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NEW DIRECTIONS FOR SOVIET MIDDLE EAST POLICY IN THE 1980'S: IMP--ETC(U)

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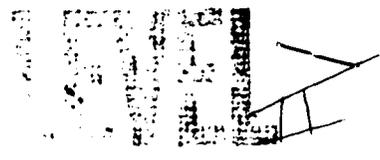
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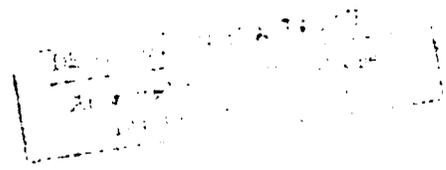
NEW DIRECTIONS FOR SOVIET MIDDLE EAST POLICY
IN THE 1980's: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE

Francis Fukuyama



February 1980

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NEW DIRECTIONS FOR SOVIET MIDDLE EAST POLICY IN THE 1980s:
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE

I. INTRODUCTION

By a rather unfortunate coincidence, a consensus has been reached among Western observers on an analytical framework within which to view Soviet foreign policy in areas of the Third World like the Middle East, at the very moment when the rules of that game, it would appear, are being rewritten rather drastically. The decade of the 70s has seen a steady erosion of Soviet influence in the region as a result of an active diplomacy on the part of the United States and some of its European allies. The very success of their policy has led many Westerners to take a more relaxed view of the Soviet "threat" in the area. But reports of the death of Soviet influence in the Middle East are premature, to say the least, for the reason that the Soviet Union remains not a country like any other, but the leader of a universal ideological movement that possesses certain assets and resources unavailable to its Western competitors. The precedents shattered by the recent Soviet intervention in Afghanistan have come as a surprise to many, but it is in fact only the logical culmination of a shift in tactics begun by the Soviets over the last four or five years, designed precisely to overcome the generally-recognized weaknesses in their earlier position. This paper will begin with an overview of the traditional mode of Soviet behavior in the Middle East as it evolved in the two decades between 1955 and 1975, with special reference to its difficult experience in Egypt and Iraq. It will then analyze the steps that the Soviets have taken over the past half-decade to ensure that their expulsion from Egypt would not be repeated elsewhere, and will conclude with a discussion of the implications of this shift for the Western alliance.

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II. THE SOVIET EXPERIENCE IN EGYPT AND IRAQ

Up until the late 70s, one could make several generalizations about the nature of the Soviet presence in the Middle East. In the first place, Moscow's regional influence was anchored among left wing nationalist regimes

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which, while often virulently anti-Western in temperament, sought to steer genuinely independent courses in foreign and domestic policy. Countries like Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Algeria could by no means be regarded as simple Russian pawns or proxies, despite the fact that they frequently served Soviet purposes. All of them, for example, have shown an extreme reluctance to grant Moscow anything that could be regarded as basing rights on their territory.

Second, the Soviets have generally taken an arms-length approach to the internal politics of these countries. After a brief period in the late 1950s when Khrushchev tried to enhance the position of a number of Arab communist parties, and was badly burned in the process, the Russians have learned to work with existing nationalist regimes, whatever their particular ideological complexion. The Friendship and Cooperation treaties signed with countries like Egypt and Iraq all feature clauses prominently abjuring "interference in each other's internal affairs."

Third, the primary vehicle for Soviet influence has been arms transfers. The one commodity in which the Soviet Union possessed a significant comparative advantage over the West was in the export of technologically advanced weapons, which it was willing to trade in a hard-nosed fashion for political influence. But arms transfers proved to be an extremely clumsy instrument of leverage, either because they tended to embroil Moscow in dangerous confrontations with the United States, or because the threat to withhold weapons was an ineffective source of control.

Finally, it proved that the Soviet position, even among its most longstanding clients, could be undermined totally by competitive outbidding by either the United States or its European allies. This is of course what happened in Egypt between 1972 and 1975; but in Iraq as well, French efforts to establish a privileged position for themselves have resulted in an increased margin of maneuver for Baghdad vis-à-vis Moscow.

The Problem of Soviet Influence: the Case of Egypt

It is common for observers of the Middle East to remark in a tone

of bemused irony the apparent paradox that whereas the disastrous Arab defeat in 1967 led to a sudden and dramatic increase in the Soviet presence in Egypt, the relative Arab success in the October War resulted in their complete exclusion. The truth of the matter, however, is that there was no paradox: the Egyptian reversal of alliances after 1974 was a delayed reaction to the June War, which if anything proves the validity of the traditional influence game. The Soviets undermined their own position initially by failing to prevent the 1967 defeat. They delayed their departure and even increased their presence by promising to make good the Arabs' territorial losses, but were unable to deliver on that promise six years and two wars later. The United States could outbid the Soviet Union for Egypt's allegiance by, on the one hand, successfully blocking any attempt to win back the occupied territories through force of arms and, on the other, by offering to mediate their return in a negotiated settlement that excluded the Russians. The case of Egypt prior to 1974 demonstrated the genuine differences that emerged between Moscow and its leading left wing nationalist client, and the relatively weak leverage the Soviets could exercise as a result of their arms-length attitude.

