4 The Cold War: global conflict, regional upheavals

Global confrontation, asymmetric interests

The intersection of great power and regional states on one hand, with that of states and social movements on the other, was, therefore, to be dramatically reaffirmed in the Cold War. The Cold War, which lasted from the late 1940s to the end of the 1980s, was a multi-layered competition: while it most evidently did involve wars and military competition between east and west, directly and in support of allies in the Middle East, it also involved more than a mainly military contest, a rivalry for political loyalties and for economic advantage.[1] Yet it is not enough to list this diversity. No international context presents as much analytic challenge as do these four decades of Cold War: here dramatic military crises, protracted inter-state negotiations and upheavals within states, the events of politics itself, were interwoven with a set of less visible, but in the longer run decisive processes, of social, economic and ideological change. The challenge to any analysis of the Cold War is to do justice to both dimensions, relating events and conflicts of the Cold War at the state level to underlying historical and sociological dynamics.

The inter-relationship of these different dimensions was not one of straightforward confrontation between the two blocs as it was in Europe. Rather the Cold War in the Middle East was beset by strategic crosscurrents. The United States, for example, had political and strategic interests in Israel, but its main economic interests, in oil, were in the Arabian Peninsula.[2] Even that interest in oil was not so much one of direct dependency of American firms importing oil to the USA itself, as it was financial and political, in terms of the advantage given over other developed allies that were so reliant on Gulf imports. For its part, the

[1] Richard Crockatt, *The Fifty Years War: the United States and the Soviet Union in World Politics, 1941–1991*, London: Routledge, 1995; Yezid Sayigh and Avi Shlaim eds., *The Cold War and the Middle East*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

[2] Simon Bromley, *American Hegemony and World Oil*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991; Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: the Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power*, London: Simon and Schuster, 1993.

Soviet Union established strategic alliances with Arab nationalist regimes, such as Egypt and Iraq, even as the latter suppressed communist parties. The two major powers in the Cold War also had very different geographic interests in the region: the USSR, which bordered the Middle East, was most concerned about the emergence of strategic and other challenges along its southern border, and therefore concentrated particularly on its non-Arab neighbours – Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan – what it termed the 'Central East'; the USA was more concerned with Israel and the Arab world. The USSR, the largest oil producer in the world at 12 mbd in the 1970s, had no direct interest in Middle Eastern oil, except in so far as it benefited from OPEC price rises, while the USA, and the western economies as a whole, came increasingly to rely on it for oil supplies, trade and investment funds, a reappropriation of oil rent masked as 'recycling'. The European colonial powers, Britain and France, sought to manage a transition from colonial to post-colonial influence, in ways that were not always consistent with US aims. For its part China had for decades maintained a rhetorical and remote stance on the Middle East that only matured into a strategic and commercial engagement in the 1990s.[3] Much as it postured on Middle Eastern issues, above all to discredit the Russians, China had no significant impact on any regional country or issue; indeed, for most of the period upto the 1990s at the earliest, the modern history of the Middle East could be written without any reference to it.

The Cold War involved a reciprocal relationship between the international 'system' as a whole and the 'sub-system' or region, of global rivalry on the one hand, and regional manoeuvre and initiative on the other. In the region, this marked a significant shift: in contrast to the two world wars, which involved, in large measure, the imposition on to the Middle East of a wider conflict, the Cold War involved to a much greater extent than the high colonial epoch, 1918–45, the *interaction* of global *with* regional forces. Thus, while the Cold War had a major impact upon the states and societies of the Middle East, to a considerable degree the states and social movements of the region also pursued individual policies. They had their own impact upon the global confrontation: states such as Israel, Turkey, Egypt, Iran were themselves actors in the Cold War, as were region-wide social movements of communist, nationalist and, later, Islamist character. The Middle East was therefore, in several important

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[3] Yitzhak Schichor, *The Middle East in China's Foreign Policy, 1949–1971*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979; Hashim Behbahani, *China's Foreign Policy in the Arab World, 1955–1978*, London: KPI, 1978; Lillian Craig Harris, *China Considers the Middle East*, London: I. B. Tauris, 1993; Fred Halliday, 'China and the Middle East: an Enigmatic Involvement', *Arab Affairs* (London), no. 12, autumn 1990.

respects, dominated by the Cold War, but this was as much because local states and social movements sought to take advantage of it for their own ends as because it was a passive object of external strategic rivalries.

Phases of the Cold War

The evolution of the Cold War in the Middle East can be seen, in terms of this interconnection of global and regional, as having fallen into four broad historical periods: 1946–55, 1955–74, 1974–85 and 1985–91. Thus the dynamic of Middle Eastern events, while certainly autonomous of the world conflict that was the Cold War, was necessarily interconnected with it. In the first period, from the latter part of the 1940s through to the middle of the l950s, Soviet–western rivalry was concentrated largely in the non-Arab 'northern tier' of countries bordering the USSR itself, namely Turkey and Iran. In this phase of the global contest, the USSR possessed neither the will nor the capacity to challenge the west in the Arab world itself. This was to change dramatically in the second phase, which lasted from 1955 to 1974: now the USSR established itself as the major ally of a number of radical Arab nationalist regimes, the most important of which was Egypt, but also including Iraq, Syria, later Libya, and South Yemen. In this period Arab nationalism, in alliance with Moscow, posed a challenge to western domination in the region; regional wars, not only those between the Arabs and Israel, but also in Algeria (1954–62) and Yemen (1962–70), were conducted in east–west terms, the forces of the 'Arab revolution' being pitted against the allies of the west.

It was in this second phase of Cold War that the west appeared to be losing ground in the Arab world, especially in the aftermath of Suez in 1956 and the 1967 Arab–Israeli war. Yet while it was apparently retreating in the Arab world, the west was at the same time apparently consolidating in the non-Arab states in the late 1950s and early 1960s: Turkey was, for the moment, a secure member of NATO, Iran was developing its power under the Shah, and, most importantly, the USA consolidated its strategic relationship with Israel, which had been shakier at the start. This second period was to give way, in the first part of the 1970s, to what became known as the 'Second Cold War', one of tension comparable to the tensions of 1947–53; this phase was one in which the Middle East came to be a scene of continuous east–west manoeuvring and an important part of the Soviet–American rivalry for strategic positions in the third world. While the USSR was expelled from Egypt in stages, between 1972 and 1976, Moscow retained its position in other Arab states, notably Syria, Iraq and South Yemen. Its relations with Libya continued, but were

always relatively tense, as the Russians found Qaddafi an unreliable ally.[4] By contrast, the USA gained ground in the Arab world in the 1970s, but it had increasing difficulties with its NATO ally Turkey, after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. It was to suffer its greatest reverse in the region in 1979, with the triumph of the Islamic revolution in Iran. The overall sense of regional rivalry was further exacerbated by the war in Afghanistan, a country on the borders of the Middle East but now increasingly interlocked with it, via Iran and Saudi Arabia. A pro-Soviet coup in April 1978 was followed by the entry of Soviet forces at the end of 1979. This led to a protracted war in Afghanistan in which the USA, supported by Pakistan, Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, sought to wear down the Red Army. Over the coming two decades Afghanistan, a state hitherto remote to western and Middle Eastern concerns alike, was to be drawn more and more into the regional play of forces,[5] and to become the fulcrum of a broader global struggle, in effect the late twentieth-century equivalent of the Spanish Civil War (1936–9).[6]

A fourth stage of Cold War opened in 1985, with the election of Mikhail Gorbachev to leadership of the USSR; in what he termed 'new thinking', Gorbachev set out to break the mould of Cold War rivalry. He worked to find common ground with the west even as he encouraged settlement of regional disputes that east and west had hitherto exploited for their own benefit. The fruits of Gorbachev's initiatives, combined with shifts in policy by regional states, were evident in the latter part of the 1980s in at least four domains: the Iran–Iraq war ended in August 1988; in November of the same year, the PLO declared itself willing to recognise Israel; in February 1989 the last Soviet forces left Afghanistan; in May 1990 the two Yemens, a pro-western North and a pro-Soviet South, merged to form a single state, with a transitional period that ended in 1994. It can indeed be argued that the Cold War had ended earlier in the Middle East, earlier indeed than in any other region of the world; for if by 'Cold War' is understood the domination of inter-state relations by US–Soviet rivalry, then this ceased to be the *dominant* line of division in 1980, with the outbreak of the Iran–Iraq war. Cautiously from 1980, and more overtly as Iran appeared to gain the initiative in the war from 1982, both east

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[4] At one point in the early stage of their relationship a Libyan paper ran a banner headline in large red letters – *rusia, daula isti' maria*, 'Russia, Imperialist Country'.

[5] On the general background and on the relation of domestic change to external context see Barnett Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, New Haven; Yale University Press, 1995; on diplomacy following the Soviet intervention, see Diego Cordovez and Seli Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: the Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995; Fred Halliday, *Rethinking International Relations*, London: Macmillan, 1994.

[6] See Fred Halliday, *Two Hours that Shook the World*, London: Saqi, 2001.

and west supported Iraq against Iran. This was made all the easier by the USSR's abandonment of its hitherto active internationalist policy in the region, a reflection at once of exhaustion at popular level, calculation of advantage vis-à-vis the west by the leadership as a whole, and Gorbachev's own evident disinterest in the third world and its problems. By the time of the dissolution of the USSR in December 1991 the Middle East had already, therefore, to a quite considerable degree, been freed from the intersection of strategic rivalry with local conflict. The region had come to be overtly dominated by that autonomous inter-state rivalry that had always partly shaped and underlain the Cold War.[7]

Iran

Against this schematic outline of the Cold War in the Middle East, it is possible to look in more detail at the way specific states were affected by the conflict. The Middle Eastern states where the Cold War first took effect were Iran and Turkey. Of all the countries in the Middle East, Iran was the one most affected by World War II: the occupation by Soviet and British forces that lasted from 1941 to 1945 unleashed strong political and social forces within the country. Iran, not Europe, then became, in effect, the place where the first chapter of the Cold War was written. While British forces withdrew from the country at the end of the war, British influence remained strong, in the politics of Tehran and the oil fields of the south. The USSR did not immediately withdraw its forces from the north and made demands for rights to oil exploration in the north comparable to those of the British in the south. At the same time it encouraged regional allies in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan to set up autonomous – not, as is frequently claimed, independent – republics. The Azerbaijan issue led to a major diplomatic confrontation in March 1946 between the USSR, on the one hand, and the Iranians and their western allies, on the other. A combination of western pressure and skilful Iranian diplomacy led, in the end, to a Soviet withdrawal in May; the autonomous republics were overrun by the Shah's forces in December 1946. Subsequently, an agreement on oil originally offered by the Iranians to the Soviet Union was revoked.[8]

   Yet while Iran was now officially in the pro-American camp, its unstable domestic politics threatened to undermine the Shah's commitment to the

[7] Robert O. Freedman, *Soviet Policy toward Israel under Gorbachev*, New York: Praeger, 1999.

