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THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN*

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The Mediterranean as a Unit of Analysis

The trouble with the Mediterranean as a unit of analysis, as the international relations theorists might put it, is that it is not a well defined regional subsystem. On the contrary: there are several distinct areas within the region with sharply different characteristics. From Gibraltar to the Levant, between the Cote d'Azur and the Nile Delta, the major problems are as varied as geography, ethnic makeup, political structure, resource endowment and historical experience can make them.

The region is, of course, defined by its relation to the Mediterranean Sea, but the Sea has served as both link and barrier between its littorals over the two millennia from the Roman Empire to the end of Western colonialism. The Sea made the Roman Empire possible, and even after the barbarian invasions, the Sea continued to play a unifying role, as Pirenne tells us:

> ...By means of the shipping which was carried on from the coasts of Spain and Gaul to those of Syria and Asia Minor, the basin of the Mediterranean did not cease, despite the political subdivisions which it had seen take place, to consolidate the economic unity which it had shaped for centuries under the imperial commonwealth. Because of this fact, the economic organization of the world lived on after the political transformation.[1]

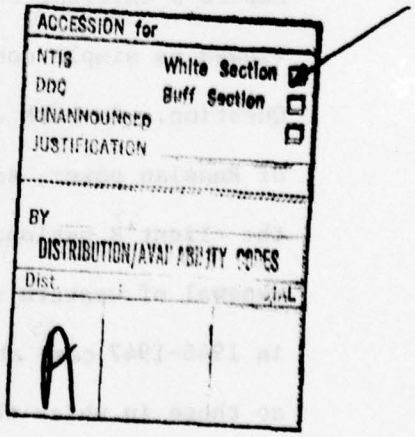
The invasion of Islam, which spread through the Eastern Mediterranean, across North Africa and into Spain with lightning swiftness at the end of the 7th and the beginning of the 8th centuries, put an end to the "Mediterranean commonwealth": "The Mediterranean had been a Roman lake; it now became, for the most part, a Moslem lake. From this time on it separated, instead of uniting, the East and the West of Europe."[2] Moslem domination of the Sea, consolidated in the 9th century, established new links between east and west in the basin, between Spain and the Levant, but it separated and isolated France and northern Italy from both the eastern Mediterranean and the southern littoral.

The tide of Islam ebbed slowly over the Middle Ages, and European control was gradually reestablished over the commerce of the Mediterranean. However, it was not until the 19th century that a single power reestablished dominance in the region; even then, France challenged British supremacy at either end of the Sea. Colonialism and imperialism strengthened the links between western Europe, the Middle East, and the Orient, especially after the completion of the Suez Canal. Not as often noticed is that this force began to bridge the European and North African coasts, for the first time since the Moslem conquests.

It may be hazarded that Soviet-American competition in the Mediterranean has had a similar effect. The Anglo-American containment effort in the 1950s attempted to tie the Middle East into the anti-Soviet Atlantic-European alliance, while the United States aimed at a complementary objective in acquiring its North African bases. In a vigorous counteroffensive, the USSR pursued a policy initially of strategic denial,

then phased into a search for strategic access that extended to the shores of the Atlantic. As British and French imperialism receded and disappeared, Soviet-American competition helped prevent the southern and eastern crescents of the Mediterranean from returning to confinement with local concerns. It was in reaction to this intrusion of overarching global conflict as well as to the expiring remnants of Western imperialism that North Africa and the Middle East became a spearhead of third world politics. The Mediterranean is not yet a single region, but it seems on the way to greater homogeneity of character and concern. Evidently, development and "modernization" largely drive that process, but the Soviet-American competition has also played a role.

This examination of the superpower competition in the Mediterranean begins with an historical overview before examining several major facets in closer detail. The final section returns to a broader perspective and the longer run prospects.



Change and Continuity in Russian and American Involvement in the Mediterranean

As Western Europe's back door but simultaneously the highway to the East, the Mediterranean Sea was of critical importance to the European powers. It was, however, of little concern to the United States, despite an occasional brush with Barbary pirates, until the middle of the 20th century. Even during the Second World War, Britain played the leading role in the Mediterranean theater, certainly in the eastern half. The increasing U.S. concern with the Mediterranean after the war formed part of its rapidly developing global involvement in an effort to contain what was perceived to be expanding Soviet power. Thus, the United States appeared as the heir of Britain in its 19th century role of barrier to the "Russian peril" in the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East.

The involvement of Russia in the region has a much longer and more complex history which stretches back at least to the Russian attack on Constantinople in 907. From the middle of the 18th century, the set of issues focusing on the Balkans and the Turkish straits, which came to be called the "Eastern Question," assumed increasing importance in the Empire's external outlook. Contemporary Soviet policy has often been viewed as simple continuity of Tsarist involvement with the Eastern Question. In both eras, it is said, the essential goal was expansion of Russian power, sanctified by a driving ideological commitment,[3] while the client's nationalist sentiment was skillfully manipulated. The renewal of western conflict with Russian expansionism in the Middle East in 1946-1947 came about in virtually the same arenas--Persia and Turkey--as those in which the conflict had left off two world wars before.

