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Iran, Libya, Syria: Prospects for Radical Cooperation

Special National Intelligence Estimate

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**IRAN, LIBYA, SYRIA:
PROSPECTS FOR
RADICAL COOPERATION**

Information available as of 26 March 1985 was used in the preparation of this Estimate, which was approved by the National Foreign Intelligence Board on that date.

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THIS ESTIMATE IS ISSUED BY THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE.

THE NATIONAL FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE BOARD CONCURS, EXCEPT AS NOTED IN THE TEXT.

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the Estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the intelligence organization of the Department of State.

Also Participating:

The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army

The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy

The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force

The Director of Intelligence, Headquarters, Marine Corps

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SCOPE NOTE

This Estimate addresses the question of cooperation among Iran, Libya, and Syria, the extent to which they are pursuing joint policies—especially of an anti-US nature—and the impact of this cooperation. It also discusses the many differences among them that will tend to set limits on coordinated action—including the use of terrorism—over the next two years. The Estimate also examines the Soviet Union's relationship with these states and the degree to which the USSR benefits from their activities.

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KEY JUDGMENTS

Three radical states in the Middle East—Iran, Libya, and Syria—under their current leadership have long been pursuing policies broadly inimical to US interests in the region and beyond. Although the independent activities of each state will continue to pose by far the greatest threat and challenge to US interests, their recognition of certain common purposes and a willingness to consult regularly and to pursue numerous goals in tandem increase the overall threat to the United States.¹

During the past two years, these countries have in fact increased efforts to move closer together on matters of common interest, that include:

- Opposition to US policies in the region.
- A desire to weaken Middle Eastern states and groups that are friendly to the United States.
- Hostility to Israel's existence.
- A willingness to extend assistance to opponents of the United States in areas far removed from the regional interests of these states.²
- A desire to encourage the emergence of revolutionary, anti-Western regimes elsewhere in the world.³

During the period of this Estimate, we believe these three states will continue to find opportunities for ad hoc cooperation—particularly if the United States takes actions which they perceive to be threatening to their interests.

Cooperation among the states generally takes the form of bilateral rather than trilateral activities, involving any two of the three states at one time. Formal cooperation is less important to them than joint perception of common enemies and the need to combat them.

¹ The Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, agrees that all three countries pose serious threats to US interests, but believes that the Estimate overstates the degree of trilateral cooperation among them and thus the degree to which they can be treated as an entity for analytical purposes. The Estimate itself acknowledges that the radicalism of each is different, their congruence of interests limited, frictions common, and cooperation among them sporadic and essentially bilateral rather than trilateral. Other similar factors could be cited. But the net impact of the paper, whatever its nuances, leaves the reader with the conclusion that there is a tripartite entente, which in fact does not exist and whose conjuration can lead to serious errors in policymaking.

² The Director, INR, does not believe there is evidence of active Syrian support for this goal.

³ The Director, INR, does not believe there is evidence of active Syrian support for this goal.

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These three states differ sharply in their ideologies, degree of radicalism, and style of leadership, and all pursue their own parochial interests, which are sometimes in conflict. Although only Iran fully espouses fundamentalism, we believe the perceived communality of interests among them—even though limited—presents potentially serious challenges to US interests. They are more dangerous collectively than individually. Cooperation serves to:

- Strengthen their sense of solidarity and reduce feelings of isolation.
- Demonstrate the success of Iranian and Syrian strategies in Lebanon.
- Embolden them to undertake greater risks in attacking US interests.
- Consolidate the regimes by enhancing their conventional military or economic capabilities.
- Encourage an atmosphere conducive to the use of terrorism.

The present radical challenge to the United States in the Middle East is in many ways more virulent and less manageable than any other challenge to the West in the region during the last several decades because:

- The present radical cooperation enjoys the use of greater wealth—Libya and Iran—than Arab nationalist states had available to them.
- The use of terrorism by these states today is enhanced by modern technology, modern communications, growing international contacts, and more sophisticated weaponry.

These states consult on a general basis, often publicly articulate common goals, and agree on certain policy actions to be implemented singly or jointly. Such actions involve:

- Arms assistance to Iran.
- Financial support to Syria.
- Provision of Syrian fighter pilots and technicians to Libya.
- A determination to employ terrorism and force against Israel.
- Attempts to subvert Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, and the Arafat wing of the PLO.
- Attempts to intimidate or change Arab regimes in the Persian Gulf region.
- Selective coordinated support to enemies of regimes allied with the United States.

