

## **THE COLD WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 1950s: WHAT WAS THE SOVIET RESPONSE AGAINST WESTERN INTERVENTIONISM?**

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### **Öz**

#### **1950'lerin İkinci Yarısında Orta Doğu'da Soğuk Savaş: Batı Müdahaleciliğine Karşı Sovyetler Ne Tepki Gösterdi?**

Bu çalışmada, Süveyş Krizi ve Eisenhower doktriniyle batılı kapitalist devletlerin bölgede nüfuz/etkinlik alanı sağlama amaçlı girişimlerine Sovyetler Birliği'nin penceresinden bakmak, pozisyonunu ve gelişmeleri nasıl değerlendirdiğini ortaya koymak amaçlandı. Sovyetler Birliği Batı'ya antiemperyalist politikayla karşılık verdi. Bu bağlamda, Orta Doğu'da Batılı kapitalist devletlerin müdahaleci politikalarına karşı Sovyetler Birliği'nin bölge devletlerinin bağımsızlık ve egemenliğini savunarak antiemperyalist bir politika gütmesi bu çalışmanın temel sorunsalını oluşturmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Sovyetler Birliği, Orta Doğu, Soğuk Savaş, Süveyş Krizi, Eisenhower doktrini*

### **Abstract**

This study aims to look from the Soviet Union's perspective to the attempts of western capitalist states intending to maintain their domains in the period, in which the Suez Crisis and the Eisenhower doctrine dominated the region; to reveal how the Soviet Union assessed the developments and to clarify its position. The Soviet Union responded to the West with an anti-imperialist policy. In this context, this policy of the Soviet Union against the interventionist policies of the western capitalist states in the Middle East defending the independence and sovereignty of states in the region constitutes the main research problem of this study.

**Keywords:** *Soviet Union, Middle East, Cold War, Suez Crisis, Eisenhower doctrine*

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## **Introduction**

The Cold War involved the struggle of two block leaders (United States of America/United States/US/USA-Soviet Union/USSR/Soviets) possessing nuclear weapons. The ideological aspect was predominant. However, at the same time, it was based on expansion of sphere of influence<sup>1</sup>. The Cold War was not limited only to European geography. East and, South Asia, the Balkans and the Near East/Middle East<sup>2</sup> were the stages for the Cold War in the 1950s. The wars in East and South Asia divided Korea and Vietnam into two countries one of which was socialist. There had been a Soviet-Yugoslav split since 1948. The capitalist bloc was content with this split in the socialist bloc and wanted it to deepen if possible. In the Balkans, the pact signed by two NATO members, Turkey and Greece, with socialist Yugoslavia included mutual military assistance in case of a possible attack and it was an effort to keep the ongoing split between the USSR and Yugoslavia since 1948 and harm the socialist camp. Yet the situation in the Near East was different. There was no socialist country in the region. Hence, there was no country in question, which was directly under Soviet influence and support. However, Soviet Union had an attitude against the policies of the United Kingdom (UK), France and the USA in the region. At this point it should be noted that Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956 and the subsequent attack that it came under was not a Cold War product directly. Therefore, the support of the USSR for Egypt in this crisis was more important than the Cold War confrontation as it was revealing the anti-imperialist character of Soviet foreign policy. In other words, the (regional) policy of the USSR had a historical/ideological/theoretical meaning apart from the Cold War mentality.

This study aims to look from the Soviet Union's perspective to the attempts of western capitalist states intending to maintain their domains in the period, in which the Suez Crisis and the Eisenhower doctrine dominated the region; to reveal how the Soviet Union assessed the developments and to clarify its position. The Soviet Union responded to the West with an anti-imperialist policy. In this context, this policy of the Soviet Union against the interventionist policies of the western capitalist states in the Middle East defending the

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<sup>1</sup> Lee 2002, p. 309.

<sup>2</sup> The concepts of the Near East and the Middle East represent the same geographical region. They might be used interchangeably in this study. There may be different approaches regarding the geography and boundary that these concepts include. But these concepts easily cover the countries mentioned in this study. Two concepts have been used in English and Russian sources. In Soviet/Russian sources, from time to time, the two concepts are used simultaneously together. The usage cited from sources was abided.

independence and sovereignty of states in the region constitutes the main research problem of this study.

What makes this work important and unique is that the subject/issue was looked through the Soviet perspective and Soviet official sources were consulted. Of course, this does not mean that an objective point of view has been neglected. Certainly, it is obvious that a study conducted using only Russian or only English sources would be insufficient. While examining Soviet policy, this study did not ignore western official and primary sources. This diplomatic history study is based on the notion of 'the subject of the history is unique'. It aims to bring a new perspective to the analysed period with help of different sources, which has mainly been studied from western perspective using western sources in the diplomatic history books and thus to contribute to the Cold War literature modestly. The study primarily focused on the historical/theoretical basis of the anti-imperialist policy of the USSR. Then, the Soviet response/attitude was revealed in response to the Suez Crisis, the Eisenhower doctrine, the Syrian Crisis and the Anglo-American interventions in Lebanon and Jordan.

### **Soviet Union's Anti-imperialist Policy**

The Soviet Union was an anti-imperialist state and did not acquire this feature in the Cold War. The Soviet/Bolshevik Revolution had an anti-imperialist world view in accordance with Marxist-Leninist theory. The party, which realized the revolution and established the state, looked at international politics from the perspective of class struggle, was opposed to the oppression and exploitation of poor countries and peoples by developed capitalist countries. Vladimir Lenin, leader of the revolution, wrote in his study *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* that imperialism was the mandatory result of the development of capitalism and its monopolistic stage<sup>3</sup>. He ranked the United Kingdom (UK), France, the United States and Germany as the most advanced colonist countries, indicating that they possess 80 % of the world's financial capital<sup>4</sup>. Lenin, had also drawn attention to semi-colonial countries other than the colonialists and their colonies, seemingly having political independence yet in mesh of financial and diplomatic dependency<sup>5</sup>. In the second half of the 1950s, according to the USSR the colonial approaches of countries in question (except Germany) to the Near East had been going on. The buttress for newly independent Near Eastern countries struggling for social and economic

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<sup>3</sup> Lenin 1969a, p. 386.

