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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

KEY PROBLEMS AFFECTING US EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN THE NEAR EAST



NIE-26

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The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Joint Staff participated in the preparation of this estimate. All members of the Intelligence Advisory Committee concurred in this estimate on 23 April.

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KEY PROBLEMS AFFECTING US EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN THE NEAR EAST

THE PROBLEM

To analyze Near Eastern attitudes and conditions which affect US security interests in that region.*

CONCLUSIONS

1. From the point of view of US security interests, the Near East must be considered as an entity. Defense of Western strategic interests in the region (oil installations, communications, and strategic air facilities) would require the use of military bases and the free movement of defending forces throughout much of the area. The loss of such countries as Greece or Iran to the USSR would prejudice the defense of the remainder. Soviet successes anywhere in the region, unless effectively met by Western counteraction, would accelerate the trend toward neutralism and might even cause some states to seek accommodation with the USSR.

2. The four principal conditions which make the region as a whole vulnerable to Soviet pressures and impede US-UK efforts to counteract these pressures are:

a. The lack of any positive political cohesion. The newly independent Arab states are generally more intent on asserting their sovereignty and on rivalries amongst themselves than on furthering any interests common to the area as a whole. Even those states most directly

threatened by the USSR—Greece, Turkey, and Iran—show little disposition to act in concert amongst themselves, much less on a regional basis.

b. A general poverty of resources (except for oil), economic underdevelopment, social and political ferment and instability, and military weakness. Turkey and, to a lesser extent, Greece are exceptions to this generalization, but it applies with particular force to Iran and the Arab States.

c. The extreme nationalistic sensitivity to foreign influence of Iran and the Arab States. This is anti-Western in effect since it is a reaction to former British or French domination and is currently directed against residual British interests. This anti-Western tendency is aggravated by Arab hostility toward Zionism and toward what the Arabs believe to be the partiality of the US for Israel. The Near Eastern states are also anti-Communist but, except in Greece, Turkey, and Israel, fear of the USSR tends to be overshadowed by fear of Western "imperialism." The inability to distinguish between these

* The Near East is taken to include Greece, Turkey, Iran, Israel, Libya, and the Arab States.

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fears has contributed to a trend toward neutralism.

d. The progressive decline in British ability to defend Western interests in the Near East, in part a consequence of the over-all decline in British capabilities, in part the result of Arab-Iranian determination to eliminate the vestiges of British imperialism.

3. The United Kingdom would welcome increased US support in the region, both in preserving British base rights and economic concessions and in extending further aid and commitments to strengthen the general security of the area. The British, however, would seek to retain the senior partnership and controlling voice in any joint Western program.

4. France, unreconciled to the loss of her position in the Near East, claims a voice in any Western program. France, however, has little to contribute, while French participation would prove a liability in view of Arab animosity toward French imperialism in Syria and North Africa.

5. Most Near Eastern countries would welcome greater US military and economic aid and US commitments to defend them in case of attack, but they vary on the conditions under which they would like to receive this support and on the reciprocal concessions they would grant. Greece and Turkey strongly desire a formal US security guarantee and would grant peacetime base rights in return. Jordan, Libya, and Saudi Arabia would probably extend further peacetime transit privileges and base rights in return for greater aid. The other Arab States and Israel also desire US-UK aid, but would be reluctant to allow base and transit rights on other than a wartime basis. Iran alone would hesitate to accept any

security arrangement under present circumstances.

6. In Turkey and Greece, expanded US assistance could be relatively quickly absorbed and lead to an early increase in strength. Israel also could be strengthened, although its limited population and size make its military potential much smaller. However, in view of the deep-seated weaknesses of the other Near East countries, in addition to such political obstacles as their anti-imperialism and the Arab-Israeli conflict, there are distinct limitations on how much the US could accomplish in these countries over the short run, especially toward increasing local capabilities for defense against the USSR. Nevertheless, greater US aid and defense commitments, particularly if accompanied by parallel political action, would assist in promoting national stabilities and a more firm pro-Western orientation and, if continued over a period of years, might materially strengthen the region as a whole. Moreover, the granting of further base and transit rights or maintenance of existing ones in return for US support would facilitate deployment of the US and UK forces on whom the defense of the Near East would largely depend.

