

More Guns and More Butter

U.S. Arms Sales to Israel, 1969-1974

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MA Thesis in History
Department of Archeology, Conservation, and History
(IAKH)

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Fall 2014

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Trykk: Representeren, Universitetet i Oslo

Acknowledgements

With a bachelor's degree in ancient history, writing this thesis has been an incredible learning experience. The writing process has not always been easy, and the motivation has varied greatly. Without the support of my family and friends, the finish-line would have been further away. First and foremost I would like to thank my supervisor Hilde Henriksen Waage for her great feedbacks, guidance, and advice on my thesis. Her support during this period has been essential and most appreciated. I would also like to thank Dean Howard for commenting on and proofreading some of the chapters.

Lastly, I would like to thank Waage's master students participating at the "Middle East seminars" for commenting on my chapters. Their help have been crucial for the outcome of the thesis, and I have learned a lot by studying and commenting the work of other students. I hope these seminars will continue in the future.

Oslo, November 2014

Ingerid Grut Dahlen

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1 Introduction

In 1969, the United States began increasing the American deliveries of arms to Israel. By 1974, Israel had become the recipient of the highest amounts of American foreign aid in the world. Since the beginning of Richard Nixon's presidency, the administration was convinced that a strong Israel would benefit American interests in the Middle East, and halt the spread of Soviet influence in the region. As a result, Israel had become an important strategic ally to the United States in the Cold War conflict that should be rewarded accordingly.

Increasing the Middle Eastern arms race was one of the consequences of the strategies implemented by the Nixon Administration from 1969 to 1974. Initially, this was not something Washington sought to pursue, but by the end of Nixon's presidency in 1974, the United States' arms sales and deliveries to Israel had resulted in the Middle East becoming the arena for a superpower tug-of-war. Despite arms limitation treaties, both the U.S. and the Soviet Union had amplified the tensions in the region by strengthening its allies' military defences.

Throughout this period, Israel received some of the United States' most sophisticated and advanced military equipment, and got the strongest military defence in the Middle East. No Arab state could compete with the Israeli Defence Force (IDF), and Israel proved to be nearly invincible in the battlefield. From 1969 to 1974, the relationship between the United States and Israel transformed. Since the creation of Israel in 1948, the U.S. had, to a certain extent, remained neutral. This would slowly change when President Kennedy sold HAWK surface-to-air missiles to Israel in 1962, and President Johnson made a deal with Israel for deliveries of Phantom and Skyhawk aircrafts in 1968. This policy on arms sales to Israel reached new heights when President Nixon and his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger took office in the White House in January 1969.¹

This thesis examines both primary documents and secondary sources to answer these questions. The study was not conducted to be yet another description of the special relationship between the United States and Israel, but rather to determine how much this

¹ Kochavi, Noam 2009. *Nixon and Israel. Forging a Conservative Partnership*. Albany: State University of New York: 4

connection affected the strategies of American foreign policy-makers. In the 1970s, Israel sought to obtain a long-term commitment from the United States, both to support its projected military expenditures and to support rapid economic development. Israel believed that both goals – “more guns and more butter” – were necessary, and so did the policymakers in the White House during the Nixon years.²

What were the motives behind the American arms policy towards Israel in the period between 1969 and 1974? What kinds of weapons, and in what quantities, were sold to Israel? Why was this military assistance so extensive?

American foreign policy in the Middle East

The American foreign policies with regards to the Middle East throughout the majority of time between 1948 and 1974 were deeply affected by the tensions connected to the Cold War. The U.S.’ power was diminishing while the Soviet Union’s power improved, and the outbreak of several international crises in the 1960s and 1970s made this a challenging era for the makers of U.S. foreign policy.³ The U.S. foreign policy-makers believed that military power was an important tool for shaping the world in favour of the United States. By keeping the Israeli military defence strong, Nixon and Kissinger believed that the balance of power in the Middle East would remain unchanged, and stability in the region as a whole would persist.⁴ In a memorandum from Nixon to Kissinger in 1970, Nixon wrote that the U.S. interests in the Middle East “are basically pro-freedom and not just pro-Israel because of the Jewish vote. We are *for* Israel because Israel in our view is the only state in the Mideast which is *pro*-freedom and an effective opponent to Soviet expansion.”⁵

In the first years of Richard Nixon’s presidency, he agreed with the State Department that regional instability in the Middle East was favourable to the Soviet Union. They believed that this would influence the Arab countries to be more dependent on the Kremlin, and the spread of communism would be imminent. This was one of the United States’ greatest fears, that the Soviet Union would increase its power and threaten American interests and allies in the

² Memorandum for the President, 17 September 1970. Subject: Financial Assistance for Israel. Source: National Archives (NA), Nixon Presidential Materials (NPM), Memo Saunders to HAK, 4/9/70, NSC, H-Files, Box H-171.

³ Logevall, Fredrik and Preston, Andrew (eds.) 2008. *Nixon in the World. American Foreign Relations (1969-1977)*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc.: 4

⁴ Logevall and Preston 2008: 129

⁵ Quoted in Christison, Kathleen 2001. *Perceptions of Palestine. Their influence on U.S. Middle East Policy*. California: University of California Press, Ltd.: 130

region. Nixon and Kissinger had a great confidence in the power of having strong allies, and Israel became one of those. The Nixon Administration came to consider Israel an important strategic partner that could project American interests in the region, and maintain the balance of power in the Middle East.

The President came to office believing that the Arab world “had aligned itself with Moscow because the United States had not been impartial, and he espoused ‘evenhandedness.’ Kissinger, however, believed that the way to combat the Soviets in the Middle East was to strengthen U.S. allies while weakening Soviet allies and undermining their confidence in the Soviets.”⁶ At the end of Nixon’s presidency, it was Kissinger’s view that had been the winning strategy applied to the American approach in the Middle East.

From 1971 onwards, the United States drastically increased its supply of military and financial aid to Israel. This was demonstrated by the first long-term arms deal with Jerusalem in December 1971.⁷ The escalation of financial aid was also apparent, rising from around \$102 million in 1970, to \$643.5 million in 1971. 85 per cent of these funding’s consisted of military assistance. After the October War in 1973, the aid to Israel increased fivefold, stabilising at around \$3 billion a year in loans and grants, making Israel the largest recipient of American foreign assistance in the world.⁸

During the final stages of the October War in 1973, the American government carried out a massive airlift to Israel that came to prove crucial for the outcome of the war. This package improved the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) and made sure that the Soviet deliveries of military equipment to Egypt and Syria did not surpass the U.S.’ deliveries to Israel. As such, the balance of power in the Middle East remained unchanged. Nixon also approved an aid bill to Israel, worth \$2.2 billion. The bill was intended to help Israel recover after the war, both to manage payment for the airlift and also to provide the means for rebuilding the army.⁹ In the decades that followed Nixon’s resignation from office in 1974, American aid to Israel would continue to grow, and Israel and the United States would remain its close relationship.¹⁰ Why did the Israelis have such a power over the American government?

⁶ Christison 2001: 126

⁷ Kochavi 2009: 4; see chapter 4

⁸ Mearsheimer and Walt 2007: 26

⁹ Kochavi 2009: 8; Eifram, Karsh 1997, *Israel*, in Yezid Sayigh and Avi Shlaim (eds), *The Cold War and the Middle East*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc.: 166

¹⁰ Shlaim, Avi 2000. *The Iron Wall. Israel and the Arab World*. London: Penguin Books: 306; see chapter 4

The American Government and the making of foreign policy

To understand the decision-making process within the American bureaucracy with regards to the foreign policies concerning Israel and the United States' weapon sales to the country, one has to study the American political system. The main institution for developing foreign policy in the U.S. Government is the Department of State (State Department), in correspondence with the Congress.¹¹ The State Department is administered by the Secretary of State, who is in command of the foreign policy-making and is in charge of the department and its staff. The State Department did not initially believe that the tensions in the Middle East were caused by increased Soviet influence. The department believed the increasing problems were local, and that this was the problem the U.S. should focus on.¹²

The President and his staff in the White House are the second main institution in the United States Government. The White House was centred on defeating the Soviet Union, and building a network of allies that could help the United States reach its goals.¹³ Many of the foreign policy decisions were decided upon because of concern for the Soviet Union's expansion, and many of the arms sales to the region were either made or denied because of this interest.¹⁴ The National Security Council (NSC) is the President's principal forum for considering national security and foreign policy matters. The council is chaired by the President. Its regular attendees are the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Treasury, the Secretary of Defence, the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and many more. The NSC continually works out policy options for the President to decide on.¹⁵

When Nixon took office, he immediately revitalised this system. He wanted it to be the "principal forum for consideration of policy issues" and established several inter-agency committees to assist the NSC's work.¹⁶ The man Nixon put in charge of the new NSC was his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger. He was also the chairman of the newly

¹¹ Shannon, Vaughn P. 2003. *Balancing Act. U.S. Foreign Policy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. Burlington: Ashgate: 28; Zernichiw, Simen 2010. *The Palestine Option. US Policy Towards the Palestinian Armed Movement 1965-1973*. MA Thesis in History, University of Oslo,: 3

¹² Christison 2001: 126

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ Quandt 2005: 16

¹⁵ Terry, Janice J. 2005. *U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East. The Role of Lobbies and Special Interest Groups*. London: Pluto Press: 29

¹⁶ Quandt 2005: 57; Daalder, Ivo H., and Destler, I. M., 2009. *In the Shadow of the Oval Office. Profiles of the National Security Advisers and the Presidents They Served – From JFK to George W. Bush*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc.: 94

established National Security Council Review Group, which would review different policy studies in the form of National Security Study Memoranda (NSSM). These, in turn, were to be discussed by a Senior Review Group (SRG) and then referred to the full NSC board for discussion and decision. After this, a National Security Decision Memorandum (NSDM) would be issued.¹⁷ Neither Nixon nor Kissinger trusted the State Department and what it could accomplish. They wanted to have complete control over the foreign policy making, and this would be done from the White House. Therefore, Nixon and Kissinger created “back channels” that would enable them to deal directly with different foreign governments in secret from the State Department and others.¹⁸

American interests in the Middle East

The U.S.’ strategies concerning the Middle East during the Nixon administration were vulnerable to influence from several factors. These factors might affect the policymaker’s attitudes, assessments and decisions, and in the United States government, there were especially three levels of influence that could impact the way U.S. foreign policy-making was formed and executed. The three different levels of influence were its global strategic interests, such as the Middle East; domestic political interests, such as the Israel lobby and the American population; and third, the influence of the individual policymaker. All of these different levels affected the American policy-making with regards to Israel and the arms sale to the country in the 1970s.

Global strategic interests

The first level of influence on the American foreign policy-making was affected by the U.S. government’s desire to undermine the Arab states confidence in that the Soviet Union could produce a diplomatic process and achieve peace in the region so this, in turn, might reduce the threat of communist infiltration and dependence of Soviet aid.¹⁹ Several of the decisions made in regards to the Middle East during the Cold War were influenced by the desire to contain the spread of communism and the Soviet Union’s influence throughout the world. The American decision makers believed that a strong Israel would help achieving this goal, and

¹⁷ Quandt 2005: 57; Daalder and Destler 2009: 94

¹⁸ Daalder and Destler 2009: 95; Logevall and Preston 2008: 5

¹⁹ Christison 2001: 126

justified the deliveries of military equipment and financial aid to Israel between 1969 and 1974 with this argument.²⁰

Secondly, by having several reliable allies in the area, access to oil would be assured. Oil has always been an important reason for the United States to pay special attention to the Middle East, as American oil companies were active in developing the oil resources in the area. These oil reserves came with a low production cost and were therefore very important for the larger oil consuming states in the world.²¹ By having a close and powerful ally in the region, the American government believed that Israel could help stop Soviet influence and consequently maintain the United States' other interests in the region, such as securing the deliveries and recovery of oil.²² As a result, through the majority of the period from 1948 until the mid-1960s, the United States provided Israel with few arms and only modest amounts of aid.²³

The third, and final, policy was to help create an environment that would be in favour of the American commercial interest in the Middle East.²⁴ The U.S. wanted to have as many allies in the world as possible, but the strong backing of Israel made this more difficult during the Nixon Administration.

Domestic political interests

The American policies in the 1970s were also very much influenced by domestic political interests and pressure. The Congress had the ability to pressure the President into not forming policies that could be deemed as unfavourable to Israel. This was due to the Congress being sensitive to pressure, more so than the President and the White House. During the 1970s, the Congress was strongly affected by pro-Israeli sentiment. The Jewish population within the United States was, and still is, small in numbers but supported the presidential campaigns with large donations, in addition to the Senate elections. The Jewish voters also have high turnout rates in the most important areas.²⁵

²⁰ Christison 2001: 126; Quandt 2005: 61-62

²¹ Quandt 2005: 12

²² Quandt 2005: 11-12

²³ Quandt 2005: 13

²⁴ Karp, Candace 2005. *Missed Opportunities. US Diplomatic Failures and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-1967*. California: Regina Books: iii; Quandt 2005: 11-15

²⁵ Mearsheimer and Walt 2007: 163-164; Christison 2001: 136-137; Yaqub, Salim. *The Weight of Conquest: Henry Kissinger and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, in Logevall, Fredrik and Preston, Andrew: *Nixon in the World. American Foreign Relations, 1969-1977*. New York 2007: Oxford University Press: 230

There were many active supporters for the Jewish cause and for increased military assistance for Israel. These supporters could be defined as part of the Israel lobby as, under American law, a lobbyist is defined as “an individual or organisation whose job is to influence the passing or defeat of legislation and who receives money for that purpose.”²⁶ The Israel lobby is not defined by ethnicity or religion but by a political agenda. Consequently, it was important for the American President, in the making of foreign policies, to consider domestic demands from such interest groups, as he himself is a product of the political system.²⁷

The Israeli lobbying groups, such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), had a major impact on domestic policies, legislation and congressional votes, especially during the Nixon Administration. This was achieved through the use of personal contacts and financial contributions. AIPAC was formed before the creation of Israel in 1948, and have been actively lobbying in the United States since. Its goals were to ensure that American foreign policies were evolving in a direction that would benefit the Zionist interest. Zion is the Jewish word for Jerusalem, and represented a long-term dream of a Jewish return to the holy land.²⁸ To avoid any confusion, the Israel lobby is referred to as the Zionist lobby when mentioned before 1948.

Furthermore, among the American population, only around 2-3 per cent were of Jewish faith. Although their numbers were small, there were a lot of other pro-Israeli groups in the American society, such as the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) and Christians United for Israel (CUFI). According to the historians John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, the Christian Zionists “viewed the establishment of the Jewish state as the fulfilment of biblical prophecy. Genesis says that God gave Abraham and his descendants the land of Israel; by colonizing the West Bank, Jews are merely taking back what God gave them.”²⁹ In fact, the support for Israel was so big in the beginning of the 1970s that the Jewish state was lightly referred to as the United States’ 51st state among the American population.³⁰

The lobbies’ influence in the higher organs of the U.S. government also developed greatly during the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. The Jewish society grew considerably, and both Kennedy and Johnson had many Jewish advisers in their administrations, among their

²⁶ Terry 2005: 29; Quandt 2005: 8-11

²⁷ Terry 2005: 29; Mearsheimer and Walt 2007: 132

²⁸ Mearsheimer and Walt 2007: 115; Waage, Hilde Henriksen 2013. *Konflikt og Stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. Kristiansand: Cappelen Damm AS.: 115

²⁹ Mearsheimer & Walt 2006: 107

³⁰ Waage 2013: 344

financial donors and personal friends. The War of Attrition in 1969-1970, and the October War in 1973 contributed to an increased focus in the pro-Israeli lobbies to ensure Israel's safety and domestic growth, and made it more difficult for the Nixon Administration to pass legislation that was not living up to the lobbies' expectations.³¹

The individual policymaker

The third and final level of influence concerning the United States' foreign policy-making was that of the individual policymaker. Their influence is important to understand in order to assist in exposing the U.S. arms sales towards Israel, and why this became so immense. The individual, such as the President or the Secretary of State, formulates policies, but in what ways can the individual's psychological traits affect the outcome of a policy? Professor in political science, William B. Quandt explains,

Small adjustments in a person's perceptions, in the weight accorded to one issue as opposed to another, can lead to substantial shifts of emphasis, of nuance, and therefore of action... Policymakers do not change from being pro-Israeli to being pro-Arab overnight, but crises may bring into focus new relations among issues or raise the importance of one interest, thus leading to changes in policy. Basic values will remain intact, but perceptions and understanding of relationships may quickly change.³²

A policymaker develops his/her beliefs, perspectives and perceptions during childhood and early adult lives, and these beliefs are under constant development throughout their lives. A person can change his or her former beliefs and replace them with new ones.³³ Some policymakers were more prone to outside pressure than others, such as President Truman in the late 1940s, whilst others were able to keep these pressures at a minimum, such as President Eisenhower in the 1950s. However, these historical figures were working under different circumstances, both domestically and internationally and may have been affected by these considerations in their making of foreign policy.³⁴

³¹ Mearsheimer and Walt 2007: 118-119

³² Quandt 2005: 19-20

³³ Zernichow 2010: 7

³⁴ Quandt 2005: 18-19

The Nixon Administration

Richard M. Nixon was inaugurated on 20 January 1969, and was forced to resign from office on 9 August 1974 following the Watergate scandal. Nixon served as Dwight D. Eisenhower's Vice President for 8 years and had been involved in the making of important foreign policy decisions during the 1950s. Therefore, Nixon regarded his experience in international affairs as one of his strongest assets, and foreign relations as a particularly important arena for presidential action.³⁵ He was a skilled politician, and had earned a reputation as a tough-minded anti-communist, as well as an advocate of a strong international role for the United States.³⁶

Richard Nixon admired strength and toughness, and firmly believed that foreign policy should be formulated in secret, “with only minimal contributions from the Congress and public opinion.”³⁷ Because of this, Nixon chose Henry Kissinger as his National Security Advisor, and later concurrently as Secretary of State (1969-1977). Kissinger is a former Harvard Professor, and a strong advocate for increased Israeli military and financial aid. He is a Jewish-German immigrant and was very concerned about the European Jews after the Holocaust and World War II. He was a strong advocate for a Jewish national home and wanted to reclaim the United States' position in world affairs as an important player after the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s. Kissinger stressed the importance of private diplomacy “and operating out of the public eye through a series of back channels and secret negotiations, Kissinger orchestrated the era of détente with the Soviet Union and the opening to China in 1971. He managed to negotiate the American exit from Vietnam by early 1973.”³⁸ Through his shuttle diplomacy in the aftermath of the October War in 1973, Kissinger secured the U.S.' position as a major diplomatic power and protected its leading position in the Middle East.³⁹ Nixon and Kissinger did not always get along, though were an effective team when they did. Before Kissinger was elected Secretary of State, replacing William P. Rogers in September 1973, he had devoted little time and energy to the issues that were dividing the

³⁵ Quandt 2005: 55

³⁶ Logevall and Preston 2007: 4

³⁷ Quandt 2005: 56

³⁸ Hanhimäki, Jussi 2004. *The Flawed Architect. Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc.: xvi

³⁹ *ibid*

Middle East. Only a possible confrontation with the Soviet Union as a result from growing tensions in the region, and the survival of Israel, could evoke his interest.⁴⁰

For the position of Secretary of State, Nixon initially chose a close personal friend, William P. Rogers (1969-1973). He had served as Attorney General in Eisenhower's administration, and had a degree from law school. Rogers was not particularly experienced in foreign policy-making and was chosen as the Secretary of State precisely because he knew little about diplomacy and could keep a low profile. Therefore, he was regularly cut out of policymaking, as was the Secretary of Defence Melvin Laird (1969-1973).⁴¹

Usually, American policymakers had only a general idea or thoughts about what had happened in the Middle East and what the United States' own strategies and interests should be related to the region and Israel. One reason for this could be lack of knowledge. Before Nixon became president, there had really never been an American politician with a deep understanding of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Consequently, American policy-makers seemed reluctant to abandon central beliefs, or recent political lines that had been conducted in the Middle East. Because of this, they were also able to abandon failed policies and move on; this was often successful. One simple change in judgement could lead to a major reassessment of American policy.⁴² Professor William B. Quandt teaches us again that:

There is no accepted wisdom. Each president and his top advisers must evaluate the realities of the Middle East, of the international environment, of the domestic front, and of human psychology before reaching a subjective judgement. While positions tend to be predictable, policies are not. They are the realm where leadership makes all the difference. And part of leadership is knowing when a policy has failed and should be replaced with another.⁴³

Literature

There have been countless studies conducted on American foreign policy between 1969 and 1974, with special emphasis on the U.S.' relationship with Israel. Several of these accounts contain some information about the American arms sale to Israel, but no grand study has been performed on this subject. Many authors review Israel's nuclear adventure, which was started in the late 1950s, and the United States' failure to stop the Israelis from acquiring a nuclear

⁴⁰ Quandt 2005: 130

⁴¹ Quandt 2005: 57; Logevall and Preston 2007: 5

⁴² Quandt 2005: 10

⁴³ Quandt 2005: 7

capacity. This caused resentment from the Arab countries in the Middle East toward the U.S., and made it more difficult to continue an even-handed approach towards the region. Avner Cohen's chapter *Israel* in Hans Born, Bates Gill, and Heiner Hänggi's *Governing the Bomb*, chronicle Israel's nuclear program and deal with the nuclear reactor *Dimona* and Israel's nuclear opacity. Avner Yaniv's *Deterrence Without the Bomb* provides additional information regarding the subject of Israel's nuclear program. Donald Neff's *Fallen Pillars* contains some information about the subject as well, in addition to arms deliveries during the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations.⁴⁴ These books offer a valuable overview of Israel's road towards a nuclear capacity and the United States' relations to this, as well as shed light on the U.S. arms sale to Israel.

A significant body of scholars describe the American foreign policy-making in the 1970s. One of the most valuable works to this thesis is William B. Quandt's *Peace Process*. Professor Quandt is a former National Security Council member from the administrations of Nixon and Carter and offers invaluable inside knowledge of policymaking and how the decisions were taken to the highest levels of government. Kathleen Christison's *Perceptions of Palestine*, and Avi Shlaim *Iron Wall*, offers a broader account of U.S. Middle Eastern history and the Arab-Israeli wars.⁴⁵

Concerning the important policymakers during this period, several works provide essential information on how Nixon conducted tasks and duties the presidency required: why both Nixon and Kissinger formed and exercised American strategies and policies, and how much domestic and international pressure had a say in their perceptions of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Nixon had many great triumphs as well as tragic failures, and has attracted the interest of many scholars and interested readers. Detailed accounts of both Nixon and Kissinger's executions of different strategies concerning the Middle East, and especially the arms sales to

⁴⁴ Cohen, Avner, «Israel», in *Governing the Bomb. Civilian Control and Democratic Accountability of Nuclear Weapons*, ed. Hans Born, Bill Gates, and Heiner Hänggi. Oxford 2012 (2010?): Oxford University Press; Neff, Donald 1995. *Fallen Pillars. U.S. Policy Towards Palestine and Israel since 1945*. Washington D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies; Yaniv, Avner 1987. *Deterrence without the Bomb. The Politics of Israeli Strategy*. California: Lexington Books

⁴⁵ Quandt, William B. 2005. *Peace Process. American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*. Washington D.C.: University of California Press, Ltd.; Christison, Kathleen 2001. *Perceptions of Palestine. Their Influence on U.S. Middle East Policy*. London: University of California Press Ltd.; Shlaim, Avi 2000. *The Iron Wall. Israel and the Arab World*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.

the region, are helpful in creating a background for the surroundings when working with the primary source materials.⁴⁶

Primary sources

Although there are several books and studies that contain information regarding the U.S. arms sale to Israel between 1969 and 1974, no detailed account has been found. Therefore, primary source material can help fill this gap. The main focus of primary document materials would be the records of the White House, since these are more important for the period under study. Nixon and Kissinger were the main legislators in the making of foreign policy during this time, with back-channel diplomacy and the improving of détente and the NSC, and the White House was the most important centre of foreign policy power in the 1970s.