Soviet problems in Egypt revolved around Moscow's unwillingness to confront the United States on Egypt's behalf. While the June War created insistent Arab demands that prompt military action be taken, the same conflict had a sobering effect on the Soviet Union which all but guaranteed that nothing of the sort would occur. Not only did Moscow carefully avoid incitements of the sort that had led to the June War, but they took active measures to prevent the outbreak of a new conflict as well. The Soviets gingerly pushed Nasser towards a negotiated solution of the conflict through manipulation of arms supplies: they gave Egypt and Syria enough weapons to plausibly bargain for a favorable settlement, but not enough that Nasser would be tempted to go to war. This proved an impossible balance to strike. In January 1970 Nasser frankly threatened to defect to the American camp unless the Russians gave him greater support; the result was a substantial but grudging Soviet combat involvement during the 1970 War of Attrition. Moscow's participation observed very strict limits and was not sufficient to intimidate Israel or the

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United States into substantial concessions. The same drama played itself out again after the August 1970 ceasefire: The Soviets delayed on arms shipments and pressed for political negotiations, leading Anwar Sadat to finally expel the Soviet advisors in July 1972 and in effect threaten that if they did not allow him to go to war, he would turn directly to the Americans.¹

The October War was the Soviets' last big chance to redeem themselves. Whatever gloomy connotations that conflict has for many Israelis, and whatever ancillary benefits the Soviets might have derived, it was not a success for Soviet arms. Despite the fact that Soviet military assistance prior to and during the war was quite generous in absolute amounts, militarily their efforts did little more than forestall another 67-style defeat. The Soviets, after having pressed the Egyptians continuously to accept a ceasefire from the sixth hour of the war, failed to intervene until October 24, by which time the fighting had all but died down and the United States had committed itself to a ceasefire by two votes in the U.N. According to Sadat, it was not the Soviet threat to intervene that saved the trapped Egyptian Third Army, but Henry Kissinger. The United States had proved that it was, in his words, "the world's greatest power," and the only one capable of extracting Israel from the rest of the Sinai. Egypt's radical shift of alliances after 1974 was a direct result of this judgment.²

Thus the Soviets were able to control neither the timing of Egypt's conflict with Israel nor its ultimate outcome. It should be noted, however, that the weakness of the Soviet position was intimately related to the strength of American commitments in the Middle East, and the strength of America's regional allies. Among the wrong or misleading conclusions being currently drawn from the Soviet failure in Egypt is the notion that the forces of nationalism will of themselves somehow rise up and drive the Russians out. This is often used as a justification for a more relaxed American attitude towards Soviet Third World activities. In fact, precisely the opposite conclusion is warranted. While nationalist resentment against the prominent Soviet advisor presence in Egypt facilitated their departure, this was hardly the precipitating cause. The Soviet position was ultimately undermined because the level

of military support the Russians made available to the Arabs was simply insufficient to achieve their national purposes, given the fact that Moscow was unwilling to risk serious confrontation with the United States.

There is no automaticity to this process. The Soviets had to be persuaded not to risk confrontation, and had to be prevented from achieving any successes through means short of confrontation. Had the rapid Soviet rearmament of Egypt and Syria after 1967 managed to soften the American-Israeli position substantially, had the United States not actively resisted every Soviet escalation with an escalation of its own, Egypt might today still be a Soviet client. Weaning it away from the Soviet orbit was a drawn-out and costly process which absorbed the attention of U.S. policymakers for prolonged periods and drew the United States into indirect participation in several wars. Future generations of Americans may decide that it is not worth paying such a price, but they should be careful not to delude themselves into thinking that the same result could be had for less.

The Problem of Soviet Influence: the Case of Iraq

The problems in Moscow's relationship with Baghdad have not been as visible as those with Egypt, but are quite significant nonetheless. They promise to loom even larger as Iraq grows in political importance and comes to take on the premier role among Arab states. While the Iraqi Ba'th has acted contrary to Moscow's wishes on numerous occasions since coming to power in 1968, the most serious differences have coincided with a period after 1975 when Iraq's relationship with France improved considerably. Paris has not yet supplanted Moscow as an armorer and outside political patron, but has succeeded in eroding the Soviet position considerably around the edges.