7. While the USSR would doubtless make vigorous efforts to counteract expanded US activity in the Near East, we do not believe that US defensive guarantees and the bolstering of local forces would in themselves cause the USSR to embark on local military aggression; in fact, a stronger US commitment to go to war in event of Soviet attack on the region would act as a deterrent to local military action by the USSR. However, if the US (and UK) proceeded to develop a comprehens-

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ive system of strategic air and other bases, and to deploy much greater forces in the area, the USSR might consider this a growing menace to its security and might eventually attempt to forestall it by the threat or use of military force, even at the

risk of general war. Indeed, such a development might be one factor influencing a Soviet resort to general war, although this decision would undoubtedly be based on global considerations, not merely on the situation in the Near East.

DISCUSSION

1. From the point of view of US security interests, the Near Eastern countries constitute a strategic entity, within which the Persian Gulf and Iraq oilfields and the Suez Canal are of major importance to the West. Defense of these key points would involve the maintenance of US-UK bases and the free movement of defending forces throughout much of the area. Moreover, the Near East nations are strategically interdependent; the loss of such countries as Greece or Iran to the USSR would greatly complicate the defense of the remainder of the Near East. It would hamper Western support of Turkey in event of war and would expose the Near East oilfields and their key transport links. At present, Iran is the Near Eastern country which is most critically vulnerable to the USSR.* The loss of Iran would not only deny Iranian oil to the West but would increase the vulnerability of the Suez Canal to Soviet attack through Iraq and the Levant.

2. Moreover, local Soviet successes anywhere in the Near East or the development of indigenous trends unfavorable to the US might have a contagious effect on the attitudes of the rest of the region. Soviet-Satellite conquest of Greece or Iran, unless offset by strong US counteraction and/or US commitments to Turkey and other Levant countries, would powerfully reinforce the trend toward neutralism and might even cause some states to seek accommodation with the USSR. We have estimated in NIE-9 that successful Soviet seizure of Greece in particular might cause even Turkey, if not firmly backed by the US, to veer toward neutralism. Soviet successes in Iran might have strong adverse psychologi-

cal effects on Iran's neighbors. The development of strong neutralist sentiment in some Near Eastern countries might have a similar effect on the policies of the others, especially among the Arab States. On the other hand, local Soviet successes might well arouse other Near Eastern countries such as Greece and Turkey to a more realistic appreciation of the Soviet menace and, if met by effective US-UK countermeasures, might greatly strengthen the pro-Western orientation of the Near Eastern states.

Internal Weaknesses of the Area

3. The Near East as a whole is characterized by a general poverty of resources (except for oil), economic underdevelopment, social and political instability, military weakness, and lack of regional cohesion. These weaknesses interact to limit the region's power potential and ability to resist outside pressures; they make it vulnerable to Soviet penetration and impede US-UK measures to counter the Soviet threat.

4. Despite the strategic interdependence of the Near Eastern countries, the lack of any positive unity within the region contributes to the weakness of the Near East and hampers US-UK efforts to bolster it on a regional basis. The Near East is politically fragmented, consisting of a relatively heterogeneous collection of young and immature national states. The conflict of interests within the region is in fact more significant than any common ties. Except for the border states in close proximity to the USSR, the Near Eastern countries are far more concerned with domestic problems, local rivalries, and the Arab-Israeli conflict than with the Soviet threat. Even the directly exposed states—Greece, Turkey, and Iran—

* NIE-6, "Iran's Position in the East-West Conflict," treats the current situation in Iran.

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display little interest in concerting common policies to meet the Soviet threat. Numerous intraregional tensions, especially Arab-Israeli animosity, tend to keep the region divided. The Arab League, the only active regional organization, is loose and ineffective, held together by a common antipathy toward Israel, but prevented by rivalries among the Arab States themselves from being a genuine unifying force. These local rivalries and the lack of agreement on common interests impair the Near East's capabilities for achieving economic and political stability and increase its vulnerability to the USSR. They make difficult, if not impossible at present, the development of any broad-based Eastern Mediterranean pact. However, a potential unifying force within the region, if it could be properly exploited, would be the common fear, though varying in degree, of the USSR.