The brunt of the archival research for this study was performed among the records of the Nixon presidency at the Nixon library in Yorba Linda, California. The archive contains a vast amount of documents, but despite of the normal 30-year declassification schedule, several important documents are still not released. These would likely have been of high value to this study. Among these classified documents is the National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) 98, written by Henry Kissinger about Israeli arms requests in the year 1970. Although the document is still classified, there exist several reviews of the NSSM 98 amongst the archival materials that are of importance and could contribute to uncovering the original contents of the NSSM 98.⁴⁷ The high-quality digitised document series *Foreign Relations of*

⁴⁶ Logevall, Fredrik and Preston, Andrew eds. 2008. *Nixon in the World. American Foreign Relations, 1969-1977*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.; Kochavi, Noam 2009. *Nixon and Israel. Forging a Conservative Partnership*. Albany: State University of New York Press; Hanhimäki, Jussi 2004. *The Flawed Architect. Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.

⁴⁷ See Chapter 3, «Army capabilities»

the United States (FRUS), compiled by the State Department, is also of high value, especially while writing about the period after the October War in 1973.⁴⁸

It must be noted that primary sources from the U.S. archives consist mostly of memoranda, conversations between the heads of states, telegrams, drafts, telephone conversations, and so on. It is essential to remember that some of these documents could be biased, and not reflecting an objective reality. This also applies to secondary sources. Furthermore, one should keep in mind that it was not always the person who is stated as the writer or legislator of the source who actually sent them out. Therefore, to avoid making any mistakes, the person's name signed on the source is only used in this study when there is a strong indication that the person actually wrote it or was involved in the making of the document. It is also difficult to know if the text was read by anyone, or what impact this might have had. Conversely, the document can represent the different views and attitudes of the multiple policymakers in the Nixon Administration, and make the source a valuable comparison to other documents from this era.

⁴⁸ National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials in the Nixon Presidential Library & Museum, Yorba Linda, California; *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS), United States State Department – Office of the Historian. Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 2004.

2 The U.S. and Israel, 1948-1969 – A Flourishing Relationship

For Israel was not created in order to disappear – Israel will endure and flourish. It is the child of hope and the home of the brave. It can neither be broken by adversity nor demoralized by success. It carries the shield of democracy and it honors the sword of freedom; and no area of the world has ever had overabundance of democracy and freedom – John F. Kennedy, 1960⁴⁹

During the Cold War, the dominant focus of the United States was its conflict with the Soviet Union, to ensure its access to Middle Eastern oil, and to stop the spread of communism throughout the world. To achieve its goals, the United States wanted, and needed, strategically placed and loyal allies in the Middle East. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Middle Eastern oil reservoir made up two-thirds of the world's known oil reserves. This made the region very important to the Washington policymakers, especially in the 1970s.⁵⁰ After the first Arab-Israeli War in 1948 and the Suez Crisis in 1956, the Middle East seemed relatively stable. It was a stalemate, with no resolution to the conflict that was created after the formation of Israel in 1948.⁵¹ It was not until the Six-Day War in 1967 that the world began to understand that the Arab countries' frustration over the territories occupied by Israel in the previous wars would only continue to grow unless there was a solution to the conflict.

Between 1948 and 1969, Washington believed that the United States was the only nation in the world that could successfully prevent the Soviet Union from extending its influence in the Middle East.⁵² The American ambassador in charge of U.S. missions to the Near East, Edwin Allan Locke Jr. (1951-1952), believed that the American government was a good example for other countries, even the entire world, on how the different governments should practice their politics and run their nations. Locke anticipated that the countries who followed the American example would manage to obtain self-sustained growth and political stability. This was particularly aimed towards the countries in the Middle East, and one of the reasons why this

⁴⁹ Speech by Senator John F. Kennedy, Zionists of America Convention, Statler Hilton Hotel, New York, NY, 26 August 1960. Read the whole speech at: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=74217> last visited, 22 October 2014.

⁵⁰ Lesch, David W. 1996. *The Middle East and the United States. A Historical and Political Reassessment*. Colorado: Westview Press, Inc.: 1

⁵¹ Quandt 2005: 2

⁵² Eifram 1997: 162

area became so important to the United States. The U.S. wanted to be the country with the utmost diplomatic power, and to dampen the Soviet Union's influence.⁵³

In the making of Israel's foreign and defence policies, the Cold War played a role in forming its relationship with the United States. Israel used the United States' fear of communism to bring the two countries closer. It was communism against democracy. The majority of the Arab states were not yet affected by the Soviet Union but Washington was still worried that this might happen in the near future.⁵⁴ The reason for this was the Arab countries and their relationship with former colonial masters in Western Europe, specifically Great Britain and France. Decolonisation in Asia and the Middle East throughout the 1940s resulted in hostile feelings towards these powers, and these did not improve when the voting in the United Nations (UN), favouring the Partition Plan for Palestine (UN 181), established a Jewish national home in the former British Mandate Palestine. The partition of Palestine ended in the first Arab-Israeli war, in May 1948.⁵⁵ The Israelis gained many enemies during this war, and were in desperate need of financial and military support.

American foreign policy during the Truman administration (1945-1953)

In May 1942, at the Biltmore Hotel in New York, an extraordinary Zionist Congress decided to open for Jewish immigration to Palestine. The Jewish Agency, the largest non-profit organisation in the world at that time and the Palestinian Jews' semi-official government, should have had control of the immigration and the rebuilding of the country.⁵⁶ Palestine was going to be a Jewish state, but the borders were not defined. When the United States and Europe became fully aware of the Holocaust, Americans and Europeans gave their support to the idea of a Jewish state.⁵⁷

Harry S. Truman (1945-53) had barely been President a week when he received the first appeal from the Zionist lobbies in the United States to support a new Jewish state in Palestine. The Zionists were supported by millions of Americans who wanted to condemn Hitler's actions against the European Jews during World War II. This could not be ignored by the

⁵³ Eifram 1997: 162

⁵⁴ Neff 1995: 170-171

⁵⁵ Karsh 1997: 157

⁵⁶ Waage 2013: 87

⁵⁷ Ibid

President. Truman had little experience in the making of foreign policy, and the President decided to stand by the Balfour Declaration and its promise of a new Jewish homeland in Palestine.⁵⁸

Like any American president, Truman was under a tremendous amount of pressure from the Zionist lobbies. He understood that if he wanted to stay in office he had to keep the voters happy, and that included the American Jewish population that supported the creation of a Jewish national home and other interest groups that promoted the Jewish cause.⁵⁹ In 1945, the American Congress supported free immigration for the European Jews to Palestine. The State Department, however, were not as enthusiastic about the creation of Israel. The department was shocked over what was going on in Palestine, with Jewish terrorist attacks against both the Palestinian public and British envoys. The State Department believed that the United States should stay out of the Middle East, as it saw the region as a source of serious conflicts both then and in the future. Truman was not against the State Department's views and its concerns about what the formation of a Jewish national home would do to the Middle East, but the President had to consider both options.⁶⁰

Truman had several pro-Zionist advisers in his administration, who were also some of his closest friends. They had a strong impact on the President's decisions, and managed to persuade Truman that he was doing the right thing by supporting a new Jewish state.⁶¹ The Zionist lobbying groups had grown in strength and numbers in the period leading up to 1948. These groups combined had around one million members in the United States alone. The lobby did everything it could to push the Truman administration closer to a decision of supporting a Jewish national home, with letters, money contributions, and lobbying. In 1945, "thirty-three state legislatures, representing 85 per cent of the U.S. population, passed resolutions favouring establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine."⁶² At a meeting in Potsdam in July, Truman received a cable from "thirty-seven governors... generated by the Zionists, urging that he demand that Britain lift the limits on Jewish immigration to Palestine. Over half the Congress also signed a message to this effect."⁶³ It was not an easy task for the President to take into accounts the State Department's and the Congress' differing views on foreign

⁵⁸ Waage 2013: 91

⁵⁹ Spiegel, Steven L. 1985. *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict. Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press: 19-20

⁶⁰ Waage 2013: 92

⁶¹ Christison 2001: 69

⁶² Christison 2001: 73

⁶³ *ibid*

policy issues. In 1948, the State Department favoured a U.N. trusteeship over Palestine, not a partition. They believed that by supporting a partition of Palestine, as the Congress did, this would threaten American interests in the Middle East, and increase Soviet influence in the area.⁶⁴

Truman had changed his mind several times regarding the United States' approach to the possible creation of a Jewish state. The President was reluctant to do anything because of the pressure from the State Department to not support a partition plan. The Zionists were furious with Truman for not backing the partition fully.⁶⁵ The presidential elections were coming up in November 1948 and Truman had to satisfy the Jewish voters, as well as the rest of the American population. He did just that, and on 14 May 1948, Israel's first Prime- and Defence minister David Ben-Gurion announced the establishment of Israel. Eleven minutes later, the United States recognised the new Jewish state, with the Soviets right behind, recognising Israel a few days later.⁶⁶

Dwight D. Eisenhower and U.S. foreign policy during the 1950s

President Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-1961) was more conscious of the benefits of having closer ties with the Arab states in the Middle East than Truman. Eisenhower "acknowledged that he knew little about the Jewish people, having always thought of them as characters that only existed in the Bible." He believed that "the Jews were in a category of extinct species."⁶⁷ Eisenhower did not believe that he had to pay as much attention to domestic pressures from the Israeli lobbying groups as Truman had done. In response to the Suez War in 1956, which Eisenhower opposed, he stated that "[t]he welfare and best interest of our country were to be the sole criteria on which we operated."⁶⁸ No country or people would change his policies. He proved this by being the only president "to exert heavy pressure on the Jewish state for territorial withdrawal" from the territories Israel had seized from Egypt during the 1956 Suez War.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Christison 2001: 78-79

⁶⁵ Waage 2013: 114-115; Spiegel 1985: 28

⁶⁶ Waage 2013: 112

⁶⁷ Christison 2001: 96

⁶⁸ Christison 2001: 97

⁶⁹ Christison 2001: 96

In the early 1950s, U.S. policy on arms sales to the region was to restrict weapon sales to both Arab countries and Israel. Despite the United States' restrictions, numerous weapons, including aircrafts, were illegally smuggled into Israel by American supporters.⁷⁰ Israel had not aligned itself with either of the two superpowers so far, but both the Soviet Union and the United States had resources Israel wanted. The Soviet Union had the people, in terms of a large Jewish minority that was to become the core issue of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment in the 1970s, and they had the weapons.⁷¹ The United States had weapons and money. For that reason, Israel's solution was to adopt a policy of "non-identification", to have the opportunity of operating with both countries.⁷² Israel's strategy lasted until the beginning of the Korean War (1950-1953), when Israel sided with the United States and began to look to Washington as a source of obtaining arms. Unfortunately for Israel, this was after the Tripartite Declaration was formed.⁷³

After the first Arab-Israeli War in 1948-1949, the United States, France, and Great Britain formed an arms embargo against the countries in the Middle East known as the Tripartite Declaration. The declaration was implemented in 1951 and defined the countries' commitment to peace and stability in the region and their opposition to the use or threat of force.⁷⁴ Eisenhower saw the declaration as an instrument to ensure neutrality of the West and the United States in the Arab-Israeli feud.⁷⁵ However, "[t]he declaration included significant loopholes, including the recognition that all states 'need to maintain a certain level of armed forces to assure their internal security and their legitimate self-defense.' The appropriate level of each state was open to interpretation, and this was exploited by both suppliers and recipients."⁷⁶ Not long after the declaration was created, France secretly broke the treaty, "seeing Israel as a natural ally against Arab nationalists opposing its claim to Algeria", and began making secret arms sales to the Jewish state. By 1955 French weapon sales to Israel included aircrafts, heavy artillery and tanks. While Israel received weapons from France, the U.S. continued its arms embargo for the next seven years⁷⁷

⁷⁰ Neff 1995: 167

⁷¹ About the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, see chapter 5.

⁷² Neff 1995: 169

⁷³ *ibid*

⁷⁴ Neff 1995: 169; Spiegel 1985: 30

⁷⁵ Neff 1995: 170

⁷⁶ Steinberg, Gerald 1998. *Israel*. In Paul Singh Revinder, *Arms Procurement Decision Making, Volume I: China, India, Israel, Japan, South Korea and Thailand*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc.: 107

⁷⁷ Neff 1995: 169

Israel's search for allies

The level of financial and military aid for the state of Israel has varied between the different American Presidents from 1948 to 1969, but one president stands out, and this was Eisenhower. Israel wanted a strong ally, and it wanted arms to defend itself against a possible Arab attack. Israel had many supporters in the United States, both Jewish and Christians, and needed as much financial support as possible during the initial stages of the nation-building process after 1948.⁷⁸ Shimon Peres, Director General of the Ministry of Defence (1953-1959) in Israel, wanted to focus on France rather than the U.S. Peres did not believe that the Americans would supply arms to Israel in the quantities the country needed. But as long as the arms embargo continued, Jerusalem was willing to receive arms from anyone. France offered it to them, in the hope of inducing Israel into going to war against Egypt in 1956. The U.S., in contrast, would only allow its allies to supply arms to Israel on the condition that Israel did not go to war. Israel could not promise this.⁷⁹

Israel's first Prime- and Defence Minister was David Ben-Gurion. He held this position until his retirement in 1963, except for a brief period between 1954 and 1955. Ben-Gurion was an important figure in the making of the Jewish state and in the Israeli government as the leader of Mapai, one of the biggest Zionist movements in the Palestinian Mandate and the largest party in Israel until 1970.⁸⁰ Unlike Peres, Ben-Gurion worked on persuading the United States to issue a formal statement saying that the U.S. would come to Israel's defence against a Soviet, or a Soviet-backed attack, if such a situation should arise. Ben-Gurion explained,

[w]hen we are isolated, the Arabs think that we can be destroyed and the Soviet exploits this card. If a great power stood behind us, and the Arabs knew that we are a fact that cannot be altered – Russia would cease its hostility toward us, because this hostility would no longer buy the heart of the Arabs.⁸¹

Despite of the Israelis' efforts in the 1950s, they could not get Eisenhower's full support. The President's stance remained unchanged.

As a result of the United States' lack of commitment towards Israel, the Israeli government needed to find other reliable allies. France was still selling military equipment to Israel after

⁷⁸Shlaim 2000: 145

⁷⁹ *ibid*

⁸⁰Waage 2013: 85

⁸¹ Quoted in Shlaim 2000: 191

the Suez War in 1956, but Ben-Gurion did not trust the French government to not change its policies because of pressure from the Arab countries. Therefore, he turned his attention toward West Germany. Israel had already received financial aid from the Federal Republic of Germany since 1952, but the Israeli government only asked the Germans in fear that the French alliance would end.⁸² Equipment and financial aid was not all the Israelis wanted when in the late 1950s, Israel began to develop a nuclear capacity.

Israel's nuclear history and the United States

Israel's nuclear project was initiated during an era when the country's leader still had the authority and the means to initiate a nuclear venture on his own.⁸³ Because of Ben-Gurion's influence and power as the Israeli Prime Minister, he was allowed maximum political flexibility and deniability. He believed that nuclear weapons would be the ultimate answer to Israel's security needs. As he saw it, Israel was surrounded by enemies and wanted to have the best possible means for a good military defence.⁸⁴

Israel was the sixth state in the world to develop nuclear weapons. The Israelis have never openly acknowledged their nuclear status, but had secretly begun to acquire a nuclear arsenal in the late 1950s. The United States could not be completely sure whether or not Israel had a nuclear capability, at least not before the U.S. took oversight pictures of the nuclear reactor Dimona, a 24 000 kilowatt nuclear facility, in the 1960s. Israel claimed that Dimona was dedicated to peaceful research and that no weapons were being produced there. The Israeli government assured the U.S. that they only wanted the ability and the resources to make such weapons if the Arabs were beginning to build their own. Washington accepted this, but had strong suspicions of a major Israeli nuclear weapons program.⁸⁵ This is called nuclear opacity – “a situation in which a state's nuclear capability has not been acknowledged, but is recognised in a way that influences other nations' perceptions and actions.”⁸⁶ The American acceptance allowed the Israelis to work on their nuclear arsenal without any disturbance.

⁸² Shlaim 2000: 191-192

⁸³ Cohen 2012: 155

⁸⁴ Cohen 2012: 154

⁸⁵ Neff 1995: 171

⁸⁶ Cohen 1998: 2

Moshe Dayan, the Chief of Staff of the Israel Defence Force (IDF) (1953-1958), and Defence Minister during the Six-Day War in 1967, has stated that Israel “would not be saved by others simply because it was a Jewish state with such a history of suffering behind it. To ensure its security and survival, the Jewish state should assume the posture of a ‘detonator’ or ‘biting beast.’ Anyone in the world, including the great powers, should know that if they attempt to disregard Israeli interests, there would be such an explosion that their own interests would also be damaged.”⁸⁷ Dayan advocated an Israeli self-reliance, and so did Ben-Gurion.

The Israeli Prime Minister began his nuclear undertakings in secret in 1959, without conveying his plans onward before the Knesset or the cabinet, which were responsible for the actions of the government. Ben-Gurion only shared his plans with his closest colleague’s in Mapai. Golda Meir, the Israeli Prime Minister during the Nixon administration in the 1970s, was one of those colleagues, and wanted Dimona to be a reality. Golda Meir and Abba Eban, the Minister without Portfolio (1959-1960) and later the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs (1966-1974), wanted to signal to the Americans that Israel was on the verge of becoming a nuclear power. “The idea was to signal to the Americans that Israel might be driven to go down the path of nuclear deterrence unless America agreed to supply Israel with advanced weapons in sufficient quantities to sustain the conventional balance of power between it and its Arab neighbors.”⁸⁸ This was something the Israelis and the Nixon administration believed could be a possibility during the October War in 1973, when Israel was losing ground to Egypt and Syria. Since Golda Meir was the Prime Minister of Israel at that time, her attitude towards Israel’s possible use of nuclear weapons, if threatened, was brought with her.⁸⁹

In 1955, the Eisenhower administration had offered Israel assistance in their nuclear research program. Eisenhower wanted this research to be done under the Atoms for Peace program, and Israeli scientists were trained in the United States to operate a nuclear reactor. The United States did not intend it to be as big as Dimona or a facility for developing nuclear weapons. In a speech in the UN National Assembly on 8 December 1953, Eisenhower stated that,

The... important responsibility of this Atomic Energy Agency would be to devise methods... to serve the peaceful pursuits of mankind. Experts would be mobilized to apply atomic energy to the needs of agriculture, medicine, and other peaceful activities. A special purpose would be to provide abundant electrical energy in the power-starved areas of the world. Thus the

⁸⁷ Yaniv: 88

⁸⁸ Shlaim 2000: 206-207

⁸⁹ Spiegel 1985: 255

contributing powers would be dedicating some of their strength to serve the need rather than the fears of the world.⁹⁰

The administration was afraid of the growing nuclear capability of the Soviet Union, and failed to confront Israel with its nuclear program. The U.S. focused more on France, Great Britain, and the Soviets, and whether these countries were in possession of, or in the making of, nuclear weapons. The United States placed Israel in the “third category priority” list, a list with countries they did not consider a production risk.⁹¹ Even though these countries possibly were in the possession of nuclear weapons themselves, the United States did not want this to be something every country should have. The great powers had a feeling of what was going on in Israel, but they had no concrete evidence of Israel’s nuclear arsenal. Professor of Non-proliferation Studies and author, Avner Cohen, argues that Israel’s nuclear opacity is “the worst kept secret in the world”, and this may be true.⁹²

The Kennedy and Johnson administrations and the first arms sales to Israel, 1961-1969

In February 1960, Eisenhower declared that the United States had no intention of becoming a major supplier of arms to the Middle East.⁹³ Already in 1962, President John F. Kennedy (1961-1963) breached this policy of non-alignment when Israel seemed to be falling behind in the Middle East arms race. Soviet weaponry flooded into the Arab states, something that worried the U.S. Because of this, the American president approved an Israeli request for HAWK surface-to-air missiles, which had been waiting to be cleared since the Eisenhower Administration.⁹⁴ The United States had now opened up for the sale of both defensive and offensive weapons to Israel for the first time in U.S. history. The United States did not want to pressure or provoke Israel by not provide armaments, and its failure to do anything about the Israeli government’s growing nuclear arsenal in the 1960s generated Arab mistrust towards

⁹⁰ Press release, “Atoms for Peace” speech, December 8, 1953. Source: National Archives, Eisenhower Presidential Materials, DDE’s Papers as President, Speech Series, Box 5, United Nations Speech, 12/8/53. Eisenhower archives, Atoms for Peace, Binder 13.

http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/atoms_for_peace/Binder13.pdf

⁹¹ Barret 2007: 144

⁹² Cohen 2012: 153

⁹³ Neff 1995: 170

⁹⁴ Eifram 1997: 162

Washington and pushed these states closer to the Soviet Union. Thus, the U.S. aligned itself with Israel without entering into a formal alliance.⁹⁵

The shift from Truman and Eisenhower's foreign policies in regards to Israel, and over to Kennedy and the first American arms sale to Israel in 1962 was substantial. This shift in the making of foreign policy was a consequence of several strategic considerations. Firstly, the U.S. had a desire to balance Soviet arms sales to Egypt with its own to Israel. The reason behind this aspiration was the fear of increased Soviet influence in the region. Secondly, the Kennedy Administration also wished to dampen Israel's nuclear ambitions, by supplying enough equipment to prevent Israel from possibly relying on its nuclear capability. And thirdly, the U.S. also wanted to encourage the Israeli government to respond favourably to U.S. initiatives.⁹⁶

John F. Kennedy was the first American president to call the connection with Israel a "special relationship." He was also "the first president to appoint a full-time aide to maintain contact with the U.S.-Jewish community, thus giving Jewish leaders, Israeli embassy officials, and pro-Israeli congressmen immediate access to the White House, which they had been denied during the Eisenhower Years."⁹⁷ Although this may not explain the increased weapon sales to Israel since 1962, it did supply the opportunity for pro-Israeli policies to be discussed in Congress, thus making it harder for the President and future presidents to go against their wishes. Despite the United States' desires to hide its increased aid to Israel, Israeli diplomacy, pro-Israeli advisers, and Kennedy's desire to maintain support from the Jewish voters and donors had a big impact on his decisions.⁹⁸

President Kennedy was shot and killed in November 1963. He was succeeded by Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-1969). In 1965, Johnson continued the sale of military equipment to Israel, and sold 210 M-48 Paton tanks and 48 Skyhawk bombers to Jerusalem. These tanks were shipped from West Germany to Israel in order to disguise the United States' involvement with Israel, in the hope of not suffering negative repercussions from the Arab states.⁹⁹ In addition to the weapon supplies, the United States had provided modest financial aid to Israel after 1948. This amount increased during the Johnson Administration, from an

⁹⁵ Neff 1995: 173

⁹⁶ Mearsheimer & Walt 2007: 24, Quandt 2005: 6

⁹⁷ Christison 2001: 107

⁹⁸ Mearsheimer & Walt: 25

⁹⁹ Mearsheimer and Walt 2007: 25; Spiegel 1985: 106-110

average of around \$63 million per year in the 1950s, to \$102 million per year from 1966 to 1970.¹⁰⁰ As the support for Israel grew bigger within the bureaucracy, the economic assistance of the United States would only intensify in the years to come.

