance) and the Soviet problem of russification and socialization of multinational recruits, it is understandable that Syria would copy this institution, and that a fruitful exchange between the two organs would commence.

While the Syrians did not at first duplicate the M.P.A. in the Syrian armed forces, it is clear that when the neo-Ba'th came to power, it began to politicize the armed forces with "Ba'th" ideology. In the years since this time, the Syrian "political orientation sections" of the armed forces have grown to mirror, and deal extensively with, their Soviet counterparts. The Syrian Political Directorate has "political guidance sections" in each branch of the armed forces, in every division and military academic institution, and in particular categories of troops.⁶⁰ Individual units have their own "political guidance departments."

Judging by the frequency of pieces in the Soviet press,

⁵⁹ Jane's Defence Weekly, October 26, 1985, p.929-930. For details of the M.P.A.'s tasks see, Harriet F. Scott and William F. Scott, The Armed Forces of the U.S.S.R. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), pp.288-298.

⁶⁰ FBIS-SOV, February 4, 1983, p.H4. [Kraznaia Zvezda, January 29, 1983, p.5.]

Soviet-Syrian contacts after the 1982 war seems to have increased. There are numerous exchanges of personnel and information on what amounts to a continual basis.

Typical would be the September 1982 visit by General Abdallah Al-Jarf, Chief of the Syrian Air Force Political Section. Al-Jarf and his party traveled to the Soviet Union and meet with the late General A.A. Epishev, head of the Soviet M.P.A. Epishev was the fourth highest ranking member of the Soviet armed forces, a veteran of the Soviet security service (he was the infamous Lavrenti Beria's deputy in the K.G.B.'s predecessor), and a Central Committee member.⁶¹

If anyone knew how to control and indoctrinate military forces, it was General Epishev. Accordingly, while in the Soviet Union, Gen. Al-Jarf and the other "...Syrian guests familiarized themselves with the experience of political education work, with [Soviet] personnel, and also with the training of political education cadres."⁶²

Moreover, these visits are reciprocal. Soviet personnel regularly go to Syria to examine the situation, to give advice, and presumably, to make reports. Indeed, the

⁶¹ Epishev became head of the M.P.A. in 1962 and served until his death in 1985. He had also been Ambassador to Rumania and then Yugoslavia. See, Scott and Scott, op. cit., pp.131,289;Jane's Defence Weekly, October 26, 1985, p.930.

⁶² FBIS-SOV September 30, 1982, p.H8. [Kraznaia Zvezda, September 22, 1983, p.3.].

Soviets reciprocated for the al-Jarf visit by sending their own delegation in January, 1983.⁶³

In a series of articles in Kraznaia Zvezda (the Soviet military paper) about the visit to Syria, Col. F. Kozanchuk stated that his trip was part of the "regular ties" between "the political organs of the Soviet Army and Navy and the political guidance [sections] of the Syrian armed forces."⁶⁴ Moreover, Col. Kozanchuk was very pleased with what he saw:

It was indicative that our interlocutors --commanders, staff workers, and officers of the political guidance organs --invariably stressed the paramount significance of educational work with service men of all categories and the need for all officers to participate in it. We saw for ourselves that a definite system of such work has taken shape and is functioning within the Syrian armed forces...Political studies and briefings are regularly held with servicemen. Military museums and combat glory rooms have been set-up, and monuments in honor of fallen servicemen ...erected within divisions and units.⁶⁵

But Col. Kozanchuk is aware, and "the Syrian friends did not hide," the difficulties they have. Specifically, there is a shortage of "career political guidance officers,"⁶⁶ the troops spend so much time in the field that they are unavailable for "daily political work," and even when they

⁶³ FBIS-SOV, February 8, 1983, p.H2.

⁶⁴ FBIS-SOV, February 4, 1983, p.H2.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.H4.

⁶⁶ This is particularly ironic since the Soviet Union itself suffers from this same deficiency. See, Scott and Scott, op. cit., pp.291-293.

are, illiteracy makes indoctrination difficult.

Tellingly, the Political Directorate has cooperated with the Ministry of Education on a textbook for the recruits.⁶⁷ And given the Syrian comrades "businesslike and sincere" interest in "the wealth of [Soviet] experience" in such matters, Kozanchuk is "convinced" that "moral and political training is functioning meticulously in the Syrian Armed Forces, and that the Syrian Political Directorate can accomplish its task."⁶⁸

The Soviet Union as the Guarantor of
Last Resort Against Israel

From the above analysis of Soviet behavior in the 1967, 1973 and 1982 wars, it was clear that the Soviet Union would have intervened had the territorial integrity of Syria been at stake. It seems clear that the Soviet Union and Syria have an understanding that the Al-Assad regime will be protected from any attempt by Israel to destroy it. According to a Kuwaiti report, for example, the Soviet Union told Israel in September 1983 that 52,000 Soviet troops are available for immediate intervention against it.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.H5.

⁶⁸ Ibid.; FBIS-SOV, February 8, 1983, p.H2.

⁶⁹ FBIS-MEA, September 22, 1983, p. Also Defense Minister Mustafa Tlas has often and publicly asserted that there are "plans for two Soviet airborne divisions to reach

While this Soviet "guarantee" is not open ended or a carte blanche for Syrian actions, it does bolster the regime's ability to stave-off an Israeli attack. (This guarantee is not as applicable against Al-Assad's internal enemies.)

The significance of this guarantee is threefold. First, this is what keeps Syria from deserting the Soviet Union. As an unnamed Western diplomat in Damascus said:

Basically, there is no reason why the Russians should be doing so well in Syria except for the fact that the Syrians see them as an essential element in their capacity to maintain a stand on the Israeli issue and vis-avis other Arabs who are close to the U.S.⁷⁰

Without such a guarantee, the Al-Assad regime would be much more vulnerable. And should the Soviet Union abandon Syria, it is far from certain that the Al-Assad regime would be able to stand-up to Israeli military pressure for very long.

Thus, and second, Al-Assad must carefully calculate and balance any policies or actions with (possible) anti-Soviet overtones with the precise degree of Soviet dependency on Syria at that moment. Consequently, the Soviet guarantee of Syrian security limits Al-Assad's ability to conduct Syrian

Damascus in eight hours in case of a new conflict with Israel." (New York Review of Books, May 8, 1986). An earlier claim had former Secretary General Andropov himself pledging that the Soviet Union would "never allow any one in the world to defeat Hafez al-Assad." (New York Times, September 14, 1984.)

⁷⁰ New York Times, May 27, 1981, p.A10.

policy as he pleases and conditions a number of his policies. Again, the amount of daily Soviet leverage over Syrian policies is usually not great, but over the long run it exercises considerable impact on Syrian options.⁷¹

The third point about the Soviet guarantee is that it creates an intriguing, and for the Israelis, frustrating, dynamic to Syrian-Israeli interaction. Israel now operates under the constraint of anticipated Soviet intervention if it attempts militarily to destroy the Al-Assad regime. Thus, regardless of how hard Israel attempts to do away with the Damascus regime, or to force an Israeli peace plan upon it, the situation just returns to its original state.

Given the exclusive dependence of Syria on the Soviet Union for weapons, spare parts, training, frequent tactical management, and an occasional threat against Israel, it seems that the Soviet military connection is deeply embedded in the Syrian military-political structure. A similar

⁷¹ The best example is Syrian attempts to make peace with Israel. If tomorrow Al-Assad accepted an American plan for regional peace which ignored Soviet interests, it is highly probable that the Soviet Union would no longer supply Syria with weapons or provide it with a guarantee against Israel. Thus, the only way for Al-Assad to even consider such an option is if he has confidence that 1) the U.S. would takeover the arms relationship (i.e. repeat the Egypt arrangement); and 2) that the U.S. could contain Israel in the event that it attempted to double-cross both Washington and Damascus and destroy his regime. Given the complicated dynamics of the U.S.-Israel-Egypt triangle, the ability of the United States to meet both of these conditions is not very great. Hence, Al-Assad is left with his only other option: the Soviet Union.

penetration has been occurring in the Syrian economy,

Soviet Penetration of the Economy

After examining Syria's current economic situation and Soviet-Syrian economic relationship since 1965, there is little doubt that the Soviet Union has utilized its position to take advantage of Syria's mounting economic difficulties, and to construct an economically dependent relationship.

Moreover, one of the key lessons of the Soviet Union's earlier experience in Egypt, Ghana, Mali etc, seemed to be that traditional political and social structures had to be destroyed if Soviet influence was to endure. As noted in Chapter IV, some Soviet academics, such as Georgi Mirski, argued that "...the accomplishment of [a third world state's] national objectives is impossible without a social transformation..."⁷² Consequently, the Soviet Union has not only been attempting to create an economically dependent relationship, but also to foster a radical transformation of Syria's economic structures and labor force.

As the Syrian economy began its secular decline in the mid 1970's, the Soviet Union moved in to take advantage of every opportunity to establish more firmly its economic presence

⁷² Mirski, Tretii Mir, op. cit., p.302; Also see, Chapter IV.

and to transform the economic system in an anti-capitalist direction. Thus, at present, Syria is heavily dependent on the Soviet Union and the East Bloc for the maintenance of its infra-structure, and for the training and development of its labor force.

While Syria does not have the population pressure of Egypt (and thus has less of an economic incentive to make peace with Israel), its economic predicament is still quite precarious. And as grants from other Arab states began to diminish in the early 1980's, this precariousness turned into a full fledged crisis. The severe economic conditions which were partially responsible for Syria acquiescence to the Soviet-Syrian Friendship Treaty became even worse. Hence, Syrian economic vulnerability increased throughout the 1980's.

As noted, grants declined from over \$1.5 billion per year in the late 1970's, to \$700-800 million per year in the early 1980's.⁷³ This rapid decline in foreign grants aggravated Syria's already serious capital formation problems.⁷⁴ There

⁷³ U.S. Department of Commerce, FET:Syria, op. cit., p.9. A more recent estimate of Arab aid to Syria placed these transfers at less than 40% of the pledged \$2 billion in aid. And most of this has reportedly come from Saudi Arabia. See, Middle East International, January 25, 1985, p.8.

⁷⁴ Reportedly, there is a great deal of uninvested and unconsumed wealth in Syria today, but its holders are afraid to invest it in long term industrial projects because they believe the government will "move-in" and nationalize the project once it starts earning a profit. Consequently, even

was also difficulties with the Iranians over Syria's oil supply. In March 1982, Syria and Iran signed an agreement providing Syria with six million tons of oil a year, one of which (approximately 120,000 b/d) was free.⁷⁵ However, Syria was never able (or willing) to make regular payments on the five million tons, and the Iranians, being desperate themselves for funds, were pressuring Al-Assad to pay.⁷⁶

There was also increasing difficulty with Turkey over Euphrates' water rights. While the most serious part of this conflict is awaiting the completion of the Ataturk Dam (some time in 1988), Turkey's hydro-electric projects have already reduced water flow and adversely affected Syrian ability to produce electricity. This has already begun to wreak havoc on the Syrian economy because most of its power is from the Euphrates hydro-electric plant, and it was no longer able to generate sufficient electricity to power its industries or light its cities.⁷⁷

if the government could coax these investors to part with there funds, they would probably go into quick-return, import-export financing, or production of consumer goods. See, Middle East International, January 25, 1985, p.8.

⁷⁵ An Nahar Arab Report and Memo, April 4, 1983, p.2; April 11, 1983, pp.8-9.

⁷⁶ Fortunately for Al-Assad, Iran agreed to reschedule \$1 billion in over due payments in mid 1984. U.S. Department of Commerce, FET:Syria, op. cit., p.9.

⁷⁷ Reportedly, only three of Al-Tabaga's six turbines can be utilized because of the reduced water flow. See, Middle East International, April 6, 1984, p.13; June 13, 1986, p.4; An Nahar Arab Report and Memo, January 31, 1986, p.11; The Middle East, November 1986, p.19.

During this precipitous economic decline, the Syrian government steadfastly refused to turn away from a controlled economy. As noted, it is not that the Syrian economy is backward or underdeveloped, but only that it is performing far below its potential. And the dogmatic maintenance of an overly centralized economic orientation is a prime reason for the economic failure. Indeed, a 1985 U.S. Commerce Department report described the Syrian economy as "rigidly socialist," and encumbered by "...an expanding web of price and exchange rate controls, marketing restrictions and import and export regulations..."⁷⁸

Moreover, Syria is so sensitive to even the appearance of turning away from Soviet style socialism and the Soviet nexus, that it stresses that limited concessions to the private sector do not constitute a Syrian "infitah" [opening].⁷⁹ Such behavior can only please the Soviet Union.

The Trade Relationship

Writing in the early 1970's, a Soviet academician said that the 1965 Soviet-Syrian trade agreement represented, not only

⁷⁸U.S. Department of Commerce, FET:Syria, op. cit., p.3.

⁷⁹ "Infitah," of course, was the Arabic term used by Sadat to describe Egypt's turn toward the West. For a Syrian denial of "infitah," see An Nahar Arab Report and Memo, January 31, 1986, pp.10-11.

a "new stage in Syrian foreign trade relations," but also that its "long term basis" became "particularly important in...the establishment in Syria of progressive reforms and its general orientation to the non-capitalist path."⁸⁰

The Soviet Union has always looked upon foreign trade as an important component of the overall relationship. Although Soviet foreign trade has shifted to a more "reciprocal" and "mutually beneficial" basis (see, Chapter II), trade still continues to represent an important avenue for the Soviet Union to penetrate a regime and influence the course of a its development. So too with Syria.

Syria still trades primarily with Western capitalist countries (Table VII.5). The major imports which Syria cannot obtain from the Soviet Union include foodstuffs, chemicals, and petroleum products. In the early 1980's, Syria's leading trade partners for imports were: Iran, West Germany, Italy, Japan and Iraq; and for exports: Rumania, Italy, Soviet Union, France and West Germany. Iran, Iraq, and Rumania figure so prominently because of petroleum. And France, for among other reasons, because of its agricultural trade.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Vavilov, op. cit., 1972, p.215.

⁸¹ As noted, foodstuffs are a significant drag on the Syrian balance of trade. Syria imported 1 million tons of wheat alone in 1983/84. (FET:Syria, op. cit., p.7.) According to Syria's own figures, it can only cover 68% of its agricultural needs. (An Nahar Arab Report and Memo,

Table VII.5
Two-Way Trade with Syria ⁸²
 (billion U.S. \$)

	<u>1974</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1984</u>
Western	.90	2.15	1.89	3.55	2.54	1.90
East Bloc	.32	.34	.39	.41	.65	.69

Clearly, the mimicking of Soviet collectivization has led to similarly poor results in Syria. While 14% of all cultivatable land was cooperative and state farms in 1974, the total reached 31% in 1976, and 34% in 1982.⁸³ An efficiency farm sector and a positive balance of trade are obviously not foremost in President Al-Assad's mind.

While Syrian trade with the West is still much more important in overall volume, the concentration of Soviet-Syrian trade in the infrastructural areas cannot be minimized. Thus, Soviet-Syrian trade is mainly an exchange of Syrian cotton, wool, petroleum, phosphates, knitted wear, textiles, cosmetics, and raw leather for Soviet machinery, timber, cement, rolled steel, automobiles, textile machines,

January 31, 1986, p.11.)

⁸² IMF, Direction of Trade Statistics (Washington, D.C.: IMF, various years).