Others have stressed the shortcomings of this analogy. The Eastern Question in the 19th century focused on the area of the Balkans and the Turkish straits and fed on the decay of the Ottoman empire. Soviet post-World War II involvement has in considerable measure been concerned with new issues--after Stalin's death the issue of rights to passage through the Turkish straits virtually disappeared from the front pages of the world press--other areas and other nations. The so-called "drive for warm water ports" that allegedly motivated Tsarist expansion to the southwest was probably far less significant than the internal conflicts of the Russian state, where conservative forces looked to militant pan-Slavism as a remedy for domestic disorder.[4] Whatever one's judgment about the weight of ideology in contemporary Soviet foreign policy, it strains a sense of history to insist on bracketing Marxism-Leninism in the service of Politburo objectives in the Arab world with the Christian-nationalist-pan-Slavist impulse so salient in the politics of the Eastern Question.

An important link between Tsarist and Soviet involvement, particularly at the eastern end of the Mediterranean region, is simply geography. Whoever ruled giant Russia could not help being concerned with events in the neighboring region--a theme that has more than once been voiced officially from Moscow in recent years.[5] That such concern has been manifested in a varying degree of intervention in regional affairs is connected with a second important element of continuity between 19th century and contemporary Russian policy--the weaknesses of and conflicts among the states in the region. Repeated intervention by the great powers, especially in the Middle East, reflects the difficulty

of establishing a stable order in the various subregions. By their mutual embroilment, the powers have probably contributed to the continued instability of the region, but the imbalances of power among local antagonists was the context within which they have found scope and perceived a rationale for their intervention.

The history of Soviet-American interaction in the Mediterranean since the end of World War II may be conveniently marked off in three periods roughly corresponding to the three decades of that interval.[6] In the first, Soviet policy was totally dominated by a Stalin emerging triumphant and unchallenged from the war. Initially, Moscow seemed confident of being able to convert its new global eminence into hard imperial coin. "The USSR," Molotov trumpeted in early 1946, "is now one of the mightiest countries in the world. One cannot now decide any serious problems of international relations without the USSR or without listening to the voice of our fatherland."[7] And, of course, "Comrade Stalin's participation is considered the best guarantee of the solution of the most intricate international problems."[8] The USSR did play a significant role in the Palestine debate in the United Nations, and by prompt recognition and indirect military aid contributed to the establishment of the State of Israel. However, Soviet efforts to acquire trusteeships over the former Italian colonies of Eritrea and the Dodecanese islands were rebuffed by the western allies. With major backing from the United States, Iran and Turkey successfully withstood Moscow's attempts to intimidate them into granting oil concessions and altering the regime of the Turkish straits. In the Greek civil war the communists were beaten; Tito resisted Stalin's pressure and became a founding father of "non-alignment." The surprising Soviet support for the nascent State of Israel in 1947-49 was presumably motivated by a desire

to weaken the British position in the Middle East, but American presence came to supplant the British (and in North Africa, the French). The Kremlin was reduced to sniping from the sidelines at western control of arms transfers to the Middle East (the 1950 Tripartite Declaration) and the early efforts to draw the region into the containment ring around the USSR (the Middle East Defense Organization).

A combination of major changes in the Soviet Union and in the regional environment--above all, the death of Stalin and the gradual Soviet awakening to potentialities in the Arab world, along with the coming to power of radical nationalist forces in Egypt, Syria and then Iraq--brought about a dramatic change in Soviet involvement during the succeeding decade. The watershed was the arms deal with Nasser in 1955, effectively nullifying the Tripartite Declaration; thereafter arms supply served as the single most important instrument of Soviet penetration in the region. In 1954-55 the aid of the new national Arab leadership in Egypt and Syria enabled the Soviet Union to vault over the barrier that was being erected by Britain and the United States in the "northern tier" of Middle East states. During the next decade, the USSR became heavily involved in intraregional conflicts between "conservative" and "progressive" states, as Moscow sought to weaken still further western, increasingly American, influence and presence. For its part, Washington veered from a dominant concern with communist subversion of the Middle East (1955-1958) to an effort to encourage domestic economic and social development. It was hoped thereby to channel nationalist energies that might otherwise spill over into the various regional conflicts which threatened to endanger important American interests in the region or even embroil the United States in military confrontation with the USSR.