5. Turkey and, to a lesser extent, Greece are the strongpoints of the area, being in general politically stable, to some degree industrially developed, and having more or less representative governments. These countries have relatively well-equipped and trained ground forces which could put up substantial resistance against the USSR, although by themselves they could not long oppose a Soviet attack. Fear of Soviet and Satellite aggression dominates Greek and Turkish foreign policy and has led these countries to seek the closest possible association with the Western Powers. Israel, a third potential area of strength, has recently sought a closer US/UK alignment, in part because of its recognition of the potential Soviet and Arab threat to its new and hard-won independence and in part because of its economic dependence upon the US.

6. The Arab States and Iran, in contrast, are weak and in most cases unstable, with an equivocal attitude toward the great power conflict. They are economically backward and undeveloped, except for their one developed asset, oil, and their economic base for further development in terms of skills, natural and human resources, and indigenous capital is weak. Political and social instability and ferment is chronic in most countries, which are characterized by the more or less repres-

sive control by a small ruling class over a passive and illiterate population. The constant jockeying of special interests, such as the army, and the congenital weakness of most Arab and Iranian governments make revolutions, coups, and assassinations recurrent features of political life.

7. The weakness of the Arab States and Iran lies largely in the fact that they are in a transitional stage from medieval to modern social, economic, and political systems; the pressures to which they are subject in making this transition and the unequal rate of change have given rise to serious social, economic, and political stresses which are a fundamental cause of the instability of the area. Chief among these elements has been the rise of a middle-class intelligentsia and urban proletariat; the former element, which is the standard-bearer of nationalism, is both idealistic and emotional in its outlook and, being denied its place in the sun by the lagging development of the prevailing political and social order, tends to develop radical nationalist and often leftist leanings. Ethnic, religious, and tribal problems in many countries also create social tensions, the Kurds and Azerbaijanis, for example, being potential separatist groups. Although the local Communist groups are small, they have a distinct if as yet limited subversive and sabotage potential, especially the outlawed Tudeh Party in Iran, and they are in a position to capitalize on any indigenous disturbances which may develop.

8. The Iranian and Arab armed forces, aside from Jordan's small British-trained Arab Legion, are extremely weak. The Egyptian, Iraqi, and Iranian armies have benefited to some extent from British or US aid, but they are far below Western standards, and graft and corruption are widespread. Their will-to-resist in event of Soviet invasion is considered low.

9. The extreme nationalistic sensitivity to foreign influence of the Arab States and Iran seriously hinders US-UK efforts to align them with the West. This sensitivity is anti-Western in effect, since it is a reaction to former British or French domination and is currently directed against residual British interests.

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The current difficulties over British oil concessions in Iran and Iraq, Egyptian efforts to secure British troop withdrawal, and the recent upsurge of Arab feeling over Morocco, all reflect such nationalistic and anti-colonial attitudes. This anti-Western tendency is aggravated by Arab hostility toward Zionism and toward what the Arabs believe to be the partiality of the US for Israel. Nevertheless, the development of these nations has been subject to strong Western influences which are still potent, and the Arab States and Iran can be said to remain more or less pro-Western at the present time.

10. In both the Arab States and Iran, there has been some trend toward neutralism as a possible avenue of escape from involvement in the East-West conflict. Although the Arab States and Iran are all anti-Communist, their fear of the USSR has tended to be overshadowed by fear of Western "imperialism." Disappointed in the US-UK response to their requests for aid and concerned lest the US and UK do not seriously intend to defend the area, some of these nations have tended to feel that their best chance for survival might lie in non-identification with either side. Iran in particular has long sought to play off the great powers against each other as a means of preserving its independence. Despite Iran's acute fear of the Soviet Union, its internal weakness and resentment against UK exploitation of its oil resources have made it adopt an equivocal attitude which hampers Western efforts to orient Iran toward the West. Since the Korean episode, the Arab States have shown a growing realization of Soviet ambitions, but they have been in general apathetic over possible Soviet encroachment, and more influenced by anti-colonial and nationalist sentiments, by frustration over US neglect of their aid requirements as compared to those of Israel, and by resentment over US policy on Palestine. In the event of further Western reverses in the East-West struggle, especially in the Near East, and in the absence of US-UK counteracting efforts, Near Eastern confidence in US-UK ability to contain Soviet expansion would be shaken and the tendency toward neutralism reinforced. There have been some

indications that the USSR is seeking actively to encourage this tendency.