<sup>4</sup> Lenin 1969a, p. 358.

<sup>5</sup> Lenin 1969a, p. 383.

development against imperialism was among the natural inherent tasks of a socialist country. In January-February 1916, with relevance to this issue, Lenin stated in his study entitled *The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination* that the socialists had to defend the liberty of the colonies without expecting a return and support even the more revolutionary elements within the bourgeois democratic national liberation movements against the oppressing imperialist powers<sup>6</sup>. Thereby, it was necessary for the USSR to endorse the Near Eastern countries attempting to achieve their national economic development free from the military, political and economic oppression of the imperialist states.

On February 9, 1955, the USSR Supreme Soviet Prezidium issued a call that they would not interfere with internal affairs of states, in which national liberation forces succeeded. The socialist states would give lasting support for the development of these states. The USSR was ready to use its inexhaustible resources for this purpose<sup>7</sup>. In the same month, a defence and security pact was signed between Turkey and Iraq in Baghdad. The UK, Pakistan and Iran joined this pact, too. British Prime Minister Anthony Eden mentioned the possibility that the pact could grow into a NATO for the Middle East<sup>8</sup>. The pact, which aimed to form a military bridgehead, a northern tier (severnnyy yarud) against the Soviets, intended to prevent the development of the relations of the USSR with the Arab countries. It was against the liberation movements of the Arab peoples. The US was not a member of the pact but it was the biggest supporter<sup>9</sup>. The USSR's Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared in a statement issued on April 16, 1955, that not entering the military blocs was a prerequisite for the solution of the problems in the Near East, and the countries in the region were pulled by the aggressive blocs on the pretext of defence<sup>10</sup>. Nikita Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), in a speech at the party's 20th Congress in February 1956, said that the Baghdad Pact was not only an aggressive bloc, but also an instrument of exploitation and enslavement of underdeveloped countries<sup>11</sup>.

Soviet Union had a policy of supporting peace both in the region and the world. Again in the 20th Congress, Khrushchev remarked that it was very important to show the vitality and correctness of the negotiation process when the four major states convened in the previous year in Geneva to reduce tension

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<sup>6</sup> Lenin 1969b, p. 261.

<sup>7</sup> Sbornik Zakonov 1956, pp. 146-147.

<sup>8</sup> Eden 1960, pp. 243-244.

<sup>9</sup> Nihatın 1957, p. 504-505.

<sup>10</sup> SSSR i Arabskie Strany 1961, p. 117.

<sup>11</sup> XX S'ezd 1956, p. 27.

in the Cold War. Thus, the efforts of the peaceful states and peoples did not go for nothing, and for the first time since World War II, there was a decrease in international tension<sup>12</sup>. The USSR thought that a possible war would take place with nuclear weapons and the world would face the danger of destruction. It was aiming to formulate relations with capitalist countries (non-socialist) by the principle of peaceful coexistence which developed in the 20th Congress<sup>13</sup>. This naturally necessitated a little more patience in achieving the ultimate goal of the world revolution of Marxist-Leninist theory. In this context The USSR was struggling to strengthen peace. Improvement of relationships with major countries, removal of war centres in the east and preventing formation of new ones, establishment of a collective security system in Europe, disarmament, prohibition of atomic weapons and initiation of good relations with all states, desire of preserving peace, were among the constituents of this struggle<sup>14</sup>. The USSR also supported an initiative, called the Non-Aligned Movement, in which Asian and African countries came together in Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955, wishing to pursue a separate and independent policy from the East and West blocs. The conference in Bandung gave importance to strengthening of peace, the struggle against colonialism and international cooperation<sup>15</sup>. In the 20th Congress, it was stated that improvement of relations with non-aligned countries and the other countries having the principle of peaceful coexistence and working for peace and security of peoples regardless of their social order were among the tasks of the CPSU in foreign policy. Egypt and Syria were also counted among the states with which friendship and cooperation had to be strengthened with great effort<sup>16</sup>. At the Communist and Workers' Parties Meeting in Moscow in 1957, it was stated that the advocates of peace of the day reached great strength, and the peace-loving countries of Asia and Africa and the liberation movements of colonial and semi-colonial people were indicated and supported among them. It was mentioned that principles such as sovereignty, respect for territorial integrity, and non-interference with their internal affairs had to be based on inter-state relations<sup>17</sup>. In the Peace Manifesto published at the end of the same meeting, it was also stated that prevention of wars was possible owing to increase of peace supporters, and the ones threatening peace and security were imperialist states<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> XX S'ezd 1956, p. 29.

<sup>13</sup> XX S'ezd 1956, p. 408.

<sup>14</sup> XX S'ezd 1956, p. 28.

<sup>15</sup> XX S'ezd 1956, p. 461.

<sup>16</sup> XX S'ezd 1956, p. 41.

<sup>17</sup> *Diplomatičeskij Slovar*, Tom 2, 1971, p. 92.

<sup>18</sup> *Diplomatičeskij Slovar*, Tom 2, 1971, p. 93.

In the Middle East, mainly, there were states that had been newly liberated from the British and French rules and trying to stand on their own feet. Particularly from the second half of the 1950's, developments in the region, western countries' struggle for continuation of their presence (UK and France) or establishment of dominance (US) in the Near East mostly contributed to revival of anti-western thoughts in some former colony countries. In this environment, the USSR had an attitude against the policies of the UK, France and the US in the region.