While the Arab-Israeli conflict remained a major factor in regional politics in the second period, intra-Arab controversies were perhaps equally important in shaping the involvement of the superpowers. However, the Six Day War in 1967 partially submerged the intra-Arab struggle as the Arab-Israeli conflict came to dominate the Middle Eastern arena and sharply altered the context of Soviet-American interaction.[9] Embarrassed by the overwhelming defeat of its clients, implored to secure the restoration of their captured territories as well as their military powers, Moscow sharply deepened and broadened its involvement in the region, which reached a peak in the extraordinary buildup of Soviet military presence in Egypt in 1970. At the same time, however, the Kremlin sought to limit its military commitment for fear of confrontation with the United States. Washington faced a parallel dilemma: it became the dominant supplier of Israel's major military equipment but attempted to distinguish, as Kissinger put it, between defending Israel and defending Israel's 1967 conquests without inducing destabilizing expectations in the Arab-Soviet camp. With both Washington's and Moscow's policies immobilized by the tensions between incompatible objectives, in the context of deeply rooted regional conflict and sharply limited superpower control over client behavior, full-scale war was renewed in October 1973. That event also accelerated the reversal of Soviet fortunes in the Arab world. The oil price revolution that culminated as an attachment to the Arab embargo in 1973 created a new Middle Eastern "correlation of forces," in the familiar Soviet jargon. As a consequence of these developments, the USSR found itself, temporarily at least, a bystander to an American-led, Egyptian and Saudi-supported effort to stabilize and possibly resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Main Directions of Soviet-American Competition

As suggested, the Mediterranean region is only gradually being knit together after a millennium of separate and unequal development. It is not surprising, therefore that historically the great powers' interests in the Mediterranean subregions have varied and the forms of their involvement have differed. The complexity of the patterns of Soviet-American interaction around the rim of the Mediterranean may be suggested by envisaging a three-dimensional matrix of subregions or theaters, issues and instruments of involvement, with the following major elements:

THEATERS	ISSUES	INSTRUMENTS
Middle East	Intraregional conflict	Economic aid
Maghreb	Oil	Arms transfers
Aegean-Adriatic	Internal structure	Great-power military presence and intervention
Iberia, France, Italy	Extra-regional connections	Domestic political intervention

Clearly, the salient issues differ by theater and in particular periods. They are not the same in the Middle East as they are in Iberia and France; they are not the same in the last as in the first post-war decade. Again, the theaters vary in the strength and importance of the

Soviet-American interaction as well as in the particular mix of instruments that are employed. The U.S.-USSR competition on the north shore of the Sea is part of the central east-west struggle whose dominant feature is the existence of rival military alliances. On the south and east shores, the context of the competition is third-world politics. Although the west attempted to draw the southern and eastern littorals into the east-west conflict, the effort was unsuccessful. Third-world politics favors a north-south rather than east-west dichotomy and this increasingly shapes the Soviet-American competition.

Obviously, the basis for Soviet-American rivalry in any of the theaters is the presence of the other superpower. The United States and the USSR have been engaged in efforts to deny each other dominant position or influence throughout the area, but this is neither an analytically useful focus nor unique to the region. Different combinations of the listed theaters, issues, and instruments could be used as fulcrums for discussion. In view of the diversity of the region and the relative weakness of Soviet presence on the northern littoral of the Sea, the paper will, with one exception, concentrate on the Soviet-American competition in the southern-eastern crescent. The exception considered in the first subsection following is the strategic role of the Soviet and American naval forces in the Mediterranean, perhaps the single factor that gives a degree of unity to the interaction of the superpowers in the whole region. Two instruments of the Soviet-American competition--arms transfers and economic

aid--have been particularly important in this region. They are dealt with in the other two subsections in the somewhat broader contexts of the effect on intraregional conflict and efforts to control regional developments.

The strategic factor

In no other area beyond European territory proper has the strategic military balance between the United States and the USSR been a factor in international affairs as it has been in the Mediterranean. American military power has been deployed elsewhere around the rim of the Soviet Eurasian expanse, but its strategic significance, in the sense of capability of striking at targets in the USSR, has been small (Vietnam) or it has not been a major issue of regional politics, as has been the case with the ballistic missile submarines deployed in the Pacific and Indian Ocean. In contrast, the nuclear power of the Sixth Fleet has figured intermittently in the SALT talks and has been one of the reasons Moscow has sought air and naval base privileges among its Mediterranean clients. The Mediterranean is not only the back door to Western Europe: as Moscow so frequently reminds us, the Mediterranean leads to the USSR's back door, the Black Sea.

The post-war Mediterranean involvement of the United States may be said to begin with the port call of the battleship Missouri at Istanbul in April 1946 as a gesture of support against Soviet pressure. The retention of an American naval force in the Mediterranean after the war, formalized later as the Sixth Fleet, was initially directed to counter specific Soviet threats in the eastern Mediterranean and

the Middle East. Gradually, the Sixth Fleet became part of a global system, developed to contain the perceived Soviet expansion within its immediate postwar frame, and with explicit objectives of deterring attack on both western Europe and the United States itself. In the 1950s the deterrent functions were entrusted first to medium bombers based in North Africa and southern Europe but then to nuclear-armed, carrier-borne aviation, as the vulnerability of the U.S. forward bomber bases to Soviet IRBMs became recognized.[10] In the early and mid-sixties, a new and powerful threat was added with the deployment of Polaris ballistic-missile submarines.

