

# IRAN, ISRAEL, AND THE UNITED STATES

Trilateral Relations from 1969 to 1974

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# ABBREVIATIONS

AIOC	Anglo-Iranian Oil Company
BP	British Petroleum
CIA	The United States' Central Intelligence Agency
CREST	CIA Records Search Tool
ISA	Israel State Archive
MFA	Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NIOC	National Iranian Oil Company
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
OAPEC	Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
SALT (I & II)	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks Agreement (I & II)
SAVAK	Iran's Intelligence and Security Organization of the Country
SIS	The United Kingdom's Secret Intelligence Service

# NOTABLE PERSONALITIES

Afshar, Amir-Aslan	Iranian Ambassador to the United States	1969-73
Alam, Asadollah	Iranian Minister of the Royal Court	1967-77
Brezhnev, Leonid Ilyich	General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union	1964-82
Dobrynin, Anatoly Fyodorovich	Soviet Ambassador to the United States	1962-86
Eban, Abba	Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs	1966-74
Eisenhower, Dwight David	US President	1953-61
Ezri, Meir	Head of Israel's delegation in Tehran	from 1968
Gromyko, Andrei Andreyevich	Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs	1957-85
Helms, Richard McGarrah	Director of the CIA	1966-73
	US Ambassador to Iran	1973-76
Hoveyda, Amir-Abbas	Iranian Prime Minister	1965-77
Jarring, Gunnar Valfrid	Swedish diplomat and Special Representative of the Security-General of the United Nations	
Johnson, Lyndon Baines	US President	1963-69
Kennedy, John Fitzgerald	US President	1961-63
Kissinger, Henry Alfred	US National Security Advisor	1969-73
	US Secretary of State	1973-77

Khalatbari, Abbas Ali	Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs	1971-78
Laird, Melvin Robert, Jr.	US Secretary of Defense	1969-73
MacArthur, Douglas II	US Ambassador to Iran	1969-72
Meir, Golda	Israeli Prime Minister	1969-74
Nasser, Gamal Abdel	Egyptian President	1956-70
Nassiri, Nematollah	Director of SAVAK	1965-78
Nixon, Richard Milhous	US President	1969-74
Pahlavi, Mohammad Reza	Iranian Monarch (Shah)	1941-79
Rabin, Yitzhak	Israeli Ambassador the the United States	1968-73
Rogers, William Pierce	US Secretary of State	1969-73
Saunders, Harold Henry	Member of the US National Security Council Staff	
Sisco, Joseph John	US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs	1969-74
Tourgeman, David	Secretary of the Israeli delegation in Tehran	from 1969
Truman, Harry S.	US President	1945-53
Vered, Yael	Director of the Middle East and East Mediterranean division of the MFA	from 1969
Zahedi, Ardeshir	Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs	1966-71
	Iranian Ambassador to the United States	1973-79

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# INTRODUCTION

Iran, Israel, and the United States (henceforth referred to collectively as ‘the triangle’) constituted during the Cold War a triangle of cooperation within the fields of intelligence, military, and trade. Iran and Israel built their *entente* upon a foundation of shared vulnerabilities.<sup>1</sup> Israel had battled against its Arab neighbours on three occasions before the time frame of the present study—in 1948, 1956, and 1967—and Iran served in Israel’s policy of the periphery as a counterbalance to this Arab threat.<sup>2</sup> Iran’s own vulnerabilities coincided with those of Israel when the Soviet Union, which was perceived by Iran as the principal threat to its own national security, began in the 1950s to draw Egypt, Syria, and Iraq into its sphere of influence. In turn, Iran and Israel became important partners of the United States, in its endeavours to secure its own interests within the Middle East as well as to contain Soviet influence within the region.

These three bilateral relationships—between Iran, Israel, and the United States—developed into a triangle during Lyndon B. Johnson’s presidency, from 1963 to 1968. Iran and Israel began to press for American arms sometimes in concert, and they did so by retaining for themselves the ability to define the danger of the Soviet-Arab threat to their national security. The Johnson administration, in turn, took steps towards the abandonment of the United States’ traditional policy of even-handedness towards the Middle East, and it did so by upgrading Iran from a client

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<sup>1</sup> Trita Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the U.S.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 29.

<sup>2</sup> Sohrab Sobhani, *The Pragmatic Entente: Israeli-Iranian Relations, 1948-1988* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 33–35; Yossi Alpher, *Periphery: Israel’s Search for Middle East Allies* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 3–4; Jean-Loup Samaan, *Israel’s Foreign Policy beyond the Arab World: Engaging the Periphery* (London: Routledge, 2018), 15–17.

to a partner and by selling for the first time strictly offensive American arms to Israel.<sup>3</sup> Characterising this emerging triangle was the ability of Iran and to evade most of the conditions that the Johnson administration attached to its military and financial assistance to them, without suffering many consequences.

The present study concerns itself with this triangle during the presidency of Richard M. Nixon, from 1969 to 1974. Whereas Johnson had taken steps towards the abandonment of the even-handed policy, Nixon picked up the ball and ran with it. His view of the world was in large measures coloured by the Cold War struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union; and his principal advisor for national security affairs and later secretary of state, Henry A. Kissinger, joined in his views. Furthermore, and shaped largely by the failing war in Vietnam that he inherited, Nixon espoused a policy of Vietnamisation; instead of direct intervention abroad, the United States would reinforce its allies through military and financial assistance.

The study is guided by primarily three research questions: How did the events by which the 1960s closed and the 1970s opened influence the triangle? Why did these events influence the triangle in the way that they did? And what were their consequences? Principal among these events were the Third Arab-Israeli War of 1967; the announcement by the United Kingdom in 1968, that its forces would be withdrawn from the Persian Gulf by 1971; the death of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1970; and the Fourth Arab-Israeli War of 1973 and the subsequent oil embargo that was launched upon the United States, among others, by the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC).

## HISTORIOGRAPHY

Scholarly research on Iran, Israel, the United States, and the relations between them has traditionally been bilateral in nature, in large part because the sources pertaining to these relations have been archived in a bilateral fashion. As a result, there are three principal historiographies available to this study: one pertaining to relations between Iran and the United States; another, to relations between Israel and the United States; and a third, to relations between Iran and Israel. In recent years, however, scholars have directed more focus towards the triangle as a whole. A fourth

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<sup>3</sup> Stephen McGlinchey, 'Lyndon B. Johnson and Arms Sales to Iran, 1964-1968', *Middle East Journal* 67, no. 2 (2013): 231; Hulda Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines: Emerging Patterns in the Relations among Israel, Iran, and the United States, 1964-1968' (PhD dissertation, University of Oslo, 2021), 61-69, 85-114; Hulda Kjeang Mørk and Hilde H. Waage, 'Ties That Bind: The Entangled Relations among Israel, Iran, and the United States, 1963-1967', *The International History Review* Ahead of Print (2022): 5.

historiography is emerging, therefore, however small it might be compared to the three aforementioned historiographies.

### *Iran and the United States*

A large part of the literature in which the relationship between Iran and the United States is detailed has concerned itself either with the overthrow of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq in 1953 or the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The *coup d'état*, in which the Eisenhower administration played a leading role, ushered in the very relationship that later assumed a special character, in which Iran became a pillar in US policy towards the Persian Gulf.<sup>4</sup> The Islamic Revolution, on the other hand, marked the very end of this special relationship.<sup>5</sup> The two most important scholarly works detailing this special relationship during Nixon's presidency is *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah* by Roham Alvandi and 'Conventional Wisdom' by Mari Salberg.<sup>6</sup>

Alvandi challenges a traditionalist view, in which the shah has been viewed upon as but a puppet recruited by Nixon and Kissinger to serve US interests within the Persian Gulf and the Middle East.<sup>7</sup> He argues the opposite, and states that 'the Shah effectively harnessed the Nixon Doctrine to serve Iranian interests'.<sup>8</sup> This study supports his claim, and places itself thus within this school of thought.

'Conventional Wisdom' is the title of Mari Salberg's PhD thesis, in which she studies US policy towards Iran from 1969 to 1979. She argues that the policy of the United States was characterised by continuity across the three administrations of Lyndon B. Johnson, Nixon and Gerald R. Ford, Jr., and to some disadvantage. A policy, in which the shah was declared an unconditional ally and became the centrepiece of US policy towards the Persian Gulf, was first devised during the Nixon

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<sup>4</sup> For literature in which the overthrow of Mosaddeq is detailed, see e.g. Ervand Abrahamian, *The Coup: 1953, the CIA, and the Roots of Modern US-Iranian Relations* (New York: The New Press, 2013); Malcolm Byrne and Mark J. Gasiorowski, eds., *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004); Ali Rahnema, *Behind the 1953 Coup in Iran: Thugs, Turncoats, Soldiers, and Spooks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). For the aftermath of the overthrow, see Mark J. Gasiorowski, *US Foreign Policy and the Shah: Building a Client State in Iran* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

<sup>5</sup> For literature in which the Islamic Revolution is detailed, see e.g. Ofira Seliktar, *Failing the Crystal Ball Test: The Carter Administration and the Fundamental Revolution in Iran* (Connecticut: Praeger, 2000); Marvin Zonis, *Majestic Failure: The Fall of the Shah* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991); Javier G. Guerrero, *The Carter Administration and the Fall of Iran's Pahlavi Dynasty: US-Iran Relations on the Brink of the 1979 Revolution* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah: The United States and Iran in the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Mari Salberg, "'Conventional Wisdom': US Policy toward Iran, 1969-1979" (PhD diss., University of Oslo, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> For this traditionalist view, see Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2008), 145.

<sup>8</sup> Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*, 6.

administration, although its foundation had already been laid by the preceding Johnson administration.<sup>9</sup>

### *Israel and the United States*

The relationship between Israel and the United States remains the most studied aspect of the triangle. A central question to which scholars have sought answers has been when the special relationship between the two first developed. One view holds that this relationship did not become 'special' until Israel emerged as the clear victor following the Third Arab-Israeli War of 1967.<sup>10</sup> This view, in which the war in 1967 is considered a watershed in the relationship, has been challenged, however, by a view that holds instead that the very seed of this special relationship was planted by John F. Kennedy and his administration. It was during the Kennedy administration that the United States first sold highly advanced weapons to Israel in the Hawk ground-to-air missiles.<sup>11</sup> While the sale was largely exogenous and compensatory in nature, and a result of Kennedy's attempts to draw Egypt closer to the United States' sphere of influence, the succeeding Johnson administration simply inherited the trajectory that had already been established.

With regards to the relationship between Israel and the United States during the Nixon administration, the primary literature that has been used in this study is *Advocating for Israel* by Natan Aridan, *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk* [Conflict and Great Power Politics] by Hilde Henriksen Waage, and 'Mission Impossible' by Waage and Hulda Kjeang Mørk.<sup>12</sup>

In his book *Advocating for Israel*, Natan Aridan studies the influence of Israeli diplomats as well as the United States' domestic Jewish lobbies upon American policymaking with regards to Israel, from the Truman administration to the Nixon administration. His principal argument challenges the belief, or myth, perhaps, that has held that Israeli diplomats and Jewish lobbyists wielded a power that enabled them to hijack American foreign policy.<sup>13</sup> He concludes that the United States

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<sup>9</sup> Salberg, 'Conventional Wisdom', 325–26.

<sup>10</sup> For this view, see e.g. Donald Neff, *Warriors for Jerusalem: The Six Days That Changed the Middle East* (Brattleboro: Amana Books, 1988).

<sup>11</sup> For this view, see e.g. Douglas Little, 'The Making of a Special Relationship: The United States and Israel, 1957–1968', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25, no. 4 (1993): 563–85; Abraham Ben-Zvi, 'Stumbling into an Alliance: John F. Kennedy and Israel', *Israel Affairs* 15, no. 3 (2009): 224–45; Abraham Ben-Zvi, 'Influence and Arms: John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson and the Politics of Arms Sales to Israel, 1962–1966', *Israel Affairs* 10, no. 1–2 (2010): 29–59.

<sup>12</sup> Natan Aridan, *Advocating for Israel: Diplomats and Lobbyists from Truman to Nixon* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017); Hilde H. Waage, *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten* [Conflict and Great Power Politics within the Middle East] (Kristiansand: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2013); Hilde H. Waage and Hulda Kjeang Mørk, 'Mission Impossible: UN Special Representative Gunnar Jarring and His Quest for Peace in the Middle East', *The International History Review* 38, no. 4 (2016): 830–53.

<sup>13</sup> Aridan, *Advocating for Israel*, 3–5.

did not supply Israel with weapons until doing so served its own interests; and while the present study indeed argues that Israel grew to be able to manipulate the United States into supplying almost extortionate amounts of weapons, it supports Aridan's claim by arguing that the United States acquiesced because it was in its interests to do so.<sup>14</sup>

In *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk*, Waage details how the history and persecution of the Jews in Europe later became integral to the conflicts within the Middle East. The book builds upon secondary literature including her own research on the subject.<sup>15</sup> While the goal of the book is grand—it encompasses subjects ranging from early Zionism to a number of regional conflicts within the region—she does spend time on the Nixon administration and its approach to Israel and Egypt.

'Mission Impossible, by Waage and Kjeang Mørk, intends to shed light upon the relationship between Israel and the United States within the context of the negotiations of peace under the auspices of Swedish diplomat Gunnar V. Jarring that followed the Third Arab-Israeli War of 1967. It concludes, as the title of the article alludes, that this mission was impossible from its inception. The United States, and the Johnson administration, did not intend to alter the balance of power within the region; and it did therefore not support the mission, which lacked credibility and leverage as a result.<sup>16</sup> While the article deals primarily with the administration preceding that of Nixon, it provides invaluable information about the dynamic between Israel and the United States that applies also to the relationship during the Nixon administration.

### *Iran and Israel*

Due to its clandestine nature as well as the hostile nature it acquired following the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the relationship between Iran and Israel remains today the least examined of the three relationships. The most important literature to this study includes *The Pragmatic Entente* by Sohrab Sobhani, *Israel and the Cold War* by Howard A. Patten, *Periphery* by Yossi Alpher, and 'Fuel Bridge across the Middle East' by Uri Bialer.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Aridan, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten [Conflict and Great Power Politics within the Middle East]*, 13–14, 15.

<sup>16</sup> Waage and Kjeang Mørk, 'Mission Impossible', 844–46.

<sup>17</sup> Sobhani, *The Pragmatic Entente*; Howard A. Patten, *Israel and the Cold War: Diplomacy, Strategy, and the Policy of the Periphery at the United Nations* (London: IB Tauris and Company, 2013); Alpher, *Periphery*; Uri Bialer, 'Fuel Bridge across the Middle East—Israel, Iran, and the Eilat-Ashkelon Oil Pipeline', *Israel Studies* 12, no. 3 (2007): 29–67.

In his book, Sobhani provides a rather early survey of the relations between Iran and Israel from the inception of the latter to Sobhani's own contemporary time. His intention is among other things to identify the main elements of bilateral relations between the two states, of which he identifies seven in total. His work is more journalistic in nature, having had no access to primary sources, and its application must therefore be executed carefully.

Howard A. Patten, meanwhile, studies Israel's policy of periphery especially within the context of the United Nations. He argues that the strategy was largely successful in that Israel was able to establish rather stable relations with Turkey, Iran, and Ethiopia, of which all were non-Arab countries within Israel's periphery. With regards to Iran, the relationship was founded upon an Israeli desire for oil and an Iranian desire to balance against Arab nationalism.

Yossi Alpher adds further to Patten's work, by providing his personal experiences as a former Israeli intelligence officer. His work shows that the objective of Israel's policy of periphery was twofold; its intention was not only to befriend Israel's non-Arab periphery but also to demonstrate Israel's strategic value to the United States in its doing so.

In his article, 'Fuel Bridge across the Middle East', Bialer studies the relationship between Iran and Israel within the context of the planning and construction of the Eilat-Ashkelon oil pipeline following the Third Arab-Israeli War of 1967. The construction of the pipeline was finished in June of 1969, and Iranian oil was for the first time exported through it in December the same year.<sup>18</sup> Bialer concludes that the political-strategic benefit of the partnership was asymmetrical, arguing that its political-strategic value was much greater for Israel than it was for Iran. This benefit diminished even further for Iran following Gamal Abdel Nasser's death in September of 1970.<sup>19</sup>

### *The Triangle*

The trilateral relations between Iran, Israel, and the United States remains understudied, and the literature pertaining to the triangle as a whole is therefore scarce. At our disposal are primarily three scholarly works: *Treacherous Alliance* by Trita Parsi, 'Between Doctrines' by Hulda Kjeang Mørk, and 'Ties That Bind' by Kjeang Mørk and Hilde Henriksen Waage.<sup>20</sup> There is also *Sold Out?* by Bryan Gibson, which primarily covers American policy towards Iraq and the Iraqi Kurds but which consequently also covers the triangle within this context.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Bialer, 'Fuel Bridge across the Middle East', 50.

<sup>19</sup> Bialer, 51–57.

<sup>20</sup> Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance*; Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines'; Kjeang Mørk and Waage, 'Ties That Bind'.

<sup>21</sup> Bryan R. Gibson, *Sold Out? US Foreign Policy, Iraq, the Kurds, and the Cold War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

In his book, Parsi examines the trilateral relations from 1948 to the present. His account is one of realism, and he argues that the rivalry between Iran and Israel today is one of power rather than ideology. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 was not cause for the shift in relations between Iran and Israel, he argues; instead, the cause was the power vacuum created by the fall of the Soviet Union and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in 1991 and 2003, respectively. Parsi's account is supported solely by interviews, indeed of very important decision-makers and experts; however, the lack of primary sources must be noted.

Hulda Kjeang Mørk's PhD dissertation, 'Between Doctrines', covers the triangle during the Johnson administration. She seeks to answer primarily the questions of why the Johnson administration finally broke with the United States' policy of even-handedness towards Israel and the Arabs, who influenced whom in this process, and how.<sup>22</sup> She concludes that while a new logic with regards to the Middle East emerged during Johnson's presidency, in which the United States opted to provide military assistance to allies abroad with the intention to influence them, Iran and Israel both worked with great determination to exaggerate the Arab threat in order to exploit this shift.<sup>23</sup>

#### SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

The present study as well as its findings rely altogether upon primary sources from the United States and Israel; Iranian archives, which include archives belonging to the Iranian foreign ministry, remain inaccessible. Iran's true motives and strategies are therefore filtered through the perspectives of American and Israeli officials, and a resulting risk is that these true motives and strategies are reduced by bias into *purported* motives and strategies. To mitigate this as much as possible, this study has employed a thorough cross-referencing of American and Israeli sources. Lastly, it is important to note that although Iran's true motives and strategies may be obfuscated by American and Israeli sources, these sources do at the very least provide information about how Iranian officials presented themselves and the impression they imprinted upon their American and Israeli counterparts.

The very bulk of primary sources available to the present study are those published in the *Foreign Relations of the United States*, a series containing unclassified records pertaining to American foreign policy during each respective presidential administration. The records are prepared, and the series is published, by the Office of the Historian; and the series has been made readily available on their

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<sup>22</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines', 2.

<sup>23</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 331–46. 'Ties that Bind' build upon this dissertation.



governmental website.<sup>24</sup> Some sources have also been provided by the CIA's online Records Search Tool (CREST), especially with regards to background information pertaining to the *coup d'état* of 1953 in Iran, in which the agency itself played a central role in the overthrow of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq.<sup>25</sup>

Important, Israeli primary sources, in which interactions between Israel and Iran between 1969 and 1974 are detailed, have been provided by Hilde Henriksen Waage and translated from Hebrew into English by Kobi Fischer. The records are filed within the Israel State Archives and pertain both to internal exchanges within the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as its exchanges with Iranian officials.

With regards to methodology especially, it is important to note that while this study is one of trilateral relations, its approach is limited in some measure by the bilateral nature in which states interact. Furthermore, and as a result of this bilateral interaction between states, state documents are typically archived in a similar fashion. The triangle, therefore, shall be studied in much the same way; it shall be divided into three bilateral relations: one Iranian-American, one Israeli-American, and one Iranian-Israeli. In the final chapter shall the loose ends be tied together, and the triangle be treated as a whole.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

'In a sense, there is nothing so practical as a good theory, for theory, whether sought for practical application or merely to clarify thinking about international relations, enables us to rise above observation of specific events and it offers us understanding of sequences and patterns of occurrences', writes Robert J. Lieber in his monograph *Theory and World Politics*.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, our observations of the world, and not least our interpretations of these observations, are filtered through our very own, unique frameworks of understanding. It is therefore imperative that we establish a point of reference using theory.

### *Political Realism*

Realism is a school of thought consisting of separate ideas, but whose adherents converge around four principal propositions regarding the international system.<sup>27</sup> A first proposition relates to the

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.history.state.gov>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom>

<sup>26</sup> Robert J. Lieber, *Theory and World Politics* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1973), 4.

<sup>27</sup> William C. Wohlforth, 'Realism', in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 131.

actor regarded in realist thought to be the most principal within the international system. Realism assumes this to be the unitary and cohesive group; however, this realist 'groupism' makes no further assumptions about the form with which such groups may manifest. Today, however, it is both reasonable and common to regard the principal actor within the international system to be the modern nation state, as opposed for example to tribes and city-states.<sup>28</sup>

A second proposition relates to the nature and political motivation of the group. Realism assumes that the group is motivated solely by intragroup interests. The nation state seeks ultimately to secure its own national interests, sometimes but not necessarily at the expense of other nation states.<sup>29</sup>

A third proposition relates to the state of the international system itself. Realism assumes that this system is in a state of anarchy. Contrary to domestic systems, be they parliamentary democracies or dictatorships, the international system lacks a supreme authority able to define and enforce laws that are applied to it.<sup>30</sup>

A fourth proposition relates to the politics emerging among unitary, cohesive, and self-serving groups within this anarchic international system. Realism assumes that the nation state seeks ultimately to attain security against other self-serving nation states within the international system; and in doing so, the nation state seeks to maximise power.<sup>31</sup>

### *Power and Alliance*

Because all states are ultimately self-serving, and because they are all self-serving within an anarchic system void of an authority that is able to define and enforce international laws, they exist in a constant state of threat. In the words of political scientist Kenneth N. Waltz, states conduct their affairs under a 'brooding shadow of violence', and 'because some states may at any time use force, all states must be prepared to do so'.<sup>32</sup> Such an environment breeds paranoia; and within its context, the ultimate goal of any state is therefore to obtain security against other states. How, then, do states obtain security? While political scientist Hans J. Morgenthau argued that power was the

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<sup>28</sup> Wohlforth, 133; Mark V. Kauppi and Paul R. Viotti, *International Relations Theory* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2019), 21.

<sup>29</sup> Wohlforth, 'Realism', 133; Kauppi and Viotti, *International Relations Theory*, 21–22.

<sup>30</sup> Wohlforth, 'Realism', 133; Kauppi and Viotti, *International Relations Theory*, 35–39.

<sup>31</sup> Wohlforth, 'Realism', 133; Kauppi and Viotti, *International Relations Theory*, 23.

<sup>32</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979), 102.

ultimate goal of states, Waltz argues that power instead is but a means to the end of obtaining security.<sup>33</sup>

The concept of power may at first appear self-evident, but political scientists have offered a wide array of different definitions of it. Morgenthau, for example, defined power as the ultimate goal in international politics; states aspire simply to obtain and amass power. This is an intangible definition, however, and it does not define what power in fact is. A more tangible definition has been provided by political scientist Robert Gilpin, which states that power is ‘the military, economic, and technological capabilities of states’.<sup>34</sup> Such capabilities are quantitative; a state whose military, economic, and technological capabilities are greater than those of another is more powerful.

A weaker state will seek to balance against a more powerful state, especially if the latter is located close in proximity to the former.<sup>35</sup> It cannot know the intentions of the more powerful state; it can only know that it has intentions, and that it is able to enforce these at will. One way in which a weaker state may balance against a more powerful state is internally, through rearmament, economic growth, and technological innovation. By assuming the capabilities of the more powerful state, however, the once weaker state provides incentive for other states to balance against itself. An example that is relevant to this study is Iran’s heavy rearmament from 1969 to 1974, in which Iran’s military capabilities increased greatly and provided incentive for Iraq to balance against it by signing a treaty of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union. Thus, internal balancing can cause what has been termed a ‘security dilemma’. The increased power of state A forces state B to increase its own power, which in turn forces state A to increase its own power once more. The result is an arms race.

Another way in which a weaker state may balance against a more powerful state is externally, through alliances with other states. ‘They [alliances] are the primary means by which states seek the co-operation of other states in order to enhance their power to protect and advance their interests’, writes political scientist Robert E. Osgood.<sup>36</sup> Their most common function, among other things, is to allow for the accretion of external power.<sup>37</sup> However, and as political scientist George Liska

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<sup>33</sup> Hans J Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), 27–28; Kenneth N. Waltz, ‘The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory’, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (1988): 616. Morgenthau did provide a second definition of power as ‘man’s ability to control over the minds and actions of other men’. See Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 27–28.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 13.

