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vent their anger against the peripheral manifestations of the foreign presence in their country. This attitude arises from the changing situation in the area and the uncertainties of the future. Consequently, the traditional Thai penchant for accommodation finds no ground on which to build, and, rather than reassess their relations with Washington, the Thais are maintaining them in a state of ill-humoured suspended animation.

As for officials in Washington, they are unlikely to shed many tears over changing relations with the Thais. In fact, they have become increasingly critical of what is regarded as the inept management of Thai diplomacy. The Congressional investigations have proved just as embarrassing for Washington as they have for Bangkok, and U.S. officials are increasingly exasperated with the Thai propensity for holding the U.S. State Department responsible for the attitudes taken by the U.S. Senate and the press. Concerning the American forces in Thailand, of the remaining 43,000 only 12,000 are directly involved in Thai affairs. The rest are supporting the Vietnam war and, increasingly, the war in Laos. Not only are the great majority of the air strikes against Laos directed from the U.S. bases in Thailand, but also the Americans are paying Thai troops to operate in Laos. The extent of this American commitment is difficult to assess, but it is indicative that when Ambassador Unger appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Sub-committee last November, he not only refused to testify on 'set to eight questions' but also was accompanied by CIA director Richard Helms.

Anyhow, irrespective of the fact that American involvement in the area hardly seems on the decline, it is clear that the future presence of U.S. forces in Thailand hinges on the Vietnam war. Their presence in Thailand after the war is over will ultimately depend not so much on the termination of the war as on the terms on which it is terminated. And it is these terms that will undoubtedly determine the future course of Thai foreign policy.

Although the Thai-American alliance proved a most profitable venture for Bangkok, it was contrary to the traditional policy of caution which enabled Thailand to survive the two colonial periods and the second World War. By the mid-1950s it appeared that the Thai ruling generals had put all their eggs in the U.S. basket with a view to profiting from the tension reigning in South East Asia and U.S. efforts to retain some control over the area. Any restraints to this policy of total commitment were of form, not of substance. As a result, Thai-American relations became an exercise in mutual deception, with the deceivers slowly realizing today that they had been the deceived. This accounts in part for the increasing demand, by a not insignificant segment of the Thai ruling elite, for a return to a more balanced foreign policy.

In view of the uncertainties surrounding the outcome of the war in Vietnam, it is still too early to predict which way the Thai Government will turn. At the present time, the Thai rulers are trying, somewhat hap hazardly, to ascertain which way the wind will blow.

Whether the skilful Thais will do as well in the future as they have done in the past remains to be seen. The Thai leopard is unlikely to change its spots. However, if former performances are any criteria, it should again prove agile enough to land on its feet.

**Egypt, Algeria, and the Libyan Revolution**

**SHLOMO SLOVIN**

This coming to power of a revolutionary regime in Libya last September was universally regarded as an unmotivated disaster for the West and a corresponding advance for the Soviet Union in Middle East affairs. This impression was considerably reinforced by the New Revolutionary Council's abrupt demand for the early withdrawal of the Americans and the British from their respective military bases and training camps in the country. After brief meetings between the parties concerned, it was announced in December that these bases would be transferred to the Libyans during the course of 1970. As a result, Libya, foremost listed in the ranks of moderate Arab States, was confirmed as a new outpost of Arab radicalism. The eclipse of the West in Arab lands, to all intents and purposes, had thus advanced one step further.

The Libyan revolution, it is clear, had a major impact on the U.S. Administration. American foreign policy-makers were deeply concerned, not simply over the loss of U.S. influence in Libya itself, serious as this was, but, more pointedly, over the possibility that the pattern of revolution and radicalism which had overtaken Libya might now sweep into Saudi Arabia and Kuwait as well, with disastrous consequences for American oil interests. In American eyes, King Feisal of and Lord Sabah were no less vulnerable than King (Idris) and wish their elimination the entire Arab world would be in radical hands, aligned with the East and hostile to the West.

American diplomacy moved quickly to head off any such eventuality.  

*U.S. investments in the Persian Gulf area, according to the New York Times, amount to over $4,000 million.*

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The immediate step was a shoring up of the moderate conservative States by demonstrating a measure of partiality towards Arab interests. It was in this vein that the State Department enunciated its new Middle East programme emphasizing America's "even-handed" stand in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Two sets of proposals were announced for settlement, respectively, Egyptian-Israeli and Jordanian-Israeli disputes. Amongst the terms enumerated was the almost total Israeli withdrawal from the territory captured in the Six Day War—something which lay at the forefront of Arab demands. The announcements were also timed in advance of the Arab summit meeting at Rabat in December so as to forestall any more for the adoption of an immediate "war programme". The American proposals were designed to show the Arab leaders that diplomatic means might yet obtain for them all, or nearly all, that they were insisting on.