### **Suez Crisis: Imperialist Attack on Egypt**

The process leading to the Suez Crisis began in July 1952 when a group called the Free Officers Movement in Egypt army formed a regime that united Arab nationalism and socialism by demolishing monarchy. New regime distanced itself from the West. In July 1954 a treaty was signed with the UK that included the withdrawal of British forces from Egypt. The Egyptian Prime Minister Gamal Abdel Nasser (president from June 1956), who believed that a strong army was necessary for freedom and independence, announced on 27 September 1955 that Egypt had made an arms deal with the socialist Czechoslovakia<sup>19</sup>. The US and the UK were extremely uncomfortable with this development. US Assistant Secretary of State George Allen and British Ambassador to Cairo Sir Humphrey Trevelyan asked Nasser not to take arms from socialist countries. The Soviet Government immediately supported Egypt and issued a special statement. It was reported that every state had the right to think of its own defence, to acquire arms in favorable commercial terms from other states for defence needs; no other state had the right to interfere with it, to have unilateral demand, and to harm other states' interests<sup>20</sup>. The US President Dwight Eisenhower was concerned about prospective arms shipments to Egypt which could negatively affect the relaxation of tensions between the USSR and the US, and a peaceful constructive solution of the Arab-Israel problem<sup>21</sup>. In response to this, Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai Bulganin sent a letter to Eisenhower (by enclosing another letter that he had sent to Eden) sharing the opinion of relaxation of tensions but defending the Egyptian-Czechoslovak Arms Deal<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> "Prime Minister.." 1956, pp. 402-404.

<sup>20</sup> "Politika.." 1955, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> "Editorial Note", Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1955-1957, Volume XIV 1989, p. 576.

<sup>22</sup> In the letter, Bulganin stated that "It is natural that the Egyptian Republic desires to acquire these arms in exchange for the products of its own labor, not binding itself with any obligations whatever that might impair its sovereign rights. It is apparent from the statements of the

In December 1955, the US and the UK offered \$200 million in aid for the construction of the Aswan Dam on the Nile River to create political pressure and make Egypt follow pro-western policy. Nevertheless, since the Egyptian leader Nasser did not change his political stance, on July 19, 1956 the US and on July, 23 the UK abandoned to support the construction of dam<sup>23</sup>. Despite this move, Nasser did not back down and on July 26, 1956 he nationalized the Suez Canal. Having lost an important revenue source and strategic point, the UK and France reacted strongly to this. On July 27, the US President Eisenhower learned from USA's acting ambassador in London that the UK had begun to take military measures and even the commanders of the Mediterranean were alarmed by the possibility of military intervention. On the same day, a message came from the US embassy in Paris including the views of the French Government. In that message, the French Foreign Minister Christian Pineau, was drawing a parallel between Nasser's attempt and Hitler's Rhineland occupation 20 years ago. According to him, a strong reaction had to be given to Nasser. Meanwhile, the UK and France were collaborating on military issues to retrieve the canal. Pineau thought that the Soviet Union would not make an effective counteraction<sup>24</sup>. The British Prime Minister Eden, on the other hand, instructed the military chiefs to prepare a military plan<sup>25</sup>. The US Secretary of

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Egyptian as well as Czechoslovak Governments that the contract concluded between them is of just that character. Moreover, there are no grounds for speaking in this instance of any arms race or for considering that these arms deliveries may lead to a violation of the peace. On the other hand, you well know that the United Kingdom and the United States of America over many years have been delivering at their own discretion considerable quantities of arms to various countries of the Middle and Near East. These arms are delivered, as a rule, under well-known political conditions, for example, on condition of the participation of the countries purchasing arms in definite military groupings aimed against other states, which actually leads to an armaments race. I should like to recall in this connection that the proposals for arms deliveries were made by the Western Powers to Egypt as well, on the condition of subordinating the Egyptian army to a so-called 'Middle East Command', or of the entry of Egypt into military groupings created there. If Egypt did not want to follow this road and is defending its national rights and legal interests, this should not give any cause for charges that it is allegedly not interested in the preservation of peace. At all events, the Soviet Government has no grounds for thinking that Egypt is interested in preserving peace any less than any other state in this region" "Message From Prime Minister Bulganin to President Eisenhower", FRUS, 1955-1957, Volume XIV 1989, pp. 636-638.

<sup>23</sup> Pelipas 2003, p. 557; *Diplomatcheskij Slovar*, Tom 3 1973, p. 268. As British Prime Minister Anthony Eden stated, Egypt applied to the World Bank for the construction of the dam, and the Bank tried to set conditions to subject the Egyptian economy to western tutelage. The US funding proposal was withdrawn because of the negative approach of Egypt to the Baghdad Pact. Eden 1960, p. 474.

<sup>24</sup> Eisenhower 1965, pp. 35-36.

<sup>25</sup> Eisenhower 1965, p. 37; Eden 1960, p. 477.

State John Foster Dulles, who held meetings with Eden from July 29 to August 2, 1956, said that President Eisenhower did not ignore the possibility of using force. Eisenhower attributed great importance to the canal and, at the end, on behalf of protecting international rights the force could have to be used<sup>26</sup>. Also Dulles aimed to make Nasser “disgorge”<sup>27</sup>. According to Eden, who described Nasser’s nationalization of the canal as a “theft”, it could encourage other extremist demands on the oil fields in the region that were extremely important for the UK and Western Europe<sup>28</sup>. According to the USSR, the western countries wanted to put Egypt economically in a difficult position by not supporting the construction of the dam. The Soviet Government characterized the nationalization of the canal as a legitimate act stemming from the sovereignty of Egypt. At this point, trying to give back the lost privileges to the canal company, or imposing the sovereignty of foreign capital to Egypt under another guise, was clearly a colonialist characteristic according to the Soviets<sup>29</sup>.

