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US STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE 1980'S.(U)
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**STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE
US ARMY WAR COLLEGE
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania**

**US STRATEGIC INTERESTS
IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE 1980's**

by

Benedict F. FitzGerald

1 May 1981

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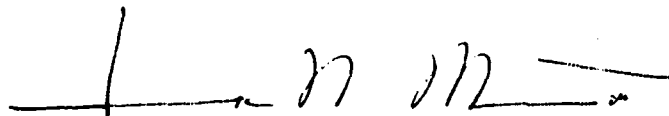
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FOREWORD

This memorandum examines the general nature of US strategic interests in the Middle East in the 1980's. The author briefly reviews traditional strategic interests in the region and follows this with a discussion of the factors which influence US interests. Next, US strategic interests for the 1980's are outlined. Finally, the author provides several suggested courses of action for the United States to further its strategic interests in the Middle East in this decade.

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This memorandum was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.



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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

LIEUTENANT COLONEL BENEDICT F. FITZGERALD has been assigned to the Strategic Studies Institute since October 1979. A Middle East Foreign Area Officer, he has over twenty years of professional experience on the Middle East. Lieutenant Colonel FitzGerald earned a master's degree in political science from George Washington University and is a doctoral candidate at George Washington University in political science with a Middle East speciality. Prior to joining the Institute he was Army Attache in Lebanon; directed a special Central Intelligence Agency task force supporting US Middle East peace efforts; and held various positions with the Defense Intelligence Agency; the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; and in the Middle East.

SUMMARY

As the United States enters the 1980's, the Middle East looms more prominently in the realm of strategic interests and as a potential area for confrontation with the Soviet Union. Soviet actions in Afghanistan, South Yemen, and the Horn of Africa; the revolution in Iran and the rise of an Islamic Republic; the continuing oil price spiral; and the deterioration of the US position throughout the region have set the tone for the United States in the 1980's.

Traditional US strategic interests have included containing Soviet influence, avoiding a direct confrontation with the Soviets, maintaining access to oil, and supporting Israel. Certain features of the Middle East milieu have a direct bearing on how the United States strives to achieve its interests, goals and objectives in the region. Some of the more salient issues that tend to influence US actions include Soviet challenges, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, the effect of Camp David and other US moves related to a solution of the Arab-Israeli dispute, attempts to address the Palestinian issue, inter-Arab rivalries, the oil and energy questions, and internal US politics.

Basic US interests for the 1980's will remain fundamentally unchanged from previous years. However, a change in direction, an alteration in relationships with regional nations, an awareness of the role of economic power, and a reassertion of US power capability seem warranted. Pro-western regimes, such as those in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Oman, Sudan, and Israel, should be encouraged in their relations with the United States and steps should be taken to enhance existing ties. Dialogue should be started with the Palestinians. The military credibility of the United States needs improvement and a more regular, if not permanent, posture in the region is needed. Radical regimes in Iraq and Algeria should be encouraged to begin new dialogue and relations. Finally, and most importantly, the United States must clarify its interests in the area, clearly express them and show the resolve, ability and determination to support them.

US STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE 1980's

During the past few years the Middle East has assumed major importance in US strategic thinking. US concerns for the continued flow of oil to the industrialized West and Japan, solutions to the Arab-Israeli problem, prevention of increased Soviet influence, preservation of the national independence of area states and maintenance of regional stability highlight the importance, complexity, and diversity of US interests and involvement in the region. In the late 1970's a series of events altered the strategic environment and caused the United States to make a searching reappraisal of its interests and objectives in the region. These events were the overthrow of the Shah in Iran and the assumption of power by a militant Islamic Republic; the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; the oil price spiral; the declaration of a Marxist state in South Yemen; the disintegration of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO); and the overall deterioration of the US position throughout the region. Singly each event might have proven manageable, but in concert they pose an unparalleled threat for the United States. These developments set the tone for the strategic environment facing the United States in the region in the 1980's.'

TRADITIONAL US STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Despite catastrophic events which have tormented the region since the end of World War II, US strategic interests in the Middle East have remained relatively constant.²

Foremost among these interests has been the containment of Soviet influence. Since World War II the United States has sought to deny influence to the Soviets in the region. The Baghdad Pact, later known as CENTO, was one such attempt; the post-1973 war shuttles of Kissinger and President Carter's Camp David actions were the latest of such moves.³

Closely aligned with the containment of Soviet influence was US interest in avoiding a direct confrontation with the United States as one of their goals as well, but it took special effort during the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars to avoid a major conflagration. Both sides took steps which could have led to war, but the two antagonists exchanged sufficiently cooling messages to avoid such a disastrous eventuality.

A third major interest has been access to oil. For years the United States has held that oil must be available at reasonable prices relatively free of restrictions, not just for the United States but for all nations. The oil embargo which followed the 1973 war and the increasing price rises since then have emphasized the vulnerability of the United States in this area and the need to safeguard access to oil.⁴

Another interest of the United States has been its commitment to the survival of the State of Israel. This has been a central theme of US policy since Israel's birth in 1948. In each of its wars Israel has received strong US support and the strength of the US commitment has been reaffirmed by successive American Presidents. There seems little doubt that the security and well-being of the State of Israel will continue to be a major tenet of US Middle East policy.

US interest in solving the Arab-Israeli dispute has remained almost inseparable from support of Israel. Each administration has expended extensive energy on this goal. Real progress was not forthcoming until after the 1973 War.⁵ Since then there have been the two interim disengagement agreements between Egypt and Israel, one interim disengagement agreement between Syria and Israel and finally the Camp David accords, which culminated in the

Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty signed in March 1979. However, this treaty has raised as many or maybe more issues than it solved.