France, of course, sought a special relationship with the oil-producing Arab states ever since the June War. Her first foothold in Iraq came in the late 1960s, when the Iraqi Ba'th was seeking foreign oil-drilling technology to break the monopoly of the British-owned Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC). The state-owned Iraqi National Oil Company (INOC) used some French equipment to supplement an ongoing Soviet project to develop the large North Rumaila oilfield. When this was completed

in 1972, the extra capacity allowed Baghdad to survive any possible retaliation by the Western oil companies when it nationalized the IPC's holdings in June of that year. The French contribution at that point was rather minor, and it was the Russians who walked off with the lion's share of the political benefits, in the form of the 1972 Iraqi-Soviet Friendship and Cooperation Treaty. But the French did prove their willingness to compete head-on with the Soviets for influence in Iraq by helping Baghdad to do things that were decidedly harmful to the interests of France's North Atlantic neighbors.

The real opening for the French did not come until 1975, however, when Soviet-Iraqi relations took a sudden turn for the worse. By then, the 1973-74 revolution in world oil prices had ended Iraq's status as an economic pariah and allowed it to begin accumulating substantial hard-currency reserves. These were used to make large purchases of capital equipment from the West; as one Iraqi explained, "We have the money and so we can afford to buy the best." Iraq's trade patterns shifted completely in the space of a year or two from heavy dependence on the Soviet bloc to an equally heavy dependence on the West. This apparent ingratitude rankled the Soviets, who were particularly defensive about the quality of their technology. But the most important development came when the Iraqis settled the war in Kurdistan by signing the Algiers Agreement with the Shah of Iran in April 1975. This seemed to be a cynical sellout of Iraq's anti-imperialist pretensions and drastically reduced Baghdad's need for Soviet weapons and spare parts. It foreshadowed a prolonged period of independent Iraqi foreign policy.

To forestall such a development the Soviets in effect embargoed arms shipments to Iraq in late June and early July 1975, as they had done to Egypt the previous year.³ The Iraqis, profiting from the Egyptian example, refused to give in to Soviet pressure and sought instead to diversify their sources of arms by offering to buy from the French. In September 1975 Saddam Hussein and the Chief of Staff Abd al-Jabber Shanshal paid a major state visit to France and negotiated an arms deal that was as large in its dollar volume as any of the agreements previously reached with the Soviet Union. When deliveries began in 1978 the order included 40 Mirage F-1s, 40 SA-330L Puma and 60 SA-342K Gazelle

helicopters, AMX-20P and AMX-30 armoured vehicles, air-to-air, air-to-surface, anti-tank, and surface-to-air missiles.⁴

The first round of arms agreements was supplemented by a second one in 1979, which included other European arms producers besides France. In May the Iraqi Defense Minister Adnan Khairallah toured the French and Spanish arms industries and indicated an interest in a volume of business that would enable Paris to supplant the Soviet Union as Iraq's primary arms supplier by the early 1980's. While in France he placed firm orders for \$250 million worth of weapons; discussions initiated at that time could lead to total sales as high as \$1.5 - 1.6 billion in 1979 dollars. In Spain he held talks that reportedly envisaged a five-year purchase of weapons and warships worth some \$900 million.⁵ Soviet arms sales to Iraq, by contrast, have averaged \$800 billion 1976 dollars per year over the last several years:⁶

	<u>1973</u>	<u>1974</u>	<u>1975</u>	<u>1976</u>	<u>1977</u>
U.S. 1976 \$	790	750	606	825	1043

Orders placed with France included a second squadron of 40 Mirage F-1s, two 3,200 ton antisubmarine frigates, six Cherbourg-class fast patrol boats, Super-Frelon helicopters and a large number of AMX-30 main battle tanks. The Spanish were said to be negotiating the sale of factories to be set up in Iraq to manufacture small arms.⁷