Declining British Capabilities in the Near East

11. Although the UK has long been the dominant Western power in the Near East and has, by US-UK agreement, primary strategic responsibility for the area, the progressive decline in British ability to protect Western interests in the region poses a major problem for the US. In part this decline is a result of the over-all decline in British capabilities and growing local recognition of British weakness, and in part a result of the growth of nationalism and xenophobia in the area. These factors have been exploited by Soviet propaganda. The British system of alliances with Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq, based on the concept of Britain as the senior partner providing arms aid and protection and receiving in return peacetime base and transit rights, is becoming increasingly offensive to Iraq and especially Egyptian nationalism, and these countries demand that the alliances be revised. Egyptian denunciation of the 1936 treaty, or provision for British troop withdrawal in any treaty revision, would create a major problem for the UK, whose Near East defense plans depend upon having a secure base and strategic reserves in the Suez area. Greek demands for Cyprus may also prove troublesome in the future, although they are not a serious problem now.

12. Because of financial stringencies and the demands of home defense, NATO, and the Far East, the UK cannot at present either give substantial aid to the Near Eastern countries or station sufficient forces in the area to achieve any more than initial defense of the Canal zone in event of war. British plans contemplate wartime reinforcement of the Near East from New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa, as well as the UK, and the UK also hopes that once the Kashmir issue has been settled, Pakistan can be persuaded to participate. The UK is seeking to stimulate Commonwealth cooperation and aid has been promised, but progress has been very slow.

Moreover, in view of the probable time required to mobilize, train, equip, and transport sizeable Dominion forces, they would be substantially delayed in their arrival in event of war. If the Commonwealth countries could be induced to prepare for prompt reinforcement of the Near East and perhaps even to contribute to the peacetime garrison, British defense capabilities would be materially enhanced.

13. As a result of the UK's reduced capabilities, the UK itself would welcome a greater degree of joint US-UK responsibility, including greater US aid to the Near East countries, stronger US air and naval forces in the area, and much closer combined planning. The UK also hopes for US support in preserving British base rights and economic concessions in the area. However, the UK would expect to remain the senior partner in the area, with command responsibility, and would expect the US to heed British recommendations and advice based on the long British experience in the Near East. It would also look askance at any apparent US effort to ease it out of its position of primacy in the area. Moreover, divergent US and UK views over how to conduct relations with the Near East countries, such as the differing US and UK approaches to the oil problem, might cause friction between the two.

French Interest in the Near East

14. Although the French lack the capability to contribute to the security of the area, and the anti-colonial sentiment in certain countries is even more anti-French than anti-British, French interest in the Near East remains strong. As is evident from French irritation at being excluded from the recent US-UK Malta conversations, the French will seek to be included in any combined plans. French participation, however, would prove a liability in view of Arab animosity toward French imperialism in Syria and North Africa.

Regional Attitude Toward Greater US Support

15. As a result of the UK's reduced strength and influence in the area, the Near East coun-

tries are looking more and more to the US. Notwithstanding the trend toward neutralism in some parts of the region, these countries would welcome greater US (as well as UK) aid and US security commitments, although their attitudes vary on the conditions under which they would like to receive this support and on the reciprocal privileges they would grant. Almost all these countries are already receiving US or UK assistance in one form or another, they recognize it as indispensable to their own development, and most of them have already sought increased support.

16. Nevertheless, many Near Eastern countries will be insistent on particular types of assistance, and sensitive to the conditions under which it is given. In Iran, the Arab States, and probably also Israel, national sensibilities, fear of outside interference, and grandiose ambitions must all be considered. These countries want large amounts of aid with as few strings attached as possible, and will be quick to react if they consider they are not receiving equal treatment, particularly in the case of the Arab States as opposed to Israel. Moreover, they will seek aid for ambitious economic development projects and for strengthening their armed forces on big-power lines that may be well beyond their present capacity. They would tend to resent what they considered to be US-UK dictation as to the type of aid they would receive and as to the complementary domestic measures they were pressed to undertake.