[8] Louise Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War: the Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992; Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982, *passim*, esp. chapter 8.

west. The Shah's position was challenged both by the nationalist forces of the National Front, led by Mohammad Mosadeq, and by the pro-Soviet Tudeh (literally 'masses') party, communist in effect if not name, founded in 1941, which organised the first, and to date, only modern popular party seen in Iranian history. In 1951 Mosadeq became prime minister and proceeded to nationalise the British-owned oil fields of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, the precursor of BP. While the Tudeh initially failed to support Mosadeq, seeing him as a US servant (*noukar-i amrika*) being used against the British, western states came increasingly to see the prime minister as a threat to their interests, in both economic (oil) and strategic (Cold War) terms. An international boycott of Iran's oil produced widespread hardship in the country. A failure by Iran to reach a compromise with the oil company and the British, and a shift in Washington from Democratic to Republican presidents in January 1953, led to a hardening of western attitudes: in August 1953, British and US secret agents, with a range of Iranian collaborators, staged a coup in Tehran which ousted Mosadeq and installed the Shah as undisputed ruler.[9] The coup date, 19 August 1953, in the Persian calendar 28 Mordad, acquired iconic status in Iranian political discourse. For the Shah it became a date to celebrate as a national holiday; for his opponents it was a day of betrayal.

August 1953 was a decisive moment in Iranian politics and in Iran's relation to the Cold War. It settled for a generation the instability that had begun with the invasion of 1941. The opposition bloc of nationalist and communist forces was destroyed, and power came increasingly to be held by the Shah. In 1953 a strategic and internal security relationship was consolidated between Iran and the USA that was to last until the revolution of 1979. The coup also led to a reorganisation of Iran's oil industry, with US firms now acquiring a 40 per cent share of total output, in a new consortium (technically the nationalisation of 1951 was not reversed). For close on a decade Iran remained very much a military dictatorship aligned with the west against the USSR; but from the early l960s onwards this began to change.

[9] On the western role in the 1953 coup see Mark Gasiorowksi, *US Foreign Policy and the Shah: Building a Client State in Iran*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991; James Goode, *The United States and Iran: In the Shadow of Musaddiq*, London: Macmillan, 1997; Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men: an American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley, 2003. On US–Iranian relations in general, see James Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: the Tragedy of American–Iranian Relations*, London: Yale University Press, 1988, and Barry Rubin, *Paved with Good Intentions: Iran and the American Experience*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980. But one note of caution: focus on external 'hands', without due regard to internal forces and political misjudgement by those ousted, can be misleading, cf. also Chile 1973. Mosadeq mismanaged his own following and missed opportunities to obtain a reasonable compromise settlement on oil.

First, in parallel with the removal of American missiles from Turkey in 1963, there was an improvement in Iran's relations with the USSR: as was to be the case with Turkey, the USSR became a significant trading and investment partner. Moscow desired stability on its southern frontier, and this is what the Shah, like King Zahir Shah of Afghanistan, offered. For its part, Iran became more preoccupied by the challenge not from the north but from the west and the south. To the west the Iraqi revolution of 1958, in which the Hashemite monarchy was overthrown, alarmed the Shah, as did, on the eastern front, the fall of the monarchy in Afghanistan in 1973. The British withdrawal from the Gulf, begun in Kuwait in 1961 and effected in the other smaller lower Gulf states a decade later, led the Shah to project Iran as the new dominant power in that region. Social upheaval to west and east, therefore, as much as the strategic manoeu-vring of the Cold War, altered Iran's international perspective. By the 1970s Iran's strategic orientation was southwards, not to the north. In the l970s, in line with this vision, the Shah took a number of military initiatives: from 1969 to 1975 Iran fought a low-level but persistent border war with Iraq, in effect the first 'Gulf war'. This war was only ended with the Algiers Agreement of 1975 in which the land and water frontiers of the two states were settled, and a pledge of mutual non-interference pro-vided. This confrontation presaged interventionist action elsewhere. In 1971, on the eve of the British withdrawal, Iranian forces occupied three Arab islands, Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs, belong-ing to the United Arab Emirates. In 1973 Iran sent several thousand counter-insurgency troops to the southern Omani province of Dhofar to fight revolutionary guerrillas active there. To the south-east it pro-vided support to counter-insurgency campaigns by Pakistan against rebels in Baluchistan.

The policies of the Iranian state were, however, vulnerable, not to defeat abroad but to a growing strain in state–society relations within. At the same time as the above-mentioned shifts occurred in Iran's exter-nal relations, there was set in train another internal process, one also shaped by exogenous processes, that was to have dramatic international consequences. Iran was, historically, a country little affected by the world economy. It had endured military occupation in world wars, but not colo-nialism. This transformation, and its explosive consequences, were to come later than elsewhere, via the impact on Iranian society of a state increasingly endowed with oil revenues. In the early l960s the regime, concerned about social unrest in the absence of reform, and encouraged by the USA which feared Soviet exploitation of unrest in Cold War com-petition, as it did in America, began to undertake pre-emptive reform – what came to be termed 'the White Revolution'. This comprised a set

of reforms including state-led industrialisation, land reform, a literacy
programme and the promotion of women's place in public life. This set
of modernising changes from above served to strengthen the power of
the state, but was made possible, first gradually and then dramatically, by
the rise in Iran's oil revenues in the l960s and l970s. Opposition to these
reforms came primarily not from the opponents of the l940s and l950s,
secular forces who shared the Shah's vision of modernisation while doubt-
ing his intentions and effectiveness, but from clerical forces to whom the
Shah was a threat, both as powerful monarch and as ally of the USA. Here,
as discussed in chapter 3, the impact of secularisation, initiated in the
1920s as an instrument of state transformation of society, was to become
more intense, and fateful. An uprising in June 1963 brought to the fore
a hitherto unknown and politically quiescent clergyman, Imam Ruhallah
Khomeini. In October 1964, following his objections to an agreement
concerning the legal status of American servicemen in Iran, he was sent
into exile, first in Turkey and then in Iraq.[10]

The Iranian state, impelled by external strategic and financial pro-
cesses alike, had thereby set the context for its own overthrow. A decade
and a half later the twin conditions of internal revolt established in
the early l960s were to combine in the Islamic revolution. The very
changes brought about by the Shah's modernisation programmes, and
the tensions they generated, laid the social basis for a mass movement of
opposition. It was the political vacuum created by the suppression of
the left-wing and nationalist movements, and the uprising of June 1963,
which made Ayatollah Khomeini the leader of this movement. Opposi-
tion began to emerge into the open in early 1978. The regime retaliated.
The result in the latter part of 1978 was a growing opposition mobilisa-
tion on the streets. This brought out millions of people in demands for
a republic and for independence, and led to the departure of the Shah
on 15 January 1979. Two weeks later, on 1 February 1979, Khomeini
returned from exile and, in March, proclaimed the Islamic Republic of
Iran. The very processes set in train to lock Iran into the Cold War
alliance system, and to secure the Iranian state, had therefore gener-
ated revolt. The increasingly autonomous *foreign policy* role of Iran with
regard to the Cold War was undermined by the explosive impact of that
strategic rivalry on Iran's *internal* social and political order.[11] Signifi-
cantly, and a fact never adequately explained, the 400,000 strong armed

[10] Baqer Moin, *Khomeini, Life of the Ayatollah*, London: I. B. Tauris, 1999; Nikki Keddie,
Roots of Revolution: an Interpretive History of Modern Iran, New Haven: Yale University
Press, 1981.
[11] Hossein Bashiriyeh, *The State and Revolution in Iran 1962–1982*, London: Croom Helm,
1984; Shaul Bakhash, *The Reign of the Ayatollahs*, London: I. B. Tauris, 1985.

forces failed to contest the revolution and, in a space of a few weeks, fell apart.

The evolution of Iranian foreign, and domestic, politics in the Cold War period exemplifies the manifold ways in which the global conflict of the Cold War, combined with the impact of the world economy, *did* shape events within particular countries, but also illustrates the limits on this process. The course of events in Iran from 1945 to 1953 was decisively influenced by the onset of Cold War, by the policies of Britain, the USA and the USSR. It was, however, shaped by the ways in which internal Iranian forces, pro-Soviet, pro-western and neutral, sought to manoeuvre in this context. The coup of 1953 had not one, but several, preconditions: an offensive strategy by Washington and London on the one hand, but also a passive abstention by the USSR *and* a divided, ineffective, pro-Mosadeq coalition within. The consolidation of 1953–63 followed Cold War pressures. Yet, after that, the course of events began to be more autonomous of global confrontation: on the one hand, the Iranian state itself came to play a more independent role, vis-à-vis the USSR and the Persian Gulf, whilst within the country the very changes brought about in part to prevent a revolutionary upheaval were themselves, combined with the injection of large oil revenues, to lay the basis for the revolutionary challenge from Khomeini and his supporters. Sharpening state–society relations, and the contradictory impact on these relations of the international context, thereby produced the explosion.

