

The Anglo-American “Special Relationship” in the Middle East during Harold Wilson’s Premiership

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Introduction

This article considers the changing nature of the Anglo-American relationship in the 1960s by focusing on British Prime Minister Harold Wilson’s policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. Commentators tend to consider that the Anglo-American “special relationship” was no longer in operation in the region by the end of Wilson’s premiership. However, the aim of this article is to clarify that Wilson, in fact, actively supported American leadership in the Middle East even at the end of his time in office. The rhetoric of “special relationship” was originally coined by Prime Minister Winston Churchill to buttress the closeness of the two countries during World War II. The unique cooperation certainly worked perfectly during wartime as they spoke the same language, had a shared cultural background and, most importantly, had common interests in the security of Western Europe as well as the postwar world order.¹ However, once the war ended, the rhetoric revealed underlining differences between the two countries in policies, priorities, and interests. The differences were reasonable when considering that the rhetoric of the “special relationship” had been used to strengthen their ties in wartime in order to defeat the Axis powers. One could consequently define the core aspect of the “special relationship” between the United Kingdom and the United States as their common interests towards international security. The United States took a bigger role than that of the United Kingdom, but they were certainly cooperating with each other to maintain international security in favor of their interests, and this therefore gave the two countries a unique relationship that differed from those with their other major allies.

Indeed, when commentators in the 1950s still believed in the special connection between the two countries, the Anglo-American differences in their grand strategy were still trivial. But the differences were gradually highlighted towards the end of the 1960s, when Britain was struggling with maintaining its

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1. Geoffrey Warner, “The Anglo-American Special Relationship,” *Diplomatic History*, vol. 13, no. 4 (Fall 1989): 479.

international role, and these differences crystallized with Wilson's "three pronged misbehaviour," namely Britain's refusal to send military forces, even a token force, to support America's war in Vietnam, the announcement to withdraw its military forces from East of Suez in 1967, and its devaluation of the pound sterling in the same year.² Those incidents showed that Britain was no longer an affluent world power capable of shouldering the high cost of security in critical areas as well as reducing America's burden of maintaining military forces. It also unveiled that Britain had no intention to be, even ostensibly, seen as America's "junior ally" to sustain the U.S. leadership.³ Commentators therefore tend to consider that the nature of the relationship was considerably altered during the Wilson-Johnson years. Alan P. Dobson writes with conviction that the Anglo-American economic "special relationship" certainly ended after the devaluation of sterling as this, in part, led to the cessation of Anglo-American cooperation to sustain the Bretton Woods system.⁴ John Dumbrell also describes British behavior in the late 1960s as those of a "middle sized power," and in this respect, the country could no longer be an equal security partner of the United States.⁵ In other words, the fact that Britain was no longer an international leading power ruined the concept of the "special relationship." Indeed, while close Anglo-American security collaboration still continued in some areas, such as Hong Kong and Cyprus, in many crucial areas Britain's dwindling power forced the United States to reconsider its security policy to protect Western interests. In the Middle East, Washington needed to support its regional collaborators vis-à-vis the communist influence in order to cope with the power vacuum after the British withdrawal from East of Suez. This "support" involved America's arms sales and military training, which simply strengthened the relationships between the Americans and the regional powers. Britain's role as security partner to the U.S. was consequently replaced by the collaborators who were, in the Lyndon B. Johnson years, Israel and moderate Arab states. Meanwhile, Britain needed to define its position in the international community, given its newly diminished military and economic power. Wilson's government was forced to look outside of its traditional

2. Andrew Scott, *Allies Apart: Heath, Nixon and the Anglo-American Relationship* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 1–2.

3. Regarding this point, see David M. McCourt, "What was Britain's 'East of Suez Role'?" Reassessing the Withdrawal, 1964–1968," *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, vol. 20, no. 3 (November 2009), 453–72; Saki Dockirill, *Britain's Retreat from East of Suez: The Choice between Europe and the World?* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

4. Alan P. Dobson, *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century: Of Friendship, Conflict and the Rise and Decline of Superpowers* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 131–38.

5. John Dumbrell, "The Johnson Administration and the British Labour Government: Vietnam, the Pound and East of Suez," *Journal of American Studies*, vol. 30, no. 2 (1996), 211–31. See also "Conclusion" of Dockirill, *Britain's Retreat from East of Suez*.

relationships and build new, friendly relationships with those who would bring more lucrative commercial deals. Commentators have indeed focused on Wilson's effort in rapprochements with the Arab countries, including anti-Western regimes, which revealed underlining differences between the United States and Britain.⁶

However, this article contends that the Wilson government's friendship with Arab states was not inconsistent with its loyalty to the Anglo-American relationship at all. The prime minister and his advisors certainly tried to formulate Britain's pro-Israeli policy in the context of toeing the line with the Americans. They were consequently concerned that the shift in Middle East policy in favor of Arab states might ruin the relationship with the United States. Yet, they finally realized that both the United States and Britain had common security interests in the region, and Britain's pro-Arab stance would not mean undermining the Anglo-American relationship. Wilson believed that Britain's policy in favor of the Arab states could serve the interests of the West as a whole. In this regard, the article contends that the accepted view that the "special relationship" no longer was in force in the Middle East by the end of the Wilson-Johnson years is misleading. The Anglo-American leaders certainly shared the grand strategy of international security, trying to maintain the West's balance between Israel and the Arab states. The arguments within rely on the documents stored in the National Archives, Kew (TNA), Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Austin, Texas (LBJL), Liddell Hart Centre, King's College London (LHC), and important online sources such as Hansard and *Foreign Relations of the United States*.

I: The June 1967 War: Testing Ground of the Anglo-American "Special Relationship"

Harold Wilson, like his American counterpart, President Lyndon B. Johnson, was known for his pro-Israeli stance. At least by the Lebanon War, the Labour Party itself was ideologically sympathetic to Israel. During Wilson's years, two hundred out of three hundred Labour MPs were paid-up members of Labour Friends of Israel.⁷ The National Executive Committee of the Labour Party also contained many pro-Israeli members while the Overseas Department also

6. For example, see Simon C. Smith, "Centurions and Chieftains: Tank Sales and British Policy towards Israel in the Aftermath of the Six-Day War," *Contemporary British History*, vol. 28, no. 2 (2014), 219–39; Moshe Gat, *Britain and the Conflict in the Middle East, 1964–1967: The Coming of the Six Day War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003); Nigel J. Ashton, "'A Special Relationship' Sometime in Spite of Ourselves: Britain and Jordan, 1957–73," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 33, no. 2 (2005): 221–44.