Regional stability has been another consistent interest. The United States has fostered reasonable change, peaceful solutions to the Arab-Israeli quagmire, and support for conservative, moderate, traditional regimes. Similarly the United States has supported regional stability to minimize Soviet influence, confine inter-Arab rivalries, and help in avoiding additional Arab-Israeli wars.⁶

FACTORS INFLUENCING US STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Several matters must be kept in mind when discussing US strategic interests in the Middle East. First, more important, different and numerous US interests converge in the region than probably anywhere else. Second, fundamental changes are occurring at an amazing pace in virtually every state in the region. The wealthiest (such as Saudi Arabia) and poorest (such as the Sudan and Yemen) nations must cope with these changes. Instability is a constant threat, is virtually inevitable and must be addressed. Third, the United States must follow a policy that opts for orderly change, attempts to control the chaotic forces at work, and permits the simultaneous pursuit of our interests without having to sacrifice one at the expense of another in this environment of high stakes and disparate interests.⁷

Numerous factors influence US actions, interests, and objectives in the Middle East. Key factors include Soviet challenges and activities, the change in perceptions about the United States; the rise of Islamic fundamentalism; the effect of Camp David and other US moves related to the solution of the Arab-Israeli dispute; attempts to grapple with the Palestinian issue; inter-Arab rivalries; oil pricing; "steadfast" front activities; and finally internal US politics. None of these factors is a separate issue, but they are all so intimately mingled that it is very difficult to speak in definite terms about one without discussing the others.

At the present time the Soviet challenge seems to weigh most heavily upon interests and the United States is attempting to counter the threat posed by the Soviets in such places as Afghanistan, South Yemen, Libya, the Horn of Africa, the Indian

Ocean, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. Competition for influence is intense. The Soviets are rapidly expanding the range of their activities in the region. Despite setbacks in Sudan, Egypt and elsewhere, the Soviets are engaged in what some observers believe to be an encircling action of the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf.¹⁰ In Afghanistan the Soviet Union is trying to consolidate its hold on the population following a succession of pro-Soviet coups d'etat and its armed invasion in December 1979. A pro-Soviet Communist movement has proclaimed South Yemen as an Arab-Marxist state and has permitted an influx of Soviet, Cuban, and East German elements to exercise control over significant portions of the society. In addition, there are threats of rekindling the Dhofar rebellion in neighboring Oman and attempts to make trouble for North Yemen.¹¹ The Soviets are selling vast amounts of sophisticated military equipment to Libya, far exceeding legitimate defense needs. Also Libya is acting as the leading exponent of radical terrorism, not only regionally but also worldwide, and has urged the use of armed force among the Moslem states in the Middle East and North Africa to overthrow moderate, pro-Western regimes.¹² Syria and Iraq have been long-term clients of the Soviets and have obtained massive military armaments. Syria has become more deeply enveloped in the Soviet arms grasp in the past few months and in early October 1980 concluded a 20-year Friendship and Cooperation Treaty.¹³ Although Iraq has been attempting to loosen the tight Soviet arms and economic linkage, the Soviets still retain a prominent if not dominant military advantage.¹⁴ The recent "merger" of Syria and Libya indicates the isolation both states feel and bears watching for the possible disruptive effect such a union could have on regional stability and for the new opportunities posed for the Soviets.¹⁵ In Iran the Soviets have seen the revolution as an opportunity for virulent anti-Americanism which the Soviets hope may turn the situation toward a position favorable to them.

The pattern that emerges, and which causes concern and motivation for US action, is that the Soviets have stimulated radical action when chances of success seemed high, then backed the action with military equipment and manpower, if not occupation, to insure that success followed.

Two categories of Soviet action can be observed. First, as political realignments occur in various states, the Soviets are active

politically and provide military support. Whether they are the instigators or the exploiters of inherently unstable situations is a moot issue. What is important is that they are able to capitalize on these events, and the potential for trouble emanating or radiating from these activities is considerable.

Although Soviet theoreticians are said to proclaim that hegemony over the world is their eventual goal, direct written proof remains inconclusive.¹⁶ Until Afghanistan, this was seen as something to be obtained little by little over an extended period. The Soviets have sought to establish a system of alliances and friendly states strongly tied to the USSR through civilian and/or military assistance programs. It seems clear that the Soviets are looking for radical-activist elements in the region to support, paving the way for an eventual Marxist takeover. Each time the Soviets succeed in achieving such a regime the United States finds its interests threatened increasingly.

The Soviet actions directly threaten and impinge on several key US interests and objectives. The Soviets have achieved a global role and are able to project power accordingly. Soviet activity clearly shows that the USSR has the capability to act throughout the world using various means including the use of proxies. The Soviet threat posed by the expanded activities must be recognized by the United States and its friends and allies, as well as by nonaligned states.