<sup>35</sup> Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 23–24.

<sup>36</sup> Robert E. Osgood, *Alliances and American Foreign Policy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), 17.

<sup>37</sup> Osgood, 21–24.

emphasises, no power, be it greater or lesser, seeks alliance with another state except when another power intervenes as a threat. The reason for this, according to Liska, is a fear of overextending commitments, in the case of greater powers, and a fear of losing identity, in the case of lesser powers.<sup>38</sup> Alliance formation may manifest in two ways, either by 'balancing' or by 'bandwagoning'.

The Iranian-Israeli *entente*, for example, exemplifies the formation of an alliance as a way of balancing against what they both perceived to be a Soviet-Arab threat to their respective national security. Israel was directly threatened by its neighbouring Arabs, principal among whom were the Egyptians. Iran, meanwhile, was directly threatened by the Soviet Union, who began during the 1950s to draw Egypt and other Arab states towards its sphere of influence. Bandwagoning, on the other hand, describes the action of a lesser power to ally with a greater adversary as a way to appease the latter or to share in its spoils of war.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> George Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), 13.

<sup>39</sup> Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 19–21; Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 158–61.

# I. THE TRIANGLE PRIOR TO 1969

## IRAN AND THE UNITED STATES, 1941-68

Iran's cold war relationship with the United States began during World War II as what historians call "an empire by invitation".<sup>40</sup> In 1941, Iran was the target of a joint invasion by the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union. Through the invasion, the two Allied Powers sought to repress German activity; to establish a route of supply from the Persian Gulf in the south to Soviet Azerbaijan in the north; and, in the case of the United Kingdom, to reinforce control over the Iranian oil industry, which had been under British control since the early 1910s.<sup>41</sup>

While the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union both agreed, as well as reaffirmed in 1943 and 1946, to withdraw from Iran within the first six months of peace, only the United Kingdom did so initially.<sup>42</sup> The Soviet Union, on the other hand, had during its occupation incited regional insurrection against the central Iranian government as well as supported the creation of two separatist governments within the province of Iranian Azerbaijan.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, when they were

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<sup>40</sup> Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah: The United States and Iran in the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 7. Alvandi borrows the concept from Geir Lundestad, 'Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945-1952', *Journal of Peace Research* 23, no. 3 (1986): 263-77.

<sup>41</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 164-65; F. Eshraghi, 'Anglo-Soviet Occupation of Iran in August 1941', *Middle Eastern Studies* 20, no. 1 (1984): 27-52; F. Eshraghi, 'The Immediate Aftermath of Anglo-Soviet Occupation of Iran in August 1941', *Middle Eastern Studies* 20, no. 3 (1984): 324-51; Nikolay A. Kozhanov, 'The Pretexts and Reasons for the Allied Invasion of Iran in 1941', *Iranian Studies* 45, no. 4 (2012): 479-97.

<sup>42</sup> John L. Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 310.

<sup>43</sup> Robert Rossow, Jr., 'The Battle of Azerbaijan, 1946', *Middle East Journal* 10, no. 1 (1956): 19; Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947*, 310.

finally due to withdraw early in March of 1946, Soviet forces made no indication of doing so. This unwillingness of the Soviet Union to withdraw from Iran forced for the first time after the Second World War a reorientation in American policy *vis-à-vis* not only the Soviet Union but also Iran.<sup>44</sup>

On 15 July 1946, the US Department of State prepared a statement in which American policy towards Iran involved the prevention of 'loss of Iranian independence either by being divided into Soviet and British spheres of influence or by being absorbed into the Soviet orbit of satellite states'.<sup>45</sup> The following year, on 12 March 1947, US President Harry S. Truman appeared before Congress, laying the ideological framework for the United States' forthcoming foreign policy towards the Soviet Union.<sup>46</sup> Two years later, in 1949, the US National Security Council entwined the national security of the United States with that of Iran, stating that the security of the United States were threatened should the Soviet Union successfully obtain control of Iran.<sup>47</sup>

For this reason, American officials viewed therefore the premiership of national-democrat Mohammad Mosaddeq favourably. Mosaddeq, who had returned to politics following the abdication of Iranian Shah Reza Pahlavi as a result of the Anglo-Soviet invasion in 1941, was viewed by officials within the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) stations chief in Tehran as necessary to reduce domestic unrest and the appeal of communism.<sup>48</sup> By championing the nationalisation of Iran's oil industry, which had been controlled by the United Kingdom since the early 1910s, Mosaddeq rose in popularity and was finally appointed prime minister on 28 April 1951. Simultaneously, however, he positioned himself directly in opposition to the United Kingdom and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC; later British Petroleum (BP)) more specifically.

During the ensuing oil conflict between Mosaddeq and the United Kingdom, the latter made numerous attempts to remove the former from office.<sup>49</sup> It even approached the United States

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<sup>44</sup> Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947*, 282–315.

<sup>45</sup> 'Policy and Information Statement on Iran Prepared in the Department of State', 15 July 1946, *FRUS*, 1946, vol. VII, doc. 381.

<sup>46</sup> Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947*, 351.

<sup>47</sup> 'Policy Statement on Iran Prepared in the Department of State', 1 February 1949, *FRUS*, 1949, vol. VI, doc. 264; 'Report of the National Security Council on the Position of the United States with Respect to Iran', 21 July 1949, *FRUS*, 1949, vol. VI, doc. 315.

<sup>48</sup> Mark J. Gasiorowski, 'US Perceptions of the Communist Threat in Iran during the Mosaddegh Era', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 21, no. 3 (2019): 198.

<sup>49</sup> Mark J. Gasiorowski, 'The 1953 Coup d'État in Iran', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19, no. 3 (1987): 263–65; Abrahamian, *The Coup*, 190–97.

towards the end of 1952 with a proposal to organise a *coup d'état*.<sup>50</sup> While the United States rejected the proposal initially, it elected not long thereafter to overthrow the Iranian prime minister. This change occurred with the election of Dwight D. Eisenhower as president of the United States, and his entering office on 20 January 1953. Agreement between the United Kingdom and the Eisenhower administration occurred in February that same year, and the CIA was authorised to plan the *coup* in March. Demonstrating the reality into which the plan manifested was a sum of USD 4 million, which was sent in April to the CIA station chief in Tehran and which was earmarked specifically for the overthrow of Mosaddeq. And finally, in June, Eisenhower gave his final approval.<sup>51</sup>

Dwight D. Eisenhower's succeeding Truman as president of the United States, however, does not by itself explain why the United States finally elected to overthrow Mosaddeq. Indeed, the Iranian prime minister served his purpose as a national democrat who was preoccupied with the issue of Iranian sovereignty with regards to oil. By the time Eisenhower entered office, however, Mosaddeq's coalition—National Front—had begun to deteriorate. In January of 1953, and in response to Mosaddeq's asking the Iranian parliament for plenary powers, prominent figures with great influence within the parliament defected from the coalition in anger. From this emerged large demonstrations in February, in which opposing factions—nationalists, democrats, communists, monarchists—clashed with each other. Meanwhile, the CIA reported in March that the Tudeh Party, which was described by the CIA as a 'vehicle of communism in Iran' and outlawed by the Iranian government in 1949, was attempting to exploit the situation by creating a united front with Mosaddeq.<sup>52</sup> American officials feared, therefore, that their Iranian bulwark was crumbling; Mosaddeq was in a desperate situation from which he might be forced to ally with the communists in order to remain in power.

The overthrow of Mosaddeq on 19 August 1953 ushered in a new era in the relationship between Iran and the United States, in which the latter built a client state within the former and thus assumed a more direct role. Succeeding Mosaddeq was Fazlollah Zahedi, who enjoyed little

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<sup>50</sup> Henry A. Byroade to H. Freeman Matthews, 'Proposal to Organize a Coup d'état in Iran', 26 November 1952, *1953 Iran Coup: New US Documents Confirm British Approached US in Late 1952 About Ousting Mosaddeq*, eds. Malcolm Byrne and Mark Gasiorowski (Washington, DC: The National Security Archive and Chadwyck-Healey, 2017); 'British Proposal to Organize a Coup d'état in Iran', 3 December 1952, *1953 Iran Coup*, eds. Byrne and Gasiorowski.

<sup>51</sup> Gasiorowski, 'US Perceptions of the Communist Threat in Iran during the Mosaddegh Era', 209–10.

<sup>52</sup> CIA, 'ORE 23-49: The Tudeh Party: Vehicle of Communism in Iran', 1 August 1949, <https://cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp80r01731r001300060066-4>; Gasiorowski, 'US Perceptions of the Communist Threat in Iran during the Mosaddegh Era', 211. For a detailed account of the Tudeh Party, see Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1982), 281–325.

popular support compared to the former prime minister. For this reason, attempts were made by both Iran and the United States to consolidate power within the new government. Domestically, repression served as the chief strategy. The Zahedi government cracked down upon all sources of opposition, which following the *coup* included remnants of Mosaddeq's National Front, the defectors of National Front who once again had changed their loyalties, and the Tudeh Party. Mosaddeq and his associates were arrested, Tudeh hideouts were raided, and the army was purged. In addition to repression, the Zahedi government publicised the trial of Mosaddeq in November and December of 1953, with the intention of directing the attention of the population away from the political situation and onto the trial and Mosaddeq's shortcomings. Furthermore, and within the context of the general election of 1954, the Zahedi government recruited notorious gangsters in order to assault and intimidate voters. No oppositional figure was elected that year, as a result.<sup>53</sup>

From beyond Iranian borders, the Eisenhower administration, too, worked to strengthen the Zahedi government. Diplomatic gestures were extended, financial aid was increased, and intelligence capabilities were both shared and improved. Shortly after the *coup*, Eisenhower congratulated the shah; and American officials expressed their support of the new government on numerous occasions towards the end of 1953, culminating in an official visit by Vice President Richard M. Nixon in December that year. Financially, the existing financial program in Iran saw an increase of USD 23.4 million, and an additional USD 45 million was given in emergency aid. The gestures and aid strengthened and stabilised the new government in Iran by providing credibility and resources.<sup>54</sup>

With regards to intelligence, the Zahedi government received help from the CIA in repressing domestic opposition. The station chief of the agency, for example, dissuaded tribal leaders in southern Iran from taking up arms against the new government; and the agency provided the new government with intelligence about the Tudeh Party and the whereabouts of its members. The agency also used its propaganda network, which it had largely adopted from the UK Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) in the process of overthrowing Mosaddeq, to distribute books and pamphlets in which the new government was praised and the opposition was criticised.<sup>55</sup> More importantly for the long term, however, was the CIA's training of Iranian intelligence forces; and

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<sup>53</sup> Gasiorowski, *US Foreign Policy and the Shah*, 85–90.

<sup>54</sup> Gasiorowski, 90.

<sup>55</sup> On the CIA's adoption of the United Kingdom's propaganda and intelligence networks, see Abrahamian, *The Coup*, 150–61.



its help in establishing a dedicated intelligence unit, which in many ways was the precursor to Iran's Intelligence and Security Organization of the Country (SAVAK).<sup>56</sup>

Lastly, the Eisenhower administration helped in resolving the oil crisis that had emerged between Iran and the United Kingdom as a result of Mosaddeq's nationalisation of the Iranian oil industry. As a result, American oil companies won a forty per cent share of Iranian oil production, which further augmented American interests in Iran and within the Persian Gulf.<sup>57</sup>

It was during the Eisenhower years that Iran became a client of American patronage. Together with countries such as South Vietnam and South Korea, Iran became an asset in the United States' strategy of containment of communism; along the entire periphery of the Soviet sphere of influence, such clients were established.<sup>58</sup> Despite this upgrade in the relationship, however, the Eisenhower administration did not depart from the United States' traditional policy of even-handedness towards the inhabitants of the Middle East; it refused to sign the United States into the Baghdad Pact, for example, to the frustration of the shah.<sup>59</sup>

John F. Kennedy entered office in January of 1961, and the policy of even-handedness was maintained although altered by a more direct approach towards the United States' clients. The Kennedy administration employed a containment strategy in which modernisation became a tool of accelerating development and by extension increasing the resilience of clients against communist encroachment.<sup>60</sup> In the case of Iran, the country fell into turmoil after Kennedy's entering office. The Iranian population was better educated than before and had acquired a greater awareness of social and political injustice; and crowds demonstrated in 1961 against the shah and his regime. In response, the Kennedy administration withheld assistance as a way of leveraging the shah into reforming the political system especially: 'there is little doubt that during the Kennedy presidency the United States pressured the shah's regime to begin a program of dramatic, selective and controlled reforms'.<sup>61</sup>

While this was true, the shah was not simply a passive recipient of these pressures from the United States. A number of reform initiatives were enacted in the beginning of 1963, collectively

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<sup>56</sup> Gasiorowski, *US Foreign Policy and the Shah*, 91–92.

<sup>57</sup> Gasiorowski, 92.

<sup>58</sup> Gasiorowski, 93–97.

<sup>59</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines', 39.

<sup>60</sup> Ben Offler, *US Foreign Policy and the Modernization of Iran: Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon and the Shah* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 27, 30–34.

<sup>61</sup> Quoted from James A. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 137. See also Offler, *US Foreign Policy and the Modernization of Iran*, 37; April R. Summitt, 'For a White Revolution: John F. Kennedy and the Shah of Iran', *Middle East Journal* 58, no. 4 (2004): 565–66; Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines', 40.

described today as 'the White Revolution'. These reforms were designed not to accord to the general Iranian population any larger measure of authority within Iran's political system, however, but simply to appease the Kennedy administration. They included land redistribution and universal suffrage, among other things, and were intended not to undermine the shah's authority.<sup>62</sup> The policy of modernisation was side-lined by the Kennedy administration in exchange for stronger ties with Iran.

As a result of his murder in November of 1963, Kennedy was succeeded abruptly by his vice president, Lyndon B. Johnson, whose presidency lasted until 1969. Throughout the remainder of the decade, Iran grew from being a client into becoming a partner of the United States. Johnson 'echoed' Kennedy in that he continued to side-line modernisation in favour of pursuing stronger ties with the shah.<sup>63</sup> The very catalyst for this transformation was Iran's becoming a military credit purchasing partner in 1964, meaning that Iran would thenceforth pay for its own military development instead of depending on foreign grant aid in order to do so.<sup>64</sup>

In the words of historian Stephen McGlinchey, '[t]he Shah's graduation from aid to credit characterized the remaining years of his rule', which includes the time period of the present study.<sup>65</sup> When Richard M. Nixon entered office in 1969, the shah was fixated on the Soviet Union and what he perceived to be a Soviet encroachment upon Iran by way of its proxies, Egypt and Iraq.

#### ISRAEL AND THE UNITED STATES, 1948-68

The very seed for the security alliance between Israel and the United States was first planted and nourished during the presidency of John F. Kennedy, who was the first American president to sell highly advanced weaponry to Israel. It was largely exogenous, compensatory in nature, and as such a by-product of Kennedy's endeavours to draw Egypt closer to the Western sphere of influence.<sup>66</sup> The relationship was further augmented by Lyndon B. Johnson, who gradually departed from a policy of even-handedness with regards to Israel and the Arabs, especially following the Third Arab-Israeli War of 1967. Israel was increasingly able to define for itself the very degree of the Arab threat, and did so to leverage for military assistance from the United States.

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<sup>62</sup> Nikkie R. Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 148; Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines', 41; Offiler, *US Foreign Policy and the Modernization of Iran*, 57–58.

<sup>63</sup> Offiler, *US Foreign Policy and the Modernization of Iran*, 70.

<sup>64</sup> McGlinchey, 'Lyndon B. Johnson and Arms Sales to Iran, 1964-1968', 231.

<sup>65</sup> McGlinchey, 231.

<sup>66</sup> Warren Bass, *Support Any Friend: Kennedy's Middle East and the Making of the US-Israel Alliance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 145–50; Ben-Zvi, 'Stumbling into an Alliance'; Zachary K. Goldman, 'Ties That Bind: John F. Kennedy and the Foundations of the American-Israeli Alliance', *Cold War History* 9, no. 1 (2009): 23–58.

The relationship between Israel and the United States was initially ambiguous. Israel employed from its inception in 1948 to the very end of 1949 a foreign policy of 'non-identification' towards the United States and the Soviet Union alike. This policy of non-alignment was motivated by Israel's having a vast Jewish diaspora throughout both the Western and Eastern Bloc, the fact that the United States and the Soviet Union had both been supportive in the creation of Israel, a sincere wish to refrain from inter-power rivalry, a desire to maintain domestic unity, and a perception of itself as a nation that shall 'dwell alone'.<sup>67</sup>

By the first half of the 1950s, however, Israel began to move away from this policy of non-alignment. This shift in foreign policy came as a necessary adaptation to changes within the United States. The Iran Crisis of 1946 forced in the United States a reorientation *vis-à-vis* its former ally, the Soviet Union. Important decisions were made increasingly within the context of the Cold War, and the Korea Crisis of 1950 only enforced this trend.<sup>68</sup> To Israel, its policy of non-alignment became therefore an apparent problem, for while it was declaring neutrality on international matters, it was requiring from the United States both financial and military aid. This contradicting duality did not elude Israeli officials, who discussed the matter of a diplomatic re-orientation away from non-alignment throughout 1950.

Rapprochement with the United States took place thenceforth, beginning with Israel's official decision on 2 July to take the position of the United States on the issue of the Korea Crisis by denouncing North Korea for its invasion of South Korea on 25 June.<sup>69</sup> Subsequently, throughout 1951, Israeli officials campaigned domestically to disseminate information about Israel's dependency on the United States for survival as well as internationally with the United States to improve its relations with Israel.<sup>70</sup> And in the beginning of 1952, Israel applied formally for military aid from the United States.

The United States, for its part, however, employed especially during Dwight D. Eisenhower's presidency, which lasted from 1953 to 1961, a policy of even-handedness towards Israel and the Arabs within the regions of the Middle East and North Africa. Even Eisenhower's predecessor, Harry S. Truman, whose partisanship clearly favoured the Jews, had been conflicted with regards

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<sup>67</sup> Uri Bialer, *Between East and West: Israel's Foreign Policy Orientation, 1948-1956* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 206–7.

<sup>68</sup> Bialer, 218–19.

<sup>69</sup> Bialer, 218.

<sup>70</sup> Bialer, 239–44.

to the establishing of a Jewish state within Palestinian territory.<sup>71</sup> In Eisenhower, however, Israel found no sympathy nor any emotional commitment at all to its cause.<sup>72</sup> In fact, during Eisenhower's presidency the United States pivoted, and sought the reversal of anti-American trends within the Arab world by demonstrating that Israel would not be granted preferential treatment.<sup>73</sup> This was demonstrated, for example, by Eisenhower's denouncing Israel, France, and the United Kingdom as a result of the Suez Crisis in 1956.

With John F. Kennedy's entering office in January of 1961, the United States took a confrontational stance towards Israel with regards to its nuclear ambitions.<sup>74</sup> In the year prior, American intelligence had revealed that Israel was constructing a second nuclear reactor in Dimona.<sup>75</sup> This construction followed an acceleration of Israel's nuclear programme, during the 1950s, through its cooperation with France.<sup>76</sup> Ostensibly, the primary purposes of the nuclear reactor were scientific and civil; however, and as Ernst Bergmann, who led Israel's Atomic Energy Commission from 1952 to 1966, stated, 'by developing nuclear energy for peaceful uses, you reach the nuclear option'.<sup>77</sup> Israel's nuclear programme could, in other words, be a path to both development and defence.<sup>78</sup>

The defensive purpose of the nuclear programme was recognised by Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion. His argument was that Israel was forced to pursue nuclear proliferation in response to what he perceived to be a growing Arab threat to Israel's national security as well as in the absence of assistance from the United States in the form of conventional arms.<sup>79</sup> More specifically, the latter involved highly advanced Hawk ground-to-air missiles. To the Kennedy administration, however, such military assistance would indicate a clear support for Israel. US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs Phillips Talbot, for example, expressed reluctance to provide such arms, for fear that it might signify to the Arabs that the United States was allying with Israel.<sup>80</sup> His concerns aligned with those foundational to the United States' traditional policy of even-handedness.

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<sup>71</sup> Kathleen Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine: Their Influence on US Middle East Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 62–94.

<sup>72</sup> Christison, 96–97.

<sup>73</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines', 45.

<sup>74</sup> Aridan, *Advocating for Israel*, 193.

<sup>75</sup> Aridan, 193; Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines', 50.

<sup>76</sup> Matteo Gerlini, 'Waiting for Dimona: The United States and Israel's Development of Nuclear Capability', *Cold War History* 10, no. 2 (2010): 144.

<sup>77</sup> Quoted in Gerlini, 144.

<sup>78</sup> Gerlini, 144.

<sup>79</sup> Aridan, *Advocating for Israel*, 195–96.

<sup>80</sup> Aridan, 198.

As a result of efforts primarily from Kennedy's deputy security counsel, Myer Feldman, Talbot eventually changed his attitude with regards to the Hawks. Feldmann had argued to Talbot that the Hawks could be supplied in the hope that Ben-Gurion and his government take a more conciliatory stance towards a plan by the Kennedy administration to repatriate a maximum of 150,000 Palestinians over the span of ten to fifteen years. In addition to this plan, Feldman, who acted as an intermediary between the Kennedy administration and Israel, was instructed also to raise within the context of the Hawks the issue of Israel's nuclear programme. He never did so, however.<sup>81</sup> Six batteries of Hawks missiles were finally sold to Israel in August of 1962, signifying a watershed in the relationship between Israel and the United States; Kennedy was the first president to sell such advanced military technology to Israel. The latter, however, took no conciliatory stance in response towards the matter of the repatriation plan nor the nuclear programme.<sup>82</sup> This foreshadowed the dynamic between Israel and the United States during the administration of both Johnson and Nixon. Despite Talbot's initial concerns, the selling of the Hawk missiles did not signify a shift in the United States' even-handed policy towards the Middle East. As a result of Kennedy's rapprochement with Egypt at the time, the sale was in fact compensatory in nature.<sup>83</sup>

A definite break from this policy of even-handedness occurred for the first time during Lyndon B. Johnson's presidency. Johnson was sworn in as president of the United States in November of 1963, upon the assassination of Kennedy earlier that month. In a way, Kennedy's presidency anticipated that of Johnson, during which the relationship between Israel and the United States deepened, in that the economic and the special military assistance especially, which had been established by the sale of the Hawks, was not only maintained but augmented dramatically.

Israel's first military request following Johnson's entering office involved two hundred modern tanks, and came as a response to a recent rearmament of Egypt by the Soviet Union. The Kennedy administration had declined a similar request, on the grounds that it did not desire for the United States to become a principal supplier of arms to Israel. Confronted not only with the request but also with immense pressure, which was applied by Israel and its political lobbies within the United States alike, the Johnson administration was at a crossroads. Talbot, for example, warned once more that fulfilling such a request would signify a break with the United States' policy of even-

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<sup>81</sup> Ben-Zvi, 'Influence and Arms', 40; Aridan, *Advocating for Israel*, 198–99.

<sup>82</sup> Aridan, *Advocating for Israel*, 200–201.

<sup>83</sup> Ben-Zvi, 'Stumbling into an Alliance', 226, 229–41.

handedness; and this notion was supported by the CIA, among others, which warned that a supplying of the tanks would be detrimental to the United States' relations with the Arabs.<sup>84</sup>

The Johnson administration decided finally not to supply the tanks, at least initially. Discussions prior to this decision had centred on the possibilities of attaching conditions to the request, as a means of leveraging Israel into responding favourably to requests that the United States conduct inspections of the nuclear reactor. Israel, meanwhile, showed no inclination to accept this request. Despite this, however, Johnson promised in February of 1964 to provide the tanks on the grounds that he acknowledged an expanding gap between Israel and the Arabs in terms of armour. Thus, it appeared that Israel was once again evading requests for reciprocity.<sup>85</sup> Despite his promise, a decision was made not to supply the tanks, based upon the fact that the tanks very clearly had offensive capabilities. This contrasted the defensive nature of the anti-air Hawk missiles from 1962.<sup>86</sup>

A counteroffer was proposed instead, to facilitate the supply of modern tanks indirectly by way of Europe and West-Germany specifically. When nothing came of this, due to a leak of the arrangement to *The New York Times* and West-Germany's subsequent withdrawal from it, the United States decided finally to provide 110 M48A2C and 110 M48A1 tanks in July of 1965. No conditions were attached to the sale, and the fact that the tanks were sold and not provided as military aid gave Israel a sense of being much less obligated to fulfil any requests from the United States in any case. Simultaneously, the United States' relationship with Egypt was steadily deteriorating, leading eventually to a discontinuation of aid to the latter. Thus, the sale of the tanks signified a clear divergence from the policy of even-handedness. It ushered in a new era in which the United States became a principal supplier of arms to Israel, and one in which it oriented itself much more narrowly towards its allies within the Middle East, at the expense of its non-allies.<sup>87</sup>

#### IRAN AND ISRAEL, 1948-68

Rouhollah K. Ramazani applies to Iran's approach to Israel between 1948 and 1950 the quality of 'calculated ambivalence'.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, Iran voted in 1947 in concert with states such as Egypt, Iraq, and Syria against the partitioning of Palestine; and Iranian Representative to the United Nations Mostafa Adl warned on numerous occasions the General Assembly and the *Ad Hoc* Committee on

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<sup>84</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines', 86–87.

