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Soviet Strategy and Intentions in the Mediterranean Basin

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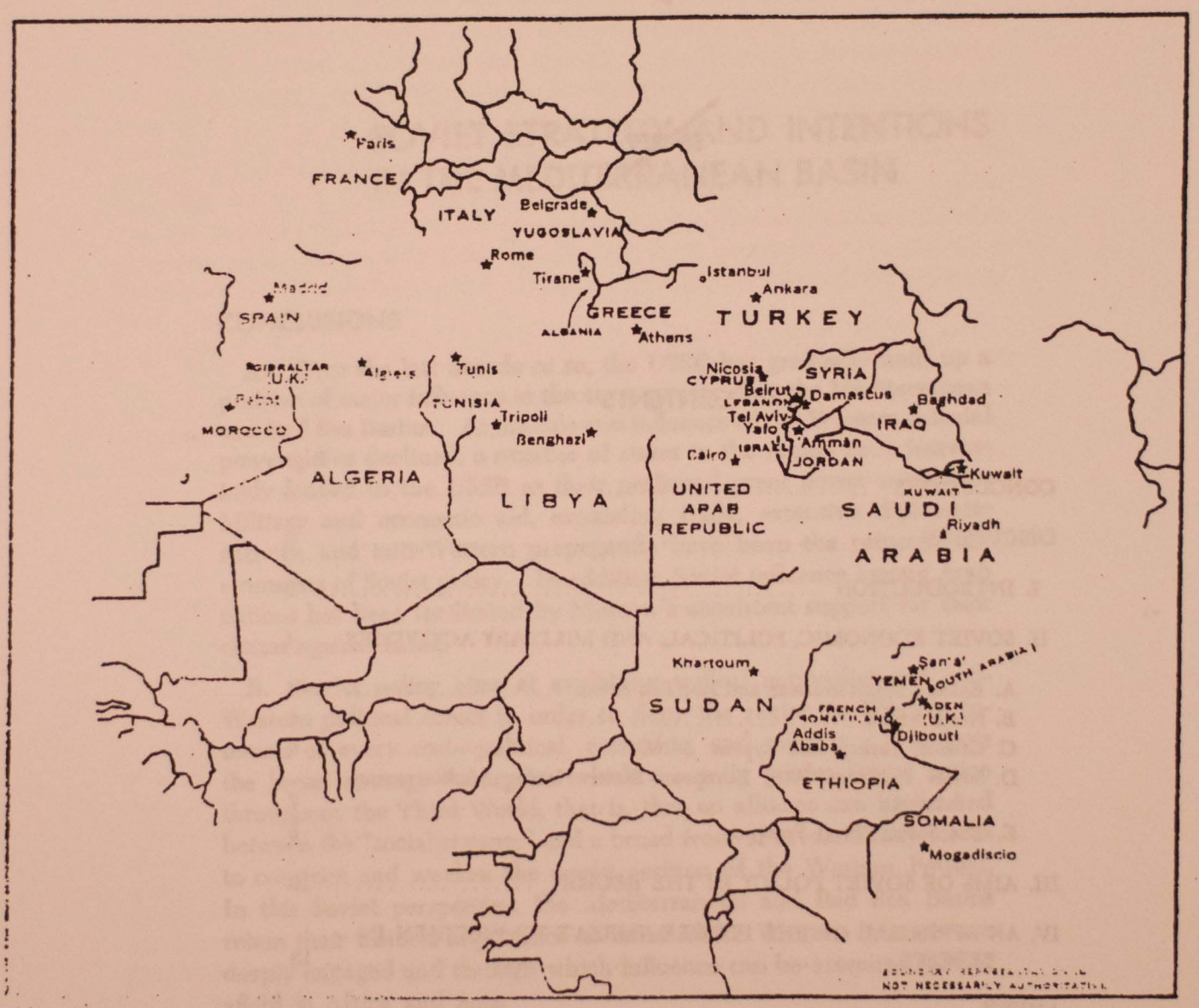

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SOVIET STRATEGY AND INTENTIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN

CONCLUSIONS

A. Over the last decade or so, the USSR has gradually built up a position of major influence in the areas surrounding the Mediterranean and Red Sea Basins. As the role and influence of the Western colonial powers have declined, a number of states in the region have increasingly looked to the USSR as their preferred great power supporter. Military and economic aid, expanding trade, extensive diplomatic activity, and anti-Western propaganda have been the principal instruments of Soviet policy. In addition, Soviet influence among Arab nations has been facilitated by Moscow's consistent support for their claims against Israel.

B. Soviet policy aims at exploiting radical nationalist and anti-Western political forces in order to deny the region to Western interests of every sort—political, economic, and military. It reflects the broad strategy conception which currently guides Soviet action throughout the Third World, that is, that an alliance can be formed between the "socialist camp" and a broad front of revolutionary forces to constrict and weaken the world position of the Western Powers. In this Soviet perspective, the Mediterranean and Red Sea Basins retain their historic importance as areas where Western interests are deeply engaged and through which influence can be exercised farther afield in Africa and Asia.

C. For the last several years, the USSR has maintained a modest naval force in the Mediterranean on a continuing basis. With its present size and capabilities, it poses no serious threat to US or NATO naval forces. The primary purpose of the Soviet naval presence is apparently less military than political-psychological: to convey that

the Mediterranean is not an "American lake." In the event of general hostilities, of course, this force would seek to attack US aircraft carriers.