The outcome of this escalatory process was the revolution of 1979; here Khomeini, playing on Iranian nationalism as on Islamic hostility to Soviet and western influence alike, took up the policy of Mosadeq, 'negative balance', *mizan-i manfi*, and propounded the slogan 'Neither East nor West', *na gharb, na sharq*.[12] While both the USSR and the USA *feared* that the Islamic Republic would align with the other, Iran in fact continued to pursue an independent path, denouncing the 'Great Satan', *sheitun-i bozorg*, America, and the 'Little Satan', s*heitun-i kuchik*, the USSR, and encouraging revolt by Muslims against both sides. By the end of 1979 Iran was in conflict with *both* Satans, enraging the USA by its detention of diplomats in Tehran and antagonising the USSR by opposing its intervention in Afghanistan. Soviet commentators long continued to hope that the Iranian revolution would align with the anti-western bloc, that 'the mullahs will come to their senses'.[13] This was not to be.[14]

[12] Nikki Keddie and Mark Gasiorowski, eds., *Neither East nor West: Iran, the Soviet Union, and the United States*, London: Yale University Press, 1990.
[13] For background see Aryeh Yodfat, *The Soviet Union and Revolutionary Iran*, London: Croom Helm, 1984.
[14] R. K. Ramazani, *Revolutionary Iran: Challenge and Response in the Middle East*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988. Years later, in a quite candid discussion with

The most dramatic challenge to the Islamic revolutionary regime came, however, not from either Satan, Great or Small, but from Iraq which in September 1980 launched an all-out invasion; this was to lead to eight years of war. Yet this war, by far the greatest and most costly conflict seen in the Middle East in modern times, and one of the longest inter-state wars of the twentieth century,[15] fitted into no easy Cold War pattern. Nor indeed did Iran's overall foreign policy during the l980s as a whole conform to the global pattern: Iran continued to oppose western influence in Saudi Arabia and in the Arab world at large, yet it also opposed the Soviet forces in Afghanistan as it called for greater freedom for Muslim citizens of the USSR. In 1989, as the crisis in the USSR developed, Khomeini in a symbolic repudiation sent a message to Soviet leader Gorbachev encouraging him to embrace Islam. This was not to occur, but, as the USSR collapsed, the end of the Cold War revealed a large new strategic panorama, replete with opportunities and perils for Iran, in the former Transcaucasian and Central Asian republics.

Turkey

The other Middle Eastern country most immediately affected by the onset of the Cold War was Turkey. Atatürk's death in 1938 had been followed by a cautious shift of Turkey's international alignment away from neutrality and towards an alliance with the west. This reflected two calculations by Turkey's leaders: on the one hand, they wanted to develop alliances with the Allies that would be economically advantageous; on the other, they anticipated that Turkey's historic rival, Russia, would emerge from World War II in more powerful and threatening mood, demanding from Turkey the kinds of strategic and other concessions it was imposing in eastern Europe. This latter anxiety was to prove accurate: in 1945 the USSR proposed revisions of the territorial agreement concerning the eastern frontier, and a revision of the 1936 Treaty of Montreux governing the passage of shipping through the Dardanelles, the straits linking the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. It was also reported by the Turks

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the author about twenty years of radical diplomacy and rhetorical self-delusion, a senior Iranian official was to list the three great mistakes of the post-1979 period: the detention of the US hostages, 1979–81; the pursuance of the war with Iraq after July 1982, when a favourable deal was in the offing; and the failure to bail out the Kabul regime. For comparative context, of rhetorical excess by revolutionary states, see Fred Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics*, London: Macmillan, 1999.

[15] This war began in September 1980 and ended in August 1988. The Sino-Japanese war lasted from July 1937 to August 1945, two months longer.

that the USSR was demanding a base on the straits.[16] In response to this confrontation with Russia, Turkey appealed to the west for help and in 1947 the country was included in the new US policy for the region, the Truman Doctrine. In 1950 Ankara despatched forces to fight with the UN in the Korean war. In 1952, remote as it was from the North Atlantic, Turkey became a member of NATO. Fourteen years after the death of Atatürk, the country's international alignment had, therefore, radically altered. This external shift was, however, both facilitated and challenged by the process of political *and* social change within Turkey. After initial control by the Kemalist state, the Turkish economy and society began to allow greater room for a private sector, Thus, in a manner contrasted to that of Iran, it was the change of society in reaction to Atatürk's statism that was to bring the country *closer* to the west. Yet over the ensuing decades the opposition to this realignment with the west, from Islamist right and very secular left, was to pose major problems to the Turkish state.

This realignment of the country's international position did not resolve many of the issues it faced in the subsequent decades of the Cold War. First of all, although Turkey maintained membership of NATO and sought to associate itself with the rising tide of European integration, its own internal politics were markedly different from those of most other members of the alliance. In 1950 a relatively free election brought to power the opposition Democratic Party (DP). This represented those social and political forces who resisted the Kemalist state and its official party, the Republican People's Party (RPP), and who had been able to gain ground during the relative liberalisation of the 1940s. In 1960, however, the army overthrew the DP, executed its leader, Adnan Menderes, and reimposed the RPP. When a successor to the DP, the Justice Party, was elected, it too was ousted in 1971; a further coup occurred in 1980, against a background of economic crisis and violent opposition from right and left. In 1984 the Turkish state was challenged from another quarter, that of a guerrilla uprising in the Kurdish regions led by the PKK, Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan, or Kurdish Workers' Party. The PKK, arising out of the radical student milieu of the 1970s, espoused a 'Marxist-Leninist' ideology and sought to establish a separate Kurdish state.

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[16] This is widely asserted in the secondary literature, but the only source cited is the then Turkish ambassador in Moscow, Selim Sarper; to my knowledge, there was no public statement to this effect at the time by the USSR nor any other documentary confirmation. See William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774–2000*, London: Frank Cass, 2000, pp. 111–12.

This domestic turbulence was only indirectly related to the Cold War. Turkey had a significant communist tradition, but was not a country, as were Iran and some Arab states, in which an organised pro-Soviet mass movement had existed. But the political instability in the country, combined with continued human rights abuses, was to lead, from the 1970s onwards, to considerable criticism in western Europe. This inhibited that full integration of Turkey with the west to which the Kemalist leadership had from the 1940s onwards aspired. The west had in the main remained silent about human rights abuses during the early phase of the Cold War, but as the subject came to occupy a more prominent place in western criticism of the USSR, so the same criteria were, intermittently, put to critical use against members of the NATO alliance itself. The Cold War, therefore, had a contradictory impact on Turkey and on state–society relations: it both led it into a closer alignment with the USA and other western states and created a context in which external criticism of its domestic policies became more insistent.

The tensions generated by these state–society conflicts were compounded by the conflicts between Turkey's global, pro-western policies and its policy on regional conflict. The second major difficulty in the country's Cold War alignment therefore revolved around the relationship with Greece. Initially both faced a common challenge in the USSR: while the challenge to Turkey was territorial, on the east, to Greece it was internal, in the form of the civil war between monarchist and communist forces that raged from 1945 to 1949. Relations between Turkey and Greece had, however, been bitter in the past: Greek nationalism was partly defined in terms of the early nineteenth-century revolt against Ottoman rule, and in the early decades of the twentieth century there had been wars and hostility between the two states, ended by an agreement between Atatürk and Greek leader Venizelos in 1930.

The issue that reactivated conflict was the island of Cyprus off the southern Turkish coast, occupied by the British since 1878. In 1960 its population totalled half a million, of whom 80 per cent were Greek, 20 per cent Turkish. A rising Greek Cypriot nationalism was dominated by a demand for union, or *enosis*, with Greece, something Turkey resisted, countering with a call for partition. Tripartite negotiations between Turkey, Greece and Britain produced an agreement in 1960 for the independence of Cyprus and guarantees for both communities, but also for the right of external intervention in the event of a community being threatened. This was not long in coming. In 1963 worsening relations between the two communities produced the first, limited, Turkish intervention. In 1974, however, following a coup in Nicosia by Greek Cypriot forces

backed by the then right-wing junta in Athens, Turkey staged a full-scale invasion: up to 40 per cent of the island was occupied, and all Greeks expelled from the Turkish sector, with Turks fleeing the Greeks.[17]

Greece and Turkey never went to war over Cyprus: restraint based on rational calculations of self-interest, and external, especially US, diplomatic pressure, ensured that this did not occur. But the Cyprus issue, beyond the human suffering it caused, led to a degree of tension in Turkey's relations with the west. The first phase of this came in 1964 when US President Johnson wrote to the Turks warning them against using in Cyprus military equipment they had received through NATO. In 1974 a more dramatic break occurred as the USA cut all military assistance to Turkey and the Turks closed US access to the numerous air bases that country had in Turkey. Only in 1978 was a new understanding between the two countries reached. Later developments were, however, to reconfirm Turkey's importance: the Iranian revolution of 1979 underlined Turkey's strategic utility to the USA; the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait strengthened this further. The dissolution of the USSR in 1991 was to make Turkey a significant actor in the new Turkic republics, and in the geopolitics of Caspian oil and gas. In the flux of post-communist Transcaucasia and the Black Sea, and amidst the upheaval of West Asia, Ankara was Washington's indispensable ally, less truculent than Saudi Arabia, more useful, far more so, than Israel.

The difficulties Turkey encountered during the 1970s and 1980s with the USA, and with growing human rights concerns in western Europe, were accompanied by modifications in Ankara's relations with both the USSR and the Arab world. After the confrontations of 1945–7 the USSR came to accept the status quo with Turkey. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev even apologised for Moscow's mishandling of relations with Ankara after World War II. As relations with the USA worsened, Soviet diplomacy concentrated on first stabilising relations with Turkey and then seeking to win it away from NATO; to the irritation of its allies in the third world, and especially to that of the largest pro-Soviet communist party in Europe, the Cypriot AKEL, the USSR backed Turkey's, not Greece's, position on Cyprus. When the breach between Turkey and the USA came in 1974, there was speculation in Moscow that this could form the basis for Turkey leaving NATO altogether. Throughout the Cold War and as part of the attempt to encourage 'national

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[17] The author, then on holiday on the island, witnessed the course of events, from the fascist coup on Monday to the Turkish parachute drop over Nicosia on Saturday morning. Years later I attended a lecture by Turkish premier Bulent Ecevit in London. My question began: 'Mr Ecevit. You once interrupted my breakfast . . .'

democratic' forces in Turkey, Moscow also developed economic rela-
tions with the country. Although a member of NATO, Turkey was,
paradoxically, the largest recipient of Soviet economic aid in the non-
communist world.

