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THE WIMP FACTOR

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CRISIS BARGAINING AND RISK MANAGEMENT: THE WIMP FACTOR

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This study explores a nondeterrable crisis bargaining approach states may employ against militarily superior adversaries. Soviet words and deeds during the Suez crisis of 1956 are used to illustrate its pursuit of an accomodationist strategy vis a vis the US. Its behavior ran counter to the prescriptions of Deterrence and Game Theories for adversarial bargaining. Instead of issuing threats, enhancing commitments, displaying resolve and capability so as to deter the US from countering its moves, the Soviet leadership highlighted compatible US-Soviet objectives, whittled down commitment to its client and displayed reluctance so as to induce the US into cooperation. Its inducement strategy seems designed, not for besting an adversary, but for heading off a direct confrontation. While avoiding confrontation and appearing accomodative, inducement is nonetheless a way to defeat the adversary in the bipolar contest for political influence over third parties.
CRISIS BARGAINING AND RISK MANAGEMENT: THE WIMP FACTOR

Since Schelling's classic work *The Strategy of Conflict* (1960), crises and escalation have come to be viewed as a bargaining process that can be manipulated to advantage by the players. These analyses seem heavily conditioned by the postwar American experience; hence they have focused on the strategy and problems associated with compelling or deterring. As Jervis (1979 p. 293) noted, scant attention has been paid to "how or whether alternative policies could be employed (by adversaries) to create a situation in which deterrence theory would not apply."

Threatened and actual use of military force figure prominently in both coercive and mixed bargaining strategies. To the extent accommodation is mentioned, it is equated with defeat, or viewed as an important adjunct to coercion. For instance Snyder and Diesing (1977) maintain, "international bargaining (between adversaries) is characterized by coercion." Although "an occasional accommodative gesture" may be made "to dampen the provocative effects of their coercion," real accommodation does not take place except by a weaker party that has been forced to do so. In turn, Leng and Wheeler (1979), Axelrod (1984) and more recently Huth (1988) exemplify the perspective that a mixed coercive/accommodative approach works better than a pure coercive strategy in adversarial bargaining.

This study suggests the feasibility of accommodative adversarial bargaining. Accommodation need not mean settling for "half a loaf" nor does it have to be used in conjunction with coercive threats in order to win the desired dividends. The semblance of cooperation can be used to make gains the adversary might otherwise not readily concede. Soviet behavior towards the US during the Suez crisis of 1956 is used to illustrate accommodative adversarial bargaining at work.

THE VANTAGE POINT OF THE WEAKER ADVERSARY

Crisis bargaining refers to attempts to influence the behavior of another state during a crisis or a situation characterized by acute, explosive tensions. Although the bargaining could be between allies, it is one between adversaries that has traditionally been of greatest concern. The two types of bargaining are assumed to be quite different; accommodation characterizes the former, while coercion, the latter.

Adversarial bargaining is often analyzed in terms of Chicken and Prisoners' Dilemma Games (Brams, 1985; Snyder and Diesing, 1977; Zagare 1987). These analyses typically reduce the players' choices at each juncture to a 2 X 2 matrix of caving in or resisting. Such an abstraction is needed, along with other simplifications, to produce determinate solutions. These simplifications have given rise to valuable insights about bargaining. However, as Young (1975, pp. 401-402) has noted, "in real-world situations... players may alter their perception of the issues at stake, (and) the available alternatives" so that the terms of strategic interaction bear little semblance to those posited by these games. One might expect a significant part of Soviet gameplans will be to steer superpower interaction away from confrontational games--situations in which its options will be limited to capitulating or resisting.
For confrontational games, military superiority confers an advantage although it does not guarantee victory. When both players end up in the "mutual loss" cell, the militarily superior will suffer less damage; although as the Vietnam war has shown, it may not have the stomach to take the loss. Nonetheless, the comforting thought that the enemy cannot do to you what you can do to them in the same measure, probably makes the militarily superior more risk acceptant, hence less averse to confrontations. As Lebow (1981, p. 242) concludes from his analysis of five crises, the militarily superior "may be willing to assume greater risks because the prospect of war exercises less of a restraining influence" upon its decision makers. Brans and Kilgour (1988, p. 21) similarly conclude from their game theoretic analysis, that the adversary possessing stronger defensive capabilities will be more willing to risk a nuclear exchange by launching a preemptive strike.

Conversely, one may expect that the party without a military edge (i.e. the USSR vis a vis the US during 1956) will prefer to avoid a confrontation whenever possible. Although "not playing" may avert confrontations, such a policy conflicts with the attainment of other cherished values. For instance, to retain or expand their influence over valued clients in the Middle East, the Soviets cannot afford to be perceived as "doing nothing." Thus for crises in the Middle East since the mid-1950s, their bargaining behavior is likely to reflect both the imperative of avoiding a superpower collision and the imperative of "being there" for their Arab clients. This expectation accords with the judgment of leading experts of Soviet Middle East policy. Golan (1977, pp. 18-19), for instance, observed "Soviet risk taking... seeks to reconcile the necessary caution with the desire to maintain- as well as expand and consolidate- the Soviet presence."