⁸³ For 1974, see, Rodney Wilson, The Economic of the Middle East (London: MacMallian, 1977), p.111; for 1976, see Nyrop, op. cit., p.120; for 1982, see D. Pipes, op. cit., p.20.

cement trucks, tractors, and diesel locomotives.⁸⁴

The data on Syrian-Soviet and Syrian-East European trade reveal that a significant alteration of trade patterns took place throughout the 1970's, and early 1980's. After the Soviet shift to "reciprocal" and "mutually beneficial" trade in the mid 1960's, Syria was not harassed for its increasing trade ties with the west. In fact, over the years, the Soviet Union began to see such west-ward leaning trade ties as beneficial to its own interests because it kept poorer client states from approaching it for large amounts of concessionary aid and trade.⁸⁵

The major distinction between the Syrian and Egyptian economic relationships with the West --and the Soviet reaction to both-- was that while both Syria and Egypt maintained and then expanded trade relations with the West, Egypt threw open the economy to foreign investment and let the private sector assume control of foreign trade.⁸⁶ In

⁸⁴ Evgeni Ksenofontov, head of the Soviet Union's commercial section in Damascus [1982], quoted in An Nahar, December 13, 1982, p.6.

⁸⁵ See Ruben Andriasian, "Mirovoi sotsializm: ekonomicheskoe i tekhnicheskoe sodeistvie osvobodivshimsia stranam" ["World Socialism: Economic and Technical Assistance to the Developing Countries"], op. cit., pp.157-158; for a summary and analysis of the Soviet view, see Hough, op. cit., pp.99-100; and Valkanier, op. cit., Ch. I.

⁸⁶ See, John Waterbury, "The 'Soft' State and the Open Door: Egypt's Experience with Economic Liberalization, 1974-1984," Comparative Politics, October, 1985 pp.65-84.

neither of these areas did Al-Assad ever think of lessening state control. Moreover, since the economy is still largely dominated by Sunnis, it would have been political suicide for Al-Assad to allow these forces to strengthen themselves at the trough of free trade.

Hence, when the Soviet Union railed against Egypt's economic policies, it was not because of Egypt's expanding trade with the West (after all, the Soviet Union was doing the same), but because Sadat was doing it in a manner which relinquished state control. Moreover, Soviet-Syrian trade was expanding.

While Soviet sources overstate the magnitude of increase in Soviet-Syrian trade (one claimed a four fold increase between 1974 and 1984⁸⁷), the increase in relative terms is sharp. Using Western figures, two-way trade (1974-84) went from \$147 million to \$448 million (see Table VII.6; VII.7). The comparable figures for all of East European (including the Soviet Union) are \$329 million to \$689 million.

After the 1980 Friendship Treaty was signed, two-way trade increased significantly. In 1981-82 alone trade doubled. But the May 1981, trade agreement which called for a 10% per year expansion in two-way trade,⁸⁸ is clearly not

⁸⁷ Yakov Rybov, in FBIS-SOV, July 30, 1984, p.H5.

⁸⁸ An Nahar Arab Report and Memo, May 30, 1983, p.4.

responsible. Since the agreement, Soviet-Syrian trade actually declined from \$308 million to \$298 million (Table VII.6; VII.7).

Under the same 1981 trade agreement, total Syrian-East European trade was slated to reach \$3 billion over the ensuing 5 years.⁸⁹ There was also an additional \$500 million in developments contracts repayable in Syrian goods. While Syrian-Eastern Europe trade actually fell from \$621 million in 1981 to \$490 million in 1985, the \$3 billion goal was actually exceeded by \$103 million (Table VII.8, VII.9).

Since 1983, there has been a deliberate Syrian effort to channel trade to the East Bloc. These efforts included cancelling a contract with a British firm to study the modernization needs of the railway system (and awarding it to a Soviet company); reversing a Ministry of Finance decision to purchase Boeing aircraft for the national airline (in favor of Soviet Tupolev-154 planes); and altering the terms for bid submission on a thermal power (plant to favor the Soviet Union).⁹⁰ These efforts are clearly continuing.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Soviet and East European Aid, op. cit., pp.19-21.

⁹⁰ An Nahar Report and Memo, May 30 1983, p.4

⁹¹ U.S. Department of Commerce, FET:Syria, op. cit., p.12.

Table VII.6
Syrian Exports to the Soviet Union, 1974-1985
 (million U.S. \$; percent of total exports)

1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
110	55	91	106	98	81	117	113	228	206	205	190
14%	6%	8%	10%	9%	5%	5%	5%	11%	10%	11%	11%

Table VII.7
Syrian Imports from the Soviet Union, 1974-1985
 (million U.S. \$; percent of total imports)

1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
47	52	44	91	42	79	45	72	80	120	143	108
3%	3%	1%	3%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	4%	3%

Table VII.8
Syrian Exports to Eastern Europe, 1974-1985
 (million U.S. \$; percent of total exports)

1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
163	113	139	162	142	135	147	178	276	258	256	237
20%	12%	13%	15%	13%	8%	7%	8%	13%	13%	14%	14%

Table VII.9
Syrian Imports from Eastern Europe, 1974-1985
 (million U.S. \$; percent of total imports)

1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
166	163	202	227	244	282	264	443	374	395	433	253
13%	9%	8%	8%	10%	8%	6%	8%	9%	8%	12%	7%

Source: Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook (Washington, D.C.: International Monetary Fund, various years). [1982: 356-357; 1986: 374-375.]

Infra-structural Development and Soviet Dependence

It is clear that Soviet economic assistance is aimed at "building a dominant socialized public sector."⁹² As Glukhov stated in Pravda, the thirty-five projects constructed with Soviet assistance (and the equal number still being built) "form the basis of the state sector...to which Syria is paying paramount attention."⁹³ By mimicking the Soviet centralized economic model, Syria has developed a marked dependence on Soviet spare parts and expertise. Moreover, this dependence is increasing.

Judging from the distribution of Soviet aid agreements with Syria, it is clear that the Soviet nexus is increasing. In the period between the February 1966 coup, and the post-October war period (give or take a year), the Soviet Union concluded three times as many aid agreements with Syria as it did in the earlier ten year period. (See Table VII.10) Moreover, in the five years from 1975 through 1979, the Soviet Union reached the same number of agreements as it had in the previous ten years.

The amount of Soviet and East Bloc aid to Syria was, in fact, quit large. While Evgeni Ksenofonov, head of the Soviet Union's commercial section in Damascus, would not give precise figures, he would say that Soviet technical and

⁹² An Nahar Report and Memo, December 13, 1982, p.7.

⁹³ FBIS-MEA, October 10, 1983, p.H1.

economic aid to Syria between 1971 and 1980 had tripled.⁹⁴ Given the fact that C.I.A. estimates Soviet aid to Syria quadrupling during the second half of the 1970's alone, then the C.I.A. figure must be fairly accurate (Table VII.11).

Table VII.10
Soviet Economic Aid Agreements with Syria ⁹⁵

<u>1955-64</u>	<u>1965-74</u>	<u>1975-79</u>	<u>Total</u>
100	360	310	770

Table VII.11
Credits and Grants Extended to Syria ⁹⁶
(million U.S. \$)

	<u>1958-67</u>	<u>1968-73</u>	<u>1974-79</u>	<u>Total</u>
U.S.S.R.	235	85	450	770
Eastern Europe	140	310	505	955
China	<u>5</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>60</u>
Total	380	450	955	1,785

Accordingly, the Soviet Union and the East Bloc have given Syria over \$1.7 billion over the last twenty-five years. Unfortunately for Syria, Soviet and East Bloc aid has virtually ceased since 1981.⁹⁷ Current Soviet aid is probably less than \$100 million a year.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ An Nahar Report and Memo, December 13, 1982, p.7.

⁹⁵ CIA, Communist Aid Activities in the Non-Communist Less Developed Countries, 1979 and 1954-1979, op. cit., p.11.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p.31.

⁹⁷ Soviet and East European Aid to the Third World (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1983), pp.19-21.

⁹⁸ A New York Times (May 27, 1981) article gave Soviet aid during 1981 as approximately \$40 million.

Through bi-lateral trade and the aid agreements the Soviet Union has achieved a dominant position in several crucial Syrian economic sectors, and an important position in a number of others. The dominant positions include: electrical generation and transmission; oil and gas production and refining; irrigation and land reclamation; and transportation. All of these sectors are in strategically important infra-structural areas. (The Soviet Union has also assumed a paramount role in educational and vocational training.)

Soviet and East Bloc aid is earmarked for highly visible showcase development projects. The Soviet Union, for example, spent approximately \$850 million on the construction of the 800 mega-watt Al-Thawra ["Revolution"] Dam on the Euphrates alone.⁹⁹

But ironically, the Euphrates Dam is an example of how Soviet technical assistance has not always worked out to Syria's advantage. While the Dam and its equipment are of Soviet and East European design and production, and while it alone produces 70% of all of Syria's energy, it was poorly conceived, and managed.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ New Middle East, 93-94 (1974), p.77.

¹⁰⁰ See, An-Nahar Report and Memo, December 13, 1986, p.7.

During the late 1970's, the Dam suffered from excess electrical capacity because planned industrial projects were not completed on schedule.¹⁰¹ But during the 1980's (as noted), Turkey's hydro-electric projects reduced generating capacity. In 1984, the Dam was reportedly operating at 30-40% of capacity.¹⁰²

The Soviet Union does not seem to have done much better with Syrian land reclamation projects. Soviet assistance and planning is crucial in all of the major projects, including the Al-Assad Reservoir on the Euphrates (the nation's largest land reclamation project), the Kebir dam, and the Meskeneh River dam in western Syria.¹⁰³ But given the repeated delays with expanding the land reclamation projects (and the overall decline in agricultural production) there does not seem to be much to boost about. During the 1976-80 Syrian economic plan, for example, less than half the targeted land was irrigated.¹⁰⁴

One area where the Soviet Union figures both prominently and

¹⁰¹ Nyrop, op. cit., p.130-131.

¹⁰² See, An-Nahar Report and Memo, January 31, 1986, p.11; OAPC Bulletin, October, 1982, p.9, table 3; Arab Business Yearbook (London: Graham and Trotman, 1986), p.332.

¹⁰³ See, An-Nahar Report and Memo, December 13, 1986, p.7; FBIS-SOV, July 24, 1984, p.H1.

¹⁰⁴ The figure was 240,000 out of 640,000 hectares. See, Middle East Economic Handbook, 1986 (London: Euromonitor Publications, 1986), p.371.

more successfully is the transportation sector. Soviet assistance has been crucial to the construction of both the Kameshly-Latakia rail line, and the rebuilding and expansion of the Aleppo-Homs-Damascus rail line.¹⁰⁵ If one believes the Soviet figures, than over eighty percent of Syria's ordinary gauge railway system has been build by the Soviet Union (1,280 out of 1,543 Km.).¹⁰⁶ It also played an important part in the expansion of Latakia's port.

The increasing economic ties are also evident from the parade of visitors between Moscow and Damascus. In 1984, there were a minimum of ten high level (ministerial or deputy ministerial level) economic, technical or scientific visits between the two capitals.¹⁰⁷ The topics discussed included irrigation, economic planning, bilateral trade, oil and gas production and marketing, nuclear power, electricity, and construction.

A typical exchange was between Syrian Minister of Planning, Kamel Sharaf and the Soviet head of the State Committee for Foreign Economic relations, Yakov Ryabov. In May 1984, they meet in Moscow for the eight session of the Permanent

¹⁰⁵ An Nahar Report and Memo, December 13, 1982, p.7.

¹⁰⁶ FBIS-SOV, May 25, 1984, p.H1; Copely, op. cit., p.707.

¹⁰⁷ See FBIS-MEA Subject Directory, April 1983-March 1984 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1985), pp.661-663; and April 1984-March 1985, pp.724-726.

Intergovernmental Committee for Economic, Scientific, and Technical Cooperation.¹⁰⁸ The talks dealt with irrigation, land reclamation, electric generation, power transmission lines, petroleum industry development, and the provision of technical cadres and experts.

The Soviet Union and the East Bloc have been providing technical cadres and experts to Syria for a number of years. One current observer estimates that approximately 1,000 Soviet and 3,000 East German, Czechoslovak, Bulgarian, Polish, and even Romanian economic advisors also at work in Syria.¹⁰⁹ (The Romanian advisors work in the oil sector.)

Leaving aside the issue that Western technical assistance would probably transform the Syrian economy and labor force more successfully, it is clear that the Soviet Union has made a significant contribution toward this goal. (But since this assistance is also self-serving there is little need for accolades.)

Besides utilizing 700 Soviet in-country technicians to complete the Euphrates Dam,¹¹⁰ the Soviets currently estimates that they have, over the years, trained 15,000 Syrians to manage the hydro-electric plant, reservoir, and

¹⁰⁸ FBIS-SOV, May 25, 1984, p.H1.

¹⁰⁹ See, Ramet, op. cit., p.35, ft.2.

¹¹⁰ New Middle East, 93-94 (1974), p.77.

land reclamation associated with the dam.¹¹¹ Moreover, the Soviets have trained 34,000-35,000 "skilled [Syrian] workers, engineers and technicians" in the Soviet Union itself,¹¹² and it has constructed and is operating Syrian transport worker schools (in Latakia and Aleppo), and has designed a school for oil workers in Rumalan.¹¹³

Another area where the Soviet Union seems to be assisting Assad is with integration of women into the labor force. If Syria hopes to compete economically with the rest of the world, it must bring women into the labor force. As Table IV.12 reveals, Al-Assad has made virtually no progress in this area, and it clearly is a major problem. Either Al-Assad has not yet attempted to integrate women fully into the labor force, or, more likely, he has attempted and failed miserably.

Table VII.12
Women in the Syrian Labor Force ¹¹⁴

	<u>1960</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1981</u>
% of all Syrian females employed	5.4	5.6	6.2
females as a % of total Syrian labor force	9.4	10.9	12.4

¹¹¹ Nikolai Kanunnikov, Asia and Africa Today, November/December, 1985, p.43.

¹¹² Nikolai Kanunnikov [ibid.] gives a figure of 35,000, while An Nahar [December 13, 1982] gives the figure 34,000.

¹¹³ An Nahar Report and Memo, December 13, 1982, p.7.

¹¹⁴ World Tables, op. cit., Vol II, p.83.

An example of Soviet support for Al-Assad's attempt to integrate women into the labor force can be found in the Soviet dispatch of a female cosmonaut to tour Syria in 1984.¹¹⁵ In a country where traditional values toward women still persist, this is clearly an effort to weaken religiously imposed restrictions on women and bring them into the labor force.

State Control and the Difficulty of Economic Reform

The year 1985 was not a good one for Syria: the fall in world oil prices severely curtailed export income, and because a good deal of its oil imports were at concessionary rates, the decline did not mean much on the import side.¹¹⁶ Additionally, as the demand for expatriate labor in the oil fields again declined, and relations between Syria and Libya became strained over Lebanon, Al-Qaddafi expelled 10,000-20,000 Syrian workers from his country, and Kuwait and Saudi Arabia expelled another 2,000-4,000.¹¹⁷ This clearly hurt the regime.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ FBIS-SOV, March 14, 1984, p.H6. Given the fact that a Syrian male has been honored with the opportunity of participating in an upcoming Soviet space missions, than this all the more significant.

¹¹⁶ Ironically, just before the decline, it was projected that Syria would soon be a net exporter of oil and therefore earn hard currency from resource. An Nahar Report and Memo, October 25, 1985, p.2.

¹¹⁷ New York Times, October 13, 1985, p.A27.

¹¹⁸ These workers were responsible for a substantial part of the half billion dollars sent back to Syria each year legitimately (Table VI.21), and an additional \$125-250

During the January 1985 Ba'th Congress, the Government attempted to encourage the private sector to contribute more to the national economy, but its ideas were all framed within the existing socialist structure.¹¹⁹ Import priorities are still determined by government decree, and foreign exchange is still rationed by the Central Bank.¹²⁰ Consequently, there was little incentive for the private sector to improve conditions. Once again, the government was as determined, according to Economy and Foreign Trade Minister, Mohammed Imady, to keep the public sector as the "pillar of the development process."¹²¹

By 1986 matters were even worse. Living conditions in Damascus seem to have hit new lows. There were reports of two hour bread lines (in a country which used to be a major grain exporter) and a four hour per/day cut-off of electricity.¹²² Imported fruit and vegetables from Lebanon were no longer available, essential consumer items disappeared, and between April and May alone, meat prices

thousand smuggled in through the black market. FET:Syria, op. cit., p.10.