US responses to the Soviet challenge throughout the region have been responsible for the changing perception of the United States by regional states. US positions have been seen as vacillating and uncertain, so that objective views are impossible, and reactive without any long-range positions. Many former US friends and allies in the region find it uneasy to be associated with the United States and, although they will not draw closer to the Soviets, they will distance themselves from the United States.¹⁷ US resolve has been questioned and its leadership has been seen as being unable to adequately address Middle East issues with the attention they deserve.¹⁸

Another major influencing factor is the effect that Camp David has had on Mid-East politics. The United States expended tremendous official efforts to bring about the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty, but because of the treaty and the perception that major Arab-Israeli issues were not properly addressed, Egypt has become increasingly isolated in the Arab world. In addition, the

United States has been affected by its support of the treaty and former staunch US advocates such as Saudi Arabia have stopped supporting Egypt, have engaged in anti-Egyptian activities, have distanced themselves from the United States and have not backed US positions and views to the extent they formerly did. Recent events related to the Iran-Iraq war tend to indicate this may have been reversed. Most of this negativism revolves around the Palestinian issue.¹⁹

The resolution of the Palestinian question is the single most difficult issue in the Middle East and has been since the creation of Israel. Autonomy for the Palestinians of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is seen by some as the first step toward a solution. The Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty calls for autonomy with eventual solution to the overall problem waiting for some future resolution. Former US Assistant Secretary of State Saunders has said that "We have realistic hope of progress in resolving the Palestinian problem in all its aspects."²⁰ However, May 26, 1980 was the date set for a framework to be arranged for autonomy, but the Egyptians and Israelis let that date pass with both parties making mutually acrimonious statements. By early fall 1980 the parties were further apart than ever and the problem seemed more intractable than before. Autonomy is only one part of the equation. The problems of a Palestinian state, status of East Jerusalem, security rights on the West Bank, water rights along the Jordan River watershed, and Jewish settlements are all immense. When portrayed as a whole the Palestinian question does indeed seem unsolvable in the near future and is bound to lead to further conflict.

The position of the United States in this issue has been crucial. Without the direct involvement of high level policymakers, including the full-time effort of President Carter, the Peace Treaty would probably not have been concluded.²¹ US good offices have been constantly at the call of the participants and the United States has been willing to break impasses when the sides requested. However, the United States is caught in the position of being seen by many Arab states as the protector of Israel and its interests without prodding Israel sufficiently to move the talks. At the same time, because of the US commitments to Israel and the pressures of internal US politics, movement toward closer direct links with the Palestinians, especially the PLO, seems further away. Thus, while the United States wants to help resolve the problems, various

countervailing factors make progress exceedingly difficult. Small steps are taken but obstacles created by the participants and the US inability to deal directly with the Palestinians make the Arab-Israeli question little closer to solution than it was prior to Camp David and the Treaty. Exacerbating the situation further has been the ambivalence of the Palestinians in renouncing terrorism and the Israeli refusal to recognize any Palestinian claims as justified.

Inter-Arab rivalries also impact on US interests in the Middle East, because many are hinged to resources, big power competition, the Arab-Israeli question or ideological considerations. In addition, the relationship of the United States to one of the partners in a rivalry affects the US position and its ability to deal with all sides in the region.

For example, the rivalry between North and South Yemen and the involvement of Saudi Arabia directly involve the United States and its interests. The rivalry has been extant for many years, long before either state existed as it is today. In addition, Saudi Arabia and North Yemen have been at odds over the Saudi Arabian Province of Asir along the northern border of North Yemen. In the 1930's, Saudi Arabia seized the areas from Yemen during the consolidation campaigns of the founder of Saudi Arabia, King Ibn Saud, and ever since then has suffered the enmity of the Yemenis. In addition, during the North Yemeni civil war of the 1960's, Saudi Arabia and Egypt were supporters of opposing sides and also gained enemies.²² More recently North Yemen and Saudi Arabia have been able to set aside their animosities because they perceive South Yemen's attempts to destabilize the region by its support for the Dhofar rebellion in Oman and for the overthrow of North Yemen's government as a greater threat. Saudi Arabia has also needed to rely heavily on Yemeni laborers in order to carry out its modernization and development program. Presently about 800,000 Yemenis are employed in Saudi Arabia. The Saudis have supported North Yemen in its battles with South Yemen and provided a large financial package for North Yemen's economic and military needs.²³

In late 1978, assassination of the leaders in both Yemens occurred, and were seemingly instigated from South Yemen. Saudi Arabia, fearful of a leftist coup or greater Soviet involvement in North Yemen, appealed to the United States to provide emergency military assistance to North Yemen. The United States responded with a \$400 million package; although much of the materiel came

quickly, some of it is still dribbling in. As a result, the United States was seen as only partially responsive, reacting when the situation reached such a point that a significant strategic set back would have been suffered had aid not been forthcoming.

US strategic interests were directly affected. Containment of Soviet involvement, regional stability, support for moderate regimes, and maintenance of access to strategic resources were all involved. Thus, the United States became involved in a regional inter-Arab rivalry due to the broader strategic context and connotations. Other inter-Arab and inter-regional rivalries which affect US interests include the Lebanese Civil War, the Libyan-Egyptian border dispute, the Iran-Iraq quarrel, the Syrian-Iraqi ideological dichotomy, the Morocco-Algerian border dispute and Polisario rebellion, and traditional versus radical ideologies. Each has implications for the United States and affects a wide range of US interests.