In the end, these Soviet enticements came to nothing. The generals
were no more susceptible to Moscow's charm than were the mullahs
in Qom. Yet Turkey's relation to NATO was never put to the ultimate
test; it was sometimes said, quietly, in western circles that, in the event
of an imminent third world war confrontation between NATO and the
USSR, Turkey would have left the alliance the day before hostilities broke
out. Here, in contrast to Iran, strategic defection was anticipated. Yet in
the end, the reverse happened: Turkish state–society tensions, and its
conflictual regional policies, did *not* destroy the pro-western alignment
that had been established in the aftermath of World War II.

The Arab–Israeli dispute

If after 1945 Iran and Turkey became early allies of the west, only to
achieve a relative stabilisation of their relations with the USSR from the
1960s onwards, the opposite was in many ways to be the case further
south, in the Arab world and Israel. In these countries the first decade
after the end of World War II was dominated by two trends: on the one
hand, decolonisation, as Britain and France withdraw from the positions
they had acquired after 1918, even as they sought to preserve forms of
influence and military presence; on the other hand, increasing involve-
ment in the Cold War as the Arab world, the Jewish community in
Palestine, and then, from 1948, the state of Israel involved the great
powers in the escalating conflict over Palestine.

The French were quick to cede independence to Syria and Lebanon as
they had promised during World War II, but took far longer before they
agreed to leave their colonies to the west – Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria.
If the British were to remain for another three decades in parts of the
Arabian Peninsula, they withdrew after World War II, as we have seen,
from their former Arab colonies elsewhere in the Middle East: Egypt,
Iraq (these two formally independent already) and Sudan (granted inde-
pendence in 1956). In the first two they sought, to the anger of local
nationalists, to preserve military and strategic assets, while the indepen-
dence of the third was marked by a growing conflict over Egyptian claims
to the lands and waters of Sudan, to the south. The most controversial
of all withdrawals, however, was that from Palestine: the British tried
initially to continue the balancing act of the pre-war years, but this now
proved impossible. Zionist forces emerged stronger from World War II

and enjoyed much greater sympathy; they were now more determined than ever on an independent, internationally recognised, Jewish state. The Arab world, including most of the Palestinian leadership, refused to accept it. In 1947 the British decided to pull out without a resolution, and in 1948, following a UN resolution on partition into two states, war broke out between Arab and Jewish forces. The local Palestinians were joined by forces from Egypt, Jordan and Syria. In the end the Jewish forces prevailed and Palestine was partitioned, not between Jews and Palestinians, but between a new Israeli state, proclaimed by Ben-Gurion in the municipal museum in Tel Aviv on 14 May 1948, and the forces of Hashemite Jordan who occupied much of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.[18]

The events of 1947–9 in Palestine were to dominate much of the international relations of the Middle East for the next half a century at least: for much of the outside world the 'Middle East' conflict was mistakenly seen as identical to the Arab–Israeli one. It was not possible to write the history of the rise of Arab nationalism across the region, or chart the course of Arab politics in the 1950s and 1960s, without recognising the catalytic role of the Palestine question. Yet in two important respects the dominant perception of the Arab–Israeli dispute was deceptive. First, the conflict of the late l940s was only indirectly related to the Cold War – in 1948 the USSR supported the establishment of Israel and armed it. It was only in subsequent decades that the lines of division in the Arab–Israeli conflict came to fall along Cold War lines. The close relationship between Washington and Israel was formed during the Johnson administration, after 1963. Secondly, while the Palestine issue sent shock waves through the Arab world for decades, and did much to promote a more radical Arab nationalism and sense of Arab identity, the Arab–Israeli conflict itself was only of limited relevance in explaining the broader course of events within Arab states, or the development of relations between them. The Palestine question was central to, but far from being the sole determinant of, the broader pattern of Middle East politics in the decades that ensued.

The immediate results of the first Arab–Israeli war were felt in the states bordering Palestine itself. In Syria a constitutional parliamentary

[18] Amidst an ocean of sources for general background see Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin, eds., *The Israeli–Arab Reader: a Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995; Kirsten Schulze, *The Arab–Israeli Conflict*, London: Longman, 1999; Ahron Bregman and Jihan al-Tahri, *The Fifty Years War: Israel and the Arabs*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998; Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*, London: I. B. Tauris, 1999. The literature on the Arab–Israeli question in English alone is, perhaps, second in volume only to that on the 'Irish question'.

system installed by the French was abolished in 1949, setting a pattern of military rule in Syria that was to outlast the Cold War. In Egypt, World War II had created a political climate similar in some ways to that in Iran, with movements of a secular or religious kind challenging the monarch and western influence. In this country, however, the monarchy proved unable to contain the tide of popular anger that followed the defeat by Israel. The British presence in Egypt was another destabilising factor: it was even more overtly provocative than in Iran, taking the form of control of a zone along the Suez Canal and ownership, along with France, of the Suez Canal itself. Amidst rising social and nationalist upheaval and intermittent *fedayin* raids against British positions, the Egyptian army seized power on 23 July 1952, exiled the king, and proclaimed a republic. It was the first time in more than two millennia, since the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great in 333 BC, that the country had been governed by Egyptian rulers.[19] The sons of *pashas* and *effendis* had been replaced by the sons of the *bilad* (countryside). In Nasser's case this went against him as his elite critics derided him as *ibn al-bustagi*, 'the son of the postman', a derision matched later in Iraq when the first republican president, Abdal-Karim Qasim, was mocked as the 'son of a railway worker'.

The revolution of 1952 was to unleash a process of radicalisation that profoundly affected Egypt as well as the Arab world. It brought the Cold War to the Arab world, or, perhaps more accurately, allowed the Cold War to come to the Arab world, aligning Arab states with one or other bloc in the Cold War itself, and dividing Arab states themselves along Cold War lines. It also provided a new ideological context for the rising tide of popular, if also conspiratorial, pressure (from *within* the state and from outside) on states. At first, the Egyptian revolution appeared *not* to fit the prevailing international divisions: the USA sought to advise and assist the Free Officers, to the point of providing former Nazi missile specialists for the Egyptian rocket programme, while the USSR saw the Egyptian revolutionaries, as they saw Mosadeq, as untrustworthy bourgeois nationalists.[20] Local Egyptian communists at first also saw Nasser as another fascist military ruler, his agrarian policy not a land 'reform' but a land 'distortion'. Yet by 1955 this had begun to change: as conflict

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[19] For general background see John Waterbury, *The Egypt of Nasser and Sadat: the Political Economy of Two Regimes*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983; P. J. Vatikiotis, *Nasser and his Generation*, London: Croom Helm, 1978.

[20] On covert US support for Nasser in his early years see Miles Copeland, *The Game of Nations: the Amorality of Power Politics*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969. Among other revelations was that the 'Cairo Tower', *burj al-qahira*, across the Nile from the Hilton, was built to use up some spare CIA cash.

between the Egyptians and the British was apparently resolved, by the final British withdrawal from the Canal Zone in 1954, new developments were exacerbating the relationship of Egypt to the west. Western support for a regional military alliance established in the Middle East in 1955, the Middle East Defence Organisation (MEDO), later the Baghdad Pact, was seen by many Arabs, and especially Egypt, as another form of colonialist intervention. At the same time relations between Egypt and Israel deteriorated, as a result both of guerrilla attacks on Israel backed by Egypt and Syria and of Israeli retaliation. In 1955 the Egyptians, seeking support in this confrontation, acquired arms from a Soviet ally, Czechoslovakia, while Israel itself had, from the early l950s, enjoyed worsening relations with the USSR.

In 1956 matters came to a head: Egypt, whose military government was now under the leadership of Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, was not only challenging the new Baghdad Pact, but sought to acquire ownership of the Suez Canal, both as a symbol of national independence and as a source of revenue to finance its development programmes. Cairo also appealed to the west, particularly the USA, for assistance in building a new dam in Upper Egypt, at Aswan, to manage the floodwaters of the Nile. US refusal to finance the dam (to be precise, withdrawal of an earlier offer), coupled with the nationalisation of the Suez Canal, led to an international crisis: the USSR backed Egypt while the British and French, outraged at the Canal's nationalisation, sought to isolate Nasser.[21]

It was on 23 July that Nasser announced he had nationalised the Suez Canal. At this point global and regional politics became intertwined, but not along Cold War lines. Israel, led by the hawkish David Ben-Gurion, entered into secret negotiations with Britain and France to plan a secret attack on Egypt: Israel would launch the first assault, and the British and French, under the pretext of 'separating the combatants', would then occupy the Canal. The plan duly went ahead: Israel attacked on 29 October 1956; on 31 October the British and French intervened. The conspirators had, however, reckoned without the great powers, indeed without the Cold War – their 'autonomous' neo-colonial fantasies, agency of a kind, collided with the structures of world politics. The USSR threatened to retaliate against London and Paris, whilst the USA, deeply hostile to Nasser but alarmed at the Anglo-French reassertion of colonial power, called for a withdrawal. Within weeks the invading forces had withdrawn and the USA, through the Eisenhower Doctrine, sought to

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[21] For one excellent account of Soviet policy see Karen Dawisha, *Soviet Foreign Policy towards Egypt*, London: Macmillan, 1979.

rally Arab opinion. The shape of Middle Eastern politics had, however, been altered irrevocably by the Suez crisis: the Arab–Israeli dispute had been integrated into the Cold War; the radical Arab states, and much of Arab opinion, enraged by Palestine, Suez and the war for independence that had broken out in Algeria in November 1954, came to sympathise with the Soviet Union.