7. June Edmonds, *The Left and Israel: Party-Policy Change and Internal Democracy* (London: Macmillan, 2000), 66.

continued to show its support for Israel.⁸ Prime Minister Harold Wilson was no exception. In his memoirs, he argued that Israel had always suffered from “a succession of incidents on Israel’s borders, some from the United Arab Republic (UAR) side, some from the Palestinian refugees in Jordan, and some of the most provocative from Syria.”⁹ However, he never mentioned Israel’s aggression towards its neighbors, such as its raid on Samu Village in Jordan in November 1966, where it killed ninety-six civilians.¹⁰ “Wilson, the most pro-Israeli Prime Minister ever,” as David Watkins labeled him, “took pleasure in serving Israeli orange juice to visiting Arab leaders who did not take alcohol.”¹¹ In a similar vein, Richard Crossman, the Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons, also commented that Wilson was “wholly pro-Israel.” According to Crossman’s diary, the Cabinet was comprised of Israel’s friends. In addition to Wilson, Roy Jenkins, the Home Secretary, and John Silkin, the Chief Whip, were sympathetic towards the Israelis too, and Crossman also said himself, “I’m pro-Israel.”¹² In contrast to Labour’s clear pro-Israeli sympathies, the Party’s general view in the late 1960s saw Arabs as “backward and feudalistic.”¹³ It should be also pointed out that the British public was very much pro-Israeli as of 1967. This was a natural phenomenon because, in the words of François Duchêne, “Jews are so much part of the fabric of European history and contemporary life that relations with Israel must, in some sense, be an extension of folk memories on both sides.”¹⁴ In this sense, the State of Israel could never be entirely foreign to people in Western Europe any more than those in America and Russia. Furthermore, as of 1967, the memory of the Holocaust made the British people more sympathetic to the Jewish cause, which in part resulted in public support for the creation of the State of Israel.¹⁵

8. Dusan J. Djonovich, ed., *United Nations Resolutions Series II, Vol. VI 1966–67* (New York: Oceana, 1989), 8.

9. Harold Wilson, *The Labour Government 1964–1970: A Personal Record* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson; and Michael Joseph, 1971), 394.

10. Clea Lutz Bunch (who is now Clea L. Hupp) argues that the attack severely damaged King Hussein’s confidence in the Israelis, which eventually led to the June 1967 war. Bunch, “Strike at Samu: Jordan, Israel, the United States, and the Origins of the Six Day War,” *Diplomatic History*, vol. 32, no. 1 (January 2008): 56–57.

11. David Watkins, *The Exceptional Conflict*, 35.

12. Richard Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, Volume Two (London: Hamish Hamilton; and Jonathan Cape, 1976), 355–56.

13. Christopher Mayhew and Michael Adams, *Publish It Not: The Middle East Cover Up* (London: Islamic Propagation Centre International, 1975), 38.

14. François Duchêne, “Israel in the Eyes of Europeans: A Speculative Essay,” in *Europe and Israel: Troubled Neighbours*, ed. Ilan Greilsammer (Walter de Gruyter: Berlin and New York, 1988), 11.

15. It was also important that the newly elected Labour government tried to utilize the memory of the Holocaust as a means to boost its campaign, showing its multicultural and

Harold Wilson did not hesitate to show his pro-Israeli stance as he believed this fell into line with his general foreign policy, namely his commitment to maintaining common interests with the United States. Despite some differences in Vietnam and Malaysia,¹⁶ the Wilson government essentially intended to toe the line with the previous Conservative governments regarding foreign policy, including the Anglo-American “special relationship,” at least by the end of 1967. The relationship defined the future of Britain, and set down the most impending and serious agendas, such as the parity of the pound/dollar and its commitment to the East of Suez, which required American support. Wilson therefore wanted to cooperate with the Americans in foreign policy terms, if possible, and maintaining a pro-Israeli line was justified when considering the Lyndon B. Johnson administration’s overt support for the Jewish state. Indeed, one might argue that Lyndon B. Johnson was the one who established the origin of the U.S.-Israeli close relationship. It is well known that, when he was a senator, Johnson had worked with Dean Acheson in order to try to stop John Foster Dulles’s threats against Israel during the Suez Crisis.¹⁷ It was also believed that Johnson played a significant role in evacuating European Jews from Hitler’s holocaust.¹⁸ The Israelis thus regarded him as one of their most reliable friends in Washington. Johnson in fact appointed supporters of Israel to significant positions, such as McGeorge Bundy, National Security Advisor until 1966 and Special Consultant during the 1967 June War, William Bundy, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs until March 1964 and then Assistant Secretary of

immigrant-friendly position. See Andy Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness in Contemporary Britain* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999); and Caroline Sharpels and Olaf Jensen, *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and Representing War and Genocide* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

16. Wilson faced the growing unpopularity of the Vietnam War at home and increasing pressure from Labour backbenchers to act for peace, particularly after the United States began its bombing campaign and introduced ground troops. Rhiannon Vickers, “Harold Wilson, the British Labour Party, and the War in Vietnam,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 43. Wilson’s support also complicated London’s relationship with members of the Commonwealth, most of whom were either opposed to the war or neutral, and no doubt played a part in establishing the British as too pro-American in the eyes of General de Gaulle of France, thus contributing to the delay in Britain’s entry into the EEC. Sylvia Ellis, *Britain, America, and the Vietnam War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 270.

17. Warren I. Cohen, “Lyndon Baines Johnson vs. Gamal Abdul Nasser,” in *Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World: American Foreign Policy 1963–1968*, eds. Warren I. Cohen and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 281–82.

18. This is according to Gomolak’s interview with a member of the Austin Jewish Community. Louis S. Gomolak, “Prologue: LBJ’s Foreign Affairs Background, 1908–1948,” PhD dissertation, University of Texas, 1989. It should be noted that the author could not find further evidence to corroborate the claim.