With the exception of one brief excursion into a more ambitious construction program,aborted by the World War, the Soviet navy had always been viewed as an extension of the Red Army. Even at the end of the war, Moscow's naval response to the perception of western naval power was a stepped-up submarine construction program. Khrushchev's conception of defense priorities had also appeared to downgrade the role of the navy's capital-ship, surface fleet. It was not until 1964 that a sizable Soviet naval force appeared in the Mediterranean, to be built up in succeeding years into a powerful counter to the Sixth Fleet.

After the Six-Day War in 1967, the Mediterranean became the venue of the most extensive deployment of Soviet naval power outside the direct territorial waters of the USSR. In this development, there are two factors whose causal role is not easy to separate. The Soviet naval buildup in the Mediterranean responded to the American deployment

of sea-borne nuclear strategic delivery power and to the disastrous defeat of the USSR's major clients in the Middle East. At the same time, it has been argued, the spillover of growing Soviet military power into an area that is close to the southern frontiers of the USSR was virtually inevitable. Whatever the relative importance of these two factors, the strategic deterrent role of U.S. naval power in the Mediterranean has been losing its significance. This is less the consequence of the Soviet naval buildup in the Sea than of developments in military technology. Carrier-based air power is swamped by the significance of ICBMs and SLBMs; the range of the SLBM, in turn, is being sharply extended by the development of Trident, so that the necessity for closeup patrolling is being removed.

However, the Sixth Fleet also has another and probably more important role--the protection of the back route to NATO. This is an issue principally of logistic support and thus emphasizes the Sixth Fleet's function of sea control. Here two different kinds of threats may be seen, apart from the sheer power of the Soviet fleet. The first is control of the North African coast. The Soviet Union probably would have found it useful if it could have developed a threat to the NATO sea lanes from the south, but there is no sign of Soviet basing on the North African littoral nor, indeed, of any serious Soviet effort to develop a proxy, indigenous capability there, even in Algeria. This is probably a consequence of conflict with other constraints which, for example, limit the types and numbers of the aircraft that the Soviet Union supplies to these countries. Also, and more importantly, it is

a result of the increasing complexity of regional politics which makes the granting of bases more and more questionable.

The second kind of threat is Eurocommunism on the northern littoral. If communist parties come to power in Spain, France, and Italy, that would not only make sea control tricky for NATO, it would also obviate the logistical requirement altogether. So far, the threat seems not to be taken too seriously, in view of the evident disharmony between Moscow and the Eurocommunists. Moreover, the Italian Communist Party continues to assure Europe that it will, if it succeeds alone to power, maintain Italy's NATO membership. However, the role of Italy as a major pillar of the U.S. Mediterranean presence surely is somewhat more obscure as a consequence of the increasing influence of the PCI.[11]

Contemporary evaluations of the Soviet and American naval forces in the Mediterranean emphasize still another role, projection of power ashore in non-NATO or Pact countries. With the growing capabilities of the Soviet Mediterranean fleet, on a background of formalized parity in superpower strategic nuclear power, it has been suggested that the respective fleets neutralize each other: there can be no more repetitions for either side of an episode like the 1958 U.S. marine landing in Lebanon. The reasons why this is an oversimplified generalization have been examined elsewhere.[12] Suffice it to note here that projection of power ashore is more circumscribed now than in the past, but this is less a function of Soviet or American power globally or on the scene than of the increasing independence of regional actors.

Arms transfers

A discussion of arms transfers to the Mediterranean area must distinguish between those to the northern littoral and those to southern and eastern shores. On the European side (including Turkey) the source was almost exclusively western and related primarily to defense against the Warsaw Pact countries--although Greece and Turkey each looked to NATO arms to counter threats from each other. In the eastern and southern portions of the Mediterranean regional conflicts were much more important than the east-west struggle, and the USSR played a major role as supplier.

Bernard Lewis has said that "in the Middle East as elsewhere, it is not small power quarrels which inflame great power conflict but rather the reverse."[13] While there have been a few Middle Eastern crises in which the superpowers moved closer to the brink of conflict, the crises were quickly overcome and the relationships between Moscow and Washington were not visibly exacerbated. In contrast, the effect of the involvement of the great powers (including Britain and France) in the region has surely been to help perpetuate and complicate a number of the regional controversies, particularly the Arab-Israeli conflict. The chief factor in this process was arms transfers.