The Suez crisis, therefore, finally brought the Cold War to the Arab Middle East: it set a pattern in the international relations of the Arab world that was to last for the following two decades. The crisis transformed Egypt and the reputation of its leader, Nasser. He became the undisputed figure head of Arab nationalism. An inter-state crisis thereby intersected with an unfolding of popular sentiment and of social movements in parts of the Arab world. Borne along by a tide of opinion in his own country and in the Arab world, Nasser pursued a programme of radical reform at home, constructing an 'Arab socialism' that sought to end centuries of colonial domination. Land reform, nationalisation of industry, mobilisation of the population into state-run political structures all followed. In ideology, Nasser was careful to distinguish himself from Soviet communism on two grounds: he rejected the latter's atheism and its belief in what he termed 'class strife'. Arab socialism was, he stated, based on Islam and the socialism he interpreted from *shrk*, the root of the Arabic word *ishtirakia*, as 'sharing' between different social groups. He saw Egypt as spearheading an Arab drive for unity, overcoming the divisions created by colonialism, and as leading an Arab, and broader, third world drive for independence from the west and colonialism, in both its formal and informal variants. At the same time, Nasser challenged traditional Arab rulers and, not least, proclaimed Egypt as the vanguard of the struggle to liberate Palestine.[22]

The period between the second and third Arab–Israeli wars, the Suez war of 1956 and the Six Day war of 1967, marked at once the high point of the global Cold War in the region and the heyday of Arab radical nationalism, as ideology and movement. The proclamation of Arab socialism in Egypt in 1961 was accompanied by radical developments elsewhere: in 1958 the monarchy in Iraq was overthrown by a military coup and popular revolt; in the same year Egypt and Syria came together to form a United Arab Republic; after 1956 the monarchy in Jordan seemed to be 'shaking' – or 'tottering', *motamalmil*, a favourite radical word of the time, only a shade short of their other term of dismissal 'they are dispersed'.

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[22] Adeed Dawisha, *Egypt in the Arab World: the Elements of Foreign Policy*, New York: Wiley, 1976; Raymond Hinnebusch, 'The Foreign Policy of Egypt', in Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, eds., *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002.

In 1962 Algeria finally won independence from France; and in September 1962 the Imamate in Yemen was in its turn ousted by a radical pro-Egyptian coup. At the same time Egypt sought to exert greater influence beyond the regional level: while in 1955 Nasser had identified with third world radicalism at the Afro-Asian Solidarity summit in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1961 he formed, with India and Yugoslavia, the core of a new Non-Aligned Movement that included Latin America as well.[23] These were not, however, mere results of a superimposed global conflict. Here it was social and political forces *within* the region, and social upheaval, not least in Egypt itself, *not* global conflict, that drove the Cold War forward.

Yet this tide of radicalism soon encountered major limits, from society within and the state system without. First, inside the Arab world itself, Egypt's drive for unity met opposition from states and distinct national sentiment: attempts in 1963 to form a new union, this time with Syria and Iraq, foundered in acrimony.[24] The revolution in Yemen led to a debilitating civil war in which royalist forces, backed by Saudi Arabia and Britain among others, challenged the new republic; meanwhile conservative states, notably Saudi Arabia, but also Iran and Morocco, began to organise against Egypt and its allies.[25] Within Egypt itself the dynamic of the socialist period soon began to ebb: the economy, now dominated by the state sector, proved corrupt and inefficient; the land reform benefited only a small number of already reasonably well-off peasants, leaving a mass of landless labourers. It did not take long, in these eventful years, for the dream of Arab liberation to fade. In 1961 the Syrians seceded from the United Arab Republic. A counter-revolutionary war that was to engulf the region, carrying away the soldiers of Yemen and ultimately overwhelming the beleaguered secularists of Kabul, had been set in motion. In 1965, as peasants in the Egyptian town of Khamshish staged the first popular revolt against the bureaucrats of Arab socialism, conservative opinion regrouped at the regional level, with the Saudis founding the Islamic World League (*Rabita al-Alim al-Islamiya*) with like-minded monarchs.

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[23] Many commentators have subsequently confused the 1955 and 1961 conferences, wrongly using of Bandung the term 'Non-Aligned', a term that came into general use only in the 1960s. The Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation, at Bandung, very much an Afro-Asian conference, included China and Israel, states later excluded from the Non-Aligned Movement but not with Latin America. The NAM, while ostensibly directed against western influence, also had a strong anti-Chinese component as well. All three founder members (India, Egypt and Yugoslavia) were in the early 1960s seriously at odds with China.

[24] On this period the classic study is Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965.

[25] Malcom Kerr, *The Arab Cold War*, third edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Arab public opinion in general now began to question the achievements of Nasser, to yearn not so much for modernity, but for *turath*, 'heritage'.

Into this situation of growing domestic unrest and inter-Arab dissension there then exploded a dramatic inter-state confrontation, the third Arab–Israeli war of June 1967: Nasser, overplaying his hand, decided to call for the removal of UN forces stationed on the border with Israel and to close to Israeli shipping the Straits of Tiran at the top of the Red Sea. The Israelis, eager to complete the task that had been thwarted in 1956, launched a surprise attack on the morning of 5 June 1967 and in a matter of hours destroyed the Egyptian air force. Israeli forces then advanced into Sinai and reached the Canal. Meanwhile Syria lost part of its territories along the Golan, whilst Jordan was forced to abandon Jerusalem and the West Bank. Israel was now in a stronger position than ever, and backed by western states and much of western public opinion. The political contours of the Middle East had been redrawn: in particular the Israeli–Arab 1967 boundaries set a pattern that was to last for decades. The Arab world, aligned with the USSR, was now humiliated and on the defensive. In an address to the people of Egypt, Nasser offered to resign as president, but the Egyptian people poured onto the streets and begged him to remain; he was to die three years later, weakened at home and abroad, in September 1970. The Arab world mourned him, but the achievements of the 'eternal leader' were to prove transitory. After his death little of Nasser's legacy at home or internationally was to survive, beyond nostalgia for a period of high hopes, and a rhetoric of unity and liberation that others, of a far more brutal stamp, were to misuse for their own, far more catastrophic, purposes.

Regional turning point: the consequences of 1967

In 1967 Israel apparently gained much of what it wanted, in the region and internationally. In the Middle East, the Arab world was divided and defeated, the Palestinians appeared on the run. In terms of the Cold War, Israel was now more than ever aligned with the west and enjoyed the almost unanimous backing of western public opinion. While the USSR broke off diplomatic relations with Israel when the war began, the USA, and US public opinion, endorsed Israeli action in this war to a degree far greater than in the two earlier Arab–Israeli conflicts. Henceforward American reservations about a strategic alliance with Israel, and about Israel's pursuit of nuclear weapons (initially with French assistance), were reduced; instead Israel came increasingly to be seen as an ally in the Cold War, against Soviet influence. Needless to say, Israel and its friend in Washington made sure the message was driven home. As a consequence,

the fourth Arab–Israeli war, launched by Egypt in October 1973, was interpreted in Washington as part of a Soviet assault on western interests. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 was given at least tacit encouragement from a Reagan administration keen to 'go after' Soviet allies, in this case Syria and the PLO, in the third world.[26]

This strategic adjustment, the aligning of the Arab–Israeli dispute with the Cold War, was compounded by other developments in the l970s and 1980s. One was the issue of Palestinian military action. In an argument that won some favour in Washington, the rise of Palestinian guerrilla resistance after 1967 was presented by Israel as a form of 'international terrorism', itself a product of Soviet hostility to the west. At the same time, in the early 1970s, criticism rose within the USA over the refusal of the USSR to permit the emigration of Soviet Jews. This appeared to cast Moscow not only as an opponent of Israel but as an enemy of Jewish people in general; in 1974 the US Congress passed the Jackson–Vanick Amendment, proposed in the immediate aftermath of the October 1973 war, which made the award by the USA of Most Favoured Nation trading status to the USSR dependent upon increased Jewish emigration. Thirdly, as had occurred in Turkey before 1950 and Egypt in the post-Suez period, domestic change facilitated foreign policy realignment: in this case Israeli society changed. The shift within Israel, from a largely statist economy run by the Labour Party with strict, if not utopian, social controls (jeans were banned in the 1950s) to a more open market-oriented one ruled by Likud, matured in the 1970s along with an increasing influence of religious parties; the Likud victory of 1977, expressing the demise of the socialist bloc around Labour, removed a further obstacle to US alignment with the Jewish state.[27] The trauma of 1967 was evident here too: in Israel too people turned to atavism and religion.

However, this sealing of Israel into the Cold War system after 1967 did not produce stability in the region. The alignment of Israel with the USA and the apparent Cold War support Israel received did not, in the longer run, resolve the political and strategic challenges it faced. The first problem was to its north. From 1975 Lebanon had been beset by civil war, a coalition of Arab nationalist, Muslim and Palestinian forces being aligned against a coalition led by Maronite Christians. In 1976, in order to offset the power of the nationalist-Muslim and Palestinian bloc, Syria had intervened in the conflict, committing one of the greatest single

[26] On the general misrepresentation of Moscow's policy see Fred Halliday, *Soviet Policy in the 'Arc of Crisis'*, Washington, DC: Institute of Policy Studies, 1981.

[27] Among a large literature, see especially Steven Spiegel, *The Other Arab–Israeli Dispute: Making America's Middle East Policy from Truman to Reagan*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

atrocities of post-1945 Middle East history, the slow death through dehydration of thousands of Palestinians at the camp of Tel el-Zaatar. From 1978 onwards Israel too sought to play a role in Lebanon: it aimed to destroy the PLO and establish a friendly state based on the Maronites, goals it did not achieve. The invasion in 1982 failed to destroy its enemies, and it, too, was to perpetrate, through criminal indifference at least, another act of world perfidy, the killings in the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Chatila in 1984. Eighteen years after it invaded, in July 2000, Israel was forced to abandon its presence in Lebanon.

At the same time, its peace with Egypt yielded little in the way of broader normalisation with the Arab world. Most strikingly, the Palestinian issue refused to go away: two decades of guerrilla action outside Israel, and to some extent within, were followed in 1987 by the outbreak of the first *intifadha*, a sustained Palestinian resistance. This took the form of demonstrations, strikes and political protests that could not easily be defeated and placed the question of Palestinian rights firmly back on the international agenda. The limits of state action, through Cold War alignment and military conquest, were evident. As in Vietnam and southern Africa, the masses did *not* 'understand' the language of force. The ebbing of the Cold War in the late 1980s was, therefore, accompanied by an enduring social and political resistance and by growing recognition, among some Israeli and Palestinian leaders, that compromise was necessary. Whether a lasting Israeli–Palestinian compromise was possible, and would command sufficient support on both sides, remained to be seen, not least because of the fecklessness of the international community and the lack of serious engagement by the Arab/Muslim and Jewish worlds alike.