There is no question but that Iraqi purchases of French weapons have brought them increased freedom of maneuver vis-à-vis Moscow. This was most evident in Baghdad's policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. Iraq has the distinction of being at the same time more extreme and, in a way, more moderate than Moscow in its posture towards Israel. On a rhetorical level, Baghdad's fanatical anti-Zionism has been an established feature of its own national identity ever since its failure to sign an armistice with Israel in 1948. Iraq's unconditional opposition to any sort of negotiations with Israel has run afoul of Moscow's efforts over the past decade to promote a comprehensive Geneva conference to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict. On the other hand, the Iraqi Ba'th

has consistently used the very radicalness of its anti-Zionism as an excuse not to take concrete measures to aid the other Arab states in their confrontation with Israel. The Soviets have been urging the creation of a single Syrian-Iraqi-Palestinian "Northern Front" for many years to little avail. The problem became the most acute following Sadat's trip to Jerusalem in November 1977. The "Steadfastness and Confrontation Front" which was assembled in Tripoli, Libya to block a bilateral Egyptian-Israeli peace was disrupted by the Iraqis, who, as the only "pure" anti-Zionists, demanded the impossible condition that Syria explicitly retract its acceptance of U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338. The Soviets, who had strongly supported the activities of the Tripoli summit, were visibly angered by Iraq's behavior but found that they had very limited leverage with which to affect it. The Iraqis' French connection insulated them from further Soviet attempts to manipulate the arms pipeline, and in any case they had built-up substantial stocks of Soviet spare parts.⁸ When Baghdad made an abrupt about-face on the issue of cooperation with Syria in October 1978 following the signing of the Camp David agreements, it did so for reasons having to do with its relationship with Iran and not as a result of Soviet pressure.

French motives in pursuing their aggressive arms-sale policy were not hard to discover. Proceeds from the transactions helped the French balance-of-payments situation and offset the sharply increased cost of oil coming from the Middle East. The French also increased the security of oil supplies in an overall "package" deal with Baghdad: in March 1979 the Iraqis promised to supply France with an additional 100,000 barrels a day of oil, followed by a pledge for an additional 100,000 barrels a day in July.⁹ Arms transfers on this scale permit the French to maintain and even expand their domestic weapons industry.

In building a privileged relationship with Iraq, the French have arguably performed a useful service for the United States and for the rest of the Atlantic Alliance. France had done with regard to Iraq what the United States did in Egypt, albeit less dramatically: reduced its dependence on the Soviet Union by satisfying certain of its needs and thereby undercut Moscow's ability to manipulate its foreign policy.

This was a task the United States might have attempted to undertake itself (and might yet in the future), but which for a variety of reasons the French were better suited to carry out. After de Gaulle dropped France's ties to Israel in 1967, the French were free of any embarrassing connections which would have made the Iraqis less willing to collaborate with them. Moreover, to this day the French political system remains relatively free of those moral restraints that would have stood in the way of any American effort to woo the Iraqis out of the Soviet camp. The French, it can be argued, allow the United States to enjoy the best of all possible worlds, benefiting from Iraqi independence from the Soviet camp without at the same time having to alter its own commitment to Israel. Since the Soviets would have been willing to subsidize Iraqi behavior detrimental to Western interests anyway, why not have the subsidy come from a country which at times has been known to cooperate with the United States?

It is questionable whether France is fully capable of supplanting the Soviet Union as the patron of a country like Iraq, however, even though the dollar value of its arms transactions may exceed those of the Soviets in certain years. Baghdad remains dependent on Moscow not only for the greater part of its arsenal, but for other vital aspects of its national security as well. As we saw in our analysis of the Soviet experience in Egypt, great power patronage and its resulting influence depends on much more than the routine provision of weapons. Moscow's standing in Egypt and Syria was related to its ability to mount massive and rapid resupply efforts out of its own inventories, paid for either by long-term credits or given gratis. At other times it has had to bring its own military forces to bear directly on the Middle East, or else threaten more drastic countermeasures against the opposing superpower. France lacks the airlift, sealift, or logistics capability to perform any of these functions, and cannot afford to give away its weapons. A European power like France may hope to erode the influence of a superpower around the edges, but not actually occupy its place. In the end, France's real role may be to pave the way for an eventual replacement of Soviet influence in Iraq with that of the United States.

III. NEW MODES AND ORDER OF SOVIET STRATEGY

The fact that the United States and France have been able to undercut the Soviet position in the Middle East has led many American observers to the conclusion that Soviet influence in the Third World is not much of a threat to Western interests because it is everywhere weak and impermanent. The inability of outside powers to control Third World nationalism is in accord with the general Western experience since World War II -- it was a lesson learned by Britain and France at the time of Suez, and by the U.S. in Vietnam. The American reaction to its own difficulties has been chiefly to abjure further attempts to attain the degree of influence to which it once aspired, and to hope that other powers will do the same. But while the Soviet Union has clearly undergone a similar rethinking of its Third World strategy in recent years, it is a mistake to assume that the conclusions it has reached are at all comparable to Western ones. While Moscow's objectives in areas like the Middle East have not changed, the tactics on operational style employed to achieve them have undergone a number of pronounced changes. These include:

- o A visible narrowing of the degree to which Third World clients are permitted to deviate from Soviet foreign policy objectives. The Soviets have of course always tried to prevent certain kinds of dissidence, such as an outright shift in allegiances to the American camp, as happened in Egypt. But the most recent targets of pro-Soviet bids for power have all been left-wing nationalists who have not made fundamental breaks with the overall line of Soviet policy. These include Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, and South Yemen. All of these regimes have displayed a certain degree of independence from Soviet objectives, and failed to cooperate in Moscow's efforts to expand its influence through the Middle East. The Soviets, in other words, are increasingly discontent with simple nonalignment or pro-Soviet neutralism, but want instead active collaborators, proxies rather than allies, control in place of influence.