A conference was held in London on August 16-23, 1956, to solve the problem. In the conference, the US Secretary of State, Dulles put forward a plan. The plan included: First, the task of managing the Suez Canal should be given to an international governing body, in which Egypt was also represented. Second, Egypt must have the right to obtain a fair income from transit. Third, a fair payment must be made to the previous company with an agreement to be made. Fourth, the income that Egypt obtains and the payment for the previous company shall be determined by the arbitration commission appointed by the international tribunal<sup>30</sup>. According to the USSR, this plan contradicted the United Nations (UN) principles and international law. The Soviet delegation was in favor of a solution revealing the general opinion, in accordance with spirit of the time, which stated that Egypt had full possession of the canal and considered its fair national profits and the freedom of other countries’ access to the canal<sup>31</sup>. Egypt rejected this plan. Then, on September 10, British

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<sup>26</sup> However, Eisenhower did not think that using military force was a good way to solve the problem. According to him, initial military successes might be easy, but eventual price might become far too heavy. “Letter From President Eisenhower to Prime Minister Eden”, FRUS, 1955-1957, Volume XVI 1990, p. 69-70; The US was in the position of just protecting someone’s private property. “Memorandum of Telephone Conversations Between the President and the Secretary of State, Washington, July 30, 1956”, FRUS, 1955-1957, Volume XVI 1990, p. 47.

<sup>27</sup> Eden 1960, pp. 486-487.

<sup>28</sup> Eden 1960, p. 492.

<sup>29</sup> “Zayavlenie Sovetskogo Pravitelstva po Voprosu o Suetstkom Kanale” 1956, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> *Istoriya Diplomatii* 1974, p. 554; “Telegram From the Delegation at the Suez Canal Conference to the Department of State”, FRUS, 1955-1957, Volume XVI 1990, pp. 228-229.

<sup>31</sup> *Istoriya Diplomatii* 1974, p. 554.

Ambassador to the US, Roger Makins informed the Secretary of State that the effort of seeking a peaceful settlement had failed. Therefore their original plan of resuming physical control of the canal would be appear to be the next logical step<sup>32</sup>. In the second conference held in London on September 19-21, it was decided to establish the Suez Canal Users' Association (SCUA). The British Prime Minister Anthony Eden said that if Egypt did not empower this association, further steps would be taken. According to Pelipas, he meant using force with non-verbal approval of the United States<sup>33</sup>. The SCUA meant control of the imperialists on the canal. It could have been the reason for the artificial provocations that led to the use of force against Egypt. The Soviet Union thought that a peaceful settlement had to be achieved as soon as possible. It was aware that they were in military preparation and intended to seize the Suez Canal<sup>34</sup>. According to Khrushchev, at a time when the Soviets were struggling with the counter-revolutionary attempt in Hungary, the UK and France were eager to send their troops to Egypt to establish a colonial regime again<sup>35</sup>.

Israel, the greatest enemy of the Arabs, which had established a state in the territory of the British mandate, agreed with the UK and France and wished to expand the territory and strengthen the southern border, started the war on October 29, 1956 with a sudden attack<sup>36</sup>. 24 hours after the attack, the UK and France gave an ultimatum to both sides, in which they had asked them to comply in 12 hours. They demanded the end of military activities in land, air and sea, by withdrawal of military forces 10 miles away from the Suez Canal, and abandonment of Port Said, Ismailia and Suez for British and French military forces. If these were not accepted, the British and French forces would use military force<sup>37</sup>. Egypt did not accept these demands. While the UK and France launched air operations on 31 October, the Soviet Government asked the UN Security Council to take immediate measures for cessation of attacks on Egypt, retreat of military forces, and provision of peace of the region<sup>38</sup>. On

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<sup>32</sup> "Letter From the British Ambassador (Makins) to the Secretary of State", FRUS, 1955-1957, Volume XVI 1990, pp. 472-473.

<sup>33</sup> Pelipas 2003, pp. 563-564.

<sup>34</sup> SSSR i Arabskie Strany 1961, p. 203, 207.

<sup>35</sup> Khrushchev 1971, p. 107.

<sup>36</sup> Since Nasser supported Algeria's liberation movement, Egypt already won France's hostility before the Suez Crisis, and France had begun to arm Israel from 1954. The UK, France and Israel held talks on a military operation against Egypt on 21 October. "French Role in the Suez Crisis" (web).

<sup>37</sup> Documents on the Suez Crisis, 26 July to 6 November 1956 1957, pp. 85-86.

<sup>38</sup> Istoriya Diplomatii 1974, p. 560. By the way, on November 1, Eisenhower called the UN to achieve a cease-fire in order to keep the war from spreading and develop a final resolution that would represent the considered judgement of the UN respecting past blame and future action.

November 2, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly decided that the UK, France and Israel would stop the war and leave the Egyptian land<sup>39</sup>.

On November 5, the Soviet Union made a critical move. They reported that the UK, France and Israel had to endure dangerous consequences if they continued the war. A letter from the Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai Bulganin to the British Prime Minister Eden stated that a possible attack on Britain could be by rocket technology. In the letter it was stated that “We call out to the parliament, the Labour Party, the unions, all the people of England: stop the war, the blood flowing. The British Government should act in common and stop the war in Egypt, the blood flowing.” The war could spread to another country and cause a third world war. The Soviet Union did not hesitate to state that it was determined to use force to crush the attackers and establish peace. The Soviet Foreign Ministry also proposed the UN Security Council to take a decision on the UK, France and Israel for them to end the war within 12 hours and leave the Egyptian land within 3 days. If they did not comply with it, the Soviets would give Egypt all kinds of military support<sup>40</sup>. Bulganin also made a call to US President Eisenhower by sending a letter that the two countries together should had to stop the attack by using force and prevent further bloodshed. However Eisenhower rejected this proposal by saying that it would not be right for the Soviet and other military forces to enter the region, and that it would be contrary to the UN Charter <sup>41</sup>.