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Despite close ties to Syria and Libya, the Soviets generally cannot control the foreign policy of either, and Moscow is shut out of any close relationship with the Khomeini regime in Iran. The Soviet Union, nonetheless, derives significant benefits from the anti-US activities of these states:

- US personnel and installations are under attack in the Middle East, rendering an effective US presence nearly untenable in Lebanon and seriously complicating the conduct of US policy elsewhere in the region.
- The overall thrust of radical activity is anti-US and anti-Israeli; only in Iran is it also anti-Soviet. (At the same time, there have been no Iranian-sponsored attacks against Soviet targets other than Mujahedin activity in Afghanistan.)
- Moderate leaders in the Middle East are repeatedly threatened and potentially intimidated from closer cooperation with the United States or from granting strategic access rights.
- US-sponsored Arab-Israeli peace efforts are opposed by the radicals.
- The activities of the three radical states create situations of instability that can serve Soviet interests by providing opportunities to weaken the West and to increase Soviet influence.

At the same time, there undoubtedly exist drawbacks for the Soviets in maintaining too close ties to the radical states:

- Radical and adventurist behavior can affect Moscow's relations with states neighboring the radicals and possibly push these states toward the United States for security.
- Miscalculated adventurism could bring about direct confrontation with the United States or could trigger US retaliation against Soviet clients.
- In the case of Iran, its actions can be, and have been, directed against Soviet interests as well—such as the crackdown on the Tudeh Party or support for the Mujahedin in Afghanistan—although the damage to Soviet interests is not nearly as great as that to Western interests.
- The radical states can sometimes hinder Soviet efforts to develop or maintain ties to other radical activist groups with which the Soviets would like to maintain independent influence—Syria's efforts to dominate the Arafat-led PLO is a particular case in point.
- The radicals sometimes seek to undermine other states that are also Soviet clients—such as Syria against Iraq, or Libya against Algeria.

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— The USSR has little desire to see Tehran successfully export Islamic fundamentalism to its neighbors,⁴ and is strongly opposed to Tehran's pursuit of the Gulf war and support for the Afghan insurgents.

Although Moscow probably is skeptical that these three states will be able to cooperate effectively, it will continue to encourage Libya and Syria to improve ties to other pro-Soviet states and groups in the region and around the world, and will continue to seek over the long run a lessening of tensions with Iran—with the long-term objective of a broad accommodation.

Moscow will continue to provide weapons, guerrilla training (in conjunction with East European states), and intelligence and security training to Libya and Syria despite their terrorist activities. Even where Soviet interests are not served by the radical activities of these states, the Soviet Union will not jeopardize its broader equities in order to try to turn off or redirect certain policies they consider ill conceived—unless serious Soviet interests are at stake. For example, Moscow has tried to prevent the transfer of sophisticated Soviet-origin military equipment by Libya and Syria to Iran. We believe that Moscow has little or no influence on the conduct of terrorism by either Tripoli or Damascus.

Of the three states, Iran is the most implacable foe of the United States and will remain the most effective and dangerous state sponsor of terrorism over the next few years. Were Iran to forge closer links with Syria and Libya, the terrorist threat to US interests would escalate. We do not believe, however, that long-term cooperation will develop, although the states may forge temporary, tactical ties. There is little the United States can do to prevent short-term cooperation by the radicals, especially in the realm of terrorist attacks against US targets.

Radical Middle Eastern and leftwing European terrorist groups share strong anti-US sentiments, and we do not rule out the possibility that they might undertake joint operations, despite major differences in ideologies and goals. There is no evidence, however, to link Iran, Libya, and Syria jointly to terrorist groups outside the Middle East, although they may use common sources of supply for arms, other materiel, and logistic support. Each of these states has the capability to undertake operations outside the Middle East on its own.