Soviet arms in the Middle East were a novelty of the USSR's policy, but the United States has not been backward in the export of arms to the third world. It led the USSR in this department in the 1950s and again in the 1970s. In the two decades since 1955, the United States delivered some $13 billion in arms and equipment to North Africa and

the Middle East, a figure that approximates Soviet arms exports to all developing countries. Between them, the United States and the USSR accounted for slightly under four-fifths of total world arms transfers in the period 1966-1975 and slightly over four-fifths of those to the Middle East.[14] However, the role of arms transfers in the policies of the two powers differed substantially.

An arms agreement opened the way for the development of Moscow's de facto alliances with militant Arab states in North Africa and the Middle East, and arms transfers, on terms of varying liberality, became the linchpin of Soviet policy in the region for two decades thereafter. Provided to the more militant forces, Soviet arms transfers were a means to subvert conservative regimes and to exact pressure against American presence while minimizing the risk of direct military confrontation. As the USSR became the armorer of radical revisionist forces, the United States responded in kind with support for conservative governments. Long reluctant to become a supplier to participants in the Arab-Israel conflict, Washington became the mainstay of Israeli military power only after the June 1967 war.

While arms transfers were a form of proxy intervention by the great powers, they were also associated with more direct forms of intervention: in some cases interventions by one power may be traced to the heightened military potential of one or more regional antagonists brought about by another power (Britain in Kuwait, 1961, or the USSR in Egypt , 1970); in others the interventions resulted in additional arms distribution (the aftermath of the 1967 war).[15]

The 1955 "Czech"-Egyptian agreement opened the Pandora's box of arms proliferation in the region, inserted the global Soviet-American struggle into a series of regional conflicts, most especially the Arab-Israeli,[16] and thereby helped maintain or even intensify the virulence of these conflicts.

Arms control between the superpowers has been a central focus of their global relationship with respect to strategic weapons, but it has not been a tool of international control in dealing with third area conflicts since the breach of the 1950 Tripartite Agreement that took place with the "Czech"-Egyptian arms deal in 1955. At various times the United States has revived the question of some form of bilateral control over the dispatch of arms to troubled areas, but arms transfers have so evidently been a major reliance of the Soviet Union in establishing its influence with developing countries that such efforts had little chance of success. It might be added that there have not appeared to be bright prospects of agreement between the United States and its NATO allies on control of arms transfers to third areas.

In acceding to the arms requests of various regional actors, the United States and the USSR pursued several objectives, but among them was the strengthening of their influence on the policy and behavior of the recipients. It would be difficult to explain the persistence and growing volume of arms transfers by this motivation alone, for the powers have been more often disappointed than gratified in their expectations. With the increasing assertiveness of third-world

countries, the influence procured by arms transfer has often been superficial or transient. The problem of control over client policy and action has become central to the patron-client relationship and is considered further in the final section of this paper.

Development and economic aid

Three major impulses have driven U.S. involvement in North Africa and the Middle East. Two are familiar and accepted--protection of access to oil and containment of the USSR. The third is moral-ideological and has generated much discord. It has been associated mainly with the Arab-Israeli conflict, but intermittently it has focused on the issues of development in the region. With Moscow's added coloration of colonialism or neocolonialism, these have often been acute foci of controversy in post-war international politics.

Immediately after the war, the Soviet Union attempted to participate in the liquidation of the Italian colonial empire. Seeking to accelerate the dissolution of the British empire, Moscow played a surprising but potent role in the struggle for Palestine, as it was later to do for similar objectives but with altered tactics in the Egyptian-British and Maghreb-French conflicts. Perhaps no other enterprise in the third world so symbolized the yearning for economic and social progress as the Aswan Dam, and few other development enterprises were so closely linked to the competition between the great powers. Thus, economic aid and sympathetic association with development plans were important elements of the policy of both Moscow and Washington.

In the initial fears of Soviet penetration into the third world during the mid- and late-1950s, Washington instinctively moved to develop or shore up anti-communist military alliances. On the other hand, the Kennedy Administration made an effort to come to terms with what it saw as the more important issue of American relations in the third world--understanding and aiding the ongoing social and economic transformations. In this new climate, economic development was viewed almost as a panacea for third world instabilities, saving these societies from frustration and despair that were seen as the primary inducements to aggression against neighbors. Development was considered the key to the creation of a middle class; the latter, in turn, was seen as the prerequisite for representative government and hence greater responsibility in world affairs. The relative curtailment of American economic aid to developing countries has many causes, but one important factor was the inevitable disappointment with this simplistic view of third world prospects.

On the Soviet side, there were also several "agonizing reappraisals" attempting to fit obdurate third world realities into a Marxian framework. Thus, in the mid-1960s the theory of "revolutionary democracy" followed that of "national democracy" as a tool to demonstrate that Soviet policy, highlighted by military and economic aid, was not ad hoc and opportunist (a Chinese criticism) but led to new socialist recruits. The failure of "revolutionary democrats" to become reliable instruments of Soviet policy is the primary reason for the evident eclecticism and caution in Soviet analysis of third world development as well as of Moscow's economic aid policies.