The UK and France stopped the war 22 hours after the Soviet letter and received a great defeat. They lost their influence in the region at the same time. The UN General Assembly decided that Israeli forces had to withdraw immediately behind the peace line on January 19 and February 2, 1957. Israel withdrew from Egypt (Gaza) in March 1957<sup>42</sup>. The Suez Canal was remained under the rule of Egypt. The Soviet Union played a major role in ending the war. It constituted a great source of strength for Egypt. The Soviet Union’s prestige rose in the Arab world. Nasser became a popular leader among the

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According to him, the United States must lead because “at all costs the Soviets must be prevented from seizing a mantle of world leadership through a false but convincing exhibition of concern for smaller nations.” “Memorandum by the President”, FRUS, 1955-1957, Volume XVI, 1990, p. 924. In this context, it can be said Eisenhower was worried that the war caused the Soviets to be active in the region.

<sup>39</sup> “Resolution 997 (ES-I)”, (web).

<sup>40</sup> *Istoriya Diplomatii* 1974, p. 561.

<sup>41</sup> “Letter from the Minister Bulganin to President Eisenhower”, FRUS, 1955-1957, Volume XVI, 1990, pp. 993-994; The Department of State Bulletin 1956, p. 795-796; Eisenhower 1965, p. 97.

<sup>42</sup> *Diplomatičeskiy Slovar*, Tom 1 1971, p. 123.

Arabs, he was very grateful to the support of the Soviets for freedom and sovereignty<sup>43</sup>.

### **The Eisenhower Doctrine: Filling the Power Vacuum**

The United States wanted to fill the vacuum left by the UK and France, which had withdrawn from the region after the Suez Crisis. Otherwise the Soviet Union and socialism could dominate the region<sup>44</sup>. This was already the US's main concern. It also approached to the Suez Crisis from this perspective and was disturbed by Egypt's parallel policy to the USSR. President Eisenhower mentioned that in the face of increased Soviet influence in the region before the Suez Crisis, they wanted to balance the Soviet power without being a silent partner of the UK<sup>45</sup>. As to the period during the Suez Crisis, he expressed explicitly that the role of the US was to counter Soviet rumblings<sup>46</sup>. Within this framework, according to the new policy, which was announced in January 1957, accepted in March 1957 at the US Congress and was named as the Eisenhower doctrine, if a socialist state attacked a Middle Eastern country, the US Government would be able to use military force to stop the attack in case related country requested<sup>47</sup>. According to the USSR, the doctrine, called as Dulles-Eisenhower in Soviet literature and in which the Secretary of the State, Dulles played a big part in its establishment, was against to national independence and sovereignty. It was a modern colonialism. The United States attributed itself an international gendarmerie task preventing national liberation movements. In the declaration reported on January 13, 1957 by Soviet News Agency TASS, it was asserted that the doctrine was a colonial imperialist program. The US Government seemed not to take the necessary lessons from the defeat of the UK and France in Egypt. Soviet Government was assuming that this doctrine did not reduce the tension in the Near East, on the contrary it was increasing the danger. Eisenhower's message was calling the voice of war, not the voice of peace<sup>48</sup>. Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Jordan rejected the doctrine, which aimed to prevent "communist infiltration" in the Near East, while Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, Israel and Turkey supported it<sup>49</sup>. According to the

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<sup>43</sup> "Egipetskiy.." 1956, p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> Eisenhower 1965, p. 178.

<sup>45</sup> Eisenhower 1965, p. 25.

<sup>46</sup> Eisenhower 1965, p. 41.

<sup>47</sup> "The Eisenhower Doctrine, 1957", (web).

<sup>48</sup> "O Politike.." 1957, p. 5.

<sup>49</sup> Istoriya Diplomatii 1974, p. 563.

Soviets, the countries that would open their lands to the US in the framework of this doctrine had as much share in this aggression as the US<sup>50</sup>.

On February 11, 1957, The Soviet Government, which did not want the doctrine to be implemented, recommended the US, the UK and France to sign a declaration of peace and security in the Near and Middle East stating that the USSR, the US, the UK and France would not interfere with the internal affairs of the countries in the region. The principles proposed by the USSR clarifying the Soviet position in the region were as follows: First, solving controversial problems in the Near and Middle East with peaceful means on the basis of the negotiation method. Second, non-interference with the internal affairs of the Near and Middle Eastern states, to respect the sovereignty and independence of these countries. Third, abandonment of all kinds of initiatives that would push these countries into military blocs where major states were members. Fourth, the liquidation of foreign bases in the Near and Middle Eastern countries and the abandonment of foreign powers from these countries. Fifth, the mutual abandonment of sending weapons to the Near and Middle East. Sixth, helping the economic development of these countries, without imposing military, political and any other provisions that were incompatible with the dignity and right of sovereignty. The US, the UK and France rejected these proposals and principles<sup>51</sup>.

The new British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, succeeding Anthony Eden, who had left the job as a result of the Suez defeat, and Eisenhower met in the Bermuda islands in March 1957. They agreed on the active participation of the US in the military committee of the Baghdad Pact. This vitalized the military bloc of Baghdad so to say. The Soviet Foreign Ministry issued a statement on 1 April 1957 about this meeting. In the statement, it was expressed that USA was officially trying to be separate from colonial policy of the UK in the region until then but at that moment, the propaganda of anti-colonialism that the US had tried to disseminate diligently was over and the United States was unmasked. It was openly working with the UK and France as a single frontier to rebuild the colonial regime in the Near and Middle East<sup>52</sup>.

In that period in Jordan (on April 3), prime minister of nationalist government Suleiman Nabulsi announced their intention of establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and recognizing the People's Republic of China. Thereupon King Hussein of Jordan dismissed Nabulsi, declared martial law and dissolved political parties on April 25 and The US sent

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<sup>50</sup> Samarskiy 1957, p. 539.