State for Far Eastern Affairs, Walt Rostow, National Security Advisor from 1966, Eugene Rostow, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, and Ambassador to the UN Arthur Goldberg. These appointments played an important role as Johnson was preoccupied with Vietnam and the issues of the Middle East were therefore left to the aforementioned pro-Israeli advisors. Moreover, representing a first for any U.S. president, the Johnson administration sold offensive weapons to Israel in 1965 and in 1966 and even provided Skyhawk jet fighters—which showed its clear and convincing pro-Israeli stand when considering the fact that the mobility of air power was regarded as one of the decisive elements in the Arab-Israeli conflict than the specific number of weapons.¹⁹

When Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser announced on May 22, 1967, the closure of the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping and all vessels carrying strategic materials to Israel, the Harold Wilson government's first reaction to the crisis was that "we can't stand aside and let Israel be strangled by Nasser in the Strait of Tiran," in Richard Crossman's words.²⁰ In addition to their personal sympathy towards the Israelis and its loyalty in the Anglo-American relationship, it was necessary for the Labour government that the Gulf be kept as an international waterway, first and primarily because if the closure continued, Britain would have a balance of payments deficit of £20 million a month. Second, Nasser's closure of the strait would possibly give Israel *casus belli*. If a war broke out, the closure would definitely continue, and the economic damage to Britain would be enormous. Third, because of their dislike of Nasser, the Cabinet wanted his attempt to threaten the Israelis to end in failure. In the late 1950s, Nasser's prestige was boosted profoundly as a champion of an anti-Western pan-Arabism, and the shift in the regional balance of power marked the end of European predominance in the Middle East. And Nasser, with increased backing from the Soviets, supported the national front movement in the Middle East. Britain was struggling to deal with the Egyptian armed and trained NLF disturbances in Yemen and this also racked up a large bill. The Cabinet members therefore believed that "Nasser's prestige and regional ambitions had to be trimmed."²¹ In practice, the Cabinet considered the idea of establishing an international naval task force that would secure Israeli access to the Gulf and the Straits. Foreign Secretary George Brown, despite his general pro-Arab stance,

19. Letter from the Deputy Secretary of Defense (Nitze) to the Under Secretary of State (Katzenbach), December 19, 1967, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1964–1968*, volume XX, Arab-Israeli Dispute 1967–68, doc. 22 (available online: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments>, accessed April 28, 2022). Johnson's predecessor, John F. Kennedy, had only sold "defensive weapons," such as land-to-air Hawk missiles.

20. Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, 355.

21. Wilson, *The Labour Government 1964–1970*, 397. See also William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*, 3rd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press; and Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 24.

actively supported an Anglo-American initiative to reopen the waterway. Crossman wrote that it looked “as if the whole of George Brown’s pro-Nasser policy, on which he’s been spending weeks and months, has collapsed overnight. Instead, George and Harold have suddenly done a complete volte-face and are now wholly pro-Israel.”²² To be fair, it should be noted that Brown’s “pro-Arab” stance has been considerably overexaggerated by commentators because of his good personal relations with various Arab leaders. Nigel Ashton indeed contends that Brown was also “evidently sufficiently trusted by at least certain senior Israelis.”²³ Perhaps, one may consider that George Brown’s motivation was related to his loyalty to the Anglo-American relationship. He indeed claimed in the conversation with Wilson and Defence Secretary Denis Healey that “we should not fail to support the U.S. in their efforts or leave them on their own.”²⁴ Yet, the other Cabinet members were more hesitant about a coalition that would remind the Arab states of the collusion of the partners during the Suez crisis.²⁵ Denis Healey was indeed aware that “such a force would be highly vulnerable in such confined waters so close to Egyptian batteries.” Healey’s advisors believed that “the Egyptian[s] had no clear view of the action that should be taken if the force were attacked,” and in this context, an international coalition would lead to the potential for Britain’s military involvement in the crisis.²⁶ While the Cabinet members certainly wished to curtail Nasser, they also wanted to avoid military involvement as Britain was encountering serious balance of payment problems, partially caused by overseas expenditures on defence. The backbenchers openly

22. Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, 355.

23. Nigel Ashton, “Searching for a Just and Lasting Peace? Anglo-American Relations and the Road to United Nations Security Council Resolution 242,” *The International History Review*, vol. 38, no. 1 (2016): 26.

24. Yet, Brown also stated, “but we should not wish this to be a solely Anglo-American enterprise.” He feared that the initiative would create an Eastern bloc/Arab versus Western bloc/Israel lineup, thereby weakening the influence of the West in the Middle East. Note of meeting between the prime minister, the foreign secretary, and the defence secretary, May 23, FCO17/490, TNA.

25. Indeed, the Cabinet turned down American suggestions to utilize the 1950 Tripartite Declaration among the United States, Britain, and France to deter Nasser’s demarche because of this reason. “Chronology of US-UK consultation on the Middle East, May 15–June 6, 1967,” undated, NSF, Files of Harold Saunders, Box 34, LBJL. The Declaration was issued by the three nations expressing their opposition to the use of force or threat of force between any of the states in the area. It articulated that if the three governments were to find any of the states in the region ready to violate armistice lines, they “would consistently with their obligations as members of the United Nations, immediately take action, both within and outside the United Nations, to prevent such violation.” “The Acting Secretary of State to Certain Diplomatic and Consular Office,” May 20, 1950, *FRUS 1950, Volume V, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, doc. 73.