After Ben-Gurion's retirement in 1963, Levi Eshkol was elected as the new Mapai leader and Prime Minister of Israel (1963-1969). Eshkol had served as Minister of Agriculture and Development and as Minister of Finance in the former governments.¹⁰¹ Like Ben-Gurion, Eshkol adopted the defence portfolio in addition to the role of Prime Minister. As Minister of Defence, Eshkol steadily built up the Israeli Defence Force (IDF), giving priority to the armoured corps and the air force. In 1965, Ezer Weizman, the commander of the IDF, was sent to Washington with a long list of necessary weapons, which included a high number of Skyhawk bombers, as well as 45 A-6 Intruders; attack airplanes. This request was approved, and the weapons were delivered to Israel.¹⁰²

In May 1967, Johnson raised the U.S.-Israeli relationship to a new level. On 14 May 1967, Egypt's President Nasser sent Egyptian troops into the Sinai Peninsula and demanded that the U.N. forces that had been stationed there leave. The U.N. forces had been stationed in Sinai since the Suez War in 1956. A week later, after midnight on 22-23 May, Nasser blocked the Strait of Tiran and the opening of the Gulf Aqaba, thus hindering Israel's access to the port at Eilat; the only Israeli port on the Red Sea. Johnson's primary concern at this time was not to relieve the threat against Israel, but to avoid involving the United States. The U.S. was deeply involved in the Vietnam War, and was not willing to get into a confrontation that might involve the Soviet Union.¹⁰³ This was one of the incidents leading to the outbreak of the Six-Day War in 1967, when, in the aftermath of the conflict, the United States radically changed its policies toward Israel.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Mearsheimer and Walt 2007: 26

¹⁰¹ Shlaim 2000: 218

¹⁰² Shlaim 2000: 218-219

¹⁰³ Christison 2001: 111; Quandt 2005: 24-25

¹⁰⁴ Ibid

The U.S. and the Six-Day War, 1967

Throughout the period leading up to the war in 1967, three incidents can explain Israel's requests for more military supplies. The first incident occurred in January 1964, when the Arab League gathered for a summit meeting in Cairo.¹⁰⁵ The main item on its agenda was the threat posed by Israel's plans for diversion of the Jordan River. Its plans were to divert water from the North of Jordan to irrigate the South. This would severely impact the available water supplies to Syria and Jordan, and these countries could not let this happen.¹⁰⁶ The second incident was the growing tensions in the region after the Israeli raid on the Jordan village Samu in November 1966, and the Israeli-Syrian air battle in April 1967. This resulted in the IDF shooting down six Syrian MiGs.¹⁰⁷ The Samu raid cost the lives of 3 Palestinian villagers with 96 injured, as well as the death of 15 Jordanian soldiers. Israel was strongly criticised for this incident by the Arab world, the U.N., and the United States. This situation arose as a consequence of several Palestinian guerrilla attacks inside Israeli territory between 1965 and 1967, which was also the third reason for Israel's requests for more military supplies. Jordan's King Hussein tried to prevent the Palestinian guerrilla organization Fatah, led by Yasir Arafat, from launching attacks on Israel from inside Jordan territory, in the hope of continuing his improving relationship with the Israeli government.¹⁰⁸

By 1967, Johnson's primary concern was the war in Vietnam. This preoccupation made him leave the Middle East foreign policy issues to the State Department. The department was concerned about the negative development in the region, with increased tensions surrounding the Israeli-Syrian borders. As the situation in the Middle East intensified, one might have suspected that the United States would take a strong position in support of Israel. On the contrary, the Johnson administration was reluctant to intervene. Johnson wanted to avoid another war at any costs, and tried to restrain the Israelis from attacking Egyptian forces near the borders.¹⁰⁹

After Egypt had closed the strait of Tiran and the Gulf of Aquba in May 1967, the United States was afraid of what Israel might do. On 25 May, Israel's Foreign Minister Abba Eban

¹⁰⁵ The Arab League was created in 1945 by Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan and Yemen. In 1964, Algeria, Kuwait, Morocco, Libya, Sudan and Tunisia had been granted memberships.

¹⁰⁶ Shlaim 2000: 229-230

¹⁰⁷ The MiG (Mikoyan-I-Gurevich), a Russian fighter aircraft capable of supersonic speeds; Quandt 2005: 24; Waage 2013: 340

¹⁰⁸ Waage 2013: 337; Christison 2001: 115

¹⁰⁹ Quandt 2005: 25-26

visited Washington, requesting more military assistance. Eban also wanted to get a firm commitment from the U.S. on supporting Israel if an Arab attack proved accurate.¹¹⁰ The Israeli Foreign Minister informed the United States of an impending Egyptian attack on Israel. He “was instructed to inform the highest authority of this new threat to peace and to request an official statement from the United States that an attack on Israel would be viewed as an attack on the United States.”¹¹¹ Johnson was not willing to issue such a statement, but was willing to grant \$70 million worth of military equipment. The President wanted to avert Israel from resorting to the use of force against Egypt’s blockade of the strait.¹¹² On 26 May, the President summoned the National Security Council for a meeting in the White House. There, he asked American intelligence experts to assess the situation in the Middle East. They concluded that an Arab attack was not imminent, and that Israel was in fact capable of sustaining a simultaneous attack from multiple Arab states.¹¹³

On 28 May 1967, Moscow told President Johnson that they had information about Israel and its plans to attack. The Soviets told Johnson that “if Israel starts military action, the Soviet Union would extend help to the attacked states.”¹¹⁴ The President warned Israel about the message from the Soviets, and urged the Israelis not to pre-empt an attack on Egypt. The Israelis took this advice into consideration, but continued to pressure Johnson to make a formal commitment, urging him to use all his influence in trying to revoke the blockade of the strait. The Israelis wanted support from the United States, but were afraid they might lose the American backing if they should strike first. Conversely, that was exactly what Israel did, and the war broke out on 5 June.¹¹⁵

The Six-Day War was the greatest victory in Israel’s history. It ended on 10 June 1967, with Israel in occupation of the Golan Heights, Gaza, Sinai, the old city of Jerusalem, and the West Bank. Throughout this war, Israel had no clear plan or guidelines for the army on how far to go. The Israeli government just followed the path the war took, and exploited the opportunities it gave.¹¹⁶ Israel had proven to be the stronger power in the Middle East, and this boosted its self-confidence. If Israel wanted to continue its superiority it had to get the best possible military defence, and wanted the help in achieving this goal from the United

¹¹⁰ Quandt 2005: 28; Waage 2013: 346

¹¹¹ Quandt 2005: 31

¹¹² Quandt 2005: 28; Waage 2013: 346

¹¹³ Brecher, Michael 1975. *Decisions in Israel’s Foreign Policy*. Yale University Press: 398; Quandt 2005: 36

¹¹⁴ *ibid*

¹¹⁵ Quandt 2004: 41; Waage 2013: 348, 352; see Appendix B1, map

¹¹⁶ Waage 2013: 355; Shlaim 2000: 242

States. Before the Israelis could begin planning their new arms request, the parties involved in the conflict had to achieve some form of resolution.¹¹⁷

The formation of U.N. Resolution 242 - 1967

The United States and the Soviet Union worked together on forming a U.N. Security Council Resolution that would benefit all parties involved in the conflict after the war had ended. This was not an easy task but in November 1967, Great Britain took charge, and the passing of U.N. Resolution 242 became a fact.¹¹⁸ The resolution called for “withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict” and “termination of all claims of belligerency and respect for an acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force.”¹¹⁹ The U.N. Resolution 242 did not specify which territories Israel had to withdraw from, if it was all the territory Israel had occupied in the recent conflict or some of it. Israel did not want to withdraw from any territories unless the Arab states ended the hostilities and agreed to full peace. The resolution would become the source of the diplomatic difficulties in achieving a permanent peace-agreement in the region in the years to come, and was to become the future of U.S. policy towards the Middle East.¹²⁰

In January 1968, Israeli Prime Minister Eshkol met with Johnson to discuss the new military arms requests. On top of the list were high-performance F-4 Phantom jets. Johnson was willing to assure that the Phantoms would be provided, but did not specify the terms, timing or the conditions.¹²¹ After much deliberation within the bureaucracy, Johnson decided, on 9 October 1968, that the United States and Israel would sign the deal for 50 F-4 Phantoms in December that year, with the first deliveries of aircrafts to Israel in 1969, and the rest in 1970.¹²²

¹¹⁷ *ibid*

¹¹⁸ For the full resolution, see Appendix C; see Appendix B1, map

¹¹⁹ Quandt 2005: 46; Christison 2001: 116

¹²⁰ Christison 2001: 117; Waage 2013: 363

¹²¹ Quandt 2005: 48

¹²² *ibid*

American policymaking concerning the Middle East during this period was not easy, and the different administrations' decisions were rarely seen in simple pro-Israeli or pro-Arab terms. The American policymakers did not make any swift decisions, and did not want to be dragged into another big conflict. Their goal was to keep the region stable, and achieve peace between the Arab states and Israel. If the administration could make this happen it was thought that this would halt the Soviet influence in the Middle East and increase Israel's security, while improving U.S. relations with the Arab countries.¹²³ Despite their goals, peace was not yet achieved when Lyndon B. Johnson ended his bid for re-election in November 1968. He was succeeded by another man that might adopt a different policy, and that was Richard M. Nixon.

¹²³ Quandt 2005: 14

3 The American Arms Sales to Israel, 1969-1971

Where peace is unknown, make it welcome; where peace is fragile, make it strong; where peace is temporary, make it permanent... After a period of confrontation, we are entering an era of negotiation. Let all nations know that during this administration our lines of communication will be open... We cannot expect to make everyone our friend, but we can try to make no one our enemy.¹²⁴

When President Richard Milhous Nixon took office in January 1969, there were a lot of questions to be answered and a lot of options regarding Israel and the Middle East to be considered. The former president Johnson had already signed off on an Israeli arms request for 50 F-4 Phantom jet fighter aircrafts that were to be delivered between 1969 and 1970. Nixon had intended to pursue an impartial policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict, and was not certain if selling military equipment to Israel was the best decision at this point in time. Nixon's reservations were short-lived, when in October 1970, the U.S. agreed to a SAM-equipment package. This package contained some of the U.S.' most sophisticated weapons that were delivered to Israel after the Jordan Civil War in September 1970. From 1970 to 1971 there was a remarkable increase in the quantities of military and financial aid that were either given or sold to Israel. President Nixon and Henry Kissinger stood by these actions and deemed them necessary for Israel's immediate and future safety.¹²⁵

Throughout the first three years of Nixon's presidency, Middle Eastern policymaking in the American government was dominated by sharp tensions between the Nixon-Kissinger globalist strategy, which was centred on defeating the Soviet Union, and a regionalist strategy pursued by the State Department under Secretary of State William P. Rogers (1969-1973). The regionalist approach viewed the events that took place in the Middle East as driven primarily by local factors, not inspired by the Soviet Union.¹²⁶ The State Department regarded Israel's inflexibility and lack of cooperation in the region, with consideration to the occupied territories and the Palestinian refugees, as the root cause of Soviet gains in the Middle East.

¹²⁴ Address by Richard M. Nixon to the Bohemian Club, San Francisco, July 29, 1967. FRUS, 1 969-76, vol. I: 2-3.

¹²⁵ Neff 1995: 175-176;

¹²⁶ Christison 2001: 126

The Nixon Administration, in the State Department's opinion, had to halt the Soviet influence by exerting pressure on Israel.¹²⁷ In retrospect, there was much to the regionalist approach, but Nixon and Kissinger were driven by a deep fear of communist infiltration and its spread throughout the world. In Kissinger's first years in office as National Security Advisor, he promoted that the United States should avoid any serious efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. As he saw it, the stalemate was in the United States' best interest because this would frustrate the radical Arabs and the Soviet Union. Initially, Nixon agreed with the State Department's view that Israel's rigidity concerning the withdrawal from its occupied territories was an important cause for the tensions in the area.¹²⁸

Within the State Department, professionals tended to agree that the situation in the Middle East was dangerous and unstable. Their perceptions were affected by the possible threats to American interests arising from the Arab states' frustration over the U.S. foreign policy-decisions, Israel's occupation of territories and the vast expulsion of Palestinians from Israel. The Arab states had therefore remained close to the Soviet Union after the war in 1967. Inside the American Government, the policymakers believed that the Middle East was divided in two camps, with the United States, Israel and the "moderate" Arabs in the one, and the Soviet Union and the "radical" Arabs in the other.¹²⁹ The State Department had for a long time wanted to keep an unbiased approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict. This meant that they wanted a policy that was neither pro-Arab nor openly pro-Israeli. With regards to arms deliveries to Israel, this even-handed approach urged restraint and territorial withdrawal from the territories Israel had occupied during the 1967 War.¹³⁰

Since before the 1967 War the Israelis had not felt safe, as they believed that Israel was surrounded by enemies. Especially after the Arab summit meetings in the 1960s, this feeling grew even stronger. These summits had, in principle, stated the Arab countries' wish for the final liquidation of Israel.¹³¹ But Israel had won the Six-Day War in 1967, and had proven its military might. The Israelis were in need of replacements for damaged military equipment, although this need was not abundant compared to the other Arab states. Once more, Israel had proven its superiority over the Arabs. Even without its lost equipment, Israel was still on top.

¹²⁷ Kochavi 2009: 4

¹²⁸ Christison 2001: 126

¹²⁹ Quandt 2005: 61

¹³⁰ Quandt 2005: 62

¹³¹ Shlaim 2009: 229-230

So why were the Israelis so desperate to continue their quest for more military equipment and financial aid?

The U.S. was deeply involved in Vietnam, and had a strict governmental budget. Israel had, in fact, planned for 1970 a growth rate of 7.5 per cent and a low rate of unemployment- approximately 4 percent.¹³² On the one hand, the Israelis were doing well, yet they still wanted and felt they needed more. If the American Government did not provide what the Israelis deemed necessary, Israel would try to seek assistance elsewhere. On the other hand, if the U.S. sold military equipment to Israel, the Nixon Administration was afraid that this might increase the Middle Eastern arms race with weapons provided by the Soviet Union. There were a lot of questions to be considered and discussed.

The first year in office, 1969-1970

Nixon and Kissinger held similar views on the international role of the United States, “on the need for strength linked to diplomacy”, and on the close relations between domestic and foreign policy as well as the danger of nuclear war.¹³³ One of the main Nixon and Kissinger strategies was détente. This strategy sought to improve U.S.-Soviet relations with arms limitation. The goal was to slow down the nuclear arms race that had increased since the late 1940s, and to create a good climate for cooperation and mutual acceptance.¹³⁴ In June 1970, the U.S. was concerned about increased Soviet activity in Cuba. Kissinger had received reports about the possibility that the Soviets were building a nuclear submarine base there, and this would have violated the solution reached after the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. No such base was detected, however, and Washington was assured that no nuclear weapons would be placed so close to the United States.¹³⁵ Nixon did stress the different circumstances his administration was placed under compared to Kennedy,

¹³² Memorandum for the President, 17 September 1970. Subject: Financial Assistance for Israel. Source: NA, NPM, Memo Saunders to HAK, 4/9/70, NSC Files, H-Files, Box H-171

¹³³ Quandt 2005: 57

¹³⁴ Quandt 2005: 60; Greenberg, David 2008, *Nixon as Statesman: The Failed Campaign*. In Fredrik Logevall & Andrew Preston, *Nixon in the World. American foreign relations, 1969-1977*. Oxford University Press, New York 2008: 56-57

¹³⁵ Hanhimäki 2004: 98-99

We also have had to consider that we are conducting foreign policy under extremely difficult circumstances. We did not invent the new strategic balance. We inherited a changed strategic relationship. Whereas the Kennedy administration dealt with the Soviet Union when the Soviets had 80 ICBM [Intercontinental ballistic missiles] that were liquid fuelled and took ten minutes to prepare, we face over 1,000 ICBM's that can be fired immediately.¹³⁶

Another foreign policy strategy of the Nixon administration was linkage. Nixon believed that since the world had become more interconnected in the years leading up to the 1970s, all matter of foreign policy was linked to everything else, “from nuclear weapons to European communism, from relations with China to domestic politics, and from the Vietnam War to Latin America and the Middle East.” Nixon and Kissinger sought to link together solutions to different crises, to find the best possible answers on how to handle them.¹³⁷

The Nixon administration was also credited for creating the landmark Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM), the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) negotiated with the Soviet Union and signed in 1972, and the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT).¹³⁸ These treaties were given great importance as a stabilising factor in the United States' and the Soviet Union's power struggle. SALT was designed to limit the production and deployment of strategic weapons. The treaties got positive feedback from arms control advocates as “the cornerstone of strategic stability, formally recognising that nuclear weapons offered no military and scant political utility in a world of superpower parity and mutually assured destruction.”¹³⁹

Despite the formation of these treaties, Nixon and Kissinger did not share the view of the arms control community, nor did they share the enthusiasm of the previous administrations for limiting the spread of nuclear weapons. They believed that the spread of such weapons was inevitable and not something the United States should oppose.¹⁴⁰ Neither Nixon nor Kissinger saw the nuclear arms race as the cause, or key factor, in the Cold War conflict. They believed that “more states with nuclear weapons were not only inevitable, but also potentially desirable.”¹⁴¹ The President and his National Security Advisor believed that political tensions were the reason for wars, not an increased arms race. Nixon and Kissinger's

¹³⁶ Quoted in Gavin, Francis J. 2008. *Nuclear Nixon: Ironies, Puzzles, and the Triumph of Realpolitik*, In Fredrik Logevall & Andrew Preston, *Nixon in the World. American foreign relations, 1969-1977*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008: 134; Meeting between Nixon and Committee on Arms Control and Disarmament, 21 March 1972, in editorial note, FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XIV, document: 218

¹³⁷ Logevall & Preston 2008: 7

¹³⁸ Gavin 2008: 126

¹³⁹ *ibid*

¹⁴⁰ Christison 2001: 133

¹⁴¹ Gavin 2008: 127

nuclear strategy was what Nixon called his “madman” strategy. The idea of this strategy, “was to convey the impression that the administration was willing, in a crisis, to use ‘excessive force’, and to threaten, often implicitly, that nuclear weapons might be used”.¹⁴²

Israel had already started their road to a nuclear arsenal in the late 1950s, and since 1965, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) suspected that Israel had stolen around 100 kilograms of weapons-grade uranium from the Apollo plant of Nuclear Materials and Equipment Cooperation (NUMEC) in Pennsylvania. NUMEC was one of the principal processors of nuclear materials in the United States, and several of its employees had close contacts with Israeli officials. Investigations were conducted by the CIA in 1969, but these were closed after a short time due to lack of evidence.¹⁴³ Kissinger did not have any grave concerns about the reports of the Israelis stealing uranium in 1969, and not long after this incident was known, the United States ended pressuring Israel to get rid of its nuclear arsenal.¹⁴⁴ Nixon and Kissinger both believed that Israel would never get rid of its nuclear capability, and that it did not really matter if it did. This policy change also emerged after an unrecorded and undocumented meeting between Nixon and Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir. The meeting led to a secret, mutual understanding on Israel’s nuclear weapons program. The contents of this meeting are still unrevealed. However, the outcome was that the United States ended pressuring Israel for answers about its nuclear program¹⁴⁵

Priority areas

Even though tensions were also high in the Middle East in the years following the 1967 War, the war in Vietnam was at the top of Nixon’s agenda regarding foreign policy issues. The war had lasted since 1957, but it was not until 1963 that the United States’ army had fought together with South Vietnam. The majority of the American public was tired of the war and wanted it to come to an end, together with bringing American troops home. The war was a grave concern for the American presidents dealing with it, and the Tet offensive in Vietnam in

¹⁴² Gavin 2008: 127, 136

¹⁴³ Memorandum for the Record, 9 March 1972. Subject: Possible Diversion of Weapons Grade Nuclear Materials to Israel by Officials of the Nuclear Materials and Equipment Corporation (NUMEC). Source: Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel (ISCAP), E.O. 13526, Section 5.3 (b)(3), ISCAP Appeal No. 2013-062, document 4. <http://www.archives.gov/declassification/iscap/pdf/2013-062-doc4.pdf>

¹⁴⁴ Christison 2001: 133; Seymour M. Hersh 1991, *The Samson Option: Israel’s Nuclear Arsenal and American Foreign Policy*. New York: Random House: 209-210

¹⁴⁵ Gavin 2008: 139

February 1968 was one of the reasons why the former President Lyndon B. Johnson decided not to run for re-election.¹⁴⁶ Apart from the Vietnam War, Nixon and Kissinger were primarily concerned with ending the Cold War rivalries between themselves and the Soviet Union. They wanted to protect American interests in the region, and to become the dominant power in the Middle East.¹⁴⁷

Nixon was unusual among the 20th century presidents in terms of his enthusiasm for foreign policy. He believed that it was the President's responsibility to conduct foreign policy, leaving the domestic policymaking to the Cabinet. The President was "conscious of the constraints on his freedom to act, especially by the Congress and public opinion, and was determined to take an active role in the conduct of diplomacy."¹⁴⁸ Nixon and Kissinger had revitalised the National Security Council (NSC). "Distrusting the professional diplomats of the State Department and determined to control foreign policy from the White House, they resurrected the machinery of government to place the National Security Council in charge of decision making and put Kissinger in control of the NSC."¹⁴⁹ Vietnam, the Soviet Union and China came to be linked as priority concerns to the Nixon administration and the NSC. Significantly, each was managed almost exclusively from the White House, with the President providing general guidance and Kissinger and his staff working on the details of the new policies and overseeing their implementation. One priority area was handed to the State Department, and this was the Middle East, at least for the time being.¹⁵⁰ Kissinger would gradually take over the policies regarding the Middle East from the early 1970s.

Israel and the United States, 1969-1970

For the American Government, it was important to understand what Israel really wanted in terms of its objectives of foreign policy decisions. The United States needed to analyse these objectives and decisions in order to make sure they were consistent with the government's own aims and interests in the region. These interests were mainly the Soviet Union, and to

¹⁴⁶ Smith, Charles D. 2010. *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict. A History with Documents*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's: 305-306

¹⁴⁷ Quandt 2005: 58

¹⁴⁸ Sandbrook, Dominic 2008, *Salesmanship and Substance: The influence of Domestic Policy and Watergate*. In Fredrik Logevall & Andrew Preston's *Nixon in the World. American foreign relations, 1969-1977*. New York: Oxford University Press: 88

¹⁴⁹ Logevall & Preston 2008: 5

¹⁵⁰ Quandt 2005: 59

maintain Israel's military superiority over the surrounding Arab countries. The United States and Israel wanted to keep the Israeli forces able to defeat any Arab state by keeping a constant ratio between the number of Arab and Israeli aircrafts in Israel's favour. It was also important to supervise the availability of fully trained Arab pilots, so they would not exceed the Israelis' capabilities.¹⁵¹

On 1 February, 1969, the National Security Council (NSC) met to review the policy for the Middle East. Three alternatives, each discussed in National Security Study Memoranda (NSSM) 2, were considered. The first alternative was to let the forces play themselves out. The United States thought that Egypt was not ready for a settlement because it wanted the return of the territories of Sinai that Israel had occupied in the recent conflict. If the Egyptians managed to get this territory back, it would have decreased Israel's security. The U.S. would not let that happen. On the other hand, Israel was the strongest military power in the Middle East, and when Egypt's President Nasser would come to understand that he would not be able to defeat Israel on his own, the United States believed that Nasser might be ready for a settlement.¹⁵²

The second alternative was to actively seek an overall settlement, to achieve peace in the region. This was one of the United States' main goals, but it was challenging to achieve. The situation in the region was degenerating, and the Arab Fedayeen's power was increasing. None of the parties involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict were willing to concede to the other parties' demands, especially Israel. This was related to the third alternative, to actively seek to limit the dangers in the absence of a settlement. The Israelis were moving towards a nuclear capacity, and if the Arab countries knew about this, a settlement would be less likely as the Soviets would find it even harder to stay out of another military conflict.¹⁵³

With so many options to be considered and decided upon, what should the American Middle Eastern policy have been? Henry Kissinger was very concerned with shielding Israel from the pressure to withdraw from all, or most of the territory it had occupied in the 1967-war. Much of that pressure came from the State Department, which promoted a settlement that involved Israel's withdrawal from nearly all of the occupied territories from the previous wars.

Kissinger strongly opposed this policy on the grounds that it would reward the United States'

¹⁵¹ Ad Hoc Group on Israeli Assistance, 26 January, 1970. Subject: U.S. Options on Assistance to Israel. Source: NA, NPM, NSC, H-Files, Box H-165, folder 2.

¹⁵² NSC meeting on 1 February, 1969. Source: NA, NPM, H-files, Box H-43, folder 2.