⁴ *The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army, believes that the Soviet Union favors the export of Iran's Islamic revolution to the Gulf states, although the Soviets do not view Iraq's defeat as the most appropriate vehicle for this because that could easily draw the United States into the military defense of the Gulf states and greater involvement in the region. The role of Islamic radicalism in the region is "objectively progressive," in the view of Moscow, because it decreases "imperialist"—that is, US—influence in the region. The damage to Western interests resulting from the undermining of the conservative regimes and the exclusion of the United States would be of major benefit to Moscow and outweigh any accompanying disadvantages.*

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The radical states' efforts to cooperate will persist, and may increase in response to perceived threats to their interests. The strengthening of a moderate Arab alignment responsive to a broader US role in the region and supportive of a Jordanian-PLO peace initiative, or an increase in assistance to Iraq in the Gulf war, would prompt continuing efforts by the radical states to form a "counteraxis."

In the case of Iran and Libya, the strongly anti-US thrust of their policies is likely to continue regardless of US actions. Syria will pursue a more guarded policy—especially vis-a-vis the United States—avoiding direct confrontation or statements of general hostility to the United States. We nonetheless believe that Syria will continue to perceive the United States as largely working against Syrian interests by supporting Israel and seeking bilateral accommodations between moderate Arab states and Israel.

Significant differences among Iran, Libya, and Syria will continue to hinder a much broader range of cooperation. Syria and Iran—representing probably the greatest polarity among the three—are most likely to encounter severe strains in their relationship, especially in Lebanon. The durability of these relationships will depend on the relative advantages of cooperation versus conflict over a given issue. Long-term divergence in national interest will ultimately serve to dissolve working partnerships. Conversely, continuing challenges to the radicals, from either the United States or moderate Arab states, will tend to perpetuate radical coalescence of interest; hostility to the United States, Israel, and the moderates will be the most abiding common denominator.

Over the period of this Estimate, contacts and cooperation among these states—predominantly on a bilateral basis—are likely to persist and might increase under some circumstances. Syrian-Libyan contacts will continue, and Libyan leader Qadhafi is likely to cooperate with Syrian President Assad in pressuring Jordan and the moderate Palestinians by providing arms, training, and money to PLO Chairman Arafat's opponents. Qadhafi's ties to Iran's Revolutionary Guard might facilitate Libyan cooperation with Iran on anti-US operations if they were designed to mask Libyan involvement. Both Assad and Qadhafi will continue to support Iranian efforts to weaken Iraqi President Saddam Husayn, although neither would want to see a Shia regime in Baghdad.

The possibility of sudden leadership changes is an important variable in estimating the longer term prospects for increased radical cooperation. Each of these states—especially Libya—follows policies heavily dependent on the outlook of its leader, and a change in the top

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leadership would most likely work against increased multilateral coordination:

- A new regime in Libya would be unlikely to reverse Tripoli's hardline policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict and would maintain ties to Damascus, but the new leader would be less likely to pursue the broad geographic scope of Qadhafi's anti-US activities or to promote terrorist operations.
- Assad's successor almost certainly will lack the strong political position, tactical brilliance, and effectiveness that have made possible Assad's controversial alignment with Iran and adept handling of Libya, and he might shrink from extensive commitments to such unreliable allies.
- Khomeini's heir presumptive—Ayatollah Montazeri—is known in Tehran and Tripoli as a friend of the Libyans, but recently he also has become clearly identified with conservatives on foreign and domestic issues who want improved ties to the West. In any case, the wellsprings of current radical policies probably run deeper in Iran than in Libya or Syria.

Unless there are changes in the leadership of the radical states, the United States will have to consider cooperation in the use of terror by the radicals in any calculations concerning such regional events as movement in the peace process. The mere acquiescence of one of the parties can greatly facilitate the terrorist activities of another radical state—Syrian acquiescence in Iranian activities in Lebanon is a prime example. Even if the radicals decide to resort to terror to further mutual goals, however, individual constraints will often limit actual cooperation.

The casual and disparate nature of the grouping will give the United States limited opportunity to hinder further radical cooperation. Syria, the "weak link" in this radical grouping, will use its relations with the United States to its own advantages—for example, by playing the "US card" to keep its Soviet ally honest. Damascus, moreover, remains relatively more open to US diplomacy, if only to burnish Syria's regional prestige. US interests may occasionally coincide tactically with Syria's, especially in reaching limited tactical accommodations with Israel or restoring a balance in Lebanese confessional relationships. Such willingness to do business seldom occurs between the United States and Libya or Iran. In addition, Assad's drive to be either the paramount warmaker or peacemaker of the region requires that Syria's sphere of influence remain unchallenged by Iran and Libya. In the final analysis, however, Syria's policies on the Arab-Israeli conflict are likely to run broadly counter to US interests in the region for the foreseeable future.