During Suez 1956, the need to avoid a confrontation with the US was particularly pressing as the crisis coincided with turmoil in Poland and Hungary. Instability in Eastern Europe further curbed what remaining inclination the Soviets may have had to be confrontational over stakes of lesser importance such as the Suez. They needed to conserve resources to meet contingencies that might arise from the Polish and the Hungarian situations.

In short, Moscow's military inferiority vis a vis the US and its preoccupation with more important stakes elsewhere predisposed it to pursue an accommodationist gameplan. Soviet strategy was aimed at inducing US cooperation, and not for cowering the latter into submission. As it was deliberately avoiding a confrontation, its tactics ran counter to the prescriptions of classic deterrence theory. Although there exists some disagreement regarding the requirements for effective deterrence, there is a consensus that success should depend on the quality of the commitment to the stake, credible and clear signals about one's resolve and commitment, past behavior and reputation for resolve, and the capability to impose costs on the adversary which will exceed his expected gains (Kaufmann, 1956; Schelling, 1960; Brodie, 1966; Kahn, 1965; George and Smoke, 1974; Jervis, 1972; Snyder and Diesing, 1977; Lebow, 1981; Huth and Russett, 1984; Huth, 1988). These staples of coercive adversarial bargaining were not part of the Soviet repertoire. Instead Moscow pursued what may be termed an "inducement strategy."
SCOPE OF THE ANALYSIS

To help the reader understand the inducement strategy, I will illustrate its workings by examining Soviet behavior during the Suez crisis of 1956. Analysis is confined to a single case because I am trying to flesh out an underdeveloped area of bargaining theory; and not to assess its generalizability. A narrow focus permits the close examination of contextual material needed by my exposition.

Suez is a particularly useful example for several reasons. The USSR was under great pressure to assist Egypt during the crisis. At the same time, it must give careful thought to how the US might react as Egypt’s antagonists are two close American allies and Israel. These circumstances permit the treatment of Moscow’s discrete behavior as a coherent plan or strategy vis a vis the US. They also permit the contrasting of what was done with what could or should have been done to assess restraint and strength of commitment of the bargaining parties. Second reason is, unlike subsequent Arab-Israeli crises, Suez occurred at a time when the USSR was undoubtedly militarily inferior to the US. Thus more than any other Middle East crisis, it is appropriate for exploring the imperatives of weakness. A third reason is that more detailed information is available for this than for most other crises.

I analyze Soviet behavior as if a single unified actor is in charge, and use a bargaining perspective to make sense of the timing, range and earmarks of its behavior. Alternative explanations, such as bureaucratic-factional politics, are not considered. Kass (1978), Spechler (1986a and 1986b) and others have shown the importance of leadership dissensus in shaping Soviet behavior toward the Middle East wars of 1967, 1969-70, 1973 and 1982. But since no one has made a strong case that similar factional politics plagued Soviet decisionmaking during the 1956 crisis, my reliance on the unitary actor approach for this particular crisis seems justified.

Finally, analysis is almost exclusively confined to what transpired in 1956. Arab-Israeli relations may be said to be in a continuous state of crisis since the founding of the state of Israel; Anglo-Egyptian relations since the return of the Wafd Party to power in 1950. On the other hand, the convention among International Relations scholars is to use a more compressed time period for crises (Hermann, 1972). Though one might date the Suez crisis in other ways, I chose 1956 as my time frame so as to highlight the moves surrounding the war that year. I also depart from the convention of differentiating crisis from war (Hermann, 1972; Holsti, 1972). No such distinction is observed here. Events, both before and during the Suez war, were scrutinized.

THE INDUCEMENT STRATEGY

Whereas the lynchpin of deterrence is to let it be known that defying the threat will result in more pain than gain (George and Smoke, 1974), the inducement strategy avoids threats altogether, and seeks instead, to convince the target there is no cause for confrontation; that cooperation or acquiescence is in both the inducer and the target’s mutual interest.

Soviet behavior during the Suez crisis may be seen to comprise an inducement strategy vis a vis the US. It was inducing the US to acquiesce to its initiatives and indirectly to the spread of Soviet influence in the Middle East. A cooperative demeanor was used to mask its zero sum competition with the US for political influence in the region. Unlike its
treatment of England, France or Israel, Moscow’s approach to the US was characterized by collegiality. It communicated and consulted with Washington in a timely manner to keep the latter appraised of its concrete concerns and military plans. It fractionated the conflict issues and highlighted only the subset where US, Soviet views are compatible. Its commitments to Egypt were carefully hedged to avoid a direct threat to any important American interests. Instead of drawing a line that its target, the US, should not cross, the inducer makes the case that pursuing a certain track is in both parties’ interests and should therefore not be an occasion for acrimony.