From Israel's standpoint, the events in Tripoli represented a most unfortunate development. Firstly, as noted, it triggered off a drastic shift in America's Middle East policy, to Israel's disadvantage. Secondly, Israel could hardly be sanguine about the addition of yet another Arab State to the ranks of the belligerent radicals. In particular, Israel was concerned over the huge bounty which Libyan oil profits would contribute to Nasser's war chest. One important limitation on Nasser's ability to wage war might thereby be effectively dispelled. In general, consolidation of Nasser's power in northern Africa could only increase, and make more formidable, the military power of Israel's chief enemy. If confirmation were needed of the harsh blow which the Libyan coup delivered to Israel's interests it was provided by the announcement of a major French arms deal with Libya, covering some $400 m. worth of arms including at least 10 Mirage fighter-bombers. Paris, pretending, conveniently, not to know the ultimate destination of these tremendous supplies, felt able to exempt Tripoli from its (ostensibly) general arms embargo imposed on the Middle East. Libya is thus set to serve as a handy clearing-house for the provision of fresh war material to the already volatile Middle East arena.

Upon closer examination, however, it is evident that the Libyan coup, far from having fortified the Arab camp, may have set in motion centrifugal forces, destined ultimately to split the radical camp wide apart. In any event, the first signs of such a split are already visible.

The division between radical and conservative regimes is one of long standing. Significantly enough, as has been frequently noted, there is no direct correlation between Arab radicalism in domestic and foreign affairs and the degree of involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict on the other. Certain Arab States, far removed from any contact with Israel, are noted for their extreme radicalism whilst others, directly neighbouring upon Israel, are classified as moderate and pro-Western. The real cause for strife in the Arab world lies hidden in inter-Arab rivalry frequently stemming from traditional feuds connected with issues of tribe, clan, or religious sect. In more recent times the strife has derived from clashes of ambition between Arab leaders with regard to Pan-Arabism, the drive to unite the Arab world under one head and one capital.

In the division which has marked inter-Arab affairs, Egypt and Algeria have, to date, been found together on the more radical side of the spectrum. Algeria, in fact, has frequently adopted a position even more extreme than that of Egypt with respect to both all-out military solution to the Palestine problem and general antagonism to the West. To this day Algeria has not subscribed to the June 1967 ceasefire, despite the retention of Algerian troops on the ceasefire line at the Suez Canal. But the identity of outlook and unity of purpose which have hitherto characterized Egyptian-Algerian relations were rudely shattered at the Rabat summit conference. In retrospect, the failure of the meeting not only confirmed the traditional conservative-radical split in Arab ranks, but also exposed a serious cleavage amongst the radical States themselves. The latter development appeared at Rabat as a cloud no larger than a man's hand but it foreshadowed a violent storm, with major consequences for East-West and inter-Arab relations.

The first sign of division within the radical camp was revealed in the difference of opinion surrounding the war plan submitted to the conference by the Egyptian War Minister. This plan called for full and immediate mobilization of Arab resources in preparation for an all-out assault against Israel. To this end, each of the Arab States was to increase its contribution to the cause and to earmark the troops or funds allotted. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, naturally enough, demurred. They indicated that they were not prepared to donate anything above the $50 m. which they were already contributing annually to salvage Egypt and Jordan from bankruptcy; ever since the earlier summit conference in Khartoum in late 1967, they had agreed to replenish the annual losses suffered respectively by Egypt as a result of the closing of the Suez Canal and by Jordan as a result of the severance of the West Bank. King Feisal and Emir Sabah made it perfectly clear that their generosity had a limit. This was neither surprising nor unexpected. It came, however, as a complete surprise to learn that Algeria had likewise adopted a negative stand on the question. Colonel Boumedienne argued that the Egyptian war plan warranted further study before States could be asked to increase their contributions; further study, in effect, meant rejection of the proposal. The Algerian leader went further and maintained that first priority should be given to the efforts of the Palestine guerrilla organizations in their struggle against Israel. The sudden reversal in Algeria's policy contributed in no small measure to the failure of the Rabat conference.
Events after the summit meeting only served to confirm that the shift in Algeria's attitude was not due to an occasional lapse or a momentary mis-
understanding. At the conclusion of the abortive conference, Nasser flew
to Algiers, in an apparent effort to heal the breach, but was unable to in-
duce Boumedienne to position. To complete the picture, Boumedienne delivered a major address shortly after his return in which he
called for an honourable solution to the Palestinian problem, which,
he declared, could be resolved only by the Palestinians themselves.
No clearer announcement that Algeria was withdrawing her support from
Nasser could have been forthcoming.