26. Cabinet conclusions, May 26, 1967, CAB 130/323, TNA.

attacked the government about the huge burden the cost of defence was putting on the country. War in the Middle East was therefore not a viable option for the Cabinet. Wilson consequently decided to avoid any coalition that would “incur the risks inherent in any commitment to the use of force to reopen the Straits.”²⁷ When Kuwait forewarned Britain on May 27 that the country would embargo oil exports if Britain took any steps against the interests of Arabs, Wilson and Brown even became reluctant to force the waterway open.²⁸ Instead, Wilson showed interest in the French proposal of holding discussions between the U.S., Britain, France, and the USSR while Brown tried to pass an appropriate Security Council Resolution.²⁹

Despite the British concern, war broke out. The Cabinet, however, learned that Washington did not resent the Israeli preemptive attack, and so were happy to accept the war situation in favor of Israel. The Johnson administration was of the view that if Israel won “after more than 10 years of pouring Soviet arms into the Middle East, the whole Soviet arms game will be profoundly degraded.”³⁰ In short, Israel’s overwhelming victory against the neighboring Arab countries, made it possible for Washington to expect that the postwar peace negotiations would be conducted in favor of the U.S.-centered camp. It therefore aimed to use Israel’s military triumph to stem any further Soviet encroachment in the Middle East.³¹ Harold Wilson shared the view with his U.S. counterparts, considering that a war dominated by Israel could be an opportunity to stabilize the Middle East. From Wilson’s point of view, once the Israelis could secure their borders, they would be ready for peace because he thought that it was Nasser who posed the risk, jeopardising Israel’s right to exist. For the “wholly pro-Israeli” prime minister, in Crossman’s words, a war dominated by Israel would definitely suit Western interests. Wilson’s announcement on 9 June demonstrated this stance: he never condemned Israel or called for a prompt withdrawal but, instead, he insisted on the necessity of recognizing Israel’s sovereign right to existence.³² Wilson also told Canadian Prime Minister Lester Pearson that “What I feel is that there is a good chance now that Israelis are pretty generous and magnanimous. They want

27. Cabinet conclusions, May 23, 1967, CAB 128/42, TNA.

28. A. M. Palliser to A. Blackshaw, May 28, 1967, PREM13/1618, TNA.

29. “Middle East,” written by Brown, May 29, 1967, CAB 128/130, TNA.

30. Walt Rostow to Lyndon Johnson, June 4, 1967, NSF, Country File: Middle East Crisis, Box 104, LBJL. Dean Rusk to the Embassy in London, June 4, 1967, NFS, Country File: Middle East Crisis, Box 104, LBJL.

31. Battle to Katzenbach, undated (September 1967), National Security Files (hereafter, NSF), Files of Harold Saunders, Box 27, LBJL. Despite such diplomatic efforts, before the outbreak of the war, the Johnson administration saw the possibility of a preemptive attack by Israel more as a problem rather than an opportunity. David Schoenbaum, *The United States and the State of Israel* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 155.

32. “Speaks of Middle Eastern Situation,” June 9, 1967, PREM 13/1620, TNA.

to be settled there with everybody recognizing their existence and the right to live, and obviously they want Aqaba. But I understand they are prepared now to settle the refugee problems once and for all.”³³ To be fair to Wilson, the scenario was justifiable immediately after the ceasefire of the war. As of June 23, 1967, London and Washington believed that “the Israeli objective is peace and their territorial claims are minimal, much less than we would have anticipated.”³⁴ Indeed, Abba Eban had assured the UN General Assembly that Israel would “unify the city (Jerusalem)” at a “practical level” “without annexing it.”³⁵ Consequently, like the United States, Wilson’s government, despite imposing an arms embargo on the Middle East on June 5, decided to continue arms deliveries to Israel. As long as the Soviet Union continued to provide weapons to the Arab states, Israel would continue to suffer “greater difficulties” in maintaining its military position.³⁶ It should be noted that the public, the media, and the Labour Party were also supportive of Israel during and after the war. Media bias, indeed, seems clear. When the BBC’s television programme, *Panorama*, broadcast both Nasser’s and Eban’s interviews, the programme spent considerably longer on Eban’s explanation for Israel’s political motives, while deliberately slashing the time given to Nasser’s peaceful remark about the Israelis.³⁷

II: The Special Relationship or Securing Britain’s Own Interests

Although Israel’s victory was favorable to the Western countries in terms of the Cold War, Britain faced a dilemma over whether to overtly take sides with the State of Israel. The Arab states started to attack Britain in various ways to protest against its pro-Israeli stand. This emanated partially from Nasser’s attempt to save his own neck. In the midst of the war, Radio Cairo claimed that the United States and Britain militarily supported Israel, providing aircraft and assisting battlefield communications.³⁸ This was certainly a “big lie”—the two countries were never militarily involved in supporting Israel during the June War. Nasser was completely humiliated by the comprehensive defeat and tried to pin the blame on the West, stating that Israel had only won the war “as the result of

33. Telephone conversation between Wilson and Lester Pearson, June 7, 1967, PREM 13/1620, TNA.

34. Dean, the Embassy in Washington to Foreign Office (FO), June 23, 1967, PREM 13/1622, TNA. For example, Israel said its interest was in demilitarization along the Syrian border rather than occupation. Editorial note, *FRUS XIX*, doc. 322.

35. Lord Caradon, New York, to FO, June 21, 1967, FCO 17/251, TNA.

36. Cabinet conclusions, June 6, 1967, CAB 128/42, TNA.

37. “Panorama: Recorded from Transmission,” June 5, 1967, Christopher Mayhew’s personal papers, file 9, no. 4, Liddell Hart Centre, King’s College London (hereafter LHC).

38. The Embassy in Washington D.C. to FO, June 9, 1967, PREM 13/1620, TNA.

encouragement and at least moral support from the imperialist Powers.”³⁹ Although King Hussein, as part of his attempt to approach the West, announced that Israel had not received any support from the two Western countries, the memory of the Suez plot was still fresh in the minds of the people in the Arab states and the “big lie” continued to be accepted as truth in the Arab world.⁴⁰ Nasser in fact wished to be on open terms with the Western countries (thus he allowed King Hussein to negotiate with Israel under the auspices of the Americans). But he needed to be seen by his people to take a tough stance against the West in order to recover his authority and public standing.⁴¹ Equally, although the leaders of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait never believed the “big lie” and wished to remain on good terms with Britain, their moderate stance had caused “embarrassment” in the Arab world.⁴² The oil producing countries thus imposed an oil embargo on the West. They also took a big chunk out of their British bank accounts, and tried to affect the value of sterling, which was already on the brink of devaluation. Furthermore, the Suez Canal remained closed, first because Nasser did not want to lift the closure and second because it was now in the war zone.⁴³ The Cabinet concluded that, if the situation persisted, this could possibly result in a 28 percent reduction in oil supplies to Western Europe, which would place a heavy burden on the British balance of payments, equivalent to £50 million.⁴⁴ Wilson also claimed that the closure of the Suez Canal alone was costing

39. The Embassy in Moscow to FO, June 10, 1967, PREM 13/1620, TNA.

40. The Embassy in Jeddah to FO, June 15, 1967, PREM 13/1621, TNA. Moshe Gat has argued that the Conservative government’s low profile policy after 1956 made the Arab states presume that the country was essentially pro-Israel and anti-Arab and this view was buttressed by Britain’s arms transfer to Israel during the late 1950s to 1960s. Gat, “Britain and Israel Before and After the Six Day War, June 1967,” 60–61; Gat, *Britain and the Conflict in the Middle East, 1964–1967: The Coming of the Six Day War* (Westport, CT, and London: Praeger, 2003), 239–42.