<sup>85</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 88–95.

<sup>86</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 95–96.

<sup>87</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 106–13.

<sup>88</sup> Rouhollah K. Ramazani, 'Iran and the Arab-Israeli Conflict', *Middle East Journal* 32, no. 4 (1978): 414–15.

the Palestine Question that a partitioning of Palestine into an Arab state and an Israeli state would result either in stillbirth or generations of turmoil and suffering.<sup>89</sup> And finally, in 1949, Iran voted against the admission of Israel into the United Nations.<sup>90</sup>

It would appear that Iran had elected to defend Palestine or to oppose Israel, or to do both. Indeed, some have suggested that Iran acted in solidarity with the Palestinians as brethren in faith.<sup>91</sup> Yet Iran accorded to Israel *de facto* recognition but one year following its denial of Israeli membership in the United Nations, and became thus the second state with a Muslim majority to do so. Furthermore, in 1958, the shah evoked in a letter to Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion the memory of Cyrus the Great, who had defeated Babylon and liberated the Israelites from exile some fourteen hundred years earlier.<sup>92</sup> Iran's initial approach to Israel was ambivalent, but to understand why its ambivalence was calculated, one must take into account three contemporary events: the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran in 1941, the subsequent Azerbaijan Crisis in 1946, and Israel's initial policy of non-alignment.

The United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, who had jointly invaded Iran and occupied a number of Iranian provinces during the Second World War, both agreed to withdraw from Iranian territory following peace. This agreement had been reaffirmed by the two Allied Powers in 1943 and 1945; however, when the date fell on 2 March 1946, the Soviet Union made no indication of moving. Adding to the ensuing crisis, and during its occupation of Iranian Azerbaijan, the Soviet Union had incited regional insurrection against the central Iranian government; and towards the end of 1945, it had supported the creation of a separatist Azerbaijani government within the region.<sup>93</sup> This event, which came to be known as the Azerbaijan Crisis in Iran, forced in American policymakers a reorientation *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union for the very first time during the post-war period.<sup>94</sup> It is also the backdrop against which we must examine Iran's initial ambivalence towards Israel.

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<sup>89</sup> For the vote, see UN, 'General Assembly, 1st Special Session: 78th Plenary Meeting, Held on Thursday, 15 May 1947', 1424, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3829522?ln=en>. For 'Adl's objections, see e.g. UN, 'Eleventh Meeting, Held at Lake Success, New York, on Saturday, 11 October 1947', 68-9, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/605747?ln=en>; UN, 'Hundred and Twenty-Fourth Plenary Meeting, Held in the General Assembly Hall at Flushing Meadow, New York, on Wednesday, 26 November 1947', 1328-9, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/734598?ln=en>.

<sup>90</sup> UN, 'Two-Hundred and Seventh Plenary Meeting, Held at Flushing Meadow, New York, on Wednesday, 11 May 1949', 330, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/646509?ln=en>.

<sup>91</sup> George Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 405-6.

<sup>92</sup> Sobhani, *The Pragmatic Entente*, 35; Alpher, *Periphery*, 12.

<sup>93</sup> Rossow, Jr., 'The Battle of Azerbaijan, 1946', 17-18.

<sup>94</sup> Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947*, 309-10, 316.

‘Evidence recently made available in Israel reveals that the possibility of a change in Israel’s foreign policy orientation was not discussed at an administrative-political level until the end of 1949. [...] “Non-identification”, as it was sometimes termed, had been accepted as a fundamental—and publicly declared—fact of Israeli life’, writes Uri Bialer.<sup>95</sup> This initial policy of non-alignment was motivated by Israel’s having a vast Jewish diaspora dispersed throughout both the Western and the Eastern Bloc; the fact that both the United States and the Soviet Union had been supportive in the creation of Israel; a sincere wish to refrain from inter-power rivalry; and domestic forces.<sup>96</sup>

While approximately 240,000 Jews had migrated to Israel from the Eastern Bloc in the period from 1948 to 1950, Israeli officials estimated after 1955 that a remaining 200,000 Eastern-European Jews wished to leave for Israel. Furthermore, of the 2,000,000 Jews residing in the Soviet Union, only nine had migrated to Israel in the period from 1948 to 1953.<sup>97</sup> In Bialer’s words, therefore, ‘it is not difficult to appreciate why [...] the issue of Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe continued to exercise a hold on the mind of Israeli policymakers’.<sup>98</sup> Maintaining relations with the Eastern Bloc, through which Israel could better facilitate further migrations of Eastern European Jews, was something Israeli officials had to be conscious of in the process of designing foreign policy.

Second, the Soviet Union had voted with states such as the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in favour of partitioning Palestine in 1947; and the five abovementioned states voted in 1949 in favour of according to Israel membership in the United Nations.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, following the adoption by the United Nations of the Partition Plan in 1947 and the creation of Israel in 1948, the Soviet Union facilitated indirectly the migration of Eastern European Jews to Israel.<sup>100</sup> This, in combination with Israel’s wish to refrain from inter-power rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, provided Israeli policymakers with a second and third motivation for maintaining friendly relations with the latter. ‘Initially, therefore, Israel refrained from outright expressions of

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<sup>95</sup> Bialer, *Between East and West*, 206.

<sup>96</sup> Bialer, 206.

<sup>97</sup> Bialer, 61–65.

<sup>98</sup> Bialer, 66.

<sup>99</sup> UN, ‘General Assembly, 1st Special Session: 78th Plenary Meeting, Held on Thursday, 15 May 1947’, 1424, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3829522?ln=en>; UN, ‘Two-Hundred and Seventh Plenary Meeting, Held at Flushing Meadow, New York, on Wednesday, 11 May 1949’, 330, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/646509?ln=en>.

<sup>100</sup> Bialer, *Between East and West*, 76, 68–77.



support for the positions of either of the two big powers over international issues', asserts Uri Bialer.<sup>101</sup>

Iran's initial ambivalence towards Israel was therefore a result of Israel's own ambiguous policy towards the United States and the Soviet Union especially, which Iran perceived as a direct threat to its sovereignty: 'The real reason for Iran's ambivalent attitude at the time was fundamentally the ambiguous nature of Israeli relations with the Soviet Union'.<sup>102</sup> By 1950, however, Israel had been recognised by the United States *de jure*; and it had accepted the Point Four Program, through which Israel, together with other developing countries including Iran, was brought closer to the West.<sup>103</sup>

The initial period of ambivalence was followed subsequently by a period of rapprochement between Iran and Israel, and the former soon became a target of Israel's policy of periphery. This development in bilateral relations must be seen within the context of three contemporary events: the *coup d'état* in Iran, the rise of Arab nationalism, and the successful penetration of Soviet influence into the Arab world.<sup>104</sup>

'The Arab world entered the new era of the Cold War in a statement of revolutionary ferment', writes Eugene L. Rogan.<sup>105</sup> Indeed, the Egyptian and Iraqi monarchies were deposed swiftly by revolutionary nationalists in 1952 and 1958 respectively; and the Syrian republic suffered a similar fate but five years later, in 1963. Of all the nationalist governments that assumed power in the Arab world during this period, however, none could challenge the hegemony of Egypt.<sup>106</sup> And Gamal Abdel Nasser, who in 1952 designed a foreign policy described by Adeed Dawisha as being 'regionally interventionist and globally activist'.<sup>107</sup>

Attempts were made early by the United States to persuade the new Egyptian government into aligning with the West.<sup>108</sup> When Egypt rejected its overtures, however, the United States turned instead to Iraq, whose signing of the Baghdad Pact in 1955 catalysed Egypt's regional interventionism: 'The Baghdad Pact had the immediate effect of detonating latent regional rivalries,

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<sup>101</sup> Bialer, 207.

<sup>102</sup> Ramazani, 'Iran and the Arab-Israeli Conflict', 415.

<sup>103</sup> Ramazani, 415.

<sup>104</sup> For the *coup d'état* in Iran, see chap. II (not included in draft).

<sup>105</sup> Eugene L. Rogan, *The Arabs: A History* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 277.

<sup>106</sup> Adeed Dawisha, 'Egypt', in *The Cold War and the Middle East*, ed. Yezid Sayigh and Avi Shlaim (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 27–28; Rogan, *The Arabs*, 304–5, 317; Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 142–45.

<sup>107</sup> Dawisha, 'Egypt', 29.

<sup>108</sup> Dawisha, 31–34; Rogan, *The Arabs*, 289, 296–99; Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, 141–42.

and putting a Cold War label on inter-Arab politics'.<sup>109</sup> Prior to 1955, nationalism in Egypt entailed primarily a 'struggle to cleanse [the country of its] British presence and to safeguard [its] territorial integrity'.<sup>110</sup> Now, fearing regional isolation, Egypt turned instead outward in an attempt to unify the Arab world under one banner.<sup>111</sup>

Israel, more than Iran, faced the direct threat posed by Arab nationalism. Not only had Israel already fought and defeated the Arab forces during the First Arab-Israeli War in 1949 but it had occupied a large part of the territories allotted to the Palestinians by the United Nations' Partition Plan in 1947. However, Arab nationalism soon acquired a pro-Soviet element; and Iran, whose principal adversary in the region was the Soviet Union, observed with great concern the successful penetration of Soviet influence in the Arab world.<sup>112</sup> In 1955, Egypt had secured significant arms deal with Soviet satellite Czechoslovakia; and the Soviet Union emerged in the following decade as the principal supplier of arms to both Egypt and Syria. In 1956, Nasser had made important acquaintances in both Yugoslavia and China.<sup>113</sup> And the same year, Nasser emerged politically victorious following the Suez Crisis, after which France and the United Kingdom, who had preemptively invaded Egypt in concert with Israel, lost face within the Arab world.<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, and beginning in the early 1960s, Egypt turned increasingly to Soviet-inspired socialism. And finally, anti-Western, or pro-Soviet, sentiments in the region were consolidated in 1958 when Egypt and Syria joined into the United Arab Republic.<sup>115</sup>

It was within this context that Israel developed its grand strategy of engaging the non-Arab periphery.<sup>116</sup> Israeli officials were acutely aware of Israel's geographical and political situation within a predominantly Arab region, and pursued from the mid-1950s therefore the friendship of its non-Arab inhabitants—primarily that of Turkey and Iran.<sup>117</sup> The shah, who had emerged stronger following the Anglo-American *coup d'état* in 1953, recognised on his part the strategic value of Israel to Iranian security—particularly the value of its Jewish lobby in Washington.<sup>118</sup> From the

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<sup>109</sup> Dawisha, 'Egypt', 31.

<sup>110</sup> Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, 138.

<sup>111</sup> Rogan, *The Arabs*, 304–5; Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, 141–42.

<sup>112</sup> Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance*, 22.

<sup>113</sup> Yugoslavia had, admittedly, broken with the USSR by 1948. China, however, offered in the 1950s to act as mediator between Egypt and the USSR; and the Chinese Premier, Zhou Enlai, personally vouched for Gamal Abdel Nasser in his talks with USSR officials. See e.g. Rogan, *The Arabs*, 296–97.

<sup>114</sup> Rogan, 304.

<sup>115</sup> Rogan, 321–22.

<sup>116</sup> Sobhani, *The Pragmatic Entente*, 33–35; Alpher, *Periphery*, 3–4; Samaan, *Israel's Foreign Policy beyond the Arab World*, 15–17.

<sup>117</sup> Alpher, *Periphery*, 11–23, 29–40.

<sup>118</sup> Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance*, 22–24; Alpher, *Periphery*, 11–12.

policy of periphery emerged an intelligence *entente* by the late 1950s; and the *entente* survived, although not without difficulties, until the eventual fall of the shah in 1979.<sup>119</sup> It was with the help of Israeli Mossad as well as American intelligence agencies that the shah established in 1957 Iran's own Intelligence and Security Organisation of the Country, or SAVAK.<sup>120</sup>

The emerging *entente* between Iran and Israel in the late 1950s developed during the early 1960s into new forms of collaboration, according to historian Hulda Kjeang Mørk. The consolidation of power around the shah following the *coup d'état* in 1953, combined with the subsequent financial aid provided by the United States and Iran's rising oil revenues, enabled during the 1960s the implementation of a number of comprehensive reforms, which all required technical expertise.<sup>121</sup> This expertise was recruited in large part directly from Israel. Furthermore, Israel emerged during the decade as an important provider of arms to Iran. Meanwhile, Israel received from Iran crude oil, which could be received in Eilat, through the Straits of Tiran, following the Suez Crisis of 1957 after which Israel gained access through the Straits.<sup>122</sup>

The most important way in which the *entente* between Iran and Israel developed, however, was through their coordinated designs of foreign policy. Beginning in 1964, notes Kjeang Mørk, the relationship between Iran and Israel 'developed a foreign policy component [...] and [the two states...] began to coordinate their foreign policies towards Washington'. Their intention, she argues, was to 'buttress the continued and expanding flow of armaments from the United States' by maintaining their own positive images while 'sully' that of the Arabs.<sup>123</sup> Another way in which Iran and Israel cooperated was through their clandestine support of the Kurds during the First Iraqi-Kurdish War of 1961. Iraq stood alone in challenging Iranian hegemony in the Persian Gulf, which threatened not only Iran but by extension Israel. A 'festering' Kurdish problem, emphasises Kjeang Mørk, was both debilitating and immobilising for the new Iraqi government, which had to focus its efforts on the domestic issue.<sup>124</sup>

Although the relationship between Iran and Israel in many ways flourished, the decade was also characterised by a general Iranian reluctance to upgrade and publicise it. Its political alignment

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<sup>119</sup> Alpher, *Periphery*, 11.

<sup>120</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, 419; Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 125–26; Sobhani, *The Pragmatic Entente*, 121–23; Mark J. Gasiorowski, *US Foreign Policy and the Shah: Building a Client State in Iran* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 151–58; Keddie, *Modern Iran*, 134.

<sup>121</sup> See chap. II.

<sup>122</sup> Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *The Israeli Connection: Who Israel Arms and Why* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), 10; Sobhani, *The Pragmatic Entente*, 53–54; Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines', 19, 55, 233, 237–43.

<sup>123</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines', 115, 122–31.

<sup>124</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 131–40.

westward and its religious alignment as a Muslim state placed Iran in a predicament. Numerous attempts by Israel to push for *de jure* recognition were met by rejection; and the situation reached new heights in 1964, when the Israeli delegation in Tehran breached protocol by publishing and distributing to other embassies in Tehran the names belonging to Israeli delegates there. While the shah indeed valued his relationship with the Israelis, he appears, according to Hulda Kjeang Mørk, most of all to have placed importance on demonstrating that he was setting its conditions. When the Israeli delegates initially refused to withdraw the list, therefore, a power struggle emerged between Iran and Israel; however, the delegates were soon ordered by their Foreign Ministry to concede to Iranian demands, and the list was withdrawn and explained as a mistake.<sup>125</sup> In broad strokes, it is within this context that one must study the relationship between Iran and Israel from 1969; the quality of the relationship never improved in terms of recognition until the Iranian revolution of 1979. The Israeli delegation in Tehran remained a delegation and received not the status of embassy.

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<sup>125</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 116–22.

## II. IRAN AND THE UNITED STATES

The importance of Iran to American foreign policy towards the Middle East increased dramatically by the end of the Second World War and the subsequent Iran Crisis of 1946. As a result of the Soviet Union dragging its feet with regards to withdrawing from its northern provinces, Iran became viewed upon by the Truman administration within the context of the Cold War. This relationship, between Iran and the United States, was further improved during the Eisenhower administration and its overthrow of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq in 1953; power was increasingly centralised in Iran's shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who became a client of American military and financial assistance.

This patron-client relationship was upgraded into one between partners during the Johnson administration; Iran became for the first time a credit-purchasing partner, and could purchase American arms with its own money. Meanwhile, a new dynamic, whose indications arguably could be observed as early as during the preceding Kennedy administration, began to characterise the relationship. This dynamic, in which Iran pressed the United States for ever increasing amounts of American arms, foreshadowed the relationship between Iran and the United States during the succeeding Nixon administration.

When Richard M. Nixon entered office in January of 1969, the stars appeared to be aligning for Iran. Nixon's view of the world was coloured in large measures by the Cold War and the United States' failing war in Vietnam. Furthermore, a new thread emerged during Nixon's administration, and one in which American foreign policy decision-making was transferred increasingly from the

Department of State to the White House. The shah, meanwhile, demonstrated an awareness of Nixon's world view. He continued to press for more American arms by painting a picture of the Soviet Union and the Arabs—principal among them Egypt, Syria, and Iraq—as ceaselessly conspiring to undermine not only Iran's national security but by extension that of the United States.

#### A NEW ADMINISTRATION, 1969

Richard M. Nixon was sworn in as the 37<sup>th</sup> president of the United States on 20 January 1969;. During his presidency, American foreign policy experienced two principal shifts. First, foreign policy became a matter limited increasingly to the jurisdiction of the White House and the United States National Security Council. Second, foreign policy focused in the stead of direct intervention increasingly on reinforcing allies abroad through military and economic aid.<sup>126</sup> These shifts in American foreign policy coincided with an announcement by the United Kingdom in 1968 that British forces were to be withdrawn from the Persian Gulf by 1971, and laid thus a foundation upon which Iranian Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi could build his own agency and shape the relationship between Iran and the United States.

Iran's most principal concern related to its national security as well as its status as a hegemon within the Persian Gulf. To the north, Iran bordered the Soviet Union, which had occupied Iran's northernmost provinces from 1941 to 1946. To the west lied Iraq, where the moderate monarchy of Faisal II had been overthrown and replaced by a nationalist republic in 1958 and subsequently a ba'athist regime in 1966. To the west lied also Egypt, which had severed its diplomatic relations with Iran in 1960, and which had subsequently commenced a number of operations within both the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf that were hostile towards Iran. To the east, Pakistan was struck by internal strife following the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, causing concern in Iran that its close friend and ally would eventually be replaced by a pro-Soviet satellite especially in Pakistani Balochistan. In turn, it was feared, this could further inspire Balochi insurgents within Iran's own eastern provinces of Sistan and Baluchestan.<sup>127</sup> The British announcement in 1968 came therefore as aggravating news to a situation that was already perceived by Iranian officials to be dire.

In order to defend the national security of his country as well as his status as hegemon within the Persian Gulf, the shah had turned to the United States for arms. Already during the Johnson

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<sup>126</sup> Stephen McGlinchey, *US Arms Policies towards the Shah's Iran* (London: Routledge, 2014), 62; Salberg, 'Conventional Wisdom', 60–62.

<sup>127</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, 1 April 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, docs. 6, 9.

administration, Iran was upgraded from an aid recipient to a credit purchasing partner; and arms transactions between Iran and the United States increased greatly during this period. By 1969, Iran had in fact become the largest purchaser of American arms.

The Johnson era anticipated in many ways Nixon's policy of Vietnamisation; however, the Nixon administration did not have a clearly defined policy on Iran nor the Persian Gulf at the time of Nixon's entering office. In fact, the question of Iran's role in American foreign policy was not formally examined until six months had passed. Due to the already excellent relationship between Iran and the United States, the latter felt inclined instead to bide its time in order to develop a policy that would best serve its long-term interests.<sup>128</sup>

The shah, however, did not sit idly by while Nixon and his administration settled into their new positions. Already on 1 April 1969, on the occasion of US President Dwight D. Eisenhower's funeral, he approached Nixon with regards to the matter of oil. Iranian oil had since 1954 been lifted by a consortium consisting of foreign companies, principal among which was the British Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. The signed agreement of 1954, while enabling Iranian oil once again to enter the international market following Mohammad Mosaddeq's nationalisation of the industry in 1951, gave the consortium full authority in deciding the amount of oil to be lifted.<sup>129</sup> In 1969, this stipulation frustrated the shah greatly.

His frustrations were rooted in a budget deficit that had struck Iran the very same year, and which had made Iran's military ambitions difficult to achieve. The importance of increased oil revenues to Iran related therefore directly to a security issue, and the perceived need for increased arms following the British departure. One way in which to increase such revenues was to increase the amount of Iranian oil to be lifted.

The shah, whose government at the time was attempting to renegotiate its agreement with the consortium, pressed therefore for a solution to the oil issue. Iran, he bargained with both Nixon and Nixon's national security advisor, Henry A. Kissinger, was willing to export oil to the United States through the United States' own Planet Oil and Mineral Company and to commit the proceeds from the trade to the purchasing of American arms and equipment, thus providing the United States with an incentive to accept his proposal. The United States, however, could not legally allow a special import quota to Iran and on the grounds that doing so would constitute

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<sup>128</sup> Salberg, 'Conventional Wisdom', 68; Mari Salberg and Hilde H. Waage, 'Masters of the Game: The Relationship between the United States and Iran Revisited, 1969-1972', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 30, no. 3 (2019): 472.

<sup>129</sup> Mary A. Heiss, 'The United States, Great Britain, and the Creation of the Iranian Oil Consortium, 1953-1954', *The International History Review* 16, no. 3 (1994): 531.

preferential treatment and thus run the risk of agitating other American allies, however, and the proposal was therefore not accepted.<sup>130</sup>

The renegotiation between the Iranian government and the consortium, too, failed in realising Iran's desires.<sup>131</sup> Still confronted by the budget deficit, the shah turned therefore instead to the matter of foreign military credits. Iran had become the recipient of such credits in 1964, during the Johnson administration, under a five-year plan that was intended to run until 1969. Despite being unable to secure a new five-year commitment from the United States in 1968, the shah had received a verbal promise from Johnson that year of an annual credit line for the next five years amounting to USD 100 million *per annum*.<sup>132</sup>

The Nixon administration, however, was not contractually bound by Johnson's promise. Pahlavi sought therefore to secure a more binding agreement with the new administration, which placed the former in a predicament. The United States had since the Johnson administration been acutely aware of its new dynamic with Iran, caused by the status of the latter as a credit purchasing partner: 'While grant aid recipients may have limited options for their acquisition of particular goods and sometimes find themselves entirely dependent on the aid supplier, countries capable of arms purchase can typically pay for their material needs from more than one supplier', notes historian Hulda Kjeang Mørk.<sup>133</sup>

With regards to this, the United States had observed a normalisation of relations between Iran and the Soviet Union since the beginning of the 1960s, under the shah's policy of independent nationalism.<sup>134</sup> On 13 January 1966, an agreement was signed between the two for the construction of industry and infrastructure in Iran; and on 2 March 1967, a five-year trade agreement was signed, which increased the value of Iran's exports to the Soviet Union by USD 50 million annually.<sup>135</sup> Although Iran's rapprochement with the Soviet Union did not involve political dealignment with the West, it emphasised to American officials the importance of maintaining Iran within the

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<sup>130</sup> Salberg, 'Conventional Wisdom', 66.

<sup>131</sup> Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassies in Jidda, Beirut, and Dhahran, 15 May 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 15; Telegram from the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, 18 May 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 16.

<sup>132</sup> McGlinchey, *US Arms Policies towards the Shah's Iran*, 54; Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines', 294.

<sup>133</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines', 63.

<sup>134</sup> Shahram Chubin and Sepehr Zabih, *The Foreign Relations of Iran: A Developing State in a Zone of Great-Power Control* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 67; Rouhollah K. Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy, 1941-1973: A Study of Foreign Policy in Modernizing Nations* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1975), 329; Sobhani, *The Pragmatic Entente*, 40.

<sup>135</sup> Chubin and Zabih, *The Foreign Relations of Iran*, 76-83; Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy, 1941-1973*, 330-38.



Western sphere of influence.<sup>136</sup> One way in which to do so was to remain the principal supplier of arms to Iran; and for this reason, Iran was finally granted by the Nixon administration military credits amounting to USD 100 million in 1969, within the framework of Johnson's promise.<sup>137</sup> To the shah, however, this was but a small and therefore unsatisfactory win. Furthermore, the Nixon administration had not yet formulated a clear policy towards Iran nor the Persian Gulf.

#### TOWARDS A POLICY, 1970

The foreign military credits granted to Iran at the close of 1969 were not a particular win for the shah. As such, he continued to press the United States for increased arms, increased military credits, and increased lifting of Iranian oil in 1970. Meanwhile, Iraq's central government conceded to Kurdish demands on 11 March 1970. In doing so, it resolved thus a conflict that Iran had both exploited and exacerbated in concert with Israel in order to limit Iraq's capabilities within the Persian Gulf. '[T]here was no longer any valid excuse for the Kurds [to] continue their struggle against Baghdad', which in turn would free Iraq's resources and capabilities for subversion within the Persian Gulf as well as enable Iraqi forces to more readily deploy within the gulf than previously.<sup>138</sup> To the shah's pleasure, however, the Nixon administration finally formulated a policy towards the Persian Gulf in November, in which Iran would play a very central role.