- o A much greater willingness to interfere in the internal affairs of client states in order to achieve their objectives of political control. Their interference has taken a number of different forms. Since 1975 the Russians have once again supported the activities of local Communist parties or ideologically-motivated cadres in the Middle East and Africa, after a hiatus of some two decades. The first example of this was the MPLA in Angola; since then there have been takeovers by pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist groups in Ethiopia, Afghanistan, and South Yemen, as well as substantial Communist infiltration into the Iraqi army. This has been supplemented by the activities of the East German Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (MfS), or state security service. The East Germans have been busy refurbishing the security apparatus of a number of African and Middle Eastern countries, including Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, the PDRY, and Sudan. MfS operations not only contribute to the consolidation of centralized Marxist-Leninist states, but provide the Soviets with up-to-date intelligence and a degree of previously-unattainable political control.¹⁰
- o A vastly increased military infrastructure with which to influence regional and internal developments in the Third World. Instead of simply bartering arms for influence, the Soviets have acquired the means of applying direct military pressure. Such capabilities have existed for some years as potentialities, with the deployment of naval squadrons in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean, and the creation of mobile airborne units with substantial airlift capacity. Their actualization has undergone a continuous evolution over the past decade, beginning with the selective transfer of pilots and air defense crews, continuing through the use of Cuban and East European proxies, and culminating in the deployment of regular Soviet combat forces. The novel aspect of recent Soviet force projection has been its use against ostensible allies and clients. The first example of this was the staging of Cuban troops through South Yemen to Ethiopia, where they were used to fight the Somalis

and Eritreans. Then in the summer of 1978 the Cubans were brought back from Ethiopia to help Abd al-Fattah Ismail suppress army factions loyal to Selim Rubai Ali in the PDRY. More recently, Soviet airborne divisions secured Kabul and toppled Hafizullah Amin in Afghanistan.

The Case of Afghanistan

This new set of Soviet tactics has been visible here and there, as opportunities for their application arose, since 1975. The very problems we saw emerging between Moscow and the Iraqi Ba'th seems to have prompted Soviet encouragement of stepped-up activities by the Iraqi Communist Party in the winter of 1977-78. It is not clear whether the ICP was actually planning a putsch, or whether it was merely broadening its base in a routine fashion, but in any case the regime in Baghdad behaved as if a Communist takeover was imminent. The ferocity and duration of the ensuing purge of ICP cadres in the army and elsewhere is difficult to explain, given Iraq's dependence on the Soviet Union, except as a response to what it believed was a genuine threat.¹¹ But the most fully developed case in which the Soviets have sought to qualitatively alter the nature of their influence has been Afghanistan. While much of the world's attention has understandably been focused on the Soviet intervention of December 1979, the most revealing period from the standpoint of evaluating Soviet intentions was in fact the two or three years preceding the coup against Daud in April 1978.

Afghanistan first became a Soviet client in 1956 when, rebuffed by the United States, it signed an arms transfer agreement with the Soviet Union. Since that time its armed forces have been exclusively equipped by Moscow, and many of its officers indoctrinated in Marxist-Leninist ideology during their training in the Soviet Union. That relationship continued after the monarchy of Zahir Shah was overthrown by his kinsman Mohammed Daud in 1973. Daud may be characterized as a left wing-nationalist of a sort common in the Arab world. Possessing a basically secular outlook, he came to power with the help of one of the Afghan Communist parties, Percham, whose services he quickly dispensed with once he consolidated his rule. (Among the leaders of Percham at the

time was Babrak Karmal, the present president of Afghanistan installed by the Soviets). Daud declared a socialist ideology for Afghanistan and undertook a number of half-hearted modernizing measures, most of which soon bogged down amidst inefficient administration and growing economic difficulties.¹²