In contrast to Israel's victory in that war, 1967 signalled the end of Nasserism as a model for Egyptian, and Arab, revolution. While a crisis of Nasserism was evident beforehand, in Egypt and in the Arab world, that year marked the beginning of its end as the ideology of Arab unity and of struggle against colonialism and Zionism. Slowly, while Nasser was alive, and more rapidly under his successor Anwar al-Sadat, the Egyptian economy was liberalised and a private sector, backed by capital from Arab states and protected by a still predominant state, began to develop. To a considerable extent Egypt itself withdrew from its drive for Arab unity: its forces left Yemen in 1967,[28] and it made peace with the

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[28] It is almost conventional to state that Egypt's intervention in Yemen was a failure; despite what most Egyptians will say, it was not. The Republic that Egypt sought to defend survived, and a compromise peace that preserved it was signed in 1970. The subsequent state was, with Yemeni characteristics, a variant of the military nationalist structure that Egypt embodied in the ideology of the ruling party, the 'General People's Congress', a replica of milder 'Arab socialism'.

conservative Arab states such as Saudi Arabia and its allies, which, emboldened by the defeat of Arab radicalism, were to become all the more powerful after the fourfold rise of oil prices in 1971–3. Sadat, who was wont to evoke his origins in a village, fell back onto appeals to the 'sons of the Nile', not Nasser's Arab *umma*. Egypt itself was, however, able to restore a degree of honour in the face of Israel when, in October 1973, it launched a surprise attack on that country: the aim was not to destroy the Jewish state but to restore Egypt's political credibility, at home and internationally, and to force the outside world to push for a negotiation with Israel. This strategy came to fruition in 1977–9: Egyptian president Sadat visited Jerusalem in 1977 and in 1979 signed an accord at Camp David in the USA. In this, Egypt recognised Israel in return for a withdrawal of Israeli forces from Sinai. Peace between the two main protagonists, albeit a cold one, was achieved.[29] The settlement Egypt aimed for in the war of 1973 was sustained; although derided by many Arabs at the time, it outlived not only Sadat, who was assassinated in 1981, but also the Cold War itself.

Like their precursors in 1948 and 1956, the Arab–Israeli inter-state conflicts of 1967 and 1973 also intersected with other trends developing *within* the region and in Middle Eastern states themselves. Indeed, beyond its strategic consequences, the war of 1967 had marked a turning point in three other respects. First, in discrediting militant Arab nationalism, it also undermined the prestige within the Arab world of the main backer of that nationalism, the USSR. Once ties began to loosen, Egyptians, never quick to take responsibility for their own disasters, began to talk of the difficulties they had had with the Russians, at the official and personal level.[30] For the Russians this was a shock; it was said that if the Americans suffered from a 'Vietnam Syndrome', the Soviets had an 'Egypt Syndrome', an aversion to third world commitment born of this particular experience. While at first it appeared that Arab nationalists would turn to the even more militant rival of the Soviet Union, China, the main trend was in the opposite direction, towards an accommodation with the west and a rejection of socialism, in all its variants. Sadat himself played this carefully: the president turned against Soviet allies inside Egypt in 1971, what he termed 'the uprising of thieves' (*intifadha al-harami-ya*), and in 1972 he expelled Soviet advisers. However, he needed Soviet weapons for his planned secret assault upon Israel and only in 1976

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[29] William Quandt, *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1986.

[30] For one graphic if partisan account see Mohamed Heikal, *The Sphinx and the Commissar: the Rise and Fall of Soviet Influence in the Middle East*, London: André Deutsch, 1978. For a Soviet retrospective, informed and quizzical, see Alexei Vassiliev, *Russian Policy in the Middle East: From Messianism to Pragmatism*, Reading: Ithaca Press, 1993.

did he complete the break by cancelling the Friendship Treaty between Egypt and the USSR, and by abrogating Soviet naval facilities. Henceforward, in accordance with his own principle that the Americans held '99 per cent of the cards', Sadat pursued his negotiation strategy uniquely through Washington.[31]

Some other Arab regimes retained closer links to the USSR: Syria remained until the end of the Cold War dependent on Soviet military and diplomatic support, the Libyan military regime that came to power in 1969 also developed military links, whilst in southern Arabia the PDRY became Moscow's closest ally in the Arab world, rejecting 'Arab socialism' in favour of its 'scientific' Soviet variety.[32] Iraq pursued a more complex game plan: while Iraqi regimes had, after 1958, developed better relations with Moscow and had clashed with the west, the radical nationalist Ba'thist regime that came to power in 1968 diversified its foreign alignments.[33] It built a close relationship with France, and drew on considerable western, including US and British, support during its war in the l980s with Iran. In this way the two decades that began in 1955, in which the Arab world as a whole was drawn into the Cold War, gave way to a more fragmented, and fluid, regional picture. Even as Soviet influence remained in some Arab states, the impact of the Cold War as a formative global conflict receded. A number of 'Arab socialist' regimes used the Soviet model of ruling party and state-controlled economy to consolidate their rule, but this was in a modified form and reflected an instrumental coincidence, not any ideological affinity. Five-year plans and elaborate grades of party privilege (the latter a particular speciality of the Ba'th) were part of the self-image of elites across the twentieth century.

The second process unleashed by 1967 was the re-emergence of the Palestinians as an autonomous political force. Prior to 1948 Palestinian politics had been dominated by a loose coalition of religious officials and notables; under the Mandate, they had been able to negotiate in some measure with British officials, but showed no ability to offset or deal effectively with the growing strength of the Jewish community.[34] The war of 1947–9 dispersed this leadership as it did the Palestinian community, and in the ensuing years the Arab states ensured that no independent Palestinian leadership emerged. Only in 1964 was an official organisation,

[31] William Qaundt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab–Israeli Conflict since 1967*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

[32] Fred Halliday, *Revolution and Foreign Policy: the Case of South Yemen, 1967–1987*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

[33] Oleg Smolansky, *The USSR and Iraq: the Quest for Influence*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991.

[34] Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: the Construction of Modern National Consciousness*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, established by the Arab League, but very much under the control of Arab states, and in particular Egypt. At that point it was a 'non-state actor' only in name.

However, 1967, gave the Palestinian movement room for manoeuvre: the regular Arab armies were discredited, while political mobilisation grew within the newly occupied West Bank and in the refugee camps of Jordan and Lebanon. The new leader of the PLO, Yasser Arafat, an engineer from a modestly well-off family in Gaza, used his own political organisation al-Fath (a reverse acronym for the Arabic HTaF, *Harakat al-tahrir filastin*, or Palestinian Liberation Movement) to represent an independent Palestine voice. While al-Fath and other groups carried out guerrilla actions in areas under Israeli control, the PLO itself came to challenge established Arab states, first in Jordan, up to 1970 and then, from the early 1970s onwards, in Lebanon. If the Jordanian challenge was defeated, by King Hussein in 1970, that in Lebanon was to be a major factor behind the explosion of a brutal civil war there that began in 1975 and was to last until 1990.[35]

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the Arab states sought to contain and influence the Palestinians. In 1974 at the Fez summit of Arab leaders the PLO was confirmed as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. While much of the third world gave broad verbal support, the western world sought at first to ignore Palestinian national claims: Israeli leaders dismissed the PLO as 'terrorists', a term that, deliberately, confused tactics with political aim, and others, particularly the USA, sought to keep them at arm's length. But over time the very endurance of the Palestinians, and a shift of opinion not only in the west but in Israel itself, led to a change. By the late l980s, the PLO came increasingly to be accepted as an independent and legitimate force. Parallel to its military activities, the PLO pursued a diplomatic strategy that led it in 1988 to proclaim its own willingness to accept an Israeli state side by side with a Palestinian one. The history of this process of growing, if unstable, mutual recognition by Israeli and Palestinian leaders, and by some at least of their own people, was complex and incomplete: many layers of prejudice in their own ranks, and in the broader world, against Palestinians on the one side and Jews on the other, remained. Yet the legacy of the war of 1947–9 – Palestinian refusal to accept a Jewish state, Israeli denial of the Palestinian claim to statehood – was in principle corrected by the Oslo Agreement in 1993; in this the Israeli government and the PLO agreed to work for a final, and just, settlement of the dispute.

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[35] Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for a State: the Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

The realisation, and time-frame, of implementation appeared to remain, however, beyond the grasp of leaders on both sides. Mutual suspicion at the level of negotiation was compounded by continuing and repeatedly inflamed resentment among their peoples, and by the influence of obstructive, and irresponsible, diasporas.

The rise of Islamism was the third underlying social and political process unleashed by the war of 1967. This retreat from secularisation was less immediately evident but was to have long-term consequences for the Arab world, for the Muslim world as a whole and indeed for Israel. Despite the use of some religious rhetoric, Arab socialism was in large measure secular, a local variant of the generic third world populism of the age.[36] Socialism's decline, combined with a broader shift in social attitudes, led over time to a return, by state and social movements alike, to the espousal of a more traditional set of values, associated with religion. This was evident in a country like Egypt where interest in *al-turath* (heritage), and in Islam became stronger across a broad social spectrum. It was evident too in the influence of states, most notably Saudi Arabia, which sought to increase their own influence by promoting 'Islamic' values, and in the rise of opposition movements, sometimes associated with the Muslim Brotherhood. These Islamist radicals saw themselves both as a challenge to the secular state and as a pan-Arab movement. Here the Arab world matched the process seen in Iran. There was no one cause of this shift, but it reflected a general rejection of the secular modernity associated with radical nationalist politics and with the modernising state. Thus a pattern could be discerned wherein the impact of the secular modern state, whatever its particular ideological orientation, was met by a rising Islamist resistance. The latter interpreted religion, tradition and culture in oppositional form.[37]

For Egypt this shift to religion was stimulated by the 1967 war. Elsewhere, in countries as diverse as Iran and Algeria, strong Islamist movements emerged in opposition to the secular state, the first example taking

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[36] Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002. On populism in general, and with much that is uncannily resonant of Middle Eastern cases, see the essay on Latin American variations (Peronism especially) published in 1977, two years before the triumph of the Iranian revolution, by the Argentinean theorist Ernesto Laclau: *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism – Fascism – Populism*, London: NLB, 1977, chapter 4 'Towards a Theory of Populism'. This essay by Laclau, whose analytic themes are paralleled in the classic study by Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1993), sets populism in its *modern* context and in so doing casts more light on the ideology of the Ayatollah, a religious-populist melange, than any excavations of the Quran or *hadith*.