¹¹⁹ See, An Nahar Report and Memo, March 4, 1985, p.9.

¹²⁰ Ibid., October 25, 1985, p.2.

¹²¹ Ibid., January 31, 1986, p.10.

¹²² New York Times, May 19, 1986, p.A14.

increased by a third and pharmaceutical drugs by 400%.¹²³

Nineteen eighty-six was so bad for Syria, that Al-Assad began negotiating with Saddam Hussein for reopening the 500,000 b/d Iraqi pipeline.¹²⁴

One of the most disturbing aspects of the Syrian economic situation is that Al-Assad would probably find it difficult to reform seriously the economy. The Soviet strategy of transforming the economic and social structure has progressed to such a degree that any turn away from either extensive Soviet-Syrian infra-structural trade or a control economy would create severe social disruption and imperil the government.

Of course, the dependence on the Soviet Union for spare-parts and expertise could be altered, but only after several difficult years, if not, decades. It would be very costly in the short and intermediate term and surely involve considerable social and economic dislocation. And this is precisely what Al-Assad cannot risk. Additionally, the

¹²³ Economist, May 3, 1986, p.51. Part of the difficulty was caused by Al-Assad's own anti-smuggling drive in February 1986. Reportedly, 700 smugglers were arrested, including some from the military. (New York Times, May 19, 1986, p.A14.) But the crack down (organized to alleviate the opprobrium toward his regime felt by the majority of people who were not directly benefiting) damaged the overall living standard.

¹²⁴ Al-Assad demanded an increase in toll revenue, and a pledge that Iraq would not support anti-Syrian terrorists. Business Week, June 16, 1986, p.55.

economy could not be easily deregulated without undermining tax revenue. Taxes on foreign trade (import/export duties; customs fees, etc.), for example, contribute over a third of total tax revenues, and import duties alone are equal to over 10% of total government revenue (Tables VII.13 and 14).

Table VII.13
" International Trade and Transaction Taxes" as a
Percent of Total Syrian Tax Revenue ¹²⁵

1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
37%	40%	41%	42%	34%	30%	36%	36%	37%

Table VII.14
Import Duties As a Percent of Total State Revenue ¹²⁶

1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
12%	11%	10%	12%	10%	15%	15%	13%	13%

While the Soviet Union's penetration of the military and economic institutions in Syria has been rather significant, it has not done as well in other spheres. Particularly in the political and socio-cultural ares.

The Relative Lack of Social and Cultural Penetration

In spite of what may be assumed to be a concerted Soviet effort to institutionalize Russian/Soviet culture in Syria, there is little evidence that they have succeeded. And

¹²⁵ Figures are computed from the total tax revenue and international trade and transaction taxes listed in Government Financial Statistical Yearbook, 1985, op. cit., pp.797-800.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

clearly it is a relatively serious priority.¹²⁷ In spite of the fact that government-government contacts on socio-cultural matters seem to be increasing,¹²⁸ unofficial, or semi-official contacts seems to be declining or simply holding steady.

As Table VII.15 and VII.16 reveal, the East Bloc, and to a lesser extent, the Soviet Union, do not train a tremendous amount of Syrian students. While Table VII.15 indicates a substantial Syrian academic presence in the Soviet Union, there has been a conflicting lower estimate.¹²⁹ If one accepts the CIA and U.S. State Department numbers, and a 1971 CIA estimate of 1,000,¹³⁰ then Syrian student enrollment in the Soviet Union increased in the mid 1970's,

¹²⁷ One can tell from the Soviet press; it tends to note proudly when a Syrian studied in the Soviet Union or identifies with a bit of Russian culture. See, FBIS-SOV, February 4, 1983, p.H5. Also, from the Egyptian accounts, it is clear that the Soviets were always disturbed by the lack of Egyptian cultural interest in the Soviet Union.

¹²⁸ During 1984, for example, there was a large amount of Soviet-Syrian inter-governmental communication and joint action on social, cultural and religious affairs. At least fourteen high level exchanges covering sports, women's affairs, judicial matters, "peace and solidarity," and even religion took place. See, "Soviet Union," FBIS-SOV Subject Index, April 1983-March 1984 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985), pp.661-663; and April 1984-March 1985, pp.724-726.

¹²⁹ A 1982 estimate in An Nahar Report and Memo (December 13, 1982, p.7) reported that less Syrian students were studying in the Soviet Union than in the United States (i.e., approximately 1,000).

¹³⁰ Cited in McLaurin, op. cit., p.131.

fell-off at the end of the decade and then increased since the early 1980's. Moreover, if the 3,665 figure is correct, then almost 6% of all foreign students in the Soviet Union are from Syria.¹³¹

Academic enrollment in other communist states (for which figures are available), however, does not indicate a large Syrian presence (Table VII.16). Moreover, the trend of enrollment does not reveal any patterns. It went up in Cuba and Poland, but down in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Unfortunately, data on what are probably the two most important East European states, East Germany, and Bulgaria, is sparse.

From what is available, Bulgaria reportedly had 137 Syrian students in 1977, and East Germany 282 in 1978. Given that East German and Bulgarian involvement in Syria is larger than that of the other East European states (and that the trends in Table VII.15 is mixed), it is probable that the current number of Syrian students in East Germany and Bulgaria is the same or slightly higher than in the above years (i.e., approximately 150 and 300 respectively).

¹³¹ UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1985 (op. cit., pp.II-439) gives total foreign students in the Soviet Union as 62,942.

Table VII.15
Syrian Students in the Soviet Union 132

<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1981</u>
1,125	3,420	3,595	2,135	3,665

Table VII.16
Syrians Studying in Selected Communist Countries 133

	<u>Czechoslovakia</u>	<u>Poland</u>	<u>Hungary</u>	<u>Cuba</u>
1977	234	69	98	n.a.
1978	214	n.a.	86	15
1979	53	84	82	1
1980	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	28
1981	177	108	80	n.a.
1982	171	143	84	54
1983	163	160	81	n.a.

Table VII.17
Syrians Studying in Selected Western Countries 134

	<u>France</u>	<u>U.S.A.</u>	<u>F.R.G.</u>	<u>Italy</u>	<u>U.K.</u>	<u>Belgium</u>
1977	1,312	450	551	355	149	85
1978	1,355	510	532	309	160	85
1979	1,385	840	525	313	174	86
1980	1,486	n.a.	508	271	155	90
1981	n.a.	1,038	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1982	2,126	n.a.	491	260	139	75
1983	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	263	155	74

While the West seems to be ahead when it comes to the number of Syrian students enrolled in its institutions (Table

132 All figures except 1981 from: Communist Aid Activities in The Non-Communist Less Developed Countries, 1954-1979, op. cit., pp.10-11; the 1981 figure is from: Soviet Union and East European Aid to the Third World, op. cit., p.22-23.

133 UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, (Paris: UNESCO, various years).

134 Ibid. (Italy includes the Holy See.)

VII.17), this lead is not particularly large. Moreover, the trend in Western states (because of political tension and fears of terrorism) is toward declining Syrian enrollment. There is insufficient data to say that a reversal of priorities toward greater East Bloc enrollment is occurring, but it certainly looks like it is a possibility.

There is sufficient data, however, to say that Soviet tourist travel to Syria has been declining since the early 1970's. Moreover, since Soviet citizens cannot travel abroad freely, it is likely that most of the persons listed in Table VII.18 are involved in some semi-official or clandestine activities. But, clearly, the number of such visitors has been declining.

Table VII.18
Soviet Tourists Arriving in Syria, 1971-84 ¹³⁵

<u>1971</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>
5,344	6,501	5,742	n.a.	5,834	6,344	3,844	n.a.
<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>			
5,100	6,400	4,900	4,500	4,400			

Paralleling this decline in Soviet visitors and the lack of substantial Syrian enrollment in East Bloc educational institutions is a paucity of translations and publications from Russian into Arabic in Syria. Table VII.19 suggests

¹³⁵ U.N., Statistical Yearbook, op. cit., 1973:482; 1974:511; 1977:584; 1978:593; 1979:536; 1981:1046; 1982:943; 1983:1002. The source rounds the figures-off after 1979.

that Russian literature, culture and science have not been widely disseminated in Syria. During the 1973-1980 period, Arabic translations from Russian were out numbered by translations from French by almost 3:1, and from English by more than 2:1. (Indeed, French cultural influence in Syria is still quite strong.)

Additionally, world wide translations from Russian into Arabic do not reveal a marked increase during the 1970's either (Table VII.20).

Since the world wide translation figures probably represent translations done in the Soviet Union and shipped throughout the Arab World, it seems logical to conclude that the Soviet Union did not significantly increase its efforts to culturally permeate the Arab world, and probably Syria.

Additionally, given the close Government control over the mass media and other means of communication in Syria,¹³⁶ it is also likely that the lack of translations from Russian into Arabic in Syria reflects a quiet Syrian policy of not encouraging the spread of pro-Soviet sentiments.

¹³⁶ Syrian access to mass media has not been increasing very fast. Between 1970 and 1983, the number of television receivers (not even considering their distribution), has little more than doubled to 44 per thousand. This compares with 56 per thousand and 279 per thousand in Jordan and Lebanon respectively (in 1981). (UNESCO Yearbook (1985), op. cit., p.X-24; ibid., 1982 p.XI-32). By constraining access to the media, Al-Assad probably hopes to keep the population less politically aware and active.

Table VII.19
Translations in Syria: Selected Languages into Arabic 137

	<u>Russian</u>	<u>French</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>All Languages</u>
1973	10	7	16	51
1974	3	6	5	17
1975	2	8	20	68
1976	9	18	7	46
1977	5	30	5	54
1978	3	10	8	30
1979	3	15	24	51
1980	5	21	9	44
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Total	40	115	94	361

Table VII.20
Worldwide Translations From Russian into Arabic 138

<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>
103	114	123	110	105	114

In contrast to the Syrian policy on translations from Russian, it might be possible that the Government is more permissive about Soviet movies. While Daniel Pipes maintains that Soviet films are now "ubiquitous" in Syria,¹³⁹ the most recent statistical evidence (for 1978-1983) does not quite support that assertion. The numbers do, however, reveal that the Syrian government can and does rapidly alter the type of films shown.

¹³⁷ UNESCO Statistical Yearbook (Paris: UNESCO, various years).

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Pipes, op. cit., p.20.

Table VII.21
Foreign Films Imported into Syria, 1978-1983 ¹⁴⁰
(per cents rounded to nearest whole number)

	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
number of all films	56	48	186	93	78	149
% Soviet	0	0	16	44	0	5
% U.S.A.	50	68	21	8	0	0
% French	20	17	17	10	0	0

Thus, it would not be impossible for it to have singularly promoted Soviet films in the last two or three years. Indeed, during 1981, the Syrian government did suddenly import forty Soviet films. Whether they are ever shown and to whom it is difficult to tell. It is likely, however, that most Syrians do not flock to Soviet films.

First, cinema attendance has declined significantly between 1975 and 1981.¹⁴¹ Second, the 1981 upsurge seem to have been an aberration; the number of Soviet films imported in 1982 was zero and in 1983 was eight. And third, the general pattern is away from both Western and Eastern films. Most of the films shown in 1982 and 1983, for example, were from other third world countries.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, (Paris: UNESCO, 1985), pt.IX, p.4.

¹⁴¹ Per capita cinema attendance dropped from 5.6 in 1975 to 1.3 in 1980. World Tables, op. cit., vol. II, p.87.

¹⁴² UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, (Paris: UNESCO, various years).

Political Sphere

During the mid 1980's, most Soviet commentary on Syria (excluding those related to the P.L.O.) was highly positive but firm in reminding Al-Assad of who his friends are and of what must be done to keep them. A typical piece would be an October, 1983 Pravda article by Yuri Glukhov. After lauding Soviet aid to Syria, Glukhov pointed out how Israel relies on the "comprehensive assistance of its overseas accomplices" in order to continue its "aggression and intrigues." The intimation was that continued Soviet support, and a positive Syrian attitude toward the Soviet Union, its local communists and the N.P.F. were vital to Syrian goals. Glukhov was quite blunt:

Firm Soviet support quells the Israeli expansionist's fever and makes a weighty contribution to consolidating Syria's position in the face of the aggressor and his accomplices. Embracing more and more spheres, the cooperation between our countries is cemented by the ties that are strengthening between the C.P.S.U. and the ruling Ba'th Party, which together with the Syrian Communist party and a number of other organizations belong to the National Progressive Front.¹⁴³

Glukhov singled out Syria's "paramount attention" to the state economic sector as worthy of praise. Additionally, the Soviet Union had to be pleased by the increasing resemblances between Syrian and Soviet societies. The mass media was established along similar lines with Al Thawra representing the government (as does Izvestiia) and Al-Ba'th

¹⁴³ FBIS-SOV, October 13, 1983 p.H2.

representing the party (as does Pravda).¹⁴⁴

Moreover, the structure of the Ba'th Party increasingly resembles that of the CPSU. The Ba'th Party (of approximately 150,000 members) is the only political party allowed to engage in ideological work in the military and among the youth.¹⁴⁵ Additionally, the youth organizations (the "Vanguard" program; the "Revolutionary Organ"; and the student organization) directly parallel the Soviet Union's own groups. Consequently, a Syrian young person "...cannot avoid learning that the Party is omnipresent and that his or her future will be bound up in it."¹⁴⁶

Syria, throughout the late 1970's and early 1980's was developing toward a totalitarian society. This is not to assert that Al-Assad does not have to placate the political and other interests of a number of groups and institutions, but it is more and more difficult to interpret Al-Assad's rule as severely constrained by other internal forces.

In the mid 1970's, it was possible to debate how constrained Al-Assad was by other actors and institutions. But by the mid 1980's, Al-Assad's internal control had become so

¹⁴⁴ Cited in Pipes, op. cit., p.21.

¹⁴⁵ Devlin, Syria: Modern State in an Ancient land, op. cit., p.57.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p.34.

tyrannical (and the Ba'th and P.N.F. covers for Alawi dominance) that it is less of an issue.¹⁴⁷ Hama 1982 really seems to have been a turning point. Al-Assad still has to deal with the (primarily Alawi) military establishment¹⁴⁸ and the more limited economic power of the Sunni middle class, but he has become so powerful and his rule has become so personalized that he really can say "L'etat c'est moi."

It is because of this personalized rule that the Soviet Union's position in Syria --in spite of the fact that it is so deeply entrenched in the military and economic structure-- is not yet fully secure. The situation in Syria, unlike the situation in Afghanistan, or even Libya, is not one where Al-Assad has to continually and excessively rely on Soviet support to maintain himself internally. Al-Assad does not have East German bodyguards or elite Cuban troops protecting his regime. While occasionally he has needed Soviet assistance to deal with the Muslim Brotherhood, it is clear that their intervention was not decisive and that Al-

¹⁴⁷ Adeed Dawisha, for example, has argued that in the mid 1970's Al-Assad was constrained by the Ba'th Party, and that during times of crises he increasingly consulted with other institutions. (Syria and the Lebanese Crisis, op. cit., pp.51-52,178.) But if anyone today has any doubts about the Hobbsian state of Syrian politics and Al-Assad's tyrannical rule, see, Report from Amnesty International to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, op. cit.

¹⁴⁸ Interestingly, the military tends to advocate a hardline toward Israel and refuses to make concessions because it interprets any concessions as "...an effort to humiliate the armed forces, to undermine its prestige, and to ridicule its national duty." Adeed Dawisha, op. cit., p.54.

Assad maintains his power primarily by his own means. Hence, any ruler who is sufficiently independent to maintain his power, is conceivably sufficiently independent to alter his foreign policy if it was in his interest to so.

While the Soviet Union has a firm base of support in the Syrian military, and a lesser one in the economy, it has little socio-cultural presence in Syria, and only a moderate political structure for influencing the government. Without these deeper socio-cultural and political roots for a pro-Soviet course, the Soviet Union's position will be vulnerable. It is because of this that both the social transformation of Syria and the control of the succession process are so important to the Soviet presence in Syria.

