US facilities in the Azores and Ascension Island. Soviet anchorages in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean were at the mercy of Western air and sea power.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, China shifted from a revolutionary policy to a vigorous diplomatic foreign policy, extending aid to selected parts of the underdeveloped world in South America, Africa, and Asia. This new Chinese political assertiveness was facilitated by the self-confidence derived from its development of nuclear bombs and satellites in the 1960s and by the Sino-US détente initiated by President Richard Nixon's dramatic visit to Beijing in 1972.

SHATTERBELTS

During phase II, Soviet penetration of the maritime realm resulted in the creation of three shatterbelts—the Middle East and the African Horn, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia.

The Middle East and the African Horn

The Middle East was the first place in the maritime realm where the Soviets penetrated the Western ring of containment. There, Syria, Egypt, and South Yemen were Moscow's main targets for extending its influence. Egypt, the largest and most powerful of the Arab states, was the prime objective. As early as 1955, the USSR began to provide aid to Egypt and also to Syria.

Withdrawal of US and British financial support for the proposed Aswan Dam, the centerpiece of Gamal Abdel Nasser's development plans in Egypt, opened the door for the Soviets to provide the funding. Moscow went on to give military support to Cairo after the Egyptian army had been defeated in the 1956 Sinai War with Israel. During the next decade and a half, Soviet influence upon Egypt was all-embracing, with vast military, technical, and economic aid. In return, the Soviets acquired access to Egyptian naval bases on the Mediterranean coast, which supported its Mediterranean squadron, a self-contained detachment of the Black Sea fleet.

This penetration of the Arab world's leading nation ended in 1972, when President Anwar Sadat made preparations for another war with Israel against the wishes of the USSR. Sadat ousted Soviet forces and took over their bases. After the defeat of Egypt in this war, the United States moved into the vacuum and, at Camp David, brokered a peace between Egypt and Israel. Egypt then returned to the maritime orbit through a new alliance with the United States.

Soviet relations with Syria were longer lasting. The Baath Party, which combined socialism and nationalism, had gained power in the mid-1950s. In 1960, its radical wing seized control with Moscow's help. Subsequent economic and military accords provided the Soviets with a strong foothold in Syria, although President Hafez al-Assad, who had seized power and become president in 1971, feared an internal Communist coup and therefore remained wary of Soviet long-range intentions. These fears played a role in Syria's decision to join with Egypt and Libya in the short-lived Federation of Arab Republics (1969–70).

Unlike Egypt, which had swept out Soviet influence in favor of peace with Israel and strong support from the United States, Syria remained at war with the Israelis over possession of the Golan Heights. As a consequence, the USSR continued to maintain considerable influence with Damascus, which still remains heavily dependent on Russian arms.

When Lebanon became embroiled in civil war among Christians, Muslims, and Palestinians in the mid-1970s, Syria seized the opportunity to extend its influence over the country.

The Syrian military intervened in 1976 at the invitation of the Christian community to prevent its being overrun by the Lebanese Muslims and Palestinians. Damascus then switched its support to the Muslims and the Palestinians when the Christian-dominated Lebanese army leadership sought to oust the Syrian forces from the country.

Soviet penetration into South Yemen began with the independence of the colony of Aden from Britain in 1967. The new state included the Arab Emirates of South Arabia in the Hadhramaut, which lay to the east of Aden. The historic trading center for the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula, Aden had an excellent natural harbor that would well serve Soviet strategic aims in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.

In 1979, a twenty-year accord between the Soviets and the South Yemen regime provided for Soviet naval bases to be installed. These gave support to the eastern Mediterranean Soviet fleet as it entered or exited the Red Sea at Bab el-Mandeb en route to the Suez Canal. With complementary Soviet bases that had developed earlier, first in Somalia and then on Ethiopia's Eritrean coast, oversight of the southern end of the Red Sea was strengthened.