On 11 March, simultaneously with the resolution of the conflict between Iraq's central government and the Iraqi Kurds, Nixon received from the shah a letter in which the latter lamented the little progress that had been made with regards to his oil-for-arms plan as well as the strict terms to which Iran was subjected for procuring American arms.<sup>139</sup> While the American president reassured the shah of his continued support for Iran, he was in contrast to the latter restrained by the democratic institutions of his country. On 15 June, Nixon received a second letter in which the shah expressed his disappointment with the system of annual tranches, which was a result of the American congressional system. 'While our system of annual tranches does cause inconvenience for both our governments, I know you understand that the Congress only reluctantly approves programs for more than even one year and we unfortunately cannot settle the matter definitively

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<sup>136</sup> National Intelligence Estimate, 10 January 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 1; Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy, 1941-1973*, 339-47.

<sup>137</sup> Memorandum from Read to Kissinger, 30 January 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 2; Salberg, 'Conventional Wisdom', 68.

<sup>138</sup> Telegram from MacArthur to US Department of State, 12 March 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 53.

<sup>139</sup> Letter from Pahlavi to Nixon, 11 March 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 54.

for a five-year period', Nixon replied to the shah's request that a five-year plan be drawn up instead.<sup>140</sup>

Richard M. Nixon's inability to meet the shah's requests were no indication of his general disposition towards the latter; on the contrary, Nixon realised the importance of Iran to his foreign policies. In June, therefore, as the National Security Council was in the process of reviewing American policy towards the Persian Gulf, the president requested from Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Joseph J. Sisco a study of Iran and its potential role within the region. The study concluded that Iran was both capable and willing to play a constructive role within the Persian Gulf. At the same time, however, it was concluded that Iran was already capable of defending itself militarily except only against the Soviet Union.<sup>141</sup>

The National Security Council, meanwhile, reported on its study of American policy towards the Persian Gulf on 30 July. The study had been requested by the president in the summer of 1969, and was permeated with a cold war outlook upon the region. Great importance was placed upon American access to and influence within the Persian Gulf, and this access and influence was measured relatively to that of the Soviet Union. Maintaining stability, too, was deemed crucial, in order to curtail radicalism and, as a result, the spread of Soviet influence.<sup>142</sup> The report concluded that it was in the best interest of the United States to support Iran, to promote cooperation between the latter and Saudi Arabia, and to refrain from assuming a position similar to that of the United Kingdom prior to 1968.<sup>143</sup> The report was soon forwarded to Nixon; however, it was not met without objection from within the administration.

Chester A. Crocker, who was a member of the National Security Council Staff, argued that the study did not adequately explain how the proposed strategy would secure American interests in the long term, for example.<sup>144</sup> Objections emerged also from the US Department of Defense, which generally opposed any unconditional foreign military assistance. The department was not convinced that Iran's military demands were consistent with its military needs.<sup>145</sup> Indeed, Sisco's study had found that Iran was in no need of military assistance; however, the US Department of

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<sup>140</sup> Letter from Pahlavi to Nixon, 15 June 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 73; Letter from Nixon to Pahlavi, 30 July 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 80.

<sup>141</sup> Salberg, 'Conventional Wisdom', 84-85.

<sup>142</sup> McGlinchey, *US Arms Policies towards the Shah's Iran*, 66; Salberg and Waage, 'Masters of the Game', 473-74.

<sup>143</sup> Salberg, 'Conventional Wisdom', 85.

<sup>144</sup> Salberg, 85-86.

<sup>145</sup> Memorandum from Nutter to Laird, 12 October 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 90.

State, of which Sisco was a part, advised Defense against conveying an impression that the United States knew better than Iran what its priorities were or ought to be.<sup>146</sup>

United States Ambassador to Iran Douglas MacArthur II was yet more explicitly in support of Iran, and especially of its endeavours to acquire more arms from the United States. To combat the reluctance expressed by Defense, MacArthur recruited the support of Director of the Central Intelligence Agency Richard M. Helms, who argued that Iran should be able to decide both the quality and quantity of arms it intended purchase from the United States.<sup>147</sup> Country Director for Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Yemen, and Aden William D. Brewer criticised the Embassy and its narrative, that “hostile forces stand ready” to fill “a vacuum which will assuredly be left in the Gulf region by the British departure” as exaggerated if not entirely inaccurate.<sup>148</sup>

In the end, however, these objections were not considered, and National Security Decision Memorandum 92 was finally approved by Nixon on 7 November. The stated policy was for United States to promote, as the very basis for its strategy within the region, cooperation between Iran and Saudi Arabia. In reality, however, Iran was given pre-eminence: ‘[T]he President has [...] approved a general strategy for the near term of promoting cooperation between Iran and Saudi Arabia as the desirable basis for maintaining stability in the Persian Gulf *while recognising the preponderance of Iranian power*’.<sup>149</sup> Thus, the National Security Decision Memorandum anticipated what was to come. In 1972, during his visit to Iran, Nixon gave the shah a blank cheque with regards to the purchasing of American arms.

The announcement of the American policy towards the Persian Gulf, in which Iran was given pre-eminence, was followed by an abandonment by Defense of its opposition to provide Iran with an additional seventy-three F-4 aircrafts. US Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird, Jr., decided initially to approve only thirty-nine of said aircrafts, on the grounds that any more would be superfluous.<sup>150</sup> On 14 December, however, State informed the US Embassy in Iran that the remaining thirty-four aircrafts had been approved in principle.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Letter from Secretary of State Rogers to Secretary of Defense Laird, 19 November 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 99; Salberg, ‘Conventional Wishdom’, 85.

<sup>147</sup> Salberg, ‘Conventional Wishdom’, 85.

<sup>148</sup> Memorandum from Brewer to Miklos, 27 February 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 51.

<sup>149</sup> National Security Decision Memorandum 92, 7 November 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 97. My emphasis.

<sup>150</sup> Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Affairs to Secretary of Defense Laird, 7 December 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 103.

<sup>151</sup> Telegram 202975 from the Department of State to the Embassy in Iran, 14 December 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 107.

## THE TEHRAN AGREEMENT, 1971

In November of 1970, Iran successfully renegotiated with international oil companies a ten per cent increase to its oil tax rate—from 50 per cent to 55 per cent—as well as a nine per cent increase to the price of its heavy oil.<sup>152</sup> The following month, OPEC, of which Iran was a producing member, outlined a number of demands to be presented before the oil companies on 12 January 1971. These included demands for increased oil revenues as well as a framework for regional negotiations.<sup>153</sup>

Due to a significant decline in the purchasing power of the British pound sterling and the American dollar, the shah argued that oil producers were effectively receiving less value for their oil in 1970 than they had twenty years prior. This was reported in a telegram from Douglas MacArthur II to the US Department of State on 30 December 1970, in which the American ambassador warned of an imminent confrontation between OPEC and the oil consortium.<sup>154</sup> The situation worsened when the consortium finally sent a group of negotiators on 12 January 1971 that were deemed by the ‘incensed’ shah as being entirely incapable of negotiation. MacArthur was then informed by the shah that OPEC would hold a meeting on 19 January; and if principal negotiators from the consortium did not arrive in Tehran and begin negotiations before that date, he warned that OPEC would be forced to take matters into its own hands and shut down production altogether.<sup>155</sup>

In response to this deadlock, Henry A. Kissinger issued a National Security Study Memorandum titled ‘World Oil Crisis’ on 15 January, in which State was instructed to prepare a paper in which American policy options were to be assessed within four days.<sup>156</sup> The following day, on 16 January, Richard M. Nixon sent a letter in which he informed the shah of this step to facilitate ‘expeditious negotiations’ between OPEC and the consortium as well as his intention to send US Under Secretary of State John N. Irwin II to Tehran in order to help reach an agreement.<sup>157</sup>

To the Nixon administration, however, a problem emerged from the fact that it lacked a clear policy option. Kissinger, for example, warned the president that their support for the consortium

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<sup>152</sup> Memorandum from the President’s Assistant for International Economic Affairs (Flanigan) to President Nixon, 1 December 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 101.

<sup>153</sup> Salberg, ‘Conventional Wisdom’, 88.

<sup>154</sup> Telegram 5566 from the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, 30 December 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 108.

<sup>155</sup> Telegram 218 from the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, 14 January 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 109.

<sup>156</sup> Salberg, ‘Conventional Wisdom’, 89.

<sup>157</sup> Letter from President Nixon to the Shah of Iran, 16 January 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 110.

could lead to animosity towards the United States in important Arab partners such as Saudi Arabia. Supporting Iran and OPEC, however, could bring with it financial ramifications on both a domestic and an international level. Beyond the positives and the negatives, there was also the practical option of supporting whichever side was winning. In this respect, OPEC was successfully creating a more united front, whereas the consortium was in an unfavourable position due to an increased demand for oil in the world.<sup>158</sup> The Nixon administration could, in other words, gain political capital by siding with a stronger OPEC.

Consumption of oil had increased greatly since 1950, both in the United States and in the world at large. In 1950, the consumption of oil constituted twenty-nine per cent of the world's energy consumption. This percentage had increased by seventeen percentage points by 1972, to forty-six per cent. Meanwhile, the United States did no longer have the capacity to provide spare oil to its allies by the late 1960s, due to limits in oil reserves as well as production.<sup>159</sup> The increase in world demand for oil strengthened the position of OPEC further.

Negotiations between the Persian Gulf members of OPEC—Iran, Iraq, Qatar, Kuwait, Abu Dhabi, and Saudi Arabia—and the consortium finally concluded on 14 February, with an agreement that strongly favoured the former. The price of crude oil exported from Persian Gulf terminals increased by thirty per cent; and a precedence of regional negotiations was established, strengthening the position of the oil producers in future negotiations.<sup>160</sup>

National Security Decision Memorandum 92 from the year prior certainly emboldened Iran during the negotiations; the country had been granted pre-eminence in the United States' policy towards the Persian Gulf. The United States assumed therefore a much more active role in the negotiations than it had done previously. Beyond Irwin's visit to Tehran, MacArthur supported Iran ardently by applying pressure upon the consortium as well as dismissing their concerns that Iran would not abide by its promise not to break any agreement before a period of five years had passed.<sup>161</sup> While this support from the United States certainly was important in strengthening Iran's

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<sup>158</sup> Salberg, 'Conventional Wisdom', 89–90.

<sup>159</sup> David S. Painter, 'Oil and Geopolitics: The Oil Crises of the 1970s and the Cold War', *Historical Social Research* 39, no. 4 (2014): 189–90.

<sup>160</sup> Intelligence Note RECN-3 Prepared in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, 18 February 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 115.

<sup>161</sup> Telegram 301 from the Embassy to the Department of State, 19 January 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 112; Telegram 495 from the Embassy to the Department of State, 30 January 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 113; Telegram 722 from the Embassy to the Department of State, 12 February 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 114.

position during these negotiations, much more important was the position of Iran as a result of an increase in world consumption of oil and therefore also the demand for oil.<sup>162</sup>

To Iran, the agreement entailed an increase in oil revenues from USD 885 million in 1971 to USD 1.6 billion in 1972.<sup>163</sup> Nixon, meanwhile, successfully centralised the decision-making process pertaining to military spending within the executive branch and circumvented thus the American Congress in April. The system of annual tranches that the shah had lamented in 1970 was no longer an obstacle, and the scene was set for Nixon's forthcoming visit to Iran in 1972.<sup>164</sup>

'PROTECT ME', 1972

US President Richard M. Nixon visited Iran with his wife and national security adviser, Henry A. Kissinger, from 30 to 31 May 1972. Not since US President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who spoke to the Iranian Parliament at the close of 1959, had a US president visited Iran. The visit was therefore most welcome to the shah, considering especially that it directly followed a visit by Nixon and Kissinger to Moscow. During their visit, the Americans met with the shah to discuss a wide array of important matters; and the conclusion of their discussions proved to be a watershed moment in the relations between Iran and the United States, in which Nixon solidified his policy towards Iran as the United States' principal watchman in the region. Nixon agreed to supply Iran with cutting edge military technology as well as supporting Iran's clandestine operations in Iraq, making clear his reasoning to the shah: 'Protect me'.<sup>165</sup>

Before his departure, Nixon was prepared for his forthcoming meeting with the shah by the US Department of State. Early in May, the US embassy in Iran sent in total six telegrams—intended to brief the president—to the department, detailing subjects ranging from the general atmosphere in Iran to its relations with the United States as well as the foreign and domestic issues it was facing. The shah was portrayed by the embassy as proud and confident but also anxious due to recent events and developments within the region.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Salberg, 'Conventional Wisdom', 92.

<sup>163</sup> Salberg, 91.

<sup>164</sup> McGlinchey, *US Arms Policies towards the Shah's Iran*, 71–73.

<sup>165</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, 31 May 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 201.

<sup>166</sup> Telegram 2488 from the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, 1 May 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 182; Telegram 2603 from the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, 4 May 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 183; Telegram 2604 from the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, 4 May 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 184; Telegram 2642 from the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, 6 May 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 187; Telegram 2641 from the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, 6 May 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 188.

His pride and confidence were rooted in the great economic and political stability of Iran. Economically, Iran had since the 1960s been able to fund its own development without relying on foreign aid. Politically, Iran had seen five different prime ministers from 1960 to 1965. Jamshid Amouzegar appeared therefore in 1972 as the prime minister who had successfully broken this chain of political disorder.<sup>167</sup>

Despite his pride and confidence, however, the shah was greatly concerned by regional developments. Iraq, who had signed a peace accord with the Iraqi Kurds in 1970 and thus at the time freed itself from the domestic issue of Kurdish insurrection, signed with the Soviet Union a treaty of friendship and cooperation in April of 1972. The shah feared that the Soviet Union would in turn create an alliance between itself, the Iraqi Kurds, and the Iraqi Ba'athists.<sup>168</sup> Furthermore, the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 had given the shah cause for concern for the stability of his south-eastern province of Iranian Balochistan. He feared that Pakistani Balochis would be drawn closer to the Soviet Union, leading eventually to its independence as a Soviet satellite state. This, he feared, would not only give the Soviet Union a satellite state on Iran's direct border, enabling it to encircle Iran from the west to the north and finally to the east, but also a port to the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, the shah feared that a Soviet-sponsored insurrection from the Pakistani Balochis would inspire Balochis in Iranian Balochistan.<sup>169</sup>

Nixon and Kissinger received a warm welcome to the Sa'adabad Palace in Tehran, wherein which the meetings were held. To the United States, the main purposes for Nixon's visit were to reassure the shah of its global strategy and to encourage the shah in his endeavours to promote cooperation within the region. The United States sought détente with the Soviet Union, explained Nixon, in order to further its own influence in the world. In order to do so, however, it relied on Iran to take charge and seek cooperation within the Persian Gulf.

The shah applauded the president for his efforts, stating that any self-reliant ally of the United States welcomes it. In doing so, he cleverly redirected the conversation to the discussion of arms. Should Iran be self-reliant, argued the shah, it would need cutting edge technology as well as military technicians trained in its operation.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Telegram 2488 from the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, 1 May 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 182.

<sup>168</sup> Salberg, 'Conventional Wisdom', 101.

<sup>169</sup> Telegram 2488 from the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, 1 May 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 182.

<sup>170</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, 30 May 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 200.

As the meetings concluded, Nixon agreed to supply Iran with significant weaponry. The agreement included laser-guided bombs, F-14 multi-role aircrafts, and F-15 air-superiority aircrafts. Nixon also promised that an unspecified number of American military technicians would be accompanying this technology. Not only was this agreement important by virtue of its contents, however.

This promise was met with disapproval from some American officials. Member of the National Security Council Staff Harold Saunders sent a telegram to Kissinger after the meetings, arguing on behalf of the Department of Defense that the United States' own units should receive preferential treatment with regards to the F-14 and F-15 aircrafts. He warned also that the shah had understood the promise of laser-guided bombs as a promise of 'all sophisticated weapons short of the atomic bomb'.<sup>171</sup> Nevertheless, Nixon's promise effectively gave Iran a blank cheque to purchase American arms; and the meetings in Tehran were thus a watershed moment in the relations between Iran and the United States: 'Starting in summer 1972, Washington no longer interfered with Iran's decisions about how much or what type of weapons it would buy', historians Mari Salberg and Hilde Henriksen Waage argue.<sup>172</sup>

In addition to promising arms and technicians, Nixon also agreed to support Iran in its clandestine operations within Iraq. Despite having signed a peace treaty with the Iraqi government in 1970 and having subsequently cut ties with Iran, the Iraqi Kurds grew displeased once more in 1972; and the Kurdish leader, Mustafa Barzani approached the shah once more.<sup>173</sup> This decision was most seminal in the history of the triangle. Contrary to its preceding administration, which had described the Iranian-Israeli *entente* as unhelpful and destructive, the Nixon administration solidified it by entering the United States as a direct participant of its subversive activities.<sup>174</sup>

In his meetings with the shah, Nixon promised to provide significant weaponry as well as to support Iran's clandestine operations within Iran. To Nixon, this was part of his plan to expand American influence within the region; however, the shah was no passive pawn in his schemes to do so. In giving his promise, Nixon had accepted the world view provided by the shah. The shah was desperately in need of cutting-edge technology, he argued, should Iran be the self-reliant watchman that the United States wanted. Through their treaty of friendship and cooperation, the shah

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<sup>171</sup> Memorandum from Harold Saunders of the National Security Staff to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs, 12 June 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 204.

<sup>172</sup> Salberg and Waage, 'Masters of the Game', 481.

<sup>173</sup> Salberg, 'Conventional Wisdom', 101.

<sup>174</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines', 115, 119-22, 140-48, 327.



maintained, the Soviet Union and Iraq conspired against Iran; and through Iraq's policy of displacing Iraqi Kurds by encouraging Iraqi Arabs to settle in Kurdish territory, the Soviet Union intended to capture the whole of Iraq. The treaty, however, was instead a reaction by Iraq to Iran's great rearmament. In this understanding, Iraq was merely balancing the Soviet Union against its more powerful neighbour Iran.<sup>175</sup>

#### A DEFANGED WATCHDOG, 1973-74

The relationship between Iran and the United States was stricken by two major events in 1973. On 6 October, Egypt and Syria launched a coordinated attack upon Israel; and on 17 October, as a response to its support for Israel, the Arab members of OPEC launched an oil embargo upon primarily but among others the United States. Iran, while effectively remaining neutral and with no desire yet to support the Arabs, was forced into a predicament.

On 6 October, upon learning of the impending invasion of Israel by Egypt and Syria, elements within the Nixon administration considered the possibility of exploiting Iran's relationship and influence with the Arabs in order to discourage Sadat from realising his plans.<sup>176</sup> The shah, however, was caught in a predicament; for Sadat intended to exploit the shah for his own machinations. The day after the Arabs launched their attack, on the afternoon of 7 October, Iranian Ambassador to Egypt Khosrow Khosravani was summoned by Sadat. The ambassador was handed a cable intended for the shah, in which the president clarified his situation, justified his actions, and emphasised his willingness to negotiate sincerely as soon as his demands were met: Egypt would accept negotiations should Israel withdraw from the occupied territory, but until then it was obligated to fight and to take casualties in order to press the issue. Sadat then went on to request that the shah relay the information to Nixon.<sup>177</sup>

Anwar Sadat, in other words, was no longer susceptible to diplomatic negotiation based upon the *status quo* in which Israel occupied large swathes of Arab territory and in which the United States and the Soviet Union were both promoting *détente* between themselves. The shah and his civil servants, however, had urged Israeli officials to negotiate sincerely with the Arabs since 1969 only to be met with intransigence. The new circumstances created by the war only lent to the shah a lesser measure of leverage in this regard.

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<sup>175</sup> Salberg, 'Conventional Wisdom', 101.

<sup>176</sup> Memorandum from William B. Quandt of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs, 6 October 1973, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXV, doc. 99.

<sup>177</sup> Backchannel Message from the Ambassador to Iran to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs, 7 October 1973, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXVII, doc. 38.

Furthermore, the shah felt obligated to support the Arabs at least in some minor degree. On 13 October, Saudi King Faisal bin Abdulaziz al-Saud requested that Iran aid Saudi Arabia with military transport aircrafts for purposes to be contained strictly within Saudi territory. The shah felt obligated to satisfy these requests, considering, as he did, that this was the first instance in which he had ever received a request from the Saudi king. Five C-130 transport aircrafts, flown by Iranian pilots, were therefore sent to Saudi Arabia. The shah also believed that the war had generated a great, unprecedented sense of emotion within the Muslim community that made the diplomatic situation difficult to overcome.<sup>178</sup>

As a result of transportation of military equipment to the Arabs by the Soviet Union, the United States commenced its own transportation of such equipment to Israel on 12 October; and by 16 October, Israel had successfully reversed the course of the war by driving back the Egyptian and Syrian forces.<sup>179</sup> In response, both to American assistance to Israel and to Israel's successes as the war went on, Arab members of OPEC launched an oil embargo upon the United States, among others, on 17 October. While Iran did not take part in the embargo itself, the shah was a leading hawk with regards to increasing the price of oil.<sup>180</sup> In December of 1973, OPEC agreed to a new official price of USD 11 per barrel of oil.<sup>181</sup> This was almost a fourfold increase from the official price before the embargo, which was USD 3.01.<sup>182</sup> As a result, Iran's revenues increased dramatically—from USD 11 billion in 1970 to USD 52.6 billion in 1975.<sup>183</sup>

This fourfold increase in the price of oil quadrupled Iran's purchasing power, which enabled the shah to pursue his military ambitions with yet more ferocity. His decision not to take part in the embargo, furthermore, meant that the relationship between Iran and the United States remained unscathed despite the shah's role as a chief protagonist in the increasing of the price of oil.<sup>184</sup> Moreover, the weapon of oil was not launched upon an entirely unexpecting United States; American officials discussed the possibilities of an embargo already on 6 October.<sup>185</sup> And despite finding the United States already within a troublesome situation due to peaking levels of production in the face of mounting demands for oil, American officials expressed little real concern after the

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<sup>178</sup> Backchannel Message from the Ambassador to Iran to the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs, 13 October 1973, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXVII, doc. 39.

<sup>179</sup> See 'When Diplomacy Failed, 1973-74', under ch. II of the present study, for more detail.

<sup>180</sup> Fiona Venn, *The Oil Crisis* (London: Longman, 2002), 21, 48.

<sup>181</sup> Venn, 21.

<sup>182</sup> Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten [Conflict and Great Power Politics within the Middle East]*, 394.

<sup>183</sup> Venn, *The Oil Crisis*, 21, 91.

<sup>184</sup> McGlinchey, *US Arms Policies towards the Shah's Iran*, 82.

<sup>185</sup> Special National Intelligence Estimate, 6 October 1973, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXV, doc. 98; Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting, 6 October 1973, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXV, doc. 103.

embargo had been launched. Diplomatic and strategic concerns received priority over the issue of prices.<sup>186</sup>

In the end, the war and the ensuing embargo made evident Iran's inability to enforce American interests within the Middle East: 'It is remarkable that the man [the shah] the Americans had put so much stock on—the Sheriff of the Persian Gulf—was considered unlikely to play any significant role in the most important conflict in the region where he was meant to safeguard U.S. interests'.<sup>187</sup> Meanwhile, Iran's diplomatic play by not taking part in the embargo proved to be highly fruitful; its revenues from oil increased fourfold whilst it successfully avoided direct confrontation with the United States. Meanwhile, the shah pursued his military ambitions with yet more ferocity. In January of 1974, he had ordered thirty cutting-edge F-14 aircrafts, which were not introduced until September that same year. The number aircrafts ordered was subsequently increased to 80 in June, amounting to the price of USD 1.8 billion.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> McGlinchey, *US Arms Policies towards the Shah's Iran*, 81.

<sup>187</sup> Salberg, 'Conventional Wisdom', 129.

<sup>188</sup> McGlinchey, *US Arms Policies towards the Shah's Iran*, 82.

### III. ISRAEL AND THE UNITED STATES

Israel's initial ambiguity towards the United States and the Soviet Union, which lasted from 1948 to 1950, was followed by its distinct orientation towards the former and the West during the 1950s. In Eisenhower, who entered office in January of 1953, however, Israel was met by an American president who valued a policy of even-handedness towards the Middle East. This involved his seeking to reverse the anti-American trends that were emerging within the Arab world, a stance that was perhaps best demonstrated by Eisenhower's condemning Israel, France, and Great Britain as a result of their invasion of Egypt in 1956.