D. We do not believe that the Soviets aim to acquire military positions or assets of their own in the area which would be significant in connection with a general war. Should they eventually adopt a policy of involvement in limited conflicts throughout the region, they would need to acquire capabilities of a kind they do not now possess, and they would presumably also want air and naval facilities at some points within the Mediterranean Basin itself. They would probably not think it politically feasible or desirable, however, to acquire bases at a time when widespread anticolonialist pressures are persuading the Western Powers to eliminate their own bases in the area.

E. Insofar as the Soviets have a military interest in the area, this seems likely for the foreseeable future to have two aspects. The first is to influence the political disposition of governments in such a way as to make the area as inhospitable as possible to military cooperation with the West, and in particular, to the deployment of US military power. The second is to establish relations with governments which make it possible to use them as proxies for actions directed against Western interests and against regimes unfriendly to the Soviet Bloc.

F. The number and variety of conflict situations which are likely to develop within the area, and between forces there and Western states, will give the Soviets numerous openings in the years ahead for applying such a policy of intervention by proxy. Since the USSR will wish to avoid becoming directly involved in military adventures undertaken by its political clients, however, it will try to keep tensions between the Western Powers and the states of the region at a high but not critical level. In such an atmosphere Soviet political opportunities will be maximized and actual risks minimized.

DISCUSSION

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Political and power relationships in the Mediterranean and adjacent areas have been transformed since 1945.[1] In the postwar period the Western European colonial powers lacked the strength and the will to restore the dominant position they had long held. The movement for national independence was successful throughout the region and brought new political forces into play. The US became a major factor in consequence of its postwar role as a world power, its aid programs, private investments, and naval presence. And, since the mid-1950's, the USSR has extended its activities and influence to the area on a considerable scale.

2. With the failure of its pressures on Iran and Turkey and the collapse of the Communist effort in Greece in the early postwar years, the USSR's interest in the Mediterranean area had appeared to decline. Stalin gave priority to consolidating Communist power in Eastern and Central Europe, Soviet resources were strained by the effort of postwar recovery, and Moscow evidently underestimated the scope and significance of the movements against Western colonialism in Asia and Africa. After Stalin's death, however, the Soviet leadership radically altered its view of developments in the Afro-Asian world. Recognizing the limited prospects of native Communists, the USSR abandoned the policy of supporting only ideological clients. It began to associate itself with newly independent governments and nationalist movements, offering support and cooperation on the basis of a common interest in "anti-imperialist" policies.

3. In the area discussed in this paper, the new Soviet approach found its first significant opportunity in 1955 when the Soviet Bloc began its activity as a supplier of arms to certain states. Since then the USSR and other Bloc states have elaborated their ties with most of the countries in the Mediterranean and areas adjacent to it. The main reliance has been on conventional instruments of influence—military and economic aid, trade, an active diplomacy including numerous exchanges of ceremonial visits, cooperation in the UN, and propaganda. Subversive techniques and intelligence operations are, of course, everywhere part of the modus operandi of Soviet policy, though in these areas they are now being applied primarily to advance the USSR's relations with local governments rather than to win power for Communist parties.[2] The result has been that the USSR has become an important factor in the region, a major influence on governments and political forces there. This paper examines the extent and significance of these developments, the aims of Soviet policy in the area, and the nature of future threats to Western interests which may result.

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[1] The areas under discussion in this paper are indicated on the map opposite page 1.

[2] See SNIE 10-2-65, "Soviet and Chinese Communist Strategy and Tactics in North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia," dated 15 July 1965, SECRET. The discussion in paragraphs 9-32 of the instruments of Soviet policy remains valid.

II. SOVIET ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, AND MILITARY ACTIVITIES

4. In the past dozen years, the influence of the USSR and its allies has made itself felt in the area in a variety of ways. Probably the most important single instrument of policy has been the supplying of military aid, but there has also been a significant quantity of economic aid, trade with the Soviet Bloc has grown substantially, and in recent years Soviet military power has been present in the regular maintenance of a modest naval force in the Mediterranean.[1] And Soviet diplomacy and propaganda have attempted to establish an alignment in world politics between the "socialist camp" and states of the region on the basis of a common opposition to "Western imperialism."

A. Eastern Mediterranean and Red Sea Areas

5. The USSR's initial move into this area was its $265 million arms agreement with Egypt, announced in September 1955, under the cover of an Egyptian-Czech deal. Since then, the UAR, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen have received about $2.1 billion worth of military equipment from the Soviet Union and its East European allies. In Yemen, the Soviets initially dealt with a traditional despot; the other three recipients have been leftwing governments dominated by military men. All four recipients were hostile to UK and US defense pacts and bases in the region. Today, the military forces of the UAR, Syria, and Yemen are equipped almost entirely with Communist arms. Only Iraq continues to make significant purchases from Western sources. In successive agreements, Moscow has supplied more and more up-to-date equipment; countries in this area have usually been the first non-Communist recipients of such Soviet materiel. Extensive training both in the USSR and in recipient countries has been an integral part of Soviet military assistance programs.

6. Economic relations have been less one-sided. In the region as a whole, however, the USSR has succeeded in obtaining a significant share in a trading area long dominated by European and American commercial interests. The four major recipients of military aid have also gotten the vast bulk of Soviet and East European economic aid to the area. Yet, even in the UAR, economic assistance from Western sources has until recently outweighed that from the USSR and Communist countries combined. With the recent cessation of US PL-480 aid and cutbacks from European sources in consequence of Cairo's failure to pay its debts, the USSR has become the major source of foreign aid to the UAR. Trade with Communist countries increased from less than 10 percent of the UAR's total trade in 1954 to nearly 40 percent in 1966.