41. On Nasser’s tactics, see Fawaz Gerges, “The 1967 Arab-Israeli War: Origins and Consequences,” in *The Transformation of Arab Politics: Disentangling Myth from Reality*, eds. Avi Shlaim and Roger Louis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 201–2.

42. “The Middle East Situation,” written by the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, June 15, 1967, PREM 13/1621, TNA.

43. “Mr Richard Marsh, Minister of Power speaks on oil supplies,” June 10, 1967, PREM 13/1620, TNA. It should be noted that in comparison to the oil crisis during the 1973 October War, the economic damage from the Arab embargo in 1967 was relatively limited. Indeed, Richard Marsh, Minister of Power, considered that the oil embargo could be absorbed without affecting the British public. This was first because the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) oil allocation scheme worked effectively. Second, the Arab oil producers failed to cajole the other producers into following their strategy to use oil as a weapon against the Western countries. During the June War, among all of the possible effects, closure of the Suez Canal was the most serious problem for the United Kingdom.

44. Cabinet conclusions, June 15, 1967, CAB128/42/2, TNA.

Britain £20 million a month in balance of payments.⁴⁵

In short, whereas Israel's triumph over the Arab states fit well with Anglo-American global strategy, securing Britain's significant interests in the Middle East relied considerably on maintaining cordial friendships with the Arab world. Given the dilemma, E. M. Rose, a Foreign Office member of staff, warned that "we need to do all we can to improve Anglo-Arab relations to avoid further damage to British interests and in order to get the Canal open and the oil flowing."⁴⁶ It was certainly true that Britain needed to keep the Suez Canal open, secure regular and cheap oil supplies, maintain a large share of the oil industry in the Middle East, and encourage Arab investment in Britain, all of which would be at stake if Britain overtly supported Israel. Eventually, Brown made it clear that "our economic interest in the area" was obviously the most important single item on Britain's agenda. Regarding Israel, Brown saw that Israel had an "outstanding ability to defend themselves," and, as such, there was no need for Britain to support it.⁴⁷ Harold Wilson, despite his sympathy for Israel, therefore allowed Brown to address the UN General Assembly on June 21, stating that Britain would not support Israel's annexation of the Arab part of Jerusalem⁴⁸ and that an immediate solution to the Palestinian refugee problem was necessary.⁴⁹ When Israel announced its annexation of the Arab part of Jerusalem on June 30, it became more difficult for Britain to maintain its pro-Israeli stance. The Israelis were obviously reluctant to move towards peace and Wilson's support for Israel could no longer be justified. The changing political situation in the Middle East also shifted opinion in the House of Commons, which placed additional pressure on Harold Wilson. Immediately before the war, the atmosphere in the House was certainly pro-Israel. For example, on May 31, 1967, James Dickens, Labour MP for Lewisham West, stressed the importance of supporting Israel, and this was justified as Israel had fought against "the axis of Cairo and Moscow." Duncan

45. Harold Wilson contended that the heavy economic damage eventually resulted in the devaluation of the pound sterling in November 1967. See Alec Cairncross, "Devaluing the Pound: The Lessons of 1967," *Economist*, November 14, 1992, vol. 325 (7785): 21 (3).

46. E. M. Rose to D. Allen, June 14, 1967, FCO17/34, TNA.

47. Brown, "Arab Attitudes and British Economic Interests in the Middle East," July 7, 1967, CAB129/132, TNA.

48. The stand of his announcement was decided in Cabinet Conclusions, June 15, 1967, CAB 128/42/2, TNA. See also full text of the speech by the Secretary of State to the General Assembly of the United Nations, June 21, 1967, FCO17/520, TNA.

49. While Britain called for an immediate solution to the Palestinian problem, it preferred to see the Palestinian claims not in nationalist but humanitarian terms, foreseeing the possibility of a collapse of the status quo. With regard to Brown's speech, see Appendices E, "Extract from George Brown's speech June 21, 1967, to the Fifth Emergency Session of the United Nations General Assembly," in *Britain, the Six Day War and its Aftermath*, by Frank Brenchley (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 143.

Sandys, Conservative MP for Streatham, and former Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, also stated that the strife in the Middle East stemmed from “the struggle for power within the Arab world” and “Russia’s desire to secure a dominant influence in the Middle East.” And consequently, it was important for Britain to support Israel. Their statements seemed to be applauded, in contrast to Margaret McKay, Labour MP for Clapham, whose campaign for Palestinian refugees was totally ignored.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, on July 7, Alec Douglas-Home, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, pointed out that “there has been a general feeling in the House that the course of the recent momentous events in the Middle East should be reviewed by hon. Members.”⁵¹ Leader of the Opposition, Edward Heath, then put pressure on Wilson on July 18, attacking Labour’s maneuvers in the Arab-Israeli conflict by citing the adverse effects on Britain of the June War.⁵²

Although the regional and political background suggested that Britain should further friendship with Arab states, Wilson’s government still wished to maintain its close relationship with the United States. However, after it became apparent that Israel did, in fact, have territorial ambitions, Anglo-American differences were becoming apparent. First, while Wilson’s government was forced to denounce the Israeli territorial ambitions because of Arab pressure, the Johnson administration was, albeit discontented with the Jerusalem issue, not eager to force the Israelis to abandon their territorial claims. Second, while Washington was becoming interested in an Israeli-Jordanian resolution, Britain considered it unfeasible.⁵³ U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk believed that the Israeli-Jordanian resolution could be the basis of the peace process after the June War, and confidently wrote to Brown that “I want to go ahead in this as in other matters on the basis of full agreement with you.”⁵⁴ Wilson’s Cabinet was content with the fact that the United States was going to commence the peace process in cooperation with Britain. The Cabinet members were, however, aware that even if King Hussein seemed to be ready for peace, “it is the return of Jerusalem,” Ambassador to Jordan, Phillip Adams advised, “that they [the Jordanians] are after and that the