The recent oil price spiral is another factor that has had wide-ranging effects on US interests. Since the 1973 War the "oil weapon" has been in the Arab arsenal as an available club for use against the United States. The oil embargo brought home the necessity for Middle East oil. OPEC began to institute price rises that increasingly impacted on the United States and its friends, allies, and Third World neighbors. Some of the Arab oil producers tied the price rises to progress on the Middle East peace issues. Others felt the mere threat of doing so was sufficient for the United States to put pressure on the Israelis. Many observers saw the United States drawing away from its support of Israel due to the pressures brought on by the oil needs. Regardless of which perspective is taken, the oil pricing and the series of events surrounding it directly affect US interests, its methods of dealing with Middle Eastern states, and how it acts in relationship to superpower considerations. Prior to the 1973 War the United States was able to take for granted a readily accessible supply of oil. Now that is in serious doubt and hard bargaining is required. The whole problem of oil must now be factored into the strategic matrix. Serious questions could arise about the validity of any assessment of US interests in the area without an appraisal of oil, access, pricing, and security to insure its availability.²⁴

The last of the major influencing factors on US Middle East interests is the rise of Islamic fundamentalism.²⁵ Since the

overthrow of the Shah of Iran and the coming to power of the Islamic Republic with its Islamic fundamental ideology, little of value can be assessed in the Middle East without referring to this newly awakened concept. Traditionally a dichotomy has prevailed in the Middle East between the Sunni and Shia sects of Islam. The Shia have also traditionally tended to exercise a militancy generally lacking in Sunni Islam.²⁶ The overthrow of the Shah was led by Ayotollah Khomeini, a fundamentalist, puritanical Shia who called for the strictest interpretation of the Koran and the rejection of virtually all Western influences. Once the Islamic fundamentalists were in power in Iran, they announced as one of their tenets the export of revolution to the entire Islamic world.²⁷ This was especially unsettling to Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the states on the periphery of the Arabian Peninsula in the Persian Gulf. Here the potential exists for instability and unrest due to the large numbers of Shias present in the population. Concurrently with the rise to power in Iran of an Islamic fundamentalist state, President Zia in Pakistan was also in the midst of establishing stricter enforcement of Islamic laws.²⁸ Libyan leader Colonel Qaddafi instituted a strictly Islamic government and has waged a vehement campaign against every Arab state and that does not adhere strictly to Islamic precepts. Frequently, Libyan opposition goes beyond ideological consideration to questions of the Arab-Israeli dispute and big power rivalry. The rise of Islamic fundamentalist precepts poses a challenge to states dealing in the Middle East and is another major factor to be understood and considered.

The factors mentioned above show some of the complexities found in relations with the Middle East. The intermeshing of factors and the challenges posed to US interests seem readily apparent. Inherent conflicts are continually present and difficulties abound. Despite those complications, it is essential that the factors discussed be considered in order to foster US interests in the region.

US STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE 1980's

The events that changed the strategic environment in the Middle East have given the impetus for new directions in US interests and objectives. Basic US interests have not been altered, but a change in direction and emphasis is seen as appropriate. Former relationships

must be restructured, adjustments must be made to changing realities, and the role of economic power must be realized.

Paramount among the interests will be to continue to deny the Soviets influence and to avoid big power rivalries. Now that the Soviets have aggressively sought new inroads in the region, demonstrated a power projection capability in Afghanistan, and exhibited a global reach, these interests assume even greater importance.

Access to oil also will remain a prime US interest in the 1980's. Dependency on oil will be a major factor influencing US actions in the region, but, as can be seen from actions of oil states such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Libya, movement on the Palestinian issue is required to insure access to oil for unlimited periods. Saudi Arabia has given the United States assurances that it will try to provide an adequate supply, but prices have recently been raised to keep them in line with prices charged by other producers.²⁹ Even though states outside the Middle East, such as Nigeria and Mexico, are providing the United States with more petroleum products, the Middle East, and especially Saudi Arabia, remains the major import source. Thus, the United States must protect these sources and maintain friendly relations. Additionally, recent reports have indicated that the Soviet Union will no longer be a net exporter of oil by the mid-1980's.³⁰ The oil fields of the Middle East will provide the most likely source for Soviet oil. As the Soviet need for oil grows, the threat to US interests in the area will increase.

Support for the State of Israel and continuation of security assistance will greatly impact on US interests in the 1980's. The question of the regional balance of power must be tempered by such issues as how much support is enough, what pressures, if any, the United States should exert to help resolve the Arab-Israeli dilemma, and whether the United States should support Israel without consideration for the impact that support has on other interests in the Middle East. The United States must find a middle road between what has seemed to the Arabs and others as blind, nonobjective support of Israel to the exclusion of rights for the Palestinians or, at the very least, movement forward to some just solution for both sides. Israeli intransigence, shown by the statements by the Begin government and the resignation of the relatively moderate Defense Minister Weizmann on March 28, 1980, do not auger well for peace.³¹ As a result of the Israeli

position other US interests suffer and it becomes much more difficult for the United States to take effective action or seem credible to the Arabs.

Finding a solution to the Arab-Israeli impasse will also remain a major interest. Here the United States must find a way to temper its support for Israel with a realistic appraisal that the Palestinian issue must be made manageable.³² This means that the Israelis must be assured that the United States will continue to support legitimate needs, but that Israel must also take steps toward solution of the Palestinian issue. Guarantees are needed for each side, not just for the Israelis but for the Syrians, Jordanians, and the Palestinians. The United States must indicate it is serious in solving the issues. This will mean that discussions must start with responsible Palestinians both within and outside the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Moderation must be fostered. Both Israelis and Palestinians must renounce the mutually damaging statements regarding force and the use of terrorist tactics. Recognition of mutual rights must be forthcoming and extreme positions should be avoided. Until the United States is able to begin meaningful discussions with the Palestinians, little of substance will occur and the hostile actions which have been escalating in frequency and intensity likely will lead to another Arab-Israeli war.