The Arab-Israeli conflict, as it is often been noted, is currently two-
dimensional. Prior to 1948 the dispute ranked solely as one between two
national or religious groups, the Jews and Arabs of Palestine. However,
with the creation of the State of Israel in May 1948 and the simultaneous
attack launched against her by the armies of five Arab States, a new
dimension was added to the conflict—an Inter-State or international
dimension. In the twenty years between 1948 and 1967 the Inter-State
conflict remained more or less operative whilst the Arab—Jewish aspect
remained dormant. This was so because, although the war between the
Arab States and Israel was never formally settled by a formal peace, the
Palestinian Arabs did not henceforth operate as an independent force.
Their participation in the struggle was related to their status as refugees
and, as such, they were more an instrument of the Arab States who
in their campaign against Israel. The Palestinian Arabs never sought, nor
assumed, an independent role with distinctly identifiable goals.

The Six Day War of June 1967, which resulted in Israeli conquest of
the West Bank of the Jordan river and the Gaza Strip with their exclusive
Arab populations, resulted, to some degree, the distinctly Arab—Jewish
dimension of the Palestine conflict. (At the same time the Inter-State
conflict was yet further aggravated, since Israel was now in control of
additional territory which had never formed part of Palestine under the
Mandate.)

Algeria's attempt to highlight the struggle of the Palestinian guerrillas
at the expense of the Inter-State struggle can only be taken to mean that
she wishes to dissociate herself in some way from the Egyptian-led cam-
paign against Israel. In short, Boumedienne, despite his opposition to Israel,
is no longer prepared to further Nasser's military ambitions.

This new phenomenon in Inter-Arab relations can best be understood
in the light of the new situation which has arisen in the Arab world, and in
North Africa in particular, as a part of the military coup in Libya. The
coup represented a major break-through for Nasser in his goal of uniting
the Arab world under his leadership. It constituted the first significant
step in implementing the imperial design outlined some fifteen years
earlier in his book The Philosophy of the Revolution. The Arab arena was
to be the 'first circle'; (Africa and the Muslim world were the second and
third 'circle' respectively). Recent events in the Sudan, where a radical
regime has been gravitating steadily closer to Nasser's Egypt, have also
aided the development of a Nasserite hegemony in North East Africa.

Formal steps have now been taken to confered Egypt, Libya, and the
Sudan under a common administration. Consolidation of the three terri-
tories under one head would produce a vast new Arab empire of some 2
million square miles with a population of over 40 million, not to speak of
the considerable economic wealth which would accrue from the Libyan
oil resources. Strategically, Nasser's grip would extend across the entire
north-east triangle of Africa with major new bases on the Red Sea and the
Mediterranean. Consolidation of this tri-State empire would create a
dramatic new factor in international relations. It would certainly confirm
Nasser's mastery in the Arab world and would go far to enhance his
prestige and authority in the Third World generally.

In retrospect, it is clear that the events in Tripoli, by giving rise to
froth Nasserite visions of Pan-Arabism, sparked off the parting of the
ways between Boumedienne and Nasser. The creation of a vast new
colossus in North Africa could not but threaten Algeria's dominant
position in that area. Algeria has been, to date, the largest of the Arab
States in the Maghreb, and naturally could not look with equanimity
upon the rise of a new imperialist—albeit Arab—Power on her doorstep.
Even aside from the imperial factor, the issue of oil alone would have
sufficed to pit Cairo and Algiers against one another. For Algeria, no less
than Egypt, borders directly on Libya (to the extent of some 100 miles on
her southern border), and Boumedienne, no less than Nasser, is entitled to
cast covetous eyes upon the enormous wealth of this thinly populated
territory. So long as the Americans and British retained control of this
oil-rich kingdom, the appetites of its powerful neighbours were of
necessity restrained. But, with the coup against King Idris and the sum-
mary withdrawal of the Americans and British, fierce competition was
unleashed between Algiers and Cairo to gain control of this island of
wealth.