Although it would take many years to wean Syria's military and the economy off Soviet patronage, if Hafez Al-Assad --or anyone else at the apex of the Syrian military-political structure-- desired to move Syria toward a more Western-oriented policy, it would be a difficult battle, but a battle which certainly could still be waged, and perhaps even won.

It is also significant that in spite of this relatively precarious position, U.S. policy, by and large, has been making it easier for the Soviet Union to maintain its relationship with Al-Assad. As noted in Chapter V, ever

since the early 1970's and Henry Kissinger, U.S. policy has mainly (but not) always been to isolate (or ignore) Syria. Kissinger and most of those who came after him believed (believe) that eventually Syria will tire of the status quo and come to the United States for peace.

Accordingly, U.S. policy rarely attempts to provide Syria with political or economic incentives to move away from the Soviet Union. It is not attempting to "drive a wedge" between Moscow and Damascus. Most often it undertakes verbal and physical actions which leave Damascus little choice other than Moscow's embrace. This was especially the case after the 1977 policy reversal, and during the first few years of the Reagan administration.¹⁴⁹

In the latter Reagan years, and under Secretary of State George Shultz, U.S. policy, especially after May 1983, has been one of neglect.¹⁵⁰ Neither the Middle East nor Syria have been a high priority. Even Al-Assad himself recently said that he is "...bitter and disappointed over the Reagan administration's policy of alternatively ignoring and

¹⁴⁹ For the post-October 1977 period, see Chapter VI. For the early Reagan period see, Alexander M. Haig, Jr., Caveat (New York: MacMillan, 1984), pp.310-351; and Jeane Kirkpatrick, The Reagan Phenomenon (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1983), pp.113-115.

¹⁵⁰ See, New York Times, January 11, 1987, Section VI, p. 6; and August 4, 1986, p.4.

confronting Syria."¹⁵¹ Clearly, the Soviet Union has a much easier time with a local partner that does not have many other options. Thus, it waits patiently and augments the dependency relationship.

The Third Revision: The Soviet Union and the Succession Struggle of 1984

In November 1983, Hafez al-Assad suffered a heart attack and was unable to govern the country (and physically absent from the office) for approximately ten weeks.¹⁵² During and immediately after this time, a struggle for power broke out between Rifat al-Assad (and his Defence Forces) and Generals' Fayyadh and Haydar (and their Third Army and Special Forces). While some of the details are still not known, it is apparent that Rifat al-Assad attempted to remove his brother and take over the government.

Unfortunately for Rifat al-Assad, Fayyadh and Haydar would not allow it. After Hafez al-Assad's recovery in the spring 1984, all three were exiled to East and West Europe.¹⁵³

In examining internal Syrian events during this time and the

¹⁵¹ Washington Post, May 19, 1986, p.4.

¹⁵² Although Al-Assad returned to his office on a limited work day in early December, he was, more or less, physically absent from his office until the end of January. See, Devlin, "Syria's Political Structure," op. cit., p.18.

¹⁵³ See, Middle East International, July 13, 1984, p.7.

actions of the Soviet Union, it seems clear that the Soviet Union interjected itself into the succession struggle in a manner which both demonstrated its importance in this process, and which caused Hafez al-Assad to become temporarily more reliant on it for his security.

Within days of Hafez al-Assad's heart attack, Rifat's Defence Companies were placed on alert and his supporters began plastering Damascus with giant posters of the President's brother. Although Rifat's largest power base was in his personal army, the Defense Companies, he also had support from those elements in the regime who wished to see economy liberalized. Additionally, over the years, he had built up a substantial patronage network from appointments to the government, and private activities in the economy (both legal and illegal).

The prospect of Rifat coming to power, however, was more than sufficient incentive for a number of powerful Alawi forces to join up and oppose him. Reportedly, these forces came from the military (which supposedly was most anti-Rifat), the Ba'th Party, and (for what little it meant during the struggle) the general population. (The contrast between the hard working, austere Hafez and the playboy-hedonist Rifat is stark, and deliberately emphasized by Hafez.)

To the bulk of Syria's population, Rifat is the symbol of Alawi excess and domination. He was heavily and publicly connected with the regime's brutality, corruption and (Alawi) nepotism.¹⁵⁴ He was (is) known for extravagant living and pleasure-seeking (e.g., his mistresses and gambling), and for ruthlessly suppressing the Sunni majority. (As noted, he is personally identified with the Tadmur and Hama massacres). Obviously, he is even more intensely disliked by the Muslim Brotherhood and other religious opponents.

Additionally, Rifat's known connections to Western intelligence agencies (e.g., the CIA), and his pro-capitalist, and generally pro-Western views are looked upon with suspicion by the Ba'th hierarchy.¹⁵⁵ Reportedly, many Ba'th Party members feared Rifat would radically alter Syria's foreign policy in a pro-Western direction.¹⁵⁶ Consequently, it was not surprising when Generals Haydar and Fayyadh thwarted his coup attempt in February 1984.

When Hafez returned, Rifat was removed from command of the

¹⁵⁴ See, Drysdale, op. cit., p.247.

¹⁵⁵ There was considerable speculation that Rifat was both more sympathetic to the west and affiliated with its intelligence services. Additionally, there was the contrasting idea that Defense Minister Tlas was "Moscow's man." See, Business Week, February 6, 1984. The evidence, however, does not support either assessment (see below).

¹⁵⁶ Drysdale, op. cit., p.249.

Defense Companies, the force more or less dismembered.¹⁵⁷ By the end of March 1984, all three of the major protagonists (Rifat al-Assad, Haydar and Fayyahn) were exiled to Europe by the President. But while Haydar and Fayyahn quickly came back and resumed command of their forces, Rifat was gone for six months, and when he did return, he was not given back the Defense Companies.¹⁵⁸

While the precise role of the Soviet Union is not known in all this, certain facts quite clearly indicate that the Soviet Union cooperated in Rifat al-Assad's removal. First, after the coup attempt, while Damascus was still quite tense, Politburo member Geidar Aliev visited the country. While the visit had been previously scheduled and postponed (due to the death of General Secretary Chernenko), it clearly assisted Al-Assad in regaining his position.

It seems clear that Aliev (who has come up through the Soviet Union's own security apparatus and is, presumably, well versed in such power struggles) told Rifat that they supported Hafez. The communique issued after the visit

¹⁵⁷ It was reduced to approximately 10,000-18,000 men; the pay of its members cut; its intelligence service dissolved; and it was reassigned to the army high command and dispersed throughout the country. See, *ibid.*; New York Times, October 31, 1986; New York Review of Books, May 5, 1986, p.31.

¹⁵⁸ It has been speculated that Rifat was only allowed to return on condition that he not attempt to regain his former (or any new) military force. See, Drysdale, *op. cit.*, p.252.

singles out Hafez personally for special mention of the Soviet Union's satisfaction.¹⁵⁹ Second, the notice regarding the Aliev-Rifat meeting speaks of a "exchange of views," which is Soviet diplomatic shorthand for a disagreement.¹⁶⁰

Third, it cannot go unnoticed, that upon leaving Damascus, the first place where Rifat (and Haydar and Fayyahd) flew was Moscow. In fact, upon arrival, Rifat had a private audience with Chernenko, and then met with Premier Nikolai Thikhonov, Politburo member Ponomorev, and International Department member, Karen Brutents.¹⁶¹ And Rifat al-Assad was clearly humbled and not in the mood for a confrontation with the Soviets: while in Moscow he taped a message to be broadcast back to Syria extolling the Soviet role in Syria and the region.¹⁶²

And finally, the Kuwaiti paper Al-Qabas (which is usually well informed about such things) wrote Hafez al-Assad basically bought off the Soviet Union in the power struggle by agreeing to further institutionalizing the Soviet presence in the military and security services. It wrote:

The fact is that at the time the appointments of Abd al-Hakim Khaddam, Rifat al-Assad, and Zuhayr Mashariqah as

¹⁵⁹ FBIS-MEA, March 16, 1984, p.H1.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ FBIS-SOV, May 31, 1984, p.H1. (It seems that Rifat also had an additional meeting with Brutents alone.)

¹⁶² FBIS-SOV, June 4, 1984, p.H2.

Vice Presidents were announced, there were developments taking place within the armed forces and the various security bodies to guarantee Soviet influence in Syria... It is true that Moscow does not possess a "strongman" to succeed the "strongman," but it has the ability to secure a balance of power that serves its interests.¹⁶³

While the report did not give any specifics on what these measures entailed, it is probably certain that they concerned personnel purges and appointments in the military and security organs, and the future course of Syrian weapons procurement. It should be noted that the Aliev apparently also provide Al-Assad and Syria positive inducements to maintain a steady pro-Soviet line. He announced that the Soviet Union would provide Syria with the long sought Mig-29's and 31's, and would "complete" Syria's electronic defensive network.¹⁶⁴

It is also significant that after the struggle subsided, the Syrian Communist Party seemed to begin agitating for a more "progressive" domestic policy. Apparently, they are not satisfied with the "discrepancy" between "the anti-imperialist trend of foreign policy and an inner political

¹⁶³ FBIS-MEA, March 22, 1984, p.H1.

¹⁶⁴ FBIS-SOV, March 22, 1984, H1. The Mig-29 is a high speed, dual role air combat/attack aircraft, and the Mig-31 has a 1500 Km radius and is reportedly the first Soviet interceptor with "look-down, shoot-down" capabilities. See, Jane's Defence Weekly, March 17, 1984, p.405.

trend toward curbing social progress."¹⁶⁵

Given the fact that there is little deviation (at least for long) between the SCP and Soviet lines it seems probable that the Soviet Union was also interested in pressuring Al-Assad. The Soviet Union and the S.C.P. must have perceived the dangers of allowing resurgent bourgeoisie elements to gain strength in the aftermath of the coup attempt and the deteriorating economic situation. Hence, they let Al-Assad know this.¹⁶⁶

It is also interesting that Syria, the Soviet Union, and the S.C.P. all cooperated on a project which seemed to meet their joint needs. This project was the June 1984 conference of regional communist parties which was held in Damascus.¹⁶⁷ Among those in attendance were the Algerian, Bahrainian, Egyptian, Jordanian, Iraqi, Lebanese, Saudi Arabian, Sudanese, and even the Tanzanian communist parties.

By allowing them to meet in Damascus, Al-Assad reminded the rulers of states from which these parties came (where most of them are illegal) that he has more than a little nuisance

¹⁶⁵ K. Hammami, "Inexhaustible Potential of the Liberation Struggle," World Marxist Review, June 1984, p.43.

¹⁶⁶ Politburo member Khalid Hammami demanded the removal of "bourgeois elements from the country's political parties. (See, "The Syrian Communist Party is Sixty Years Old," World Marxist Review, October, 1984, pp.119-122.)

¹⁶⁷ East German News Agency, June 3, 1984.

value to them. Additionally, he demonstrated and increased Syria's continuing value to the Soviet Union. From the Soviet perspective, the meeting served to display Moscow's continuing importance to the region, it provided it with additional information on the activities of each party, as well as promoted the unity of the "anti-imperialist" forces.

The Current Situation

In the period since the 1983-84 power struggle, the regime has seen its internal and external fortunes rise and fall many times. During late 1985, the Muslim Brotherhood was fairly active and engaged in limited bombing actions in the country.¹⁶⁸ And during the spring 1986, the regime was once again buffeted by numerous bombings which were all attributed to Iraq.¹⁶⁹

In spite of the fact that the regime has a long list of

¹⁶⁸ See, Middle East International, February 7, 1986, p...

¹⁶⁹ On March 13, 1986 a refrigerator truck explodes in Damascus killing at least fifty people and wounding many more. Within a few days a Lebanese reportedly "confessed" to working for the Iraqis, and to picking-up the explosives in Baghdad and planting the bomb. He was subsequently hanged. (See, New York Times, March 19, 1986, p.A1.) On April 15 and 16, 1986 seven bombs explode on buses and trains in five northern towns. Al-Assad acknowledged 144 dead and at least 149 wounded. (See, Economist, May 3, 1986, p.51; Washington Post, May 19, 1986, p.A4; The New York Times, May 29, 1986.) In May, 1986, the government displayed three men from Hama and two Turkish nationals and asserted that they are Muslim Brothers who received money and explosives from Iraq and smuggled them in across the Turkish border where they have a base. (See, New York Times, May 19, 1986, p.A14.)

enemies eager to de-stabilize it (King Hussein had already admitted to harboring anti-Al-Assad terrorists,¹⁷⁰ and the Muslim Brotherhood, dissident Ba'th Party members, Iraqi agents, Israeli agents, Lebanese Marionites, and Tripoli [Sunni] Muslims were all suspects) the probability is high that it was Iraq. But after this most recent terrorist wave, the internal troubles have been more manageable.

Additionally, except for the late 1983 -early 1984 power struggle, the Alawis have once again been demonstrating remarkable cohesiveness. Since Hafez al-Assad's return in early 1984, Alawis sectarian solidarity has clearly returned.

In examining current succession politics, it is clear that the major actors are all still Alawis, and that there is not even a Sunni faction in the Army (no less one capable of taking over). Regardless, concern and interest is always necessary when a man with a heart condition and diabetes controls a country such as Syria.

In spite of the fact that Al-Assad is said to have recovered his health,¹⁷¹ the security situation in Syria is still

¹⁷⁰ Washington Post, May 19, 1986.

¹⁷¹ Al-Assad recently gave four straight hours of interviews to Western journalists (Washington Post, May 19, 1986) and was said to be working his "customary eighteen hour day" (New York Times, May 18, 1986).

precarious. IISS, for example, estimated that the central government spent (what amounts to) over twenty percent of the defense budget on internal security.¹⁷² Additionally, Rifat al-Assad is still a potential threat to the regime.¹⁷³

Hafez al-Assad seems to keep Rifat around because he distracts the regime's opponents (i.e., he acts as a "lightening rod" ¹⁷⁴), and because he discourages an Alawi coup. Any conspirators could probably not overthrow Hafez without Rifat's assistance or acquiescence, and they are probably reluctant to join forces with him because he might be the main beneficiary of such a coup.¹⁷⁵

Other potential successors, such as Generals Haydar and Fayyadh, are considered to be too weak to gain power on their own, and Defense Minister Mustafa Tlas is said not to have an independent power base. Other contenders include:¹⁷⁶

General Ali Aslan, Deputy Chief of Staff. Aslan has

¹⁷² The figures are \$635 million out of \$3.2 billion (1984) and \$613 million out of \$2.8 billion (1983). IISS, The Military Balance, op. cit., p.62.

¹⁷³ In July, 1985, there was clear evidence of the "involvement" of Rifat al-Assad's followers in an attempt to assassinate Vice Premier Abd al-Halim Khaddam (See, Middle East International, January 25, 1985, p.8). Additionally, there seems to have been a Saudi Arabian dimension to the plot (See, Middle East International, April 6, 1984, p.13.)

¹⁷⁴ Drysdale, op. cit., p.256.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. p.256.

¹⁷⁶ Drysdale, op. cit., p.256; New York Review of Books, May 8, 1986, p.31.

recently been promoted to the same rank as Tlas and Hikmat Shihabi, and is from Al-Assad's own Matawirah tribe.

Muhammed al-Khawali [al-Khouli], Chief of Air Force Intelligence and advisor to Hafez Al-Assad. Khawali is also from Al-Assad's Matawirah tribe. Additionally, he has been implicated in a number of 1986's major international terrorist acts (see below).

Ali Duba, Chief of Military Intelligence, while a possibility is said to be "deeply unpopular [and] splendidly suited temperamentally to his present job."¹⁷⁷

Abd al-Halim Khaddam, Vice President and a Sunni, may have a chance if he could be counted upon not to attempt to move against Alawi control of the armed force.