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DISCUSSION

Introduction

1. Three radical states in the Middle East—Iran, Libya, and Syria—under their current leadership have long been pursuing policies broadly inimical to US interests in the region and beyond. Although the independent activities of each state will continue to pose by far the greatest threat and challenge to US interests, their recognition of certain common purposes and a willingness to consult regularly and to pursue numerous goals in tandem increase the overall threat to the United States.⁵

2. During the past two years, these countries have in fact increased efforts to move closer together on matters of common interest which include:

- Opposition to US policies in the region.
- A desire to weaken Middle Eastern states and groups that are friendly to the United States.
- Hostility to Israel's existence.
- A willingness to extend assistance to opponents of the United States in areas far removed from the regional interests of these states.⁶
- A desire to encourage the emergence of revolutionary, anti-Western regimes elsewhere in the world.⁷

3. A round of high-level visits in summer and fall 1984 by the leaders of Libya, Syria, and Iran—including President Assad's trip to Libya in August

⁵ *The Director, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, agrees that all three countries pose serious threats to US interests, but believes that the Estimate overstates the degree of trilateral cooperation among them and thus the degree to which they can be treated as an entity for analytical purposes. The Estimate itself acknowledges that the radicalism of each is different, their congruence of interests limited, frictions common, and cooperation among them sporadic and essentially bilateral rather than trilateral. Other similar factors could be cited. But the net impact of the paper, whatever its nuances, leaves the reader with the conclusion that there is a tripartite entente, which in fact does not exist and whose conjuration can lead to serious errors in policymaking.*

⁶ *The Director, INR, does not believe there is evidence of active Syrian support for this goal.*

⁷ *The Director, INR, does not believe there is evidence of active Syrian support for this goal.*

and President Khamenei's first official travel abroad to Damascus and Tripoli in November—reflects an intensification of contacts among these radical states. Syrian and Libyan assistance to Iran in the Gulf war, together with Iranian and Libyan involvement in Lebanon, where Syria plays a major role, have prompted a steady expansion of ties. Qadhafi's second in command, Major Jallud, Syrian Vice President Khaddam, and Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh-ol-Eslam have made frequent trips among the capitals to deal with a range of concerns, including intra-Arab disputes over the Palestinians and the peace process.

4. Since early 1983, Libya, Syria, and Iran have attempted to supplement ad hoc bilateral cooperation by reviving a multilateral "front" of radical states. Meetings of senior officials of the three states have taken place in Damascus (January 1983), at the United Nations in New York (October 1984), in Tripoli prior to the Islamic Conference ministerial meeting in Sanaa (November-December 1984), and in Tehran (January 1985). Currently, there are plans for the group to meet again this summer.

5. The new radical grouping also seeks to rebuild the moribund Steadfastness Front with Iranian participation. The Front—comprising Syria, Iraq, Libya, Algeria, the PLO, and South Yemen—coalesced in December 1977 in response to President Sadat's trip to Jerusalem. By late 1982, the Front had disintegrated as a consequence of renewed Syrian-Iraqi hostility, disarray in the PLO after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the evolution of a more pragmatic regime in Algeria under President Bendjedid, and the development of a new Arab consensus on a framework for peace negotiations represented by the Fez Declaration of 1982. Multilateral consultations among the three radical states thus far have yielded few concrete gains over the cooperation achieved in bilateral contacts:

- Syria, Libya, and Iran presented a common front at the Islamic Conference meeting in Sanaa and prevented PLO Chairman Arafat from making a speech, but radical-drafted language for the conference resolutions failed to pass.

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- Efforts to draw Algeria and South Yemen into the Front so far have failed, although South Yemeni President Hasani's recent visits to Damascus, Tripoli, and Algiers suggest a renewed South Yemeni interest in cooperation.
- Each of the three states has made rhetorical commitments to sweeping goals, but the agenda for specific actions resulting from their discussions has been limited for the most part to routine diplomatic tasks and agreement to hold further meetings.