In the light of the foregoing, several subsequent events may assume
added significance. The recent settlement of the long-standing Algerian-
Moroccan feud might, perhaps, signal Algeria's desire to neutralize her
Western borders before embarking on any eastward adventures. Egypt's
dispatch of some thousands of troops to Tripoli to 'secure' the Libyan
revolution might plausibly be designed to safeguard its 'Egyptian'
character. And while the weapons which are to flow from France to Libya
are meant to serve Egypt in her war with Israel, they can serve,
additionally, to guarantee Egyptian superiority over any Arab would-be
challengers. Above all, as noted previously, Algeria's emphasis on the
Palestinian character of the Arab-Israeli conflict was designed as much to
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withdraw support from Nasser as to indicate support for the Palestinians. Clearly, a new chapter in political and military rivalry has opened in North Africa. Once again, economic and power interests are seen to be more potent influences than common ideology in the formulation of foreign policy. As time progresses, Libya may be expected to become increasingly a scene of confrontation between the two capitals of the radical Arab world—Cairo and Algiers. She may indeed be a Mediterraneo-Romanawan in terms of oil resources, but she seems destined to become a second Yemen in terms of her potential for intersecne strife.

Fighting is hardly likely to break out so long as the Americans and British have not completely evacuated the territory. It is, however, not too early to begin to assess the significance of any actual hostilities on future U.S., French, and even Russian policy. In view of the potential importance of the Suez Canal for the Russians, it is not really likely that they will abandon their ties with Nasser. On the other hand, there is no decisive impendiment to the cultivation of closer ties between Algiers and Washington. The cold war, it seems, remains a steadfast feature of Middle Eastern affairs, but with a new focus besides the Arab-Israeli conflict. The ultimate effect of these developments on that conflict remains to be seen.

The rise of the Soviet merchant marine

PHILIP HANSON

The rapid growth of the Soviet merchant marine fleet came rather dramatically to public attention with the Russian bid to enter the Atlantic trade in the spring of 1968. The Soviet fleet expansion, however, had already been well under way from the late 1950s, and Western shipping companies had been watching it apprehensively for some time. By the end of 1968 the Soviet Union had the sixth largest national fleet in the world. At about 10 million gross tons it was almost half as big as the U.K. fleet and growing by about a million tons a year. In recent years, moreover, this rise has been accompanied by a very evident growth and geographical extension of Soviet naval power. This has given support to the view that the Soviet merchant fleet was posting a Chamber of shipping of the United Kingdom, British Shipping Statistics 1969-1959, London, 1969, p. 15.

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not just a 'purely commercial' threat (if there is such a thing) to the West, but a strategic and political one as well. What are the true nature and extent of any such threats? The answer at present must be that nobody—probably not even Soviet policy-makers—can say with any certainty. A preliminary study of the problem, however, suggests three things. First, that the merchant fleet expansion is of mainly commercial rather than political significance. (The naval expansion is another matter, but in modern conditions it is not an obvious corollary of the rise of the merchant fleet.) Secondly, that the economic threat has been exaggerated. Thirdly, that the strength of this economic threat is none the less a matter of some uncertainty, and deserves more study.

Many people would dispute the first proposition. In the first place, it may be claimed that the merchant fleet needs naval protection, so that the merchant fleet expansion leads naturally to a naval expansion. However, while the growth of a nation's maritime trade may in the past have provided a good reason—or excuse—for naval expansion, the relationship now is not very strong. A war of attrition at sea after escalation to a nuclear exchange is hard to imagine. Even in a conflict limited to conventional weapons, air superiority would now be much more important than naval superiority to maritime trade flows. The Soviet navy's role can perhaps be seen as limited to carrying nuclear deterrent weapons, protecting Soviet territory, supporting Soviet intervention in localized conflicts, and possibly harassing other people's shipping. On the whole, these activities do not require merchant fleet support. The only connection with Soviet maritime trade would seem to be an indirect one: a capacity to harass foreign shipping may have been seen as a useful insurance against harassment of Soviet merchant ships. A naval expansion therefore looks to be a largely independent phenomenon.

It has been said that the growth of Soviet shipping dates from the American embargo on vessels trading with the Soviet bloc after the Cuban missile crisis, and that the Russians were content with foreign carriage of Soviet cargoes until then. But the embargo can only have been an auxiliary factor. The largest annual percentage increases in the Soviet fleet so far were in 1961, 1963, and 1964. Many of the relevant ordering decisions must have been taken before Cuba. Moreover, in proportionate terms at least, there had already been an almost equally large growth of tonnage in 1963, of about a fifth in one year as against a quarter in each of the later three years. Still earlier, in 1957, there was an important policy decision which shows that Soviet policy was already concerned with shipping as an "asset" in the balance of payments: net foreign-exchange earnings replaced tonnage and ton-mileage as the new "success index" in measuring fleet performance in overseas trade. 3

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