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## Challenge

Richard G. Colbert

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## CHALLENGE !



Military assistance, economic aid, political support for local causes and leaders, all backed at the appropriate time by a naval presence. This is the four-pronged approach the Soviet Union has used to gain eminence in the Mediterranean and with which it is attempting to establish itself in a similar fashion in the Indian Ocean area. In the near future we may well see the same strategy used to foster greater Soviet influence in our own hemisphere.

On the one hand, recent Soviet naval operations off our southeast coast and reports of a possible submarine base in Cienfuegos, Cuba, underscore the growing Soviet imperialist challenge in an area long protected by the Monroe Doctrine. And on the other hand, the election in Chile of the first Marxist president in the free world highlights the Communist ideological challenge in the Western Hemisphere.

Just as the British extended their empire by projecting economic, political, and military power with their vast seapower, so too have the Russians adopted a similar approach to the extension on their own empire in the "Third World." Clearly the Soviet leadership has studied the works of Alfred Thayer Mahan and the principles he laid down as essentials for any nation which is seeking global power.

In the Mediterranean area we have seen the Soviet entrenchment in the United Arab Republic and Syria; and we have witnessed a growing influence in Algeria and, most recently, Libya. While none of these Arab States have yet become the "satellites" that most of the Eastern European nations are, the fact remains that the influence of the Soviet Union in these nations far exceeds that

of the West. And this evolution has all occurred within less than a decade.

Economic aid—such as the financing of the Aswan Dam; political support—in taking up the cry of the Arab States versus Israel; and military assistance—such as rearming of the humiliated Arabs following the June 1967 war have all been parts of this Soviet strategy.

The fourth element of their adroitly orchestrated strategy aimed at gaining control of this strategic and economic crossroads of the world has been, of course, the timely deployment of Soviet naval task groups. By using a naval presence to give visible support to their political strategy, the Russians are meaningfully and effectively using a tactic known historically as "gunboat diplomacy."

Prior to June 1967, Soviet naval operations in the Mediterranean posed no significant challenge to our own mighty 6th Fleet. Three years later the Mediterranean is no longer the exclusive U.S. and NATO "lake" it once was. Between 30 and 45 Soviet ships operate there at any one time. Five times, in the last 2 years, the number has swollen to fleet size: August and November 1968; March 1969, just prior to the 20th anniversary of NATO; September 1969; and this past April, on the occasion of the Lenin centennial.

The Soviet naval presence in the eastern Mediterranean and along the northern littoral of Africa unlocks many

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doors of political and paramilitary importance. It threatens the southern flank of Europe. It displays the hammer and sickle, giving psychological support to the various radical regimes which struggle to maintain their control in several countries. At times it even neutralizes our 6th Fleet operations in these areas.

When King Idris of Libya was overthrown in a coup in September of 1969, Soviet naval forces took station along the Libyan coastline. Others shadowed our 6th Fleet ships more closely than usual. The Russians indirectly were warning us to stay clear, to avoid any action paralleling our landings in Lebanon in 1958 or the Dominican Republic in 1965. They were using their ships to neutralize our own and, at the same time, making political and psychological capital with the Arabs. Immediately following the coup, the new Libyan Government publicly expressed "thanks" to the Russian Navy for preventing the 6th Fleet from "interfering."

Another area of growing interest for the Soviet Union is the Indian Ocean. Their strategic naval interests there are obvious. First, the vital link which that ocean provides for their ships moving between the Soviet Atlantic and Pacific fleets; second, the important sea access to the underbelly of Communist China.

In addition, the Soviets have important political interests in that region of the world. They would seek to dominate east Africa and south Asia, as well as the oil-rich areas of the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. Such dominance would mean they could negate the rising political and economic influence there of Communist China. With the ability to deny the oil of the area to Europe, the United States, and other nations of the free world, the Kremlin would have a potent political tool.

To achieve these ends the Soviets are moving into the Indian Ocean area, using the same tactics they have so

successfully employed in the Mediterranean—military assistance, political support, and economic aid. Again, all backed by an appropriate naval presence. And the important point here is that Russia is the *only* nation offering this attractive combination of assistance, support, and aid to the non-aligned nations of the area.