<sup>51</sup> "Noty.." 1957, p. 5; SSSR i Arabskie Strany 1961, p. 308.

<sup>52</sup> "Zayavlenie MID SSSR" 1957, p. 3.

naval ships to the eastern Mediterranean in support of King Hussein<sup>53</sup>. The USSR considered this event as an imperialist conspiracy aiming to reverse the development of the eastern nations and divert them from the path of independent national development<sup>54</sup>. In the meantime, on April 19, 1957, the Soviet Union called on the governments of the US, UK and France to disable the Eisenhower doctrine and discuss the use of force against UN principles, but this initiative was not answered positively<sup>55</sup>.

### **Interfering in Syria's Internal Affairs**

In February 1957, according to Andrey Gromyko, the USSR Foreign Minister, within the context of this doctrine the US was interfering in the internal affairs of the countries with the excuse or justification of communist infiltration, and it was involved in destructive activities<sup>56</sup>. At this point, it should be noted that the US did not need to take any doctrine or law into consideration to interfere with internal affairs of a country. In the Cold War environment, they formed their policies within the context of the struggle against communism. One example of this was in Syria in August 1957. The fact that Syria rejected the Eisenhower doctrine (according to the US) meant that it was not on the US orbit, even it was a demonstration that Syria was a country where there was a "communist infiltration danger". The US, regardless of the doctrine in question, intervened in some countries' internal affairs and overthrew their governments (as in 1953 in Iran and in 1954 in Guatemala). The CIA-backed coup attempt in Syria ended unsuccessfully on August 12, 1957, by surrounding the US Embassy in Damascus. The following day, three US diplomats were deported<sup>57</sup>. Thereupon, the US declared Syria's Washington ambassador as "persona non grata". The Chief of Defence Staff Tevfik Nizamettin retired on August 17, left-leaning Afif Bizri was taken to the position. US Assistant Secretary of State Loy Henderson, King of Iraq Faisal II and King of Jordan Hussein came to Turkey and consulted Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and President Celal Bayar on August 24<sup>58</sup>. The USSR thought that participants of this meeting had prepared a military intervention plan against Syria. Turkey increased its military fortification on the Syrian border, and the US sent the 6th Fleet to the Mediterranean, on the grounds that Syria

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<sup>53</sup> "23. Jordan (1946-present)", (web).

<sup>54</sup> Samarskiy 1957, p. 540.

<sup>55</sup> SSSR i Arabskie Strany 1961, pp. 319-331.

<sup>56</sup> Gromyko 1988, p. 376.

<sup>57</sup> "Suriye'de Komplo Meydana Çıkarıldı" 1957, p. 3; "Amerika'lı 3 Diplomat Suriye'den Çıkarıldı" 1957, p. 3.

<sup>58</sup> Fırat ve Kürkçüoğlu 2006, p. 630; "Amerikan Filosuna Hazırol Emri Verildi" 1957, p. 1.

leaned towards a socialist regime and that the Soviet influence increased in the country<sup>59</sup>. According to the US President Eisenhower, there was strong suspicion that the communists had taken control of the Syrian government<sup>60</sup>. The Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes also thought that Syria had become an international communist base and a threat to the free world<sup>61</sup>.

The Soviet Prime Minister Bulganin sent a message to Menderes on September 10 expressing his concern that Turkey had an aggressive stance towards Syria. He stated that if an adventure against Syria was launched, it would not stay on a local scale and reminded that the First and Second World War broke out because of local disagreements<sup>62</sup>. The Soviet Foreign Minister Andrey Gromyko sent a letter to the UN General Assembly suggesting that if Turkey attacked Syria, UN members would have to give military aid to Syria to stop the attack. He also asserted that the USSR was ready to join the military power, which would be established to crush the attack, and punish the ones that had broken the peace<sup>63</sup>. The United States, on the other hand, did not neglect to say that Turkey was a friend and ally of the US and would protect Turkey in the context of NATO commitments if attacked<sup>64</sup>. On October 8, this time Syria accused the Turkish Government of causing an incident and deploying troops on the border, and also invading Syria's airspace<sup>65</sup>. The Turkish side replied this

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<sup>59</sup> *Istoriya Diplomatii*, 1974, p. 565; "Henderson Beyrut'a Gitti" 1957, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> Eisenhower 1965, p. 196.

<sup>61</sup> Eisenhower 1965, p. 200. On August 21, Menderes told American Ambassador Warren Fletcher that "The danger is so great that Syria does not hesitate to challenge USA, dangerously and openly, with the purpose of destroying USA prestige in this area... We are awaiting 'solid decision' in order to be able to take appropriate measures." "Telegram From the Embassy in Turkey to the Department of State", FRUS, 1955-1957, Volume XIII 1988, p. 643.

<sup>62</sup> "Poslanie.." 1957, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> "Pismo A.A. Gromyko.." 1957, p. 4.

<sup>64</sup> Eisenhower 1965, p. 203-204; "Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Turkey" FRUS, 1955-1957, Volume XIII 1988, p. 692-693. Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon opposed the interference with the internal affairs of Syria and a probable military intervention. Turkey and the US were alone in this crisis. Ataç 2017, p. 97.