This policy was maintained by John F. Kennedy. Indeed, Kennedy was the first American president to sell advanced arms to Israel in the form of the Hawk ground-to-air missiles; however, and although this sale was significant in that it anticipated the development of a special relationship between Israel and the United States during the succeeding administration of Johnson, this sale was intended strictly for defensive purposes. Moreover, and more pertinent to the present point, the sale of the Hawks missiles was largely exogenous and compensatory in nature, and occurred much as a result of Kennedy's attempts at rapprochement with Egypt.<sup>189</sup>

It was not until the Johnson administration that a significant shift occurred in this relationship. Whereas Kennedy indeed had been the first American president to sell advanced American arms to Israel, Johnson was the first president to sell strictly offensive arms in the form of M48A1 and M48A2C tanks as well as A-4E Skyhawk attack aircrafts. He did so conditionally, and the package

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<sup>189</sup> Ben-Zvi, 'Stumbling into an Alliance'; Ben-Zvi, 'Influence and Arms', 37–42.

required a stated commitment from Israel that it refrain from nuclear proliferation and that it accept periodic visits by the United States to the nuclear reactor in Dimona. Israel addressed only the former requirement, and stated that it ‘would not be the first power to introduce nuclear weapons in the Middle East’.<sup>190</sup> This ambiguous phrasing, however, allowed its nuclear proliferation to continue; Israel was able to define what ‘introduce’ involved for itself, and the issue would be brought up by the succeeding Nixon administration. In the end, Israel received the American arms while meeting no American condition. This illustrated the emerging dynamic between the two, in which Israel would receive American arms despite never fulfilling any conditions attached to their shipment. In the words of Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan: ‘Our American friends offer us money, arms, and advice. We take the money, we take the arms, and we decline the advice’.<sup>191</sup>

When Nixon entered office, an atmosphere of uncertainty loomed over the Middle East. The Third Arab-Israeli War of 1967 had not yet been resolved by a treaty of peace between the belligerent states, chief among whom was Israel and Egypt. Nixon’s world view as well as the thread of divide that emerged during his presidency, in which American foreign policy decision-making was transferred increasingly from the Department of State to the White House, combined with this general atmosphere, enabled Israel to leverage the United States for ever more American arms. Whereas the Department of State maintained a sincere belief in negotiations for peace and often expressed its frustration over Israeli intransigence with their regards, the White House—primarily Nixon and his chief advisor, Henry A. Kissinger—had no interest in peace in and of itself. The most principal interest of the latter two was solely to preserve Israel’s military supremacy over the Arabs, and by extension the United States’ military supremacy within the region over the Soviet Union.

#### THE ROGERS PLAN, 1969

US President Richard M. Nixon entered office during a time of crisis within the Middle East. Israel had emerged victorious over Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in 1967; and the war had not yet been resolved by a peace settlement. Furthermore, and as a consequence, the war had developed into a war of attrition between Israel, Egypt, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) from within Jordan. After a year of deliberation by the new administration, US Secretary of State William

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<sup>190</sup> Ben-Zvi, ‘Influence and Arms’, 42–55; Abraham Ben-Zvi, *Lyndon B. Johnson and the Politics of Arms Sales to Israel: In the Shadow of the Hawk* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), 27–67, 87–101, 99; Kjeang Mørk, ‘Between Doctrines’, 85–114, 191–232.

<sup>191</sup> Quoted in Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten* [Conflict and Great Power Politics within the Middle East], 382. My translation.

P. Rogers announced on 9 December a plan for peace. The plan collapsed, however, in the face of opposition from Israel, Egypt, and the Soviet Union.

Through its victory in 1967, Israel had occupied the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. The war and the subsequent occupation had triggered UN Security Council Resolution 242, which called for a withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied territories; and Swedish Diplomat Gunnar V. Jarring was appointed to conduct negotiations between the adversaries.<sup>192</sup> Israel, however, rejected the resolution; it required instead direct negotiations with the Arabs. To the Arabs, on the other hand, such negotiations would imply their diplomatic recognition of Israel and were therefore unacceptable.<sup>193</sup> In what might appear to have been a sudden change of mind, however, Israel announced on 8 October 1968 its readiness to talk through Jarring. In reality, its announcement did not imply an acceptance of the resolution; the announcement was instead merely a superficial—perhaps even perfunctory—olive branch intended to appease Lyndon B. Johnson and his administration as a way to receive more military assistance.<sup>194</sup> The Jarring Mission finally collapsed due to a lack of leverage; neither the United States nor the Soviet Union were eager to contribute with their influences as great powers that Jarring so desperately needed. In fact, the Johnson administration had no desire to change the balance of power that followed the war of 1967. Israel had won immense support within the United States through its victory.<sup>195</sup>

The Middle East did not immediately arrest the attention of the Nixon administration. It was instead much too preoccupied with the failing war in Vietnam. In fact, an interdepartmental group studying American interests within the region observed that it was difficult to prove that the Middle East was vital to the national security of the United States. However, it was of principal interest to the United States to secure the survival of Israel as well as to prevent Soviet dominion over the Arab states and their resources.<sup>196</sup>

Establishing at minimum a ceasefire became therefore imperative. The enduring war of attrition increased the likelihood of escalation. The moderate regime of Jordan, for example, had received an immense influx of radical Palestinian refugees following the war of 1967, and was struggling for

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<sup>192</sup> Waage and Kjeang Mørk, 'Mission Impossible', 830–31.

<sup>193</sup> Waage and Kjeang Mørk, 832–33.

<sup>194</sup> Waage and Kjeang Mørk, 836–37.

<sup>195</sup> Waage and Kjeang Mørk, 845–46.

<sup>196</sup> Paper Prepared by the Interdepartmental Group for Near East and South Asia, 30 January 1969, *FRUS*, 1969–76, vol. XXIV, doc. 2.

survival.<sup>197</sup> An overthrow of the regime would leave a power vacuum that the Soviet Union could exploit in order to expand its sphere of influence, and thus one danger, as Israel and the United States perceived it, would be the encirclement of Israel to the east. At best, the endeavour to establish a ceasefire would terminate hostilities; at worst, it would demonstrate to the Arabs especially that the United States did not blindly support Israel.

The Nixon administration was, however, not only confronted with the predicament of crisis within the region; it had simultaneously inherited the predicament of Israel's nuclear program. In 1960, news arose of an Israeli nuclear reactor that was being constructed in Dimona with the help of France.<sup>198</sup> Furthermore, Israel had received from France twelve surface-to-surface missiles, programmed for nuclear warheads, and was in the process of establishing a production line whereby this number would increase to an estimated 24-30 missiles by the end of 1970.<sup>199</sup> Meanwhile, Israel had made a commitment to the United States, in conjunction with its signing in 1968 of a shipment of fifty F-4 aircrafts, that it would not be the first state to introduce nuclear arms to the region. The semantic value it had placed upon 'introduction', however, was most ambiguous. Whereas the United States construed it simply to involve the development, acquisition, and possession of such arms, Israel construed it instead as the testing and public declaration of its possession.<sup>200</sup>

The implications of Israel's acquiring nuclear weaponry were deemed tantamount to the implications of an enduring conflict; knowledge of the program within the region, it was feared, could be the catalyst for a Soviet nuclear commitment to the Arabs.<sup>201</sup> From this entwined nature of these two matters, however, derived a problem of leverage.<sup>202</sup> Should a large measure of leverage be applied upon Israel with regards to its nuclear program, the administration would be forced to apply less leverage against it with regards to a peace settlement—and *vice versa*.

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<sup>197</sup> Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten* [Conflict and Great Power Politics within the Middle East], 305–7.

<sup>198</sup> Bass, *Support Any Friend*, 47.

<sup>199</sup> Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs to President Nixon, 19 July 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 38.

<sup>200</sup> Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs to President Nixon, 19 July 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 38; Memorandum from the Chairman of the *Ad Hoc* Group on the Israeli Nuclear Weapons Program to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs and Acting Secretary of State Richardson, undated, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 31.

<sup>201</sup> Memorandum for the Record, 20 June 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 35; Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs to President Nixon, 19 July 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 38.

<sup>202</sup> Memorandum from the Chairman of the *Ad Hoc* Group on the Israeli Nuclear Weapons Program to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs and Acting Secretary of State Richardson, undated, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 31.

Despite the grave implications of Israel's nuclear program, the Nixon administration elected early not to place much pressure upon Israel with regards to the program. At minimum, the administration urged Israel to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Also on that point, however, did the administration concede to Israel, as is evident by Israel's not yet having signed the treaty today. Furthermore, Nixon disregarded the advice by his defence department to withhold a shipment of F-4 aircrafts as leverage against Israel.<sup>203</sup> In doing so, Nixon did not only relinquish leverage with regards to the nuclear program but contributed directly to it, as these aircrafts were capable of carrying nuclear missiles.<sup>204</sup>

Having elected to turn a blind eye to Israel's nuclear program, the Nixon administration continued its endeavours for a peace settlement. The administration opted for the 'Sisco initiative', in which US Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South Asia Affairs Joseph. J. Sisco was charged with direct negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>205</sup> The desire was to establish common grounds upon which further peace negotiations could be conducted under the auspices of Jarring. These negotiations were inconclusive, however.<sup>206</sup> And finally, on 9 December, the official American policy on a peace settlement was declared by Rogers, through which the United States supported the UN resolution and called for a withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied territory.<sup>207</sup>

The Rogers Plan crumbled, however, in the face of opposition from Israel, Egypt, and the Soviet Union.<sup>208</sup> The recently elected Israeli premier, Golda Meir, was furious by Rogers' declaration, and Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban described the plan as a major error of international diplomacy. Meanwhile, the Nixon administration proceeded to ship F-4 aircrafts, with which Israel proceeded to bomb areas near the Suez Canal.<sup>209</sup> The problem of leverage, in other words, was solved by

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<sup>203</sup> Paper Prepared by the *Ad Hoc* Special Review Group on the Israeli Nuclear Weapons Program, undated, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 37.; Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs to Acting Secretary of State Richardson, 22 July 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 40.

<sup>204</sup> Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs to President Nixon, 28 August 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 45.

<sup>205</sup> Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in the Soviet Union, 18 March 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 15.

<sup>206</sup> Paper Prepared by the Department of States, undated, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 58; Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassies in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Israel, 29 October 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 61.

<sup>207</sup> Waage and Kjeang Mørk, 'Mission Impossible', 838.

<sup>208</sup> Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs to President Nixon, 18 December 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 77; Telegram from the Department of State to Certain Diplomatic Posts, 24 December 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 80; Telegram from the Department of State to Certain Posts, 24 December 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XII, doc. 109.

<sup>209</sup> Waage and Kjeang Mørk, 'Mission Impossible', 838.



leveraging against neither the nuclear program nor a peace settlement. In fact, Nixon did not intend to remedy the asymmetrical balance of power that so favoured Israel. It had, for what it was worth, at the very least demonstrated a willingness to reach a settlement, and that it was not alone to blame for the failure of the plan.<sup>210</sup>

#### HARDWARE FOR SOFTWARE, 1970

The War of Attrition continued to rage as the relationship between Israel and the United States entered into the year of 1970, and the question of a ceasefire retained therefore its importance to the Nixon administration. While the administration continued to be devoted to Israel, any military and financial aid became contingent upon the balance of power within the region.

Following the war of 1967, and during the subsequent War of Attrition, Soviet activity increased dramatically within Egyptian territory. The Egyptian army was decimated, and its economy was in a desperate condition. In order to attain some form of security, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser allowed therefore Soviet forces an increased measure of presence. The Egyptian army, air force, and navy were thus fortified with both Soviet hardware and personnel.<sup>211</sup>

Israeli Premier Golda Meir visited the United States on 25 September 1969 against this backdrop.<sup>212</sup> There, she requested from Nixon an additional shipment of F-4 and A-4 aircrafts as well as a low-rent loan of USD 200 million *per annum* until 1974.<sup>213</sup> Nixon reassured her of his support for Israel and its cause, but added that he would be willing to trade 'hardware for software'. In effect, he implied that he would be responsive to Israeli requests if Israel gave him latitude with regards to ceasefire negotiations.<sup>214</sup>

This was not an untroubled nor cynical attempt by Nixon to leverage against Israel. On the contrary, Nixon and his administration did indeed observe Soviet activity within Egypt with concern, and the subject was discussed on a number of occasions throughout 1970. Director of the CIA Richard M. Helms confirmed in June that the Soviet Union had approximately five SA-3 surface-to-air regiments as well as approximately five MiG-21 squadrons flown by Soviet pilots stationed within Egypt.<sup>215</sup> A dangerous situation would arise should these forces challenge Israeli forces near the Suez Canal.

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<sup>210</sup> Aridan, *Advocating for Israel*, 259–60.

<sup>211</sup> Dawisha, 'Egypt', 35–37.

<sup>212</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, *The White House Years* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1979), 370.

<sup>213</sup> Golda Meir, *My Life* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1976), 323–24.

<sup>214</sup> Kissinger, *The White House Years*, 371.

<sup>215</sup> Memorandum for the Record, 10 June 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 124.

Instead, the Nixon administration adopted a new approach to maintaining Israeli superiority, which was contingent upon the balance of power within the region. A technical analysis by the US National Security Council Staff concluded that there was no immediate need for military assistance to Israel. Despite being greatly outnumbered in hardware, Israel outnumbered the Arabs in combat-qualified personnel; and as human training required time, this ratio was estimated to change slowly. Furthermore, the analysis did not account for direct Soviet involvement. The involvement by Soviet forces stationed within Egypt was assumed to be limited to the training of domestic forces, and neither were they immediately belligerent. In fact, the request of F-4 and A-4 aircrafts, it was estimated, would enable Israel to defeat a coordinated attack by a total of fourteen Arab states.<sup>216</sup>

On 25 February, during a Special National Security Council meeting, Kissinger noted that Meir would not be mistaken if she thought that she had been promised something during her meeting with Nixon in September of 1969.<sup>217</sup> The Nixon administration, however, was confronted with a political and diplomatic dilemma. Israel's continuing raids near the Suez Canal had increased the pressure upon Nasser and the Soviet Union to somehow end them. The Soviet response to the United States, provided in a letter by Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union Aleksei N. Kosygin in January, was formulated as a challenge:

We would like to tell you [Nixon] in all frankness that if Israel continues its adventurism, to bomb the territory of UAR and of other Arab states, the Soviet Union will be forced to see to it that the Arab states have means at their disposal, with the help of which a due rebuff to the arrogant aggressor [Israel] could be made'.<sup>218</sup>

This diplomatic play transferred some of this pressure onto the United States. The onus was placed upon the Nixon administration to limit its support for Israel. Doing so, however, would demonstrate to the world that it had conceded to Soviet demands.

Instead of providing Israel with a shipment of the aircrafts it had requested, Nixon promised compensatory aircrafts intended to maintain the balance of power should Israel incur losses to attrition or the Soviet Union supply the Arabs with enough weapons to disrupt it.<sup>219</sup> As such, Nixon

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<sup>216</sup> Paper Prepared by the National Security Council Staff, 23 February 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 93.

<sup>217</sup> Memorandum for the Record, 25 February 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 94.

<sup>218</sup> Letter from Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union Kosygin to President Nixon, 31 January 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XII, doc. 121.

<sup>219</sup> Letter from President Nixon to Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, undated, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 101; *Aide-Mémoire* from President Nixon to the Government of Israel, 17 March 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 104; Telegram from the Department of State to Certain Diplomatic Posts, 21 March 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 105; Telegram from the Embassy in Israel to the Department of State, 23 March 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 106.

did not concede to Soviet demands, although his administration was indeed forced to grapple with this implication: 'Abroad, the appearance of bowing to Soviet pressure cannot be disposed of by simple denial', observed Kissinger.<sup>220</sup>

In reality, Nixon and his administration, basing their decision-making upon the regional power balance that so clearly demonstrated Israeli superiority, withheld a majority of the assistance requested by Israel as positive reinforcement intended as leverage for a ceasefire. As Kissinger advised Nixon: 'I [lean] toward conditioning future military and economic deliveries to Israel on their acceptance of our position—we should do so not by cutting off aid but by promising a generous aid package regulating deliveries by Israel's agreement to a negotiating scenario'.<sup>221</sup> In transitioning to this compensatory system of deliveries, Nixon honoured his promise to Meir as well as vowing to maintain Israeli superiority while retaining an upfront shipment of weapons as leverage.

Israel, however, exploited the Soviet presence within Egypt in order to press the United States for more assistance. This triggered Nixon to seek a re-evaluation of American policy options in April, of which two were outlined by the National Security Council Staff. The United States could rely on strengthening Israel as a military counterweight to the Soviet Union and the Arabs or it could rely primarily on political efforts in seeking to force a ceasefire between Israel and the Arabs.<sup>222</sup>

In a sense, Nixon elected to employ both policies after due reconsideration. In June, he increased the number of earmarked F-4 aircrafts to be shipped to Israel for the months of September and October from four to five. Additionally, he ordered his state department to respond affirmatively to Israeli requests for ground-to-air missiles, bombs, tanks, radar and spare parts.<sup>223</sup> Simultaneously, the Nixon administration declared its agreement to resume the Jarring Mission.<sup>224</sup>

Israel and Egypt both accepted the proposal, and a ceasefire was finally established on 7 August.<sup>225</sup> They agreed to end hostilities, to refrain from changing to military *status quo* within the ceasefire zones, and not to introduce or construct new military installations. Egypt, however, did

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<sup>220</sup> Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs to President Nixon, undated, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 95.

<sup>221</sup> Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs to President Nixon, 16 June 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 127.

<sup>222</sup> Paper Prepared by the National Security Council Staff, 20 May 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 116.

<sup>223</sup> National Security Decision Memorandum 66, 18 June 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 128.

<sup>224</sup> Telegram from the Department of State to Certain Diplomatic Posts, 23 July 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 137; Telegram from the Department of State to Certain Diplomatic Posts, 24 July 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 138; Telegram from the Department of State to All Diplomatic Posts, 29 July 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 139.

<sup>225</sup> Cease-Fire Agreement between Israel and the United Arab Republic, undated, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 145.

not linger for long before moving new forces into the zones. On 6 September, Israel therefore withdrew from the talks under the auspices of Jarring.<sup>226</sup>

Egypt's violations of the ceasefire provided Israel with yet more leverage against the United States for additional assistance. Golda Meir lamented to Nixon that his response to the violations had been slow, using the term 'acquiescence' to manipulate her point while requesting a loan of USD 500-600 million in September of 1970.<sup>227</sup> In addition to approving the loan, Richard M. Nixon also approved a significant package of weapons requested by Israel.<sup>228</sup>

#### ANWAR SADAT AND ISRAELI INTRANSIGENCE, 1971

The violation of the ceasefire by Egypt was shortly followed by the death of Nasser in September. His successor, Anwar Sadat, declared on 4 February 1971 his willingness to negotiate for peace; should the Sinai Peninsula be returned to Egypt, he vowed to honour the ceasefire for a prolonged period of time, to restore diplomatic relations with the United States, and to sign a peace treaty with Israel.<sup>229</sup> By May, however, after having been met with nothing but intransigence from Israel, he had signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union. And thus, the stage was set for the impending Fourth Arab-Israeli War of 1973.

The cleavage between the US Department of State and the White House was only further exposed by Sadat's speech on 4 February. Kissinger had never heard of Sadat, did not trust that he would remain in office for very long, and argued therefore not to accommodate him for fear that it would cause conflict with Israel. Rogers, on the other hand, perceived the situation as new and one of change.<sup>230</sup> A third attempt to negotiate under the auspices of Jarring could this time bear fruits, the latter believed.

Richard M. Nixon acquiesced to Rogers' advice, and in a letter to Meir he implored the Israeli prime minister to re-consider and to restore Israel's negotiations with Egypt: 'There have been profound changes in the Arab world since September, whose implications can only be tested

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<sup>226</sup> Waage and Kjeang Mørk, 'Mission Impossible', 839.

<sup>227</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, 18 September 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 162; Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs to President Nixon, 9 October 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 166.

<sup>228</sup> National Security Decision Memorandum 87, 15 October 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 171; Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs to President Nixon, 9 October 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 167.

<sup>229</sup> Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten* [Conflict and Great Power Politics within the Middle East], 379.

<sup>230</sup> Waage, 380.

through negotiations'.<sup>231</sup> Meir agreed to resume negotiations in December of 1970; however, these negotiations proved also to be stillborn. While Sadat accepted the conditions presented to him, that he sign a peace treaty with Israel in return for the Sinai Peninsula, Meir rejected the proposal.<sup>232</sup> Rogers' belief in a final peace settlement remained unwavering, however, and negotiations entered a second phase.

In May of 1971, Rogers and Sisco visited both Israel and Egypt for separate talks with Meir and Sadat. Israel's reluctance to sign a peace treaty with Egypt did not abate, however. Should it withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula, it feared, Egypt and the Soviet Union would seize the opportunity to attack.<sup>233</sup> Such an attack was confined to Israeli imagination, however, for Egypt was in no condition to launch a full-scale attack upon Israel and the Soviet Union desired most of all to maintain its *détente* with the United States. This was, in other words, part of Israel's manipulation of the United States. Egypt, on the other hand, received Rogers and Sisco with eagerness. Sadat confirmed once again that he was willing, should the Sinai Peninsula be returned to Egypt, to restore diplomatic relations with the United States and to sign a peace treaty with Israel.<sup>234</sup>

The Rogers-Sisco initiative bore few fruits. Meir was willing only to make concessions on a few unremarkable points. In fact, her resistance to sign a peace treaty with Sadat was supported by Nixon and Kissinger, which further impeded Rogers and Sisco in achieving something fruitful.<sup>235</sup> Sadat, meanwhile, frustrated by Israel's intransigence, found himself in a difficult situation. Neither the United States nor the Soviet Union were much willing to disturb the *status quo*, in which Israel happened to hold all the cards at the negotiation table while simultaneously being strongly averse to meeting him half-way. Demonstrating his desperation, after having achieved no success through the American channel and in an attempt to remedy it, he turned therefore to the Soviet Union with which Egypt already had a solid relationship.

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<sup>231</sup> Letter from President Nixon to Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, 3 December 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 187.

<sup>232</sup> Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten* [Conflict and Great Power Politics within the Middle East], 380-81.

<sup>233</sup> Telegram from Secretary of State Rogers to the Department of State, 8 May 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 228.

<sup>234</sup> Telegram from the Interest Section in Egypt to the Department of State, 9 May 1971, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 231.

<sup>235</sup> Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten* [Conflict and Great Power Politics within the Middle East], 381-82.

Following the failed negotiations and the failed initiative by Rogers and Sisco, Sadat signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union.<sup>236</sup> The treaty was a great victory for the Soviet Union, as it reaffirmed Egypt's alignment with it and contractually prohibited Egypt from any rapprochement with the United States.<sup>237</sup> To Sadat, however, the treaty proved not to be conducive to the ambitions with which he had signed it.

Henry A. Kissinger opposed the Rogers-Sisco initiative from its inception. In a conversation with Nixon he described it as a mistake, stating that 'we [Kissinger and Nixon] can handle it', to which Nixon replied that 'once there's deadlock, we [Nixon and Kissinger] break it [the negotiations]'.<sup>238</sup> Despite this initial lack of support for the initiative, however, Sadat's signing of the friendship and cooperation treaty with the Soviet Union appeared to have forced a shift in Nixon's tone. Late in May, Nixon wrote to Rogers, stating that Israel would receive no more aid unless they 'bite the bullet' with regards to an interim agreement with Egypt. Furthermore, and in the same memorandum, Nixon did not only give Rogers full authority to leverage this proposal against Israel but explained also that Israeli officials would most certainly attempt to circumvent him by approaching Nixon directly with the assumption that he would overrule Rogers.<sup>239</sup> This candour and sincerity with which Nixon wrote to Rogers must not be overstated, however, for the president did indeed overrule his secretary of state on the point of shipments of arms. In fact, and to Rabin, Nixon stated frankly that, 'the moment Israel needs arms, approach me [...] and I'll find a way of overcoming the bureaucracy'.<sup>240</sup>

Shipments of F-4 aircrafts to Israel were indeed postponed in the summer of 1971, following Israel's refusal to accept a proposal from Sisco that they receive an additional amount of F-4 aircrafts in return for an acceptance of an interim agreement.<sup>241</sup> While Meir expressed her 'grave concern' in response to the postponement, it prompted her also to express her interest in a limited interim settlement in September.<sup>242</sup> Meanwhile, however, she leveraged Egypt's signing of the friendship and cooperation treaty against the Nixon administration; and approximately a month later, after

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<sup>236</sup> Dawisha, 'Egypt', 37; Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten* [Conflict and Great Power Politics within the Middle East], 383.

<sup>237</sup> Dawisha, 'Egypt', 37.

<sup>238</sup> Conversation between President Nixon and the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs Kissinger, 20 April 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 222.

<sup>239</sup> Memorandum from President Nixon to Secretary of State Rogers, 26 May 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 233.

<sup>240</sup> Aridan, *Advocating for Israel*, 262.

<sup>241</sup> Aridan, 267.