¹⁵³ Ibid

Cold War opponents and strain the U.S.-Israeli relationship, as well as decrease Israel's security.¹⁵⁴

The Rogers Plan

The conclusions from the NSC meeting on 1 February 1969, were to become the basis for the new Middle Eastern policy. In late 1969, Secretary of State William P. Rogers presented a formula for lasting peace in the Middle East. This would come to be known as the Rogers Plan. It called for Israeli withdrawal from territories it had occupied in the 1967 War. In exchange, the Arab states were to make peace with Israel and acknowledge its right to exist. The Rogers Plan, as Professor in U.S. Foreign Relations Salim Yaqub wrote, "also called for the demilitarisation of the Sinai Peninsula, safe passage of Israeli vessels through the Suez Canal and the Strait of Tiran, a negotiated settlement of Jerusalem's status on the basis of shared Israeli and Jordanian administration, and a resolution of the Palestinian refugee issue through a combination of repatriation and resettlement."¹⁵⁵

Kissinger strongly opposed this plan because he believed it would empower the Arab states and the Soviet Union, while weakening Israel. He wanted to delay any settlement until after the Arab countries had ended relations with the Soviet Union and shifted their focus toward the United States. Kissinger also knew that Israel would resist any attempt to let the occupied territories go. This, in turn, would cause difficulties for the American administration as it would cause strong reactions among the American Jewish population at home supportive of Israel, as well as other pro-Israeli advocates.¹⁵⁶

Nixon, on the other hand, was not as negative as Kissinger at first, but had sympathy for both Rogers' and Kissinger's views. The President soon realised that the American Jewish voters were an important political constituency which had to be taken into account if he was to have a chance of winning the up-coming presidential elections in 1972. Throughout his first term, Nixon sought to attract Jewish support. He could not get this by supporting the Rogers' Plan

¹⁵⁴ Yaqub, Salim 2008. *The Weight of Conquest: Henry Kissinger and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. In Fredrik Logevall & Andrew Preston's *Nixon in the World. American foreign relations, 1969-1977*. 2008. New York: Oxford University Press: 227

¹⁵⁵ Yaqub 2008: 231

¹⁵⁶ Yaqub 2008: 229-230

and the State Department.¹⁵⁷ Nixon later wrote in his memoirs that, “I knew that the Rogers Plan could never be implemented, but I believed that it was important to let the Arab world know that the United States did not automatically dismiss its case regarding the occupied territories... With the Rogers Plan on the record, I thought it would be easier for the Arab leaders to propose reopening relations with the United States.”¹⁵⁸ Nixon has been known for keeping things to himself, so when the President openly gave the impression that he supported the plan, he secretly instructed his adviser on Jewish affairs, one of several positions held during the Nixon Administration, Leonard Garment (1969-1974), to give private assurance to Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir and the Jewish leaders in America that the president had no intention of pursuing the Rogers Plan.¹⁵⁹ Despite Nixon’s deliberate undermining of the Rogers’ Plan, he agreed with Rogers’ view that American policy, by implementing the plan, would not only point the way to a just solution in the Arab-Israeli conflict, but the U.S. would also continue its important alliance with the Western powers.¹⁶⁰

The War of Attrition

...some argue that another war is unlikely as long as Israel retains superiority and does not feel threatened... If, on the other hand, Israel feels isolated and threatened, it could choose to attack the UAR in a final effort to topple Nasser or seize Lebanese or Jordanian territory in an effort to end Fedayeen shelling... So the way to stability is to keep Israel feeling strong and secure – U.S. options on Assistance to Israel, 1970.¹⁶¹

The term “War of Attrition” has usually been applied to the Egyptian-Israeli clashes that took place between March 1969, and August 1970. The fighting occurred when the situation in the Middle East began to deteriorate due to Israel’s strengthening of the borders surrounding its occupied territories. Nasser did not want the Suez Canal to be the defining border between Egypt and Israel, and sought to push the Israeli forces back with attacks on the Israeli armies stationed in the area. Israel responded to these threats with commando raids, air control, and the building of 35 new fortifications along the Canal that was called the Bar Lev line.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ Yaqub 2008: 230-231

¹⁵⁸ Quoted in Yaqub 2008: 231

¹⁵⁹ Yaqub 2008: 231

¹⁶⁰ Kochavi 2009: 10-11

¹⁶¹ Ad Hoc Group on Israeli Assistance, 26 January, 1970. Subject: U.S. Options on Assistance to Israel. Source: NA, NPM, H-Files, Box H-165, folder 6

¹⁶² Waage 2013: 374

The United States also sought to get an Israeli acceptance of UN Resolution 242, but Israel was not willing to accept a resolution that called for Israeli withdrawal. Jerusalem wanted guarantees of arms deliveries from the U.S. before agreeing to discuss any diplomatic initiatives. From January to April 1970, American-made Israeli Phantom Jets were flying over Cairo releasing (8000 tons of) explosives.¹⁶³ These clashes, in turn, were accompanied by Egyptian and Israeli demands for the latest weapon technology from their sponsors, the Soviet Union and the United States.

Nasser went to Moscow requesting increased quantities of military equipment as well as Soviet combat personnel and technicians. The Egyptian President had agreed to begin working on a permanent peace agreement, and in return for his cooperation, the Soviets would send large quantities of sophisticated military equipment to Egypt. By mid-March, new and extensive emplacements of advanced SAM 3 surface-to-air missiles, guns, radar systems, and MiG fighter planes were operational. 15 000 Soviet technicians and advisors, including 200 pilots were also in place.¹⁶⁴ The Soviet Union had never before given such sophisticated military equipment to a non-communist country in such a short period of time.¹⁶⁵ This equipment was superior in quality and quantity to those available to the Egyptians at the outbreak of the 1967 War, and significantly improved their defence force.¹⁶⁶

After several additional clashes between the IDF and the Egyptians, Secretary of State William Rogers issued a second proposal on 19 June, which was known as Rogers B, or the Second Rogers Plan. This plan had three parts. First, a three month cease-fire on the Egyptian front; second, a statement by Israel, Jordan and Egypt issuing the acceptance of Security Council Resolution 242, with emphasis on the withdrawal from occupied territories; and third, an undertaking from Israel to negotiate with Egypt and Jordan under Dr. Gunnar Jarring's auspices as soon as a cease-fire went into effect.¹⁶⁷

After the 1967-War, the U.N. had appointed the Swedish Diplomat Dr. Gunnar Jarring to mediate in the Middle East and to get the parties involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict started on a possible peace settlement. Syria had declined to participate in the Jarring talks, but the other Arab states were optimistic. Israel, however, was sceptical, and had no expectations of a

¹⁶³ Waage 2013: 376

¹⁶⁴ Ibid; Quandt 2005: 70-71

¹⁶⁵ Shlaim 2000: 294; Kochavi 2009: 13

¹⁶⁶ Smith 2010: 310

¹⁶⁷ Shlaim 2000: 295

good outcome.¹⁶⁸ The Israelis did not believe in the U.N.'s ability to mediate, but did not want these talks to end because Israel might get blamed for their failure. Therefore, Israel continued to supply Dr. Jarring with new proposals and documents in order to keep the mission alive.¹⁶⁹

Golda Meir immediately wanted to reject the proposal from Rogers on 19 June 1970, seeing it as a means of imposing the original Rogers Plan. President Nixon advised Israel to not be the first to reject the plan, but as Egypt and Jordan accepted it, the Israelis were bound to comply. The War of Attrition had ended, and the Jarring talks begun once more.¹⁷⁰

By the end of July 1970, Israeli retaliatory raids had wiped out Egypt's protective air defence missile systems as well as its heavy weapons. Prime Minister Golda Meir's wish for Nasser's destruction and resignation did not come true. Nasser's regime did not fall under the Israeli raids, and the Soviet Union had physically intervened by sending their own technicians and personnel to help the Egyptians.¹⁷¹

In September 1969, Israel had requested an additional 100 A-4 Skyhawks attack aircrafts and 25 F-5 Phantom jet fighter-bombers from the United States. Nixon was reluctant to give the Israelis a positive response on their request, and in March 1970, Kissinger and Rogers made the decision to hold Israel's requests for these aircrafts, awaiting further developments in the area. The aircrafts would be delivered, Kissinger assured Ambassador Dinitz, but this had to be executed during a time with less attention on the U.S. relationship with Israel.¹⁷² The Israeli government had expressed its concern about the absence of a distinct prospect of additional planes. The Meir government had stated that,

[u]navoidably there begins to emerge a frightening picture of a state whose entire being is dependent on an air shield that is gradually shrinking, and of a stage in the not so distant future when the country will appear ready prey for its enemies...before this threat to our security becomes actively real there shall apparently be dealt us now a political blow by a decision which cannot but be interpreted as meaning that Israel is indeed alone and abandoned.¹⁷³

The Nixon administration had to reassure Israel that it was not alone, and that the U.S. would resume its deliveries to Israel in the near future. Washington knew that such statements from the Israelis would evoke strong protests from the American Israeli supporters, but was forced

¹⁶⁸ Shlaim 2000: 260

¹⁶⁹ Shlaim 2000: 261

¹⁷⁰ Shlaim 2000: 296

¹⁷¹ Shlaim 2000: 295

¹⁷² Quandt 2005: 71-72

¹⁷³ Summary of meeting of Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Defence Minister and other members of the Israeli cabinet, 9 March 1970. Source: NA, NPM, NSC-Files, H-Files, Box H-329

to keep their plans quiet, in fear of strong Soviet reactions. Despite of their hesitations, the first F-5 Phantom jets reached Israel in September. These aircrafts soon became the Arab symbol of American support for Israel in the Middle East. Because of the increased Soviet involvement, Israel was more dependent on American strategic support and arms supplies than ever before.¹⁷⁴

By August 1970, the Israelis and Egyptians agreed to a cease-fire, but only after intense debates and rivalries within the Nixon administration.¹⁷⁵ The Israelis only accepted the cease-fire because of Nixon's promise of border changes only as a result of negotiations. In addition, Nixon assured Israel that the country would get more military and financial help.¹⁷⁶ Before agreeing to a cease-fire, Prime Minister Golda Meir sought a guarantee that Israel would be allowed to purchase standoff anti-radiation missiles (SHRIKE) and Phantom jets, that the Rogers Plan would be withdrawn, and that the U.S. would veto any anti-Israeli resolutions in the United Nations. The United States agreed to the demands.¹⁷⁷

Arms deliveries, 1970

The Nixon administration was concerned about the consequences of openly supporting Israel with military equipment. If the U.S. were to take some distance from the Jewish state, how much could Washington take before they reached a dangerous situation? Israel had asked the U.S. for more military equipment, but there were a few points that needed to be considered if the United States was to make this happen. How would the Nixon Administration's response to Israel's assistance request affect the U.S.' main interests in the Middle East? Would this worsen the American relationship with the Arabs? If so, how would this affect Israel's survival? And could the United States still avoid a confrontation with the Soviet Union?¹⁷⁸ These were some of the questions raised by a National Security Council ad hoc group, created in October 1969. This group was to, instead of the Pentagon, discuss the United States' policies with regards to Israel. The Department of Defence had other important foreign policy

¹⁷⁴ Quandt 2005: 66

¹⁷⁵ Smith 2010: 310

¹⁷⁶ Waage 2013: 377

¹⁷⁷ Quandt 2005: 74

¹⁷⁸ Memorandum for Dr. Kissinger, from Harold H. Saunders, January 19, 1970. Subject: Meeting on Israeli Assistance Requests. Source: NA, NPM, NSC Country Files, H-Files, Box H-43, folder 6.

issues to take care of, as well as a lack of a clear arms transfer policy. The question of raised military assistance to Israel was now up to the NSC ad hoc group to figure out.¹⁷⁹

In a summary for the NSC ad hoc group on Israel from 23 February 1970, Henry Kissinger wrote, “[a] number of Arab friends in Tunisia, Morocco, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Jordan have told us that a decision to supply additional aircraft [to Israel] will virtually put an end to any diplomatic effort to achieve a political settlement on the basis of the U.S. peace proposals. If the U.S. in Arab eyes back Israel’s current strategy, the Arabs say they will not be able to regard U.S. peace proposals sincere.”¹⁸⁰ This was critical. The United States needed a good diplomatic relationship with the Arab states. If the U.S. decided not to supply Israel with more armaments, the Nixon administration could risk losing its alliance with Israel. So, what was the United States to do?

The answer was to deliver 44 Phantoms by the end of June 1970, and to sell and deliver 3 additional Phantoms to Israel in July and the remaining 3 in August. This would bring the total up to 50, which was in compliance with the 1968 Phantom deal that the former President Johnson had approved. Only 88 Skyhawks of the 100 committed in past contracts had been delivered so far, and neither the Soviet Union nor the UAR would react badly to these deliveries.¹⁸¹ In addition, the Israelis regarded the American administration’s decision as a test of their support for Israel. This made it difficult to do nothing.

In the same document, Henry Kissinger lists the United States’ interests in the Middle East. This is based on the question “What decision will best serve the long-term national interests of the U.S.?” The main U.S. interests in the Middle East in 1970 were,

1. That this area not become the arena or the trigger for a U.S.-Soviet confrontation.
2. That this area not fall under Soviet predominance.
3. That Israel survives.
4. That the Arab nations continue to welcome an American presence. This was relevant to the U.S. effort to prevent Soviet predominance. But it is also related to protecting the investments of private Americans as well as some \$1.5 billion in international income credited Government to protect American citizens (well over 10.000) working and living in this area.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Memorandum for Henry Kissinger, from Harold H. Saunders and Lawrence E. Flynn, 24 October 1969. Source: NA, NPM, NSC-Files, H-Files, Box H-43

¹⁸⁰ Analytical Summary. Subject: Assistance to Israel: Options and Issues, 23 February 1970. Source: NA, NPM, NSC-Files, H-Files, Box H-324

¹⁸¹ Memorandum for the President from William P. Rogers, 9 June 1970. Subject: Next steps in the Middle East, Source: NA, NPM, NSC-Files, H-files, Box H-43

¹⁸² Analytical Summary. Subject: Assistance to Israel: Options and Issues, 23 February 1970. Source: NA, NPM, NSC-Files, H-Files, Box H-324

American concerns were not predominantly to protect Israeli interests, but their own. Nixon was worried about the fact that the Soviet Union seemed to be increasing its influence in the Middle East by exploiting the Arab countries' frustration over the post-1967 stalemate. Moscow, Nixon believed, correctly calculated that the American people would not be willing to open a second military front until the Vietnam War was over.¹⁸³ Nixon and Kissinger regarded Israel as a strategic asset in the Middle East and, by extension, in the global struggle against the Soviets. In addition, Israel had a lot of support in the American Congress and from the Israeli lobbying groups. The influence of these groups could contribute to forming the administration's policymaking in Israel's favour, and would make it difficult to sustain an even-handed approach to the Middle East.¹⁸⁴

Army capabilities

National Security Study Memorandum 98, written by Henry Kissinger on 10 August 1970, contains a review of Israeli arms request that year. The document is still partially classified, but in a response to this memorandum, which was about options for U.S. arms assistance, it is written that,

The UAR army of 170 000 has been reorganized since the June 1967 war into three field armies of eleven divisions and twelve separate brigades. Soviet guidance in this reorganization and subsequent training has been directed toward organizational efficiency, increased mechanization, and training in combined arms operations... The effectiveness of the UAR army, however, has not significantly improved since 1967... While the Sinai holds little of practical value for the UAR, its loss had great emotional impact on the Arabs; regaining the Sinai is tremendously important for Nasser's image in the Arab world.¹⁸⁵

The document describes the UAR army as inferior to the IDF, and that the UAR air force was estimated to consist of 17 000 men, 365 jet fighter bombs, 50 light and medium jet bombers, and approximately 200 combat-ready jet qualified pilots.¹⁸⁶ And despite Soviet guidance, the UAR army had not significantly improved since 1967 compared to the IDF.

¹⁸³ Kochavi 2009: 9

¹⁸⁴ Smith 2010: 310

¹⁸⁵ Options for U.S. Arms Assistance for Israel. DOD Response to NSSM 98, 1970. Source: NA, NPM, National Security Study Memoranda (NSSM), Box 166

¹⁸⁶ *ibid*

The Israeli Defence Force Army (IDFA) however, was an effective force of 72 000 personnel on active duty, capable of increasing to a power of 310 000 within one week of mobilisation. The ground forces were organised into seven task force headquarters controlling 34 brigades. These ground forces were capable of successfully defending Israel against simultaneous Arab attacks on all fronts or successfully defending two fronts while mounting major offensives on two fronts.¹⁸⁷ The IDF also consisted of 261 jet fighters, two jet bombers, more than 650 pilots, of which approximately 500 were jet qualified, assorted helicopter and transport aircraft and approximately 16 000 men. It was superior to the air force of any Arab state and could defeat any combination of Arab air forces if it did not suffer major damage in a pre-emptive attack.¹⁸⁸ The IDF was clearly superior to the UAR army, with a military force many times the size of the Arabs'. Despite only a few losses during the 1967 War, Israel still wanted more equipment from the United States. The IDF had only lost seven high performance and nine medium performance aircraft to non-combat causes since the war, but the UAR army had lost many more, and with a previously lower level of aircrafts.¹⁸⁹

According to the response to NSSM 98, the IDF was clearly superior in having a bigger army, more qualified pilots and more advanced equipment. Israel was a very small country, especially compared to some of the Arab states, and yet Israel had the capability to crush them all at the same time. Several countries in Western Europe, together with the Soviet Union and a number of Arab states in the Middle East, saw the Israelis' need for more equipment as unnecessary and aggravating. The Nixon administration knew that by providing for Israel's increasing military might, they could risk its relationship with powerful allies, and even risk a military confrontation with the Soviet Union. The U.S. did mark that the degree of Israeli superiority was not necessary. Despite this, the flow of weapons into Israel did not stop.¹⁹⁰

The Soviet Union continued to strengthen its influence in the region, by providing more military and financial support to its allies. The U.S. could not afford having a weakened Israel, and wanted to increase its own power in the Middle East while decreasing the Soviets'. To acquire the Arab states' trust, the U.S.' strategy was to downplay its shipments to Israel;

¹⁸⁷ Options for U.S. Arms Assistance for Israel. Subject: DOD Response to NSSM 98, 1970. Source: NA, NPM, NSSM Box H-166

¹⁸⁸ Ibid

¹⁸⁹ Memorandum for assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, 3 June 1970. Subject: Replacement aircraft for Israel. Source: NA, NPM, H-Files, Box-H43

¹⁹⁰ Draft memorandum 11 February 1970. Subject: Responses to Israel's arms and economic assistance requests to NSC. Source: NA, NPM, H-files, Box-H43, Folder 2.

the government wanted to maintain a balance of power – a balance, they felt, that was threatened by recent introduction of Soviet missiles and combat pilots to Egypt and other military equipment to the Arab world.¹⁹¹

The Jordan Civil War – Black September of 1970

In September 1970, fighting broke out between the Jordanian army and the Palestinian guerrilla organisations, called Fedayeen. These groups had created a state within a state that posed a threat to the rule of King Hussein. Yasser Arafat's organisation Fatah was the largest of the Fedayeen groups.¹⁹² Consequently, the King of Jordan ordered his army to disarm and break the power of these organisations, which resulted in a bloody civil war. Thousands of Palestinians were killed, and many more fled the country.¹⁹³ In the middle of the crisis, one of the big Fedayeen groups, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP,) hijacked four international airliners. One of the planes was blown up over Cairo, after removing the passengers. Their objective was to force Israel to free Fedayeen prisoners and to provoke a full-scale confrontation with the Jordanian army.¹⁹⁴ The Jordanian army retaliated, and within a few days, Syrian tanks crossed the border into northern Jordan to aid the Fedayeen. King Hussein asked the U.S. and Israel for help, and Kissinger requested for an Israeli air attack against the Syrian armoured forces. Kissinger promised that if the Egyptians renewed the fighting along the Canal Zone to aid the Syrian army, the United States would give Israel all the necessary military assistance.¹⁹⁵ The need for Israeli intervention did not arise, as King Hussein and his army was able to push back the Syrians and defeat the Palestinian guerrilla groups.

Nixon and Kissinger were convinced that Soviet provocation of the Palestinians was the reason for the civil war in Jordan and that the Soviet Union was behind Syria's moves across the border.¹⁹⁶ All evidence indicates that the Soviets, in fact, had not established a relationship with the Fedayeen, and that they had no reason to overthrow Hussein. Nixon and Kissinger

¹⁹¹ Memorandum for the President, From Henry A. Kissinger, 8 December 1970. Subject: Vietnam Statistics for Press Conference. Source: NA, NPM, NSC-Files, Country Files, Box-907

¹⁹² Christison 2001: 128

¹⁹³ Shlaim 2000: 298

¹⁹⁴ Christison 2001: 128

¹⁹⁵ Shlaim 2000: 299

¹⁹⁶ Christison 2001: 128

were stuck in a Cold War mind-set, a focus on a strategy that would guarantee Israel's security in order to halt the Soviets', and were therefore unable to view the Arab-Israeli conflict, or the Jordan crisis, from a neutral diplomatic perspective.¹⁹⁷ According to the former Israeli Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin (1968-1973), Kissinger once stated that "[t]he President will never forget Israel's role in preventing the deterioration in Jordan and in blocking the attempt to overturn the regime there. He said that the United States is fortunate in having an ally like Israel in the Middle East. These events will be taken into account in all future developments."¹⁹⁸

The anti-SAM package of 1970

After the War of Attrition and the Jordan crisis in 1970, the Israelis had proven their loyalty to the United States and Israel's ability to protect other American interests in the region. Nixon had promised Israel more arms if the IDF would aid the Jordan army against the Syrians. Nixon had come to believe that it was "the threat of Israeli military might, demonstrated through Israeli overflights of Syrian armed columns," that had caused a Jordan victory.¹⁹⁹ Israel had thereby kept its promise, and now it was the United States' turn. Israel had requested more weapons, especially anti-SAM equipment able to destroy SAM sites. SAM is a surface-to-air missile, and with SHRIKE anti-radiation missiles, the Israelis would be able to suppress selected SAM radars that controlled the missiles.²⁰⁰ The Israelis had attacked Egyptian SAM sites during the War of Attrition, but many of those were not active, dummies as they were called. Once the sites were located, the Israelis needed electronic equipment to penetrate such sites without being badly hurt by other missiles. This package included not only this equipment, but also almost all of the United States' most sophisticated weapons at that time.²⁰¹

In a memorandum for the President about follow-up actions with Israel from 3 October 1970, it was discussed whether or not the United States should provide such weapons to Israel. The American government believed that the Israelis would use this equipment to attack all missile

¹⁹⁷ Christison 2001: 129

¹⁹⁸ Quoted in Neff 1995: 175

¹⁹⁹ Kochavi 2009: 17

²⁰⁰ Options for U.S. Arms Assistance for Israel. Subject: DOD Response to NSSM 98, 1970. Source: NA, NPM, NSSM, Box H-166.