7. In Iraq, hard currency oil receipts have contributed far more to national revenues than has Soviet economic aid. In anti-Western Syria, the USSR has been one of the chief sources of economic aid; some $230 million has been extended, half in 1966 for a massive dam and irrigation project on the Euphrates, plus another $140 million from Eastern Europe. In Yemen, Soviet aid has far

[1] Tables showing military and economic aid supplied to states of the region appear in the Annex.

outweighed that from other sources, although apparently a significant part of this aid is being channelled through the UAR.

8. Middle Eastern countries have been eager to engage in programs which conserve water and improve agriculture; the USSR has taken on the Aswan High Dam project in Egypt and the Euphrates project in Syria and has also assisted in a wide variety of irrigation and land reclamation schemes. It has undertaken major railroad building in Iraq and Syria, and port construction or maritime projects in Yemen, the UAR, and Iraq. It has encouraged fisheries and assisted in setting up food processing plants in the UAR, Sudan, and Yemen, as well as further south in Somalia. While the USSR has by no means replaced the West in development activity, its role in this field has helped to change attitudes. Such "normal" activity has resulted in acceptance of the USSR as a responsible partner in development programs, and has helped to diminish earlier fears that Moscow's only aim was to impose communism.

9. Political relations between the Eastern Arab states and the Soviet Union vary widely. At one end of the spectrum, Saudi Arabia has no relations with the USSR; Sudan, Jordan, Lebanon, and Kuwait have modest trading relationships; Sudan gets a small amount of economic aid. Iraq seeks to follow a middle course between the USSR and the West. Syria, under its present extreme Baathist leaders, has moved fairly close to the USSR; it tolerates the local Communist Party, has at least one Communist in the Cabinet, and is seeking to establish party-to-party relations with the CPSU and the Yugoslav League of Communists. It is vigorously anti-US on most foreign policy issues and appears content to leave a large part of its trade and virtually all of its development program in Soviet or other Communist hands. Support for Arab claims against Israel has been a principal device employed by the Soviets to spread their influence among all the Arabs.[4]

10. Closest in relations with the Soviet Union is the UAR, which the USSR categorizes as a "revolutionary democracy" in the process of building socialism. The CPSU has encouraged the Communist Party in Egypt to dissolve itself as an overt organization and has advised its members to join the sole legal political organization, the Arab Socialist Union. Egyptian foreign policies, particularly in the Arab states and Africa, are largely congruent with those of the USSR; both countries wish to see a reduction of Western military and economic positions. There are, however, certain limits to the UAR's intimacy with the Soviet Union because of efforts by each side to use the other for its own purposes. Nasser retains his independence and his dreams of Egyptian leadership in pan-Arabia, and evidently realizes that Moscow's long-range plans are not identical with his own. Perhaps more important, Cairo continues to earn most of the foreign exchange it needs to run its industry and buy its food from Western sources—tourism, the Suez Canal, and cotton sales—and it still looks primarily to Western companies to find and produce its oil.

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[4] The Soviet attitude toward the Arab-Israeli dispute is discussed in Section IV of NIE 30-67, "The Arab-Israeli Dispute: Current Phase," dated 13 April 1967, SECRET.

11. In the southern portion of the Red Sea Basin, Yemen and Somalia have cordial relations with the USSR, which is their major source of military and economic assistance. Opportunities have been less favorable for the Soviets in neighboring countries; Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia are closely tied to the US, and the Sudan is largely uninterested in affairs beyond its own borders. In Yemen, the USSR provided substantial military assistance to the archaic regime of the Iman in 1958-1959 and continued this with the Yemeni Republic under UAR domination. Soviet economic and military aid has helped to sustain the Egyptian military effort in Yemen. The Soviets support Egyptian efforts to eliminate British influence from South Arabia. This backing is in line with general Soviet tactics of pursuing Soviet aims through local forces already committed to an anti-Western course. Soviet activities in Somalia also reflect opportunistic sponsorship of anti-Western forces, but this enterprise has involved a certain cost. By supporting and arming Somalia, the Soviets have aroused fear and hostility in Ethiopia and Kenya, the two most important East African states; aid offers to them do not appear to have offset these effects.[5]

B. North Africa

12. Opportunity has not knocked as often for the Soviets in North Africa as it has farther east. The rulers of Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia have not seen their interests served by close ties with the USSR and have confined relations to limited trade and aid. Several years ago Morocco obtained a squadron of fighter aircraft from the USSR, and it has recently contracted for $2 million worth of spares and ammunition. Both it and Tunisia have agreed to take moderate amounts of economic aid from Communist countries. But the regimes of all three countries maintain close political and economic ties with the US and France or Britain.

13. Algeria has maintained fairly close relations with the USSR since it gained its independence from France in 1962. Relations cooled for a time after Ben Bella's removal, but his successor, Boumediene, although departing from Ben Bella's conspicuously pro-Soviet domestic and foreign policy line, wanted to retain Soviet military and economic aid. The USSR decided to adapt, and subsequently moved ahead with military aid, which now totals about $210 million. The Soviets have developed extensive access to the Algerian military establishment through their aid and training program, although they do not now exercise a significant influence in internal economic or political affairs. More recently, there have been signs that the Algerian regime is renewing its support for national revolutionary movements abroad, especially in Africa. The Soviets will, of course, encourage this.

C. Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus

14. The Soviet task in developing relations with these countries differs in many ways from that in dealing with the Arab states. As NATO members,

[5] Soviet interests and actions in the Red Sea are also discussed in NIE 75/76-67, "Prospects in the Horn of Africa," dated 27 April 1967, SECRET.