6. Cooperation among the three radical states is more often *bilateral* than trilateral. Often the cooperation extends no further than an agreed-upon agenda of priorities on which each state then acts independently.

7. These three states differ sharply in their ideologies, degree of radicalism, and style of leadership, and all pursue their own parochial interests, which are sometimes in conflict. Although only Iran fully espouses fundamentalism, we believe the perceived communality of interests among them—even though limited—presents potentially serious challenges to US interests. They are more dangerous collectively than individually. Cooperation serves to:

- Strengthen their sense of solidarity and reduce feelings of isolation.
- Demonstrate the success of Iranian and Syrian strategies in Lebanon.
- Embolden them to undertake greater risks in attacking US interests.
- Consolidate the regimes by enhancing their conventional military or economic capabilities.
- Encourage an atmosphere conducive to the use of terrorism.

8. The present radical challenge to the United States in the Middle East is in many ways more virulent and less manageable than any other challenge to the West in the region during the last several decades because:

- The present radical cooperation enjoys the use of greater wealth than Arab nationalist states were able to employ in earlier decades.
- The use of terrorism by these states today is enhanced by modern technology, modern communications, growing international contacts, and more sophisticated weaponry.

9. Despite the common radically oriented goals of the three states, fundamental differences in the nature

of the regimes continue to impede closer cooperation. Ideological variations among Qadhafi's idiosyncratic interpretation of Islam contained in his "Green Book," Ayatollah Khomeini's fundamentalist Shia Islam, and Assad's secular Arab nationalism and Ba'athist socialism continue to cause frictions among the three states. Divergent leadership styles are an additional complicating factor, leading to some rivalry and lack of personal rapport, and setting limits on cooperation. Conflicting longer range national interests—notably divergent ultimate goals in Lebanon and the Gulf—also impede broader coordination of strategy by the three states.

Areas of Cooperation

Mutual Assistance: Military Aid to Iran

10. Both Syria and Libya will probably continue to support Iran as a mutual ally, as they have done in the past, although the assistance is probably not jointly coordinated. Libyan and Syrian military aid to Iran, although limited, has been of considerable importance to Iran, which is otherwise beleaguered by a broad arms embargo. Both countries have assisted Iran by facilitating the transshipment or transloading of materiel destined for Tehran, mainly from East European Communist suppliers.

11. *Libyan* military sales to Iran began with the Iran-Iraq war (in 1980) and are valued at \$406 million since 1979.

The bulk of Libyan materiel going to Iran has been munitions; however, in 1981 Iran acquired tanks and artillery pieces. The Soviet Union apparently vetoed Libyan transfer of more sophisticated equipment—such as MIG-23s and surface-to-surface missiles—but Tripoli probably sent at least SS-1 (Scud) surface-to-surface missiles to Iran last November.

12. *Syrian* military assistance to Iran has been valued at \$158 million since 1979. It is noteworthy that Syrian arms sales worldwide—prior to the Iran-Iraq war—were valued at less than \$10 million. The last known Syrian-Iranian agreement occurred in early 1984, when Damascus agreed to ship an unspecified number of 122-mm rockets and explosives.

Economic Aid to Syria

13. Syria received about \$200 million from Libya in 1984. There was no known Libyan economic assistance to Syria in 1982 or 1983.

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14. Syria has not received any direct financial assistance from Iran in recent years; however, Iran provides Syria with all its imported oil and at concessionary prices. Syria owes Iran \$990 million for oil deliveries and Iran has allowed Syria to delay payment repeatedly. Syria will probably never repay its growing debt in full, but Tehran benefits greatly from Syria's continued closure of Iraq's oil export pipeline through Syria. Syria depends upon Iranian oil deliveries for its refineries and this represents a significant factor in their relations. The value of Syria's close relationship with Iran would be partially diminished if it could get oil from other sources. Syria could not, however, turn to Iraq instead of Iran as a source of oil without a major reorientation of its regional strategy.

they share certain foreign policy goals, their primary terrorist targets also are different:

- For Iran, terrorism is a way to strike back at the enemies—the United States, France, the Gulf states, including Iraq, and Iranian exiles—that it believes prevent the export of its revolution. Tehran justifies such activity on the basis of its fundamentalist Shia ideology.
- Libya uses terrorism opportunistically and as a response to its perceived weakness relative to its adversaries. Tripoli's attacks are directed primarily against anti-Qadhafi Libyan exiles and selected moderate Arab leaders.
- Syria uses terrorism as a foreign policy tool, primarily against Israel, Jordan, and the mainline Fatah Palestinians, and against the Gulf states to encourage compliance with its foreign policy goals. It has directly profited from Iranian anti-US terrorism in Lebanon, however, and probably privately condones the bulk of it.