It was in the field of foreign policy that Daud demonstrated his genuine independence of Moscow. Ever since the formation of Pakistan in 1947, governments in Kabul have contested the Durand line separating the two countries because it left many of their kindred Pushtuns across the border in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province. A subsidiary issue was the Afghan demand to establish an independent Baluchistan out of parts of Pakistan and Iran. The Soviets found these irredenta useful for their own purposes because they put pressure on two of America's regional clients. Daud himself during his first tenure as Prime Minister between 1953 and 1963 stressed these nationalist claims, and raised them once again when he returned to power in 1973. But after a number of serious border incidents and mutual threats of war, Daud came to an understanding with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan in 1976 and agreed to respect Pakistan's territorial integrity. At the same time, Daud responded favorably to overtures from the Shah of Iran to improve relations between their two countries. The latter extended economic aid to Kabul, agreed to several joint agricultural projects, and began to construct a railroad link from Bandar Abbas to several important Afghan cities. In addition, the Iranian Savak was reported to have given Daud assistance in suppressing the two Afghan Communist parties, Percham and Khalq. Daud went on to establish friendly relations with other pro-American Middle Eastern states, paying visits to both Egypt and Saudi Arabia in 1977.

These developments hurt Soviet interests in two ways, by removing an important source of leverage over Iran and Pakistan, and by reducing Kabul's overall economic dependence on the Soviet Union. The rail link to the Persian Gulf in particular was expressly designed to end Afghanistan's reliance on land routes through the Soviet Union for its external trade. But what is noteworthy here is the fact that both of these developments can at best be described as inconveniences for Soviet foreign

policy, rather than serious setbacks. They were within the range of the sort of dissidence that the Soviet Union had previously tolerated among its Third World clients. For example, both Egypt under Nasser and Iraq under Saddam Hussein sought reconciliations with major ideological opponents, and both tried to broaden their economic base by seeking ties with pro-Western neighbors. There is no way that Daud's turn to the right in foreign policy could be construed as a serious threat to Soviet security: he did not, for example, attempt to arm his military with American weapons in place of Soviet ones, or enter into a military agreement with his pro-Western neighbors. The fact that Moscow was nonetheless unwilling to tolerate his actions indicates the more demanding standards that the Soviets now seem to apply to their Third World clients.

Daud was overthrown by Percham and Khalq in a coup on April 27-28, 1978, in which Perchami influence over the Soviet-trained officer corps was crucial. A Soviet role in the coup has been denied altogether by some, but it seems clear from the circumstantial evidence that, while Moscow played no part in the planning in a tactical sense, its overall support was instrumental in bringing it about. The takeover was precipitated by the murder of a prominent leftist, Mir Akbar Khyber, which led to massive demonstrations by sympathizers at his funeral on April 19. Daud's ensuing crackdown on leftist leaders prompted the Khalq strongman, Hafizullah Amin, to order his friends in the armed forces to act. The coup itself was therefore hastily planned and executed. The fact that this particular sequence of events was not foreseen by either Moscow or the Afghan communists has been taken by some as proof that the Soviets neither planned nor desired it.¹³ Yet to conclude this is to misunderstand the nature of the relationship between the CPSU leadership in Moscow and its allied parties in the Third World. The Soviets do not have the power to order takeovers at particular times and places; what they can do is to encourage local Communists with advice and promises of support once they come to power. By some accounts, Moscow pressured Khalq and Percham to form a united front with the help of the Communist Party of India and the Iraqi Communist Party in May 1977, after the rightist trend of Daud's foreign policy became evident. There is also some speculation that Soviet pilots flew the planes used

to bomb the presidential palace during the takeover itself.¹⁴ In any case, the sequence of events following the coup is more revealing of Moscow's prior intentions: Moscow recognized the new government of Nur Mohammed Taraki instantly, Soviet military and economic advisors entered the country in large numbers, and in November 1978 Taraki signed a Friendship and Cooperation Treaty with the Soviet Union.

The difficulties that Moscow encountered with the regime in Kabul after April 1978 were of a totally different order than what it had faced before. The disagreements were not on the level of ideology or substantive policy, but over tactics and implementation. Shortly after coming to power the Khalqis began purging the Perchamis, and many prominent leftists, including the vice-president Babrak Karmal, were forced to flee the country. Khalq strongman Hafizullah Amin pushed through what the Russians regarded as an "infantile" left-wing communist program in the context of Afghanistan, declaring a radical land reform program, abolition of dowries, and the education of women. By the fall of 1978 this had already led to substantial unrest among tribal groups and conservative Moslem elements. A major uprising in the western city of Herat in March 1979 was followed by serious deterioration in the 100,000 man Afghan army over the summer. This prompted the Soviets to prod Taraki and Amin to broaden their base of support in August, by some reports even advising them to take members of the old royal family into a coalition government.¹⁶ When this proved unavailing, Moscow appears to have attempted to play Taraki off against the hardline Amin. Taraki seems to have been on the verge of purging Amin when the latter preemptively purged him in a shootout in the presidential palace. Amin subsequently demanded the recall of the Soviet ambassador, Alexander Pusanov, whom he accused of complicity in the plot to unseat him.