Greece and Turkey are allied with the West, to which they look for military aid and support and for economic assistance. Turkey controls the sea route from Russia's southern coast to the Mediterranean and has been hostile to the southward expansion of Russian power. In line with Moscow's "Good Neighbor Policy" directed toward nations along its southern borders, the Soviet Union has embarked on a persistent and patient effort to improve relations with Turkey. The Soviets have recently begun a small program of economic assistance and made efforts to exploit growing Turkish distaste for the large US military presence. Although the Turkish Communist movement is insignificant, a newly emergent left is articulating anti-American feelings with increasing impact.

15. Prior to the April 1967 coup, Soviet relations with Greece had improved. The USSR and other Communist states had been accommodating in arranging barter deals for Greek agricultural products for which there was no ready market. The Greek Communist front party (EDA) held a bloc of 22 seats out of 300 in Parliament. But the April coup brought into power a military regime with strong anti-Communist feelings. Soviet propaganda labels it as fascist and the creature of the US. For the present, the Soviets will have no direct dealings with Greece. They will hope that internal opposition to the military regime will promote cooperation of the non-Communist left with the Greek Communists, a situation which could give Soviet policy new opportunities if and when the military regime collapses.

16. Cyprus has offered much greater opportunities for Soviet intrusion than either of its parent countries. The Soviets moved to support Archbishop Makarios in his efforts to assert Greek Cypriot hegemony over the island in 1964 by providing sizable amounts of arms. But this policy interfered with Soviet efforts to improve its relations with Turkey, and, for the past year or so, the USSR has followed a more even-handed line between Greek and Turkish interests on Cyprus. This has damaged the position of the large Cypriot Communist Party, and cooled Soviet state relations with Cyprus as well. Now, Soviet policy toward Cyprus revolves around three basic aims: to maintain Cyprus as a sovereign state, to secure the withdrawal of British bases from the island, and simultaneously to keep open the possibility of advancing relations with both Greece and Turkey. Progress in the attainment of these goals would in addition erode NATO's position in the eastern Mediterranean.

D. Soviet Relations With European States Having Mediterranean Interests

17. The existence of two Communist states on the Mediterranean, Albania and Yugoslavia, does not at present have much significance for Soviet activities in the area. Conceivably a political change in Albania could some day restore that country's relations with the USSR, however, and give the Soviets renewed access to naval facilities. Political trends in Yugoslavia indicate that Belgrade will continue to pursue independent policies, despite intermittent efforts in recent years to improve relations with Moscow. There is, of course, a certain parallelism between Yugoslav and Soviet influence on other states of the region, since

Belgrade also talks the language of revolutionary socialism and anti-imperialism and shares Soviet views on many international issues. Nevertheless, Yugoslavia has no policy of deliberate cooperation with the USSR to increase the latter's influence in the Mediterranean. It would prefer, in fact, to see both Soviet and American influence reduced. Generally, Belgrade would like the states of the region to follow the principles of nonalignment, in which case it would expect to play a more prominent role itself.

18. Britain, France, and Italy have viewed with apparent equanimity the increase of Soviet activities and influence in the area they once dominated. They have appeared to assume that the US had both the capability and the responsibility for keeping Soviet activities in the area within bounds. In addition, they have tended to make a fairly benign appraisal of Soviet intentions in general in recent years, and have believed therefore that the economic and cultural interests they still have in the Mediterranean countries would not be seriously affected by the Soviet presence. Should the Soviets begin to infringe seriously on these interests, these attitudes would almost certainly change. Since the USSR has important diplomatic and economic interest in its relations with these European powers, Europe being the priority concern for Soviet policy, Moscow would probably proceed with some care in undertaking actions in the Mediterranean region which could give them alarm.

19. Spain should be mentioned also as a European state which will continue to be a factor affecting developments in the western Mediterranean. While it is not formally involved in NATO defense, it does have a defense relationship with the US, is still a colonial power in Africa, and has important relations with the Maghreb. While some moves have been made in recent years toward a normalization of relations between Spain and the USSR, it seems certain that Spain, even after the changes which are likely to come in the internal regime after Franco's passing, will remain opposed to any enlargement of Soviet influence in its vicinity.

E. The Soviet Naval Presence

20. The Soviet Union first undertook modest naval operations in the Mediterranean in 1954. By 1960, with the establishment of a base at Vlone Bay on the Albanian coast of the Adriatic, the USSR was maintaining a force of 12 "W" class submarines in Mediterranean waters. When Soviet-Albanian dissension forced the Soviets to withdraw from the base in 1961, the USSR left 4 of these submarines with the Albanians and withdrew the rest to Soviet ports. Except for occasional submarine patrols and cruises by 1 or 2 ELINT ships, a hydrographic vessel, and a supporting oiler, the Soviet Naval presence in the Mediterranean virtually disappeared.

21. The Soviets reestablished a visible presence in the Mediterranean in the summer of 1964 with the dispatch of a cruiser-destroyer force from the Black Sea Fleet and the institution of virtually continuous submarine patrols. The pace of operations doubled in 1965 and again in 1966, reaching a high point in June 1966 when a force of 20 ships—6 submarines, a cruiser, 4 guided missile destroyers, a modified KOTLIN class destroyer, 2 minesweepers, 2 escorts, 3 oilers, and an oceangoing rescue tug—were active in Mediterranean waters. For the last two years, normal Soviet deployment in the Mediterranean has consisted of about 10 surface ships (2 or 3 major combatants, 2 small combatants, 2 or 3 hydrographic vessels, and 3 support ships) and from 1 to 4 submarines. These ships are drawn from all three Western fleets.