A. Consult Not Insult the Adversary

The Cold War was in full swing during 1956, inspite of the so called "Spirit of Geneva." Yet there were almost no indications of Cold War hostilities in official Soviet dealings with the US over the crisis. At no time did the Soviet leadership threaten to sanction Washington for anything the latter had done or might do. The anti-US diatribes so abundant in Soviet news analysis, were noticeably absent from communications formally issued by the Soviet government. Thus for instance, while Soviet journalist M. Mikhailov labeled the Dulles’ Plan for internationalizing the Suez as "a plan for solving the question in the interests of monopolies," the Soviet government diplomatically describes it as a plan, "which envisages the placing of the Suez Canal under foreign management." The euphemism "foreign management" is obviously calculated to avoid offending Washington.

Through timely communications, the US was kept appraised of Soviet views, concerns and rationales for behavior. The political climate in 1956 was very different from 1973. During 1973 detente was at its zenith, the Soviet leadership was in daily contact with the Nixon-Kissinger team to discuss developments in the Yom Kippur war. Such confidential discussions were not possible during the Suez crisis; nonetheless "quasi-consultations" did take place in the form of timely announcements and correspondence. Quasi-consultations occurred at nearly every important juncture of the crisis, as when Egypt nationalized the canal, when Soviet pilots were dispatched to assist Cairo keep canal traffic flowing, and when Israel and later England and France invaded Egypt.

First Secretary Khrushchev gave a speech five days after the Suez was nationalized in which he explained the limits of Soviet involvement and support for the Egyptian move. He avoided any hint that the Soviet leadership may have encouraged the seizure; unlike Nasser’s speech on the occasion of the nationalization, Khrushchev did not mention Soviet economic, military aid to Egypt. The expropriation was tepidly described as "legal" and "an action that the Egyptian government, as a sovereign government, is entitled to take." Khrushchev further states that the Soviet Union shared France and England’s interest in "free navigation through the Suez...for all." As will become clear later, "free navigation for all" indicates a policy position significantly at odds with Cairo’s. Aside from a public speech, there were also official correspondence with Western leaders dissociating the Soviet Union from Egypt’s nationalization move. In short, the Soviet leadership through authoritative communications, tried to make clear to all interested parties the extent of its agreement and
responsibility for its client's provocative behavior. As Khrushchev said in
the course of the speech, "we hope...(the West) will understand us correctly."
The next occasion that Soviet role may alarm Washington arose from its
dispatch of pilots to the Suez. Soviet press was quick to mention the
pilots were "invited" by Cairo and are part of an international contingent to
keep traffic flowing on the Suez. The nonmilitary background and functions
of the crew were prudently reported.11
Later when Israel invades Egypt and a full blown war was on, the Soviet
leadership again took the time to explain its position, to disclose its
planned response so as not to unduly alarm its adversary. It issued a
carefully crafted statement sympathizing with Egypt but made clear no
Soviet military aid was forthcoming.12 Israel's invasion and the landing of
Anglo-French troops in Egypt were harshly condemned; but the statement also
declares "the Soviet government believes that the UN Security Council
must take immediate measures to stop the aggressive actions." Coming to the
aid of the victim is thus to be a collective UN, rather than a Soviet
responsibility.13
Four days after this statement, Bulganin wrote to Ben-Gurion, Eden and
Mollet.14 The menacing tone of his letters is quite at variance with the
aforementioned government statement. Perhaps Arab pressures for a stronger
Soviet response elicited the new tone. Whatever brought about the change,
quasi-consultations with the US continued, as indicated by Bulganin's
letter to Eisenhower. Both the timing and the content of this letter, indicate
its real purpose may be to give a proper account of the ominous notes sent to
Ben-Gurion et al, so as to forestall any possible sharp reaction from the
US. Bulganin's appeal to Eisenhower, for joint US-Soviet military
intervention to restore peace in the Middle East, was written on the same
day as his letters to Israel, France and England. All four, dated Nov. 5,
1956, were published the next day by both Pravda and Izvestiia. The timing
suggests these letters were meant to be read together. As for the contents,
Bulganin cannot be serious in requesting a joint US-Soviet military
expedition against close US allies. If the proposal is not serious, its
real meaning would have to lie elsewhere. Perhaps, the letter was written, not
to broach a politically ridiculous military scheme, but to explain why threats
against Israel, England and France were made, and to convey the conditions
under which the threats will be carried out. Bulganin dwelled at length on
shared US-Soviet values that will be served by a joint expedition—
restore peace in the Middle East, end aggression, enhance moral authority
of the UN, etc. In short, Bulganin was saying the ominous threats against
these countries were prompted by noble sentiments the Soviet Union shares
with the US. As for his joint expedition proposal, it was to underscore
that his government's threat to use force in the crisis will be carried out
only if Washington concurs and actively cooperates.

To elicit voluntary US cooperation, Soviet leaders should not threaten
or bully Washington. Bullying and blustering may cow an opponent into
submission (Schelling, 1960; Yukl, 1974; Ellsberg, 1975); they are unlikely
to bring forth voluntary cooperation. Such tactics may even arouse or
stiffen the opponent's resistance because going along with the bully might
make him look foolish or weak (Blechman, 1972; Leng and Wheeler, 1979). Thus
collegiality, not threatening blusters, characterized Soviet communications with the US.