Reflections on the Competition

As noted, the Mediterranean is not a homogeneous area with respect to either its internal characteristics or the forms of Soviet-American competition. Moreover, over the post-world war period significant changes have taken place in the self-perceptions and external orientations of the nations along the shores of the Sea, thereby altering the context and affecting the dynamics of the superpower competition. In retrospect and prospect, in this fourth decade since the end of World War II, what governs the interactions of the United States and the USSR in the region? What are the central factors that constrain or encourage their operation? What are the likely prospects for persistence and change in their relationship?

Rules of the game

Since the USSR has had a much fainter imprint on the European side of the Sea, and for additional reasons that will shortly become clear, the thrust of this discussion relates to the North African-Middle Eastern crescents of the Mediterranean. In that area and over more than thirty years of mutual involvement, the United States and the USSR have more than once come close to the brink of open conflict. However, these have been exceptional incidents and the rule has been forms of what might be called "accommodating rivalry." Yet the mechanism of accommodation hardly seems automatic while the rivalry seems intrinsic. Thus, the game is not to be taken lightly.

The first rule of the game of Soviet-American competition is avoidance of superpower military confrontation. Fundamental to the successful operation of this rule is that third world concerns are not central to either

the rivalry or coexistence of the superpowers. It has long been an axiom of Soviet involvement in areas outside of the homeland not to allow the main event to be obscured by the side show. Khrushchev resisted Chinese insistence on the centrality of the third world as the main axis and arena of international class struggle, as opposed to the conflict between the socialist camp and the capitalist world directly. So too, in defending its hesitation to become directly involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict against Egyptian charges of betrayal, the Brezhnev regime emphasized the historical importance of keeping one's eye on the main struggle with the capitalist world.[17]

Avoidance of military confrontation is one thing; cessation of efforts to limit the other's influence and enhance one's own--indeed, if possible, to eliminate the rival's regional presence--is quite another. However, a critical requirement for avoiding confrontation is mutual recognition of the existence of "vital" interests and the right to protect them. This appears to be the most appropriate explanation for the behavior of both sides in a variety of Middle Eastern crises, the most clearly illustrative of which took place in the year 1970. During the first half of the year the Soviet Union was allowed to build up a force of Soviet troops in Egypt reaching 15,000 or 20,000, an unprecedented departure from previous norms of international relations. In the second half of the year, the Soviet Union watched carefully but from the sidelines as the United States helped orchestrate the defeat of a Syrian-backed Palestinian coup against Hussein in Jordan.[18]

The most effective way of avoiding superpower confrontation is for both to avoid unilateral and direct intervention in client conflict, a fact of competitive coexistence both recognize. Hence, the threat

of direct intervention by either side becomes a signal of the onset of crisis. At the same time, neither side wishes to permit the decisive defeat of a major client, which could significantly affect the regional position of the patron. The corollary is, therefore, that wars between major clients cannot be allowed to proceed to the point of decisiveness. It is not the duration of such local war that is important to maintenance of superpower peace but the probability of a decisive outcome.

There is nothing in the rules of the game that directly prohibits an attempt by either superpower to "expel" the other from the region. But since the means to achieving that goal may risk military confrontation, both powers in effect have relegated achievement of the objective to a more distant future. Both recognize that total expulsion of the other antagonist from the region is impossible, although erosion of his position in particular areas may be achieved. Thus, limitation of means has led to defacto limitations of goals.

What is the role of détente in all this? We have learned not to take too seriously the notion of detente as mutual trust and good neighborliness. We have learned that detente may be viewed in Moscow as consistent with the encouragement of economic warfare (during and after the 1973 war), with intervention by Soviet-backed forces in areas remote from the homeland (Angola), as well with the by-now classical pattern of Soviet provision of arms to warring factions in an unstable area (the Horn of Africa). The two-track Egyptian-Soviet strategy for recovery of the lost territories after the 1967 War, military plus international political pressure, was pre-detente, but intensified Soviet support for the Palestinians and Moscow's proxy interventions

in Africa are detente-era policy. To some extent, detente has resulted in the development of more accessible channels of communication that have eased the task of crisis management in third areas. Even so, however, the potentially explosive crisis of October 24-25, 1973, was dealt with in large part by cold war methods.

Detente in third areas appears to represent nothing more than a recognition of the rules of the game of accommodating rivalry--the existence of major regional interests on each side, respect for each other's power and therefore of the risk of military confrontation, and the somewhat more limited means that may be employed in the pursuit of the competition. It follows, however, that the stability of the rules of the game is not assured. It depends on the continuation of a military standoff between the superpowers, probably on the global scale as well as locally. Equally important, it depends on continued perception by each side that the other does have "vital" interests in the region which he is prepared to defend at considerable cost.