17. Most Near Eastern countries would also like a firm US-UK pledge to come to their defense in case of war. Turkey and Greece have been most persistent in seeking this protection, but the desire exists in other states as well. They do not consider the UK system of alliances or existing US-UK policy statements as sufficient guarantee and would like a firm and unequivocal commitment, preferably a unilateral US and UK guarantee of protection without any commitment on their part. There is a wide disparity in the probable willingness of various countries to go further and conclude formal security pacts with the US and UK. Greece and Turkey would adhere to any form of security arrangement which embodied a firm US guarantee. Most Arab states

(and Israel) would probably agree to bilateral mutual assistance agreements (preferably supplanting the British system of alliances in Egypt and Iraq), if these were accompanied by substantial US-UK aid. However, they would doubtless insist that, while the US and UK be committed to come to their assistance, they not be committed to support the US and UK in event of hostilities outside the Near East. If the Near East were not invaded, most of these countries would prefer to remain benevolently neutral in event of general war. They would also insist that any bilateral pacts be on a basis of full equality between the parties, and avoid the objectionable features of the alliances with the UK. Iran alone would be hesitant to sign any pact whatsoever under present circumstances.

18. There is little desire anywhere in the region for any security arrangement, bilateral or multilateral, which does not include the US and/or UK. Although the Arab League has made some efforts toward creating a loose security pact, this is directed primarily against Israel, and is exceedingly weak. The Turks have shown little interest in closer defense ties with their neighbors within any framework which would not also include the US. Although Greece and Turkey, among others, have raised the question of a Mediterranean pact with US-UK participation, paralleling the North Atlantic Treaty, there is also little regional sentiment for this. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to get Israel and the Arab States to join together, and several nations might be unwilling to extend their commitments beyond their own frontiers. Moreover, the military establishments of most Near Eastern countries are so weak that a regional pact would serve little useful purpose. Under strong US-UK pressure, many Near Eastern countries might eventually be persuaded to join in a regional pact, but this seems at best a long-range possibility.

19. Most Near Eastern countries recognize that they might be called upon to make some reciprocal concessions, such as base and transit rights, in return for greater US-UK support. But willingness to continue present base and transit rights or to grant new ones in peacetime varies among the Near Eastern

countries and would be in part dependent on the type of US-UK commitment and the amount of aid. Greece and Turkey would almost certainly be willing to allow the US and UK peacetime bases in return for a security guarantee. Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq already allow base rights to the UK, and Saudi Arabia to the US. Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the new state of Libya would doubtless be willing to expand these concessions during peacetime in return for greater aid. However, the other Arab states, particularly Egypt, have strong nationalist aversions to the peacetime presence of foreign troops on their soil, and such concessions would be difficult to negotiate. The Egyptians maintain that their own forces, if suitably strengthened, could initially defend the Suez base. Israel, too, while probably willing to allow access to US-UK forces in wartime, might balk at the presence of peacetime forces and installations. While all the Near Eastern countries would feel more secure if stronger US-UK forces were stationed in the region, many of them would prefer to see these forces stationed elsewhere than within their own frontiers.

Effects of an Expanded US Program in the Near East

20. An expanded US program for bolstering the Near East could materially assist in strengthening the stability and pro-Western orientation of the area, but there are distinct limitations on what could reasonably be accomplished in the short run. In view of the fundamental weaknesses of most countries in the region, in addition to such political obstacles as their anti-imperialism and the Arab-Israeli conflict, even a broadly conceived US-UK program including security commitments, economic aid, and the building up of local defense forces could not decisively increase the Near East's stability or local defense capabilities over the next few years. The weaknesses of the Near East are too deep-seated to permit rapid progress in the short run on an over-all regional basis, although significant results could probably be attained in such countries as Greece, Turkey, and probably Israel, where the groundwork already exists. It would take a sustained parallel political effort to over-

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come Arab and Iranian resentment of US-UK influence and policies and to convert anti-colonial and neutralist sentiment into a more cooperative attitude. A long time would also be required to develop a concept of common interests within the region that would permit programs to be undertaken on a regional rather than largely bilateral basis.

21. Many countries will make ambitious demands for economic aid, but the ability of these countries to absorb such aid will be limited by governmental inefficiency and instability, local graft and corruption, inadequate technical skills, and the dearth of complementary local capital. US aid would be most effective if concentrated in the field of agriculture, but many countries will be equally interested in early industrialization. However, US aid accompanied by technical assistance and used properly by the local governments, could even in the short run contribute to the pro-Western orientation of the region, ameliorate those conditions which underlie local unrest and encourage Communism, and lay the groundwork for progressive economic development over a period of years.