Military Personnel Exchanges

15. Libya feared a confrontation with Egypt early in 1979, and requested qualified Syrian personnel to augment its Air Force.

[Redacted]

16. The deployment of the Syrian squadron [Redacted] has also proved important in defense of Libya's claimed airspace over the Gulf of Sidra. [Redacted]

[Redacted] We believe that Damascus would allow Qadhafi to use these pilots to defend Libyan-claimed territorial rights and airspace in an encounter with US forces.

17. Libya, one of Syria's staunchest supporters in Lebanon, has been an important source of funds and weapons for Syrian-sponsored Lebanese factions and armed Palestinian groups, particularly the more radical, nonconciliatory factions. Although in 1982 Libya deployed about 800 combat troops to Lebanon, its military contingent did not play a significant role there.

Cooperation on Terrorism

18. All three states employ terrorism as an instrument of policy and provide support and training to other terrorist groups—who sometimes act at the behest of the sponsoring state. Iran, Syria, and Libya each use terrorism for different reasons and, while

19. Of the three states, Iran is the most implacable foe of the United States and will remain the most effective and dangerous state sponsor of terrorism over the next few years. Were Iran to forge closer links with Syria and Libya, the terrorist threat to US interests would escalate. We do not believe, however, that long-term cooperation will develop, although the states may forge temporary, tactical ties. There is little the United States can do to prevent short-term cooperation by the radicals, especially in the realm of terrorist attacks against US targets.

20. Tactical cooperation among these three major state sponsors of terrorism may increase in coming months, but the divergence of goals and the longstanding rivalries among them almost certainly will preclude the formation of a "terrorist international" to plan or coordinate joint activity during the period of this Estimate. Libya, Syria, and Iran will use terrorism to advance the anti-Western and anti-Israeli goals they share, but their efforts will remain largely unilateral in execution. Moreover, even in Lebanon—the one place where they would be most likely to cooperate—each has a unique perception of how best to expand its own influence. Beyond Lebanon, their interests become more diffuse, making actual terrorist cooperation even more unlikely:

- Despite an increase in terrorism in Lebanon during 1984, there was little in the Gulf states—contrary to Community expectations—during the period following the bombing of the US Embassy in Kuwait in December 1983. We do

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not understand what policy reasons have contributed to this relative lack of activity.

21. Such cooperation as has occurred has been largely bilateral in nature and generally has involved surrogates working at common purposes. Iran and Syria, for example, have assisted the activities of the fundamentalist Lebanese Shias, while Syria and Libya have supported a variety of radical Palestinian groups. While the three states occasionally have discussed mutual cooperation on terrorism, there is no evidence of any trilateral arrangement involving coordination of attacks or operational planning.

22. Most of the terrorist cooperation that has occurred in Lebanon has been between Iran and Syria. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard contingent—stationed in Lebanon since 1982—operates from the Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley. The Guard has recruited and trained Lebanese Shias for the Iranian-backed Hizballah movement, elements of which we believe are responsible for the major terrorist attacks in Lebanon that have occurred since 1983. Although Hizballah probably now is capable of conducting attacks without Syrian or Iranian cognizance, both they and the Revolutionary Guard would be hard pressed to maintain their activities in Lebanon without tacit Syrian support.

23. While we do not believe Damascus has directly participated with the radical Shias in anti-US terrorist acts, Syria has provided the logistic and material support and acquiescence that makes their operations possible. Arms and supplies must pass Syrian checkpoints, and Syrian forces have provided security and travel documents for Iranian-associated personnel in Lebanon. Syria may have provided some logistic support to Tehran in the bombing of the US Embassy in Kuwait in December 1983.