<sup>65</sup> In fact, the Turkish government intended to cover up the heavy economic and financial problems in the country with the rhetoric of foreign threat and spread of communism. It exaggerated the threat perception in order to get/obtain economic aid from the US and extensively used the thesis that Syria turned into a Soviet Union's satellite. So it preferred to instrument the Syrian Crisis in the domestic politics. As a matter of fact, the general elections to be held in 1958 were held in October 1957 and Menderes (Democrat Party) succeeded to come into power again. Meanwhile, during the Syrian Crisis, commanders of Land Forces, Marine Corps Forces and Air Forces (in September) and also Chief of Defense Staff (in October) resigned and became deputy candidates of the Democrat Party. This event supported the interpretation that the threat was exaggerated and that the Turkish army also regarded the Syrian crisis as a leverage of domestic politics. Ataç, "Soğuk Savaş Döneminde Türkiye-Rusya

accusation that the military arrangements were a natural security measure justified by the current tension in the region and that Syria's interpretation was an interference with Turkey's sovereign rights. In the meantime, two Soviet ships visited Syria's Latakia Port and the US's 6th fleet visited Izmir Port. Tension started to decrease from the end of October. The problem was brought to the UN General Assembly, but a decision was not taken because the idea of resolving the problem between the parties outweighed and it was removed from the agenda<sup>66</sup>. The parties softened their attitudes. The USSR sent a satellite called Sputnik to space at the beginning of October and this event was influential in the termination of this crisis. By this, it was seen that military-technological power of the USSR had reached a level that could threaten US soil.

### **Soviet Opposition to the Anglo-American Interventions**

The US found the opportunity to implement Eisenhower doctrine for the first time in the summer of 1958. General Abdul Karim Kaseem realized a coup on July 14, toppled monarchy regime in Iraq. The Baghdad Pact member countries gathered in Istanbul and showed a strong reaction to this. They mentioned that the coup was a result of Nasser's and the communists' suggestions, and they demanded the US to implement the Eisenhower doctrine and launch a military intervention in Iraq. Turkey, in particular, profoundly emphasized the possibility of military intervention. Conversely, the US and the UK, who thought that military intervention would lead the convergence of the people around the new regime and that the new regime would be closer to Egypt and the USSR, convinced to enable Turkey to step back<sup>67</sup>. In October, the

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İlişkilerinde Suriye Boyutu", p. 102, 106; At this point, it is necessary to underline the US Government also believed that the Syrian Government was not influenced by the communist ideology. According to the Special National Intelligence Estimate on September 3, Syria was approaching the USSR in order to improve its military and economic strength and to respond to the West's support to Israel. "Special National Intelligence Estimate", FRUS, 1955-1957, Volume XIII 1988, pp. 677-678.

<sup>66</sup> Fırat ve Kürkçüoğlu 2006, p. 631.

<sup>67</sup> Baghdad Pact members, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan were in favour of intervention in Iraq. They deemed it necessary to state that, following gratifying decision, in order safeguard independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon, the implementation of Eisenhower Doctrine in case of the Iraq situation was vital importance for them. "Telegram From the Embassy in Turkey to the Department of State", FRUS, 1958-1960, Volume XI 1992, p. 307; Also, Turkey brought a proposal to intervene Iraq by himself. But, according to Dulles, this proposal was unwise and he added that "such Turkish action would not have approval world opinion in view absence resistance new Iraq Government and might bring not only consolidation support for new Government but also dangerous Soviet reaction. Department preparing separately appropriate reply to Turks." "Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom", FRUS, 1958-1960, Volume XI 1992, p. 325.

headquarter of the pact moved to Ankara. In March 1959, Iraq left the pact. The Iraqi Prime Minister Kaseem thought that being a military and aggressive pact member was incompatible with Iraq's neutrality. The Pact was named the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in August 1959<sup>68</sup>.

During the coup in Iraq, Lebanon was struggling with its own internal turbulence. There was great opposition against the Lebanese President Camille Chamoun, who followed a pro-western policy. His term of office was about to end and when he attempted to change constitution in order to be re-elected as president, pro-Nasser and nationalist groups launched an armed conflict. Both Chamoun and the US were worried about events in Iraq. Chamoun, supporting the Eisenhower doctrine, asked for help from the United States. The US marines landed in Lebanon on July 15. King Hussein, who was worried about the spread of events from Iraq to Jordan, also asked the US and the UK for support (although previously he had not formally accepted the Eisenhower doctrine). The UK sent paratroopers to Jordan on July 17 with the approval of the United States<sup>69</sup>.

The Soviet Union was very satisfied with the coup in Iraq and the crack in the Baghdad Pact. It officially recognized the new Iraqi regime on 16 July 1958<sup>70</sup>. He considered the US's entry into Lebanon as a desire to protect the colonial system. The Soviet Government wanted to take the necessary precautions immediately to prevent interference in the UN framework and to defend the national interests of the Arab states. The USSR could not remain indifferent to these events, which posed a serious threat to the region<sup>71</sup>. A similar statement was made about the UK's intervention in Jordan<sup>72</sup>. The Soviets offered a meeting on July 19, in Geneva or anywhere, where the heads of government and the UN Secretary General would be present to discuss the crisis, prevent military conflict and resolve the issue peacefully. The US and the

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<sup>68</sup> Fırat ve Kürkçüoğlu 2006, p. 632-633.

<sup>69</sup> Fırat ve Kürkçüoğlu 2006, p. 633-634; *Istoriya Diplomatii* 1974, p. 566.

<sup>70</sup> *SSSR i Arabskie Strany* 1961, p. 516.

<sup>71</sup> *SSSR i Arabskie Strany* 1961, p. 517-520. The USSR considered this intervention as 'open USA aggression.' Lebanese Government's appeal to the USA for aid was a pretext for the USA's intervention. "Telegram From the Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State", FRUS, 1958-1960, Volume XI 1992, p. 257-258.

<sup>72</sup> *SSSR i Arabskie Strany* 1961, p. 524-526. In the meantime, Prime Minister Chamoun sent a letter of explanation to Eisenhower on July 21, when Lebanese Parliament Speaker Adil Osseiran sent a message to US President Eisenhower and the UN Security Council to protest US military intervention. He said that the message meant nothing but Osseiran's personal opinion and that he was proud of being side by side with the United States, which preserved its independence and integrity. Eisenhower 1965, p. 280-281.