The fact that the Russians were forced to intervene as they did in December 1979 and physically replace Amin with their own candidate the ex-Perchami leader Babrak Karmal, indicates that ideological orthodoxy is not enough to guarantee that Moscow's interests will be well served in a particular client state. On the other hand, one could not ask for a more dramatic demonstration of the new turn in Soviet Third World strategy. The Russians showed they were not interested merely in the

largest possible quantity of influence, but in its quality as well. They hoped to be able to dictate not only the major lines of Afghan foreign policy, but its day-to-day management: hence Daud's replacement with Taraki/Amin, and then their subsequent replacement with Karmal. The Russians were about to be expelled from Afghanistan, not as in Egypt by the established leadership of the country, but by a popular rebellion, and they showed quite convincingly that they were no longer prepared to accept such an outcome passively. The massive troop intervention was no more than the culmination, under unexpectedly adverse circumstances, of a turn in overall policy that had begun more than a year and a half earlier.

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE

In evaluating the threat posed to the interests of the Western allies by these recent changes in Soviet tactics, it must be borne in mind that they have all arisen as a response to the basic weakness of the previous Soviet position. Since 1974 the Russians have had to deal with the central fact that they were closed out of the Mideast heartland, and their subsequent choice of targets around the periphery -- Ethiopia, South Yemen, Afghanistan -- was a necessity imposed on them. Soviet-style Marxism-Leninism is a doctrine with very little inherent appeal anywhere in the Middle East, and where it has become the ruling ideology, it has had to be applied from the outside -- often at great cost to the Soviets. Moscow's influence remains tenuous among its traditional clients like Syria and Iraq, and even in those countries where it has consolidated the rule of an ideologically sympathetic regime, its control has not been optimal (as its problems with Hafizullah Amin have shown).

Moreover, as the Soviet intention to have puppets rather than allies becomes clearer, new opportunities will arise for the West to wean older "nonaligned" clients out of the Soviet orbit. Countries like Iraq and Somalia have already been seriously alienated by what they regard as communist machinations against them, and it is significant that both voted in favor of the U.N. General Assembly resolution demanding a withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. It is now possible for

Western diplomats to argue rather persuasively to Third World countries receiving or seeking Soviet military assistance that such programs are potential fifth columns; that, in the words of the Kennedy inaugural, "those who foolishly sought power by riding the back of the tiger ended up inside."

On the other hand, to the extent that the new Russian strategy is a successful adaptation to these weaknesses, the consequences could be far-reaching indeed. One of the notable features of the old international regime in the Middle East was the reluctance of most left-wing nationalists to cooperate overtly with the Soviet Union on military matters. The memory of European colonialism made leaders like Nasser or Boumedienne extremely sensitive to the presence of foreign bases, no matter what their origin, on their territory. While the Russians gained access to some facilities through the 50s and 60s, this occurred haphazardly and in response to specific political developments. The new crop of Soviet clients, by contrast, have given Moscow direct military assistance from the outset. Aden became a major Soviet-Cuban logistics facility during Ethiopia's war with Moslem Somalis and Eritreans, and Ethiopia, in turn, was used as a staging base for operations against Rubai Ali. The Karmal regime in Kabul has collaborated in the occupation of Afghanistan by a Soviet army.

A second problem is that these regimes will be much harder to dislodge either from power or from the Soviet orbit. Politics in the Middle East often resembled a gigantic bazaar in which the Western powers could, as the examples of Egypt and Iraq showed, purchase the favors of a given country for the right political-military price. The new crop of Soviet clients are less likely to succumb to such blandishments on ideological grounds; moreover, the extreme narrowness of their domestic bases make them much more dependent on Soviet-bloc support.

The Western allies must also reach some agreement on the specific meaning of the recent events in Afghanistan. Currently a debate is developing as to whether the intervention signals a Russian intention to drive for warm water ports or oil in the Persian Gulf. Such objectives almost certainly exist as planning guidelines or ultimate aspirations, but it is doubtful that they guide short-term policy in any

terribly precise way. As American policymakers have come to realize, politics in the Middle East is too unstable and chaotic to allow a geopolitical planning horizon longer than the next six months to a year. Soviet expansion in the Middle East has occurred through the exploitation of opportunities for which Moscow bore little or no responsibility. The fact that there was no master plan driving this process does not make it any the less expansionism, nor does it reduce the dangers presented to the Western position. The real lessons of the intervention in Afghanistan do not concern the nature of Soviet objectives, which have remained constant throughout the post-war period, but the potential success with which those objectives will be achieved.