24. As long as Iran's activities serve Syrian purposes in Lebanon, Damascus is likely to tolerate terrorist action directed against Israeli, US, and Western interests. Damascus is aware, however, that Iranian-sponsored terrorist activity undermines its interest in establishing long-term stabilized Syrian control over Lebanon. Successful Iranian efforts to recruit radical adherents among the Lebanese population, moreover, give Iran an independent base of support which Syria will find increasingly difficult to control. The growing strength of the extremists may ultimately compel Syria to crack down on Iranian-sponsored terrorists, but Damascus runs the risk of becoming a target in the process, and it will have to weigh carefully the overall gains and losses in its relationship with Tehran.

25. The bilateral cooperation between Syria and *Libya* on terrorism is focused on the mutual support of surrogates. Libya has long been a supporter of the more radical Palestinian groups, and has been actively supplying arms, funds, and training to the anti-Arafat rebels. While such groups as Abu Nidal and the PFLP-GC act with Syrian backing, Libya's influence is more limited. Indeed, Qadhafi has often been frustrated because Syria exercises control over the arms Libya provides for the Palestinian groups it supports. We have no evidence to indicate the Syrians and Libyans have discussed operational details of terrorist operations against Western targets, although they almost certainly have talked about anti-Arafat operations.

26. The Syrians generally deem Qadhafi too untrustworthy and mercurial for them to be interested in genuine cooperation with him. Qadhafi uses extremist rhetoric to urge attacks against Israel—which suits Damascus—but Libya does not have the leverage to direct Palestinian activities, nor would Damascus find such meddling useful. Qadhafi has demonstrated interests well beyond Middle Eastern boundaries, supporting many insurgents and radical governments, whereas the more practical Assad concentrates on the Middle East, where he can exert the most influence.

27. Libya and Iran remain distrustful of each other for a variety of reasons. Qadhafi's and Khomeini's philosophies are incompatible, and Qadhafi regards Khomeini's ability to inspire militant followers with jealousy. Iran, for its part, keeps alive a legacy of bitterness toward Libya because it blames Qadhafi for the disappearance of Lebanon's revered Shia leader, Musa Sadr, in Tripoli in 1978. In fact, a terrorist group apparently composed of Lebanese Shias seeking revenge for Musa Sadr's death occasionally attacks Libyan targets.

28. Libya has little to offer Iran and Syria, both of which have demonstrated a more sophisticated ability to undertake and successfully carry out lethal terrorist attacks. Qadhafi would find it difficult to win support among the radical Shias in Lebanon, given their religious fervor and their disdain for his brand of revolutionary socialism. Qadhafi probably is no more eager than Assad to see Lebanon become a fundamentalist Shia state, and his dreams of glory are such that he perceives Khomeini—and sometimes Assad—as rivals for influence in the region.

29. Radical Middle Eastern and leftwing European terrorist groups share strong anti-US sentiments, and we do not rule out the possibility that they might undertake joint operations, despite major differences

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in ideologies and goals. Such an attack probably would be a one-time tactical operation to strike at a major objective shared by all, such as a US base or embassy. There is no evidence to link Iran, Libya, and Syria jointly to terrorist groups outside the Middle East, although they may use common sources of supply for arms, other materiel, and logistic support. Each of these states has the capability, however, to undertake operations outside the Middle East on its own.

30. Recently, Libya publicly indicated an interest in joining hands with European terrorist groups. Qadhafi has specifically threatened US and NATO installations in Italy, but we doubt Iran or Syria would be willing to assist in such an undertaking.

Independence Versus Cooperation on Global Activities

31. Libya and Iran have both strongly and publicly articulated the need for oppressed states to strike against US interests worldwide. Syria has been more circumspect in such statements. Furthermore, there are great differences in the degree, kind, and focus of activity by Libya, Iran, and Syria around the world. Apart from shared and articulated anti-US goals, there is little conclusive evidence of *specific* coordination among the three in their global activities. They operate independently, even in countries where their activities are similar, probably reflecting some general agreement on targets and opportunities rather than intergovernmental planning.

32. Of the three, Libya is the most active, aggressively trying to subvert its immediate neighbors and to woo the West Europeans in order to divide them from US policy toward Qadhafi, and supporting rebel or dissident movements in pro-Western countries as far-flung as the Philippines, Pakistan, Zaire, and the French protectorate of New Caledonia in the South Pacific. Iran's efforts—from Africa to the Far East—appear more focused on spreading its revolutionary theology and encouraging Islamic revivals. Syria is least involved in worldwide activities, and tends to its more parochial interests in launching terrorist attacks against Syrian dissidents, weak Gulf states, pro-Arafat Palestinians, and Jordanian diplomats.