²⁰¹ Ibid

sites across the Suez Canal, whether or not the U.S. approved. The Egyptians would not roll back its missiles or agree to an indefinite cease-fire without any talks or signs of progress toward a settlement.²⁰² The Israelis would not begin peace-talks without a SAM-rollback, and believed that by inflicting enough Egyptian and Soviet casualties they would perhaps lose heart and withdraw their SAMs from the Canal. Then again, the U.S. recognized that they could expect strong reactions from the Arab countries and the Soviets whenever aid was provided to Israel. The provided strategy was therefore to deliver one large package to Israel instead of two or three smaller ones, to make the Soviets' and the Arab states' "agony" short lived.²⁰³

It was not only anti-SAM equipment that was included in this package. As Soviet airplanes, with Soviet trained pilots, were flying towards Egypt, Israel wanted its air force in top shape. The United States had, at this time, not enough equipment available for everyone it needed to support. In July 1970, U.S. production rates were scheduled to be drastically reduced and the government had planned a delivery of 10-20 F-4s to Iran. Simultaneously, Israel was pushing for more military equipment, and the United States was discussing whether or not it could divert the Iranian aircrafts to Israel instead.²⁰⁴ The total cost of the SAM-package was put forward in NSSM 98 and accounted for \$163.693 million.²⁰⁵

This package helped Israel raise its confidence level, and made Israel believe that it had no need to negotiate with its Arab neighbours who wanted to go back to the pre-1967 borders, because the Israelis believed that no Arab country would attack Israel as long as it had military supremacy. It gave the Israelis a false sense of security, which was shared by Henry Kissinger and the President, who argued that Israel's military superiority would acquire the Arabs to deal with Washington instead of Moscow since this would expose Soviet weakness.²⁰⁶ The Soviets had been much more involved in the Middle East during 1970, than before, and for that reason, the United States needed to strengthen its allies. This need resulted in the first long-term arms deal with Israel in late 1971. Since the Nixon Administration

²⁰² Memorandum for the President from Henry A. Kissinger. Subject: Anti-SAM package for Israel, 9 October 1970. Source: NA, NPM, NSC H-Files, Box-H-171, Folder 7

²⁰³ Ibid

²⁰⁴ Memorandum for assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, 3 June 1970. Subject: Replacement aircraft for Israel. Source: NA, NPM, NSC-Files, Country Files – Middle East, Box 607

²⁰⁵ Memorandum for the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. Subject: Further Input to NSSM 98, 29 August 1970. Source: NA, NPM, NSSM, Box H-166

²⁰⁶ Neff 1995: 176

considered the War of Attrition a result of Soviet involvement, the United States needed now, more than ever, a strong Israel.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ Memorandum of conversation. 29 July 1970. Subject: Discussions with Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin, Embassy of Israel, re Israeli Military and Financial equipment. Source: NA, NPM, NSC-Files, Country Files – Middle East, Box 607

4 A Changing Relationship, 1971-1973

In December 1971, a profound shift in Nixon's policy towards Israel took place. As a result of this policy change Nixon dramatically raised the scale of his administration's commitment to Israel and increased American financial aid, diplomatic backing, and military supplies to the country.²⁰⁸ Israel had openly supported the United States' approach in Vietnam and the upcoming presidential elections in 1972, in favour of Nixon, as well as prepared to intervene in the Jordan crisis on America's behalf by keeping the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) on military alert²⁰⁹ This won appreciation from the White House and fostered a sense of common purpose as well as strengthening Washington's faith that Israel was an important strategic ally in the Middle East.²¹⁰

The large-scale U.S. military and financial assistance to Israel after 1971 was one of the consequences of the three previously fought Arab-Israeli wars. These wars had created a mutual thought among the American public and governments that Israel was constantly under attack from its neighbouring Arab countries. During this year, the United States provided Israel with military loans of around \$545 million, and by 1974, Israel had become the largest recipient of U.S. foreign assistance in the world.²¹¹ In a memorandum to President Richard Nixon from 27 February 1973, the Minister of Finance George P. Shultz wrote,

[I]n [Fiscal Year] FY 1971 we began providing Israel high levels of assistance, partly in order to strengthen their economy and very weak balance of payments situations. Their position [in 1973] has turned around completely to the point where substantially lower levels of United States assistance for the coming fiscal year can be considered... While the Israelis agree their situation is strong, they still believe one more year's high level of assistance is needed.²¹²

The United States was very concerned about increased Soviet influence in the Middle East after the War of Attrition in 1969-1970, and wanted to stop communist infiltration, and keep its diplomatic relationship with the other Arab states. The U.S. also regarded Israel as an

²⁰⁸ Kochavi 2009: 4

²⁰⁹ Kochavi 2009: 17

²¹⁰ Kochavi 2009: 2

²¹¹ Sharp, Jeremy M. 2009. *U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel*. CRS Report for Congress: Congressional Research Service, RL33222:19

²¹² Memorandum for the President written by George P. Shultz, 27 February 1973. Subject: Assistance for Israel. Source: NA, NPM, NSC, VIP Visits, Sept. 1970- March 1973, Box 922

equal, democratic country that had “guts and moxie” as Nixon described them.²¹³ Therefore, the U.S.’ financial and military support to Israel was high, and it became even higher when Nixon introduced the first long-term arms deal with Israel in late 1971, and ordered a full-scale airlift to Israel during the 1973 October war.

Building its own defence

In the 1950s, the local production of military equipment in Israel was limited to ammunition, small arms, and the Uzi sub-machine gun. This was inadequate to Israel’s needs, and during the 1960s, The Israeli Government experienced a lot of uncertainty and insecurity with consideration to external sources of weapons. This led the Israel’s policymakers to embark on the development of its own arms production capability.²¹⁴ In the 1970s, Israel began to produce combat aircrafts, such as the Kfir, air-to-air missiles, fast patrol boats, the Merkava main battle tank (MBT), and other major weapons systems. All of this led to a massive growth in the domestic defence industry in terms of both employment and investment. From 1966 to 1975 the Israeli defence industry absorbed approximately 60 per cent of new employees in the manufacturing sector.²¹⁵ From the mid-1970s the “production of combat aircraft became the core of Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI) activities. The number of employees grew to over 20,000, making IAI the largest industrial firm in Israel.”²¹⁶

After the Jordan crisis in September 1970, the United States came to believe that Israel was an important ally worthy of protection and support. Therefore, the U.S. had started to ship equipment to Israel in order for it to establish its own military production industry. On 22 December 1970, Washington signed a Master Defence Data Exchange Agreement that provided a great transfer of technology. This was provided via several technical data packages. These packages consisted of blueprints, plans and types of materials for construction of new weapons. More than 120 of these production packages were given to Israel over the next eight years.²¹⁷

²¹³ Spiegel 1985: 179

²¹⁴ Steinberg 1998: 92

²¹⁵ Steinberg 1998: 112

²¹⁶ Steinberg 1998: 121

²¹⁷ Neff 1995: 175

Although the United States did provide Israel with the equipment to be self-sufficient, the Jewish state still wanted large sums of both economic and military aid. The reason behind its high requests was that Israel wanted to sustain its high growth rate at approximately 8 per cent, while at the same time maintain its extensive military superiority over its neighbouring countries in the Middle East.²¹⁸ In 1970, the United States could not explain all the projected Israeli government expenditures, and in a response to Israel's military equipment requests a memorandum was drafted, stating that,

[t]he requests for economic assistance, together with the growing number of applications for production rights and licenses to manufacture military equipment in Israel indicates that Israel wants (by 1974 if possible) to develop its own capability to manufacture major armaments in quantities sufficient to support export trade, and to continue at full speed existing nuclear and missile program. In effect, what seems to underlie Israel's requests for financial assistance is the goal of achieving all this – while at the same time sustaining a full employment economic growth rate of 8% yearly and building reserves.²¹⁹

Washington assessed the advantages and disadvantages of the self-sufficiency Israel wanted to achieve and what this would do to the U.S. relationship with Jerusalem. On the one hand, it would be helpful to the United States' position in the Middle East to become less closely identified with Israel. This would not happen as long as the United States continued to ship major military equipment to the country. Even before, and during the War of Attrition from 1969 to 1970, Washington knew that there would be consequences for the U.S. if it provided military equipment and additional aircrafts to Israel.

Assistant Secretary of Near Eastern and South Asian affairs Joseph Sisco (1969-1974) believed that if the United States provided the means for an Israeli military production capability in addition to delivering other military armaments, this would be interpreted not only among the Arab states, but the general world as a whole, to mean that the U.S. firstly, “had moved to intensify the arms race; second, was not serious about arms limitations; third, had discounted the peace efforts; and fourth, had decided to give Israel a blank check to play the game its own way”.²²⁰ The Americans were afraid of what the Arabs' reactions would be, such as violence against American citizens in the area, and damage to U.S. economic interests in the Middle East. Kissinger, however, believed that if the United States did not give a

²¹⁸ Draft memorandum from 11 February 1970. Subject: Responses to Israel's arms and Economic assistance requests. Source: NA, NPM, H-files, Box H-43

²¹⁹ Ibid

²²⁰ Memorandum from Joseph Sisco to the Secretary and the Under Secretary, 18 February 1970. Subject: Israel's request for Arms and Economic Assistance. Source: NA, NPM, H-files, Box H-43.

positive response to Israel on their frequent request for additional aircrafts and the means for creating a production capability, this would harden the Israelis' attitude toward the peace proposal and make them less inclined to reassess their position.²²¹

On the other hand, the U.S. feared that by making Israel capable of producing its own military equipment, this would "turn over to Israel the capacity to make war or peace on its own terms and in a way that could challenge the USSR to involve itself."²²² The Nixon administration did not want Israel to feel as though it was nearly invincible, due to the possibility that this could delay any peace settlements even further. Yet the U.S. could not stop Israel's natural growth, and in the eyes of the Arab states the United States was, and would always remain, the creator of Israel. No matter what the U.S. decided, the Nixon administration believed that the Arab states would still feel that the United States backed Israel regardless of its policies.²²³

The U.S. was uncertain of what they should do concerning Israel in this matter. The American government had concluded, in the past, that the Israeli need for more aid was much less acute than Israel previously had expressed. In a memorandum for the President from the Office of Management and Budget in the White House from September 1970, it is stated that,

Enough evidence is available to suggest that Israel could do more to reduce foreign exchange requirements and the need for assistance from the United States. While a rising standard of living and a high growth rate are desirable objectives, the United States should not have to relieve Israel of all financial sacrifices. Accordingly, policies designed to shift resources from consumption to exports would seem desirable as part of a self-help effort by Israel.²²⁴

As it is shown in the memoranda, the U.S. had many thoughts on and perceptions of what Israel wanted and what it actually needed to maintain its security level. The United States wanted Israel to be self-sufficient, but also wished for the Israelis to have realistic views, and to understand that the more they asked for, the more money the U.S. had to put up, and this would eventually impact the American society as a whole. If, on the other hand, the American government gave in to Israel's requests, this could have a psychological impact on its relationship with Jerusalem. It could buy the United States some leverage over Israel, a leverage that could be used to push Israel in the right direction concerning a peace settlement

²²¹ Analytical summary, 23 February 1970. Subject: Assistance to Israel: options and issues. To the Ad Hoc Group on Israel, written by Henry Kissinger. Source: NA, NPM, H-files, Box H-43

²²² DOD response to NSSM 98. Subject: Options for U.S. Arms Assistance to Israel, Report I, Israeli budget. Ad Hoc Group on Israeli Assistance, 26 January 1970. NA, NPM, NSSM, Box-166.

²²³ DOD response to NSSM 98. Subject: Options for U.S. Arms Assistance to Israel, Report 2, Israeli arms production, Israeli self-sufficiency in Arms production, February 18, 1970. Ad Hoc Group on Israeli Assistance. NA, NPM, NSC-Files, H-Files, Box H-43

²²⁴ Memorandum for the President, 17 September 1970. Financial assistance for Israel. From the office of management and budget. NA, NPM, NSC H-files Box H-171

and the acceptance of U.N. Resolution 242.²²⁵ That Israel had such a big arsenal of military equipment during the 1970s is apparent, and even though its arsenal was bigger than any other country in the Middle East, this did not stop the Israelis from wanting more and ever more military and financial supplies.

A standstill period

From the end of the Jordan Civil War in September 1970, prior to the outbreak of the October War in 1973, the Middle East seemed fairly stable to the Washington policymakers. Nixon and Kissinger believed that this stability was due to the military balance in the region in favour of Israel.²²⁶ After receiving the big anti-SAM package in October 1970 from the United States, Israel was pleased by the good relationship it had made with the Nixon administration.

The State Department, Nixon and even Kissinger at this point, agreed that it was in America's best interest to be on good terms with the Arab states in the Middle East. They believed that it was important to reach a settlement with the parties involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and to achieve peace in the region. Nonetheless, they had different ideas on how to best achieve these goals. Nixon and Kissinger believed that keeping Israel strong by military means was the ideal way to go. The President and his National Security Adviser pursued a policy of matching the Soviet arms to Egypt with their own to Israel, thus ruling out the possibility of Egypt having military supremacy in the region.²²⁷ The State Department, however, was not as enthusiastic about granting Israel such a big amount of military equipment and financial assistance during the War of Attrition or the Jordan crisis as Nixon and Kissinger had been. The State Department believed that by granting military and financial help to the enemies of the Arabs, this would increase the Soviets' influence in the region, and drive the Arab states further away from the U.S.²²⁸

The State Department believed that Israel could be persuaded to be more forthcoming in its negotiation stance if arms were withheld and wanted to use this as leverage to get peace-

²²⁵ Draft memorandum, 11 February 1970. Subject: Responses to Israel's arms and economic assistance requests. Source: NA, NPM, NSC Files, H-files, Box H-43, folder 2.

²²⁶ Quandt 2005: 85

²²⁷ Quandt 2005: 85

²²⁸ Quandt 2005: 83-84

settlement talks started. Kissinger did not agree with this view. He argued that this would simply make the Israelis feel more insecure, and therefore less cooperative. He also believed that this would make the Arab states believe that a military solution could be possible for regaining their territories lost to the Israelis in the Six-Day War in 1967, and to give the Palestinian refugees back their homes. Kissinger argued that the Arab states would turn to diplomacy only if they saw that the Soviet Union could not deliver military equipment that surpassed the Israelis.²²⁹ After the Jordan crisis, Nixon and Kissinger succeeded in undermining the State Department's initiatives, and established almost complete control over foreign policy making, especially with concerns to the Middle East. Since there were no signs of any peace agreements in the region, Nixon focused on maintaining the military balance in the region in Israel's favour.²³⁰ Although there seemed to be no signs of any peace settlements in the Middle East, this was not a result of a lack of trying on the part of the State Department.

The interim canal agreement, Israel and Egypt 1970-1971

After the Jordan crisis, Egypt was willing to accept a three-month cease-fire with Israel in November 1970. Sadat expected to resume the Jarring talks and that this would eventually give results. In the early 1970s, Jarring resumed his work by trying to break the diplomatic deadlock that had been there since 1969. Now, he wanted a more active role in the mediation between the parties, with the help from the United States. Jarring's aim was an overall peace settlement between Egypt and Israel, and his mission was somewhat taken over by the interim canal agreement in 1971.²³¹

Anwar al-Sadat, who succeeded as the new Egyptian President after Nasser's sudden death on 28 September 1970, held a speech for the Egyptian National Assembly on 4 March 1971. In his speech, he stated that "[i]f Israel withdrew her forces in Sinai to the [Mita and Giddi] Passes... I would be willing to reopen the Suez Canal; to have my forces cross the East Bank [of the Suez Canal]...to make a solemn, official declaration of a cease-fire by six, rather than

²²⁹ Quandt 2005: 93

²³⁰ Quandt 2005: 86

²³¹ Shlaim 2000: 301; Quandt 2005: 87-92

three months; to restore diplomatic relations with the United States; and sign a peace agreement with Israel through the efforts of Dr. Jarring.”²³²

Sadat appealed to Nixon the day after, on 5 March, to launch an initiative that could bring about an interim agreement based on the suggestions he had expressed through his speech. It was not until late May 1971 that Nixon came to consider that Sadat was serious about this new attitude toward Israel and his commitment for an interim agreement to be implemented. Nixon, therefore, ordered the State Department to begin working on an interim canal settlement. He provided this explanation to Secretary Rogers - “[I]t is essential that no more aid programs for Israel be approved until they agree to some kind of interim action on the Suez or some other issue...the interests of the United States will be served...by tilting the policy...on the side of 100 million Arabs rather than on the side of two million Israelis.”²³³ Nixon had possibly begun to understand that to maintain American interests in the region, the U.S. could not always be on the side of Israel. No matter what Israel felt about this agreement, it was the best for every country in the Middle East that an interim agreement was being realised.

The idea of Sadat’s proposal worried the Israelis. In March 1971, Sisco presented the initial ideas that the U.S. had discussed with the Egyptians. In this paper, it was suggested that “Israel should withdraw its forces to a distance of forty kilometres from the canal; the evacuated area would be demilitarized; Egyptian technicians and up to seven hundred policemen would be allowed into a ten-kilometer-wide strip along the east bank of the canal.” After six months, the canal would be opened to all shipping. The agreement would also “constitute a first step toward the full implementation of Resolution 242, and both sides would be free to review the cease-fire after one year.”²³⁴

Golda Meir was deeply affected by David Ben-Gurion, and shared his views about the hostility of the Arabs and that the way of dealing with them was from a position of strength. Therefore, the idea of withdrawal from the occupied territories without a peace treaty was out of the question for Meir, who also had the ultimate responsibility for the defence policy.²³⁵ Because of this, the Israelis had some demands before they were willing to take part in an agreement, and formed a counterproposal. Israel wanted the canal to be reopened to the

²³² Bregman, Ahron, 2004. *Israel's Wars, A History Since 1947*, New York: 103-104; Quandt 2005: 88

²³³ Quoted in Kochavi 2009: 18

²³⁴ Shlaim 2000: 303

²³⁵ Shlaim 2000: 287

shipping of all nations (as Sadat had agreed to); “the unlimited duration of the cease-fire; the withdrawal of Israeli forces to a distance to be agreed; no Egyptian military forces in the area to be evacuated by Israel; the thinning out of Egyptian forces on the western side of the canal; and the release of all prisoners of war.”²³⁶

To get the process started, the Nixon administration had promised the delivery of 12 additional Phantoms if the Israelis could deliver a counterproposal to the Egyptian proposition from March. The counterproposal was accepted by Nixon two days later, but it did not get the President’s full support.²³⁷ Kissinger knew that the Israelis never would agree to withdrawal or the station of Egyptian troops alongside the Canal, and accept the Egyptian demands. The National Security advisor had therefore lost faith in the whole agreement, together with the rest of the White House. The State Department, however, still hoped to achieve some kind of agreement, and tried to keep the talks going by travelling to the Middle East. They were ultimately not able to get an interim agreement in place, which resulted in the end of Roger’s and Sisco’s predominance as Middle East policymakers. Nixon and Kissinger would take the reins in the making of foreign-policy, and told the State Department not to come up with any new initiatives until after the presidential elections in 1972.²³⁸

In May 1971, Egypt and the Soviet Union signed a treaty of cooperation and friendship. This concerned the United States as this memo from Henry Kissinger in 1971 shows,

In spite of the continuing cease-fire and the readiness of both Israel and Egypt to try and reach an interim agreement through us, both sides have continued to build their military might. We have exercised restraint in the supply of military equipment to the Middle East. The Soviet Union, however, has continued to build its military presence in Egypt and to provide large amounts of sophisticated weaponry to Egypt and other Arab countries... We will seek to bring about increasing relations of confidence with Arab states who wish to be friendly with us, but without in any way undercutting our close relationship with Israel.²³⁹

The United States believed that they had exercised a restraint on the supply of military equipment to the Middle East. As previously mentioned, the U.S. pursued a policy of matching Soviet military equipment to Egypt with its own to Israel. In reality, the U.S. had restrained its supply of military equipment to the Middle East compared to the Soviet Union,

²³⁶ Shlaim 2000: 304

²³⁷ Quandt 2005: 90-91; Smith 2010: 316

²³⁸ Quandt 2005: 91-94

²³⁹ Memorandum for Mr. Henry Kissinger from the Department of State. Subject: Transmission of Department’s response to NSSM 137. 1 November 1971. Source: NA, NPM, NSC, Subject Files, The President Annual Review of Foreign Policy (1971), Box 327

but this would soon change when in December 1971 the first long-term arms deal between the U.S. and Israel was created.²⁴⁰

U.S. arms deal with Israel, 1971

After several discussions between Nixon and the Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, she announced, on 28 December 1971, that Israel was ready to return to the Jarring talks.²⁴¹ A reason for this might be that during a visit to Washington in December by Golda Meir, the United States signed the first long-term arms deal with Israel. The U.S. agreed to provide new Phantom and Skyhawk aircrafts over a three-year period. By signing this agreement, Washington could avoid repeated discussions and supply disruptions whenever the short-term agreements had expired.²⁴² This was a big turning-point in the American relationship with Israel since no such agreement had been formed in the past.²⁴³

In a memorandum for Kissinger and the White House from the Special Assistant to the Secretary and Executive Secretary of the Department of State Theodore Elliot Jr. (1969-1973), in December 1971, it was discussed whether or not it was a good idea to give the Israelis a firm commitment on more aircraft at that point. Before the visit from Golda Meir, the State and Defence departments did not believe that it was an appropriate time to give Israel a firm commitment on more aircrafts. They wanted to propose to the Israelis a “limited aircraft supply program under which we would not further increase the number of U.S. planes in the Israeli air force but would replace aircraft lost by attrition and would provide trainer aircraft. This would mean supplying about 15 aircraft a year rather than 30 or so the Israelis want.”²⁴⁴ At the same time, the departments recommended granting Israel the necessary aid to be able to produce up to 100 of its own aircrafts, the “Super Mirage” as it was called. They did not believe that Israel needed more aircrafts to uphold its clear military superiority, and especially not when Israel began to produce its own combat aircrafts.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁰ Ibid

²⁴¹ Quandt 2005: 87

²⁴² Christison 2001: 133

²⁴³ Spiegel 1985: 210

²⁴⁴ Memorandum for Mr. Henry Kissinger and the White House, written by Theodore L. Elliot Jr. Subject: Background papers and biographic sketches for Prime Minister Meir’s visit in December 1971. Source: NA, NPM, NSC-Files, VIP Visits, Israel Prime Minister Meir visit to U.S. Sept 1970-March 1973, Box-922

²⁴⁵ Ibid

Nevertheless, the arms agreement was formed and the advice from the State and Defence Departments was not taken into account. Instead, the increased arms deliveries to Israel suited Nixon and Kissinger's foreign policies. They both used arms sales as a "carrot and stick" approach, the carrots being military equipment and the stick meant the threat of withholding weapons, to gain support from foreign leaders and thereby increase American influence in the Middle East.²⁴⁶ Nixon, Rogers and Secretary of Defence Melvin Laird, were initially worried if the arms deliveries to Israel might have negative effects on the U.S.' diplomatic relations with the Arab States. Kissinger, however, believed that with limitations and continuity in the arms sales to Israel, this would serve as a signal to the Soviet Union and the Arabs that aiding Israel with military equipment would eventually bring a peace settlement into place.²⁴⁷

The United States knew that Israel was not willing to cooperate with Egypt, or themselves for that matter, if the country did not get what it wanted in terms of military supplies. Israel had stated that it would not continue with the interim agreement if the American government did not resume its supplies of Phantom jets and Skyhawks to Israel. Jerusalem saw the continuation of U.S. supply of high-performance aircraft to Israel as being the most convincing evidence of the American support for their country. Therefore, the Israelis could continue with the peace efforts because they knew that the United States would support their cause.²⁴⁸

Another reason for this agreement to be possible was that several American politicians supported an arms deal with Israel. Several congressmen were supportive of increased assistance to Israel and therefore it was, in a political sense, dangerous to ignore their calls. The presidential elections were coming up in 1972, and increased aid to Israel would earn the President many votes from the American Jewish population, in addition to other supporters for Israel's cause. Funding for Nixon's campaign was also an important factor in winning the election, and much of this came from Jewish contributors.²⁴⁹ The new arms deal in 1971 was also possible as a result of Sadat's visit to Moscow in October where he was promised increased military assistance. This alarmed the United States.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ Spiegel 1985: 212

²⁴⁷ Ibid

²⁴⁸ Memorandum for the President from Henry Kissinger, 1971 (unknown date). Subject: Your meeting with Prime Minister Meir, Secret nodis. Source: NA, NPM, NSC-Files, VIP Visits, Israel Prime Minister Meir visit to U.S. Sept 1970-March 1973, Box-922

²⁴⁹ Spiegel 1985: 213

²⁵⁰ Spiegel 1985: 210

On 18 July 1972, Sadat surprised the world by expelling fifteen thousand Soviet military advisers from Egypt and placing his own forces in control of the Soviet bases and its military equipment. In Sadat's own autobiography, the Egyptian president explains why he did it: "One of the reasons behind my decision was the Soviet attitude toward me; but another important reason was that within the strategy I had laid down, no war could be fought while Soviet experts worked in Egypt."²⁵¹ Sadat's expelling of the Soviet personnel was also a consequence of the Soviet Union not fulfilling its promises that were made in October 1971 to increase its military assistance to Egypt.²⁵² Still, the Soviet personnel were recalled shortly after, and the flow of Soviet weaponry into Egypt was resumed. Sadat received the most advanced equipment the Soviets had, such as anti-aircraft missiles, MiG fighters, tanks, armour-piercing missiles and other high performance armaments. The Egyptians had attained what the Soviets had promised them for cooperating with the interim agreement in 1971.²⁵³

One of the reasons for the United States' concern regarding the agreement signed between the Soviet Union and Egypt was the fear of increased Soviet influence in the Middle East. The U.S. justified its supply efforts to Israel with that argument, and although they did give military aid to other allied countries in the Middle East, Israel got a lot more, especially after 1971. In a memoranda to Nixon from 13 May 1972 it was stated that,

[s]upplies from both the Soviet Union and the U.S. have reached such a magnitude and level of sophistication that there are few areas left to limit. Israel's existing military superiority is so substantial that a U.S. proposal for embargo would be synonymous to a recommendation for permanent Egyptian/Arab military inferiority, the thrust of U.S. supplies have been in support of Israel's offensive oriented military strategy... Israel's relatively impressive advance toward self-sufficiency in many areas of weapons production would further render in workable (from the Egyptian standpoint) efforts to limit foreign weapons supplies.²⁵⁴

The October War of 1973

From 1971, throughout the period leading up to the October War in 1973, the Meir government chose a policy of not formulating any particular doctrine, contingency plan or any other foreign policies. Meir, instead, chose not to decide until a decision was forced upon

²⁵¹ FRUS 1969-1976, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli crisis and war, 1973, document 14, footnote 3

²⁵² FRUS 1969-1976, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli crisis and war, 1973, document 14

²⁵³ Waage 2013: 384

²⁵⁴ Memoranda for the President 13 May 1972. Subject: Your Moscow Trip and the Middle East. Source: NA, NPM, NSC-Files, Country Files: Middle East 1971-74, Memoranda-Sensitive, Box 324

Israel by their opponents.²⁵⁵ As Historian Avner Yaniv writes, “[t]his principle became the origin of a catastrophe because of the prevalence of three critical assumptions in IDF thinking.” These three assumptions were: 1) “that intelligence would ensure an adequate advance warning”; 2) “that the government would not desist from a decision to authorize an interceptive strike if and when Arab moves suggested that an attack was imminent”; and 3) “that the very least [what] the government would authorize would be a large scale mobilization of reserves.”²⁵⁶ In a memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon from February 1973, Kissinger wrote that “Mrs. Meir declared that she will be bringing no new ideas to Washington because the old ones [are] still good, since conditions in the area have not changed and because the Arabs persist in their old objectives. She stressed that it was only the strength of the Israeli armed forces which can hope to assure stability in the Middle East.”²⁵⁷ This lack of policies and the Israeli unwillingness to agree to the interim agreement were the reasons for the Israeli surprise on the morning of 6 October, the holiest day in Israel and for the Jews world-wide, called Yom Kippur, when Syria and Egypt attacked the Israeli forces in the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights.²⁵⁸

The Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Abba Eban, once recalled that “[b]y 1973 the diplomatic deadlock, the failure of the Jarring mission, the strong support given by the Nixon-Kissinger administration to an attrition policy, all created a climate of exuberant self-confidence that began to border on fantasy...reaching a somewhat absurd level in 1973.”²⁵⁹ Having won the previous Arab-Israeli wars, the IDF and the Israeli Government felt that there was no need to discard what already seemed to be the recipe for success. Accordingly, Israel assumed that what it needed in the future was merely more of the same, a strong and still growing military defence.²⁶⁰ After the 1967 war, Israel had gained a newfound confidence. The occupation of the Sinai, the West Bank, and of the Golan Heights gave the Jewish state strategic depth, the advantage of physical barriers, an extended lead time in terms of alert, and leverage against the Arabs.²⁶¹ One of Israel’s many failures during this time was to underestimate the importance Egypt attached to Sinai. It was not just because it was an advantage to have in war-time, but also because it was part of their country and heritage. The

²⁵⁵ Yaniv 1987: 163

²⁵⁶ Yaniv 1987: 163

²⁵⁷ FRUS, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1973, document: 16.