<sup>242</sup> Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs to President Nixon, 23 September 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 249.

having met with Nixon in the White House, Meir departed from the United States with promises of an immense increase in American arms deliveries.<sup>243</sup>

## TWO COMPETING CHANNELS, 1972

Anwar Sadat had experienced little success in his endeavours to express to the United States his desire for a settlement of peace with Israel, whose intransigency with regards to negotiations had resulted in a postponement of F-4 from the United States. As a result of this postponement, Golda Meir begrudgingly expressed her lukewarm interest in proximity talks with Egypt for an interim settlement. This prompted the US Department of State, led by William P. Rogers and Joseph J. Sisco, to pursue such talks in 1972; however, Richard M. Nixon and Henry A. Kissinger had no desire of pressuring Israel into relinquishing territory—especially when the Soviet Union's position within the Middle East was weakened.

William P. Rogers' proposal for an interim settlement was certainly ambitious. Israel was expected to relinquish, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 242, control of key strategic areas within the Sinai Peninsula and withdraw from the occupied territories; and while Egypt would be allowed a small force to cross the canal, its military presence within the peninsula would be limited in the future.<sup>244</sup> With Meir having expressed her interest in proximity talks, however insincere she was, State proceeded to pursue such talks by approaching Sadat in October of 1971.<sup>245</sup>

Nixon and Kissinger, however, had no desire to see Rogers succeed. In September of 1971, the president spoke of keeping 'Bill' in line; and Kissinger spoke to the president about slowing down Sisco, who he described as being 'the trickiest one we've got'.<sup>246</sup> Simultaneously, a secret back-channel was established between the US White House and the Soviet Union; Nixon and Kissinger met with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko in September, who proposed that the Soviet Union withdraw its military units from Egypt in exchange for a full Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten* [Conflict and Great Power Politics within the Middle East], 382.

<sup>244</sup> Memorandum from the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs to President Nixon, 2 July 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 241.

<sup>245</sup> See footnote 5 in Telegram from Secretary of State Rogers to the Department of State, 7 October 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 255.

<sup>246</sup> Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 248; Conversation between President Nixon and the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs, 9 December 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 269.

<sup>247</sup> Conversation between President Nixon and Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, 29 September 1971, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, vol. XXIII, doc. 251.

Thenceforth to November, Kissinger met with Soviet Ambassador to the United States Anatoly F. Dobrynin on three occasions, before a meeting was finally held between Kissinger and high-ranking Soviet officials on 22 April 1972.<sup>248</sup> While their agenda on this day did not include the Middle East, Kissinger was given a proposal for a settlement by General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Leonid I. Brezhnev. This proposal did not diverge from Gromyko's, but emphasised that any settlement had to include Israel's full withdrawal.

In December of 1971, between these two meetings, Golda Meir was made aware of Gromyko's proposal. She was visiting the United States following the postponement of the F-4 aircrafts in July. Beyond assuring Meir that deliveries of the aircrafts would recommence in an unconditional fashion—although at an unspecified date—simply for the purpose of preserving Israeli superiority within the Middle East, Nixon also revealed to the Israeli prime minister the Soviet proposal. In it, he stated, Israel had the real negotiations; the Rogers-Sisco initiatives were simply intended, according to Nixon and Kissinger, to give the appearance of negotiation.<sup>249</sup>

Richard M. Nixon and Kissinger had no desire nor intention to pressure Israel into relinquishing territory, especially on the premises of the Soviet Union and the Arabs. On the contrary, they desired and intended to preserve Israel's, and by extension the United States', superiority within the Middle East. In this regard, their secret back-channel with the Soviet Union was not established with much more sincerity from Nixon and Kissinger. Their cynicism was rooted in a situation within the Middle East in which the Soviet Union was weakened. In a meeting with Dobrynin in March of 1972, Kissinger explained his understanding of the Soviet proposal as a 'way for the Soviets of extricating themselves from a difficult situation' in which either its Arab allies would grow disillusioned with them or they would be forced to make a difficult decision upon Egypt's likely declaration of war within the close future.<sup>250</sup> Or, as stated in Kissinger's memoirs:

The Soviets were in a difficult situation [...] Egypt was becoming restive at Moscow's failure to deliver progress toward a settlement [...] So long as they endorsed the radical Arab program we could have no reason for joint action with them. Without us the program could be achieved only by a war that the Soviet clients would lose. Thus the Kremlin's rigid Middle East policy turned into a demonstration to the Arab world of its inability to affect events and to a progressive loss of its influence. So far as we were concerned, our objectives were served if the status quo was maintained until either the Soviets modified their stand or moderate Arab states turned to us for a solution based on progress through attainable stages.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, 22 April 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XIV, doc. 141.

<sup>249</sup> Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 268.

<sup>250</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, 17 March 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXIII, doc. 281.

<sup>251</sup> Kissinger, *The White House Years*, 1246-47.



Egypt's restiveness became all the more evident on 18 July, when Sadat expelled 15 000 Soviet military advisors from Egypt.<sup>252</sup> The decision was unforeseen by both American and Soviet officials; and while it indeed appeared to the former that Egypt was distancing itself from the Soviet Union, the manoeuvre was in reality a first step in Sadat's plan for a new war with Israel.

#### WHEN DIPLOMACY FAILED, 1973-74

The relationship between Israel and the United States was put to the test in 1973, when Egypt and Syria launched a coordinated attack on the former in October. The two Arab states experienced a great measure of success during the opening hours and days of the war, forcing the United States not only to support Israel with additional military equipment and consumables but also to grant a greater measure of attention to the Arabs and their demands in the aftermath of the war.

Cursed with the personal image of a weak and indecisive man, Anwar Sadat had achieved little success throughout his diplomatic efforts to squeeze peace from a desperate situation. In 1971, he had attempted to exploit his position as the new leader of Egypt by approaching the United States and declaring his desire for peace. Efforts by William P. Rogers and Joseph J. Sisco to negotiate a peace settlement, however, proved toothless against Israeli intransigence, and the Egyptian president found himself forced to turn instead to Egypt's old Soviet friend. His signing of a friendship and co-operation treaty with the Soviet Union, however, did not provide a sufficient measure of military and financial aid. In 1972, furthermore, the Soviet Union signed the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks Agreement (SALT) with the United States, through which the two superpowers confirmed their desire for *détente*. There appeared therefore to be no way in which he could disrupt the *status quo*, in which Israel both occupied the Sinai Peninsula and held all the cards at the negotiation table, Sadat realised.

As the first step in his plan to forcefully disrupt this *status quo*, Sadat expelled all Soviet military advisors stationed within Egypt in July of 1972. The manoeuvre was multifaceted, and forced both the United States and the Soviet Union to re-engage with the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Nixon administration was forced to reconsider Egypt's ties to the Soviet Union. The latter was forced to replace prevarication with action, and commenced thenceforth and with greater frequency shipments of highly advanced weaponry to Egypt.<sup>253</sup> Secondly, Sadat sought to improve the poor

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<sup>252</sup> Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten* [Conflict and Great Power Politics within the Middle East], 384.

<sup>253</sup> Rogan, *The Arabs*, 366; Dawisha, 'Egypt', 38; Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten* [Conflict and Great Power Politics within the Middle East], 384.

coordination of his army. He reorganised the military leadership by substituting any apprehensive general with an ardent hawk, and an agreement was signed with Syria to unify the command of both armies.<sup>254</sup> Thirdly, and in August of 1973, Sadat visited Saudi Arabia in order to brief the Saudi king of his plans and to persuade the king to launch an oil embargo upon any supporter of Israel. And lastly, the date for the war was set to 6 October—a Saturday—upon which the holiest day in Judaism landed. This would give the Egyptian and Syrian armies an element of surprise, as no radio or television broadcasts were allowed during this holiday.<sup>255</sup>

The Egyptian and Syrian armies attacked simultaneously at around 2 PM that day, forcing Israel to defend both its northern and southern borders. While Israeli intelligence had exposed the plan earlier in the morning, initial reports did not indicate a full-scale invasion. Israeli officials were thus caught by surprise, and so too were their American colleagues. The CIA, for example, while in many ways ultimately correct, estimated that Israel was sufficiently able to force an Arab offensive into retreat, and that hostilities would abate before a week had passed.<sup>256</sup> While the war was short-lived, lasting but a couple of weeks, neither Israel nor the United States expected what was to come.

Egyptian forces quickly penetrated Israeli fortifications on the eastern bank of the Suez Canal, while Syrian forces moved deep into the Golan Heights. Reports from the two fronts reached the Israeli leadership, forcing it into a scramble. The Israeli air force, which had been pivotal in 1967, was quickly deployed. Israeli pilots were, however, immediately challenged by Soviet SAM-6 systems stationed within Arab territory and twenty-seven planes were lost over Egyptian airspace alone during the first hours of the war. Israel's air superiority was no longer uncontested. While Israel managed to reverse the course of the war by 16 October, having successfully forced the Syrians to retreat and encircled the Egyptians, it had for the very first time demonstrated vulnerability.

News of the imminent attack reached the United States early in the morning on Saturday, and American officials scrambled to gain a clear picture of the order of events. Kissinger, for example, telephoned Dobrynin thrice throughout the day, enquiring about what the Soviet Union knew as well as their actions going forward.<sup>257</sup> Egypt and Syria claimed that their attack was defensive in nature, and that it had come as a response to an attack on Egypt from within the Gulf of Suez by

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<sup>254</sup> Rogan, *The Arabs*, 367.

<sup>255</sup> Rogan, 367.

<sup>256</sup> Special National Intelligence Estimate, 6 October 1973, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXV, doc. 98.

<sup>257</sup> Transcript of Telephone Conversation between Secretary of State Kissinger and the Soviet Ambassador, 6 October 1973, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXV, doc. 100; Transcript of Telephone Conversation between Secretary of State Kissinger and the Soviet Ambassador, 6 October 1973, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXV, doc. 105; Transcript of Telephone Conversation between Secretary of State Kissinger and the Soviet Ambassador, 6 October 1973, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXV, doc. 111.

the Israeli navy.<sup>258</sup> This pretext was rejected by American officials. A naval strike by Israel was simply inconceivable, and one on the holiest day in Judaism all the more so. Furthermore, intelligence could reveal that the Soviet Union had begun an evacuation of its citizens from both Egypt and Syria days before the attack, indicating that the attack was planned.

The initial response from the United States was calculated and tame. On the day of the attack, it was decided that no military equipment would be shipped to Israel.<sup>259</sup> The United States was, however, expected to uphold its historical commitment to Israel and its survival; and in this regard, the initial successes of the Arab states forced the United States into a difficult position. Furthermore, the Soviet Union commenced shipments of military supplies to both Egypt and Syria on 7 October. These shipments increased in frequency as Syria's storage of missiles became depleted on 9 October, and they had peaked by 12 October.<sup>260</sup> The Nixon administration, whose policy was to maintain Israeli superiority in the Arab-Israeli conflict, was forced to take action.

Israel had requested an additional forty F-4 aircrafts and 300 M-60 tanks by 8 October, as well as a range of smaller items including ammunition and missiles. At the time, however, William B. Quandt and Lieutenant Colonel Donald Stukel, both of the National Security Council Staff, argued to Kissinger against fulfilling Israel's larger request. They believed that the Soviet Union would be more restrained with regards to its resupplying the Arab states than it had been in 1967, and national security council staffers did not want to aggravate the Arabs nor the Soviet Union by injecting a large amount of American weaponry into the war.<sup>261</sup> This changed, however, when it became evident that the Soviet Union in fact did not practice such restraint. On 14 October, Kissinger declared to Dobrynin that the United States was engaged in an airlift to Israel of both heavy equipment, including F-4 aircrafts, and military consumables.<sup>262</sup>

Anwar Sadat was finally forced to concede defeat on 19 October, and a final ceasefire was signed between the belligerent states six days later. Despite his military defeat, however, Sadat had successfully drawn attention to the Arab-Israeli conflict once more and had thus disrupted the *status quo* that so plagued him. The Nixon administration was forced to take the Arabs into consideration,

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<sup>258</sup> Transcript of Telephone Conversation between President Nixon and Secretary of State Kissinger, 6 October 1973, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXV, doc. 104.

<sup>259</sup> Minutes of a Washington Special Actions Group Meeting, 6 October 1973, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXV, doc. 103; Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting, 6 October 1973, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXV, doc. 112.

<sup>260</sup> Jon D. Glassman, *Arms for the Arabs: The Soviet Union and War in the Middle East* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 129-30.

<sup>261</sup> Memorandum from William B. Quandt and Donald Stukel of the National Security Council Staff to Secretary of State Kissinger, 8 October 1973, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXV, doc. 129.

<sup>262</sup> Transcript of Telephone Conversation between Secretary of State Kissinger and the Soviet Ambassador, 14 October 1973, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. XXV, doc. 183.

and did so for the first time. In the aftermath of the war, Kissinger embarked upon a journey to Egypt, Syria, and Israel, among other countries within the regions of North Africa and the Middle East.<sup>263</sup> His approach, however, was most cunning. Kissinger had never supported an all-encompassing treaty of peace, and he embarked upon a journey of step-by-step diplomacy that was intended to keep Syria isolated from negotiations between Egypt and Israel and thus ultimately to serve Israel's interests.<sup>264</sup>

A first peace agreement, named Sinai I, was finally signed by Egypt and Israel on 18 January 1974, whereby which Israel agreed to move its forces within the Sinai Peninsula approximately 24 kilometres eastwards. In return, the Nixon administration vowed that the United States would be responsive to Israel's requests for military and financial aid. This responsiveness was clearly demonstrated in the years following the signing of a second peace agreement, Sinai II, in September of 1975. Military assistance to Israel increased from approximately USD 2.5 billion in 1974 to USD 4 billion in 1979; and economic aid, from approximately USD 165 million in 1974 to approximately USD 915 million in 1979.<sup>265</sup> Following the war of 1973, Israel became the single largest recipient of American assistance. The relationship between Israel and the United States, that had become special following the war of 1967 and Nixon's entering office in 1969, became exceptional following the war of 1973.

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<sup>263</sup> Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten* [Conflict and Great Power Politics within the Middle East], 396–400.

<sup>264</sup> Waage, 397; Lars H. Bakke and Hilde H. Waage, 'Facing Assad. American Diplomacy toward Syria, 1973-1977', *The International History Review* 40, no. 3 (2018): 550–57, 562, 565–67.

<sup>265</sup> John P. Miglietta, *American Alliance Policy in the Middle East, 1945-1992: Iran, Israel, and Saudi Arabia* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2002), 172–73.

## IV. IRAN AND ISRAEL

Shared vulnerabilities, more than a shared identity as two non-Arab countries within a predominantly Arab region, constituted the foundation for the *entente* between Iran and Israel.<sup>266</sup> Israel's principal vulnerability came as a result of its geopolitical position as a Jewish state whose modern creation within former Palestinian territory had displaced the native population. The Palestinian struggle, in which Israel was inherently antagonistic, soon became the single most important issue around which pan-Arab nationalists rallied during the 1950s. Perceiving itself as surrounded by sharks, Israel made efforts therefore to establish diplomatic relations with its non-Arab periphery.

Iran's situation, on the other hand, was differed from that of Israel. Its position among the Arabs was inherently more secure than that of Israel, somewhat by virtue of its being a predominantly Muslim country but primarily by virtue of its not having displaced any Arab population. That is not to say that Iran's relationship with the Arabs had always been friendly; however, its principal vulnerability was instead its immediate proximity and military inferiority to the Soviet Union, who had previously invaded and occupied Iran's northern provinces from 1941 to 1946.

Iran's and Israel's vulnerabilities coincided when the Soviet Union politically penetrated large parts of the Arab world during the 1950s. Their *entente* was intended to balance against what both countries perceived to be a Soviet-Arab threat to their existence, in the case of Israel, and their hegemony within the Persian Gulf, in the case of Iran. As a result, however, the *entente* became

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<sup>266</sup> Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance*, 29.

subject to the balance of power within the region: '[T]he logic of balance meant that the very basis of the alliance was threatened if either country overcame its differences with its neighbors'.<sup>267</sup> This is supported by political scientist Glenn Snyder, who writes that, '[a] state's dependence on an alliance [...] is a function of the net benefit it is receiving from it, compared to the benefits available from alternative sources'.<sup>268</sup>

Since the modern inception of Israel in 1948, Iran had taken an ambivalent stance towards it. Israel's initial ambiguity towards the United States and the Soviet Union had forced some reluctance in Iran to recognise it and to accord to it membership in the United Nations. When Israel's foreign policy began to favour the United States and the West during the 1950s, however, Iran responded positively to its policy of periphery. Despite their emerging *entente*, which involved their sharing of intelligence, their trade, and their cooperation in subversive activities in Iraq in particular, however, Iran refused to upgrade its relationship with Israel into a official and formal one. Furthermore, Iran continued to employ a harsh tone towards Israel, especially with regards to its occupation of Arab territory following the Third Arab-Israeli War of 1967.

The time period from 1969 to 1974 was very eventful for this relationship. No treaty of peace had yet resolved the atmosphere of uncertainty that followed the Third Arab-Israeli War, the United Kingdom announced in 1968 its withdrawing from the Persian Gulf by 1971 and a Ba'athis faction overthrew the moderate government of Iraq the same year, and Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser died in 1970. As a result, and as the present study will show, a new dynamic began to emerge; Iran extended a diplomatic hand to Egypt, and it began for the first time to press Israel for peace with the Arabs also in private.

#### AN OLIVE BRANCH TO EGYPT, 1969

Iran's response to Israel's crushing victory over Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in 1967 was initially uttered with a 'forked tongue'.<sup>269</sup> During the war, Iran declared its profound sympathy for the Arab states; and following the war, its principled disapproval of any occupation by force. Such words of reprimand were, however, strictly limited to public statements. While maintaining the public façade of supporting the Arabs, Iranian officials reassured their Israeli colleagues in private that their

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<sup>267</sup> Parsi, 29.

<sup>268</sup> Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, 166.

<sup>269</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines', 269–73.

public declarations were intended only as appeasement.<sup>270</sup> In 1969, however, Iranian officials began for the first time to apply pressure upon their Israeli colleagues also in private.

In August of 1969, Iranian Foreign Minister Ardeshir Zahedi met with his Israeli counterpart, Abba Eban. During the meeting, Zahedi related to the failed negotiations under the auspices of Gunnar V. Jarring while lamenting what he described as Israeli obstinacy.<sup>271</sup> This trend continued into October, when, in a conversation with Eban, Iranian Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi ‘turned to moralising’ and enquired with the Israeli foreign minister why peace between Egypt and Israel could not be achieved.<sup>272</sup> Also in the presence of American officials did the shah express this sentiment. In April, he asserted in the presence of US Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird, among others, that, ‘Israel should not be allowed to hold territory gained by force’.<sup>273</sup> And to US National Security Advisor Henry A. Kissinger and his staffer Harold H. Saunders, the shah claimed that the Israelis were ‘drunk’ on victory, pointing to Israel’s intransigence with regards to the peace negotiations.<sup>274</sup>

Furthermore, this shift in rhetoric was accompanied with steps taken by Iran towards the restoration of diplomatic relations with Egypt. These relations had been severed by the latter in 1960, following a public statement by the shah in which Iran’s *de facto* recognition of Israel was reaffirmed.<sup>275</sup> Following the war in 1967, however, Iran extended a diplomatic hand to Egypt by softening its requirements for rapprochement. In doing so, the shah stated to a Kuwaiti newspaper in June, Iran had left the door open for Egypt—implying that Iran’s rapprochement had received his blessing.<sup>276</sup>

These developments were of great concern to Israeli officials. They feared most of all that a restoration of diplomatic relations between Iran and Egypt would come at the expense of Iran’s relationship with Israel.<sup>277</sup> In this regard, Israeli officials demonstrated an acute awareness of the

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<sup>270</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 269–73.

<sup>271</sup> Amnon Ben-Yohanan to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Israel State Archive (ISA), MFA 8687/11, doc. 58.

<sup>272</sup> Unknown to unknown, undated, ISA, MFA 8687/11, doc. 82. While the monarch did not specify whom his enquiry involved, it is clear from the context that is involved Israel and Egypt.

<sup>273</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, ed. Monica Belmonte (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2006), doc. 6.

<sup>274</sup> Harold H. Saunders, ‘Memorandum of Conversation’, 11 April 1969, in *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 8.

<sup>275</sup> Rouhollah K. Ramazani, *The Persian Gulf: Iran’s Role* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1972), 35–38; Ramazani, *Iran’s Foreign Policy, 1941-1973*, 404; Chubin and Zabih, *The Foreign Relations of Iran*, 156–57; Sobhani, *The Pragmatic Entente*, xii–xiii.

<sup>276</sup> Yael Vered to Schlomo Hillel, 12 August 1969, ISA, MFA 8687/11, doc. 147; Unknown, undated, ISA, MFA 8687/11, doc. 248.

<sup>277</sup> Yael Vered to Abba Eban, 28 September 1969, ISA, MFA 8687/11, doc. 91.

underlying mechanism for the *entente*; should Iran resolve its adversarial relationship with Egypt, it would become less vulnerable and thus less dependent upon Israel as a counterbalance. Iran, however, did not actively endeavour to undermine its relationship with Israel. It was motivated instead by shifts in the power balance within the region.

In January of 1968, the United Kingdom announced its planned withdrawal from the Persian Gulf by 1971. Its presence within the Persian Gulf sheikhdoms was effectively coming to an end, causing concern within Iran. Should the Trucial States, in the absence of the British, be drawn into the Soviet sphere of influence, Iran would find itself encircled by the Soviet Union from the north to the south. Furthermore, and in July of the same year, the moderate Iraqi government of Abdul Rahman Arif was overthrown by the Iraqi Ba'ath Party. The new government did not hesitate before challenging Iran on the subject of the Shatt al-Arab waterway, a subject that had been the root of much historical conflict between the two countries.<sup>278</sup>

The British news, combined with the events within Iraq, forced in Iran a reappraisal of its regional strategy. In response, it took steps to secure its position within the Persian Gulf. It reached an agreement with Saudi Arabia over the continental shelf, and resolved with the latter the disputed statuses of the Farsi and Arabiyah islands. To Bahrain, Iran extended bilateral ties and was reportedly the first state to recognise its sovereignty following British withdrawal.<sup>279</sup>

Within this framework, Egypt's role was important for several reasons. Since its severing of diplomatic relations with Iran, Egypt had initialised a number of clandestine operations within both the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf. In Yemen, for example, Egypt supported the overthrowing of the monarchy by a nationalist republic in 1962. Meanwhile, it solicited—albeit unsuccessfully—cooperation against Iran from the Persian Gulf sheikhdoms. And in 1965, Egyptian lawyers contributed to a pan-Arab claim on the Iranian province of Khuzestan, which was declared integral to the 'Arab homeland'. The province, which the Arabs referred to as 'Arabistan' to emphasise its predominantly Arab population as well as its history as being an Arab emirate, was both financially and strategically valuable to Iran. It contained Iran's oil installations, its large oil reserves, and it shared an immediate border with Iraq.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Ramazani, *Persian Gulf*, 36, 42–45; Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, 399–403; Sobhani, *Pragmatic Entente*, 36–37.

<sup>279</sup> Ramazani, *The Persian Gulf*, 45–56; Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy, 1941-1973*, 406–21.

<sup>280</sup> Ramazani, *The Persian Gulf*, 38; Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy, 1941-1973*; Ramazani, 406–21; Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines', 75–76.



When Iran extended an olive branch to Egypt in 1969, it did so to a weakened Egypt. During the war in 1967, and in the mere span of six days, Egypt had lost approximately 10,000 to 15,000 men; and an additional 13,000 Egyptians, Jordanians, and Syrians were either wounded or missing. Furthermore, Israel had destroyed 85 *per cent* of Egypt's military hardware, and had acquired a vast amount of Egyptian military equipment.<sup>281</sup> To remedy this, Egyptian hardware and military personnel was increasingly replaced with that of the Soviet Union.<sup>282</sup> In addition to these losses, Egypt also suffered territorial losses; Israel had occupied the Sinai peninsula. It is conceivable, therefore, as was the understanding of American and Israeli officials at the time, that Iran intended to draw Egypt away from the Soviet Union and closer to the West, or at the very least to mitigate the increasing entrenchment of Soviet forces within Egyptian territory, ultimately in an attempt to balance against Ba'athist Iraq.

It is also conceivable that Iran's endeavours were designed to manage its alliance with Israel. According to political scientist Glenn H. Snyder, partners in alliance manoeuvre between common interests and competing interests. The primary competitive interest between partners in alliance, according to him, is to control or influence each other in order to minimise one's own costs and risks.<sup>283</sup> The *entente* between Iran and Israel was largely asymmetrical and dominated by the former. This was demonstrated by Iran's never succumbing to Israeli pressure, that the relationship between them be upgraded to its formal recognition of Israel *de jure*; its reluctance with regards to the building of the Eilat-Eshkelon oil pipeline being remedied by Israel's proposal finance the majority of the project; and the very fact that Israel, as shall be seen, simply was forced to tolerate Iran's overtures to the Arabs as well as its shift in rhetoric towards Israel also in private.<sup>284</sup> And as historian Hulda Kjeang Mørk observes, 'the shah [...] appears to have placed great importance on demonstrating that he was setting the conditions within the relationship'.<sup>285</sup>

Prior to 1969, the Iranian call for peace between Israel and the Arabs was limited to public declarations intended only to appease the Arabs and religious movements within Iran. In expanding their call for peace to private meetings with their Israeli colleagues in 1969, Iranian officials signalled a shift in their doctrine that would characterise, as we shall see, much of the dynamic between Iran and Israel thenceforth.