50. Vol. 747 Commons debates, titled “Middle East,” May 31, 1967, available online: <https://hansard.millbanksystems.com/sittings/1967/may/31> (accessed October 13, 2022). Watkins recalled that McKay was subjected to “a scurrilous campaign” when she criticised the Israeli expansionism that subordinated the Palestinians. He claimed that “by the time of the 1967 war, any who expressed Arab sympathies were attacked with unprecedented venom.” Watkins, *The Exceptional Conflict*, 35.

51. Vol. 749, Commons debates, titled “Middle East,” July 9, 1967.

52. Vol. 750, Commons debates, titled “Middle East,” July 18, 1967.

53. See Erika Tominaga, “The Failure in the Search for Peace: America’s 1968 Sale of F-4 Phantoms to Israel and its Policy Towards Israel and Jordan,” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, vol. 16, no. 2 (May 2016): 303–27.

54. FO to Washington, July 25, 1967, PREM 13/1622, TNA. The telegram includes the copy of the text of the message from Rusk to Brown.

West Bank is of secondary importance.”⁵⁵ The Israelis nevertheless made a definitive statement on a united Jerusalem. He thus claimed that “King Hussein recognized that this war, as all wars in history, had to have consequences.”⁵⁶ In a similar vein, British Ambassador to Israel, Michael Hadow, also pointed out that Israel had no faith in King Hussein’s intention to start the actual negotiation. “Eban made it clear that,” Hadow wrote, “the Israel Government realize that King Hussein’s present manoeuvrings really amount to trying to get the Americans or us to extract from the Israeli certain concessions before the negotiations are embarked upon.”⁵⁷ Furthermore, Harold Wilson was more interested in an Israeli-Egyptian resolution because of the repercussions on Britain of the closure of Suez Canal. Wilson definitely preferred to talk about “what leverage could be exerted on Israel to withdraw from the Canal to enable the Egyptians to re-open it,” rather than the Jerusalem question.⁵⁸ Third, Washington refused to countenance any language that could be read as forcing Israel to withdraw or lay down a timeframe. Indeed, U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Goldberg, informed Rusk that, according to the Arabs, “it was being said that we wanted no res[olution].” Britain, however, considered it urgent to get a decision in the United Nations as soon as possible because they believed that “if we do not get a decision from the Security Council very soon [...] some moderate Arab regimes would disappear.”⁵⁹ And Brown did not think those moderates would be replaced by other moderate regimes.⁶⁰ Brown believed that the Khartoum Conference convened in August and September “produced a welcome and encouraging climate of moderation among the Arab states,” and the resolution should be achieved before “the spirit of Khartoum would pass.”⁶¹ Indeed, when Lord Caradon, UK Permanent Representative to the United Nations, saw King Hussein in person on November 5, the king reiterated “speed [for concluding the resolution] was essential and all would be lost if we did not now bring the matter to a conclusion in the council.”⁶²

55. Adams, Amman, to FO, July 15, 1967, PREM 13/1622, TNA.

56. Record of a meeting between the prime minister and the foreign minister of Israel, in the prime minister’s room at the House of Commons, November 6, 1967, PREM13/1624, TNA.

57. Tel Aviv to FO, July 26, 1967, PREM 13/1622, TNA.

58. Wilson to Brown, May 18, 1967, PREM 13/1622, TNA.

59. Untitled, November 14, 1967, PREM 13/1624, TNA.

60. Ibid.

61. The Embassy in Washington to Foreign Office, September 27, 1967, PRFM13/1623; untitled, November 14, 1967, PREM 13/1624, TNA.

62. UK Mission New York to Foreign Office, November 5, 1967, telegram no. 3033, PREM 13/1624, TNA.

III: Britain's Hidden Support for Securing a U.S.-led International Order

In November 1967, Britain could no longer sit on the fence: it was time to take a clear position and commit either to the Arab or the U.S. side. At that time, two drafts were submitted to the Security Council: a non-aligned text sponsored by India—which was in fact favorable to the Arab cause, namely because it was “too precise on withdrawal” from the Israeli point of view⁶³—and the pro-Israeli American resolution. On the one hand, the Arabs claimed that they could accept only these terms: “(1) the restoration of all territory that had been taken by the Israelis, (2) the settlement of the refugee question, and (3) the auspices of some international body which would obviate the necessity of direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Arabs.”⁶⁴ On the other hand, the Americans stipulated “land for peace” encompassing “(a) withdrawal of occupying troops, (b) end of belligerency, (c) political independence and territorial integrity, (d) recognition of every state to live in peace and security in [the] area, (e) solution of refugee problem, and (f) freedom of passage through international waterways.”⁶⁵ To Britain’s dismay, both the Americans and the Arabs, namely the Egyptians, asked Britain to cosponsor their favored drafts.⁶⁶ “It would be most valuable,” Goldberg explained to Lord Caradon, “if the United Kingdom could be associated with the new [American] text and if King Hussein could be informed accordingly before the meeting tomorrow [November 5] afternoon.”⁶⁷ Lord Caradon’s advice to Brown was twofold. On the one hand, he said that Britain could go “together again” with the United States if King Hussein accepted the text.⁶⁸ In this line, he could inform the king that Britain “welcomed [the] American move,” emphasizing “that it would be urgently considered,” while also cautiously not mentioning the wording of the text.⁶⁹ On the other hand, he honestly told Brown that his first thought was that “it would be better that the United Kingdom should not be

63. UK Mission New York to Foreign Office, November 2, 1967, telegram no. 3439, PREM 13/1624, TNA.

64. W. Rostow to Johnson, October 31, 1967, doc. 495, *FRUS* XIX.

65. Mission to the UN to the Department of State, November 4, 1967, doc. 501, *FRUS* XIX.

66. UK Mission New York to Foreign Office, November 7, 1967, PREM 13/1624; UK Mission New York to Foreign Office, November 5, 1967, telegram no. 5975, FCO 17/514; UK Mission New York to Foreign Office, November 4, 1967, FCO 17/514, TNA.