²⁵⁸ Quandt 2005: 104-105

²⁵⁹ Shlaim 2000: 318

²⁶⁰ Yaniv 1987: 130

²⁶¹ Yaniv 1987: 128

thought that the Egyptians would find the continued occupation of the peninsula intolerable did rarely occur to Israel.²⁶²

The tendency to view Middle East issues in the context of the Cold War led the United States to overlook several promising opportunities for peace agreements between Israel and Egypt. Sadat had at several times between 1971 and 1973 sought to make a deal.²⁶³ Although this was a mistake on Washington's part, the United States was still very much involved in Vietnam, Cambodia, the opening to China, and with the Presidential elections in 1972 during these years. The administration was also involved in serious negotiations with the Soviet Union regarding limiting strategic armaments in the world.²⁶⁴ In June 1973, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Leonid Brezhnev (1964-1982) visited Washington for the first time. There, he warned the Americans that the Egyptians and Syrians were intent on going to war with Israel and that the Soviet Union could not stop it from happening. He told the United States that only a new American initiative and an Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders could prevent a war.²⁶⁵ Despite all the evidence of an upcoming war, Israel and the United States did not take the threat seriously. The two countries had all the available information to come up with a strategy, or at least try to get an interim agreement in place, but did not use it.²⁶⁶

Egypt and Syria's aim in the October War was to break the political stalemate that had been present since the effort for an interim settlement started in 1971. They sought to provoke an international crisis that would force the superpowers to get involved and make them pressure Israel to withdraw from the territories it had occupied since 1967.²⁶⁷ One of the U.S.' policies after the 1967 war had been that there would be no military confrontations so long as the Arab states faced a definite defeat. The military balance in favour of Israel was the key to stability as the Americans saw it, and therefore it came as a big shock when Syria and Egypt brought its forces into Israeli territory on 6 October.²⁶⁸

Each day of war cost Israel \$250 million. Within one month that had added to Israel's entire annual Gross National Product (GNP), and taken the lives of around three thousand Israelis

²⁶² Yaniv 1987: 170-171

²⁶³ Mearsheimer & Walt 2006: 53

²⁶⁴ Quandt 2005: 86

²⁶⁵ Quandt 2005: 101-102

²⁶⁶ Ibid

²⁶⁷ Shlaim 2000: 319

²⁶⁸ Quandt 2005: 105

and 8500 Arabs. It made Israel more dependent on the U.S. and it emphasised that Israel did not have many friends in the world after the Arab oil embargo following the war.²⁶⁹ The October War also reshaped American policymaking for the rest of Nixon's presidency. From this point on, the war had set in motion an intense diplomatic process that would focus on the Middle Eastern peace process and a shuttle diplomacy that Kissinger set in motion after October 1973.²⁷⁰

The airlift

By the eve of the war, the administration had essentially accepted Israel's status quo in the Middle East and the American financial assistance to Israel had nearly quadrupled since Nixon took office. The sale of sophisticated American military equipment had been institutionalised with the arms deal of 1971, and Israel had proven to be an important strategic ally to the United States. In the midst of the October 1973 War, it was Nixon who made the final decision to send a massive airlift to Israel on 14 October, as a response to the Soviet airlift to Egypt and Syria a few days earlier.²⁷¹

At the beginning of the conflict, Kissinger was convinced that Israel would ask for more military aid during the war. Israel did just that, but despite their appeals for more military supplies, the U.S. was reluctant to provide the quantity of ammunition and military equipment Israel had asked for. The United States did not believe that Israel was in need of more ammunition so soon into the fighting. Regardless of its reservations, the U.S. did not want the Arabs to win the war on the grounds that this might increase Soviet influence in the region, and started to ship relatively small amounts of military supplies to Israel. The Nixon administration hoped for an early end to the fighting and that Israel would be the victorious part.²⁷² By 8 October, Egyptian and Syrian forces had repossessed some of their previously lost territories from Israel, and the pressure on the United States to provide arms for the Jewish state increased. The reason for the administration's reluctance was that they believed that Israel would crush the Arab states within a few days of the hostilities anyway, and that

²⁶⁹ Yaniv 1987: 188

²⁷⁰ Christison 2001: 135

²⁷¹ Kochavi 2009: 8

²⁷² Quandt 2005: 109

they feared Soviet interference in the war whenever the U.S. increased its military assistance to Israel.²⁷³

During the first days of the conflict, Israel was suffering losses on both fronts. After almost a week, Israel was ready to agree to a cease-fire because of shortages of equipment and ammunition, but Egypt was not. By 8 and 9 October, it began to appear that the war would last longer than the United States had anticipated, and as the conflict lasted throughout the first week it became more and more difficult for the Nixon administration to keep Israel's confidence in the Americans as an ally and provider of its security, while simultaneously convincing the Arabs that the U.S. was not providing much help to Israel by providing more military equipment.²⁷⁴

On 12 October, the Soviet Union began an airlift to Damascus consisting of several hundred tons of equipment. Soviet supplies to Egypt and Syria assured that the fighting would not stop on the Arab side for lack of equipment. The Arabs were in a position to fight a prolonged, low-intensity war of attrition that could force the Israelis to remain mobilised and alert for a long period of time. The U.S.' solution to the problem was to provide Israel with sufficient economic and military support in order to ensure that a war of attrition would not succeed.²⁷⁵ The U.S. used the same strategy as before, to match Soviet equipment to the Arabs with the same, or even more, to the Israelis. The Soviet airlift to Syria, therefore, gave the United States the opportunity to deliver more weapons to Israel, because the United States had previously stated that the Nixon administration would not be the first to send military equipment to the Middle East during this crisis.²⁷⁶

That same day, the Israelis had suffered many casualties and heavy loss of equipment on both fronts. Therefore, Golda Meir sent several messages to President Nixon urging for military assistance. The United States now feared that if they did not send an airlift of a substantial amount of military equipment to Israel, it was not impossible that the Israelis would resort to the use of nuclear weapons.²⁷⁷ Although some state officials believed that Jerusalem was being overly pessimistic in order to get more military equipment, the administration was not

²⁷³ Spiegel 1986: 245

²⁷⁴ Spiegel 1986: 249

²⁷⁵ Memorandum from William B. Quandt of the National Security Council Staff to Secretary of State Kissinger. Washington, 13 October 1973. FRUS, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1973, document: 169.

²⁷⁶ Quandt 2005: 112

²⁷⁷ Spiegel 1985: 255

willing to take that risk.²⁷⁸ Helmut Sonnenfeldt, a member of the National Security Council, wrote to Kissinger on 13 October that “[n]o matter how much in pain [they are in], the Israelis will probably use an atomic bomb before they concede the 1967 borders – not to mention what Senator Jackson will use here at home if we attempt to extract such a concession at this time. On the other hand, the Arabs will never yield on the 1967 borders, or the Palestinians.”²⁷⁹ These might only have been empty threats, or Israel’s way of saying that it would never give up its territories voluntarily despite heavy pressure. Due to the United States’ deep-rooted fear for getting involved in a conflict with the Soviet Union, the airlift to Israel seemed to be the safest approach for avoiding a possible nuclear confrontation.²⁸⁰

There had been several delays with the deliveries of replacement supplies to Israel during the first eight days of the war. The United States had hoped for an early cease-fire, and did not want to move too quickly in the matter of providing resupply efforts to Israel. Seeing that the cease-fire initiative did not take hold, and the increased Soviet deliveries of weapons to Egypt and Syria, Nixon sent a message on 13 October, through Kissinger at the Washington Special Actions Group (WSAG) meeting - a subdivision of the NSC chaired by Kissinger.²⁸¹ The message stated that if there were any further delays in carrying out orders, they wanted the resignation of the officials involved.²⁸² Nixon took the delays in the resupply efforts very seriously. The Israelis had been frustrated over the slow rate of the American resupply efforts before the airlift was put in place. The reason for the withholding of supplies to Israel was that the administration had worked on a strategy of trying to supply Israel quietly, without pushing the Arabs closer to the Soviet Union. “In order to help the White House withstand the pressures of Israel and her American supporters while he waited for the optimal moment, Kissinger blamed the Defence Department for the delays.”²⁸³ Nixon was very preoccupied with his own problems concerning the Watergate scandal, so Kissinger kept him informed through telephone conversations. Therefore, it is possible to assume that Nixon believed the Defence Department was in some way guilty of delaying the resupply efforts to Israel.

²⁷⁸ Ibid

²⁷⁹ Memorandum from Helmut Sonnenfeldt of the National Security Council Staff to Secretary of State Kissinger. FRUS, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1973, document:170

²⁸⁰ Spiegel 1986: 255

²⁸¹ Quandt 2005: 113-114

²⁸² Memorandum from Helmut Sonnenfeldt of the National Security Council Staff to Secretary of State Kissinger. FRUS, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1973, document:170

²⁸³ Spiegel 1985: 251

Nevertheless, it was only after Nixon had received a message from Meir pleading for more equipment that Nixon wanted the delays to stop and the resupply efforts to begin.²⁸⁴

At the same WSAG meeting on 13 October, Kissinger accounted for the U.S.' objectives in the war:

[T]o maintain contact with both sides. For this the best outcome would be an Israeli victory but it would come at a high price, so we could insist that they ensure their security through negotiations, not through military power. Second, we attempted to produce a situation where the Arabs would conclude the only way to peace was through us. But during the war we had to show the Israelis they had to depend on us to win and couldn't win if we were too recalcitrant.²⁸⁵

Kissinger also stated, that “[a]n Arab victory, even with American acquiescence, will look like American weakness. The Israelis have now slowed because of the shortages; now they might crank up when we want them to stop.”²⁸⁶ Kissinger did not initially want a massive airlift; he believed that this would make the U.S. lose its ties to the Arab states, but he was not the one to make that call. The Nixon administration did not want an Arab victory because this would weaken the United States' influence in the Middle East, and increase Arab states' dependence on the Soviet Union. The U.S. wanted the Arab states to turn to the United States in the aftermath of the War and could not risk losing its alliances.²⁸⁷

On 13 October Nixon ordered that all available aircrafts would be used for a full-scale airlift of military equipment to Israel, the biggest airlift in U.S. history. One of the main considerations of the decision to provide such an airlift was to convince Egypt and the Soviet Union that a prolonged war would not be the answer to peace in the Middle East, and to demonstrate to the Soviets that the United States was capable of matching Soviet military deliveries to Egypt and Syria with their own to Israel.²⁸⁸ The Israelis had argued that even though they had evidence of a possible Egyptian and Syrian attack, they did not pre-empt. The Israeli government had listened to the U.S. advice to not be the first to strike. Because of this, the Israelis were in a defensive position, something they had not been in during the previous wars.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁴ Spiegel 1985: 252

²⁸⁵ FRUS, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1973, document: 173.

²⁸⁶ Ibid

²⁸⁷ Ibid; Hanhimäki 2004: 307-308

²⁸⁸ Quandt 2005: 113-114

²⁸⁹ FRUS, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1973, document: 115

In a telephone conversation between Kissinger and Nixon from 14 October, they spoke about the airlift, and that it did not matter whether they were sending 3 planes or 300, they would get blamed just as much. No other country would let the airplanes intended for Israel fly over their airspace, and therefore the only way to get Skyhawks and Phantoms to Israel was to put them on American transport planes. Nixon believed that if you did something, you might as well go all in, and that was exactly what the United States did.²⁹⁰

On 14 October, the first C-5 transport planes arrived in Israel. From that day until 25 October, “the U.S. delivered approximately 11,000 tons of equipment, forty F-4 Phantoms, thirty-six A-4 Skyhawks, and twelve C-130 transports [...] from October 26 until the airlift ended on November 15, another 11,000 tons of equipment were delivered. In all, 147 sorties were flown by C-5s with 10,800 tons aboard, and 421 sorties by C-141s with 11,500 tons.”²⁹¹ The main goal for the United States was to deliver around 25 per cent more military armaments to Israel than the Soviet Union delivered to Egypt and Syria, and the airlift also contained highly sophisticated military equipment that Israel did not previously own.²⁹²

In another WSAG meeting on 16 October, Kissinger stressed that it was important that the Soviet Union were able to see that the U.S. was capable of delivering more military equipment than they were. It was also central to keep a good relationship with Israel before the impending diplomatic initiatives after the war. In that case, Kissinger argued for a large aid bill of \$3 billion. That same day, the President announced that the U.S. would grant \$2.2 billion in aid for Israel to cover the cost of the airlift.²⁹³ Even though Israel had gained the advantage against the Syrian and Egyptian troops by the point the airlift was in place, the U.S. supplied Israel with enough military equipment to keep a War of Attrition going. In maintaining its good relationship with Israel, the United States believed that by providing the airlift, the Israelis could be more inclined to participate in the peace efforts. It did bring on consequences however, such as the Arab oil embargo. The embargo put severe strains on the United States’ relationship with its Western, Asian, and Arab allies, and made Israel even more isolated in the world.²⁹⁴

²⁹⁰ FRUS, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1973, document: 180

²⁹¹ Quandt 2005: 114

²⁹² FRUS, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1973, document: 191.

²⁹³ Quandt 2005: 116-117

²⁹⁴ Neff 1995: 184

5 Consequences of U.S. Military and Financial Assistance to Israel, 1973-1974

From the start of Richard Nixon's presidency, Nixon had always been concerned with foreign policy-issues such as ending the war in Vietnam, and the crisis in the Middle East. In March 1973 Nixon ended the Vietnam War, and his approval rating reached 70 per cent. He would soon reach the bottom, however, when the Watergate scandal was known to the public. No president in American history has suffered such a major collapse of credibility as fast as Nixon did. The United States was suffering high inflation because of the Arab oil embargo, and the unemployment rates were high during the President's final time in the White House. This had only made Nixon's reputation worse, and many Americans had therefore lost faith in their President.²⁹⁵

The costs of supporting Israel during the early 1970s had been great and had, at times, undermined the United States' own ideals and interests. An example of this can be found in regards to the October war in 1973, and as Donald Neff writes, "[n]o fighting took place in Israel itself and the Jewish state fought mainly to retain the Arab territory it occupied in violation of the UN Charter and America's own policy against acquiring territory by force."²⁹⁶ Despite its policy, this did not stop the United States from giving Israel unprecedented diplomatic, military, and financial aid, such as the airlift during the October War in 1973. The immediate result of this was the Arab oil embargo, which severely impacted the U.S. and the rest of the world, and caused strains on the U.S.-Soviet relationship.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ Kochavi 2009: 97; Neff 1995: 177

²⁹⁶ Neff 1995: 184

²⁹⁷ Ibid

The oil embargo

Once the 1973 October War had started, the Washington Special Actions Group (WSAG) held a series of meetings on war-related issues, including the potential for an Arab oil embargo. Since Nixon was preoccupied with the domestic difficulties caused by the Watergate scandal, the President had given Kissinger his full support and authority, and had told Kissinger that the commitments he made during the discussions with the Soviets had the President's complete support.²⁹⁸ To handle the oil crisis, the Nixon administration had to cooperate with major Western industrial powers. This led to the establishment of the International Energy Agency (IEA), where the members discussed the development of an oil reserve for use in emergencies, plans to share their supplies if needed, and measures to reduce their dependence of Middle Eastern petroleum.²⁹⁹

In the middle of the War, on 14 October, Kissinger wrote to King Faisal of Saudi Arabia that the U.S. "had no alternative but to begin an airlift of supplies to Israel following the Soviet massive airlift of arms to Arab states". He added, "I hope, Your Majesty, you will understand that our airlift is not intended as anti-Arab". He assured King Faisal that as soon as an effective ceasefire had been achieved, the United States was prepared to stop the airlift at once, provided the Soviets did the same.³⁰⁰ Prince Fahd, Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior of Saudi Arabia (1962-1975), had a meeting with an American official in Jidda, Saudi Arabia, on 15 October. There, he stated that Saudi Arabia had been offended by the language, tone, and content of Secretary Kissinger's letter. He concluded that their relationship with the U.S. could never be the same again. Saudi Arabia was not considering breaking off diplomatic relations, but would possibly be compelled to support economic sanctions against the United States unless the U.S. stopped its resupply efforts to Israel and pushed the Israelis to withdraw to the pre-1967 borders.³⁰¹

These threats proved to be real, as on 17 October 1973, eleven members of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) announced that an oil embargo was being established with a five per cent cutback of oil production.³⁰² This would be followed by monthly cutbacks until Israel withdrew to the 1967 borders pending that the United States

²⁹⁸ FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli crisis and war, 1973, document: 217

²⁹⁹ Spiegel 1985: 225-226

³⁰⁰ FRUS, 1969-1974, Volume XXXVI, Energy Crisis, 1969,1974, editorial note, document: 216

³⁰¹ Ibid

³⁰² These members were Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Qatar, Syria, and Tunisia.

terminated its supplies of arms to Israel. At the same time, six Persian Gulf members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) announced that they too would increase the price of oil by 70 per cent until Israel agreed to U.N. Resolution 242.³⁰³ Nixon and Kissinger had ignored the warnings of an impending oil boycott and continued the airlift to Israel at full speed. Their goal was to increase the rate of deliveries to Israel until they were 25 per cent ahead of the Soviet deliveries to the Arab states. It was very important in the Nixon-Kissinger strategy to show the Soviet Union that the U.S. would not be pressured in any way and if they did, the U.S. would not hesitate to retaliate.³⁰⁴ This was an important strategy in the Nixon administration because this would, in their opinion, bring the Arab states that were supportive to the Soviet Union over to their side, and this would, in turn, increase the American influence in the region.³⁰⁵

On 18 October, a personal emissary from King Faisal of Saudi Arabia arrived in Washington with another important message to the President. The message stated that unless Israel returned to the pre-1967 lines, and the U.S. stopped its airlift to the Israelis, an embargo would be put in place on all oil shipments to the United States. Despite these threats, the very next day, Nixon requested from Congress \$2.2 billion in aid to Israel. On 20 October, therefore, Saudi Arabia implemented the embargo against the United States. The other OAPEC and OPEC countries soon followed, which had grave consequences for the rest of the American allies in Western Europe and Asia.³⁰⁶

The consequences of the Arab oil embargo

Even though the oil embargo was implemented, Kissinger did not believe it would be long lasting, at least not until 1974. In Kissinger's book *Years of Upheaval*, he wrote that he could recall that in the beginning of the oil crisis, the Nixon administration believed that the embargo was "merely a symbolic gesture of limited practical importance."³⁰⁷ This attitude was also reflected in a memorandum from the Office of Economic Research in the CIA from 19 October 1973, where the CIA stated that if such an embargo went into effect, the repercussions would be relatively small, and that "after the first month, the brunt of the

³⁰³ FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1973. Document: 200.

³⁰⁴ Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting, Washington, October 16, 1973. Subject: Middle East. Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, NSC Institutional Files (H-Files), Box H-117, Minutes Files (1969-1974)

³⁰⁵ Ibid

³⁰⁶ Neff 1995: 177

³⁰⁷ Kissinger, Henry 1982. *Years of Upheaval*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson: 893

cutback would fall on Europe and Japan.”³⁰⁸ In the same document, the CIA wrote “[o]n October 17 the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) decided to cut oil production...by not less than 5% a month until the Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories is completed and the ‘legal rights’ of the Palestinians restored. The Arab countries also promise to maintain oil deliveries to ‘friendly’ countries that give Arabs ‘effective material help’; and threatened a total embargo of countries that used their armed forces to aid Israel.”³⁰⁹ The Nixon administration, and especially Kissinger, was now starting to get concerned by the impending oil crisis but wanted to deal with it after a cease-fire was put in place and the war had ended. Kissinger also believed that the United States could break it because he would not provide auspices for the negotiations until the Arab OPEC countries ended the embargo.³¹⁰

The beginning of the embargo, therefore, triggered increases in oil prices and cutbacks in production. 70 per cent of the oil consumption in Western Europe was provided by the Arab oil-producing states, and Japan’s supply needs were around 40 per cent. The U.S. oil- and total energy consumption, on the other hand, were respectively only 12 and 5 per cent reliant on Arab oil.³¹¹ The oil producing states recognised that it was somewhat unjust to punish the Europeans and Japanese more than the United States, but saw no other option.³¹² Regardless of the Nixon administration’s doubts and light concerns, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia announced on 20 October, the day after Nixon had announced the \$2.2 billion aid bill to Israel, that the oil embargo against the United States was being implemented as well as substantial cuts in production. Professor of Politics William B. Quandt wrote that “in retrospect, Kissinger wondered whether he had pushed too hard on the Arabs with the \$2.2 billion aid request just as the military situation was turning to Israel’s favour.”³¹³ The OAPEC countries had clearly stated that the embargo would affect any country that was supportive to Israel and/or supported the country with military and financial means, so the aid bill to Israel certainly did not stop it. By December 1973, oil prices had quadrupled in Europe and the

³⁰⁸ FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli crisis and war, 1973, document: 200.