22. The Soviet "combined naval squadron" in the Mediterranean has not engaged in heavy tactical exercise schedules. Surface forces have spent about half their time at anchor in one of five offshore anchorages (in the Gulf of Hammamet off the Tunisian coast, in the vicinity of Malta, in the Gulf of Sirte on the Libyan coast, in the vicinity of Kithira Island, and off the eastern coast of Crete) and about a third of their time in routine transits to and from anchorages and in surveillance of NATO operations. The remaining time has been spent in operations of which we know little but which we believe are primarily individual ship exercises. There appears to have been little underway training or replenishment and very few ASW exercises. Usually, multiship tactical exercises have been conducted only during transits between anchorage areas; little is known about Soviet submarine operations. The presence of Soviet naval units in the Mediterranean affords them practice in Mediterranean navigation and opportunities for surveillance of Sixth Fleet and other NATO operations. Hydrographic ships and ASW exercises undoubtedly provide the Soviets with essential information on undersea conditions, water temperature gradients, and sound propagation characteristics, which would be of particular use in their efforts to develop ways to combat Polaris.

23. For the present, the Soviets almost certainly do not consider their Mediterranean squadron capable of conducting extended operations against the Sixth Fleet, although they would seek, at the outset of general hostilities, to attack its aircraft carriers. Other units of the Sixth Fleet would also be attacked as targets of opportunity. Neither the Soviet surface units nor the current level of submarine deployments, however, constitute a threat to US Polaris operations. Dependent as it is on vulnerable mobile logistic support, and lacking adequate air defense, the Soviet surface squadron could not long operate against the greatly superior forces with which it shares the Mediterranean.

24. In recent years, Soviet naval detachments in the Mediterranean have included at least one port call in each cruise. Since the resurgence of Soviet naval activity in 1964, Russian ships have called at ports in Egypt six times, in Yugoslavia and in Ethiopia three times, in Algeria twice, and in France once. These port calls and the fact that Soviet anchorages are frequently no more than 10 or 15 miles from the coasts of Tunisia, Malta, and Greece have made the

Soviet naval presence in the Mediterranean quite visible. The primary purpose of this presence is apparently less military than psychological and political. The mere presence of Soviet combatants is intended to convey that the Mediterranean is not an "American lake." Friends and foes alike are expected to understand that the USSR intends to be a factor there.

25. There have been rumors from time to time that the Soviets were bargaining for base rights in the area, usually with the Egyptians. We think it would be incompatible with the Soviet political line to take on a role which the former colonial powers have given up. Nevertheless, the possession by their political clients of facilities to which the Soviets might in certain contingencies wish to have access is no doubt a fact that Soviet planners welcome. The equipping of forces in the area with Soviet arms is a similar advantage,[6] but we do not believe these are provided with a view to being stockpiled for eventual use by Soviet forces.

III. AIMS OF SOVIET POLICY IN THE REGION

26. It is clear from the scale and character of the activities described above that the Soviets have come to regard the Mediterranean Basin as of major interest to their policy. It has not been so clear that these activities were governed by any systematic strategic conception, apart from the general proposition that the area offered considerable opportunities for damaging Western interests.

27. In part, the growth of Soviet presence and activity in the area has been a response to forces operating within the region; it has not been all Soviet design. The main pattern of events there in the postwar period has been the struggle of nationalist forces in many countries to expel the Western colonial powers or to reduce their influence. These elements were interested in the backing of a great power not previously involved in the area. The USSR emerged from World War II with a stature which made it eligible for this role, and, in addition, it was a power which appeared to have "anti-imperialist" credentials. Thus the initial Soviet entry into the area probably came about as much by invitation as by Moscow's own initiative.

28. The opportunity offered by the Egyptian interest in Soviet arms in the mid-1950's probably helped to precipitate the important shift which was then developing in Soviet policy. What was involved was a wholly new appraisal of the changes taking place in the Third World, developments which the Soviets had been slow to understand. Whereas they had assumed that newly independent "bourgeois" governments would remain under the effective domination of the colonial powers, they now discovered that there were opportunities for injecting their own influence. They also came to recognize that the tides of nationalism running in the Third World had a "revolutionary" potential. They concluded that a policy of associating the Bloc with the new governments and

[6] The question of Soviet readiness to supply the UAR with ballistic missiles or nuclear warheads is discussed in paragraph 20 of NIE 30-67, "The Arab-Israeli Dispute: Current Phase," dated 13 April 1967, SECRET.

the nationalist movements on a platform of "national liberation struggle" offered a way of increasing pressure on the Western Powers. The sensitive issues involved in the decolonization process could be used to generate divisions within and among the states of the Western Alliance. The Soviets assumed that the internal regimes in the newly independent states, in part because of their association with the Bloc, would inevitably take on a more radical character. When they "chose the socialist path," their conflict with the Western Powers would intensify; this in turn would mean denial to the latter of access to strategically critical areas and resources.

29. The Soviet entry into the Mediterranean area, where the anticolonial struggle was then in a particularly active phase, was thus a manifestation of a general policy concept intended to be applied to the whole of the Third World. When Stalin's successors were first seized of this vision, they evidently believed that returns on this policy would be prompt in coming. The Suez war, the Algerian rebellion, the overthrow of the monarchy in Iraq probably seemed to them to indicate an acceleration of the historical process they saw developing. In recent years, they have evidently concluded that this process would be more prolonged and complicated than they had assumed. But the broad concept they developed in the mid-1950's remains central to their policy today.