22. The capacity of the Near Eastern countries to absorb and effectively utilize large-scale military aid is also limited by administrative inefficiency, inadequate officer and NCO cadres, lack of training, and the absence of a strong economic base. Greece and Turkey as well as Israel are hampered by such difficulties, although substantially increased military aid could be expected to materially improve their local capabilities within a relatively short time. In some Arab states and Iran these difficulties would be even greater, and the problem of military graft and political intrigue would in many cases be acute. Although light arms and training in guerrilla warfare might be best suited to the capabilities of these forces, they will tend, like the Iranians, to demand such equipment as jet planes and tanks. Moreover, they will be sensitive to the US-UK guidance and technical assistance required to maximize the effectiveness of the arms aid received. There is also the risk that the Arab States and Israel may seek to utilize increased US aid against each other and the much lesser risk, in the

case of the Arab States, that they might pursue local conflicts among themselves. Nevertheless, in the short run a US-UK aid program could improve their will and ability to conduct delaying and harassing actions against a Soviet attack, and their willingness to cooperate with US-UK forces.

23. Consequently, we consider that while a major improvement in the economic condition, internal stability, and military capabilities of the Near East through US-UK programs is a long-run proposition, much could be accomplished in the near future. Concrete evidences of greater US-UK interest in the region, including an area-wide military and economic aid program, particularly if accompanied by parallel political action, could be expected to reverse the present trend toward neutralism in the Arab States (though under present circumstances probably not in Iran) and modestly increase local capabilities for delaying action in event of war. Moreover, the additional base and transit rights which the US and UK might secure in several countries would greatly facilitate deployment of the US and UK forces, upon whom, for the next few years at least, the defense of the region would very largely depend.

Soviet Reaction to Greater US-UK Activity in the Near East

24. Since the thwarting of its early postwar attempts to gain a foothold in Greece and Iran, the Kremlin has not fully exploited its capabilities in the area. Because of the very weakness of the area and of the Western forces based there, the USSR may have felt that the region presented little threat to its security and could be easily conquered in event of war. Recent Soviet Near Eastern policy has been confined to promoting internal instability and intra-regional tensions and reducing Western influence. Soviet methods have included propaganda to aggravate nationalist suspicion of Western motives, expanded trade contacts, local Communist efforts to cause internal and intra-regional dissension, and incitement of minority groups.