In Libya in 1969, Muammar al-Gaddafi's overthrow of King Idris and seizure of power led to the closing of the remaining British military bases there, as well as of the US Wheelus Air Base. (Most British troops had been withdrawn three years previously.) This paved the way for the short-lived alliance with Egypt and Syria and for Libya to become a base for international terrorism against Israel and the West.

Gaddafi espoused socialist principles but was strongly anti-Communist. While he forged military ties with the USSR, which supplied him with vast amounts of advanced military equipment, including missiles, his major interests lay in extending Libya's influence into the Arab world and providing support to Palestinian guerrilla movements. A formal Soviet-Libyan alliance was forged much later, in 1980, when the Libyans came into conflict with Tunisia, and it continued in subsequent years of Libya's conflict with Chad. However, by 1980 the alliance was of little strategic value to the Soviets, inasmuch as Egypt had already made peace with Israel and had become a major client state of the United States.

Relations between the USSR and Iraq took various turns. Initially, in 1955, Iraq severed ties with the Soviet Union over the latter's support of the Kurdish revolt in northern Iraq. Later, in 1972, when Iraq broke its diplomatic links with Britain and Iran, it signed a friendship pact with the Soviets, although its various Baathist regimes continued to be wary of possible Communist coups. Given the strength of the alliance between Washington and the Shah of Iran, Iraq saw its links to the USSR as a valuable countermeasure and purchased substantial amounts of arms from Moscow. The situation changed drastically in 1979, when the virulently anti-American Khomeini regime overthrew the Shah. As Saddam Hussein prepared for war against Iran, the United States considered support of Iraq both desirable and feasible.

During this period of major Soviet inroads into the Arab world, the West maintained its position through strategic alliances with Turkey, the Shah's Iran (until his ouster), Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf states. The importance of Iranian oil to the West had been underscored at the beginning of this era when Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh nationalized the British-owned Anglo-Iranian oil company. Elected by the deputies of the Majlis in 1951, with strong support for his nationalization program, Mosaddegh was overthrown by a combined CIA-British action two years later. He was convicted of treason by the new government. Far from being the Soviet tool that he was accused of being, he had rejected Moscow's bid to win an oil concession.

It was in early 1979, at the very end of phase II, that the US-Iran alliance was shattered by the overthrow of the Shah and the establishment of the fundamentalist Islamic Republic, led by the Ayatollah Khomeini. Seizure of the American embassy by Iranian militants and

the keeping of 52 American hostages for 444 days embittered the relations between the two nations for years to come.

From the 1950s onward, oil from the eastern Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf waters, as well as from Iraq and Iran, had become of such global importance that the West had to maintain a strong Middle Eastern presence. In addition, Turkey, the region's largest military power, served as NATO's eastern cornerstone and defensive bastion against the Soviet Black Sea positions.

US support for Israel had begun out of domestic political and humanitarian concerns. However, with American help, Israel had developed a formidable military machine, supported by a strong intelligence capacity which was superior to those of its combined Arab enemies It therefore constituted a valuable Cold War military asset to counter Soviet influence among most of the Arab states. Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states were completely dependent upon Washington for military support and arms to guard against continuing threats from Iraq (and, after 1979, from Iran), providing the West with a firm strategic presence in the Persian/Arab Gulf.

Soviet penetration also extended into the Horn of Africa, where its strategic objective was full command of the southern end of the Red Sea. This involved Moscow in countries bordering the sea along both the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa. Even though the Suez Canal was now closed, the Horn, a transitional region between the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa, was a tempting prize. By linking positions on the coast of the Horn to those held in South Yemen, the Soviet navy would acquire control of both sides of the Gulf of Aden through surveillance installations monitoring the movements of US and allied air and naval power in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean.

In the Horn of Africa, the opening for the USSR came in Somalia in 1969, when a military coup brought General Mohamed Siad Barre to power and established a Marxist-Leninist state that developed strong ties with the Soviet Union. Soviet assistance included considerable arms to build up the Somali forces. In exchange, Moscow was given the right to build naval and missile bases in the north in the port of Berbera (in former British Somaliland), opposite Aden, and in Mogadishu in the south.