Russian "technicians" and "advisers" abound in Somalia and South Yemen, just as they do in the UAR, Syria, and Iraq. Moslem guerrillas, bearing Soviet arms, harass Ethiopia's maritime province of Eritrea. Use of "trade and aid" tactics along the east coast of Africa provide a legitimate vehicle by which eventual political leverage can be extended in several vital areas. Newly established fishing accords and aid agreements with Mauritius presage similar political gains on that strategically located island nation. Mauritius, as a Russian naval base in time of war, could pose an ominous threat to the free world sea lines of communication around the Cape of Good Hope through the Indian Ocean to the Malacca Straits.

Key to the Russian strategy in the Indian Ocean is, as in the Mediterranean, their navy. "Showing the flag" by brandishing their modern and impressive naval power serves Soviet political interests and goals in this area well. It gives the Soviet Union a very real presence in an unstable region, a presence which derives importance from both the psychological and military advantages it affords. It is a valuable politico-military tool, making important new options in this area available to the Kremlin for the first time.

In early 1968, when the British Labour Government announced its decision to withdraw all British military forces east of the Suez by 1971—a decision which has since been changed—the Soviets were quick to react. Within 2 months a task group made up of a cruiser, guided missile frigate, guided missile destroyer, and an oiler all

departed Vladivostok, steamed a grand total of 25,000 miles in 5 months, visiting 10 ports and eight nations around the Indian Ocean periphery in the process.

Last year alone, 20 Soviet combatants visited the Indian Ocean, "showing the flag" and making their naval presence obvious in some two dozen ports of 14 nations.

In our own hemisphere the Soviet strategy has yet to assume the four dimensions it has in north Africa, the Middle East, south Asia, and east Africa.

Military assistance has gone only to Cuba. Similarly, economic aid to the area has been limited, primarily taking the form of commercial exchanges—Russian and Eastern bloc equipment for Latin raw materials—which have often benefited the Soviets more than the Latins. And economic development programs sponsored by the Soviets to date are very modest.

In the political area, evidence of a Soviet strategy similar to that in the eastern Mediterranean and Indian Ocean regions is likewise scarce. Political support has been given indigenous Communist Parties rather than existing governmental structures. The adverse reaction of Latin Americans to the Cuban missile crisis, in which Castro appeared to have substituted Soviet dominance for "Yankee imperialism," must have warned the Russians to keep their political advances on a low key. This they have done. Political support for Chile's new President is to be expected, but only to the degree that the new Government might request it. While the Soviets have established diplomatic relations with five Latin nations in 1969-70, the tactic has been to allow the Latins to take the initiative in proposing political ties.

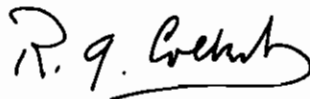
Despite the Soviet hesitancy to date in the economic, political, and military spheres, their naval interest in the Caribbean has been far from passive.

In July 1969, while Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko was publicly calling for friendlier United States-Soviet relations, nine Russian ships—two with surface-to-surface missiles, along with three submarines—conducted maneuvers in the Gulf of Mexico. Again this past spring a destroyer, cruiser, tender, and three submarines conducted similar operations in our home waters.

Admiral Gorshkov, Chief of the Soviet Navy, once asked, "How would the American like it if rocket launching Russian ships maneuvered in the Gulf of Mexico 80 miles from New Orleans?" In neither July 1969 nor this past spring were Soviet ships that close to New Orleans, but they *did* pass within 25 miles of Miami!

In September of this year the Russian Navy conducted its third deployment to the Caribbean within 15 months. One signal was all too apparent: it plans to operate freely in waters close to the shores of the United States.

Successful employment of their naval presence in Latin waters, especially in the all-important psychological and political dimensions, could well be the precursor to stepped-up economic, political, and military efforts to project influence in Latin America. The challenge to this Nation is to devise a viable Latin American policy to keep that area from falling prey to the four-pronged Soviet approach which has worked so well in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean areas.



R. G. COLBERT  
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy  
President, Naval War College