30. Within the framework of Soviet Third World policy, there appears to be a geopolitical emphasis. In recent years a large proportion of Soviet effort and resources has been applied within the arc extending from the western Mediterranean to South Asia. Other parts of the underdeveloped world seem to be of lesser concern. Obviously this results in part from the way opportunities have developed, but it probably owes something also to a traditional Russian preoccupation with these regions as a sphere of special interest. The approach of the Soviet leaders to the role of great powers in world politics is in some ways not greatly different from that of their Czarist predecessors, who also believed that these regions were of prime strategic importance.

31. Military considerations certainly figure in the Soviet desire to contest the Western position in the area, although these probably do not have much to do with planning for the contingency of general war. No doubt the Soviets would like to deny the Mediterranean to use by US forces. Propaganda pressures against their presence are mounted from time to time; recently, Brezhnev voiced a pointed demand for "the complete withdrawal of the Sixth Fleet." But the Soviets must realize that there is little real prospect of effecting such denial by political means.

32. Nor do we think that the Soviets aim to acquire military positions or assets of their own which could be significant in connection with a general war. Such assets would not enable them to strike with much greater effect at strategic targets critical to them than they can now. An attempt to acquire a capability for successful preemptive attack on US strike forces in the area would assume at least a very extensive ASW effort which would have to be based mainly in the Mediterranean itself. Even if we assumed that the Soviets were designing

their forces for a first strike capability, which we do not, such a capability in the Mediterranean would remain for some time well beyond their means, both technical and political. Finally, the Soviet conception of the course a general war might take, if it came, does not seem to include extended land or sea campaigns in the Mediterranean Basin as a whole.

33. The Soviets may be thinking of their possible involvement in limited conflicts in the region. In principle the policy of attempting to displace Western influence could present such contingencies. Or local conflicts might occur in which the Soviets would wish to support their clients at some fairly high level of risk short of actual intervention. Their activities may point to an intention someday to operate in the Mediterranean in this way.

34. Should they adopt a policy of intervention in local conflicts, the Soviets would have to acquire capabilities which they do not now possess. They lack limited war forces of a kind which could operate effectively in any part of the area not contiguous to the USSR. They would need a lifting of present restrictions on use of the Dardanelles and a cooperative regime in Turkey, neither of which seems possible for the foreseeable future. They would presumably want air and naval facilities at some points in the Mediterranean Basin itself. Not only is it unlikely that even states friendly to the USSR would wish to make these available, but it would be extremely awkward politically for the Soviets to acquire them. To do so would compromise the "anti-imperialist" rationale on which Soviet policy operates and would have negative repercussions throughout the Third World.

35. Insofar as the Soviets have a military interest in the area, this seems likely for the foreseeable future to have two aspects. The first is to influence the political disposition of governments in such a way as to make the area as inhospitable as possible to military cooperation with the West, and in particular, to the deployment of US military power. The second is to establish relations with governments which make it possible to use them as proxies for actions directed against Western interests and against regimes unfriendly to the Soviet Bloc. Military and economic aid and the USSR's political backing as a great power are the primary instruments of such a policy. The relationship developed with the UAR over the last dozen years probably indicates the pattern which the Soviets would like to develop generally in the area.

36. Thought of as an area in which and through which to pursue Soviet interests by proxy, the Mediterranean region retains its historic character as a world crossroads. It gives access to Africa and has links with Asia. The radical nationalist movement has been strong there, and its political leaders have been in the forefront of efforts to achieve united action against "Western colonialism and economic exploitation." The political climate is one in which the Soviets skills at forming fronts for subversive, political, and propaganda actions work to good effect. Thus the Soviets probably regard the region as not only of interest in itself but also as a useful base for support of their general strategy in the Third World.

37. The Soviets have surely given thought to ways in which they might turn the West's still considerable dependence on the region's oil supplies to their account. But at the present stage, aspirations to preempt or control oil output show little promise. The Bloc states cannot provide a substitute market. To be in a position to manage the distribution of oil, and perhaps to deny it to the West, would assume a degree of Soviet control over producing countries which the USSR no longer exercises even in Eastern Europe. It seems certain that, whatever political forces hold power in these countries, they will continue to be extremely jealous of the disposal of these national assets. Probably the most the Soviets expect to be able to do is to encourage and exploit politically the chronic frictions between producing countries and Western oil interests. This might be facilitated as they buy more oil and gas in the area themselves, which they apparently intend to do in order to meet Eastern Europe's growing requirements. Even modest purchases would permit them to expand their commercial presence and perhaps to provide military goods to additional Middle East countries.

38. As indicated, Soviet trade with the area has developed, though unevenly. It has helped to establish relations of mutual interest with certain states, placed personnel on the scene, and facilitated the exercise of political influence. But generally, apart from occasional transactions to get a new trading partner interested in dealing with the USSR, economic criteria are applied to this trade. The Soviets apparently recognize that it cannot be used for direct political leverage. Moreover, the interests of almost all countries of the area will continue to argue for maintaining extensive trading relationships with the West.

39. In sum, the Soviets see the region as strategically important—politically, economically, militarily—in the long-term contest with the Western Powers to which they are committed. Their primary aim for the foreseeable future will be, in the degree possible, to deny the area politically to the West, and in particular to the US. This emphasis flows from the nature of the means available to them. To the extent that states and political forces within the region can be induced to look to Moscow for political direction, the Western position will be increasingly constricted. And alignment with the Soviet Bloc of forces in this area would work to Soviet advantage in the struggle for the Third World as a whole.