Timely communications are useful even though US decision makers are unlikely to take Soviet explanations and protestations at face value. Such communications on their part can only help not hurt their efforts to induce American acquiescence. As Sawyer and Guetzkow (1965, pp. 479-80) have suggested "communication... by providing information, interpretation, or implications" is a "major agent" for shaping the other party’s utility calculations. Soviet behavior may bask in a better light than if no explanations were given and the adversary’s Cold War imagination ran amuck. Consultations also reinforce a cooperative, or at least take the edge off the adversary’s antagonistic outlook.

B. Common Cause With the Adversary

It is unlikely that most favored outcome for one adversary is also the most favored outcome for the other. To avoid conflict and enhance cooperation, it becomes necessary to find a basis for common action; to grant at least the minimum that the other will take in preference to resisting (Ikle and Leites, 1962).

To keep the US sedated, the Soviets fractionated the conflict issues and highlighted the subset where US, Soviet views are compatible. Though unmistakably pro-Arab, only a subset of Egypt’s specific preferences was endorsed. On several key points, the Soviet leadership was more in agreement with Egypt’s enemies as well as the US, than with Egypt. Contrary to Egypt’s strongly held preference, the Soviet leadership supported Western attempts to impose a settlement under the auspices of the London Conference. It would not endorse Egyptian: 1) view of absolute sovereignty over the Suez Canal; 2) goal of denying Israel use of the Suez waterway; 3) heaping of blame for Middle East tensions on Israel; 4) goal of expelling Israel from the UN; 5) insistence that the 1947 UN Partition Plan be the basis for a border settlement with Israel; nor its 6) demands for a Palestinian homeland.

1. Choice of Form for Negotiating A Settlement

The Soviets participated in both sessions of the London Conference on the Suez Canal, a conference convened at the initiative of UK and France. They characterized the conference as "an important guarantee of peace and security." Whereas the White House issued a statement that "welcomed" Soviet support for this Western dominated forum, Egypt did not. Nasser preferred an Egyptian sponsored conference made up of the signatories of the 1888 Treaty of Constantinople and other users of the Canal. He was sharply critical of the London Conference and believed its purpose "is open interference in Egypt’s internal affairs" by establishing "a polite form of what might be called international colonization." He further believed that the First London Conference will result in a UK-USSR agreement on a Middle East arms embargo (Heikal, 1986, pp. 102-3).

It is not only the "where" but also the "how" to settle the issues that one sees important gaps between the USSR and its own protege and substantial overlaps in US, Soviet preferences.
2. How to Settle The Canal Problem

Both Washington and Moscow were agreed that Cairo was within its rights in nationalizing the Canal but not in restricting Canal usage. Thus while upholding Egypt's "inalienable sovereign right" to nationalize the waterway, the Soviet Union also insisted on "freedom of traffic for all countries." Mikoyan explicitly mentions Israel should have equal freedom to send its ships through the Canal. In turn, according to Eisenhower, the Canal "lay completely within Egyptian territory and under Egyptian sovereignty. The inherent right of any sovereign nation to exercise the power of eminent domain within its own territory could scarcely be doubted... The main issue at stake, therefore, was whether or not Nasser would and could keep the waterway open for the traffic of all nations" (Eisenhower, 1965 p.39).

Eisenhower was uncertain that Egypt can properly administer the Canal without outside help; thus he proposed the setting up of an international supervisory body to work closely with Egyptian authorities. Unlike the US, Moscow expressed confidence in Egypt's ability to administer the Canal without outside help; however, in private communications, it indicated that it is "willing to negotiate some kind of mutually satisfactory arrangement with the US... (for) imposing international controls" on the Canal (Eisenhower, 1965 p.45).

Maintaining a distinction between ownership and right to restrict usage runs counter to deeply held Egyptian antipathy to Israeli use of the Canal. Nasser is reported to have told Hammarsjöld that "the idea (of Israeli ships using the Canal) is totally unacceptable. And if they do go through I shall have to resign!" (Heikal, 1986, p. 207). As for the matter of joint international-Egyptian administration of the waterway, Nasser flatly declared his government will "not accept any form of international control."3

3. On Who is to Blame and How to Settle the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Aside from issues pertaining to Egypt's rights over the Suez Canal, border clashes with Israel, were the other major precipitant of the Suez War of 1956. Although Soviet criticisms of Israel for the clashes are of a louder decibel than Washington's, the substance of the two superpowers' views are almost indistinguishable. Both called on Israel to make restitutions and were open to the idea of the UN sanctioning Israel in the event of future raids. Their consensus is at odds with Arab calls for the immediate punishment and the expulsion of Israel from the UN.