Syrian government of the economy has also not improved in the mid 1980's. The structural problems still remain and Al-Assad has yet to undertake meaningful reform.¹⁷⁸ As one anonymous Damasence recently said: "We never had poor people before. Now we have them."¹⁷⁹ Basic necessities are even scarcer then before (or non-existent), and the country has even begun to experience (Romanian style) power cut offs of six hours each day.¹⁸⁰

Less than 40% of pledged Arab aid (of \$1.8 billion) has actually been paid to Syria during the early 1980's, and

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Middle East International, March 6, 1984, p.15; September 26, 1984, pp.13-14.

¹⁷⁹ New York Times, December 31, 1986, p.2.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

most of this has come from Saudi Arabia.¹⁸¹ More recently, however, and in spite of the fact that Saudi Arabia is reported to have significantly slowed down its contribution to "no more than \$20 million," the transfers are supposed to be reaching prescribed Baghdad Agreement levels.¹⁸²

In foreign relations, Al-Assad, since spring 1986, has been able to lessen Syria's isolation with the moderate Arab states, but he has also had increasing troubles with nominal allies.

Despite all its efforts and 57,000 troops, Al-Assad has been unable to "close the book" on Lebanon. Indeed, 1985 was a very difficult year. When the Syrian backed Shi'te Amal militia attacked three major Palestinian refugee camps, it not only strained relations with Iran and Libya, but also caused all of its former allies in Lebanon to turn against it and support Arafat and the non-Syrian P.L.O.¹⁸³

By the fall 1985, there were increasing strains with Libya over Syrian pressure on the P.L.O. Al-Qaddafi even threatened to withdraw his ambassador from Damascus.¹⁸⁴ Additionally, he did expell 10,000-20,000 Syrian oil

¹⁸¹ Middle East International, January 25, 1985, p.8.

¹⁸² New York Times, May 19, 1986, p.A14.

¹⁸³ New York Times, May 25, 1986, p.A4.

¹⁸⁴ New York Times, October 13, 1985, p.A27.

workers.¹⁸⁵ And there never seems to have been a successful resolution to an earlier dispute with Libya about its support for a Lebanese group with ties to the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood.

Similarly, Syrian efforts to dominate the P.L.O., and Iran's support for the Lebanese Shi'ites were causing tension between Damascus and Teheran.¹⁸⁶ Additionally, by May 1986, Iranian shipments of concessionary oil became a problem.¹⁸⁷ None of the problems were resolved because Syrian troops soon moved against Iran's Lebanese surrogate, Hezbollah, in Meshghara (six miles from Israel's "security zone").¹⁸⁸ Al-Assad has been attempting to gain control over the pro-Iranian Hezbollah, and the party (and Iran) seem to be going out of its way to avoid a full fledged battle with Syria.¹⁸⁹ But it is an open question how long this Iranian restraint will endure.¹⁹⁰

One of the most interesting displays of both Syrian and

¹⁸⁵ New York Times, October 13, 1985.

¹⁸⁶ New York Times, October 13, 1985, p.A27.

¹⁸⁷ Al-Assad wanted the oil flow to continue and, reportedly, to make some progress on releasing hostages held in Lebanon with Iranian connivance. New York Times, May 19, 1986.

¹⁸⁸ New York Times, June 16, 1986, p.A3.

¹⁸⁹ New York Times, July 5, 1986; March 1, 1987.

¹⁹⁰ See, New York Times, March 8, 1987, p.A3; March 27, 1987, p.A11.

Soviet influence in Lebanon was revealed after four Soviet diplomats were kidnapped (and one killed) in late September, 1985.¹⁹¹ After intensive negotiations involving the Syrians and Soviets, and the lifting of the siege on Tripoli (which had partially precipitated the seizure), the three remaining diplomats were released.

According to separate information from an American and Iraqi diplomat¹⁹², the Soviet-Syrian negotiators seized a family member of one of the individuals connected to the seizure of the Soviets, killed him and returned his mutilated body to the family. When returning the body, they threatened to continue such actions against this and several other families if the three remaining diplomats were not returned unharmed. Within several hours, the Soviets were, indeed, released.

Throughout the kidnappings in Lebanon, Al-Assad has been able to play upon Western desires to utilize Syria as an intermediary to obtain the release of Western hostages. And often Al-Assad reveals that he is "meeting with" Hezbollah or other leaders to attempt to gain their release.¹⁹³ But since many of the kidnappings seem to be tolerated by Syria

¹⁹¹ New York Times, October 1, 1985, p.A1.

¹⁹² The conversations were not for attribution. The meeting with the American took place in May 1986, and with the Iraqi in February 1987.

¹⁹³ New York Times, October 1, 1985, p.A.

(and since it was so successful with the Soviet situation), it seems that most of this activity has Al-Assad's tacit support.

Al-Assad's good fortunes in Lebanon, however, did not last long. In December, 1985, Al-Assad thought that he had finally "closed the book" on Lebanon. Vice President Khaddam had finally negotiated an agreement with the commanders of the militias (and not the civilian politician --which was supposed to make it more reliable) for an end to Lebanon's civil war.

Al-Ba'th exuberantly proclaimed that "a new future for Lebanon has begun."¹⁹⁴ Khaddam spoke of Syria's determination to "close the file on the Lebanese crisis."¹⁹⁵ Al-Assad even gave the arrangement his personal backing by appearing on Syrian television with the leaders of the three (or, in retrospect, two) major militias (Nabih Berri, Walid Jumblat, and Elie Hobeika) to sign the "Damascus Accords."

However, as it turns out, Al-Assad and Khaddam had no idea of what was occurring among the Christian forces. Indeed, the Christian forces loyal to Amin Gemayel --who perceived Hobeika as a Syrian stooge-- soon mutinied. Consequently, the entire arrangement, and most of Syria's hopes in

¹⁹⁴ New York Times, December 29, 1985.

¹⁹⁵ New York Times, December 27, 1985.

Lebanon, collapsed.¹⁹⁶

But Al-Assad did (temporarily) have better fortune with Jordan. In January 1986 Syria was sufficiently strong and King Hussein so frustrated with Arafat and the P.L.O., that the he finally visited Damascus (Al-Assad reciprocated by visiting Amman in May).¹⁹⁷ It seemed that Jordan finally might be coerced into casting its lot with Al-Assad on the Palestinian issue. But soon this too broke down.

The turns in Al-Assad's fortune and Syria's vulnerability cannot be better illustrated than by examining the first few weeks of January, 1986:¹⁹⁸

	<u>1/1/86</u>	<u>1/10/86</u>
Jordan:	Hussein visits Damascus	U.S. diplomat Murphy meets Hussein and Peres in Europe
Lebanon:	"Damascus Accords" pacifies Lebanon	"Damascus Accords" collapse with Christian uprising
Israel	Missile challenge to Israel	Apprehension over Israeli strike
Iraq	Tension high	Tension even higher

¹⁹⁶ See, The Economist, May 3, 1986, p.8; New York Times, May 19, 1986, p.A14.

¹⁹⁷ New York Times, May 6, 1985.

¹⁹⁸ New York Times, January 4, 1986; January , 1986.

By the Spring there were also increasing difficulties with the Soviet Union. When Vice President Khaddam visited Moscow on May 19, 1986, his visit was overshadowed by the visit of Libya's Abdel Salam Jallourd.¹⁹⁹ In fact the entire U.S.-Libyan confrontation in the Mediterranean was preoccupying Moscow and raising doubts over its utility as an extra-regional partner. Even when Al-Assad visited Moscow on June 19, 1986 and met with Gorbachev there did not seem to be any new understanding between the leaders.

While Soviet-Syrian relations remained tense throughout the summer, the underlying dynamics of Syrian vulnerability continued to allow the Soviet Union to strengthen its position. In spite of temporary setbacks and the frustrations of the overall and limited relationship, Syria's geopolitical situation between Israel, Iraq, Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, and the domestic imperatives of Alawi minority rule and radicalism, continue to provide the Soviet Union with a receptive local partner.

As long as Al-Assad believes that his best security guarantee can be found in Moscow, and not Washington, then he will continue to maintain the relationship with the Soviet Union, and indirectly provide Moscow with additional opportunities to entrench itself in Syria.

¹⁹⁹ New York Times, May 19, 1986.

Chapter VIII

Soviet Middle East Policy as Revealed by the
Egyptian and Syrian Cases

After analyzing the Soviet Union's experience in Egypt and its past and current activities in Syria, it seems that the Soviet policy-makers have learned a mixed lesson from the failure to consolidate relations with Egypt.¹ Specifically, while the Soviet Union has significantly improved its management of the Syrian relationship, it has not altered its long term goal of seeking to establish far reaching control of the local partner. The Soviet Union is still attempting to participate authoritatively in Syria's domestic political processes in order to determine Syrian national policy, and to insure the attainment of its own wider foreign policy objective.

While the conventional pattern of influence-building serves to elucidate the activities of most other states (including the United States) in similar situations, Soviet behavior indicates that a more formal and authoritative form of control was the major aim of Soviet policy toward Egypt, and still is toward Syria. On a tactical level, Soviet policy

¹ It should be noted that this conclusion supports what little research has been done on the inability of states to "learn." See Howard Jervis, Perceptions and Misperceptions in International Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); and Glen Snyder and Paul Diesing, Conflict Among Nations (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

has become more sophisticated, flexible, and patient; but on a strategic level, it continues to promote maximal policy objectives and seeks to control Syrian policy.

The Egyptian experience only seems to have caused the Soviet Union to improve and refine the means for attaining control by teaching it not to push too hard over too short a period of time. By extending the time frame allowed for attaining its objective of control, and by attempting to gain dominance more subtly, the Soviet Union has clearly improved its management capability.

Chapters I-VII attempted to trace and document the Soviet Union's pattern of attempting to gain control of Egypt's and Syria's decision-making structures. Concerned over the increasing difficulty of competing with the West in a post-colonial environment, and over the mounting reversals in Africa and Asia during the mid and late 1960's (e.g., Indonesia, Guinea, Ghana, etc.), the Soviet Union attempted to penetrate the decision-making structures and processes of a number of its local partners. It wished to escort Egypt down the path it later took Ethiopia, Angola, South Yemen, and Afghanistan.²

In general terms, the penetration attempt was (is) carried

² See, Stephen H. Hosmer and Thomas W. Wolfe, Soviet Policy and Practice Toward Third World Conflicts (Lexington, MA:Lexington Books, 1983), especially pp.79-107.

out directly through covert actions and the use of sympathetic (indigenous) left-wing forces, and indirectly by manipulating the arms transfer relationship, the deployment of large numbers of in-country Soviet and East bloc combat and security personnel, and the overall economic trade and aid relationship. But the efforts to penetrate the Abd al-Nasir and then the Sadat regimes were so blatant and crude that they eventually backfired and caused a complete rupture with that country.

The attempt to transform the ASU into a pro-Soviet, pro-communist vanguard party with tight links to the CPSU was only the more overt side of the Soviet strategy. The extensive and documented account of the Soviet Union's clandestine activities presented in Chapter II and III clearly reveal more than a concerted effort to exercise an informal, non-coercive sway over Egypt's decision-makers. But the Soviet Union failed to penetrate Egypt's decision-making structures, could not insure the continued rule of a pro-Soviet elite, and was eventually expelled from Egypt.

Furthermore, the Soviet Union apparently drew --at first-- the wrong conclusions from the Egyptian experience. (The subsequent reversal in Chile [1973] also seems to have encouraged this incorrect Soviet analysis.³) Instead of reducing its efforts to control the internal processes and

³ See, Bialer, op. cit., pp.272-273.

structures of particular regimes, the Soviet Union redoubled its efforts in those countries where it was active. It gave up on the notion of a "peaceful transition to socialism" in these states and now was increasingly emphasizing direct revolutionary action. Hence, the rush toward even more interventionist techniques outlined in the Introduction and Chapter IV.

In Syria's case, the immediate urgency of penetrating the Al-Assad regime was off set first by the continuing Soviet interest in Egypt, and then by Soviet interest in Iraq. By the late 1970's, however, both these options were unavailable, and the Soviet Union turned its full attention toward Damascus. It was at this point that the more subtle Soviet attempt to dominate Syria fully emerged.

While the Soviet Union had pursued an unremittingly crude strategy of pressuring the Egyptians into making concessions and purging anti-Soviet elements, the more sophisticated and successful policy in Syria demonstrates that the lessons of the Egyptian experience were not totally lost on Soviet policy-makers. By the time the full failure in Egypt became clear in the mid-1970's, Soviet policy-makers seem to have realized that countries such as Egypt, Syria and Iraq, with more established political and economic structures, are significantly different from other, more underdeveloped states such as Ethiopia, Afghanistan, South Yemen,

Mozambique, and Angola.

Thus, the major variable in the Soviet penetration effort is not size, but the comparative level of political and economic (under)development.⁴ If a state has established and relatively secure (indigenous) political institutions, then it is much more difficult to penetrate. Additionally, the existence of internal and external conflicts are also important. The point is to create, or work with, a relatively weak and isolated local leadership which is beholden to external support for its existence.

Syria, while fully fitting only two of the three above categories (i.e., the internal conflict generated by minority, Alawi domination; and the struggle with Israel), still provides an attractive target. While not a state emerging directly from feudalism (as is Afghanistan, Ethiopia and South Yemen), or from colonial domination (as is Angola and Mozambique), the instability and fragility of its institutions can not be minimized. Moreover, improved Soviet penetration techniques have enabled the Soviet Union to gain a significant amount of leverage over Syria. And nowhere is this improvement more evident than in the Egyptian and Syrian armed Forces.

⁴ In territorial terms, Syria is actually a very small local partner. Angola, Ethiopia and Libya are 5-9 times larger; Afghanistan is over 3 times larger; and even South Yemen is almost twice as large.

As detailed above and in each case, the Soviet Union undertook a strenuous effort to penetrate the military establishment of its local partner. But while it failed miserably in Egypt --indeed, the primary Egyptian resistance to the Soviet nexus arose from within the military-- the situation with the Syrian military seems to be significantly different.

While it would be a gross exaggeration to say that the Soviet Union has deeply penetrated the Syrian military establishment or controls its policy, it is possible to say that Syrian military dependency on the Soviet Union, as well as low level Soviet penetration of the Syrian armed forces, has contributed to an acquiescence in the Syrian military (if not longterm bias) toward maintenance of good relations with the Soviet Union. And it is from this foot-hold in the Syrian military that the Soviet Union slowly hopes to secure its position in Syria. By gradually expanding its control over other state and social institutions, the Soviet Union hopes to create a web of dependent relationships which tightly bind Syria to itself and the East Bloc, and which promote Soviet foreign policy goals by directing and regulating Syrian policies.

Improved Soviet Management of Relations with Syria

The Soviet strategy of taking advantage of Syria's periodic

vulnerabilities to extract concessions and reinforce the Soviet presence is significantly more sophisticated than were the previously utilized techniques with Egypt. Syria's establishment (with Soviet encouragement) of military, political and economic institutions closely resembling the Soviet Union's own was only the first step in this process.

By gradually and increasingly pushing Syria to replicate the Soviet Union's institutions and then cooperate with it, Moscow has built the basis for direct and frequent contacts between Soviet and Syrian personnel. This vastly increases Soviet awareness of political and social trends within Syria, and it opens the door to further Soviet penetration of the Syrian decision-making structure. By giving Soviet personnel the opportunity to entrench themselves in Syrian domestic politics, the Soviet Union hopes to manipulate the military, economic, and political relationship to its advantage.

While many details of the Soviets' involvement with their Syrian counterparts are not known, it is clear from the occasional expulsion of Soviet personnel that Moscow actively attempts to utilize direct covert actions to garner control. And this is only the most obvious manifestation of Soviet attempts to gain control of Syria's decision-making structures and processes.