IV. AN APPRAISAL OF THE FUTURE THREAT TO WESTERN INTERESTS

40. There can be no doubt that the USSR has in the last dozen years made significant progress in the direction of the aims described above. From a position of insignificant influence it has become a major factor in the region. Most important, it is now widely accepted by radically disposed political leaders as a responsible ally in the vaguely defined "anti-imperialist" cause. Over the same period, the US has tended more and more to become identified as an opponent of this cause and as a supporter of the old order and the Western domination that went with it. Thus the Soviets, operating within circumstances generally favorable to their cause, have largely succeeded in making the process

of transition to postcolonial development in this area an aspect of the broader East-West power contest. It is this fact which will greatly influence the kind of threats to Western interests which seem certain to develop in the years ahead.

41. It is important to be clear about the nature of the role the Soviets will be playing. They will stimulate and assist anti-Western nationalist forces which would be present in any case. Generally, they do not control these forces and have little prospect of doing so. Thus far they have felt it necessary to be very circumspect about using military and economic aid programs subversively to establish such control. There are no Communist Parties large enough or effective enough to have hope of seizing power in their own right. Communists are present in nationalist movements and fronts, and no doubt have penetrated governments, but their role is not directing. Obviously if the West suffers serious reverses to its interests or areas are denied to it, there will be little comfort in saying that this was owing to Communist-influenced rather than Communist-controlled nationalist forces. There will be a real and probably a long-term threat in the alliance of Soviet policy with nationalist forces in the area.

42. Nevertheless, the distinction between control and influence is vitally important to the Soviets themselves, and will set certain limits to the kind of actions and the extent of the risks they will undertake in pursuing their aims. It will mean in particular that Moscow will be prudent about backing clients who may in its view be inclined to adventurism in employing violence against local opponents or the Western Powers. The Soviets will not make defense arrangements which would bind them to take military action in the area. And they will sign no blank checks for economic support. In general, they will not enter upon commitments and risks which they cannot themselves control.

43. A further limitation on future Soviet actions in the area is the heavy involvement of European as distinct from American interests. A main feature of Soviet policy at present is the effort to dissolve the security ties represented by the Atlantic Alliance. Actions which conveyed that the USSR was not merely pursuing political-economic advantage in a normal manner, but was bent on establishing real domination in the Mediterranean region would eventually alarm the European states. The effect would probably be to revive a sense of common peril within the Atlantic Alliance. Not even France, despite its rapprochement with the USSR and its partial withdrawal from the Alliance, would stand aside from efforts to oppose a Soviet advance into the region which was manifestly dangerous to Western security. Considerations of this sort will also argue against any Soviet effort to establish a really challenging naval presence in the Mediterranean. The Soviets are aware that their present course of extending their political influence and acting against Western interests by proxy offers the best means of advancing their aims without provoking high risks or compromising their policies in Europe.

44. Even within its present limitations, however, Soviet policy is likely to find numerous opportunities in the Mediterranean and its adjacent areas in the years ahead. Instability and conflict, also involving Western interests, will

provide a fertile field for a long time. There are several categories of conflict situations which will engage Soviet attention: (a) political struggles within states between radical and traditional forces; (b) decolonization problems; (c) intra-regional warfare arising from ethnic, boundary, and ideological conflicts; (d) clashes of interest between regional states and the Western Powers. Not all of the conflict situations of these various kinds will be exploitable in the Soviet interest and some may even be awkward for the USSR. Soviet actions will inevitably be marked by much cautious tacking and opportunism in so complex an area.

45. Struggles between political factions within states will usually be the easiest for the Soviets to handle. Their support will generally be given to the radical nationalist left against traditional forces. Success for the former is likely to produce a pro-Soviet and anti-Western regime and to create a political climate more favorable to the activity of local Communists. Any number of countries in the region are candidates for a process of internal radicalization sooner or later. Syria has been in such a phase in recent years. Iraq and Algeria were earlier, but have since shown more stability. Such developments would not be surprising in countries as varied as Jordan, Ethiopia, Malta, and perhaps even in Greece.

46. The Soviets are not likely to be capable of precipitating such developments themselves, but their growing presence in the area is itself an encouragement to radical forces. We do not believe that the Soviets will alter their policy of avoiding overt involvement in such internal political conflicts, but whenever the outcome favors an enlargement of their influence they are likely to move in on the opportunity. The extent of the commitment they would make to a new radical or nationalist regime anywhere in the area would depend on their judgment of its viability and of the difficulty of disengaging if necessary. The pattern of Soviet relations with Syria and with Somalia suggests the course they are likely to follow in such cases.

47. Only a few colonies remain in the region. They include French Somaliland, the Spanish territories in northwest Africa, and the British protectorates in South Arabia and the Persian Gulf. Such remnants of colonalism provide a peg for anticolonialist propaganda, but they generally have the disadvantage from the Soviet point of view that they inspire violent intraregional disputes over the right of succession. The Soviets are likely to preserve a discreet distance from the sponsorship of concrete solutions, while offering pious but generalized backing to the cause of "national liberation."

48. The Soviets appear content for the present to have Cairo in the forefront of the continuing anticolonialist struggles in South Arabia and the Persian Gulf. But they also cultivate other movements directed against Western interest, such as the Baathist Party in Syria. They will probably continue to lend support to Nasser with propaganda and subversive activity because they see in his brand of Arab nationalism a means of energizing revolutionary forces in the Arab world as a whole. Moscow is not now actively opposing the concept of Arab

unity under Nasser's leadership, presumably because it sees little likelihood that any such scheme could materialize in the foreseeable future. We believe that it remains opposed to the idea in principle, because it would be more advantageous for the USSR to deal separately with a number of small states rather than with a single hegemony. In the Maghreb, however, where Cairo's pretensions have also reached, Moscow will continue actively, if not openly, to discourage the extension of Nasser's influence.