The problem of control

The reliability of the leadership of their respective clients as instruments of superpower policy has been a problem for both Moscow and Washington at different times. Both have struggled to understand the forces with which they worked, have sought at various times to achieve control in varying degree over those forces, and have failed more or less resoundingly. The outstanding example, of course, is the Soviet disaster in Egypt, where the failure to achieve control was directly responsible for the Soviet undoing. But there are examples on the U.S. side as well--the unhappy experience of alliance-building

in the mid-1950s, the short-lived Eisenhower Doctrine, intended to provide a post-Suez framework within which the Soviet penetration of the Arab world could be contained, and the failure of "food for peace" in Egypt, which Nasser rejected along with the U.S. objections to his African and Red Sea involvements.

For the USSR, which aimed for more control, the failures to achieve it were more significant. In this respect, the post-Stalinist leadership, for all its pragmatism and opportunism, had much to learn from the old man. Djilas recalls a conversation with Stalin, as victory loomed in Europe in April 1945, in which Stalin said: "This war is not as in the past; whoever occupies a territory also imposes on it his own social system. Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach. It cannot be otherwise."[19] Stalin evidently believed that the only principle of stable international balance was that adopted by the Diet of Augsburg in 1555--*cujus regio, ejus religio*. He might well have been contemptuous of his followers for ignoring the principle that Soviet control could extend only as far as the reach of the Red Army. Only Molotov among his survivors, who quarreled with Khrushchev over just such an issue in early 1955, understood the problem.[20]

Doctrinally committed to reliance only on objective forces, the Soviets felt obligated to make do with unstable subjective factors. They disguised their opportunism, even from themselves, with Marxist-Leninist analysis of the "progressive" role of the "revolutionary" states. But what bound the "revolutionary" states together, as Sharabi has noted, was not their social and economic organization but the fact that "all of them were ultimately based on military control, on

personalized leadership, and on the domination of the single party or ruling group."[21] Reliance on personalized rule in developing states--the error of subjectivism--was the major blunder of Soviet third world policy.

The competition in the long run

The difficulty of achieving control over the policy of clients is the other side of the coin of what Gasteyger has called the "diversification of political alignments," by which he means the "attempt of a growing number of countries to reduce their allegiance to one political camp and to improve their relations with the other, in the expectation that such a better 'balanced' position might allow for more freedom of action."[22] Confronting each other in various third areas, the superpowers partly neutralize each other and thus provide greater freedom of manuever for their clients and for the "non-aligned."

In this increasingly more fluid environment, which has been skillfully exploited by the third world, the superpowers have often found their regional hold slipping. For several years after the six-day war in 1967, Washington feared it was being pushed out of the Middle East. Since 1972 and especially following the October 1973 war, it is Moscow that has been searching for instruments to legitimate its role in the Middle East, particularly with respect to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Hence the Soviet insistence on reconvening the Geneva Conference (of which the USSR is co-chairman) and Moscow's warm embrace of the Palestinians and the PLO. This may also help explain Soviet maneuverings with Libya and in the Horn of Africa.

As long as the superpowers maintain their mutual deterrence in third areas, perhaps the most important fact of their interaction will be their relative powerlessness in controlling regional affairs, and the growing control of the region's medium range powers. Washington's attempts to reconcile divergent intraregional interests and at the same time manage the global competition with the Soviet Union make it difficult to formulate long-term U.S. policy objectives. Moscow's relative powerlessness is only barely disguised by Soviet propaganda and obscured by maneuverings in adjacent areas. At the moment, the United States appears to hold many of the high cards in the game. According to Sadat, Wahington holds "99 percent of the cards" in the Arab-Israeli game, but the kaleidoscopic character of Mediterranean-Middle Eastern events is due not to just national character and the temperament of local leaders but in part to the latters' efforts to exploit the superpowers to the regional actors' own advantage. This situation is not likely to change.

The simultaneous involvement of the USSR and the United States in regions of remaining conflict has contributed little to the solutions but has instead become part of the problem. It will require a realization that this is in fact the core of the issue before we may see a stabilization of the region as well as a development of Soviet-American coexistence akin to that which they have achieved in Europe. It cannot be expected that Moscow will completely withdraw from the Mediterranean. Geopolitics is too powerful, especially when reinforced by growing military and economic power. The United States is not likely to withdraw back on itself either. In the long run only the conversion of North Africa and

the Middle East into a buffer zone between the superpowers is likely to provide a possibility for solution of the regional conflicts and the development of a less dangerous and more durable Soviet-American coexistence in the region.