³⁰⁹ FRUS, 1969-1974, Volume XXXVI, Energy Crisis, 1969,1974, document: 223

³¹⁰ FRUS, 1969-1974, Volume XXXVI, Energy Crisis, 1969,1974, document: 225

³¹² FRUS, 1969-1974, Volume XXXVI, Energy Crisis, 1969,1974, document: 223

³¹³ Quandt 2005: 116-117

United States, unemployment rates were high and the people were becoming desperate. Nevertheless, the Arab states were looking towards Washington now, not Moscow.³¹⁴

Kissinger's trip to Moscow and SCR 338

On 19 October, Israel had won an important battle in the war, and Egypt admitted defeat. The Egyptian forces had to pull back because of Israeli forces gaining more and more territory on the West Bank of the Suez Canal. The Syrians were also losing ground to the IDF, but did not approve to Sadat's acceptance of a cease fire. Nevertheless, they quickly understood that they had no choice but to join the Egyptians, as they had no chance of winning this war on their own.³¹⁵ Consequently, on 20 October, Kissinger went to Moscow after receiving a message from the Soviet General Brezhnev urging the Secretary to come and work on a U.S.-Soviet Security Council Resolution (SCR) and peace negotiations.³¹⁶

In Moscow, on 21 October, Brezhnev and Kissinger agreed on a Security Council Resolution which "1) Call[ed] for a cease fire in place to be carried out within twelve hours of the adopting of the Security [Council Resolution]; 2) Include[d] that the Security Council Resolution 242 [would] be implemented in all its parts, and; 3) Contain[ed] the provision that, concurrently with the cease fire, negotiations between the parties would be started under appropriate auspices looking towards a final settlement."³¹⁷ Kissinger was happy about the outcome of the discussions because he knew that Israel would never accept the Arab states' interpretation of SCR 242, which called for Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders. Therefore, the phrase "in all its parts" suggested that Security Council Resolution 242 would be considered as a package, and for Israel this meant that it did not have to withdraw from the territories captured in 1967 until it knew what each Arab government would give Israel in return. For the Arab states, this meant that they did not have to negotiate face-to-face with the Israelis because of the phrase "under appropriate auspices".³¹⁸

Despite this breakthrough in diplomatic efforts, the oil embargo was still in place, and the OAPEC countries were not willing to end it unless the Security Council Resolution 242 was

³¹⁴ Quandt 2005: 128; Waage 2013: 395-396

³¹⁵ Waage 2013: 392-393

³¹⁶ FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli crisis and war, 1973, document: 216

³¹⁷ FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli crisis and war, 1973, document: 222; see appendix D for the full resolution

³¹⁸ Spiegel 1985: 261

realised, and Israel had gone back to the 1967 borders. Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia wrote to Kissinger on 22 October,

I feel that I can tell you very frankly and in confidence, in the spirit of friendship which we share, that my Government is going to be most hesitant and even reluctant to use its influence until and unless we are convinced that the intentions of the United States and the Soviet Union in their joint initiative is truly to implement Security Council Resolution 242 "in all its parts." We know that the Israelis have their own interpretation of Security Council Resolution 242 that would be far from acceptance to ourselves and to other Arabs.³¹⁹

Prince Fahd continued by saying "[u]ntil we can be confident that the United States and the Soviet Union truly intend jointly to uphold the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, we lack the means by which to persuade our friends that acceptance and immediate implementation of the present resolution is in the Arab interests."³²⁰

Just before the U.N. Security Council was to convene and discuss what was to become Resolution 338, which was drafted by the U.S. and the Soviet Union, Israel accepted the cease-fire resolution. The cease-fire went into effect on Monday 22 October, but it did not last for long. On 23 October, Brezhnev sent a message to Kissinger saying that Israel had broken the cease-fire. The Soviet leader urged Kissinger to get Israel to withdraw to the positions it held during the acceptance of Resolution 338.³²¹ The Israeli forces had now pushed forward and surrounded the Egyptian Third Army Corps and cut off its supplies. If the United States did not do something about the situation, it risked destroying its improving relations with the Soviet Union, and Kissinger's role in the peace efforts would be jeopardised.³²²

³¹⁹ Message from Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Jidda, 23 October 1973. FRUS, 1969-1974, Volume XXXVI, Energy Crisis, 1969-1974. Document: 224

³²⁰ Ibis

³²¹ Message from Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev to Secretary of State Kissinger, Moscow, October 23, 1973. FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli crisis and war, 1973, document: 241

³²² Quandt 2005: 120, Spiegel 1985: 262

A possible nuclear confrontation

After Kissinger's meeting in Moscow on 22 October, he flew straight to Tel Aviv for armistice negotiations. There, Kissinger had exchanged observances of the cease-fire with Meir,

Kissinger: Did you get our message that if you need a few hours at the other end...

Meir: What does a standstill ceasefire mean?

Kissinger: Frankly, we haven't thought it through... [but] You won't get violent protests from Washington of something happens during the night [of 22-23 October], while I'm flying [to Washington).

Meir: If they don't stop, we won't

Kissinger: Even if they do...³²³

The Secretary of State told Meir that she could take some more time to complete Israel's military operations before abiding by the cease-fire and adopting U.N. Resolution 338, while Kissinger was flying back to the United States. The Secretary only made it clear that Israel should not try to destroy the Egyptian Third Army Corps.³²⁴ Furthermore, in the same meeting between Kissinger and Meir, the Israeli Prime Minister told Kissinger that "I know what you did. Without you, I don't know where we would have been. I went to the airfield the other day and I watched the planes come in. It was more than I could ever have dreamed."³²⁵ Here, she was referring to the American airlift to Israel that Nixon had ordered on 13 October, and was one of the main causes for the oil embargo.

When Kissinger returned home from his trips to Moscow and Tel Aviv, the Soviets and Egyptians urged the United States to intervene with the use of force against the Israelis, if necessary. Kissinger decided to send American ground observers into the area on 24 October instead. The reason for this was to make sure that Israel continued to be in a defensive position, and not carry on attaining new territory.³²⁶ Regardless of these efforts, there were more reports about Israel breaking the cease-fire and of the Israelis continuing to make their way deeper into Egyptian and Syrian lands. Brezhnev again tried to get the United States to do something about the continued Israeli breaking of the cease-fire, and warned that it was impossible to let this continue. He went on saying, "I will say it straight that if you find it impossible to act jointly with us in this matter, we should be faced with the necessity urgently

³²³ Quoted in Hanhimäki 2004: 313

³²⁴ Quandt 2005: 120, Mearsheimer & Walt 2006: 44; Hanhimäki 2004: 309

³²⁵ FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli crisis and war, 1973, document: 241

³²⁶ FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli crisis and war, 1973, document: 259

to consider the question of taking appropriate steps unilaterally. We cannot allow arbitrariness on the part of Israel.”³²⁷

This message from Moscow made the Nixon administration concerned and angry. Nixon reportedly told Kissinger to take any necessary action, and called for a military alert of all American military forces and nuclear units, also known as DEFCON 3.³²⁸ This was a critical time in the U.S.-Soviet relationship, and made the possibility for a nuclear confrontation more imminent. Although there was never any real danger of a nuclear confrontation, both the Soviet Union and the United States threatened that it was not impossible. Nixon had a nuclear strategy that he had adopted in the beginning of his presidency; the “madman” strategy. The strategy conveyed the administration’s willingness to use excessive force, and threatened that nuclear weapons might be used in a crisis situation.³²⁹ This was also the strategy Nixon and Kissinger used during the end of the October War after the Soviet Union had started to send personnel to the area and appeared to intervene separately from the U.S. After Nixon had called for an alert of all military forces, the Soviets seemed to stop pushing for an intervention in the conflict, and the crisis was averted.³³⁰

On 24 October, the final cease-fire resolution was put in place and the war ended. The U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 340, which called for an immediate cease-fire, the return to the 22 October lines, dispatch of an enlarged U.N. observer force to the area, and implementation of Resolution 338.³³¹ The war had finally come to an end, but it was not without its consequences. The October War had caused severe strains on American relations with the Arab countries because of the airlift to Israel. The Arab oil embargo, caused by the American backing of Israel and the military resupply effort to the country, made the U.S.’ relationship with its Western European and Japanese allies strained, and isolated Israel. For the United States, this was a high price to pay. Israel was supposed to enhance American interests, not jeopardized it like the country had done throughout the war.³³²

³²⁷ Message from Soviet General Secretary Brezhnev to President Nixon, Moscow, undated. FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli crisis and war, 1973, document: 267

³²⁸ Quandt 2005: 121

³²⁹ Gavin 2008: 136

³³⁰ Gavin 2008: 137

³³¹ Quandt 2005: 124; see appendix E for the full resolution

³³² Neff 1995: 177

The aftermath of the October War

The Egyptian Third Army was continually surrounded by Israeli Defence Force on 26 October, and the situation was still tense despite the cease-fire. In a telephone conversation between Kissinger and the Israeli Ambassador Shimcha Dinitz (1973-1979), Kissinger suggested that the Israelis let the Egyptian army go home, or at least let the army receive food and water supplies. Dinitz told Kissinger that the Israelis would let the Egyptian army go home if the army were not shooting at the Israeli forces. Kissinger suggested that the Israelis could just let the army and their tanks go back to the rest of the Egyptian army, because the Soviets would replace its military equipment anyway. Dinitz answered,

Dinitz: We will not open up the pocket and release an army that came to destroy us. It has never happened in a history of war.

Kissinger: Also it has never happened that a small country is producing a world war in this manner. There is a limit beyond which you cannot push the President...

Dinitz: We are not trying to push the President.

Kissinger: You play your game and you will see what happens.³³³

The United States had finally begun to put heavy pressure on the Israelis to begin working toward permanent cease-fire agreements. If the U.S. was to become the new diplomatic superpower, the Americans had to prove to the Arab countries that they could deliver what they had promised. This would also weaken the Soviet influence in the area, which had been the United States' goal all along. If Egypt and Syria did not get back the territories lost in the Six-Day War in 1967, they would realise that the United States was in fact the best ally to have, not the Soviet Union who had failed to get them what they wanted.³³⁴

As Steven L. Spiegel wrote, “[i]n the period between 1973 and 1977, Kissinger, Nixon and Ford relied on diplomatic momentum and the carrots of trade, aid, and arms sales. Their aim was to expand the American role in the region at the expense of Russian influence. This would lead, they believed, to uninterrupted oil supplies as long as the new diplomatic process could be maintained.”³³⁵ The United States' diplomatic efforts started immediately after the October War had ended. Kissinger travelled from country to country, encouraging disengagement agreements between Israel, Syria, and Egypt to get started. Although the war

³³³ Transcript of Telephone Conversation between Secretary of State Kissinger and the Israeli Ambassador (Dinitz), Washington, 26 October 1973. FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli crisis and war, 1973, document: 284

³³⁴ Shlaim 2000: 51-52; Mearsheimer and Walt 2007: 51-52

³³⁵ Spiegel 1985: 228

had officially ended, there were still tensions between the parties in the conflict, and they were still in need of official agreements, not just resolutions. Israel and Egypt signed a disengagement agreement in January 1974, and the Israeli-Syrian agreement was signed in May 1974. Much of this was due to Kissinger's extensive diplomatic efforts.³³⁶

The Israel lobby and Henry Jackson

There was a strong pro-Israeli atmosphere in the United States during President Nixon's time in the White House, and especially during the October War. This mood had a strong impact on policymakers, even though Nixon did not believe the domestic opinion had any impact on his foreign policy-making.³³⁷ In 1969, Nixon had stated that "[u]nder no circumstances will domestic political considerations have any bearing on the decisions I make with regard to the Mideast."³³⁸ The Democratic Senator Henry M. Jackson, one of the strongest pro-Israeli voices in the Congress, was asked in the 1970s whether the pro-Israel lobby was taking over Congress. According to the American political analyst and author Kathleen Christison, "[h]e scoffed at this notion, saying, '[t]hese people don't understand. They refuse to realize that the *American people* support Israel. Americans, whether Gentile or Jew, respect competence. They like the idea that we are on the side which seems to know what it's doing'."³³⁹

Israel's victory in the previous wars had raised massive support from the evangelical Christians in the United States. They believed that these victories were a sign of God's plan in human history. Therefore, Israel received a lot of financial contributions from wealthy Diaspora Jews and other well-off Americans. This money helped finance, among other things, Israel's concealed nuclear program in the 1950s and 1960s.³⁴⁰ This money was untraceable, and once inside Israel, no one would know what the Israeli government would use it for. Author Donald Neff wrote, "[t]o America's enemies, and some of its friends as well, the United States was not only guilty of condoning Israel's expansion and occupation but of directly sharing in its transgressions against the Palestinians by its generous awards of aid that

³³⁶ Shlaim 2000: 322

³³⁷ Christison 2001: 136

³³⁸ Sandbrook 2008: 89

³³⁹ Quoted in Christison 2001: 136

³⁴⁰ Mearsheimer & Walt 2007: 30

helped finance internationally condemned practices.”³⁴¹ U.S. military aid has also helped transform Israel’s armed forces into one of the most sophisticated militaries in the world. As Specialist in Middle East Affairs at the Congressional Research Service, Jeremy M. Sharp puts it, “US military aid for Israel has been designed to maintain Israel’s ‘qualitative military edge’ (QME) over neighbouring militaries, since Israel must rely on better equipment and training to compensate for a manpower deficit in any potential regional conflict. US military aid also helped Israel build a domestic defence industry, which ranks as one of the top 10 suppliers of arms worldwide.”³⁴²

In 1974, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, George Brown, held a lecture at Duke University about the Jewish influence in the country. Brown said,

[i]t’s so strong you wouldn’t believe now. We have the Israelis coming to us for equipment. We say we can’t possibly get the Congress to support a program like that. They say, “Don’t worry about Congress. We’ll take care of the Congress.” Now this is somebody from another country, but they can do it. They own...the banks in this country, the newspapers...you just look at where the Jewish money is in this country.³⁴³

Even though 1973 October War had been covered by the media, and the American public had come to see that because of Israel’s refusal to comply with the U.N. resolutions, the country had, in fact, started another war, and brought the world into an energy crisis, the support for Israel amongst the public and the U.S. government did not waver. Now, more than ever, the Nixon administration regarded Israel as a firm Cold War ally to the United States, even though the war had been very costly for the U.S. and jeopardized its relationship with the Arab countries in the Middle East and the Soviet Union.³⁴⁴

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) was one of the biggest pro-Israeli lobbying groups in the United States, and in 1970, they brought 1400 Jewish leaders from 31 different states to Washington to protest against the Rogers Plan. There, they were able to see 250 congressmen, which was almost half of the members of Congress. Nixon, and especially Kissinger, was against the Rogers Plan from the beginning, so it was not difficult to abide by the lobbyist’s calls. This proved, however, that the pro-Israeli advocates were a force to be reckoned with, and that it was impossible to ignore them.³⁴⁵

³⁴¹ Neff 1995: 184

³⁴² Sharp 2009: 1

³⁴³ Spiegel 1985: 221, note 12. Washington Post, 13 November 1974, p. A9

³⁴⁴ Christison 2001: 125; Neff 1995: 177

³⁴⁵ Christison 2001: 137

The Jackson amendment

Richard Nixon never had a strong electoral mandate or a big support in the Democratic Congress. The Congress frequently criticised the policies towards Israel, and sought to change them by making their point through speeches, letters, legislation and resolutions. These protests were led by Senator Henry Jackson, who was a presidential candidate in the elections in 1972 and 1976.³⁴⁶ Senator Jackson was a man with strong pro-Israeli sentiment, and was one of the strongest critics of détente and the SALT I agreement. He based this criticism on two issues. Firstly, he believed that Nixon and Kissinger had “bargained away American nuclear superiority” to the Soviet Union, and second; the United States’ indirect support of the Soviets’ emigration laws if the U.S. gave Moscow a Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status, today known as “normal trade relations”. This status would have given the Soviet Union the same financial and trade advantages as the United States, but the amendment put this on hold.³⁴⁷

In June 1970, the Nixon administration had passed a Defence Procurement Act (also known as Defence Production Act). This was originally introduced in 1950, and is still a United States federal law. The Defence Procurement Act was created “to ensure the availability of the nation’s industrial resources to meet the national security need of the United States by granting the President authorities to ensure the supply and timely delivery of products, materials, and services to military and civilian agencies.”³⁴⁸ The Jackson Amendment would be a part of the Act, and the administration needed it to be approved “in order to have the power to negotiate a multilateral agreement for the reduction of tariffs and other disincentives to free trade.”³⁴⁹

The Senate adopted the Jackson Amendment to the Defence Procurement Act in 1972, but it was already introduced in 1970 as a consequence of the deepened Soviet involvement in the Middle East during the War of Attrition (1969-1970). To restore the balance in the Middle

³⁴⁶ Spiegel 1985: 169

³⁴⁷ Hanhimäki 2004: 340

³⁴⁸ Else, Daniel H. 2009. *Defense Production Act: Purpose and Scope*. CRS Report for Congress: Congressional Research Service. RS20587: I; Hanhimäki 2004: 366-367

³⁴⁹ Hanhimäki 2004: 366

East, it became important to furnish Israel with the means to provide for its own security.³⁵⁰ This bill also had the effect of the President's ability to grant aircrafts and other military equipment to Israel. The key passage in the Jackson Amendment reads:

The President is authorized to transfer to Israel, by sales, credit sale or guarantee, such aircraft, and equipment appropriate to use, maintain and protect such aircraft, as may be necessary to counteract any past, present, or future increased military assistance provided to other countries of the Middle East. Any such sale, credit sale, or guarantee shall be made on terms and conditions not less favorable than those extended to other countries which receive the same or similar types of aircraft equipment.³⁵¹

In September 1970, the Jackson Amendment is was mentioned in a memorandum for General Haig from Harold H. Saunders. This paper was being drafted during the War of Attrition and would be used during the Jordan Civil War in September 1970. In this paper, it was recommended that the Nixon administrations should use the Jackson Amendment as the main legislative vehicle for assistance to Israel, and was concluded to be used as the principal instrument of assistance for Israel in Fiscal Year (FY) 1971.³⁵² The reasons for this were,

- 1) It would be responsive to the sentiment on the [Capitol] Hill.
- 2) It would probably be available soon
- 3) It is appropriate to Israel's military-based needs
- 4) It does not create any precedents for making grant assistance available to a developed country but does not preclude our switching to grant assistance if circumstances should warrant it.
- 5) It would allow the extensions of assistance on liberal terms.³⁵³

Just after this was concluded, the SAM package for Israel, in October 1970, was decided upon, and in December 1971, the first long-term arms deal between the U.S. and Israel became a reality.³⁵⁴ The Jackson Amendment gave the President the authority to provide Israel with the equipment that would maintain the balance of power in the Middle East, something Nixon and Kissinger deemed crucial to the stability of the region. Senator Jackson also declared that the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) credit terms were inappropriate for Israel, and stated that he had in mind assistance on concessionary terms – “repayment on the order of 25 years or more, and rates of interests that would be negligible – and certainly

³⁵⁰ Jewish Telegraph Agency, 19 June 1970. Senate Committee adopts amendment authorizing aircraft, associated equipment for Israel. www.jta.org/1970/06/19/archive/senate-committee-adopts-amendment-authorizing-aircraft-associated-equipment-for-israel last visited: 10.10.14

³⁵¹ Memorandum for General Haig from Harold H. Saunders (Hal), Washington, 26 September 1970. Subject: Financial Assistance for Israel, TAB B, Options Paper. Source: NA, NPM, Memo Saunders to HAK, 4/9/70, NSC Files, H-Files, Box H-171

³⁵² Ibid

³⁵³ Ibid

³⁵⁴ See chapter 4

concessionary.”³⁵⁵ This meant that the United States would give Israel a lower interest rate, which they did not provide many countries. Senator Jackson believed that Israel was entitled to this kind of treatment because of the many conflicts it had been through since its creation in 1948. Israel was in fact doing really well, and was one of the countries with the highest economic growth at that time. Regardless, Jackson still believed that the Israelis would not be able to pay back their loans to the U.S. without substantial sacrifices unless they had a long deadline.³⁵⁶

Jackson-Vanik 1972

In October 1972, Moscow held a summit meeting with the United States where they completed a major trade agreement. This would have given the Soviet Union MFN status if the agreement went through. During the same month Henry Jackson, together with Representative Charles Vanik, presented two draft bills to Congress that were to become the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, an improved version of the Jackson Amendment.³⁵⁷ The reason behind the Jackson-Vanik Amendment was the expensive education tax that was placed upon all Soviet citizens that wanted to emigrate from the Soviet Union. In reality, it was only the Jewish citizens that were allowed to emigrate and the tax, therefore, was mainly applied to them.³⁵⁸

Moscow deeply wanted MFN status but were stopped because, as Julie Ginsberg writes: “[t]o comply with the amendment, the applicable countries may not deny their citizens the right to emigrate, impose a significant tax on emigration or related documents, or otherwise monetarily punish any citizen for seeking to emigrate.”³⁵⁹ This was precisely what the Soviet Union had done, but because of pressure from the United States, the Kremlin put an end to the education tax in late 1972. The amendment, however, was still included in the American

³⁵⁵ Memorandum for General Haig, from Harold H. Saunders (Hal), Washington, September 26, 1970. Subject: Financial assistance for Israel, TAB B, options paper. Source: NA, NPM, Memo Saunders to HAK, 4/9/70, NSC-Files, H-Files, Box H-171, Folder 7.

³⁵⁶ Ibid

³⁵⁷ Hanhimäki 2004: 341

³⁵⁸ Hanhimäki 2004: 369, 341

³⁵⁹ Ginsberg, Julie 2009. Reassessing the Jackson-Vanik Amendment. Council on Foreign Relations: 2. <http://www.cfr.org/trade/reassessing-jackson-vanik-amendment/p19734>. Last visited: 08.10.14

Trade Act in 1974, and tied the granting of the Soviet's MFN status to them lifting the restrictions on the number of emigrants from the Soviet Union.³⁶⁰

The Soviet emigration issue was very important to Israel together with the American public. Many Israelis came from Soviet Jewish descent, and several had emigrated from the USSR. Therefore, it was important for the Israeli community to bring as many Soviet Jews to Israel as possible, since it was essential for Israel to have a high Jewish population.³⁶¹ When Golda Meir became Prime Minister of Israel in 1969, she faced the problem of how to avoid a confrontation with the Kremlin, while at the same time maintaining a good relationship with the U.S. The White House was reluctant to launch a campaign against the Soviet emigration policies in fear of making the Cold War warmer, but the Congress supported the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the fullest.³⁶²

Nixon and Kissinger had ignored the Amendment since its creation. They wanted to continue détente between themselves and the Soviet Union. The Amendment became a risk to this relationship. The Israeli government did support Jackson, and sent several messages to Nixon, urging him to implement the Amendment and to put pressure on Moscow to change its emigration policies. Nixon would not listen, and in 1973, the President sent the Trade Reform Act to the Congress. This included requirements that would have given MFN status to the Soviet Union, and it also excluded the connections to the emigration issue. Because of this, 76 senators, including Henry Jackson, reciprocated by reintroducing the Jackson Amendment, and making it a part of the Act.³⁶³

Nixon and Kissinger were very much against the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, and saw no need to interfere in Soviet internal politics. During the first days of the October War in 1973, Kissinger told the Israelis that if the U.S. would begin its resupply efforts to Israel, the Israelis and the American Jewish community had to withdraw their support for the Amendment. Because of this dilemma, Meir declared Israel neutral in the issue of Jackson-Vanik between the White House and Congress. Although the Israeli Prime Minister maintained a posture of neutrality, the Israelis secretly ran an effective campaign supporting the Amendment because

³⁶⁰ Hanhimäki 2004: 341

³⁶¹ Kochavi 2009: 30

³⁶² Kochavi 2009: 30

³⁶³ Kochavi 2009: 36

it “addressed some of their most fundamental emotional dispositions and ideological goals.”³⁶⁴

As a result of Richard Nixon’s preoccupation with the Watergate scandal, it was Kissinger that had to try and block the Jackson-Vanik Amendment. He did not succeed because, “[h]e was too wedded to a realistic outlook and to the strategic design of détente to fully grasp the deep ideological attraction Jackson-Vanik had for Americans: it enabled America to regain the moral high ground it had lost in Vietnam and it appealed to two pillars of the American self-image: a ‘nation of immigrants’ and a ‘redeemer nation’.”³⁶⁵

In 1974, the Jackson-Vanik Amendment became a part of the United States’ Trade Act. The implementation of the amendment impacted the American relationship with Israel by allowing the Jewish state more time in repaying its loans, as well as increasing amounts of military equipment. The relationship with the Soviet Union became more strained, and was the start of the decline of détente. Brezhnev was not happy about the way the agreement of MFN status had turned out, or the United States’ interference in domestic Soviet disputes. In a meeting between the Soviet General and Kissinger on 24 October 1974, Brezhnev complained about the United States’ failure to abide by the 1972 agreement. Kissinger commented that “I have believed and have said publicly that it was a mistake for the United States to involve itself in an internal Soviet issue. But all the blame... belonged to Jackson, whose manner is as humiliating for me as it is for you.”³⁶⁶ At home, Kissinger was the one that received the most criticism for not being on the Israelis side in the matter of the Soviet emigrants because he had been against the Amendment. Even though this criticism had some effect on Kissinger’s political life, he still remained Secretary of State and National Security Adviser for the new president Gerald Ford after Richard Nixon’s resignation from office on 9 August 1974.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ Kochavi 2009: 5

³⁶⁵ Ibid

³⁶⁶ Hanhimäki 2004: 369

³⁶⁷ Ibid

6 Summary and Conclusion

I have set as my goal the attainment of a generation of peace. I believe that arms control presents both a necessary and promising road toward a stable, secure world in which true peace can exist – Richard M. Nixon, 1971.³⁶⁸

Throughout Richard Nixon's presidency the deliveries of military and financial aid to Israel were substantial. The Nixon administration provided Israel with aircrafts and other military equipment worth billions of dollars, and secured Israel's military supremacy in the Middle East. The introduction of the Jackson Amendment in 1970 authorised the President to provide additional military equipment to Israel, and Nixon used this authority several times during his presidency. The sale of Phantom's and Skyhawk's to Israel escalated and the Israeli government managed to obtain a nuclear arsenal.