RECOMMENDATIONS

What can the United States do in this decade in the Middle East? Caught in a quandary between support for Israel and a commitment to Arab-Israeli peace, a reasonable solution to the Palestinian issue seems further away than it did a year ago. Increased Soviet actions, decreased US credibility, and increased dependence on oil indicate that the United States must assume a more vigorous posture in the region and turn from a reactive posture to a more active, preemptive posture.

Many courses of action are available for the United States. Some will be counterproductive, but some will be able to assist in furthering interests and objectives. No longer is the old adage "What's good for the United States is good for the rest of the world" true. The United States must recognize that the world has changed dramatically and that these new realities must be factored into our relations with area states. The United States should

attempt to place its concerns and objectives in terms understood in the context of a locally meaningful syntax. The United States must tailor solutions to problems to the local situation, and not suggest that the solution rest on a US model. Also, the United States must be prepared to emphasize the mutuality of interests that exists on such issues as ideology, containment of Soviet influence, solution to the Arab-Israeli question, regional stability, and continued access to a ready oil supply.

Specifically, what measures should the United States follow in the Middle East to further its interests?

First, the United States should make every effort to enhance its relations with moderate pro-Western regimes such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan, Israel, and Egypt. The United States should identify those states in the area that are its friends, and clarify the extent and limit of mutual interests and concern in undertaking guarantees and cooperative action. The United States should emphasize the paramount role of Saudi Arabia both in bilateral relations and regional affairs and as a potential supporter for an Arab-Israeli settlement, and insure that Saudi counsel is sought on the range of issues affecting the area.

Second, the United States must open dialogue with the Palestinians. So many US concerns rest on the premise of a settlement of the Arab-Israeli problem that without the direct involvement of the Palestinians there can be no solution, not only to the Palestinian question but to other issues such as regional stability, offsetting Soviet influence and the security of Israel. Although many difficulties still exist, the Palestinian leadership has in the last year or so seemed more realistic in its demands at a time when the Israeli government has seemed to become less realistic, if not totally opposed to any form of viable agreement. On the other hand the PLO meetings in Damascus in spring 1980 may result in Palestinians reverting to their former terrorist activities. At least some of their conciliatory actions may no longer be valid.³³

Third, the United States must improve its military credibility in the region to include use of facilities, presence, overflight rights, port visits, military assistance, joint exercises, and training. Creation of an independent Indian Ocean Command; agreements with regional states such as Oman, Somalia, Kenya, and Egypt on basing, training, and staging facilities; and providing the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) with a capability that is

real and perceived as credible to regional states would provide renewed US posture in the region, help enhance US prestige, and support US interests and objectives in the area.³⁴

Fourth, the United States must begin an enlarged dialogue with radical regimes such as Iraq and Algeria. Both states have shown a willingness to distance themselves from their dependence on the Soviet Union and a desire to play a more reasonable role in regional affairs. Both states have been hardliners regarding the United States and have opted for maintaining a level of instability in the region that goes beyond the mere bounds of regular change. Recently, they have shown indications that they are amenable to altering their strict hardline position. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the turmoil in Iran have given Iraq food for thought and Iraq now is actively seeking a rapprochement with Persian Gulf states and has an opportunity to emphasize mutuality of interests with Iraq on a range of issues. If this move can be coupled with views on the Palestinians and a renewal of an American military presence then gains are possible.

Fifth, the United States must continue to pursue a comprehensive Arab-Israeli settlement. This includes the whole range of issues such as border questions with Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon; water rights covering the Jordan River watershed; Jerusalem; the Palestinians, and the security of Israel. The United States must show it can deal with the issues objectively and devoid of undue pressures from special interests, as well as in terms of US national interests.

Finally, the United States must clarify its interests in the area, clearly articulate them and show the resolve, ability and determination to support them. This will call for firmness in dealing with regional actors, in letting the Soviets understand our position and in educating our own population to the realities of the region.

CONCLUSION

The United States has a broad range of diverse interests in the Middle East. The key interests are access to oil, support for Israel, delimitation of Soviet influence, and regional stability. The ability of the United States to realize its interests is snarled by many factors which complicate the horizon almost to the point that many of the issues seem like a Gordian Knot or the proverbial Chinese

puzzle. Soviet challenges, Islamic fundamentalism, the Palestinian issue, oil pricing, internal US politics, inter-Arab rivalries, and US relations with Israel have all had major impact on how well the United States could achieve its interests in the Middle East. In view of the many divergent trends in the Middle East, the United States needs to show it does have an ability to assist moderate elements and to provide diplomatic means to resolve conflicts. But, the United States must meld diplomacy with power and take steps to fill the power vacuum that exists in the region, especially in the Arabian Peninsula-Gulf area. Power alone cannot suffice to serve American interests. The test for the 1980's in the region will be how well the United States will be able to restore its credibility by blending military diplomatic power and still continue to pursue its wide-range of interests. Although the challenges are real and complex, solutions are available.