Events in Ethiopia soon placed the Soviets in a quandary, forcing them to choose between two allies, Ethiopia and Somalia. In 1974, a Soviet-backed military junta had overthrown Emperor Haile Selassie and installed a Marxist regime headed by Mengistu Haile Mariam. Two years later, the Ethiopians formally ended their alliance with the United States and formed one with the USSR. In the long-standing dispute between the Somalis and Ethiopians over the latter's control of the Ogaden Desert, which lay between them, the USSR and Cuba opted for Ethiopia. The Soviets flew in twenty thousand Cuban troops and provided advisers, enabling the Ethiopians to retake the Ogaden in 1978.[4] As the conflict continued, the Somalis turned to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United States for help.

In 1978, Soviet-Cuban assistance also enabled the Ethiopians to defeat the Eritrean rebels, who had seized most of Eritrea, and clear the way for the Soviets to gain naval and military bases on the Red Sea at Massawa and Aseb.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa became a second shatterbelt during this period. With the reopening of the Suez Canal in 1975, the USSR gained direct access to the Red Sea by way of the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Together with land proximity, this provided the Soviets with a strategic advantage in the Middle East over the more distant Western powers. In

most of Sub-Saharan Africa, however, Moscow was at a strategic disadvantage relative to Western Europe. France, Belgium, and Britain were much closer geographically to West and Central Africa and could apply military power there more quickly. In addition, the Europeans had strong economic and cultural ties to those regions. The Soviets, however, had to use lengthy sea routes or overfly the continent to provide military support to Communist movements there.

Only in relatively distant southern Africa did Moscow and its Cuban allies have equal strategic access. There, however, the Soviets had to contend not only with the European powers backed by their transatlantic US partner but also with white-ruled South Africa, which could directly support the anti-Communist forces in nearby Mozambique and Angola.

An early opportunity for a Soviet foray into Sub-Saharan Africa presented itself within Central Africa, in Congo. Congo attained independence from Belgium in 1960, and its first government was headed by Patrice Lumumba, a Marxist. His Soviet-backed regime was immediately beset by the secession of the mineral-rich Katanga (Shaba), but the USSR's capacity to provide military help was limited. Lumumba was soon overthrown and subsequently murdered, and a new national government was established through a combination of covert US help, Belgian troops, and white mercenaries. Two years later, Mobutu Sese Seko seized power and the United States became the main supporter of the country (renamed Zaire). This ended Soviet hopes of gaining a foothold in Congo—an important source of such strategic minerals as copper, uranium, cobalt, and tin as well as industrial diamonds, petroleum, and rubber.

The adjoining Republic of the Congo-Brazzaville had received its independence from France at the same time as had Congo. Although a Marxist-Leninist government took power, it steered a neutral course between Moscow and the capitalist world, especially because of its economic dependence upon France. Only at the beginning of phase III of the Cold War did Congo sign a friendship pact with the Soviet Union, a relationship devoid of strategic significance.

In West Africa, Guinea, which had been led to independence from France in 1958 by Ahmed Sékou Touré's radical union movement, cultivated relations with the Soviet Union. In 1961, Touré expelled the Soviet ambassador for seeking undue influence in the country, but relations were restored, and Conakry became a base for Soviet military surveillance aircraft and a permanent Soviet naval patrol off the Guinea coast.

Ghana provided no opening for the Soviet Union, although under Kwame Nkrumah (1957–66) it took a strong anticolonial, Pan-African stance, unfriendly to the West. Elsewhere within West Africa, Mali had a flirtation with the USSR in the 1960s and 1970s, when Soviet military advisers provided a small number of tanks and aircraft. While there was a Soviet market for some of its exports, such as hides, groundnuts, and canned fish, the impoverished country still depended mainly upon France for imports and credits as well as for trade with neighboring African states.