It is possible to assume that the Nixon administration did not have a firm set of policies or did not form any particular doctrine with regards to the arms policy towards Israel when Nixon took office in January 1969. It is implied that the policies were formed as the events unfolded, and the weapons deliveries and sales to Israel were shaped thereafter.

Arms policy towards Israel

This thesis has shown that there have been several different motives behind the American arms sales towards Israel between 1969 and 1974. The most prominent American motives were firstly, to dampen Soviet influence in the world whilst halt the spread of communism; secondly, increase the U.S.' own power in the Middle East by enlisting more allies, and undermining Soviet influence; third, to secure other American interests in the region, mainly oil; and fourth, to satisfy the pro-Israeli public opinion and the survival of Israel.

³⁶⁸ Richard Nixon's message to the Congress transmitting the Tenth Annual Report of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, 15 March 1971. In a Memorandum for Mr. Henry Kissinger. Transmission of Department's response to NSSM 137, 1 November 1971. Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC, Subject Files, The President Annual Review of Foreign Policy (1971), Box 327

Dampen Soviet influence

Nixon came to power believing that the Arab world had joined forces with the Soviet Union and that this had to be dealt with by increasing the United States' own power in the Middle East. Israel was the golden ticket that could secure American interests and stop Soviet expansion, thereby halt the spread of communism throughout the world. The President and his National Security Advisor believed that increased aid and a steadfast support for Israel would eventually reveal the inadequate value of Soviet aid and convince the Soviet Union's clients in the Middle East to cooperate with Washington instead. Nixon and Kissinger believed that Israel's military superiority would expose Soviet weakness. Therefore, Washington needed a strategically placed, strong and loyal ally in the Middle East, and after the Jordan Civil War in 1970, Israel had proven to be an ally of high value.

To undermine the Soviet Union's influence in the region, the United States pursued a policy of downplaying its arms shipments to Israel, and conveying different strategies to the different parties involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. When Secretary of State William P. Rogers presented the Rogers Plan in 1970, which called for Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in the 1967-War and the Arab states' acknowledgement of Israel's existence, Nixon emitted to the impression of supporting the plan in hope of making the Arab states consider reopening its relationship with Washington. To the Israeli government, however, Nixon assured that he had no intention of pursuing the Rogers Plan.

It became very important for the Nixon administration to increase its arms sales to Israel as a consequence of Soviet shipments to Egypt and other allies in the Middle East. The Soviet Union had also provided several thousand tons of equipment to Syria and Egypt at the end of Nixon's presidency, and to maintain the military balance of power in the Middle East, the United States had to supply additional aircrafts to Israel. Contrary to Nixon and Kissinger's believes, it was concluded in 1970 that Israel was in fact superior to any Arab state in the region, and it was therefore no particular need for furnishing Israel with more military equipment.

The pursuit of oil

The oil in the Middle East was also important to the Washington policymakers, and in extension, the states that were in the possession of the oil reserves in the region. Despite of this emphasis on the oil reservoir in the Middle East, the Arab oil embargo on all shipments to the United States after the October War was a direct consequence of the United States' support for Israel. The embargo strained Washington's relationship with its Western European allies, as well as the Arab countries in the Middle East. The U.S. had received several warnings from Saudi Arabia prior to its implementation, but Kissinger did not take these threats seriously. Was the Middle Eastern oil not that important to the United States after all? Kissinger believed that an embargo would not be implemented until sometime in 1974, and that the United States had the power to stop it. The Americans did not have the power to halt an embargo, and on 20 October 1973, the Arab oil embargo was erected. The world was now thrown into an energy crisis that would last throughout the remainder of Nixon's presidency.

A pro-Israeli society

The pro-Israeli public opinion was strong in the United States during the 1970s and the pro-Israeli lobby steadily increased in numbers. In the 1960s, President Kennedy had opened up for giving Jewish leaders, Israeli embassy officials and pro-Israeli Congressmen immediate access to the White House. This policy would remain under Nixon's presidency and made it difficult for the American administration to pursue policies that were not favourable to the state of Israel. This had a big impact on the policy-making and a strong influence on the arms policy towards Israel. The Israelis also regarded the Nixon administration's decisions on arms sales to their country as a test of U.S. support and commitment to Israel. This made it difficult for the American government to not provide what the Israelis deemed necessary for Israel's survival.

The Israel lobbying groups would campaign on the behalf of Israel inside the United States, and could influence the presidential elections by affecting the voting in the Congress and support the President with high turnout rates during the elections. Israel had many friends in the U.S. to lobby its cause and this was usually highly effective.

Different weapons in high quantities sold to Israel

From 1969 to 1974, the United States' relationship with Israel transformed. The previous administrations had begun providing Israel with modest amounts of military equipment and financial aid, with President Kennedy's HAWK deal in 1962, and President Johnson's Phantom's deal in 1968. It was not until Nixon and Kissinger became the main architects of foreign policy in the early 1970s, however, that this relationship truly changed.

The escalation of financial aid was apparent, rising from \$102.0 million in 1970 to \$643.5 million in 1971. 85 per cent of this aid consisted of military assistance. After the October War in 1973 the aid to Israel increased fivefold, stabilising at around \$3 billion a year in loans and grants, making Israel the largest recipient of American foreign assistance in the world.

The different arms packages in the 1970s arose as a consequence of increased Israeli assistance requests, and the anti-SAM package in October 1970 accounted for \$163.7 million and contained SAM surface-to-air missiles, anti-SAM equipment, SHRIKE anti-radiation missiles, and other highly sophisticated weapons. The real turning point in the administration's commitment to Israel came in 1971 with the first long-term arms deal with Israel in U.S. history. The Israelis had pressured the United States into making a firm commitment on the grounds that Israel was being threatened from all sides of its borders. The three previously fought Arab-Israeli wars also created a common thought amongst the American public that Israel was constantly under attack from its neighbouring countries. The Israeli Government emphasised that the Arab states wanted to terminate the state of Israel and needed the military equipment to maintain its military might and its much needed security. Since the Israelis regarded weapon deliveries as a symbol of American support for the survival and well-being of Israel, Nixon and Kissinger approved the long-term arms deal between the two countries.

The long-term arms deal of December 1971 provided Israel with the security of knowing that weapons were being provided. For the United States, this meant that Israel would stop pressuring Washington for more military equipment and could thereby avoid repeated discussions whenever the short term agreements expired. The Soviet Union also began providing large amounts of sophisticated military equipment to its allies in the Middle East. To contain this threat of increased Soviet influence in the region, Nixon and Kissinger believed in the power of Israel.

The State Department was against the creation of such an agreement, especially in the midst of negotiations with Egypt about a possible interim agreement with Israel. The Department believed that this would most likely have negative effects on the U.S.' diplomatic relations with the Arab countries in the Middle East and contribute to an increased Soviet presence in the region. Kissinger and Nixon assumed that the arms deliveries to Israel would eventually lead to a peace settlement because of the Israelis being more inclined to follow American initiatives. By providing the Israelis with what they wanted in terms of military equipment, Nixon and Kissinger believed that the United States would have some leverage to hold over the Israeli Government if they did not want to participate in diplomatic initiatives concerning a peace settlement and the implementation of Resolution 242.

As history has shown, Israel's military supremacy did not lead to the end of the Arab-Israeli conflict and Israel was not more inclined to negotiate and address a possibility for a withdrawal from the territories occupied in the Six-Day War in 1967 during the Nixon administration's time in the White House. However, Nixon and Kissinger did manage to increase American influence in the region with Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy after the 1973 October War and made the U.S. one of the most prominent diplomatic powers in the Middle East.

Extensive assistance

The military assistance to Israel was extensive and derived as a consequence of several incidents during this period in time. The big amount of military assistance was not something the Nixon administration had planned, and the different bodies in the administration had contrasting opinions and understandings over the need for increased military assistance for Israel.

The large magnitude of the military assistance provided to Israel during the Nixon years was influenced by several factors. The administration had concluded that Israel's assistance needs had been somewhat exaggerated from the Israeli government. Israel had the military ability to win an overwhelming victory against simultaneous Arab attacks and was even beginning to develop its own arms industry. Regardless of the reports and conclusions, Nixon and

Kissinger did provide almost all of the Israeli requests for more military equipment, and deemed it necessary for Israel's safety and for the protection of American interests in the area.

The Jackson Amendment introduced in 1970, provided the President the authority to arrange for sales, credit sales or by guarantees, the necessary military equipment to "counteract any past, present or future increased military assistance provided to other countries."³⁶⁹ Seeing as the State Department had reservations about the long-term arms deal with Israel in 1971, it is possible to assume that the President now held the power to bypass the Departments if he deemed it necessary. In addition, it was Nixon who approved the airlift to Israel during the October War, and blamed the State Department for delaying the resupply effort. Nixon had been preoccupied with the Watergate scandal, and was only being informed how the war unfolded through telephone conversations with Kissinger. It is difficult to say whether Kissinger had informed the President about a possible delay on the behalf of the State Department, or not. Nevertheless, Nixon ordered the biggest airlift in American history to Israel on 14 October 1973. The goal was to deliver 25 per cent more than the Soviet Union, to keep a constant ratio of military equipment in the Middle East in favour of Israel.

Israel did in some way exploit the U.S. and knew which buttons to push to get what it wanted. If the United States tried to pressure Israel in any way, the Israelis would usually deny any form of participation in the diplomatic initiatives provided by the United States in the 1970s. Only when weapons were being delivered, the Israelis could consider participating in the negotiations and this contributed to its continuously growing military arsenal.

The Nixon administration did not provide the entire amount of the Israelis' arms requests, but most of it. Nixon and Kissinger did not involve the United States in the Arab-Israeli conflict predominantly to aid and secure Israel. They sought to promote the United States' own interests, and which one of these interests got the highest priority was up to them and their electorate to decide. As this study shows, Israel and the pro-Israeli lobbying groups in the United States had a major influence on the decision-making process of the American government. Since Israel was a country made by immigrants, the Israeli strive for a homeland derived substantial support from the American population. Even though the relationship between Israel and the United states had its ups and downs, the bond between the two

³⁶⁹ Memorandum for General Haig from Harold H. Saunders (Hal), Washington, 26 September 1970. Subject: Financial Assistance for Israel, TAB B, Options Paper. Source: NA, NPM, Memo Saunders to HAK, 4/9/70, NSC Files, H-Files, Box H-171

countries was strengthened during Nixon's presidency and would only grow stronger in the years to come. The arms sales to the region continued and the United States would continue to be Israel's main benefactor and ally.

Appendix A – Directory of People, Terms and Abbreviations

Brezhnev, Leonid – General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1964-1982)

Brown, George – Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff (1966-1968), Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force (1973-1974), Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1974-1977)

Dayan, Moshe – Israeli officer. Minister of Defence (1967-1974)

Dinitz, Simcha – Israeli Ambassador to the United States (1973-1974)

Dobrynin, Anatoly – Soviet Ambassador to the United States (1962-1986)

Dulles, John Foster – U.S. Secretary of State (1953-1959)

Eisenhower, Dwight D. – President of the United States (1953-1961)

Ford, Gerald R. – Vice President of the United States (1973-1974), President of the United States (1974-1977)

Haig, Alexander – NSC Military Assistant to the National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger (1969-1970), Deputy National Security Advisor to Henry Kissinger (1970-1973), White House Chief of Staff (1973-1974)

Jackson, Henry – U.S. Congressman and Senator from the state of Washington (1941-1983)

Jarring, Gunnar – Swedish Diplomat. U.N. appointed Special Envoy for the Middle East peace process after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. His mission was to achieve a peaceful Arab-Israeli settlement, also known as the ‘Jarring mission’, and ‘Jarring talks’.

Johnson, Lyndon B. – President of the United States (1963-1969)

Kennedy, John F. – President of the United States (1961-1963). He was assassinated in November 1963.

Kissinger, Dr. Henry A. – U.S. National Security Advisor (1969-1975), Secretary of State (1973-1977)

Meir, Golda – Prime Minister of Israel (1969-1974)

Nasser, Gamal Abdel – Prime Minister of Egypt (1954-1962), President of Egypt/ the United Arab Republic (1956-1970)

Nixon, Richard M. – Vice President of the United States (1952-1960), President of the United States (1969-1974)

Peres, Shimon – Israeli Minister of Defence (1974-1977)

Rabin, Yitzhak – Israeli Ambassador to the United States (1968-1973), Prime Minister of Israel (1974-1977)

Rogers, William P. – U.S. Secretary of State (1969-1973)

Sadat, Anwar al. – Vice President of Egypt (1969-1970), President of Egypt (1970-1981)

Saunders, Harold “Hal” H. – NSC Staff Member/ Senior Staff member (1961-1974), Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (1974-1975)

Scowcroft, Brent – American officer. Military Assistant to President Nixon (1972-1973), Deputy National Security Advisor (1973-1975)

Sisco, Joseph “Joe” J. – U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs (1969-1974)

Truman, Harry S. – President of the United States (1945-1953)

Abbreviations and Terms

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency

Douglas A-4 Skyhawk - or ‘Skyhawks’. An American made attack aircraft

Fatah – Palestinian National Liberation Movement

FRUS – Foreign Relations of the United States

FY – Fiscal Year

IAF – Israel Air Force

IDF – Israel Defence Force

Lockheed C-5 Galaxy – also known as ‘C-5’, a large U.S. military transport aircraft used during the American airlift to Israel in 1973

Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG – high-subsonic fighter aircraft produced in the Soviet Union from 1952.

McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom II – or ‘Phantoms’, is a tandem two-seat, twin-engine, long-range supersonic jet interceptor fighter-bomber originally developed for the United States Navy. By the mid-1960s had become a major part of their respective air wings, as well as the IDFs.

NSC – National Security Council

NSSM – National Security Study Memoranda

NSDM – National Security Decision Memoranda

PLO – Palestine Liberation Organization. Formally set up in 1964 with the aim of creating an independent State of Palestine

SAM - A surface-to-air missile (SAM) designed to be launched from the ground to destroy aircraft or other missiles. It is one type of anti-aircraft system.

Shuttle Diplomacy – The term describes Henry Kissinger’s diplomatic tactics as a mediator in the aftermath of the 1973 October War. Kissinger, a team of White House Department staffers, and a press corps flying between Middle Eastern Heads of State government to convey proposals and ideas for furthering negotiations.

SRG – Senior Review Group

Suez – referring to the Suez Canal or the Suez Crisis/War

United Arab Republic (UAR) – Name of Union between Syria and Egypt from 1958 to 1961 when Syria seceded from the Union. Egypt continued to be known officially as the "United Arab Republic" until 1971.

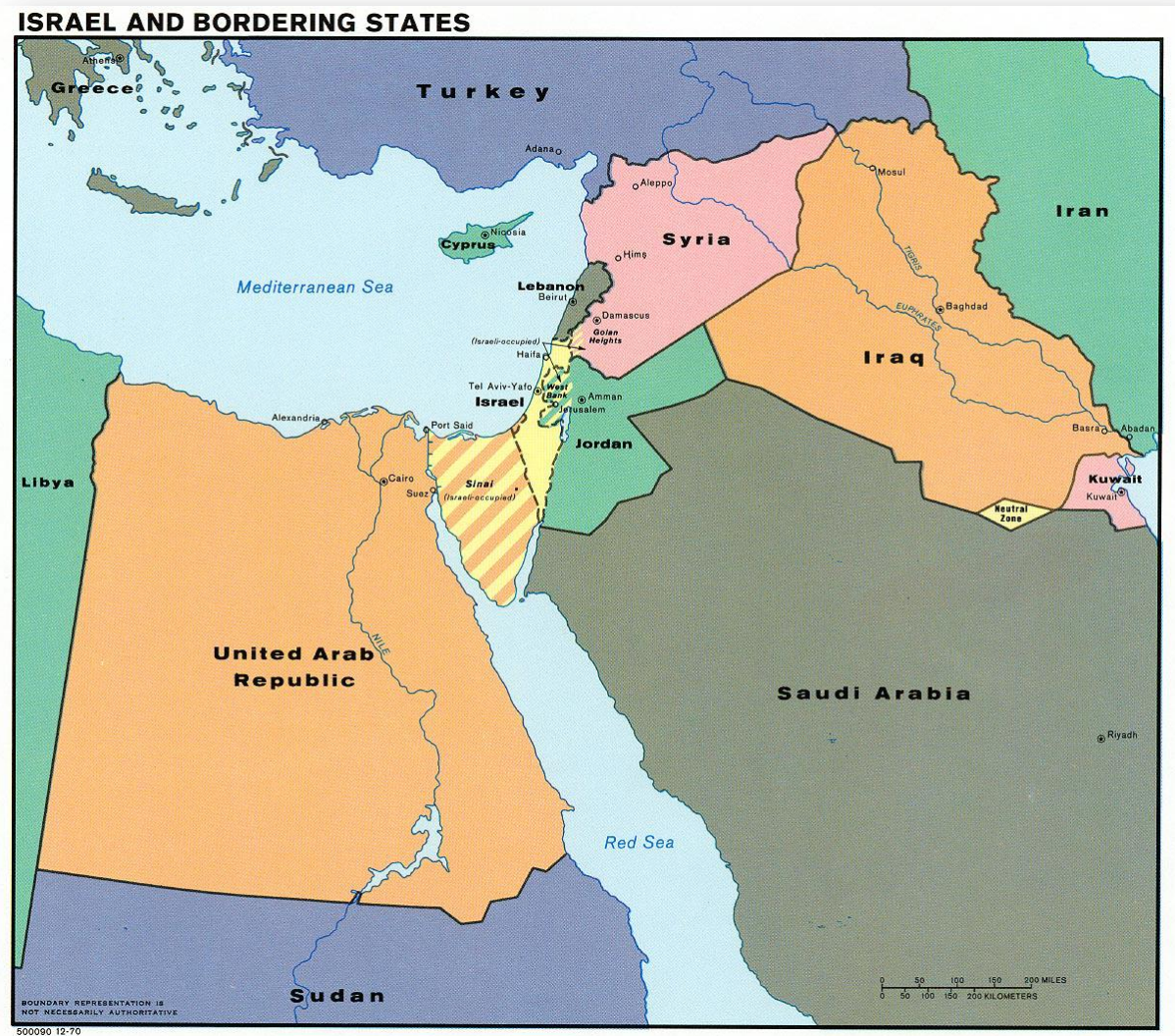
U.N. – United Nations

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, or ‘the Soviet Union’

WSAG – Washington Special Actions Group. A crisis management forum created as part of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger’s reformation of the National Security Council

Appendix B – Maps

B 1: Middle East 1970³⁷⁰



³⁷⁰ "Israel Maps," *Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection*, Accessed 7 November 2014
<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/israel.html>

B-2: Israel 1972³⁷¹



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³⁷¹ ibid

Appendix C, United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 (1967)

Resolution 242 (1967)

of 22 November 1967.³⁷²

The Security Council,

Expressing its continuing concern with the grave situation in the Middle East,
Emphasizing the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every state in the area can live in security,
Emphasizing further that all Member States in their acceptance of the Charter of the United Nations have undertaken a commitment to act in accordance with Article 2 of the Charter,

1. Affirms that the fulfilment of Charter principles requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East which should include the application of both the following principles: (i) Withdrawal of Israel armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict; (ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force;
2. Affirms the necessity
 - (a) For guaranteeing freedom of navigation through international waterways in the area;
 - (b) For achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem;
 - (c) For guaranteeing the territorial inviolability and political independence of every State in the area, through measures including the establishment of demilitarized zones;

³⁷² *Resolution 242 (1967)*, United Nations Security Council, 22 November 1967: <http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/0/7D35E1F729DF491C85256EE700686136>.

3. Requests the Secretary-General to designate a Special Representative to proceed to the Middle East to establish and maintain contacts with the State concerned in order to promote agreement and assist efforts to achieve a peaceful and accepted settlement in accordance with the provisions and principles in this resolution;
4. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council on the progress of the efforts of the Special Representative as soon as possible.

Adopted unanimously at the 1382nd meeting.

Appendix D – United Nations Security Council Resolution 338 (1973)

Resolution 338 (1973)

of 22 October 1973.³⁷³

The Security Council,

1. Calls upon all parties to the present fighting to cease all firing and terminate all military activity immediately, no later than 12 hours after the moment of the adoption of this decision, in the positions they now occupy;
2. Calls upon the parties concerned to start immediately after the cease-fire the implementation of Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) in all of its parts;
3. Decides that, immediately and concurrently with the cease-fire, negotiations shall start between the parties concerned under appropriate auspices aimed at establishing a just and durable peace in the Middle East.

Adopted at the 1747th meeting by 14 votes to none.

³⁷³ Resolution 338 (1967), United Nations Security Council, 22 October 1973: <http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/0/7FB7C26FCBE80A31852560C50065F878>.

Appendix E – United Nations Security Council Resolution 340 (1973)

Resolution 340 (1973)

25 October 1973.³⁷⁴

The Security Council,

Recalling its resolutions 338 (1973) of 22 October and 339 (1973) of 23 October 1973.

Noting with regret the reported repeated violations of the cease-fire in non-compliance with resolutions 338 (1973) and 339 (1973),

Noting with concern from the Secretary-General's report 1/ that the United Nations military observers have not yet been enabled to place themselves on both sides of the cease-fire line,

1. Demands that immediate and complete cease-fire be observed and that the parties return to the positions occupied by them at 1650 hours GMT on 22 October 1973;
2. Requests the Secretary-General, as an immediate step, to increase the number of United Nations military observers on both sides;
3. Decides to set up immediately, under its authority, a United Nations Emergency Force to be composed of personnel drawn from State Members of the United Nations except the permanent members of the Security Council, and requests the Secretary-General to report within 24 hours on the steps taken to this effect;
4. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Council on an urgent and continuing basis on the state of implementation of the present resolution, as well as resolutions 338 (1973) and 339 (1973);
5. Requests all Member States to extend their full co-operation to the United Nations and the implementation of the present resolution, as well as resolutions 338 (1973) and 339 (1973).

³⁷⁴ *Resolution 340 (1973)*, United Nations Security Council, 25 October 1973:
<http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/99E64445F71F1231852560C50066524D>

Adopted at the 1750th meeting by 14 votes to none.

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