[37] Fred Halliday, *Nation and Religion in the Middle East*, London: Saqi, 2000, chapter 7, 'Fundamentalism and the State: Iran and Tunisia'.

power in 1979, the other from 1989 onwards engaging in sustained violent opposition to the National Liberation Front (FLN). Turkey too was far from immune to this process: those forces opposed to the Kemalist state that had begun to emerge in the 1940s gained ground in the transformed social and economic climate of Turkey in the 1970s and 1980s. Islamists came to office in 1996–7 and again in 2003. This shift in political culture and sentiment, which took different forms in each country, reflected both changes maturing within Middle Eastern states and wider international trends. It was in part a reaction against the kind of state and secular politics that had been generated by the Cold War, in both the pro-western and pro-Soviet blocs, but it was also encouraged by some states as a means of countering left-wing and secular opposition movements.

   The most dramatic instance of this promotion of Islamist groups, very much as part of the Cold War, was the US arming of the Afghan guerrillas fighting the Red Army in Afghanistan after 1978. During the 1970s and 1980s, however, many other countries, not only Saudi Arabia but also Turkey, Egypt and indeed Israel, sought to use Islamist groups to diminish the influence of their opponents, only to find that such groups had outlived their initial patronage and become independent, violent actors. In September 2001 this was to reach its culmination in the attacks on the USA. The power of these Islamist movements was, therefore, not a product of the *end* of the Cold War, but a pervasive, influential legacy of *the Cold War itself*, and the ends to which western states and their regional allies, in a policy of world-historical criminality and folly that was to cast its shadow over the onset of the twenty-first century, incited these fanatics and killers. Starting at 8.40 a.m. US Eastern Standard Time on 11 September 2001, the world was to learn what this meant for the century just begun.[38]

The Middle East and the Cold War: regional and global conflict

As we have seen, World War II did not so obviously shape the Middle East as World War I had done. It nonetheless laid the basis for much of what was to come after 1945 as, largely beyond the region, the Cold War unfolded on a world scale. The interaction was not, however, only one way. The Cold War was itself, repeatedly, influenced by events in the Middle East. The most visible of all dimensions of Cold War rivalry was in the case of the strategic rivalry, nuclear weapons. One Middle East state, Turkey, was a full member of NATO. No nuclear

[38] Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: the Trail of Political Islam*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2002.

weapons were used in the Middle East and, in the main, the great powers abstained from deploying them in the region, in contrast to Europe and East Asia. But the USA did deploy intermediate range Jupiter nuclear missiles, capable of hitting targets in the Soviet Union, in Turkey in 1961.[39] As part of contingency planning for a world crisis, Britain designated Masira, off the Omani coast, as a dispersal site for its nuclear weapons.

Moreover, the crises that erupted in the Middle East had their impact on nuclear policies and east–west relations. The Cold War indeed began in the region: the first major Soviet–US showdown was not over Berlin or Poland, but over the Soviet refusal to leave Iranian Azerbaijan in March 1946. On several occasions thereafter the Cold War rivals went on nuclear alert as a result of developments in the region: the Middle East was the cause of nuclear alert on six out of a total of twenty occasions for nuclear alert by the USA, the last and most important being during the Arab–Israeli war of October 1973. The Middle East was also the occasion for the one, and only, time that the USSR itself threatened the use of nuclear weapons, during the Suez crisis of 1956.[40] Both sides supplied their allies with large quantities of weapons during the Cold War period: indeed throughout these years the Middle East was the largest recipient of arms supplies of any region of the developing world.

The region was not the sole or, compared with Europe or East Asia, the *main* locus of Cold War conflict. Yet both blocs saw the Middle East as, in different ways, vital to their security. The series of global security doctrines enunciated by successive US presidents were, to a considerable extent, prompted by, or at least readily applicable to, the Middle East. The Truman Doctrine (1947) applied, in addition to Greece, to defence of western interests in Turkey and Iran. The Eisenhower Doctrine (1957) was explicitly directed at reassuring US allies in the Arab world in the aftermath of Suez. The Kennedy Doctrine (1961), promoting social reform to pre-empt revolution, was applied to land reform in Iran and Egypt. The Nixon Doctrine (1969) encouraged a greater role by

[39] John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997 pp. 264–5. At the time of writing (2004) it is not yet evident whether the large amount of material thrown up since 1991 from Soviet and, some, western sources about the Cold War in the Middle East has led to any major breakthroughs or revision of established views, compared with what we now know about, say, the Korean war, the Cuban missile crisis, the wars of southern Africa, etc. On the most contentious issues of the time, I would say that 'we', the members of the editorial committee and broader community of MERIP(Middle East Report and Information Project), got it right.

[40] Barry Blechman and Steve Kaplan, *Force without War*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1978, p. 48. These instances of nuclear alert were: Suez 1956, Lebanon 1958, Jordan 1958, Turkey 1963, Jordan 1970, Arab–Israeli war 1973. The 1970 Jordan incident is not included in Blechman and Kaplan.

influential regional powers including Iran and Saudi Arabia. The Carter Doctrine (1980) was designed to protect US interests in the Gulf. The Reagan Doctrine (early 1980s), actively challenging the USSR through anti-communist insurgency, was applied most vigorously in Afghanistan but, by providing a 'green light' to Israel, also encouraged it to attack Soviet allies, the PLO and Syria, in Lebanon in 1982.[41] A further dimension of US policy in the latter part of the Cold War was the fight against 'international terrorism'; this came to be a central feature of US security policy in the 1970s and 1980s and, while not exclusive to the Middle East, was particularly concerned with actions by Palestinians. Until the unexpected entry of Osama bin Laden, the core concern in the terrorism policy was Palestine.

For their part, the Soviets saw the Middle East in both military and political terms. Their pursuit of détente and strategic agreements with the USA was affected by a wish to prevent US deployment of forces in the region, near their frontier: there was a direct link between their deployment of missiles in Cuba in 1962 near the US mainland and their concern at the US deployment of missiles in Turkey. As Khrushchev inimitably put it, 'We shall put a hedgehog in Uncle Sam's pants!' Like the USA the Soviets also sought to justify their support for regional allies, with weapons and political assistance, in terms of broader doctrines. Thus Arab allies were part of a broad 'national democratic' and 'non-capitalist' bloc that was growing in the third world and which, as seen from Moscow, strengthened the camp of those opposed to the west. This strategy of Cold War engagement was to reach its culmination in the 1980s with the participation of *ogranicchonni kontingent*,[42] the 'limited contingent', over more than nine years, in the war in Afghanistan.

However, for all the incorporation of the Middle East into broader Cold War strategies and ideological visions, there were limits to the fusion of regional and global politics. In the first place, both major powers stayed out of major *direct* involvement in the region. US forces did enter Lebanon unopposed in 1958, and the CIA was active in many contexts, most notably in Iran in 1953; yet the first time that US troops actually fought in the Middle East was after the Cold War ended, in Kuwait in 1991. The USSR deployed forces in Egypt, above all after the June 1967 war, but again avoided overt, direct, involvement. Secondly, each side, for all their use of military supplies and political support for allies, knew these

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[41] Zeev Schiff, 'The Invasion of Lebanon: Did Washington Give a "Green Light"?', *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1984.

[42] And 'limited' it was: compared with the 550,000 troops that the USA had, at its peak involvement, in Vietnam, the Soviet forces in Afghanistan were, at their maximum, 190,000.

were instruments with limited effect. For example, Soviet air and artillery crews did participate directly in the 'war of attrition' fighting along the Suez Canal after 1967. Yet while western states and Israel knew what was happening, this was concealed from public discussion at the time; as had happened in the Korean war, and in several other conflicts in the third world, for reasons of strategic management and to ward off public pressure for precipitate action, the Soviet role was not challenged by the west.

The Soviets too avoided direct confrontation with the USA, despite repeated warnings, for example, by Brezhnev over Lebanon in July 1982, that they could not 'remain indifferent' to events so near their frontiers. Soviet leaders spoke ominously of the 'smell of oil', but did little to counter western action. The USSR continued to use diplomatic channels to contain conflict in the Middle East: the Arab–Israeli wars were, to a degree greater than those of other regions, discussed and negotiated at the United Nations in New York. In the latter part of the 1980s diplomatic contacts continued on a range of 'regional' matters – Palestine, the Iran–Iraq war, Afghanistan. Moreover, in the overall context of the Cold War, the scale of conflict in the Middle East should be recognised. Total casualties in the Arab–Israeli wars were round 50,000, far less than those in the wars of Algeria or Yemen, or the Iran–Iraq war, and small compared with those of the wars of East Asia and southern Africa.[43] The region knew no Vietnam or Korea, no Angola or El Salvador; Afghanistan in the 1980s was on its margins, its impact all the more muted by the fact that the Iran–Iraq war was raging at the same time. This was, of course, to change later as Saudi Arabia and others were to reap what they had sown.

All of this international rivalry of the Cold War years was shaped by the regional states themselves. Of no little significance for the external powers, and in contrast to the more obedient regimes of other regions (for example, eastern Europe, Latin America), the states of the Middle East displayed an ideological individuality and resilience that made them uneasy partners for both east and west. Of the eighteen Arab states only one, South Yemen or the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), was a full supporter of the Soviet Union, embracing the theory of 'scientific socialism' and modelling itself on the Soviet pattern of political and economic development. For all their temporary alliances with Moscow, the Arab nationalist regimes kept Soviet influence and local commitments

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[43] Anthony Cordesman, *Perilous Prospects: the Peace Process and the Arab–Israeli Military Balance*, Oxford: Westview Press, 1996, p. 105, Table 5.1 'Losses in the Arab–Israeli Wars, 1948–1982'.

at bay.[44] On the other side, only Israel had a political system that, for its own Jewish citizens, approximated to the model of western democracy, the remaining allies of the west – in the Arab world, as well as Turkey and Iran – being ruled by various forms of authoritarian regime where the state controlled political and much of economic life. As far as Middle East states were concerned, alliance with the 'free world' was an external, not a domestic, matter. In the most constant Arab ally of the USA, Saudi Arabia, slavery was permitted until 1965.