US and Soviet views on the broader settlement of Arab-Israeli conflict were also quite close. Both of them were even handed and dissuaded all parties from resorting to military force. Washington repeatedly stated it will oppose "any aggression in the Middle East" and support "any nation which might be subjected to such aggression." Moscow in a similar vein declared "it is possible and necessary to avoid an armed conflict in the Near East and that it is in the interests of all Near East states not to allow themselves to be provoked into being involved in military operations." Whereas Dulles describes US policy as "embracing the preservation of the State of Israel" and the "principle of maintaining our friendship with Israel and the Arab states." Molotov, in turn, advocates "settlement of the Palestine question on a mutually acceptable basis, taking due consideration of the just national interests of the interested parties."
Like the US then, Soviet leadership counseled restraint and did not have a onesided view that Israel will necessarily be the guilty party in the event of war. Like the US, it favored a compromise settlement acceptable to both Israel and the Arabs.

When it came to the concrete aspects of that compromise settlement, Soviet views were again significantly at odds with those of its own protege. Between the 1947 UN partition plan and the 1949 Armistice, Arabs preferred the former, as it would entail a smaller territory for Israel and an independent Palestinian state. Israel, in turn, preferred the 1949 Armistice for precisely the opposite reasons. The Soviet leadership shared Israel's preferences. Thus when war raged in 1956, Bulganin suggested UN troops might be deployed along both sides of the 1949 armistice line after the belligerents withdraw their troops. A Soviet Government statement earlier called upon "the interested parties to refrain from any kind of action which may lead to an exaccerbation of the situation on the existing demarcation line set up by truce agreements between the Arab countries and Israel."33

As for the related matter of Palestinian refugees, both superpowers expressed humanitarian concern, but did not endorse Arab calls for a Palestinian homeland. To the chagrin of his Arab hosts, the communiques issued during Foreign Minister Shepilov's Middle East tour in June 1956 were noticeably silent on the Palestinian problem. A Soviet Government statement which does mention the refugee problem, called for "efforts to alleviate the difficult position of hundreds of thousands of Arab refugees" alongside pleas that existing demarcation lines be observed. The US, in turn, advocates "resettlement in adjoining Arab states" and "repatriation to Israel to such extent as may be feasible" to ease the plight of Arab refugees.36

In sum, like the US, the Soviet leadership was critical of Israel for the repeated border clashes prior to the Suez war, but evenhanded with a slight tilt towards Israel when it came to the broader the Arab-Israeli conflict. As such, Soviet views were more compatible with those of its US adversary than its own Egyptian client.

4. Ending the Suez War

When the Suez war broke out on October 29, 1956, the Soviet leadership continued to confine its efforts to championing objectives also shared by the US, viz. the restoration of peace and the status quo ante bellum. Thus the constant refrain in Soviet press was the "ending of aggression against Egypt" by which is meant cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of foreign troops from Egyptian territory. US-Soviet views on Egypt as the victim and on the need for the invading forces to withdraw are so much in step that the Soviets supported the US sponsored UN Security Council measure on a Middle East ceasefire; in contrast, England and France vetoed the draft resolution.37

Snyder and Diesing (1977) surmised that the extent of common interests and values between the bargaining parties determine whether the process will be primarily accomodative or coercive. Hence, bargaining between allies tends towards accommodation; while adversarial bargaining, coercion. My analysis indicates, interests and values are not immutable givens constraining behavior, but parameters subject to manipulation by the players.
Notwithstanding Cold War enmity and rivalry, Soviet leadership defined its preferences and views about the Suez crisis in a manner compatible with those of its adversary; and in so doing, rendered the bargaining process accommodative.

C. Carefully Hedged Commitment and Resolve

The quality of commitment is often deemed critical for winning in crisis bargaining (George and Smoke, 1974; Huth and Russett, 1984). Both the credibility of deterrence threats and the resolve to follow through are contingent on commitment.39 There is a tendency to assume, the problem of commitment during crisis bargaining is: how to convince the other of the high value one places on the stake and hence of one’s resolve to go to great lengths to secure it.

Soviet behavior contradicts this prescription about commitment and resolve. It did not underscore, but instead carefully delimited its commitment to Egypt. Instead of consistent messages so as to minimize confusion or doubt about its determination to protect its client, it signalled varying levels of resolve. It displayed greater resolve at the onset and at the tail end than at the peak of the crisis. By carefully calibrating commitment and resolve, the Soviet leadership worked out what Jervis (1979, p. 303) has termed “the tension between the desire to increase risks in order to make the other side retreat and the desire to lower them in order to make the situation safer.”

1. Fainthearted Commitment

The web of political, military, economic ties binding a client to its patron is a critical indicator of commitment (Huth and Russett, 1984; Tillema and Wingen, 1982). The manner in which the Soviet leadership spun a web of ties with Egypt reveals efforts to present it as a limited, retractable commitment rather than as a deeply held, irreversible one.

Czechoslovak arms sale to Egypt is perhaps the first most visible sign of Soviet commitment to the latter.40 Although the USSR could have directly armed Egypt, it went to the trouble of using a Czech front and maintained the fiction that Prague was acting on its own.41 Direct tangible Soviet assistance to Cairo took the form of a loan to build the Aswan Dam. This disjunction between military and economic bonds is eloquent testimony to the Soviet leadership’s unwillingness to appear too closely bound to its client. Since the presence of both direct military and economic assistance would indicate a higher level of commitment than if only economic ties were present, it took pains to hide the military ties.

