

# Israel Affairs



## The impact of the cold war on the Thatcher government's Middle East policy

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### **Abstract**

This article argues that Margaret Thatcher's concern over Soviet ambitions was a highly significant factor behind the general agreement between 10 Downing Street and the Foreign Office (FCO) on the Middle East during the 1980s. Notwithstanding her instinctive understanding for the State of Israel, Thatcher increasingly perceived Israeli policies as a liability rather than an asset for Western interests, in view of worries that they were increasing instability in the region, and therefore undermining the security of Britain's Arab allies. Thatcher feared that the Soviets and other radical forces would exploit regional turmoil in order to expand their influence in the Middle East. Therefore, she agreed with the FCO on the urgent need to resolve the Israeli–Palestinian conflict as a means of defusing regional tensions at a time of heightened cold war friction.

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