While it is difficult to gauge with certainty whether the

Soviet Union's overall interpersonal skill in handling the Syrians has improved, this does seem to be the case. Soviet personnel seem to have learned to be a bit more sensitive to the feelings of their local host. While it is known (as brought out above) that the Russians are still disliked by most Syrians (and that a good number of Soviet personnel have been assassinated in Syria), it does seem that they have made some improvement in the way they interact with their Syrian colleagues.

In a 1983 interview in Tishrin, for example, Soviet academic Alexander Kislov reminded his Syrian readers that when Sadat requested in 1972 that Soviet advisors leave Egypt, they actually left a day earlier than asked.⁵ This comment was an obvious move to reassure Syrian decision-makers, and perhaps even the general population, that Soviet military personnel stationed in Syria would leave if the Syrian government asked them to.

Additionally, the Soviet Union (since 1976) clearly has managed to avoid the public (and often gratuitous) personal imbroglios which plagued the relationship with Egypt, and even became its hallmark. And as far back as 1976, for example, Hafez al-Assad spoke of the special relationship

⁵ FBIS-MEA, November 16, 1983, pp.H3-5.

between top Soviet and Syrian leaders.⁶ The longevity of personal relationships between top Syrian and Soviet decision-makers also indicates an ability of each side to get along with the other.

The Soviet Union also has improved its handling of the arms transfer relationship with Syria. In spite of statements by high Syrian officials that the Soviet Union provides them with "everything" they need, and with "no strings attached,"⁷ it is certain that Syria has no such carte blanche on weapons acquisition. Rather, it would seem that the Soviet Union has managed to reduce the friction caused by any limitations on transfers.

As noted above, the Soviet Union's calculations regarding arms transfers are complicated by the willingness and ability of the United States and Israel to maintain the Middle East arms race, and by the shifting nature of intra-Arab politics. The preferred Soviet strategy seems to be one of providing a number of Arab states with sufficient weapons to make war against Israel (or force a settlement upon it) in a coalition. It wants the Arabs to help themselves by uniting in an anti-Zionist, anti-Western front.

⁶ Cited in Adeed Dawisha, op. cit., pp.148-149. (This is one of the reasons why Al-Assad was so infuriated by the Soviet move to oppose him in Lebanon. See Chapter V.)

⁷ Defense Minister Mustafa Tlas, New York Times, October 14, 1984.

Only when the region is polarized on a Soviet/Arab-U.S./Israeli axis is Moscow willing to risk its own position. "Arab unity on an anti-imperialist basis" really is the preferred Soviet strategy. As former Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko remarked after twenty four months of continuing Syrian-Israeli-U.S. crisis in Lebanon (June 1983): "Much depends on the Arab countries themselves, on their cohesion in the struggle against the forces of aggression."⁸ A united Arab front increases the chances of success against Israel and provides the Soviet Union with more room to manoeuver among its Arab partners.

The alternative, less preferable, but existing strategy is for the Soviet Union to maintain Syrian forces at a level below those of Israel while guaranteeing the territorial integrity of Al-Assad's Syria. This protects the local partner and minimizes the risks of an Israeli pre-emptive strike against Syria, while at the same time discouraging Syrian adventurism and promoting the polarization of the region along an anti-Israel, anti-U.S. axis.

The problem the Soviet Union has in pursuing a more generous arms transfer policy toward Syria is that it is vulnerable to U.S./Israeli counter-moves. In running the Middle East arms race, Israel does not just see itself running against

⁸ New York Times, June 17, 1983, p.A8.

Syria, but against, at the minimum, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. Hence, it comes to Washington with figures such as in Table VIII.1 and obtains sufficient qualitatively advanced equipment to defeat any combination of these adversaries. This strategy guarantees Syrian inferiority vis-a-vis Israel.

Table VIII.1
Israeli Estimate of Arab Military Forces ⁹

	<u>Israel</u>	<u>Syria</u>	<u>Confrontation States*</u>	<u>All Arab Forces**</u>
Troops	170,000	330,000	961,000	1,500,000
Aircraft#	670	600	1,440	2,863
Tanks	3,600	3,600	8,000	8,000
A.P.C.'s	8,000	2,700	8,850	8,850
artillery	1,000	2,300	7,000	11,635

*Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia;

**excludes Egypt; # Combat aircraft

Since the United States supports Israel in an arms race against an array of Arab states, Syrian "strategic parity" could only be attained at an extremely high level. If the Soviet Union suddenly attempted to overturn the (Israeli favored) balance of power by transferring arms to Syria, it would have to increase vastly qualitative and quantitative deliveries. Not only is such a strategy expensive (the

⁹ Jane's Defense Weekly, March 31, 1984, p.470. It should be noted that approximately two-thirds of Israel's aircraft are of the highest quality, while only a third of Syria's are of a similar quality. (Additionally, Israel gives a lower figure of Syrian tanks than does IISS; IISS says Syria has 4,200 tanks (IISS, World Military Balance, op. cit., 1983/1984, p.62.)

Soviet Union, or one or more wealthy Gulf states would have to underwrite the vast costs of such a build-up), but it is also dangerous, and probably would not succeed.

First, there is the already existing gap between Israeli and Syrian forces which would have to be closed. Second there is Israel's superior ability to absorb sophisticated equipment and to utilize it more successfully (see Chapter II). And third, there is the high probability that Israel would launch a pre-emptive strike before Syria ever reached parity, let alone superiority. Thus, given continued U.S. support, any Soviet attempt to heat up the local arms race would not bring the desired result. Syrian-Israeli disequilibrium would simply be established at higher and higher levels.

The Soviet Union and Syria have to endure the specter of Israel's military superiority until either the United States becomes tired of maintaining it, or until the Arabs unify on an anti-Zionist, anti-imperialist basis and form a coalition to balance Israel. The limitations this places on Syria's revisionist foreign policy are obvious.

In dealing with this relative Syrian vulnerability (which still can be viewed as a result of Soviet arms restraint), the Soviet Union seems to have won Syrian acquiescence much more easily than in Egypt. Although the Soviet Union

maintains an incredibly large arms flow to Syria, it is clear that Syria still does not get all the types of weapons it requests, nor (as in Egypt) does it receive the latest Soviet technologies in a timely fashion.

Limited Soviet Arms Restraint

In sum, the Soviet strategy seems to be to provide Syria with as much quantity and quality as necessary to protect itself, but to calibrate anything larger than this on the basis of a rough equilibrium between Israel and a coalition of Arab states. Thus, the key to the arms transfer relationship is Soviet maintenance of a rough quantitative balance (i.e., Table VIII.1) while manipulating the qualitative elements. By lagging on the delivery of first-line equipment to Syria by even a year or two, the Soviet Union seems to avoid the dangers of an unrestrained Middle East arms race, and excessive and bitter Syrian recriminations.

The evidence for limited Soviet arms restraint --especially on the qualitative level-- is large. The Soviet Union, for example, does not seem to export its highest quality equipment to Syria. This is especially evident in tank and aircraft exports. While Syria will soon be receiving the Mig-29, this aircraft is probably an "export" design which

is not the Soviet Union's highest quality craft.¹⁰

Similarly, the T-72 tank is clearly not the top of the line Soviet tank today, and it may not have been the best tank even when Syria first received it in 1979.¹¹ Moreover, it is also known that the Soviet Union has been unwilling to provide Syria with night-sights for these tanks.¹²

As noted in Chapter VII, the SA-5 surface-to-air missile deliveries did not constitute a lack of Soviet restraint. But the area of greatest restraint has been in the withholding of surface-to-surface missiles, specifically, SS-23's.¹³ While the Syrian army has asked for SS-23's, it is "understood that the Kremlin is reluctant to supply it."¹⁴ The provision of SS-23's (or of SS-21's in large numbers) would pose a strategic threat to Israel, and would

¹⁰ Lewis, op. cit., p.33. Moreover, the craft is being made available to Third World air forces without ever having gone to Warsaw Pact forces.

¹¹ It is surely not a coincidence that the Soviet Union touts the quality of the T-72 while at the same time refusing to export the T-64. See Lewis, *ibid.*, p.33; and Jane's Defence Review, 1984 (London:Jane's Publishing Co., 1985) p.438. Additionally, Israel's claim of destroying as many as nine T-72's in 1982 indicates that the tank is of inferior design. Jane's Defence Review, 1984, ibid., p.431.)

¹² Economist, May 3, 1986.

¹³ Syria's current surface-surface missile force includes: 1 Scud Regiment (18 missiles); 1 Frog Regiment (18 missiles); 1 SS-21 Regiment (12 missiles). See IISS, World Military Balance, op. cit., 1986, p.85.

¹⁴ Jane's Defence Weekly, June 28, 1986, p.1219.

almost certainly precipitate a war.

Similarly, and in response to the 1982 defeat in Lebanon, President Al-Assad insisted to Jimmy Carter that Soviet equipment is just as good as American, but that Syrian forces were at a disadvantage because they lacked some of the Soviet Union's "special electronic equipment." He also added that this would not happen again.¹⁵ Given the fact that Comrade Aliev promised to "complete" the electronic defensive works when he visited Syria in 1984, there is probably some truth to Al-Assad's statement, and to an analysis which highlights the Soviet reluctance to pursue a qualitative arms race in the Middle East.

While the motives of Soviet arms transfer restraint toward Syria directly parallel those active toward Egypt a decade earlier, in the current case, Syria seem to accept its fate with greater equanimity. The sources of this greater equanimity seem to lie, in the greater Syrian ability (than in Egypt since 1967) to live with the status quo, the Soviet guarantee of Syria's security against Israel, and a greater realism on the part of the Al-Assad regime about the limits of Soviet support for any Middle East state.

Syria's population pressures, and even its economic troubles due to the state of war are less than Egypt's were a decade

¹⁵ The Blood of Abraham, op. cit., p.79.

earlier. And even if Al-Assad does not go to war against Israel, he can still claim to be the leader of the pan-Arabist and anti-Zionist movement. Additionally, the Soviet strategy of restraint does not completely rule out a Syrian war against Israel. It just limits that war to one of two types: a grand coalition of Arab forces (which theoretically is within Al-Assad's powers to bring about), and a war closely coordinated with, and approved by, the Soviet Union.

The former type of war, while dangerous for both superpowers, would probably be acceptable to the Soviet Union if it is of limited objective and minimized the chances of superpower involvement. A coalition of Arab forces is less likely to need the Soviet Union to the same extent than a single (or two) Arab states would, and its chances of success are much greater.

The latter type of war is acceptable to the Soviet Union because it provides it with control over when the war option can be exercised (providing that the war, more or less, also suits Syrian interests at that time). Thus, it is calculated in the light of Syrian and Soviet policy objectives.

Given Israel's superiority,¹⁶ it is fairly certain that the Syria alone could not hope to defeat it in a confrontation

¹⁶ See, Table VIII.1; and Jane's Defence Weekly, March 31, 1984, p.470.

which lasted more than a few days. Consequently, Al-Assad's and the Soviet Union's best chance for regaining the Golan Heights and changing the regional calculus through force of arms is to seize the Golan with the units in place, and obtain a superpower imposed cease-fire before Israel can mobilize its reserves and counter-attack.¹⁷ (This was Al-Assad's October 1973 strategy, except this time there is no Sadat to complicate the plan. See Chapter III.)

Thus, if Syria hoped to utilize this strategy, it would have to coordinate its efforts closely with the Soviet Union. Naturally, this provides the Soviet Union with a great deal of leverage over Syrian military policy. The Soviet Union could insist --and in fact Syria would need-- at the minimum, normal relations with Iraq, close relations with Jordan, and other Arab diplomatic, if not, military assistance.

As a result of the war options open to Syria, the Soviet Union can rightfully point out that the major impediment to a war against Israel is not Soviet arms restraint, but the inability of Syria to reconcile itself with its neighbors and to form an Arab coalition, however limited in scope and duration. This both reduces the tension in the arms transfer

¹⁷ Since existing Israeli forces in this area (as in 1973) are grossly out matched, this is the type of attack which Israel is least prepared to handle. Syria would have approximately 36 hours to utilize its local superiority. Jane's Defence Weekly, June 28, 1986, pp.1219, 1240.

relationship and provides the Soviet Union with closer control over Syria's war option.

Soviet Management of the Economic Sphere

The Soviet Union also seems to have better managed its trade and aid relationship with Syria. To begin with, Soviet economic policy --in spite of the late-1960's shift to more commercial (if not mercenary) terms-- has always been relatively more generous to Syria than it had been to Egypt. The post-1966, 1973 and 1979-80 economic concessions to Syria contrasted starkly with the restrictive aid policies toward Egypt (see Chapters II, V, and VII).

It should be noted, however, that Syria, as a significantly smaller and less populous country, has substantially smaller aid requirements. Thus, the Soviet Union could more generously meet these needs because they are more limited.

A second aspect of the Soviet-Syrian economic relationship (and contrast with Egypt) is that the Soviet Union has had more success in creating a viable and self-sustaining state sector in Syria, and a higher degree of infrastructural dependency. Relatively speaking, Soviet penetration of Egypt's state sector, and the degree of Egyptian dependence on Soviet infrastructural imports, was never as great.

Clearly, the Soviet Union never obtained the economic

position in Egypt which it has today in Syria. But again, given the large difference in size, this discrepancy is easier to understand.

The major similarity between Soviet involvement in Egypt and Syria, however, persists: Soviet aid and trade policy still cannot replace the primary economic relationship with the capitalist world, and the Syrian economy (like the Egyptian economy before it) is no where near totally dependent on Moscow. The Soviet Union continues to be a very poor second in the regional economic competition, and to a large extent, it has even opted out of this competition.¹⁸

The Sources of the Drive to Control

In addition to the Soviet Union's domestic need to control its local partners (outlined in the Introduction), the economic and military spheres actually provide additional incentives for the Soviet Union (subtly) to penetrate the Al-Assad regime. Part of the drive to control Syrian (and Egyptian) policy stems from the tensions inherent in a Soviet policy which utilizes means which both maintain and undermine its presence.

In the economic sphere, for example, the Soviet Union relies on a mixed policy of trading heavily with Syria in the

¹⁸ For the details and reasons of this Soviet shift, see, Valkenier, op. cit.

strategic infrastructural sector, but tolerating Damascus' maintenance of primary economic relations with the West. In the military sphere, the Soviet Union relies on the arms transfer relationship but it is unable to provide Al-Assad with sufficient force to liberate his occupied territories.

Thus, to insure its continuing presence in the region, the Soviet Union attempts to suppress these inherent conflicts by gaining as much control as possible over the local decision-makers. Since it is incapable of meeting the economic needs of its regional partners, the Soviet Union has to attempt to regulate Syria's foreign economic relations with the West, and the internal pressures which promote it. Only by doing so is it able to guarantee that Syrian policy-makers will not act against this inherently contradictory Soviet policy. Without a degree of control over Syria's economic policies --or at the minimum, a marked dependence on crucial Soviet spare parts and expertise which will dissuade them-- a Syrian realignment against the Soviet Union is always possible.

Since the Soviet Union cannot come close to matching the appeal of a Western economic orientation (and no longer even attempts to), its turn to selective economic penetration is very prudent and may even pay off in the long run. By attempting to control the commanding heights and strategic infrastructure of the Syrian economy, the Soviet Union hopes

to gain leverage over the economic and political decision-makers without having to foot an extensive aid bill.

Hence, the Soviet insistence on Syrian adoption of the Soviet Union's own economic model is based as much upon the easier penetration ability it affords, as for ideological or self-legitimizing reasons. If the Soviet Union can persuade or manipulate a local partner into concentrating control of the economy in a few state ministries, it is significantly easier for it to gain control of that state's economic policies and inhibit any excessive turn to the West.

While the Soviet Union has urged Syria on a "pro-socialist," pro-Soviet course through the replication of the Soviet state-economic model and the establishment a significant degree of infrastructural dependence, it is also clear that Moscow has not been able to force Al-Assad to lessen his economic reliance on the Damascene Sunni economic elite. Indeed, it seems that Al-Assad consciously utilizes this power base to balance his own pro-Soviet government economic ministries and military establishment.¹⁹ And as long as Al-Assad continues to allow these pro-capitalist, pro-Western Sunni elements to operate (however limitedly), the danger of a repetition of the Egyptian failure is still possible.