UK did not accept<sup>73</sup>. In the UN General Assembly on August 21 it was decided that interventionist forces would withdraw from Lebanon and Jordan in accordance with the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference and non-aggression<sup>74</sup>. The US forces left Lebanon on October 25 and British forces left Jordan on November 2. In December 1958, the Lebanese government announced that they had no relation to the Eisenhower doctrine anymore. According to the USSR, the efforts of the imperialist powers for the revenge of Suez had been unsuccessful<sup>75</sup>. However, these military interventions did not cause significant changes in the foreign policy of Lebanon and Jordan. No significant improvement in relations with the USSR was observed.

As Khrushchev stated in 1959 at the 21st Congress of the CPSU, the Soviet Union intended to establish friendship and mutual economic relations with the states, which had won independence through national liberation movement, wanted to go their own way, and to stay away from the capitalist phase to get rid of colonial oppression. These peace-loving states, fighting for anti-imperialism, independence and national security, surpassed the imperialist states in terms of land, population and natural wealth<sup>76</sup>. The fact that these states were not dominated by the imperialism was very important both for the free development of these states and for the security of the USSR. In this context, the USSR proposed a draft declaration on the independence of the colonial countries and peoples at the 15th session of the UN General Assembly. Granting independence and freedom immediately in accordance with the will of people in the region to the colonial countries that were under tutelage and unable to self-govern, removing all the pillars of colonialism equally in all territories, and complying with the principles of equality, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity stated in the UN Charter were included in the draft which was adopted on 14 December 1960. It was the first document accepted by the UN protecting the rights of peoples fighting colonialism<sup>77</sup>.

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>73</sup> SSSR i Arabskie Strany 1961, p. 541; "Editorial Note", FRUS, 1958-1960, Volume XI 1992, p. 338-339. Eisenhower replied that such discussions should take place within the established framework of the UN Security Council, which are already seized of the problem. "Editorial Note", FRUS, 1958-1960, Volume XI 1992, p. 372.

<sup>74</sup> SSSR i Arabskie Strany 1961, pp. 829-830; Eisenhower 1965, pp. 287-288.

<sup>75</sup> Istoriya Diplomatii 1974, p. 568. Chamoun left his post in September 1958, replacing Lebanese army commander Fuad Chehab as president. Chehab applied a neutral and compromising policy. In Jordan, King Hussein, who also received financial support from the United States, managed to defend his rule. Bordachev ve Smirnov 2009, p. 236.

<sup>76</sup> Vneocherednoy XXI S'ezd 1959, pp. 400-401.

<sup>77</sup> "Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples" (web).

The Soviet Union publicly opposed to western interventionism in the Middle East in the second half of the 1950s. This response had an ideological dimension apart from the Cold War mentality and revealed that the USSR pursued an anti-imperialist policy in the region. Marxist-Leninist ideology (Lenin's theory of imperialism and ideas about right to self-determination of nations) and decisions made in the 20th Congress of the CPSU were the historical/theoretical foundations of this policy. It was also compatible with international law, Charter of the UN in particular. The USSR's approach to the Middle East was within this framework. In the Cold War era this policy was not only balancing the western impact and containment policy of the US but also promoting the Soviet domain in the region. So it was convenient for the USSR's interests.

The aggressive and interventionist policies of the UK, France and the US were concluded in a way that the USSR would be pleased with. Because, as stated above, these policies led to the reaction of Egypt and Syria, who had just been rescued from western imperialism and wanted to distance themselves from the West. This paved the ground for these states to improve their relations with the USSR, which was always opposed to the imperialist politics of western states. On the other hand, Iraq, which had good relations with the West during the monarchy period, kept a distance from it by leaving the Baghdad Pact and approached the USSR. In Lebanon and Jordan, the interventionist attitudes of the western countries were countered by the rise of a serious pro-sovereignty opposition.

The Soviet Union was not only politically but also economically supportive of Egypt, Syria and Iraq, which were exposed to imperialist aggression, intervention or threats. Agreements were signed with these countries involving economic cooperation and these agreements were not based on political or any other circumstance<sup>78</sup>. In this way the Soviet Union tried to aid the countries in question to stay away from the oppression of the imperialist

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<sup>78</sup> For example, in October 1958 an economic technical assistance agreement was signed between the USSR and Egypt to build the first phase of the Aswan dam in Cairo. 90 million rubles long-term loans were granted. Refundment would be realized as supply, machine and equipment. In August 1960 the economic technical assistance agreement was signed on the last stage of the dam. In Syria, in October 1957, an economic and technical cooperation agreement was signed, including the construction of the Kamishli-Latakia railway, hydroelectric power plant and irrigation system. According to the agreement made in December 1957, the USSR would receive cotton and grain from Syria. In March 1959, an agreement was signed between the USSR and Iraq, granting 550 million rubles to Iraq to buy industrial equipment from the USSR. Also in Iraq, electrotechnical and cotton factory and Baghdad-Basra railway would be built. *Diplomaticheskii Slovar*, Tom 3 1973, p. 267, 280, 335; *SSSR i Arabskie Strany* 1961, pp. 415-419.

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states and to realize their national development as soon as possible by contributing to the socio-economic development of them.

The Soviet Union's stance towards western policy in the region, which it regarded as imperialist expansion, and its support to countries in question were in perfect accordance with its ideology and the existing international political environment dominated by capitalism-socialism tension and competition. Moreover, after World War II, colonial and semi-colonial countries declared their independence one by one. Thus, the anti-colonial international political environment of the period was also a strong support for the Soviet policy.

In short, in the second half of the 1950s, in the face of all these developments, the anti-imperialist policy of the Soviet Union in the Near East resulted in the withdrawal of the UK and France, the deterioration of the USA's Eisenhower doctrine, and the rise of the USSR's prestige and influence in the region.

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