ENDNOTES

1. James R. Schlesinger, "American Power and the Survival of the West," *Parameters*, Vol. 10, June 1980, pp. 19-25.
2. This point can be easily seen by reviewing statements by key US policymakers for the past 15 years. See for example: "Charting the Future Course of US Foreign Aid in the Near East and South Asia," *The Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. 54, April 25, 1966, pp. 668-71; "Department Reviews US Relations with the Countries of the Arabian Peninsula—Persian Gulf Region," *The Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. 71, September 2, 1974, pp. 335-41; and "Middle East: Forces of Change," *The Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. 79, October 1979, pp. 44-46.
3. The Soviet danger in the Middle East and the need for a strong US counter were well pointed out by John S. Badeau in "The Middle East: Conflict in Priorities," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol 36, January 1958, pp. 233-240, and in Eugene V. Rostow, "A Basis for Peace: Where Kissinger Went Wrong," *The New Republic*, Vol. 172, April 5, 1975, pp. 14-15.
4. President Carter in his State of the Union Message on January 23, 1980, raised the oil interest to its strongest position in the US Middle East equation when he said: "Any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America." For the complete text see *The New York Times*, January 24, 1980, p. A12.
5. Perhaps the most cogent discussions of US activities can be found in Edward R. F. Sheehan, *The Arabs, Israelis, and Kissinger*, New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1976; and William B. Quandt, *Decade of Decisions: American Policy Toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1967-1976*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.
6. Ample evidence for this position exists. The most recent public statements can be found in: David D. Newsom, "US Policy Toward the Persian Gulf," *Current Policy No. 160*, Washington: Department of State, April 11, 1980; and in Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, "Protecting US Interests in the Persian Gulf Region," *Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. 80, May 1980, pp. 63-67.
7. See the November 7, 1979, Statement of Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Harold H. Saunders, "Defining US Interests in the Middle East," *New Outlook*, Vol, 23, January/February 1980, pp. 30-35.
8. Members of the "steadfast" front include Libya, Syria, Algeria, South Yemen, Iraq, and the PLO.
9. See the interview with Secretary of Defense Brown, "Cost to Protect Mideast Oil: \$5 Billion a Year," *US News and World Report*, Vol. 89, August 4, 1980, pp. 26-28.
10. A recent short appraisal of Soviet activity can be found in Steven J. Rosen, *Soviet Strengths and Vulnerabilities in the Middle East*, RAND P-6446, Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation, February 1980.
11. Several recent accounts point to the Soviet and Soviet proxy activity in South Yemen. See: Drew Middleton, "Soviet Said to Build Arms Caches in Libya, Syria, Persian Gulf Area," *The New York Times*, March 14, 1980, p. A1; Yossef M. Ibrahim, "Saudis Are Said to Induce Yemenis to End Soviet Arms Advisors Role," *The New York Times*, March 19, 1980, pp. A1, A13; Pranay B. Gupte, "Soviet Activity Found Growing in Aden Region," *The New York Times*, June 10, 1980, p. A13; and Pranay B. Gupte, "South Yemen Seeks to Widen Arab Ties," *The New York Times*, June 15, 1980, p. A4.

12 Probably the finest expose of Libyan foreign adventures, perfidy, and terrorist activity can be found in G. Henry M. Schuler, "Beyond Billy: The Importance of Investigating Libya's Treacheries," *The Washington Post*, July 27, 1980, pp. D1, D4, and D5. Other recent articles pointing out the Soviet connection and intra-Arab rivalries can be found in: Dennis Chaplin, "Libya: Military Spearhead Against Sadat," *Military Review*, Vol. 59, November 1979, pp. 42-50; Drew Middleton, "Soviet Said . . .,"; Tim McGirk and Michael Swed-Cousins, "Libya's Qaddafi: Outcast Abroad-'Philosopher-King' at Home," *The Christian Science Monitor*, August 8, 1980, pp. 1, 10; and Youssef M. Ibrahim, "A Prophet Without Honor But Not Without Means," *The New York Times*, August 24, 1980, p. E2.

13. See: Drew Middleton, "Soviet Said . . .,"; William Branigin, "Isolated Syrians Tighten Soviet Ties," *The Washington Post*, February 22, 1980, pp. A17-18; Helena Cobban, "Opposition to Russian Advisors Mounts in Syria," *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 31, 1980, pp. 1, 14; "Syria Hints a Move Closer to Moscow," *The New York Times*, June 26, 1980, p. A8; Helena Cobban, "Syria May Move Closer to Soviets," *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 27, 1980, p. 6; and "Baathists Urging Syria to Bolster Moscow Alliance," *The Washington Post*, August 23, 1980, p. A16. For information about the Syrian-Soviet treaty, see: Kevin Klose, "Moscow, Damascus Conclude Military, Economic Accord," *The Washington Post*, October 9, 1980, pp. A1, A44.

14. Iraq seems in the throes of a real dilemma. On the one hand it wants to be the leader of the Pan-Arab movement and it wants to be seen as the protector of Arab interests against what it sees as encroachment by both the West (epitomized by the United States, France, and Great Britain) and the Soviets. At the same time it feels impelled to retain its arms relationships with the Soviets because it has become dependent in that sphere. Yet, recent moves to obtain equipment from Italy, West Germany, France and Britain, which had previously been exclusively supplied by the Soviets, indicate the Iraqis intend to broaden their horizons and lessen their dependence. John K. Cooley in "Conflict Within the Iraqi Left," *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 29, January-February 1980, pp. 87-93, discusses the internal strains in Iraq which provide background for current actions. Other useful articles are: Claudia Wright, "Iraq—New Power in the Middle East," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 58, Winter 1979/80, pp. 257-277; Amos Perlmutter, "The Courtship of Iraq," *New Republic*, Vol. 182, May 3, 1980, pp. 19-21, 24; Ned Temko, "Surprise Iraq Plan May Help US In Middle East," *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 15, 1980, pp. 1, 15; Helena Cobban, "Iraq Bids for Arab Leadership," *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 10, 1980, pp. 1, 10; Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Iraq Seizes a Chance to be the Big Boy on the Arab Bloc," *The New York Times*, April 13, 1980, p. E3; Drew Middleton, "Iraqis Hold Military Edge in Confrontation with Iranians," *The New York Times*, April 13, 1980, p. 14; Jonathan C. Randal, "Iraq Shelves Area Ambitions to Focus on Internal Strife," *The Washington Post*, May 4, 1980, p. A32; and "Iraq to the Fore," *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 17, 1980, p. 24.