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<sup>281</sup> Michael B. Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 305–6.

<sup>282</sup> Karen Dawisha, *Soviet Foreign Policy toward Egypt* (London: Macmillan Press, 1979), 43–49.

<sup>283</sup> Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, 165.

<sup>284</sup> For the Eilat-Eshkelon project, see Bialer, 'Fuel Bridge across the Middle East'.

<sup>285</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines', 119.

The expansion of the Iranian call for peace to private meetings was followed in 1970 by what Israeli officials described as an anti-Israeli campaign notably in the party press of Iran's ruling party. Simultaneously, Israeli officials stationed within Iran observed 'anti-Israeli activity' within the bazaars, which they soon connected to the hostile press. The Iranian regime had exaggerated its pro-Arab rhetoric, they argued, and had thus fuelled the civilian uproar. In reality, however, there was no causal relationship between the hostile press and the activity within the bazaars. Despite the lack of such a relationship, Israeli officials attempted to construct one in order to manipulate Iran into softening its tone both publicly and in private.

It was in light of Israel's continuing border conflict with Egypt, as well as recent attacks launched upon Israel by Palestinians from beyond the Lebanese border, that Israeli Delegate to Iran Meir Ezri was invited on 18 January 1970 to meet with Iranian Prime Minister Amir-Abbas Hoveyda.<sup>286</sup> The Israeli delegate, however, was more concerned with what he described as an anti-Israeli campaign in the Iranian press. Hostility towards Israel had been observed in the party press *Neday Iran Nuvin*, which belonged to Iran's ruling party and with which Hoveyda was directly associated.<sup>287</sup>

In response to his confrontation with Meir, the Iranian prime minister ordered that no such press continue to be publicised, and the hostile press subsided by February and March. At the same time, however, Ezri received news in June of anti-Israeli activity within the Iranian bazaars. Pamphlets were distributed and speeches were held, both of which demonised Israel. The Israeli delegate suspected that the Iranian regime had exaggerated its pro-Arab policy, thus inadvertently fuelling the uproar.<sup>288</sup> The two occurrences were independent from each other, however.

In Iran, the bazaars have traditionally been important centres for the Islamic movement, which since the end of the nineteenth century had forged an important alliance with the *bazaaris*, the people of the bazaar.<sup>289</sup> The proximity of the main mosques to the bazaars has historically allowed for daily association between common folk, merchants, and clergy.<sup>290</sup> During the post-war period,

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<sup>286</sup> For the increasingly frequent Palestinian attacks, see e.g. Fawaz A. Gerges, 'Lebanon', in *The Cold War and the Middle East*, ed. Yezid Sayigh and Avi Shlaim (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 90–95; Rogan, *The Arabs*, 349–50; Hilde H. Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten* [Conflict and Great Power Politics in the Middle East] (Kristiansand: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2013), 224–27.

<sup>287</sup> Meir Ezri to the MFA, 19 January 1970, ISA, MFA 447/2, doc. 369.

<sup>288</sup> Meir Ezri to the MFA, 03 June 1970, ISA, MFA 447/2, doc. 199.

<sup>289</sup> Said A. Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 15.

<sup>290</sup> Arang Keshavarzian, *Bazaar and State in Iran: The Politics of the Tehran Marketplace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 232.

the people of the bazaar consistently opposed the Iranian regime as a result the White Revolution, which imposed competition upon the traditional merchant guilds in the form of modern department stores and supermarkets. Simultaneously, in 1962, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who was an ardent opponent of the shah, emerged as the leader of the Islamic movement.<sup>291</sup> It was to this alliance, between the *bazaaris* and the clergy, that the anti-Israeli activity was connected; the war in 1967 had triggered the boycotting of Jews by the Iranian clergy.<sup>292</sup> While Israel indeed was being demonised, the Iranian regime was simultaneously accused of cooperating with it as well as 'Western imperialism' in general. This rhetoric was frequently employed by the Iranian clergy in order to 'maintain a degree of unity in [its] pursuit to topple the regime'.<sup>293</sup>

It must also be noted that the contents of the article published in *Neday Iran Nuvin* are veiled in the Israeli sources by ambiguity. Nowhere do the sources cite explicitly what was written; the contents are only referred to as anti-Israeli by Israeli officials. It is reasonable, however, to believe that the article criticised Israel's occupation of Arab territory especially following the war in 1967 as well as its intransigence with regards to the subsequent negotiations for peace. In an open letter to Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir that was published in June, Mahmoud Tolu'i, who was in fact an editor of *Neday Iran Nuvin*, did indeed direct his criticism to said occupation and intransigence.<sup>294</sup> Should the contents in Tolu'i's letter be any indication of the opinions expressed in the earlier party press article, the purported anti-Israeli quality becomes a question of perspective. The choice of words by Israeli officials for describing the article complied with Israel's typical response to criticism, in which any such criticism was ascribed to a quality of being anti-Israeli.

Whether or not Israeli officials were aware of the true nature of the activities within the Iranian bazaars and their independence from the party press article, they did not hesitate to present the two incidents as causally linked in an attempt to manipulate Iran into softening its tone against Israel both publicly and privately. In a way, this attempt was in accord with Israel's previous endeavours to upgrade its diplomatic relationship with Iran.

#### REGIME CHANGE IN EGYPT, 1971

Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser died on 28 September 1970, and Iranian Minister of Royal Affairs could inform Ezri that Nasser's death had frustrated the shah greatly. It had occurred at a

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<sup>291</sup> Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, 85–87, 106–7.

<sup>292</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines', 267.

<sup>293</sup> Keshavarzian, *Bazaar and State in Iran*, 147–48.

<sup>294</sup> 'An Open Letter to the Israeli Prime Minister', 7 June 70, ISA, MFA 447/2, doc. 189.

least opportune moment, according to the shah, who likely alluded to the ceasefire negotiations.<sup>295</sup> In his diaries, however, Alam revealed that the shah in fact had been ‘tremendously buoyed up’ upon learning of the death of the Egyptian president; and in February of 1971, the shah declared in private to Alam that a ‘tragic end awaits anyone who dares cross swords with [him]’, ascribing Nasser’s death to divine providence.<sup>296</sup> This duality reflects Iran’s general approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict. This, however, does not by itself explain why Iranian officials elected to express frustration and regret to their Israeli colleagues upon learning of Nasser’s death.

The arrival of Nasser’s death was deemed inopportune for two reasons. First, Iranian officials had since 1969 maintained that the late Egyptian president was the only Arab leader capable and willing to accept a peace deal with Israel. In August of 1969, Zahedi asserted to Ezri that the key to peace between Israel and the Arabs lay in the hands of Nasser.<sup>297</sup> And second, Iranian and Israeli officials alike were concerned that Nasser’s death would create a power vacuum within Egypt, fearing ultimately that someone of his ilk or ‘worse’ would seize power there.<sup>298</sup> When Iranian officials veiled their elation over Nasser’s death behind frustration and regret, therefore, they did so because they had lost the leverage they had placed in Nasser, and, much more importantly, in an attempt to uphold a sense of urgency with regards to the negotiations for peace between Israel and the Arabs.

Gamal Abdel Nasser’s successor was Anwar Sadat, however, who declared on 4 February 1971 his desire for peace. Egypt would restore its diplomatic relations with the United States and accept a treaty of peace with Israel, he asserted, should Israeli forces withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula. Sadat’s overtures set in motion endeavours by the US Department of State to negotiate a settlement between Israel and Egypt; however, the former rejected any proposal of meaningful substance.

In Iran, too, Sadat’s overtures were received well. Zahedi, for example, maintained that Israel was not properly taking advantage of the opportunity presented to it by Sadat, a notion which was reaffirmed by his deputy, Abbas Ali Khalatbari, who ascribed Egypt’s signing of the treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union on 27 May to Israeli obstinacy.<sup>299</sup> Approximately a week before the signing, Zahedi had questioned Israel’s true desire for peace in correspondence with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs: ‘We know that the present Egyptian government really wants peace.

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<sup>295</sup> Meir Ezri to the MFA, 30 September 1970, ISA, MFA 447/2, doc. 111.

<sup>296</sup> Alam, *The Shah and I*, 172, 202.

<sup>297</sup> Ben-Yohanan to the MFA, 21 August 1969, ISA, MFA 8687/11, doc. 58; unknown to unknown, October 1969, ISA, MFA 8687/11, doc. 82.

<sup>298</sup> Meir Ezri to the MFA, 30 September 1970, ISA, MFA 447/2, doc. 111.

<sup>299</sup> The MFA to the delegation in Tehran, 23 May 1971, ISA, MFA 6801/10, doc. 173.

We wonder if you [cannot] come to terms with them, when and with whom can you come to terms'.<sup>300</sup> Ezri, however, responded by claiming that the treaty did not indicate any new developments in the relationship between Egypt and the Soviet Union; it was simply a reaffirmation of their close relationship.

Although not all Iranian officials were much impressed by Sadat—Hoveyda, for example, described him as a 'second-rate man'—they were convinced that the new Egyptian president desired a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Late in 1970, in a meeting with Sadat, Hoveyda insisted that Israel has a right to exist, to which the Egyptian president did not protest. And in June of 1971, Ezri was informed by President of the National Iranian Oil Company Manouchehr Eghbal that Sadat and his ministers had shown him a genuine desire for peace. According to Eghbal, the Egyptian president regretted Nasser's conflict with Israel, which had decimated the Egyptian economy; it was a mistake not to recognise Israel, Sadat had concluded.<sup>301</sup>

Whether or not Sadat truly desired peace or Iranian officials truly believed that Sadat desired peace, is not as important as the fact that his statements were utilised by Iranian officials to press Israel on this issue. This is a clear shift from Iran's approach to the conflict prior to 1969, in which Iran had no desire or intention to mediate between Egypt and Israel.<sup>302</sup> Khalatbari, for example, declined in May of 1971 an invitation to visit Israel, stating as his reason Israel's 'improper method' *vis-à-vis* the Arabs while reassuring that such an invitation would be taken into consideration once mediation was possible.<sup>303</sup> Coupled with Iran's ceaseless efforts to press Israel on the issue of peace with Egypt, this may indicate that Iran in fact had a genuine interest in mediating between Egypt and Israel, or at the very least that peace should be negotiated between the two adversaries.

#### A RELATIONSHIP IN CRISIS? 1972

The relationship between Iran and Israel remained very productive throughout 1971, despite their disagreements. Israeli exports to Iran increased by 20 *per cent*, from USD 18.4 million in 1970 to USD 23 million in 1971.<sup>304</sup> Cooperation within the area of intelligence, too, endured. Meir Ezri discussed with General and Director of SAVAK—Iran's intelligence agency—Nematollah Nassiri on numerous occasions subjects ranging from communist underground movements in Iran to the

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<sup>300</sup> The MFA to the delegation in Tehran, 18 May 1971, ISA, MFA 6801/10, doc. 178.

<sup>301</sup> The delegation in Tehran to the MFA, 02 June 1971, ISA, MFA 6801/10, doc. 164; Meir Ezri to the MFA, 01 June 1971, ISA, MFA 6801/10, doc. 165.

<sup>302</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines', 271.

<sup>303</sup> The Delegation in Tehran to the MFA, 02 June 1971, ISA, MFA 6801/10, doc. 164.

<sup>304</sup> Amnon Ben-Yohanan to the MFA, 29 December 1971, ISA, MFA 4562/33, doc. 4; David Tourgeman to Yael Vered, 07 January 1972, ISA, MFA 6802/4, doc. 187.

situation between the Iraqi regime and the Iraqi Kurds.<sup>305</sup> Despite the productive quality of this relationship, however, Israeli officials began in 1972 to describe it as being in a state of crisis.

Already at the turn of the year, tension rose when Iran refrained from inviting Israeli representatives to attend its celebration of the 2,500-year anniversary of the Persian Empire. Prominent guests included among many others Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet Nikolay V. Podgorny and US Vice President Spiro T. Agnew. Historian Robert Steele has claimed on the grounds of an interview of iranologist Richard N. Frye in 1984, who headed the Asia institute of the Shiraz University at the time of the celebrations, that a group of Israeli scholars were housed secretly by the Iranian regime within the outskirts of Shiraz.<sup>306</sup> The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, however, bemoaned prior to the celebrations, invoking the name of Cyrus the Great and his role in Jewish history as a liberator of the Jewish community from the shackles of Babylon, that no official or unofficial Israeli figure had been invited to attend them.<sup>307</sup>

In addition to not being formally represented, Israel was subsequently accused by the Iranian regime of influencing the Western press into criticising the luxurious celebrations that otherwise contrasted the living conditions of the vast majority of Iranians.<sup>308</sup> These allegations were denied by Israeli officials, who countered instead that the rumours were likely to have originated with Iran's and Israel's common adversaries.<sup>309</sup> This explanation appeared to have been accepted by the Iranian regime by mid-January of 1972.<sup>310</sup>

More important than the bickering over invitations and formal representation, however, was what Israeli officials described as an emergence of 'megalomania' within the Iranian regime.<sup>311</sup> While this description likely can be ascribed to some degree of Israeli exaggeration, Iran had entered the new year with cause to feel confident. Its rapprochement with Egypt had hitherto been successful. The two states had already during Gamal Abdel

Nasser's reign exchanged ambassadors, and Anwar Sadat's government was too involved with Israel and its domestic crises not to shake Iran's diplomatic hand. In turn, this lent itself well to Iran's endeavours within the Strait of Hormuz in November of 1971, where Iran successfully

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<sup>305</sup> Meir Ezri to the MFA, 11 July 1971, ISA, MFA 6801/10, doc. 107; Meir Ezri to the MFA, 01 September 1971, ISA, MFA 6801/10, doc. 83; David Tourgeman to Yael Vered, 07 January 1972, ISA, MFA 6802/4, doc. 187.

<sup>306</sup> Robert Steele, *The Shah's Celebrations of 1971: Nationalism, Culture, and Politics in Late Pahlavi Iran* (London: IB Tauris, 2020), 70.

<sup>307</sup> Robert Steele, *The Shah's Celebrations of 1971: Nationalism, Culture, and Politics in Late Pahlavi Iran* (London: IB Tauris, 2020), 70; The MFA to the delegation in Tehran, 13 September 1971, ISA, MFA 6801/10, doc. 73.

<sup>308</sup> For a brief overview of the criticism launched by the Western press, see Steele, 2–4.

<sup>309</sup> The MFA to the delegation in Tehran, 09 September 1971, ISA, MFA 6801/10, doc. 57.

<sup>310</sup> Israeli Embassy in London to Abba Eban and Moshe Sasson, 14 January 1972, ISA, MFA 6802/4, doc. 186.

<sup>311</sup> David Tourgeman to unknown, 03 February 1972, ISA, MFA 6802/4, doc. 180.

occupied the islands of Abu Musa and the two Tunbs without suffering any overwhelming consequences.<sup>312</sup> Iraq promptly severed its diplomatic relations with Iran; and Algeria, Libya, and South Yemen joined Iraq in severely denouncing Iran. Egypt, however, while publicly calling for the withdrawal of Iranian troops from the islands, maintained a moderate position and did not join the other Arab states in lodging a complaint with the UN Security Council nor did it sever its diplomatic relations with Iran.<sup>313</sup>

To Iran, the islands were intended as part of an expansion of its security perimeter.<sup>314</sup> The decision to occupy the islands was made in response primarily to an increased presence of Soviet ships on the Indian Ocean.<sup>315</sup> In 1968, when the presence of Soviet ships were first observed on the Indian Ocean, the fleet included surface-level combat vessels, submarines, maintenance vessels, intelligence and research vessels, and tankers. By 1970, its naval presence had remained virtually unchallenged.<sup>316</sup> Furthermore, and by 1971, Soviet ships had made six appearances within the Persian Gulf by way of the Indian Ocean.<sup>317</sup>

Lastly, and in connection to its occupation of the islands and the Soviet naval presence, Iran established the same year diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China.<sup>318</sup> The latter had formerly been committed to an alliance with the Soviet Union. This Sino-Soviet friendship had begun to deteriorate in 1956, however.<sup>319</sup> Subsequent ideological disagreement throughout the 1960s resulted eventually in a split, which finally developed into a border war between the two former allies in 1969.<sup>320</sup> Iran exploited this collapse in communist unity, and the decision to establish diplomatic relations with China was announcement in August of 1971.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> Ramazani, *The Persian Gulf*, 56.

<sup>313</sup> Ramazani, 62–68.

<sup>314</sup> Ramazani, 56–57.

<sup>315</sup> Other reasons include the Indian invasion of Pakistan in 1971, a South Yemen-supported attack on an oil tanker by the island of Perim, and the South Yemen-supported Dhofari rebellion against the Sultanate of Oman. See Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy, 1941-1973*, 428.

<sup>316</sup> Thomas B. Millar, *Soviet Policies in the Indian Ocean Area* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970), 1–2, 12.

<sup>317</sup> Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy, 1941-1973*, 429.

<sup>318</sup> Ramazani, 430–32.

<sup>319</sup> Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 46–54. Political scientist Constantine Pleshakov, however, appears to place less weight on the twentieth congressional meeting, although his account does not appear to disagree with Lüthi's. See Constantine Pleshakov, 'Nikita Khrushchev and Sino-Soviet Relations', in *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963*, ed. Odd A. Westad (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998), 231.

<sup>320</sup> Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 340–44; Sergey Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962-1967* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2009), 201–4.

<sup>321</sup> Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy, 1941-1973*, 430–31.

While these diplomatic successes gave Iran reason to feel confident, they also gave Israeli officials reason for concern. High-ranking meetings between the Israeli foreign minister and the shah had ceased by early January 1972. Although the contact between Iranian and Israeli officials had reportedly become more proper following the succession of Ardeshir Zahedi by Abbas Ali Khalatbari as foreign minister in September of 1971, its quality remained poor.<sup>322</sup> Israel's value to Iran as a regional counterbalance had diminished, as is confirmed by an internal Israeli report dated to February of 1972.<sup>323</sup>

This last statement must not be overstated, however. Iran continued to perceive the Soviet Union as a great threat to its security. The treaty of friendship between the Soviet Union and Egypt was followed in April of 1972 by a similar treaty between the former and Iraq. At the same time, Nassiri expressed concern to Ezri that the Soviet Union was conspiring with Baloch insurgents in Pakistani Balochistan in an attempt to sever the province from Greater Pakistan.<sup>324</sup> Should it be successful, it would establish a Soviet satellite on Iran's south-eastern border, which in turn could inspire insurgent elements within Iran's own province of Balochistan. War broke out between the central Pakistani government and the provincial government of Pakistani Balochistan a year later, during which the central government accused both the Soviet Union and Iraq of conspiring with the Balochis.<sup>325</sup>

In much the same vein, Nassiri suspected the Soviet Union to be conspiring with the Kurds, appealing to them with promises of establishing a sovereign Greater Kurdistan, torn from the Kurdish regions of Turkey and Iran. The Kurdish population within the Soviet Union, albeit small in size and therefore not a threat to the stability of the Soviet state, offered the Soviet Union 'an attractive instrument for the prosecution of Soviet policy among the *zarubezhnyi* [trans-frontier] Kurds'.<sup>326</sup> Soviet propaganda aimed towards these trans-frontier Kurds increased in frequency during and after the Second World War. Its theme, too, diverged from the traditional theme of Soviet propaganda, whose nature was generally ideological and revolutionary. Within the Middle East, and with regards to the Kurds especially, Soviet propaganda instead 'sympathised with the

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<sup>322</sup> David Tourgeman to Yael Vered, 07 January 1972, ISA, MFA 6802/4, doc. 187.

<sup>323</sup> David Tourgeman to unknown, 03 February 1972, ISA, MFA 6802/4, doc. 180.

<sup>324</sup> David Tourgeman to Yael Vered, 12 April 1972, ISA, MFA 6802/4, doc. 165.

<sup>325</sup> Farhan H. Siddiqi, *The Politics of Ethnicity in Pakistan: The Baloch, Sindhi, and Mohajir Ethnic Movements* (London: Routledge, 2012), 68–70; Aurangzaib Alamgir, 'Pakistan's Balochistan Problem: An Insurgency's Rebirth', *World Affairs* 175, no. 4 (2012): 36; Imtiaz Ali, 'The Balochistan Problem', *Pakistan Horizon* 58, no. 2 (2005): 48–52, 58.

<sup>326</sup> Wilson N. Howell Jr., 'The Soviet Union and the Kurds: A Study of National Minority Problems in Soviet Policy' (PhD dissertation, Virginia, University of Virginia, 1965), 237.



material aims and aspirations of discontented elements and [...] sought to lay the blame for social frustration on Western imperialism and incumbent governments'.<sup>327</sup> With regards to Iran, the theme of Soviet propaganda aimed towards trans-frontier Kurds was that the Iranian government was conspiring with Turkey, Iraq, and Western 'imperialists' in denying the Kurdish people their natural rights.<sup>328</sup>

Iran was therefore in no position to abandon its *entente* with Israel. Its fear of being encircled by the Soviet Union preserved its dependency upon Israel as a counterbalance, despite its recent diplomatic and geopolitical successes. For this reason, and as of May of 1971, high-ranking meetings were finally scheduled once more. On 18 May, the shah met with Golda Meir to discuss among other things the abovementioned issues.<sup>329</sup> On 30 May, a high-ranking meeting was scheduled between Director of the Middle East Department of the Israeli Foreign Ministry Yael Vered and Khalatbari.<sup>330</sup> And in July, a series of meetings were scheduled between the Israeli delegation to Iran and Khalatbari.

#### WAR ONCE MORE, 1973-74

On 6 October 1973, after six years of failed negotiations for peace following the Third Arab-Israeli War of 1967, Egypt and Syria launched a coordinated surprise-attack upon Israel.<sup>331</sup> While the latter was eventually able to defeat the joint Arab forces, the war had demonstrated Israel's vulnerability for the very first time since 1948. To Israeli officials, this was cause for concern with regards to Israel's relationship with Iran.

During the first few days of the war, Israel experienced a crisis. Arab forces advanced well into the Sinai Peninsula, across the heretofore impenetrable fortifications along the Bar Lev Line, as well as into the Golan Heights. Once Israel was finally able to deploy its fighter pilots, who had been so pivotal in the war of 1967, they were immediately challenged by Soviet SAM-6 systems stationed within Arab territory. The illusion of Israel's virtual invincibility had been thoroughly dispelled; and as a result, Israeli officials believed that Israel's value to Iran had diminished.<sup>332</sup>

Not only had the illusion of Israel's invincibility been dispelled, however; it had been dispelled by an alarming unity between Egypt and Syria. The issue was therefore twofold: On the one hand,

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<sup>327</sup> Howell, 445–46, 456–89.

<sup>328</sup> Howell, 484.

<sup>329</sup> [Referring to document not possible. Request more information from Kobi.]

<sup>330</sup> Mordechai Gazit to the MFA, 10 July 1972, ISA, MFA 6802/4, doc. 80

<sup>331</sup> For a more detailed account of the peace negotiations and the war, see chapter 'III. Israel and the United States'.

<sup>332</sup> Schlomo Dayan to the MFA, 31 March 1974, ISA, MFA 8391/8, doc. 274.

Israel's vulnerabilities had been exposed; and on the other hand, Egypt and Syria had demonstrated an ability to unite and thus to pose a very serious threat to Israel.

In addition to these initial developments during the war, Iran was able to successfully exploit the subsequent oil embargo that was launched upon primarily the United States and the United Kingdom by the Arab oil producers of OPEC.<sup>333</sup> Prior to the war, Sadat had visited with the Saudi king, to and from whom he revealed his plan and requested assistance. The king assured the Egyptian president that Saudi Arabia would support Egypt and Syria; and on 16 October, a weapon of oil was deployed. The price of Arab oil was increased by seventeen per cent; and the production of Arab oil, cut by five per cent.<sup>334</sup> The Arab producers of oil warned subsequently that their oil production would continue to be cut by an additional five per cent for every month that Arab territories remained occupied by Israel.<sup>335</sup>

This decision inflicted chaos upon the international oil market. At the end of the day, on 16 October, the price per barrel of oil had increased from USD 3.01 to USD 5.12.<sup>336</sup> And when the United States refused to yield to the demands set by the Arab oil producers by the end of the month, a full-scale oil embargo was placed upon it by Saudi Arabia, the United Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Algeria, and Libya.<sup>337</sup>

To Iran, however, the embargo came as a financial blessing. Since 1965, imports of foreign goods and services into Iran had exceeded its exports; and while Iran had successfully attracted foreign capital into the country during this time, the overall balance of payments had remained in an almost permanent deficit.<sup>338</sup> This very same deficit served in 1969 and thenceforth as a chief motivation for Iran's requesting increased foreign military credits from the United States as well as increased lifting of Iranian oil by American oil companies.<sup>339</sup> Due to the embargo, Iran could raise its prices drastically; and as a result, Iran's oil revenues increased throughout 1973 from USD 5 billion to a staggering USD 19 billion.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> Other countries included in the embargo were initially Canada, the Netherlands, and Japan.