The Western alliance presently faces a critical problem in the Middle East as a result of the vulnerability of European oil supplies to political instability arising from purely regional factors. The problem will worsen by an order of magnitude should the quality of Soviet influence over the sources of oil evolve into something approaching control. At the present moment, Moscow cannot order the Iraqi Ba'th to turn off the tap to Western Europe and Japan; indeed, many of the difficulties in the Soviet-Iraqi relationship have arisen over Baghdad's willingness to deal with the West on purely commercial terms. What politicization there has been in the overall economic relationship between Iraq and the West has revolved chiefly around issues of regional concern, such as the Arab-Israeli dispute. We have already seen in the past decade the corrosive effects that such control can have on the cohesion of the Western alliance with respect to this particular issue. European and Japanese dependence on Persian Gulf oil is such that these countries have felt they had no choice but to accommodate to the political demands made of them. But this type of alliance disunity was tolerable as long as it did not seriously jeopardize NATO's purpose as an anti-Soviet organization. Imagine then what would happen to the alliance should Ba'thist Iraq, to take one example, be replaced by a Communist one. The greater degree of political control this would bestow upon the Soviets would in all probability spell the end of the alliance as we know it. It would mean that the oil weapon could be coupled to a whole host of East-West issues that are currently isolated from one another, such as

theater nuclear modernization. It would be ironic indeed if the unity of the Atlantic alliance, which has held together under the pressure of hundreds of thousands of Soviet troops armed with nuclear weapons for over three decades, should suddenly be undone by a Communist coup d'etat in a far away Persian Gulf country.

FOOTNOTES

¹ A rather extensive inside account of Soviet-Egyptian dealings during the period 1967-1973 has now been provided by Mohammed Haughal in The Road to Ramadan and The Sphinx and the Commissar, and in Sadat In Search of Identity. See also Abd al-Majid Farid's The Secret Conversations of abd al-Nasir.

² See Sadat, In Search of Identity, pp. 146-147.

³ See William Beecher in the Boston Globe, 7/10/75.

⁴ SIPRI World Armaments and Disarmament Yearbook, 1979, p. 218-220.

⁵ The Middle East, June, 1979, p. 20.

⁶ U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1979.

⁷ Washington Post, 7/13/79.

⁸ New York Times, 7/2/78.

⁹ Washington Post, 7/13/79.

¹⁰ There is a discussion of MFS activities in Brian Crozier, "The Surrogate Forces of the Soviet Union," Conflict Studies no. 92, pp. 9-10.

¹¹ There is no direct evidence of Soviet involvement in a coup attempt by the ICP; on the other hand, we should not expect to have any. The strongest argument that the Iraqi communists were positioning themselves for a takeover is the strength of the Ba'thist reaction. The purge, which began in May 1978, continued unabated for over a year and netted, by some accounts, several thousand communists (probably a majority of the ICP's total membership). The Iraqi leadership has made direct accusations that the ICP (and behind it, the Soviet Union) was plotting a takeover. In May, 1979 the Iraqis walked out of the Arab People's Congress on the grounds that the Sudanese Communist Party was being drawn into the leadership--the Sudanese Communists, it will be remembered, attempted to overthrow Jaafar Numeiry in 1971. All of this occurred in a period when Sadat's peace moves and the Iranian revolution required, if anything, a greater degree of cooperation with the Soviet Union. The purge was too serious to be a merely symbolic gesture. In the Ba'th Party's first tenure in office in 1963, they had undertaken a similar purge and were severely hurt as a result. It is not the sort of action they would undertake for frivolous reasons.

¹² See Hannah Negaran, "The Afghan Coup of April 1978: Revolution and International Security," ORBIS, Spring, 1979, pp. 94-99; Theodore L. Eliot, Jr., "Afghanistan after the 1978 Revolution," Strategic Review, Spring, 1979, pp. 59-60.

¹³ See, for example, Louis Dupree, "Afghanistan under the Khalg," Problems of Communism, July-August 1979, p. 34.

¹⁴ Events, June 16, 1978; Selig S. Harrison, "The Shah, Not Kremlin, Touched Off Afghan Coup," Washington Post, May 13, 1979.

¹⁵ See Dupree, op. cit., pp. 40-42.

¹⁶ New York Times, August 2, 1979.