Moreover, up to the outbreak of the Suez war, Soviet leadership repeatedly stated its readiness to observe any great power agreement to stem the flow of arms into the Middle East.42 And when war began in October, Soviet technicians present in Egypt, who could have been used as a "trip wire" to enhance the credibility of its commitment to Egypt, were instead, quietly pulled out.43

A high level of commitment, often useful in coercive crisis bargaining situations, is not needed and may be counterproductive for an inducement strategy. The strength of one’s commitment to a pawn will not help elicit voluntary cooperation from one’s adversary; the latter is not interested to help preserve one’s strategic assets. The more a state is identified as one’s
pawn, the less likely the adversary would consent to a common approach for securing or advancing the pawn's interest. Thus, inducing American cooperation is better served by understating Soviet ties and commitment to Egypt.

2. Accordion-like Resolve

The Soviets calibrated their display of resolve to reap maximum political effect while keeping a lid on its escalatory potential. Initial Soviet attempts to convince all interested parties of its determination to safeguard Egypt were quickly abandoned once war broke out. It does not revert to a strong show of support until after the eye of the crisis has passed.

In late August 1956, when militarization of the Suez crisis seemed imminent in the wake of the movement of Anglo-French forces to areas adjacent the Suez Canal, the strongest Soviet statements were issued. On August 23, 1956, First Secretary Khrushchev said that in the event of a Western attack on Egypt, "there would be volunteers" and Cairo "would not stand alone." Three weeks later another warning was issued that the USSR "as a great power, cannot stand aloof from the Suez dispute...any disturbance of peace in the Middle East cannot but affect the security interests of the Soviet Union." The linkage of both "volunteers" and Soviet "security interests" to developments in the Middle East was quickly dropped once war began. As will be discussed later, the sending of "volunteers" will not be raised again until the need has passed. As for "security interests," subsequent official statements as well as press reports omit mention of any important Soviet interests being affected by the fighting. The combined attack on Egypt was sharply denounced as "acts of gangsterism... affecting not only Egypt but also other states" and the alarm was raised that the war threatens the "moral principles and foundations" of the UN and may unleash "a third world war" but no links to Soviet "security interests" were drawn.

The well known Bulganin letters to Israel, UK and France, which hinted at a nuclear attack and threatened the use of force to "crush the aggressors," also carefully delimit rather than underscore Soviet resolve to defend Egypt. At first blush, Bulganin seemed to be threatening the two Western allies and Israel with a nuclear strike, a close reading of the letters indicates otherwise. The letters raised the spectre of a nuclear attack, and then dismissed it as abhorrent. To wit "in what position would Britain have found herself if she had been attacked by more powerful states possessing every kind of modern destructive weapon?...If rocket weapons had been used against Britain and France, they would probably have called it a barbarous action. Yet in what way does the inhuman attack... made on Egypt differ from this?" In calling a nuclear strike "barbarous," Bulganin is also saying, his country will not take such a step.

As for his threat to employ conventional military force against the "aggressors," it was couched in such a way as to ensure it will not have to be carried out. The letters to Israel, France, and England stated that "the Soviet government has approached the US with a proposal to use naval and air forces, together with other UN members...We are fully determined to crush the aggressors and restore peace in the Middle East through the use of force." A letter simultaneously sent to Eisenhower explained that US and USSR "as permanent members of the UN bear a particular responsibility for
stopping war...the joint and immediate use of (our naval and air power)...backed by a UN decision, would be a sure guarantee of ending the aggression."48 In short, once fighting broke out and there was need to bail out its protege, Moscow quickly spelled out the conditions under which it would take forceful action. Its military intervention was made contingent on a UN decision and a joint US-Soviet expedition, two conditions exceedingly unlikely to be met.49

It is not until the crisis was nearly over that Moscow drops the two impossible conditions and threatens to send "volunteers" to fight alongside Egyptians. On Nov. 11, 1956, Soviet leadership warned that unless British, French and Israeli forces were withdrawn from Egypt, it "would not raise obstacles to the departure of Soviet citizen volunteers who wish to take part in the struggle of the Egyptian people for their independence."50 It further noted "great numbers of pilots, tank men, artillery men and officers...have asked to be allowed to go to Egypt."