15. Loren Jenkins, "Qaddafi Wants Libyan-Syrian Union," *The Washington Post*, September 2, 1980, p. A18; Loren Jenkins, "Syria Agrees to a Merger with Libya," *The Washington Post*, September 3, 1980, pp. A1, A16; John Kifner, "Syria and Libya Agree to Merge But Reveal No Details," *The New York Times*, September 3, 1980, p. A5; "Syria President Arrives in Libya for Talks on Merger," *The New York Times*, September 9, 1980, p. A7; and John Kifner, "Libya and Syria Sign Merger Agreement," *The New York Times*, September 11, 1980, p. A7.

16. The Atlantic Council of the United States, *After Afghanistan—The Long Haul: Safeguarding Security and Independence in the Third World*, Washington: The Atlantic Council of the United States, March 1980, p. 30.

17. Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Saudis Are Trying to Maintain a Safe Distance from the United States," *The New York Times*, March 9, 1980, p. E3.

18. Recent examples of this can be seen in: Christopher S. Wren, "Hussein Visit to United States Viewed As Sensitive," *The New York Times*, June 16, 1980, pp. A1, A8; and Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Lamentations from the Gulf," *The Washington Post*, January 7, 1980, p. A21; John Kifner, "Arabs React Coolly to Carter's Address," *The New York Times*, January 25, 1980, p. A9; and James Dorsey, "Arab Image of US Tarnished," *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 13, 1980, p. 6.

19. Matti Peled, "Palestine Key to Mideast Security—An Israeli View," *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 1, 1980, p. 23. Arab positions are very clear: movement must be made on settling the Palestinian issue, or there can be no movement on other issues. Saudi Crown Prince Fahd, in an interview on May 24, 1980, stressed the centrality of the Palestinian question, and others to include the leaders of Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Libya have also often reiterated the same position. For Prince Fahd's comments see: *The Washington Post*, May 25, 1980, pp. A1, A22.

20. Saunders, p. 32.

21. There seems to be very little doubt that only the President's direct and continuous participation in the negotiations was able to move the Egyptians and the Israelis to an agreement.

22. The two best studies in English of North Yemen are: Manfred W. Wenner, *Modern Yemen: 1918-1966*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967; and Robert W. Stookey, *Yemen: The Politics of the Yemen Arab Republic*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1978. An excellent survey of Saudi Arabia and its security concerns can be found in Adeed Dawisha, *Saudi Arabia's Search for Security*, Adelphi Papers No. 158, London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1979.

23. The vagaries of Peninsula politics and the role that the US-Soviet rivalry plays can be seen in the whole question of arms sales to North Yemen. See: Edward Cody, "Yemeni Hostilities Heating Up Again," *The Washington Post*, June 7, 1980, pp. A13, A19; Edward Cody, "US, Saudi Concern Increasing at Soviet Arms Aid to North Yemen," *The Washington Post*, June 5, 1980, pp. A1, A30; Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Saudis Are Said to Induce Yemenis to End Soviet Arms Advisors' Role," *The New York Times*, May 19, 1980, pp. A1, A13; Edward Cody, "Saudis Said to Threaten North Yemen with Aid Cutoff Because of Soviet Ties," *The Washington Post*, February 20, 1980, p. A21. Official US discussion can be seen in "Vance Tells Congress of Concern About Soviet's Influence in Yemen," *The New York Times*, February 6, 1980, p. A8; and in US Congress, 96th, 1st Session, House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, *United States Policy and United States-Soviet Relations, 1979*, Hearing on October 16, 1979. Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1979, pp. 7, 21-23, and 28-29.

24. President Carter had noted the importance of Persian Gulf oil prior to his 1980 State of the Union Message when on March 16, 1978, in an address at Wake Forest University he said that "The economic health and well-being of the United States, Western Europe, and Japan depend upon continued access to the oil from

the Persian Gulf." The economic impact of the oil pricing has wide ranging ramifications, not just for the United States and the West, but for the impact it has on the producing states and the Third World states that have limited resources and find oil becoming increasingly dearer.

25. Numerous excellent articles and books are available to gain an appreciation for the Islamic revival and the impetus given this revival by the Iranian revolution. Among the best are: G. H. Jensen, *Militant Islam*, New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1979, especially pp. 121-204; Daniel Pipes, "'This World is Political!': The Islamic Revival of the Seventies," *Orbis*, Vol. 24, Spring 1980, pp. 9-41; William E. Griffith, "The Revival of Islamic Fundamentalism: The Case of Iran," *International Security*, Vol. 4, Summer 1979, pp. 132-138; R. Hrair Dekmejian, "The Anatomy of Islamic Revival: Legitimacy Crisis, Ethnic Conflict and the Search for Islamic Alternatives," *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 34, Winter 1980, pp. 1-12; R. Hrair Dekmejian, "The Islamic Revival in the Middle East and North Africa," *Current History*, Vol. 78, April 1980, pp. 169-174, 179; John O. Voll, "The Islamic Past and the Present Resurgence," *Current History*, Vol. 78, April 1980, pp. 145-148, 180-181; and Martin Kramer, *Political Islam*, The Washington Papers No. 73, Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1980.

26. Charles H. Whittier, *Islam in Iran: The Shi'ite Faith, Its History and Teaching*. Washington: Congressional Research Service, September 11, 1979.