NOTES

*Extension and revision of remarks made on May 18, 1977 at a seminar of the Washington Center of Foreign Policy Research. The paper is part of a series on the Mediterranean, and paper writers were given the following guidance:

> The papers should focus on the permanently operating factors in the situation: cultural, historical, structural-economic and perhaps geographic. Where applicable, due attention should be given to the underlying ethnic and religious factors that may shape political conduct. We would not expect that the paper writers will find scenario writing or futurology at all useful. Nor should the paper focus on current events. The main purpose of the paper is to provide policy makers and senior military commanders with a cultural-historical perspective to guide their understanding of the day-to-day events. In general, we would expect more a historical than a social-science orientation. The ultimate purpose of the papers is to help us to put together a manual on Mediterranean issues as they might concern senior American policy makers and military commanders. In this manual, separate seminar papers will be included in toto. The necessary drawing of policy implications will be done in the introductory survey written by ourselves. Hence, the papers themselves need not necessarily focus on issues which are of more plausible policy significance. We certainly do *not* want a concentration on the issues of the day; rather the focus should be on the underlying causes of the issues of the day. It is our hope that the papers and the whole manual will be of lasting value.

1. Henri Pirenne, *Medieval Cities*, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday Anchor Books, n.d. (original copyright 1925, by Princeton University Press), p. 10.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

3. One of the earliest outward-directed themes of Russian history is the historical mission of Russia as defender of Eastern Christendom. Moscow would restore Byzantium and expel Islam from Europe.

4. A curious dialectic enveloped this expansionist mystique: external involvement stretched the meager resources of the primitive Russian economy to the breaking point, leading to a strengthening of the reformist and revolutionary movements, which led Russian reaction to press for external rallying points to channel internal dissent.

5. E.g., the important TASS statement, published in *Pravda*, April 17, 1955: "It stands to reason that the Soviet Union cannot remain indifferent to the situation arising in the Near and Middle East since [events there have] . . . a direct bearing on the security of the USSR."

6. For separate reviews of Soviet, British, and American policy in the Middle East, see Paul Y. Hammond and Sidney S. Alexander, eds., *Political Dynamics in the Middle East*, New York, American Elsevier, 1972: Arnold L. Horelick's Part I ("Policy From 1955 to 1969") of A. S. Becker and A. L. Horelick, "Soviet Policy in the Middle East," Chapter 15; Peter Calvocoressi, "Britain and the Middle East," Chapter 12; and William B. Quandt, "United States Policy in the Middle East; Constraints and Choices," Chapter 14.

7. Cited in Adam B. Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence*. The History of Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-67, New York, Frederich A. Praeger, 1968, p. 405.

8. *Ibid.*

9. See A. S. Becker, "The Superpowers in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1970-1973," in A. S. Becker, B. Hanson, M. H. Kerr, *The Economics and Politics of the Middle East*, New York, American Elsevier, 1975. pp. 77-120.

10. Forward basing was also being made obsolete by changes in the map of political alliances and the increasing assertiveness of "nonalignment."

11. The threat of Eurocommunism is related to that of Finlandization, which Western Europe has worried about off and on for more than a decade. If either of these is reinforced by Soviet power in the Mediterranean, there would be grounds for taking seriously the threat of "outflanking NATO from the south" that has so often been discussed in connection with the appearance in strength of Soviet naval forces in the Sea. (See, for example, Curt Gasteyger, *Conflict and Tension in the Mediterranean*, Adelphi Papers, No. 51, London, Institute for Strategic Studies, September 1968, p. 5).

12. Becker, "The Superpowers in the Arab-Israeli Conflict," pp. 90-99.

13. Bernard Lewis, "Conflict in the Middle East." *Survival* (London), 13:6, June 1971, p. 192.

14. Sources on arms transfers are: U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1966-1975*, Washington, D.C. 1976, pp. 72-74, 78-79; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), *World Armaments and Disarmament. SIPRI Yearbook 1976*, Cambridge, Mass., The MIT Press, 1976, pp. 250-253; and CIA, *Handbook of Economic Statistics 1976*, ER-76-10481, Washington, D.C., September 1976, pp. 68, 69, 71.

15. For a discussion of the connection between arms transfers and great power interventions, see A. S. Becker, "Arms Transfers, Great Power Intervention, and Settlement of the Arab-Israeli Conflict," P-5901, Santa Monica, California, The Rand Corporation, July 1977.

16. Of course, the western-supported Baghdad Pact was also responsible.

17. Vadim Zagladin, "Printsipal'nost i posledovatel'nost'," *Novoe Vremia*, No. 22, May 26, 1972; cited in Becker, "The Superpowers in the Arab-Israeli Conflict," p. 103.

18. For further discussion, see Becker, "The Superpowers in the Arab-Israeli Conflict," pp. 79-83.

19. Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin*, New York, Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962, p. 114.

20. Uri Ra'aran, *The USSR Arms the Third World: Case Studies in Soviet Foreign Policy*, Cambridge, Mass., M.I.T. Press, 1969, Chapter 4.

21. Hisham Sharabi, *Nationalism and Revolution in the Arab World*, Princeton, New Jersey, D. Van Nostrand Company, 1966, p. 69.

22. Gasteyger, *Conflict and Tension in the Mediterranean*, p. 15.