<sup>334</sup> Venn, *The Oil Crisis*, 7–8.

<sup>335</sup> Waage, *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten* [Conflict and Great Power Politics within the Middle East], 394–95.

<sup>336</sup> Waage, 394.

<sup>337</sup> Waage, 398.

<sup>338</sup> Homa Katouzian, *The Political Economy of Modern Iran: Despotism and Pseudo-Modernism, 1926-1979* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1981), 328; Massoud Karshenas, *Oil, State, and Industrialization in Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 214–16.

<sup>339</sup> See chap. I.

<sup>340</sup> Robert Graham, *Iran: The Illusions of Power* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), 16.

To Israel, this, too, was cause for concern. Iran's increased oil revenues enabled the shah to fulfil his desires of grand rearmament, and Iran's arms purchases from the United States increased dramatically by the end of 1973. Its military sales agreement with the United States increased from just short of USD 500,000 in 1972 to a little more than USD 2,100,000 in 1973, and this figure subsequently doubled to approximately USD 4,300,000 in 1974.<sup>341</sup> The fact that the *entente* between Iran and Israel was built upon shared vulnerabilities did not escape Israeli officials, who feared Iran's successes would come at Israel's expense.

Furthermore, and both during and following the war, Iran's rapprochement with Egypt did not only intensify but expanded to Arab states such as Syria and Iraq. During the war, Israeli officials had discovered that Iran was assisting the Arabs directly, albeit in no great measure.<sup>342</sup> In 1974, Iran granted USD 850 million in financial aid to Egypt and USD 150 million to Syria.<sup>343</sup> Meanwhile, the shah employed a still sharper tongue with regards to Israel, replacing the terms 'Israeli' and 'non-Muslims' with 'Jews'; and implying an antagonistic relationship between the 'arrogant jews', occupying Muslim lands, and the Muslims, among whom the Iranians belonged.<sup>344</sup> This line of rhetoric did not, however, necessarily diverge from Iran's traditional ambivalence towards Israel. In fact, the shah expressed to US Ambassador to Iran Richard M. Helms, following Golda Meir's resignation on 11 April 1974, that he did not desire to see a new leader in Israel that was willing to concede too much to the Arabs.<sup>345</sup> Indeed, the war did without a doubt demonstrate to Iran the potential of Arab unity, and encouraged thus Iran to be more vigilant with regards to the Arabs: 'Iran continue[s] to treat the Arab world with suspicion [among other things as a result of...] the unity that the Arab states showed during the October [W]ar'.<sup>346</sup> And lastly, but certainly not in the least, it must be mentioned that Iran in fact warned Israel of the attack as early as in April of 1973.<sup>347</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> Miglietta, *American Alliance Policy in the Middle East, 1945-1992*, 64–69.

<sup>342</sup> Mossad to unknown, 10 May 1974, ISA, MFA 8391/8, doc. 149.

<sup>343</sup> Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance*, 43.

<sup>344</sup> Schlomo Dayan to the MFA, 31 March 1974, ISA, MFA 8391/8, doc. 274.

<sup>345</sup> Washington to the MFA, 9 May 1974, ISA, MFA 8391/8, doc. 195.

<sup>346</sup> Mossad to unknown, 10 May 1974, ISA, MFA 8391/8, doc. 149.

<sup>347</sup> The Israeli delegation in Iran to the MFA, 25 April 1973, ISA, MFA 8391/8, doc. 334.

## THE TRIANGLE FROM 1969-74: A CONCLUSION

With Lyndon B. Johnson emerged a new logic in the United States, in which its traditional policy of even-handedness towards the Middle East was abandoned and in which transactions of arms were used increasingly in an attempt to influence Iran and Israel into complying with American desires.<sup>348</sup> Despite this, however, the Johnson administration surrendered in the face of Iranian and Israeli objections rather readily any conditions it had originally attached to such transactions. It was during the Johnson administration that Iran was upgraded from being an American client, receiving military and financial aid from the United States, into being an American partner and being able to purchase arms and military equipment by using its own money.<sup>349</sup> The Johnson administration was also the first American administration to sell strictly offensive military equipment to Israel, in the M48A2C and M48A1 tanks as well as the A-4E Skyhawk aircraft. The upgrading of the United States' relationship with Iran as well as its sale of offensive military equipment to Israel signalled the abandonment of the United States' traditional policy of even-handedness towards the Middle East.<sup>350</sup>

Lyndon B. Johnson's successor, Richard M. Nixon, picked up this ball and ran with it. His view of the world was in large measures coloured by the Cold War struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union; and his principal advisor and later secretary of state, Henry A. Kissinger, shared in his views. Inheriting the failing war in Vietnam, Nixon espoused a policy of

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<sup>348</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines', 2–7.

<sup>349</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 62–69.

<sup>350</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 85–114, 191–200.

Vietnamisation. The containment of Soviet influence within the world remained the most principal item on Nixon's foreign policy agenda; however, instead of direct intervention abroad, the United States would reinforce its allies through military and financial assistance. This laid a perfect groundwork from which Iran and Israel could leverage the United States for more arms.

Three principal research questions have guided the present study: How did the events by which the 1960s closed and by which the 1970s opened influence the triangle between Iran, Israel, and the United States? Why did these events influence the triangle in the way that they did? And what were their consequences? Principal among these events were the Third Arab-Israeli War of 1967, the United Kingdom's announcement of withdrawal from the Persian Gulf in 1968, the death of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1970, and the Fourth Arab-Israeli War of 1973 and the subsequent oil embargo that was launched upon the United States, among others, by OAPEC.

With regards to Iran and the Persian Gulf, the Nixon administration was much too preoccupied with the United States' failing war in Vietnam to define a clear policy *post-haste*. Iran was already deemed to be an important partner of the United States, however, which contributed as a reason for this lack of urgency in the new administration.<sup>351</sup> Despite their preoccupation with the war in Vietnam, however, American officials could not ignore the developments that had taken place within the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. The Soviet Union had increased its military activity within Egyptian territory as a result of the Third Arab-Israeli War, which had weakened Egypt greatly; and the announcement by the United Kingdom in 1968, that its forces would be withdrawn from the Persian Gulf by 1971, forced American officials to deliberate over which role the United States would assume in its stead.

A policy, of which Iran became the very pillar, was finally defined in National Security Decision Memorandum 92 of 1970.<sup>352</sup> Much in accordance with Nixon's policy of Vietnamisation, the policy involved a strategy of promoting cooperation between Iran and Saudi Arabia as the basis for maintaining stability within the Persian Gulf. While its overarching strategy involved cooperation between these two countries, however, the Nixon administration recognised the 'preponderance' of Iranian power in this relationship. Thus, while the policy has been termed 'the Twin Pillar Policy', a case can be made that Iran was in fact the sole pillar in it. The Nixon administration did not intend to enter the United States as the country to fill the vacuum left within the gulf by the United Kingdom, in other words. That role was intended instead for Iran.

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<sup>351</sup> Salberg and Waage, 'Masters of the Game', 472.

<sup>352</sup> National Security Decision Memorandum 92, 7 November 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 97.

Furthermore, the policy established a precedence that Iran could, and certainly did, exploit. It made no mention of direct intervention by the United States; and in order to become a pillar by which the Nixon administration could maintain stability within the gulf, Iran required large supplies of American arms. In order to make his case, the shah consistently painted a dire picture of the situation within the gulf, in which Soviet-Arab conspiracies ceaselessly threatened Iran's security. He also cleverly entwined the security of Iran with that of the United States, demonstrating an awareness of Nixon's world view and American foreign policy since 1949.<sup>353</sup> These efforts by the shah finally bore fruits in 1972, when he received the American president in Tehran. There, Nixon granted him a *blank cheque* with regards to American arms, with the sole exception being nuclear arms, and the American president promised that the United States would join Iran, and, by extension, Israel, in its subversive activities within Iraq. As for his reason in granting the *blank cheque*, Nixon exclaimed 'protect me'.

Richard M. Nixon's decision to enter the United States into these subversive activities marked a watershed in the history of the triangle as a whole. Administrations before his, including the Johnson administration, had not only expressed a general apprehension with regards to the deepening relationship between Iran and Israel but had also kept the two countries separate in their own foreign policies.<sup>354</sup> This was a seminal shift in the history of the triangle; through his decision, Nixon recognised the Iranian-Israeli *entente*, whose activities had been described by the preceding administration as unhelpful and destructive, and the triangle was thus solidified.

Care must be taken not to overstate Nixon's naivety with regards to his granting the shah a *blank cheque*. He was certainly no blind puppet to the grand machinations of the shah. In fact, his imploring the shah to protect him was merely intended to tickle the royal hubris of the Iranian monarch. To the United States, furthermore, its reinforcing Iran was intended just as much to prevent the shah from turning to others, such as the Soviet Union, for arms as it was intended simply to reinforce Iran as a pillar of stability within the Persian Gulf. Indeed, '[w]hile grant aid recipients may have limited options for their acquisition of particular goods and sometimes find themselves entirely dependent on the aid supplier, countries capable of arms purchase can typically pay for their material needs from more than one supplier', writes historian Hulda Kjeang Mørk.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> 'Policy Statement on Iran Prepared in the Department of State', 1 February 1949, *FRUS*, 1949, vol. VI, doc. 264; 'Report of the National Security Council on the Position of the United States with Respect to Iran', 21 July 1949, *FRUS*, 1949, vol. VI, doc. 315.

<sup>354</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines', 115, 119–22, 140–48, 327.

<sup>355</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 63.

However, this very fact was something that the shah could exploit, as he certainly did, for ever more American arms. The present point, therefore, is that the shah was well aware of Nixon's world view and policies, and that the relationship between Iran and the United States was one in which Iran was not simply a passive recipient of American policies. In fact, Iran played an active role in forming American foreign policy towards itself, the Persian Gulf, and the Middle East at large. It did so in large part by exaggerating the Soviet-Arab threat, for example by emphasising to American officials the treaty of friendship and cooperation that was signed by Iraq and the Soviet Union in 1972.

With regards to Israel, a similar dynamic applied, although the relationship between Israel and the United States differed in other ways from that between Iran and the United States. The Nixon administration, much like administrations before it, felt for example a moral and ideological obligation to protect Israel that it did not feel towards Iran.<sup>356</sup> This relationship, between Israel and the United States, was, however, highly ambivalent; a thread of divide emerged within the Nixon administration that characterised much of the period from 1969 to 1974.

The preoccupation of the Nixon administration with the failing war in Vietnam, which had resulted in a lack of urgency with regards to defining a policy towards Iran and the Persian Gulf, caused a delay in its defining a policy towards Israel as well. Much of the initial policy making was therefore confined to the inner workings of the Department of State, and Secretary of State William P. Rogers proposed in 1969 a settlement between Israel and the Arabs that was contingent upon Israel's withdrawing from the occupied territories of the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and the Golan Heights. In doing so, Rogers accorded American support to UN Security Council Resolution 242; and his proposal anticipated much of American policy towards Israel and the Arabs thenceforth, in which the United States would publicly support the resolution but secretly reinforce Israel while foregoing any conditions attached to its shipment of arms. To understand this, one must explain the divide that emerged within the Nixon administration in this period.

Beginning in 1970, American policymaking with regards to Israel and its conflict with the Arabs was increasingly commandeered by the White House, and Nixon and Kissinger in particular. Rogers' proposal was promptly opposed by Israel, yet the newly elected Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir's requests for American arms and financial loans were met with eagerness by Nixon. Whereas the Department of State was preoccupied with resolving the hostile limbo in which Israel and the Arabs found themselves following the Third Arab-Israeli War, the White House was preoccupied instead with preserving the balance of power within the region that so favoured Israel.

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<sup>356</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 336.

Responding to a Soviet challenge in 1970, that the United States curtail its support for Israel lest the Soviet Union increase its support for the Arabs, Nixon elected instead to provide compensatory military assistance to Israel. In doing so, the Nixon administration could avoid a great escalation with the Arabs while preserving Israeli supremacy over them.

The death of Gamal Abdel Nasser at the close of 1970, and his succession by Anwar Sadat, struck anew the hope in state department officials for negotiations between Israel and the Arabs. Chief among them were Rogers and his assistant for near eastern affairs, Joseph J. Sisco. Nixon acquiesced to Rogers' requests that a new attempt be made at facilitating negotiations for peace between Israel and the Arabs; however, Nixon and Kissinger both harboured a strong lack of faith in the potential of such negotiations. They even undermined the efforts by Rogers and Sisco directly, by establishing a secret channel with the Soviet Union that ran parallel with the Rogers-Sisco initiative, through which they stalled any progress from being made. With Israel, too, Nixon and Rogers established a secret channel, through which they circumvented Rogers and Sisco by continuing to promise American arms unconditionally.

Israel, meanwhile, painted a similarly distorted picture to that of Iran, in which the Soviet-Arab threat was ever present. Sadat's signing of the friendship and cooperation treaty with the Soviet Union in 1971, for example, which in reality came in response to Israeli intransigence with regards to negotiations, was used to leverage the Nixon administration into providing more American arms.

The bilateral relationship between Iran and Israel, meanwhile, was always limited in some respects. It was built upon a foundation of shared vulnerabilities; and these vulnerabilities coincided during the 1950s, when the Soviet Union first began to draw Egypt, Syria, and Iraq towards its sphere of influence. Iran, however, was a Muslim country; and even if its religious identity did not necessarily provide a reason significant enough for the shah to sympathise with the Arabs, he could not ignore the religious forces within Iran that did. As a result, Iran was forced to assume a measured stance by which it would publicly condemn Israel for its occupation of Arab territory while celebrating the defeat of the Arabs in private.<sup>357</sup> The relationship between Iran and Israel remained therefore clandestine, and it was never given official status despite numerous attempts by Israel to persuade Iran into giving it recognition *de jure*.

Israel's crushing victory of primarily Egypt, Syria, and Jordan following the Third Arab-Israeli War had left the three Arab countries greatly weakened, both in their military and their economic capabilities, and large swathes of their territories fell under Israeli occupation. Iran celebrated

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<sup>357</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 269–73.



Israel's victory over Egypt in particular, for Nasser's Egypt was only second to the Soviet Union in Iran's perception of it as a threat to Iranian hegemony within the Persian Gulf. Moreover, and beyond any grand geopolitical concerns, the shah harboured a personal disdain for the Egyptian president, whose downfall evoked in the shah a feeling of *schadenfreude*. Publicly, and in accordance with its ambivalence towards Israel and the Arabs, therefore, Iran maintained this façade by which it condemned Israel and expressed its support for the Arabs. However, the façade was merely intended to appease the Arabs abroad, with whom Iran shared a religion, as well as religious forces within, whose voices had grown increasingly vociferous and critical of the shah and his regime throughout the 1960s.

This study has found that a new thread in the relationship between Iran and Israel began to emerge in 1969, however. While Iran's condemnation of Israel following the Third Arab-Israeli War had been restricted to public statements, Iran began in 1969 to press Israel for peace with the Arabs in private. Iranian Foreign Minister Ardeshir Zahedi lamented Israel's obstinacy with regards to negotiations for peace between Israel and Egypt during a meeting with his Israeli counterpart, Abba Eban, in August of 1969. Later that same year, the shah 'turned to moralising' in a meeting with the Israeli foreign minister.<sup>358</sup> Also in the presence of American officials did the shah express his disapproval of Israel's occupation of Arab territory, describing Israel as being 'drunk' on victory in a meeting with Kissinger.<sup>359</sup>

This shift, which was observed by both Israeli and American officials, coincided with Iran's attempts at rapprochement with Egypt.<sup>360</sup> The shah softened his demands for the restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries, after Egypt had severed them in 1960, and he stated to a Kuwaiti newspaper in June that Iran had left the door open for Egypt in so doing.<sup>361</sup> Iran's rapprochement with Egypt had received his blessing, in other words.

Israeli officials, meanwhile, were acutely aware of the nature of their *entente* with Iran; and they grew therefore concerned over Iran's rhetorical shift towards them as well as over its diplomatic overtures to Egypt. Were Iran to successfully neutralise Egypt as a threat to its national security and

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<sup>358</sup> Amnon Ben-Yohanan to the Israeli MFA, ISA, MFA 8687/11, doc. 58; Unknown to unknown, undated, ISA, MFA 8687/11, doc. 82.

<sup>359</sup> *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, ed. Monica Belmonte (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2006), doc. 6; Harold H. Saunders, 'Memorandum of Conversation', 11 April 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 8.

<sup>360</sup> For these observations, see e.g. Yael Vered to Abba Eban, 28 September 1969, ISA, MFA 8687/11, doc. 91; 'Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs to President Nixon', 18 May 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-76, vol. E-4, doc. 196.

<sup>361</sup> Yael Vered to Schlomo Hillel, 12 August 1969, ISA, MFA 8687/11, doc. 147; Unknown, undated, ISA, MFA 8687/11, doc. 248.

regional hegemony within the Persian Gulf, Israel's value to it as a counterbalance would greatly diminish and the very *entente* be undermined.<sup>362</sup> The situation continued to grow worse, and, as this study has found, it culminated into somewhat of a diplomatic crisis between the two countries in 1971 and 1972.

This shift in Iran's foreign policies was catalysed by the United Kingdom's announcement in 1968, that it would withdraw from the Persian Gulf by 1971, and the Ba'athist overthrow of the moderate government in Iraq the same year. To balance against these developments, Iran sought to secure its position within the Persian Gulf. With regards to Egypt, its weakened condition as a result of the Third Arab-Israeli War lowered Iran's threshold for rapprochement with it; as a result of its devastating defeat, it was believed, Egypt would be more responsive to Iran's diplomatic efforts.

Any complete understanding of Iran's motivations evades us, as a result of its archives being inaccessible, but they were likely numerous. First, and as a result of the Third Arab-Israeli War, the Soviet Union assumed a more direct military role within Egyptian territory. It is conceivable, therefore, that Iran's rapprochement with Egypt was intended to draw it away from the Soviet sphere of influence or at the very least to mitigate the increasing Soviet presence there. This was the understanding of both American and Israeli officials.<sup>363</sup> The former even supported Iran's rapprochement with Egypt especially, as was expressed by US Ambassador to Iran Richard M. Helms to Uri Lubrani, of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in 1974.<sup>364</sup>

Secondly, it is conceivable that Iran did not desire to see Israel grow out of its dependence upon it. The *entente* between Iran and Israel was greatly asymmetrical, and one in which Iran was able to dictate terms to Israel. Iran never succumbed to pressures from Israel, that the relationship between them be upgraded to its formal recognition of Israel *de jure*, for example. This asymmetry was also demonstrated by Iran's and Israel's efforts to construct the Eilat-Eshkelon oil pipeline, during a process in which Iran's reluctance was remedied by Israel's proposal that it be the majority financier of the project.<sup>365</sup> And the very fact that the *entente* endured despite Iran's shift in its rhetoric towards Israel in private as well as its diplomatic endeavours at rapprochement with Egypt demonstrated that Israel was simply forced to tolerate these developments. Israel's victory in 1967, and its subsequent occupation of Arab territory as a result of it, however, altered the balance of power

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<sup>362</sup> The MFA to the delegation in Tehran, 09 September 1971, ISA, MFA 6801/10, doc. 57.

<sup>363</sup> From Zvi Avivi to G. Elron, 4 June 1974, ISA, MFA 8391/8, doc. 100.

<sup>364</sup> Uri Lubrani to MFA, 5 June 1974, ISA, MFA 8391/8, doc. 129.

<sup>365</sup> Bialer, 'Fuel Bridge across the Middle East'.

within the region more in favour of Israel—not with regards to Iran, perhaps, but Iran was certainly forced to acknowledge the stronger position assumed by Israel.

A motivation for Iran to press for a peace between Israel and the Arabs that was contingent upon Israel's withdrawing from Arab territory could therefore have been to maintain the balance of power within the Iranian-Israeli *entente* itself, in which Iran so clearly dominated. Alliance bargaining, according to political scientist Glenn H. Snyder involves the managing of both common interests and competitive interests. 'The primary competitive interest [between partners in alliance]', he continues, 'is to control or influence the ally in order to minimize one's own costs and risks'.<sup>366</sup> And as historian Hulda Kjeang Mørk observes, 'the shah [...] appears to have placed great importance on demonstrating that he was setting the conditions within the relationship'.<sup>367</sup> The Iranian-Israeli *entente* was strictly pragmatic, in other words, and the shah did not intend to see Israel grow independent by its neutralising the Arabs as threats to its national security for fear that Iran would lose its ability to set the conditions within the relationship in its doing so.

Iran's ambivalence towards Israel, however, obscures this understanding. A marked shift in the dynamic between Iran and Israel did indeed occur in 1969, in which Iranian officials began to press both Israeli and American officials for a peace between Israel and the Arabs that was contingent upon Israel's withdrawing from Arab territory. To add further confusion, however, the shah expressed to US Ambassador to Iran Richard M. Helms, upon the resignation of Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir in April of 1974, that he did not desire to see a new government in Israel that was willing to concede too much to the Arabs.<sup>368</sup> This does not necessarily undermine the understanding that Iran intended to restrain Israel by maintaining the balance of power within the Iranian-Israeli *entente*, however. While Iran did not intend to see Israel grow independent from the *entente*, it certainly did not intend to see a full recovery by the Arabs.

While the triangle was solidified by Nixon's entering the United States as a direct participant in Iran's and Israel's subversive activities within Iraq, it remained limited in many respects beyond those pertaining to the relationship between Iran and Israel described above. Indeed, it is remarkable, as historian Mari Salberg describes it, that Iran, into which the United States had invested so much in order to reinforce it as a stabilising force with which it could safeguard its

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<sup>366</sup> Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, 165.

<sup>367</sup> Kjeang Mørk, 'Between Doctrines', 119.

<sup>368</sup> Washington to the MFA, 9 May 1974, ISA, MFA 8391/8, doc. 195.

interests within the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, was unable to impose much influence during the Fourth Arab-Israeli War of 1973.<sup>369</sup>

With regards to the subsequent oil embargo that was launched upon the United States, among others, by OAPEC, Iran did indeed remain neutral. It was also relied upon by American officials to maintain a stream of much-needed oil in order to mitigate the ramifications of the embargo. Meanwhile, however, the shah was a leading figure in the dramatic increase in the price of oil during the embargo. This increase in the price of oil remained a divide in the relationship between Iran and the United States.<sup>370</sup>

In sum, the triangle, which had begun to emerge during the Johnson administration, culminated finally into its solidification during the Nixon administration as a result of the events by which the 1960s closed and the 1970s opened. The ramifications of the Third Arab-Israeli War were two-pronged. First, the Israel's decisive victory meant the crushing defeat of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. As a result of their crushing defeat, however, the Soviet Union assumed a more active military presence in Egypt especially.<sup>371</sup> Second, the war was never resolved by a treaty of peace between the belligerent states, and an atmosphere of uncertainty loomed over the region as a result. The United Kingdom's announcement in 1968, that its forces would be withdrawn from the Persian Gulf by 1971, exacerbated this atmosphere; and the Nixon administration was forced to deliberate over which role the United State would assume within the region.

It elected finally to assume an indirect role, in according with Nixon's doctrine of Vietnamisation. Iran became the stabilising pillar in Nixon's policy towards the Persian Gulf, intended to safeguard American interests there and within the Middle East at large. This policy culminated in 1972 into Nixon's granting Iran a *blank cheque* with regards to American arms, and his entering the United States as a direct participant of Iran's and Israel's subversive activities within Iraq.

Meanwhile, both Iran and Israel exploited the atmosphere of uncertainty following the Third Arab-Israeli War. Egypt's signing of a treaty of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union in 1971 and Iraq's signing of a similar treaty the year after were both emphasised by Iran and Israel to American officials. They did so in order to paint a distorted picture of the situation within the region. Neither Egypt nor Iraq was in any condition to pose any significant military threat to Israel. Furthermore, Egypt's signing came largely as a response to Israeli intransigence with regards to

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<sup>369</sup> Salberg, 'Conventional Wisdom', 129.

<sup>370</sup> Salberg, 135.

<sup>371</sup> Dawisha, *Soviet Foreign Policy toward Egypt*, 43–49.

negotiations for peace; and Iraq's, as a response to Iran's great threatening posture as a result of its great rearmament at the hands of the United States. Meanwhile, the very same events that contributed as reasons for Nixon's solidifying the triangle revealed also an inherent weakness in the triangle, as was demonstrated by the relationship between Iran and Israel.

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