27. Raymond N. Habiby and Fariborz Ghavidel, "Khumayni's Islamic Republic," *Middle East Review*, Vol. 11, Summer 1979, pp. 12-20; James A. Bill, "Iran and the Crisis of '78" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 57, Winter 1978/1979, pp. 232-342; R. K. Ramazani, "Iran's Revolution in Perspective," pp. 19-38, in *The Impact of the Iranian Events Upon Persian Gulf and United States Security*, ed. by Z. Michael Szaz, Washington: American Foreign Policy Institute, 1980.

28. The latest evidence of Zia's effort can be seen in Carol Honsa, "Pakistani President Hopes to Sculpt 'Model Islamic State'," *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 2, 1980, p. 3 and Stuart Auerbach, "Pakistan's Official Turn to Islam Collides with Tradition," *The Washington Post*, September 8, 1980, p. A24.

29. Reports indicative of this are: Anthony J. Parisi, "4 in OPEC Lift Oil Cost \$2 a Barrel," *The New York Times*, January 30, 1980, pp. D1, D9; Youssef M. Ibrahim, "US and Saudis Confer on Oil Topics," *The New York Times*, March 4, 1980, p. D9; John M. Berry, "Saudis Boost Oil Prices by \$2 a Barrel," *The Washington Post*, May 15, 1980, p. A16; Peter Behr, "Saudis Warn US to Pressure Israel on Jerusalem or Risk Oil," *The Washington Post*, August 29, 1980, pp. E1, E3.

30. US Central Intelligence Agency, National Foreign Assessment Center, *The World Oil Market in the Years Ahead*, August 1979, especially Appendix C, pp. 37-42; and US Central Intelligence Agency, *The International Energy Situation: Outlook to 1985*, April 1977, pp. 12-13.

31. Examples of the Begin attitude can be found in: Jason Morris, "Begin Pursues His Hard Line, Defies Friends and Allies," *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 15, 1980, p. 3; David K. Shipler, "Begin Besieged: Those Slings and Arrows Are Denting the Armor," *The New York Times*, July 6, 1980, p. E1.

32. Two recent proposals regarding Jerusalem ought to be useful in any discussion: Lord Caradon, *The Future of Jerusalem: A Review of Proposals for the Future of the City*, National Security Affairs Monograph Series 80-1, Washington: National Defense University, February 1980; and John A. Berry, "The Jerusalem Question: Cutting the Gordian Knot," *Parameters*, Vol. 10, June 1980, pp. 33-43.

33. The ebb and flow of peace and war, hawks and doves in both Israeli and Palestinian camps indicates considerable internal strife and dialogue. Some evidence of this can be seen in: Jonathan C. Randal, "PLO's Armed-Struggle Rhetoric Muted by Pragmatic Politicking," *The Washington Post*, March 22, 1980, pp. A1, A28; "Fatah Guerrillas Meet in Syria Amid Heightened Anti-Israeli Feeling," *The New York Times*, May 23, 1980, p. A3; "Key Palestinian Faction Again Re-elects Arafat," *The New York Times*, June 1, 1980, p. 14; Bernd Debusmann, "Fatah Calls for a New Militancy," *The Washington Post*, June 5, 1980, p. A21; Ned Temko, "Caught Between Two Nationalisms: The Struggle for Palestine," *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 6, 1980, pp. 12-13; Ned Temko, "Arafat Treads Tightrope as PLO Factions Differ," *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 9, 1980, p. 13; John K. Cooley, "Two-Track PLO Policy: Talking, Fighting at Same Time," *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 6, 1980, p. 7; Edward Cody, "Tough Rhetoric Masks PLO Strategy," *The Washington Post*, July 6, 1980, p. A16; Helena Cobban, "Yasser Arafat: Voice of the PLO," *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 8, 1980, pp. 12-13; and Joseph Fitchett, "Arafat Denies Demanding Destruction of Israel," *The Washington Post*, August 2, 1980, p. A13.

34. The United States, in the spring and summer 1980, concluded agreements with Oman, Kenya, and Somalia and has shown movement in expanding its military posture in the region. For many area states, however, the question of US credibility and resolve remains in doubt.

35. Edward Cody, "Iraq Leader Seeks Greater Globe Role," *The Washington Post*, October 2, 1979, p. A7; Claudia Wright, "Iraq's Challenge," *The New York Times*, February 8, 1980, p. A31; Claudia Wright, "Iraqi Diplomatic Strategy," *The New York Times*, June 5, 1980, p. A23; and John Kifner, "Iraq's President Seeks to Become the New Tito," *The New York Times*, June 22, 1980, p. E23. Despite Iraq's many signals of change and its seeming desire to play a more moderate role in regional and global affairs, its relations with the United States remain in disarray, caused in large part by conflicting actions by the United States. US problems are discussed in: Jonathan C. Randal, "Iraq Rebuffs US Overtures on Full Diplomatic Ties," *The Washington Post*, May 12, 1980, p. A12; Michael Getler, "Objections Overridden, Warship Turbines Will Be Sold to Iraq," *The Washington Post*, August 2, 1980, p. A8; Bernard Gwertzman, "US May Let Iraq Buy Jets Despite Terrorism Question," *The New York Times*, August, 1980, p. A5; "Baghdad Seeking \$200 Million in Transport Planes," *The Washington Post*, August 6, 1980, p. A22; and George C. Wilson, "US Moves to Halt Boeing Jet Sales to Iraq: Airways," *The Washington Post*, August 30, 1980, p. A1.

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