Actually, the initiative for the introduction of Soviet "volunteers" into the fray, came from Egypt and Moscow merely concurred.51 Soviet leadership refused to concur, until the need for "volunteers" has passed. Cairo appealed for volunteers on November 6, 1956; it was not until November 11 that the Soviet government announced its readiness to allow volunteers to depart for Egypt. Between November 6 and 9, a UN peacekeeping force had been approved and was on its way to the Sinai to enforce a ceasefire; Israel, Britain and France have all declared their readiness to pull out their troops as soon as UN forces arrived.52 For all intents and purposes, the eye of the storm had passed; Soviet volunteers had been rendered unnecessary. Even Egypt recognized this; and on November 9, made clear it had "no wish to accept Soviet volunteers at present."53 Yet it was not until after these developments that the announcement was made.54

Displaying strong resolve at the outset may make a client’s antagonist more cautious and tractable. Thus it is a relatively inexpensive way for a superpower to help out its pawn. In turn, displaying strong resolve after the need to make good on it has passed, garners propaganda gains at almost no cost and may serve an important extended deterrence function.55 However at the peak of the crisis, when a dangerous spiral is most likely, dissolving resolve is more prudent as this reduces the chances of one’s being sucked into the vortex.

The ebbing of Soviet resolve during the high noon of crisis also makes sense as part of an inducement strategy. No matter what the reason, if Soviet troops clashed with those of England and France, a US-Soviet confrontation will ensue; cooperation over the Suez crisis will cease. The impression that Soviet military intervention is imminent will also set the two superpowers on a collision course. When furious fighting is going on and the Soviet protege is reeling from superior enemy forces, the US will be specially watchful of any sign that Soviet troops might intervene. More than at any other phase of the crisis, displays of strong resolve at this juncture might lead Washington to believe Soviet military intervention is imminent. Thus at the height of the crisis, Moscow delimits, not strengthen its resolve.
Levy (1987), Achen and Snidal (1988) have pointed out that when deterrence is most effective, an "immediate deterrence" (Morgan, 1977) situation will not even arise. The adversary is so daunted by one's likely reaction or military superiority that no provocative challenge is ventured. However, this does not mean all is well. As George and Smoke (1974) have found, the revisionist power can resort to alternatives that are not easily deterred.

Soviet behavior during the Suez crisis suggests alternative noncoercive bargaining tactics states might undertake to advance their national interests. Given the likelihood of a strong American response to untoward behavior on its part, given its moderate valuation of Egypt and given its military inferiority vis a vis the US, the need to forge nonprovocative bargaining strategies assumed special importance for the Soviet leadership. It forged such a strategy with moves contrary to some of the prescriptions of deterrence theory and chicken games. Instead of issuing threats, enhancing commitments, displaying resolve and capability so as to deter the US from countering its moves, Moscow tried to induce the latter's cooperation or at least acquiescence. To induce such cooperation, the stakes were fractionated and only the subset where US and Soviet interests are compatible, were highlighted. This compatibility was often achieved by disagreeing with its own Egyptian protege. Commitment to its client is whittled down and understated. Reluctance took the place of resolve. Instead of bluster and bravado, it cultivated an image of reasonableness and collegiality.

Soviet bargaining strategy seems designed for heading off, and not for besting the US in a direct confrontation. It is a strategy for reaping the fruits of victory without sowing dangerous dragon's teeth. The ultimate goal of winning the bipolar contest for political influence over third parties was hidden in a Trojan horse ploy of advocating immediate objectives also valued or deemed legitimate by the adversary. Efforts are made to appear reasonable and restrained, both because such behavior is not provocative and because an image of sobriety allays mistrust, making voluntary cooperation more likely. As Rubinstein (1984, p.77) noted, "though it was President Eisenhower's opposition that forced the aggressors to withdraw... it was the Soviet Union whose prestige rose spectacularly in the Arab world." Dawisha (1979, p.15) similarly noted "Soviet diplomatic activity did secure additional prestige for the Soviet Union in the Arab world where the population seemed to be impressed with the style, if not the substance, of the Soviet stand."

These findings indicate the utility of subsuming adversarial crisis bargaining under the broader rubric of what Singer (1963), George and Smoke (1974) and others have termed a "model" or "theory of inter-nation influence," a framework that features both accommodative and coercive options. Accommodation is not confined to intra-alliance bargaining; bargaining between adversaries in an international crisis need not be primarily coercive. One's own stock may be improved by appearing accommodative as by playing confrontational games; one can lie in the same bed with the adversary without sharing his dream. Perhaps the key to understanding whether accommodation or coercion will be chosen rests on three factors viz. power asymmetry, issue salience and whether one acts in a timely enough manner to define the game that will be played.
NOTES

1 For instance Zagare's (1987, ch. 5) dynamic game theory analysis dubbed "theory of moves," gives a compelling parsimonious explanation of both superpowers' maneuvering, at times at the expense of their respective clients, during the 1967 Six Day War. Such behavior on their part helped to "maintain the stability of the compromise outcome" (i.e. a ceasefire without further Arab losses), the outcome that is a nonmyopic equilibrium.

2 As Jervis (1979), George and Smoke (1974), Maxwell (1968) and many others have suggested, it is the actor willing to risk and tolerate greater costs that is likely to prevail.

3 Zeuthen (1930) makes many interesting observations about asymmetry of resources and other player characteristics in his pioneering work on bargaining.

4 This linkage of military superiority to risk acceptance is also consistent with Expected Utility theory. Bueno De Mesquita (1982) has demonstrated that a necessary though not sufficient condition for the initiation of war is whether or not the initiator regards the probability of winning as greater than the probability of losing.