¹⁹ The recent appointment of Finance Minister Mohammed Imadi, a Western-oriented economist trained at Columbia University, indicates that Al-Assad is not attempting to crush the traditional Sunni merchant class. See, New York Times, December 3, 1986.

(Some of these elements supported Rifat al-Assad in 1984.)

The same type of tensions plague the Soviet Union in respect to the military and political relationship. As detailed above, the Middle East military equilibrium is such that the ability of Syria to attain its policy objective through force is highly constrained (i.e., it is contingent upon an Arab coalition or a Soviet decision to risk confrontation with the United States). Thus, should the status quo become intolerable for the Al-Assad regime (as it eventually did for the Abd al-Nasir and Sadat regimes), then the entire Soviet position could crumble with a Syrian attempt to change extra-regional partners.

In attempting to revise the status quo toward conditions more amenable to Soviet and Syrian interests, the Soviet Union is inhibited by a number difficult choices and calculations. As noted, the arms transfer problem, while under better control with Syria than with Egypt, still causes tension. If the Soviet Union agrees to transfer massive quantities of arms to Syria it jeopardizes a number of Soviet interests.²⁰ But the failure to do so creates

²⁰ As noted massive shipments risk: a) the destruction of Israel (which is, a priori, against the Soviet Union's wishes; b) an Israeli pre-emptive strike, the possible destruction of its regional partner, and the need to intervene itself; or c) probable United States intervention. It has also been noted that even a more modest arms flow jeopardizes other Soviet regional goals. While both the Soviet Union and Syria are revisionist powers, their conceptions of the region's future order --especially in

bilateral tension and continually demonstrates the limited ability of the Soviet Union to assist its partner.

In either case, the Soviet regional position is complicated: it is a revisionist, extra-regional state aligned with a local revisionist state, and neither are capable of altering the status quo in the indefinite future. The Soviet Union's position is further complicated by its need to champion the demands of Syria and other radical Arab states in order to insure its continuing utility to these states. But this very posture adversely affect the willingness of the United States and Israel to accept the Soviet Union as a legitimate regional actor.

This is especially evident in regard to the difficulty the Soviet Union has had in reopening relations with Israel. It is known that former Foreign Minister Gromyko (and others) regretted the 1967 decision to break off diplomatic relations with Israel.²¹ But any move to re-establish relations antagonizes the Soviet Union's radical Arab partners and reduces the Soviet Union's importance to

relation to Lebanon and the P.L.O.-- differ markedly. Thus, the Soviet choice is between a well equipped and modernized Syrian military which can protect itself from Israeli and American pressure (but also leaves it strong enough to challenge other Soviet regional interests), and one which contains Syrian adventures against Soviet interests in Lebanon and the P.L.O., but leaves the country vulnerable to Israel.

²¹ Shevchenko, op. cit., pp. 137,200.

them.²²

If the Soviet Union ceases to propound the extremist line, and indeed, distances itself from it by (re-)recognizing Israel, than it loses most of its utility to Syria and the radical states; but if it does not, then its activities in the region are vigorously opposed by the U.S. and Israel, and its legitimacy to act in the region continually questioned. Thus, it often ends up attempting to maintain both (mutually exclusive) positions and attracts the suspicion of not only the U.S. and Israel, but more importantly, Syria. Thus, the cautious and gradual Soviet feelers to Israel since August 1986.²³

Additionally, both Moscow and Damascus are tempted to seek a deal with the maintainer of the status quo, the United States continues to exist. This creates suspicion on both sides of the revisionist partnership.²⁴ And the Soviet Union

²² See, for example, New York Times, August 18, 1986. It is notable, however, that a sea-change seems to have occurred in a number of more moderate Arab states. For the first time, such states as Egypt and Jordan are said to be privately urging the Soviet Union to re-establish diplomatic relations with Israel. See, New York Times, August 23, 1987, p.A1.

²³ While Poland and Israel have already established interest sections in each other's capitals, and it is speculated that Hungary will soon follow, the Soviet Union is careful not to move too quickly, or too far so as to alienate Syria (New York Times, September 17, 1986, p.A14; April 2, 1987, p.A1).

²⁴ See, New York Times, August 5, 1986.

and Syria have more than once flirted with such an approach to the United States. The U.S.-Soviet 1972 "code of conduct," for example, theoretically delimited each side's activities in the Middle East,²⁵ and alienated Egypt and Syria. The October 1977 Communique was a second Soviet tender for such a U.S.-Soviet understanding.

What the Soviet Union seems most to want from the United States is for it to refrain from opposing its participation in the region as a legitimate and equal extra-regional actor.²⁶ Within certain bounds of (Soviet) principle, the Soviet Union has occasionally seemed open to a division of labor whereby both superpowers pressure their local partners to accept a settlement worked out before hand. Privately, some Soviets can be quite frank about being willing to pressure Syria if they believe it will end in a positive settlement not designed, as they say, to "satisfy the Israeli appetite for expansion."

²⁵ See, Alexander L. George, "The Basic Principle Agreement of 1972: Origins and Expectations," in Alexander George (ed.), Managing the U.S. Soviet Rivalry (Boulder: Westview, 1979), 65-106.

²⁶ Former Foreign Minister Gromyko never tired of calling upon all parties active in the Middle East "to act with sober minded regard for each other's interests and rights." (New York Times, September 28, 1984, p.A12.) And former Soviet U.N. representative Oleg A. Troyanovsky occasionally noted how it was not necessary for the Soviet Union and the United States to "like each other," but only for them to "respect each other as equals." (New York Times, March 13, 1983, p.6.)

The difficulty for the Soviet Union, however, is that, by and large, the United States does not believe it necessary to include the Soviet Union in the management of the region's affairs, and therefore continues to isolate it and attempt to force it to the sidelines. The U.S. believes that if it waits long enough the status quo will be so intolerable for Syria that it too will follow Egypt's lead and "come to the United States."²⁷ Moreover, Syrian reluctance to completely spurn the United States reinforces this American perception.

Actually, it seems that the person who has learned the most from the Soviet-Egyptian experience is Hafez al-Assad. Even when United States regional policy has come to impasses, Al-Assad occasionally encouraged it to continue playing a major role.²⁸ Clearly, he would never repeat Sadat's (and after 1964, Abd al-Nasir's) error of totally aligning his country with one or the other superpower.²⁹

Al-Assad is aware that both the United States and Soviet Union have a multiplicity of interests in the region and that there is rarely a perfect coincidence either superpower

²⁷ Kissinger, The White House Years, op. cit., pp.

²⁸ Carter, Keeping the Faith, op. cit., p.298,407.

²⁹ The fact that Egypt, under President Mubarak, has quietly moved back toward contacts with the Soviet Union demonstrates that Sadat's policy was too extreme to be maintained. See, Economist, December 20, 1986, p.63.

and Syria's own. Thus, he has not found it necessary, and has been extremely careful not, to completely alienate the United States. Indeed, Al-Assad has shown a repeated willingness to turn to the United States when he believes that it can assist him in obtaining his goals (e.g., the 1974 Disengagement Negotiations; the limited cooperation in 1976; and the United Nations condemnation of Israeli annexation of the Golan). Moreover, he is aware that his leverage against the Soviet Union is greatly reduced when U.S.-Syrian relations are at low ebbs.

Additionally, the Soviet Union's perceived and real weakness in the region which causes Syria to maintain the relationship with the United States. As the less capable, and more cautious, of the two superpowers, the Soviet Union is inherently disadvantaged in the competition with the United States. And this weakness and caution is often self-reinforcing.

Militarily, the Soviet Union is hobbled not only by its inability to provide its client with sufficient arms to radically transform the status quo, but also by its own prudence in not attempting to intervene and reconstitute the status quo itself. It is an ironic paradox that while globally the armed forces are the Soviet Union's "most effective policy instrument,"³⁰ in the Middle East, it is

³⁰ See, Bialer, op. cit., pp.264-265.

significantly constrained by the military realities.

While it would be an exaggeration to assert that the Soviet Union is incapable of intervening in the Eastern Mediterranean, it is possible to say that it would not be a particularly easy task,³¹ and that under most all circumstances save one (i.e., the destruction of Al-Assad's Syria itself), the costs clearly outweigh the benefits.³²

Thus, because the Soviet Union cannot militarily revise the status quo (either through its own efforts, or that of its local partner), it is constantly in danger of being deserted by its client. The best Syria can hope for in the indefinite future (providing it maintains the Soviet connection) is a prolongation of the moderately unacceptable status quo. Thus the allure of American patronage for modified Syrian ambitions can, under the present set of circumstance, never be removed, and the Soviet Union must seek to compensate for this weakness, and to satisfy its domestic need to dominate

³¹ See, Rajan Menon, "Military Intervention and Soviet Policy in the Third World," in Roger Kanets (ed.) Soviet Foreign Policy in the 1980's (New York: Praeger, 1982), pp.269-291.

³² Israel's non-contiguity to the Soviet Union almost completely degrades the Soviet advantage in land forces, and with only 15,000 naval infantry and 60,000 airborne troops (without self contained logistical facilities; see, Ibid., pp.269), the Soviet Union would surely have a difficult time intervening. Additionally, Israel is internally unified, its troops are more highly motivated and possess technologically superior weapons, and (presumably) would be able to retain local air superiority and the military support of the United States in the last resort.

local partners, by attempting to penetrate the Al-Assad regime and gain more formal control over its policies.

While these factors contribute to a Soviet tendency to attempt to dominate local partners, it is quite possible that this tendency will decrease over the next decade or two. The continuance of this tendency is not only contingent upon the precise relations of power with the United States and Israel (i.e., the Soviet Union's de facto weakness), but also on the continuance of Soviet internal development along a path of excessive control and political domination of its own citizenry. And for the first time in almost thirty years this is once again in question.

Under the Mikhail Gorbachev regime, the first attempt at major reform since Khrushchev is taking place. Although this reform is primarily intended to increase the economy's efficiency, and not to promote freedom as understood in the West, it invariably will result in limited political liberalization if it is successful.³³ Additionally, if General Secretary Gorbachev's strategy is to succeed, the Soviet Union will need several years, if not at least a decade or two, of external calm. And this includes not only a slowing down of the arms race, but also a lessening of the

³³ In order to criticize economic inefficiency and corruption, Gorbachev must do away with the fear of being persecuted. And it is unlikely that such an increase in human rights in the economic sphere can develop without a concomitant increase in other areas.

U.S.-Soviet rivalry in the Third World.

In attempting to bring about these transformations, Gorbachev has already undertaken a far-reaching series of personnel changes. The possibility that these changes may bring about a shift in the frozen Russian/Soviet mentality of defensive expansion and heavy-handed dominance of local partners cannot be ruled out. If this shift were to occur, the Soviet Union may very well lessen its effort to penetrate local regimes and 1) Soviet-Syrian relations may improve; or 2) Syria may attempt to move closer to the West.

In examining the probabilities of a change in Soviet political culture, it is clear that Gorbachev has already established a new team (primarily) of younger professionals. All top Soviet personnel previously connected with the Middle East (and the failure in Egypt), i.e., Brezhnev, Gromyko, Ponomarev, Podgorny, Suslov, Kosygin, Ustinov, Ulianovsky, etc., are now gone. This could lead to the possibility of improved Soviet handling of Syria. (For one thing, Gorbachev has already rationalized the coverage of the region by combining the former First Africa and Near East Departments of the Central Committee International Department [I.D.] into a new Department for Arab Countries.³⁴)

³⁴ New York Times, August 10, 1986, p.10.

The major Soviet changes seem to be occurring both in the Party hierarchy, the government and the military. The most significant change is clearly the appointment of former Ambassador to the United States Anatoly F. Dobrynin as head of the International Department.³⁵ From the perspective of Soviet foreign policy and the Middle East, this is a major change.

Dobrynin (at 67 slightly older than most other Gorbachev appointments) can be expected to be relatively more cognizant of U.S. sensitivities in the Middle East and of how to manipulate them. Additionally (and as noted in Chapters III and IV), former I.D. head Boris Ponomarev was considered by both Sadat and Heikal as a proponent of greater dependence on local communist forces and as an inflexible ideologue.³⁶ Dobrynin does not seem to have such a dogmatic bent.³⁷

Moreover, Karen Brutents, a leading specialist on the Middle East, and the person probably most identified with Soviet policy toward Syria over the last few years,³⁸ has been

³⁵ New York Times, August 10, 1986, p.1.

³⁶ Fukuyama described him as "a hardline Stalinist ideologue." See, Moscow's Post-Brezhnev Reassessment of the Third World, op. cit., p.10.

³⁷ See, New York Times, May 13, 1984, p.25.

³⁸ Brutents' continual shuttling between Moscow and Damascus, as well as his inclusion at the highest level meetings between Syrian and Soviet delegations, clearly

promoted to head the U.S. desk.³⁹ Although Brutents was one of Ponomarev's chief deputies in the I.D., it seems clear that he did not share his superior's extreme ideological worldview. In fact, a review of his writing reveals that he may even be, what Fukayama labeled, a "neo-Khrushchevite." Brutents wants to establish good relations with major Third World states if they can assist the Soviet Union, and in spite of their attitude toward the local communists.⁴⁰

A third change is the appointment of Eduard A. Shevardnadze as Foreign Minister. While his significance is often minimized because of a lack of experience in foreign affairs --and his supposed receptivity to Gorbachev's foreign policy agenda-- Shevardnadze's appointment is probably very important, especially for the Middle East.

First, as a non-Russian, indeed, as a Georgian, Shevardnadze's sensitivities to and interest in the peoples of the Mediterranean might very well be greater than Gromyko's. Second, his long and successful experience in the Soviet security apparatus makes him a formidable opponent. Shevardnadze's background indicates that he is able to be

indicates that he is a major formulator of Soviet policy toward Syria.

³⁹ Washington Post, May 24, 1986.

⁴⁰ Fukuyama, Rise and Fall of the MLVP, op. cit., p.24.

both accommodative and ruthless at the same time.⁴¹ Moreover, the whirlwind schedule at the United Nations in late September 1986 (the Danilov-Zakharov negotiations; the meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres and forty other heads of state, foreign ministers and ambassadors) makes clear that he is highly capable and has certainly grown into the position.⁴²

A fourth major appointment is Aleksander S. Dzasokhov as Ambassador to Syria. Dzasokhov has spent twenty years on the staff of Moscow's Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee and has been deputy chairman for the last ten. Dzasokhov seem to be especially capable of, and interested in, mediating the Syrian-P.L.O. difficulties.⁴³ The fact that the Soviet Union intends to give this issue such importance indicates that it wishes to get this major problem behind and remove it as an irritant from the Soviet-Syrian relationship.

There were also a number of significant appointments in the Soviet armed forces. Since coming to power, Gorbachev has replaced at least eight of the top sixteen positions in the

⁴¹ In the 1970's when the Georgian Constitution was being drafted, for example, Shevardnadze gave into protesters' demands that Georgian be listed as the republic's official language; but he also quietly arrested the protest organizers, who are reportedly still languishing in prison. New York Times, September 21, 1986.

⁴² See, The Middle East, November 1986, p.41.

⁴³ See, new Middle East, November, 1986, p.40.

military.⁴⁴ This includes Defense Minister D.F. Ustinov; Commander of the Soviet Navy, Admiral S.G. Gorshekov; head of the M.P.A., General A.A. Ephisev; and Chief Marshall of Aviation, General Kutakhov. All of these officials were deeply involved in managing relations with Syria and Egypt.⁴⁵

From what can be gleaned from biographies of the new appointments, it seems possible that Soviet military's emphasis on Syrian will be maintained or decreased. The only official among the four now occupying the above positions who seems to have had extensive involvement with Syria or the Middle East, or a strong career interest in expanding Soviet involvement in Syria, is the new Defense Minister, Sergi L. Sokolev.⁴⁶ But Sokolev is identified with the old policy line and is aging. He too will soon be replaced.