25. The USSR would obviously be seriously concerned over any expanded Western activity

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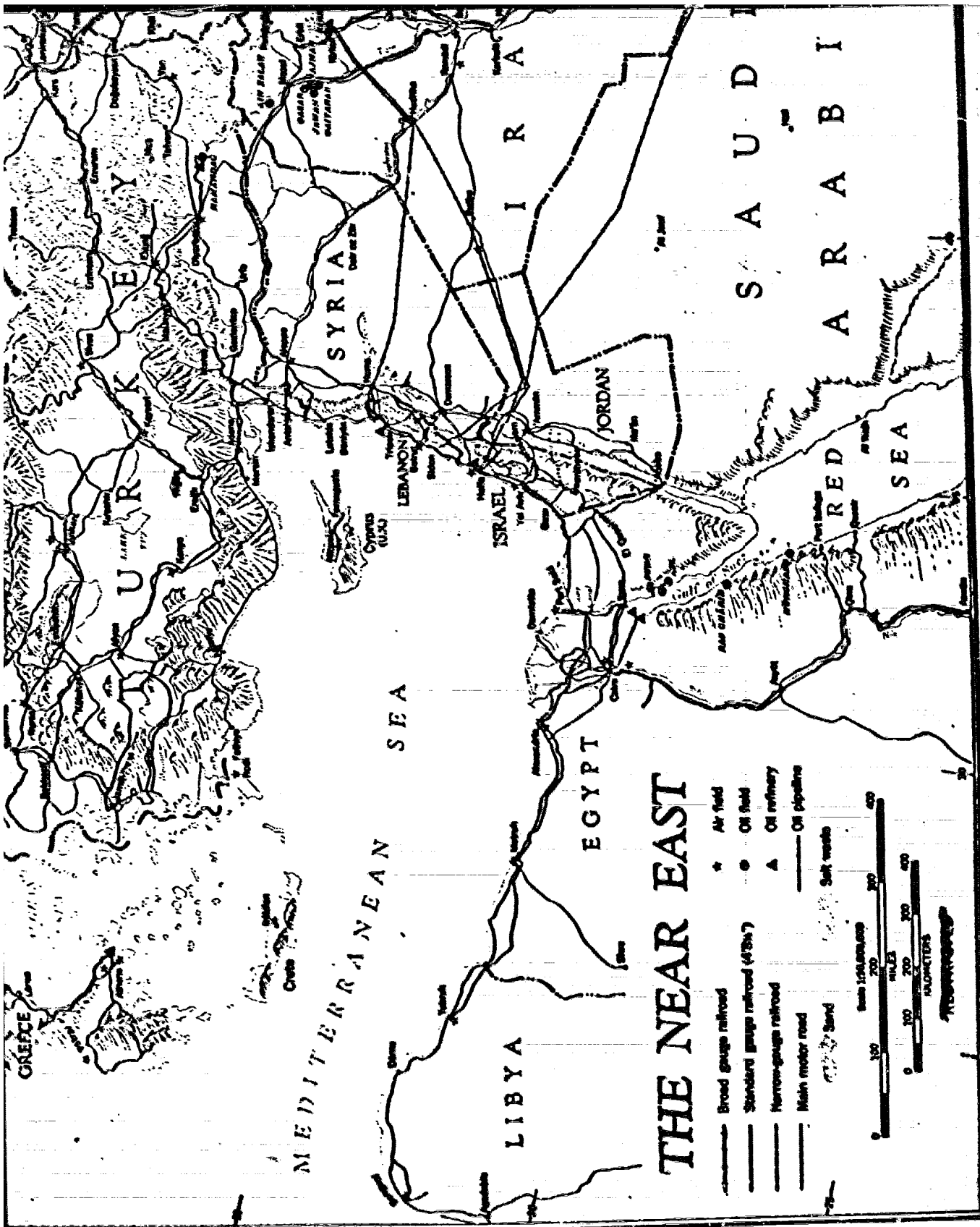
in the Near East, although it is difficult to estimate just what form its reaction would take. Soviet propaganda has already pointed to the planned expansion of US-UK air bases as a new step toward encirclement. The USSR might find it profitable, at least for the present, to pursue a relatively "soft" policy in an attempt to encourage neutralism, wean the Near Eastern countries away from the US-UK bloc, and undercut the Western program. The Kremlin has recently followed a policy of this type toward Iran, with apparently substantial results, and there have been some indications that it may seek to follow this policy toward other countries as well. Through expanded trade contacts, assurances of peaceful Soviet intentions and simultaneous threats as to the consequences of westward orientation, the USSR might play upon the anti-colonialism and fears of the Near Eastern countries with some success.

26. On the other hand, the USSR may employ a series of counterpressures, including threats, intensified anti-Western propaganda, larger scale subversive activities, promotion of local coups or separatist movements, and possibly even local armed intervention. The Kremlin might thus hope to intimidate the Near Eastern countries, offset Western efforts to promote stability and a pro-Western orientation, and possibly secure control of key areas. The underlying weakness and instability in the Arab States, and particularly the current crisis in Iran, offer substantial opportunities for Communist exploitation. The USSR, however, is probably not able to provoke a successful Communist revolution or separatist movement in any Near Eastern country at this time.

The USSR and its Satellites also pose a continued military threat to Greece, Turkey, and Iran, but there is no firm evidence of an early intention to attack.

27. In the final analysis, the intensity of the Soviet reaction to expanded US-UK activity in the Near East would depend largely on the nature and extent of the US-UK program. We believe that clear evidence of greater US-UK determination to support the Near East, especially a formal US security commitment to go to war in event of Soviet attack on the region, would act as a deterrent to local armed intervention by the USSR. There is reason to believe that existing US aid and expressions of interest in Greece, Turkey, and Iran have already caused the USSR to act with caution. On the other hand, an extensive US-UK program involving greater aid and defense commitments, plus the progressive development of strategic air and other bases and deployment of much greater forces in the area, might be considered by the Kremlin as a growing threat not only to accomplishment of its objectives in the Near East but to its security as well. The Kremlin would probably be extremely sensitive to the prospective development of substantial US-UK strength in such close proximity to the southern USSR. In these circumstances, the Kremlin might eventually feel it necessary to forestall such a development by the threat or use of military force in the area despite the risk of general war. Indeed such a development might be one factor influencing a Soviet resort to general war, although this decision would undoubtedly be based on global considerations, not merely the situation in the Near East.

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THE NEAR EAST