In the latter part of phase II, Benin, which had adopted a Marxist ideology in 1975, sought support from the Communist world. Little was forthcoming except for a handful of Soviet small naval craft, so the country remained economically tied to Europe. Neither Benin nor Mali offered any strategic advantages for the USSR.

In East Africa, which received its independence from Britain in 1963, only Tanganyika and Zanzibar were realistic targets of opportunity for Communist penetration, as major ethnic divisions rather than ideology were the basis for turmoil in Kenya and Uganda. Immediately following independence, Zanzibar was the scene of a leftist revolt, some of whose participants were Cuban trained. However, the island was quickly merged with Tanganyika into Tanzania (1964), and the mainland gradually took control of the island's affairs.

Chinese influence grew in Tanzania, as China provided the aid for building the Tazara (Tan-Zam) Railway from the coast at Dar es Salaam to Zambia in the late 1960s. Nevertheless, the Communist influence was kept within limits, as Julius Nyerere preferred to follow his own brand of socialism, free of great-power entanglements. Nyerere and his successors continued to steer a course of nonalignment in the great-power clash. The country did become embroiled in border clashes with Uganda that erupted into full-scale war in 1978–79. It also served as a support base for liberation movements in other parts of Africa.

In the mid-1970s, southern Africa provided the USSR with a new window of opportunity. In Angola, the Communist guerrillas who had led the war of independence from Portugal gained control of the government. In its struggle to keep power against opposition rebel movements, the Marxist regime received large amounts of aid from the Soviet Union and Cuba. In 1976, the opposition National Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) nearly succeeded in capturing Luanda with the help of South African troops and US support. However, Cuban soldiers were flown in by Soviet planes, backed by seaborne supplies, to save the capital and to enable the regime to gain control of the north and much of the rest of the country. With the assistance of Cuba and the USSR, Angola also provided a base for Southwest African guerrillas (the South West Africa People's Organization, SWAPO) in their battle for independence from South Africa.

A Marxist government was also installed in Mozambique when the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo) came to power in 1975. The new regime received aid, equipment, and training support from the USSR and help from Cuban air force personnel. Beira became a base for the Soviet Indian Ocean squadron. The country soon became a haven for the rebels of the Marxist Zimbabwe African National Union, precipitating a brief but devastating invasion from white-dominated Rhodesia.

The Soviet bases on the two coasts of the two southern African allies, Angola and Mozambique, were strategically valuable. From Beira overlooking the Mozambique Channel, the Soviets presented a challenge to the US Fifth Fleet and to its air arm based on the Indian Ocean Island of Diego Garcia, which had been leased from Britain. In addition, Beira provided oversight of the shipping lanes from the eastern Mediterranean and Indian Ocean through the channel to the Cape of Good Hope and of traffic destined for the Atlantic. Angola enabled the Soviet Union to monitor the trans-Cape route from the Atlantic side.

By the end of phase II, the Soviet position in Sub-Saharan Africa had become shaky, despite these widespread efforts to penetrate the region. Its Communist satellites in Ethiopia and Angola remained locked in combat with powerful rebel forces within their countries. Moscow incurred high costs in keeping large numbers of Cuban troops to sustain these regimes while pumping arms and economic assistance into them. Moreover, in white-dominated South Africa, the Soviets had encountered a regional power with the military capacity and the logistical advantages to help the rebels in both Angola and Mozambique fight the Marxist governments and their Communist allies to a standstill.

The geopolitical actions of the Soviet Union in Sub-Saharan Africa during phase II had converted the region into a shatterbelt. Moscow's goals had been twofold—to support Marxist and anticolonial movements of national liberation wherever they took place and to fulfill Soviet geostrategic objectives by securing footholds along the Horn of Africa and other lands and offshore islands bordering the Indian Ocean, thus threatening sea-lanes vital to the maritime world. The success of these efforts proved to be mixed, however, as so much of Africa continued to depend upon the West for its economic survival and was unwilling to forgo ties with European investors and markets.