49. The greater part of the turbulence and conflict in the Mediterranean area in the years ahead will arise from intraregional disputes over boundaries, ethnic problems, religions and ideologies. Some of the states likely to be involved have been recipients of Moscow's aid and political backing. The Western Powers will generally be trying to avoid direct involvement, and will in fact be using their influence to contain violence. The principal conflict situations of this category include those between Arabs and Israelis, Moroccans and Algerians, Ethiopians and Somalis, Saudis and Egyptians, and Greeks and Turks, though there is clearly a potential for others to develop.

50. Soviet propaganda will attempt to exploit such conflicts in the customary anticolonialist framework, but Moscow's policies will necessarily be marked by much opportunism. As a general principle, the Soviets will consider that their interests would not be served if quarrels of this kind broke out into open warfare. Some would carry a risk of direct confrontation between the USSR and the West. In almost all (the Arab-Israeli conflict is probably an exception), should the Soviets make a choice between antagonists, they would run the risk that their general influence in the area would suffer. Usually, therefore, Moscow will use its influence to hold such conflicts below the level of large-scale violence, the situation which often permits it to work the political ground on both sides of the dispute. Only in the rare case of this kind, perhaps to avoid a hard choice or to contain a really dangerous conflict, would Moscow be willing to play the role of mediator. It would avoid such a role in open conjunction with the Western Powers, however.

51. As indicated, the Arab-Israeli case is probably an exception among intraregional conflicts and provokes a different Soviet attitude. Moscow has clearly decided that it has more to gain by taking sides, probably because it sees the Arabs, in consequence of their numbers and revolutionary nationalism, as the best long-term bet. If the Arabs were to make gains in their struggle against Israel, and the Soviets had supported them, the USSR's influence would obviously make a substantial advance throughout the Arab world. Nor do the Soviets have any basic objection to an Arab resort to violence against Israel, but we do not believe that they would themselves lend direct military support to the Arabs, and they would not run high risks of an East-West conflict for the sake of the Arab cause.

52. The conflicts of interest between the Western Powers and certain states of the area seem unlikely in the future to lead to actual hostilities. The end of colonialism probably means that the Western states will prefer to rely on lesser

sanctions to protect their interests. Even in gross cases of aggression they will probably seek a UN formula rather than resort to unilateral intervention. The Soviets will make every effort, however, to keep fears of "imperialist aggression" alive, an easy undertaking in the feverish political climate of much of the region. Where this propaganda line is implausible, the myths of "neocolonialist restoration" by more insidious means will often serve as well. Broadly, the Soviets will try to keep tensions between the Western Powers and the states of the region at a high but not critical level. In such an atmosphere, Soviet political opportunities will be maximized and actual risks minimized.

53. We do not now foresee the time when the Soviet attitudes, aims, and methods described in this paper will change. This could result only from a profound alteration in the Soviet approach to East-West relations, or alternatively, from a gradual stabilization of the troubled region surrounding the Mediterranean and Red Sea Basins. The former is not in sight and the process of political-economic development within those regions seems likely to be prolonged.

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ANNEX

TABLE 1

VALUE OF SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE EXTENDED TO AREA NATIONS, 1955-1966
(Millions of Dollars)

	TOTAL	USSR	East Europe
Algeria	211	210	1
Cyprus	29	28	1
Iraq	564	564	0
Morocco	13	13	0
Somalia	35	35	0
Syria	374	327	47
UAR	1,439	1,160	279
Yemen	91	60	31

TABLE 2

SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AID TO AREA NATIONS, 1954-1966
(Millions of Dollars)

	Extended		Drawn	
	USSR	East Europe	USSR	East Europe
Algeria	233.1	22.5	18.6	3.4
Ethiopia	101.8	17.0	17.2	5.8
Morocco	45.6	35.2	0	5.2
Somalia	65.7	5.6	21.3	2.5
Tunisia	33.5	22.1	7.2	7.0
Cyprus	0	1.3	0	1.3
Greece	84.0	0	4.1	0
Iran	330.0	46.1	11.5	6.1
Iraq	189.5	20.0	120.8	19.0
Syria	233.8	140.0	55.5	25.4
Turkey	207.6	13.7	7.6	11.5
UAR	1,011.1	542.9	379.8	129.1
Yemen	93.0	13.0	36.7	4.6

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TABLE 3

MAJOR ITEMS OF SOVIET BLOC MILITARY EQUIPMENT DELIVERED TO AREA NATIONS, 1955-1966

	Algeria	Cyprus	Iraq	Morocco	Syria	UAR	Yemen	Somalia
Land Armaments								
Heavy tank						60		
Medium tank	318	32	400	43	425	1,100	135	80
Self-propelled assault guns	100		120		90	215	65	
Amphibious light tank					10	75		
Personnel carriers, armored and amphibious	365	32	500		450	1,000	155	170
Artillery pieces, antitank, antiaircraft	900	32	800	100	650	1,400	460	357
Naval Vessels								
Destroyers						4		
Submarines						15		
Minesweepers					2	6		
Submarine chasers	3		3			12		
MTB	12	6	12		22	47		
Other	3		7			15		6
Aircraft								
Medium jet bomber			10			26		
Light jet bomber	27		15		6	50		
Fighters	83		92	12	113	432		11
Heavy transports	7		8			22		
Other	54		85	5	77	309	55	3
Missiles								
Air-to-surface						6		
Air-to-air	20		34		43	167		3
Surface-to-air missile	[a]	[b]				34		
Surface-to-surface (ship)	6				4	17		
Antitank			28					

[a] Some SAMS.
[b] Some equipment.

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