67. UK Mission New York to Foreign Office, November 4, 1967, telegram no. 3022, FCO 17/514, TNA.

68. UK Mission New York to Foreign Office, November 5, 1967, telegram no. 5975, FCO 17/514 TNA.

69. UK Mission New York to Foreign Office, November 4, 1967, telegram no. 3022, FCO 17/514, TNA.

associated with the new American text.”⁷⁰ This impression was based on his thinking that peace would never be achieved as long as the text included a clause that neither side could accept. “We must do our utmost to avoid being faced with the necessity of voting on disagreed texts of doubtful practical value,” he wrote to Brown.⁷¹ Lord Caradon, therefore, went so far as to draw up Britain’s own draft, “if only for purposes of comparison with the new American text,”⁷² as he told the secretary. This alternative text regarding “land for peace” clauses required that “all armed forces should withdraw from territories occupied as a result of the recent conflict,” which was almost the same as the actual clause of Resolution 242.⁷³ Brown went for the first option and Lord Caradon had conversations with King Hussein and Egypt’s Foreign Minister Mahmoud Riad. Lord Caradon was, nevertheless, convinced that his “first impression” was right. Although “the Arabs accepted the obligations to be imposed on them,” Lord Caradon wrote to Brown, “they were worried not only about [the] wording of the resolution but also about American intentions [...] with the question of withdrawal.” In short, in a series of previous statements issued by the Americans, the Arab states did not trust the Americans and were suspicious that, were the American draft to be accepted, Gaza, Jerusalem, and even the West Bank would remain occupied by the Israelis. “If they had a word of honour from the president [of the United States], that would be good enough for them and they would no longer worry about the wording of the resolution, or about having a resolution at all,” Lord Caradon observed. “But,” he continued, with the current American attitude, the Arab states “could not go along with anything like the American text until and unless the question of withdrawal were clarified.”⁷⁴ Therefore, Britain decided not to associate itself with the American text.

Britain was nevertheless still required to show its position when voting. Lord Caradon rightly described the dilemma that:

If we abstain on the American text we will clearly annoy the US government who continue to think that if we come out publicly in support of their text this will enable them to swing several delegations to their side and thus ensure the required majority. But if we vote in favor of it the Arabs will regard our vote as pro-Israeli and

70. Ibid.

71. UK Mission New York to Foreign Office, November 3, 1967, telegram no. 5953, FCO 17/514, TNA.

72. UK Mission New York to Foreign Office, November 4, 1967, telegram no. 3025, FCO 17/514, TNA.

73. UK Mission New York to Foreign Office, November 4, 1967, telegram no. 3026, FCO 17/514, TNA.

74. UK Mission New York to Foreign Office, November 6, 1967, telegram no 3043, FCO 17/514, TNA.

therefore unfriendly.⁷⁵

Britain's own draft now appeared as a clever way to avoid coming down in favor of either side of the conflict. Brown knew that the British text "is not particularly attractive to either side,"⁷⁶ even expecting their refusal. Eban indeed told Brown that "it is unacceptable to Israel" while King Hussein and Riad pointed out that the stipulation on "territories" occupied during the June War was too vague to be acceptable.⁷⁷ Indeed, people involved in the UN negotiations surely realized that any peace settlement based on the British text would not be achieved easily.⁷⁸ Henry Kissinger went so far as to opine that "I thought the 242 language was a joke [...] because the phrases mean nothing."⁷⁹ Nevertheless, as Brown wrote to Harold Wilson, it would enable Britain to "explain and protest our own position in the event of the other resolutions coming to the vote: we expect to abstain on them on the grounds that they would be unproductive."⁸⁰ Washington indeed initially did not like the UK trying to "approach to a middle position."⁸¹ Yet, it was unlikely that the United States could forestall the introduction of the Latin American draft, which required Israel to "withdraw all its forces from all territories occupied by it as a result of the recent conflict."⁸² Washington subsequently started to see the UK draft more pragmatically, as "it is beginning to look increasingly attractive when compared to the viable alternatives." On November 13, the U.S. finally signaled its support, "without committing ourselves on the text."⁸³ Once Britain's draft got support from Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon, Iraq, and (in principle) the UAR,⁸⁴ Goldberg also encouraged the Israelis to "give

75. UK Mission New York to Foreign Office, November 9, 1967, FCO 17/514, TNA.

76. Foreign Office to UK Mission New York, telegram no. 6351, November 16, 1967, FCO 17/514, TNA.

77. Ibid.

78. Author's Skype interview with Katakura Kunio, September 27, 2016. Katakura was an Arabic-trained diplomat in the Japanese Foreign Ministry at the time and later became Ambassador to Iraq, the UAE, and Egypt in the 1990s. See also Sydney Dawson Bailey, *The Making of Resolution 242* (Dordrecht, Boston, and Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985), 143–96.

79. Memorandum of Conversation, October 22, 1973, doc. 230, *FRUS, 1969–1976, vol. XXV, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1973*.

80. Brown to Wilson, November 15, 1967, PREM 13/1624, TNA.

81. Ibid.

82. Nathaniel Davis of the NSC Staff to W. Rostow, November 13, 1967, doc. 524, *FRUS XIX*.

83. Ibid.

84. Nathaniel Davis of the NSC Staff to W. Rostow, November 16, 1967, doc. 526, *FRUS XIX*.

grudging acceptance to UK draft.”⁸⁵ On November 19, Britain’s text informally received support from all of the related parties excluding Syria. With Lord Caradon’s tactical diplomacy successfully preventing any objection by the Soviets, the British draft was adopted by the UN Security Council on November 22, 1967.⁸⁶