The Cold War in the Middle East: a balance sheet

The period of the Cold War had, therefore, a profound effect on the Middle East, its states and peoples, and on the place of the Middle East within the international system as a whole. Yet it is important here to distinguish between the Cold War as a global, formative *context*, and the Cold War as a system of *strategic control* which dictated the actions of local states and movements. As states and political movements manoeuvred to take advantage of the global rivalry, that rivalry itself had a profound impact on many parts of the region, inspiring mass movements of left and right. External forces sought allies and poured weapons, advice and in some cases economic assistance into the region. In addition, the Cold War certainly accelerated the transition in international involvement that World War II had begun – pushing out the French and the British, bringing in the Americans and the Russians.

On some occasions, the Middle East could be seen as the focus of the global rivalry: over Iran and Turkey in 1946, in the Arab–Israeli conflicts of 1967 and 1973, and, on the margins, over Afghanistan after 1979. Yet in two respects the independent impact of those forty years of global conflict should not be overstated. In terms of state–state relations, as already noted, the Cold War, unlike World War I, did not alter the state map of the Middle East, with the exception of Israel's expansion in 1967; that delineation of states remained virtually unchanged. Unlike both world

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[44] The same primacy of regional/local power applied to social forces – be they the Palestinians or the Islamic revolutionaries. My central argument in *Soviet Policy in the 'Arc of Crisis'* was that the upheavals of the late 1970s in the four states concerned – Afghanistan, Iran, South Yemen, Ethiopia – were due not to Soviet instigation but to political revolt within these states – an 'Arc of Revolution', not an 'Arc of Crisis'. For general discussion of Soviet policy see Rolan Danreuther, *The Soviet Union and the PLO*, London: Macmillan, 1998; Galia Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, and *The Soviet Union and National Liberation Movements in the Third World*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1988; Yaacov Ro'i, ed., *The Limits to Power: Soviet Policy in the Middle East*, London: Croom Helm, 1979; Fred Wehling, *Irresolute Princes: Kremlin Decision-Making in Middle East Crises, 1967–1973*, New York: St Martin's Press, 1997.

wars in the Middle East, and in contrast to the later war in East Asia, the Cold War in this region, Suez excepted, was not accompanied by military conflict directly involving major outside states. Also limited was the ideological impact of the Cold War. While in the aftermath of World War II Soviet communism did inspire mass movements in a number of countries (Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Egypt), these did not survive the repression of the Cold War itself. The Arab socialist regimes copied some of the rhetoric and administrative practices of the Soviet system, but they had their own reasons for doing so. As we shall see in chapter 7, the most lasting ideological impact of communism in mindset and vocabulary may turn out to have been in the influence it had, not on the secular left, but on Islamist discourse. On the pro-western and pro-capitalist side, while the attractions of western consumerism and financial security were more widely accepted by the middle classes of the region, this did not lead to a political alignment, in terms either of acceptance of western strategic goals or of the introduction of western democracy at home.

Now that the clamour of these four decades has died down, a balance sheet must, therefore, be cautious. In terms of influence on the course of events it is indubitable that the Cold War did provide the context and spur to many developments in the region: but the initiative all too often lay not in Moscow or Washington, but with the local states. It was part of Cold War, and nationalist, rhetoric to cast all opponents, within the state and outside it, as 'agents', 'puppets' and 'lackeys' of external powers; but the elites of Turkey, Israel, Iran and Saudi Arabia were not simply tools of Washington, any more than were the radical leaderships of Egypt, Syria, Libya, Iraq or the PDRY agents of Moscow. The policies of Egypt towards Israel in, say, 1967, and again in 1973, were by no means directed by Moscow. A striking example of this autonomy, while lacking even a state, was the PLO which resisted for years Soviet encouragement to recognise Israel as part of an eventual peace agreement. Equally, the radicals of the PDRY, albeit dependent on Soviet military and economic support, persisted in their aspiration to spread revolution to Oman and North Yemen. Ideology had its own dynamic, as anyone who knew the revolutionaries of that time can confirm.

Much of what took place in the inter-state relations of the Middle East during the Cold War had, moreover, little to do with the global conflict. Apart from inter-Yemeni rivalry, the major inter-state conflicts – Arab–Israeli, Iran–Iraq (from 1975), Syrian–Lebanese – had only an indirect relationship in their origins and outcomes to the Cold War. If this independence of regional actors was true for states, it was even more so for the social and political forces that states did not control. The upheavals that rocked the region, be they the Zionist drive for a state in the 1940s,

the revolutions of Iraq and Iran, or the rise of Palestinian or Kurdish guerrillas, were themselves largely autonomous. The growth of Islamist sentiment from the 1970s onwards was a rejection of both west and east and served to threaten both, in ways peaceful and violent. As much as by the nuclear alerts and inter-state wars of the region, the history of the Middle East in the Cold War was marked by events that states did not control or which struck at states: on one side, military coups (for example, Egypt 1952, Iraq 1958, Yemen 1962, Iraq 1968) and the eruption of social movements (Palestine after 1967 and in 1987, Iran 1978–9, Hizbullah after 1982); on the other, longer-term shifts in the composition and values of society that enabled, or prevented, foreign policy shifts. Here again the narrative of states, global and regional, has to be combined with that of societies and social movements, a topic to which we shall return in chapter 8.

A final verdict on the past may rest not with global strategy, but with international political economy. What was decisive for most people in the region, the pursuit of a livelihood and a measure of economic security, had almost nothing to do with the Cold War: the USSR never offered significant amounts of investment or aid, let alone a viable economic model, whilst the monies coming from the west were largely channelled to elites through the provision of oil revenues from consumers and then recycled back to London and New York. If the Middle East that confronted the changed international situation of the early 1990s, after the end of the Cold War, was very different from that which had faced the world at the beginning of the conflict, in the 1940s, this was as much in spite of, as because of, the four decades of Cold War that had just passed. The most important conclusions by far, however, concern not what the Cold War did to the Middle East but what, as a result of the policies developed in the Cold War, the Middle East was, in the next historical phase, to do to the world. The seeds of the crisis of the atrocities and wars of the early twenty-first century, of 11 September 2001 and all that followed, lay in the Middle East of the 1970s and 1980s, and not in 'Islam', the 'Arab psyche' or any other such vapid hypostatisation. They lay in a concrete, political and socio-economic context that the outside world, in particular the west, had sought to exploit.
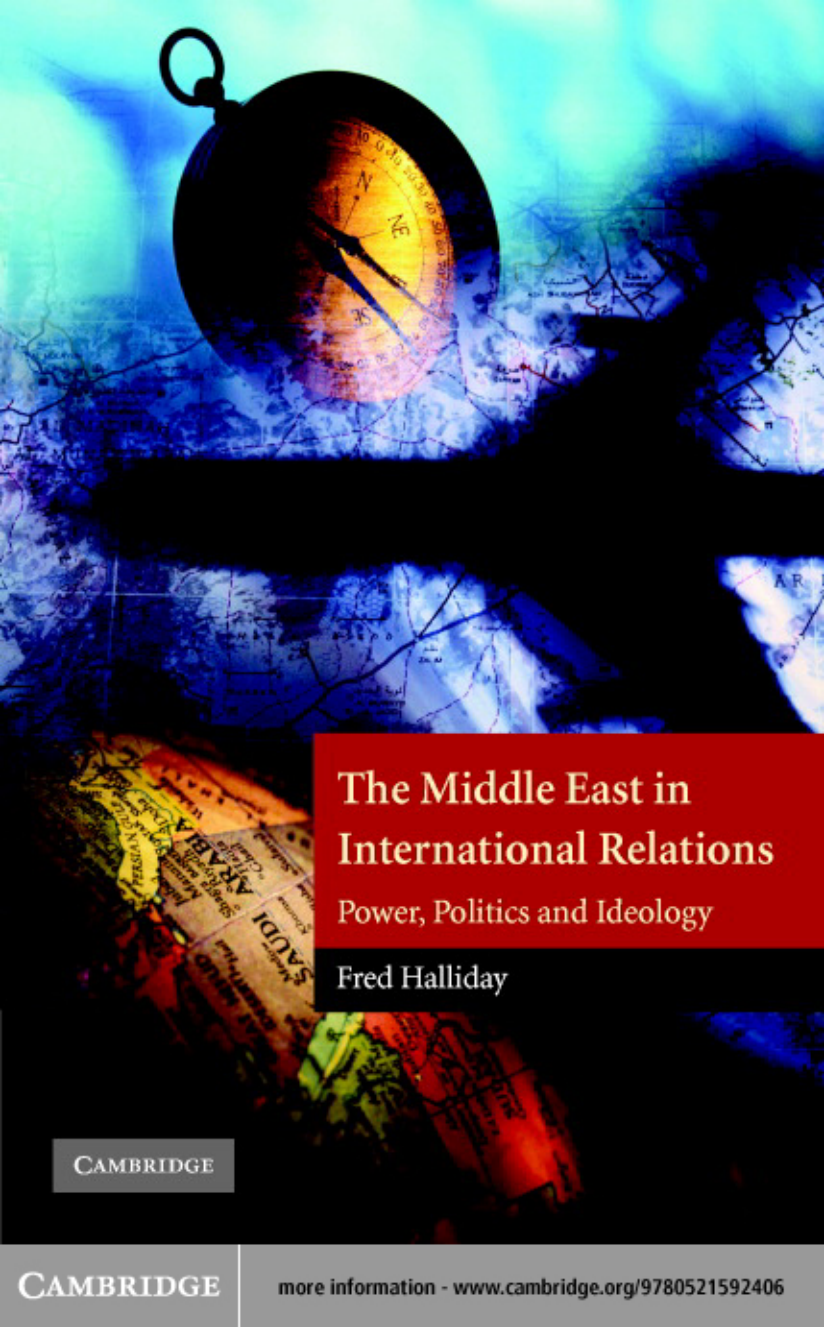
The Middle East in International Relations

Power, Politics and Ideology

Fred Halliday