5 See Achen and Snidal (1988) for a discussion of what they term "inferential felonies" often found in case studies of deterrence.


8 "Speech by Comrade N.S. Khrushchev" Pravda and Izvestia Aug. 1,
1956. Heikal (1973, ch. 3) indicates the move was Nasser's revenge for the Dulles' cancellation of aid for the Aswan Dam. Only a handful of Egyptians had prior knowledge.


10Bulganin wrote to Mollet, Eisenhower and Eden. The contents of his letters were not disclosed; but he reportedly denied the USSR had encouraged or had any foreknowledge of Nasser's action (Keesing's Contemporary Archive Oct. 6-13, 1956, p.15128).

11"Soviet Pilots Ready to Go to Suez Canal" Pravda Sept. 7, 1956.


13Syrian president Kuwatly met with Soviet leaders on October 31, 1956. He reportedly pressed for military intervention but was told the USSR "is not ready to enter a world war (Heikal, 1973, p. 147).

14The contents of the letters will be treated at length in a later section.

15Psychological studies have convincingly shown that the message intended and the message received can be quite different (Jervis, 1972; White, 1968; Hopple, 1979; Hermann, 1977).


Details of the proposal can be found in the "Declaration Providing for the Establishment of a Suez Canal Users Association, September 21, 1956" (Dept. of State, 1956 pp. 365-366).


According to the Soviet UN delegate, Israel has repeatedly mounted "outrageous attacks" against Arab countries. In turn, the US co-sponsored a resolution criticizing Israel for its "flagrant violation" of the UN charter. That resolution further stated "the Council will have to consider what further measures are required to maintain or restore peace." UN Doc. S/3538 cf. Dept. of State Bulletin Jan. 30, 1956. See also Facts on File Jan 11-18, 1956, p. 18.


Dept. of State Bulletin April 23, 1956.


Dept. of State Bulletin Feb. 20, 1956


Facts on File July 4-10, 1956, p. 226.


Snyder and Diesing (1977) identify persuasion as a third possible variant.

Wagner (1982) argues that high valuation of a stake should not be confused with high motivation to stand firm; and that neither necessarily brings victory. His useful distinction does not vitiate the notion that the possessor of higher commitment/resolve enjoys a bargaining advantage. What he does show is that this advantage may be negated by resources and tactics available to the adversary.

Nasser, in his speech announcing the nationalization of the canal, admitted that the Czech-Egyptian arms agreement of 1955 was really a Soviet-Egyptian accord. Cf. Mohammed Heikal (1973). Soviet textbooks also make this admission (Ponomaryov et al, 1974, p. 300).


First Secretary Khrushchev, at a news conference on April 27, 1956, said: "If it were possible to agree, through the UN or otherwise, that (arms shipment to the ME) would not take place, we...would be prepared to take part in such an undertaking" (Facts on File April 25-May 1, 1956, p. 142). See also Facts on File May 23-29, 1956, p. 174.

Khrushchev did not specify the nationality of the volunteers. Referring to possible outbreak of war, he added if he had a son of military age, who wanted to volunteer, he would tell him to go ahead. "Khrushchev Warns West on a Suez War" New York Times Aug. 24, 1956.


See for instance "Soviet Government Statement on Armed Aggression
Against Egypt" Pravda and Izvestiia Nov. 1, 1956.

47Pravda and Izvestiia Nov. 6, 1956.

48Pravda and Izvestiia Nov. 6, 1956.

49The UN Security Council on November 5, refused to consider a Soviet resolution for UN military intervention to be spearheaded by the US and USSR (Facts on File Oct. 31- Nov. 6, 1956, p. 364). Eisenhower dismissed Bulganin's proposal for a joint US-Soviet expedition as "unthinkable" (Facts on File Oct. 31- Nov. 6, 1956, p. 364).

50"TASS Statement" Pravda and Izvestiia Nov. 11, 1956.

51Cairo sources denied that Egypt had requested the dispatch of Soviet volunteers. Soviet sources contended the Egyptian ambassador to the USSR had made the request. (Facts on File Nov. 14-20, 1956, p. 385). Moscow's version seems more credible; Egypt's appeals were aired on Nov. 6 and there was no official Soviet response until November 11.

52The Record on Suez: A Chronology of Events, 1956; Facts on File Nov. 7-13, 1956, pp. 373-74.


54Wright's (1987, p. 85) controversial book mentioned that British intelligence intercepted secret Soviet diplomatic communications indicating Moscow was about to intervene; it was this piece of intelligence that convinced the British government to pull back. British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd (1978, pp. 210-11) however, indicated "It was not fear of Soviet intervention" but rather American instigated pressures on the pound sterling that proved decisive.

55For instance, Zimmerman (1981, p. 333) suggests that the timing of Soviet troop deployment during the Korean War indicates their purpose is to deter the US from reattempting to unify Korea. Soviet troops were sent into North Korea "after the front had stabilized" and "the US was no longer
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