Although Wilson’s Labour government decided not to take sides in the conflict, at least on the surface, the year 1969, however, posed two challenges, which eventually started to tilt Britain’s policy slightly towards the Arab side. First, Israel requested that Britain sell them an extra two hundred Centurion and two hundred and fifty Chieftain tanks. It was a kind of a testing ground: the answer would certainly reflect whether Britain was going to continue supporting Israel like before. Wilson still wished to be a supporter of Israel, and decided to provide the Centurions. Yet, he hesitated to upgrade the armament level. The Chieftain was, at that time, considered to have the most sophisticated, powerful, and heaviest armor, and thus introducing the tank to the Middle East would not only aggravate the arms race but also regress the development of Britain’s relationships with the Arab countries. What is more, France appeared to be a big arms supplier to the Arab states. The Arab states now had a choice between British or French arms. This meant that if they knew that Britain was selling highly sophisticated arms to Israel, the Arabs could easily boycott the British weapons, buying French arms instead.⁸⁷ The second challenge, however, ruined Wilson’s loyalty to the Anglo-American relationship, at least on the surface. In 1969, Muammar Qaddafi, Libya’s socialism-inspired politician, took control of the Libyan government and started to confiscate Western oil products. Colonel Qaddafi, while holding the British interests to hostage, asked Britain to supply Chieftains. “The revolution in Libya,” the Cabinet observed, “makes it more likely that our forces and facilities there would suffer if we concluded the deal with Israel.”⁸⁸ Although there was a deep-rooted sympathy towards Israel in the Cabinet,⁸⁹ it would seem that Britain had now pinned its colors to the mast. The Cabinet eventually decided to sell

85. Mission to the UN to the Department of State, doc. 528, *FRUS* XIX.

86. Regarding Lord Caradon’s diplomacy, see Ashton, “Searching for a Just and Lasting Peace? Anglo-American Relations and the Road to United Nations Security Council Resolution 242,” *The International History Review*, vol. 38, no. 1 (2016): 24–44.

87. Regarding this point, see Simon C. Smith, “Centurions and Chieftains: Tank Sales and British Policy towards Israel in the Aftermath of the Six-Day War,” *Contemporary British History*, vol. 28, no. 2 (2014): 226.

88. Minutes of a meeting of the Defence and Oversea Policy Committee, October 16, 1969, PREM 13/3329, TNA.

89. For example, Sir Burke Trend wrote to Wilson that “it was politically impossible to refuse tanks to Israel.” Sir Burke Trend to Harold Wilson, October 16, 1969, PREM 13/3329, TNA.

Chieftains to Libya, while refusing the same request from Israel.⁹⁰

However, the decision was, in fact, not inconsistent with Wilson's loyalty to the Anglo-American relationship. The Cabinet certainly decided to sell the state-of-the-art tanks, but suspended *de facto* deliveries to Libya. Wilson considered that the actual delivery could be implemented when Israel could gain extra weapons from the United States, so that the British behavior would not ruin the balance of power in favor of Israel. Indeed, for Wilson's government, concluding the contract with Libya did not contradict its commitment to maintaining common security interests with the United States. By the end of its premiership, the Wilson government realized that openly supporting Israel would only incite the Arab states to seek Soviet assistance. It was thus a wise idea that Britain should distance itself from U.S.-Israeli intimacies in order to maintain the West's friendship with the Arab world.⁹¹ In other words, Wilson's government considered Britain's Middle East policy in the context of the security of the West as a whole. The idea was also accepted by Lyndon Johnson's successor Richard Nixon. Nixon indeed told Michael Stewart, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs from March 1968, that Britain should retain a "reasonable relationship" with the Arabs in order to maintain the West's interest in the region. "The Americans" Nixon said, "were regarded as being in the Israeli pocket," but "Britain was not." "It was essential for her [Britain]," Nixon continued, "to pursue an active diplomacy in the area so that the Arabs could realize they could have friends outside the Soviet Union."⁹²

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Labour government certainly saw an interest in Israel's triumph over the Arab states from the viewpoint of Cold War politics. Britain shared common ground with the United States in this respect. Yet, the economic pressure compelled Britain to improve its relationship with the Arab states, the attempt of which was represented by George Brown's speech to the UN on June 21, on the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. The contradictory stance led Britain to seek "a middle position," in Brown's words.⁹³ The result was Britain's tabling of its own draft to the UN Security Council. Nevertheless, Britain's position was not entirely "middle," but rather still pro-

90. Minutes of a meeting of the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee, October 16, 1969, PREM13/3329, TNA.

91. Moshe Gat, "Britain and Israel Before and After the Six Day War, June 1967: From Support to Hostility," *Contemporary British History*, vol. 18, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 59.

92. Minutes of a meeting of the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee, October 16, 1969, PREM 13/3329, TNA.

93. Brown to Wilson, November 15, 1967, PREM 13/1624, TNA.

American. First, even though both the United States and the UAR asked Britain to cosponsor their supporting drafts, the Cabinet considered only the possibility of cooperation with the Americans. Second, in practice, the Cabinet did nothing to push the Israelis to withdraw from the occupied land even though the closure of the Suez Canal brought enormous economic repercussions to the balance of payments. The Cabinet was, in fact, satisfied with the current balance of power in the Middle East, which was sustained by the American-Israeli coalition. Indeed, even though Britain tried to be charming to the Arab states in public, Eban recognized that Britain “privately” supported Israel’s impossibility of retreat.⁹⁴ In a similar vein, the United States perceived that “the UK is the itchiest of all since the Canal’s continued closure is costing Wilson—and Britain—a great deal,” and thus understood the necessity of Britain’s ostensible pro-Arab stance.⁹⁵ At that time, the United States was aware that the public and the Labour Party were, fundamentally, still pro-Israel. The Labour government, however, simply could not afford to be seen as publicly supporting the Israelis. Indeed, London and Washington shared their grand strategy, cooperating with each other to maintain the balance of power in the Middle East in favor of the West. In this regard, one may say that the Middle East policy of the British government under Wilson’s premiership was, in fact, indirectly supporting America’s Cold War policy in the Middle East. As the core aspect of the Anglo-American “special relationship” came from their common interests in international security, this article contends that the relationship under Wilson’s premiership could certainly still be regarded as “special.”

94. Mission to the UN to the Department of State, September 26, 1967, doc. 449, *FRUS* XIX.

95. W. Rostow to Johnson, October 12, 1967, NSF, Files of Harold Saunders, Box 34, LBJL.