The new Commander of the Soviet Navy Vladimir N. Chernavin has spent his "formative years" in the Northern Fleet and is a "pioneer" of nuclear submarine warfare. Neither of these facts auger well for emphasizing Syria or the Mediterranean

⁴⁴ Jane's Defence Weekly, October 25, 1985, pp.929-933; December 21, 1985, p.1335.

⁴⁵ Admiral Gorshekov, for example, was there in 1964 when Khrushchev launched his major bid for a naval presence in Egypt, and General Kutakhov was sent to Egypt in 1970 to assist with the successful Soviet air defense intervention.

⁴⁶ Reportedly, Sokolev has traveled to twenty three foreign countries, including several trips to Syria and South Yemen. See, New York Times, December 23, 1984, p.8.

as a bastion of Soviet naval power. Additionally, the new head of the M.P.A., Col Gen. Aleksei D. Lizichev has more experience with M.P.A. activities on the Western and Chinese fronts than in the Third World.

With the shake up in the Soviet military and Party hierarchies, significant changes in Soviet policies are possible. Dobrynin's and Brutents' appointments may indicate a new Soviet sensitivity to the adverse impact of Soviet Third World activities, especially in the Middle East, on U.S.-Soviet relations. It should be cautioned, however, that the Soviet academic literature on the Middle East generally does not reflect what some have described as an awareness of the "damage past [Soviet] activism" in the Third World has done to Soviet-American relations.⁴⁷ The Middle East literature, more clearly than other areas, maintains that the Soviet Union is the aggrieved party and that the United States is denying it its rightful due.⁴⁸

Moreover, Dobrynin and Brutents' appointment raises a number of interesting possibilities for Soviet-Syrian and U.S.-Syrian relations. For one thing, should the U.S. ever desire to attempt a rapprochement with Syria, it would probably be a more difficult task with the (presumably) pragmatic and

⁴⁷ For an analysis see, Fukayama, ["Moscow.."] p.VI.

⁴⁸ See, Primakov, op. cit., 1978.

experienced Dobrynin and Brutents attempting to thwart it.⁴⁹ Additionally, both are probably very good at reading the mood of the United States and calibrating Soviet Middle East activities, including expansion, to take full advantage of these swings.

Secondly, even if Gorbachev secures himself and carries out his reforms, it may lessen the Soviet tendency for excessive penetration of Syria based on personal style and leadership insecurity, but it will not remove the larger and probably more important source of Soviet regional weakness. Certainly, the initial personnel changes indicate that the new leadership is more confident of its legitimate global role. As Henry Kissinger recently remarked, the new Soviet leadership is different:

Brezhnev was ebullient but slightly insecure in dealing with Americans visitors. Reflecting a vulnerability and inward doubt, he insisted on proclaiming the equal status of the Soviet Union.

Mikhail Gorbachev and his colleagues are far more urbane. They take Soviet equal status for granted; reaffirming it would surely have evoked an indignant outburst.

The Brezhnev group seemed exhausted by its experience in Stalin's purges and in the war. It was --until tempted by American divisions-- extremely cautious. Gorbachev and his associates seem less constrained by the past and more assertive with respect to Soviet power. They have the intellectual equipment for a far more dynamic

⁴⁹ Surely it was not, for example, a coincidence that after five years of being unable to discuss bilateral regional issues with the Reagan administration, the first Third World area the Soviet Union wished to discuss when it became possible was the Middle East. See, New York Times, February 20, 1985.

foreign policy than their predecessors. These qualities also make them far more formidable adversaries.⁵⁰

But even with a more secure and self-confident leadership, other sources will continue to propel the Soviet Union down the path of Syrian vulnerability, concession and penetration. It does seem, however, that the failure in Egypt and the limited success in Syria have finally taught the Soviet Union that it should not harbor illusions about a communist regime coming to power in Arab countries.⁵¹

As one of the early supporters of an acceleration of the social revolution in Egypt, Igor Beliaev, quite plainly now states that while Syria is progressive "to some extent in its economic policy," there is "no reasonable possibility that [it] will become a communist country..."⁵² Moreover, Hafez al-Assad "is not even a standard socialist in the manner in which we interpret the term," and he is "preoccupied with internal problems."

There seems to be at least a current of Soviet sentiment which realizes that the conditions that existed between the

⁵⁰ Newsweek, March 2, 1987, p.39.

⁵¹ The most recent debacle in South Yemen not only reinforces this, but also increases Syria's importance because it reduces the number of alternative Soviet partners.

⁵² Igor Beliaev, "...," New Outlook, September, 1983, p.24-25. It should be noted, however, that this remark was made to several Israeli questioners and may have been said to please the listeners.

Soviet Union and Egypt in the early and mid 1960's cannot be duplicated, and that too much should not be expected from al-Assad and Syria.⁵³ Whether this current will ever come to dominate policy is questionable.

In considering how best to improve on its position in the future, the Soviet Union has many alternatives but clearly some are more attractive than others. First it must reinforce its defensive commitment to Syria and undermine the Israeli threat. The Soviet Union must continue to guarantee the survival of the Hafez al-Assad regime, and Israel must continue to operate under the constraint of anticipated Soviet intervention preventing a decisive Israeli victory.

Clearly, the "rules of the game" which in effect deny both superpowers a decisive strategic victory through military means, must, at the minimum, continue to operate.⁵⁴ Hence, the importance of the Soviet guarantee to Syria. And the new leadership seems to be playing this angle well. Gorbachev often takes a high profile with Syria and he has publicly

⁵³ Private conversations with Soviet academics, May 1986.

⁵⁴ Thus, war (and if necessary superpower intervention) will never do more than bring the situation back to an uneasy status quo with a highly antagonistic Syria refusing a settlement along Israeli or U.S. lines. For a discussion of the "rules of the game" or the "redline" for Soviet intervention see, Kaplan, op. cit., pp.185,668; and Sella, op. cit., pp.22,100.

pledged to continue the arms flow.⁵⁵

Second, and in the dear term, the Soviet Union must continue (and perhaps increase) its efforts to penetrate the Al-Assad regime and/or reduce the tensions in its policy caused by its weakness vis-a-vis the United States. Given the sheer physical costs of redirecting Soviet priority to strengthen its regional position vis-a-vis the United States, it seems probable that a more subtle and efficient penetration effort will continue.

Third, the Soviet Union must weaken the near American monopoly of influence and communication with Israel.⁵⁶ As noted, it is already moving in this direction. But whether or not the Soviet Union will be able to accomplish such a feat has yet to be seen.

And finally, the Soviet Union must work to insure that the United States does not turn its attention toward pulling Syria away from the Soviet Union. For most of the last two decades, this has not been much of a problem because the United States has pursued a strategy of isolating the Al-

⁵⁵ New York Times, May 29, 1986.

⁵⁶ While full diplomatic relations need not (and probably will not) be established, even low level formal contacts would create a sea change in the Soviet ability to intermediate between Damascus and Tel Aviv, and thus break the near U.S. monopoly.

Assad regime.⁵⁷ This left it little choice between capitulation to U.S. conditions or Soviet sponsorship.

Given the stability of the regional status quo, the durability of Al-Assad regime, and the trajectory of U.S. policy, it seems probable the Soviet Union will gradually continue to increase its presence in and control of Syrian policy. Since the United States rarely even attempts to divide Syria from the Soviet Union, there is little opportunity for Al-Assad to move away from the Soviet Union. Such a policy could only come about with an American commitment to Syrian security and a settlement of the Arab-Israeli problem on a scale which the United States has not even begun to think about.

⁵⁷ As noted, the basic American policy since the early 1970's has been that the Arabs would have to come to the U.S. for peace. With the December 1977 reaffirmation under President Carter, Syria was effectively side lined for the next three years (see Chapter VI). And under President Reagan, the Middle East has received such scant attention that the Soviet Union has had little to worry about in this respect (Chapter VII).

Appendix I: Syria, The Soviet Union and International Terrorism

Throughout the last few years, there was increasing speculation that Al-Assad and the Soviet Union were engaged in more global terrorism. Certainly, there was a more direct link between south Lebanon suicide car-bombers and the Syrians. Of the fifteen attacks between April 9, 1985 and November 26, 1985, five were claimed by the Syrian supported NSSP and six by the Lebanese Branch of the Ba'th Party.⁵⁸

This was a distinct change since the initial Israel invasion when the primary sources were disillusioned Shi'ite Muslims. The change in tactics in Lebanon also created more suspicion that an overall shift toward more terrorist operations world wide was taking place. Indeed, the Israelis have been pointing to the Syrian hand behind global terrorism for a number of years. Moshe Arens, has said that Syria has "adopted terrorism as a principle method of warfare," and that "without [Syria's] active support and initiation, the wave of international terrorism in recent years would not have been possible."⁵⁹

Arens also claims that Syria directed the bombing of the

⁵⁸ New York Times, February 16, 1986, p.A1.

⁵⁹ Moshe Arens, "Terrorist States," in Benjamin Netanyahu (ed.), Terrorism: How the West Can Win (New York:Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1986), p.94.

U.S. Embassy and Marine Barracks in Lebanon, and that it has close contact with such groups as the Red Japanese Army, the Armenian A.S.A.L.A., and the Thai Patani Liberation Organization. Moreover, each of these groups are said to have a permanent representative in Damascus.⁶⁰

But tracing a Soviet connection to these groups and their actions is not very easy. First one has to find a Syrian hand --which seems clear-- but then one has to find the Soviet hand behind the Syrians. And certainly this is much less apparent. Additionally, the Soviet Union eventually became so concerned that it was becoming too closely identified with Syrian terrorism that it visibly attempted to distance itself.⁶¹

While the precise level of Soviet connivance is less clear, it is known, however, that the Soviet Union and its allies--especially the Bulgarians and East Germans, are involved in training terrorists in Syria.⁶² Additionally, there is information that the Soviet Union trained 2,000-3,000 Palestinians who later went on to train West European terrorists.⁶³

⁶⁰ Ibid, p.95.

⁶¹ New York Times, December 30, 1986, p.A8.

⁶² See, New York Times June 23, 1981, p.A1; and Washington Post, August 15, 1985.

⁶³ New York Times, July 24, 1983, p.A10.

Traditionally, extra-territorial Syrian violence has been targeted on moderate Palestinians, Arabs friendly to Jordan's King Hussein, and critical Syrian citizens who have been able to get abroad.⁶⁴ But certainly there is a clear pattern of operations, and a trail of evidence, which can only led one to conclude that the more recent European bombings are connected, and that Syria is involved.

While Israel has a vested interest in asserting that the Al-Assad government is a motor force of global terrorism there has been additional, and numerous, outside corroboration. Moreover, this evidence clearly links Al-Assad to a number of non-Middle Eastern groups with nothing in common except their anti-Western activities.

It has been reported that George Habash has trained Tamil terrorists in his PFLP "Dera" camp outside of Damascus.⁶⁵ There were confirmed reports of approximately three hundred terrorists from West German, Italy, Japan, the Philippines, Iran, Argentina, Brazil, and Turkey in Al-Fatah's Hamouriya camp (south of Damascus) in 1979.⁶⁶ The Soviet Union and Syria were even supposed to have given training to radical

⁶⁴ See, New York Times, June 10, 1986, p.A1.

⁶⁵ London Observer, December 9, 1984.

⁶⁶ New York Times Magazine, November 2, 1980, p.56.

American Indians in the early 1980's.⁶⁷

There have also been repeated sightings of Japanese Red Army and Irish Republican Army terrorists in the Bekaa Valley in the early 1980's.⁶⁸ The Turkish government has reportedly apprehended Armenian terrorist at the Turkish-Syrian boarder,⁶⁹ and Syria is a known supporter of the Polisario against the Moroccans.

The evidence for substantial Syrian involvement in global terrorist activities is fairly conclusive. In spite of the fact that the Western governments involved have a habit of contradicting themselves and each other, numerous circumstantial evidence, and a bit more conclusive evidence, that the Al-Assad government has been involved in a substantial number of operations around the world.⁷⁰

Moreover, when confronted in May 1986 with evidence about the activities of Abu Nidal in Damascus Assad refused to restrict the groups activities.⁷¹ Additionally, after examining the modus operandi of the 1986 bombings in Europe,

⁶⁷ U.S. News & World Report, June 1, 1981, p.52.

⁶⁸ New York Times, June 23, 1981, p.A1; and Early Warning (Washington D.C.), June, 1984.

⁶⁹ Al-Dostaur (Jordan), July 29, 1985.

⁷⁰ For some of the contradictory remarks, see New York Times, February 16, 1986, p.A1.

⁷¹ New York Times, May 19, 1986.

the CIA has concluded that the explosives used in the Berlin German-Arab Friendship Society bombings was of the same type found in the attempt against an El-Al plane.⁷²

Below is a list of the individuals involved in the most recent attacks and a summary of the evidence linking them to Syria:

Mohammed Sarham: [Survivor of the Rome airport massacre, December 27, 1985.] According to the CIA reports, Sarham "directly implicated Syria." He said he was trained in the Bekaa Valley, and "taken" to Damascus for further training and the briefing on the Rome Airport plan.⁷³ Reportedly, Syrian agents escorted him with other terrorists to Vienna (via Bucharest). There are conflicting reports over whether these same agents continued on with him to Rome.

Ibrahim Mohammed Khaled: [Survivor, Rome Airport massacre], gave Italian police a detailed description of Abu Nidal's headquarters in the Rukh al-Din quarter of Damascus, and of his meetings with Syrian Air Force Intelligence. He has also provided Italian investigators with information on terrorist training camps in the Bekaa Valley.⁷⁴

As the Italian Interior Minister, Oscar Luigi Scalfaro said, "Syria is one of the countries that gives hospitality and immunity to several groups and several people who can later go around the world to undertake attacks."⁷⁵ There is "concrete evidence" of Syria as a source of this wave of terrorism.⁷⁶

Nezar Hindawi: [The attempt to blow-up an El-Al plane with a hidden bomb given to his pregnant Irish girlfriend.] First, the Syrian Foreign Minister vouched --and must have known-- that Hindawi's visa was based on

⁷² New York Times, May 21, 1986.

⁷³ New York Times, May 21, 1986, p.A1; May 23, 1986, p.A5.

⁷⁴ New York Times, February 6, 1987.

⁷⁵ New York Times, May 23, 1986, p.A5.

⁷⁶ New York Times, June 29, 1986.

false information. Second, after being arrested, Hindawi said that he went to the Syrian Embassy in London, and was hidden by them.⁷⁷ Third, Israel claims to have intercepted the call from Damascus to the London Embassy with the "direct order" to bomb the plane.⁷⁸ And fourth, Hindawi directly implicated Syrian Air Force intelligence in the plot.⁷⁹

After being denied permission by the Syrian government to question three of its diplomats in London, England expelled them. And the London Prosecutor in the case said that Hindawi was apparently "acting on instructions ...from the Damascus government."⁸⁰ The court's evidence was sufficient to move England to break off diplomatic relations with Syria, and to severely restrict the entry of Syrians into England.⁸¹

Ahamed Nawaf Mansour Hasi: [Bombing of Berlin disco frequented by American soldiers, and the German-Arab Friendship Society.] Hasi claims to have received "guidance" and "tactical advice" from Syria's East Berlin Embassy for the disco bombing, and the explosives for the Friendship Society attack from the Syrian Embassy in West Berlin.⁸² Similar to the other cases above, a West German court tried and convicted Hasi and flatly stated that the Syrian government was involved.

⁷⁷ New York Times, May 24, 1986, p.A1.

⁷⁸ Newsweek, June 12, 1986, p.31.

⁷⁹ Middle East International, November 7, 1986, p.3.

⁸⁰ New York Times, July 16, 1986.

⁸¹ New York Time, May 10, 1986.

⁸² Time, May 19, 1986, p.28; New York Times, May 6, 1986, p.A1.

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