33. In the *Persian Gulf*, Iran, Libya, and Syria all have contempt for, and seek to intimidate, the Gulf Arab states. Iran seeks to export its revolution across the Gulf and to replace the conservative, pro-Western monarchies with revolutionary Islamic governments under its sway. Tehran has used terrorism, covert political action, propaganda, and educational efforts

toward this goal. Syria's interest in the Gulf Arabs is mostly pecuniary, and Damascus has used terrorism and assassination against the smaller Gulf states to discourage them from opposing Syrian interests in the region, supporting the moderate states' peace process, or falling too far behind in their financial subventions to Damascus:

- The December 1983 bombings of the US and French Embassies in Kuwait, along with simultaneous bombings of Kuwaiti Government facilities, by pro-Iranian terrorists may have been one example of Syrian-Iranian cooperation to attack moderate Gulf Arab and Western interests.

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34. Libya's Qadhafi opposes in principle moderate, pro-Western Arab regimes such as those found on the peninsula, but mixes his efforts to foment unrest in them with periodic efforts to improve his image and bilateral relations.

35. *Western Europe.* Of the three, Libya's Qadhafi has the strongest interest in close ties with Western Europe. He seeks to:

- Enhance his own world prestige and diminish his isolation.
- Weaken US influence on the Libyan policies of European countries.
- Maintain capabilities to move against Libyan exiles there.
- Strengthen his military capabilities through arms purchases and training.
- Threaten US and NATO installations in Europe.

While Iran and Syria probably support in principle the goal of weakening the US political role in Europe, they would place action in this regard low on their priorities. Iran has supported Lebanese Shia plans to attack US installations in Europe, however.

36. In *Africa*, Libya and Iran have the greatest interests:

- Qadhafi's goals are to establish Libyan political leadership in Africa, eliminating French and US influence there. Qadhafi has seized upon instability and existing conflicts throughout Africa to exacerbate regional tensions. A myriad of African oppositionists receive training at camps inside Libya along with financial and military assistance. Libya's principal targets are Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia, Somalia, and Chad.

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— Tehran is spending substantial sums of money in Sub-Saharan Africa to win sympathizers among Sunni Muslim fundamentalist groups, expatriate Lebanese and Asian Shia groups, and in the universities of Africa. Although Qadhafi's revolutionary ambitions in Africa must compete with Iran's, he sees Tehran's campaign as reinforcing Libyan objectives, particularly as it undermines Western influence in Africa.

— Syria has no significant role in Africa.

37. Libyan and Iranian goals in *Central America and the Caribbean* are similar, although there is no evidence that they formally cooperate to achieve them. Syria is not involved there. Islam constitutes little part of Iranian or Libyan motivation there, but both countries believe their involvement:

— Is a way to strike back at the United States in its own "backyard."

— Boosts their individual goals of demonstrating Third World leadership abilities.

38. Both countries—separately—provide aid to Nicaragua:

— Libya has provided political, military, and economic support to the Sandinistas for the past 15 years, and currently helps prop up the regime. This Libyan support indirectly enhances the Sandinista's ability to subvert neighboring states such as El Salvador. Qadhafi has been largely prevented, however, from shipping major arms to Nicaragua.

— Tehran sends small arms and ships oil to Managua, and in January 1985 Prime Minister Musavi-Khamenei paid a highly publicized visit there (and to Cuba) designed to demonstrate Iran's support for the Sandinista regime.

39. Libya's involvement in the region is much more extensive than Iran's. Qadhafi is providing limited funding to leftist opposition political groups in countries such as Dominica, St. Lucia, Antigua, Panama, Colombia, and Costa Rica, and has developed ties with Suriname, Guyana, and Brazil in South America. Libyan activities in the region support many Cuban objectives, but ties between these two states have never been close. Competing ideologies and competition for influence will restrict the extent of cooperation between Qadhafi and Castro.

40. In *Asia*, Libya and Iran have surprisingly active relations with North Korea:

— Libya signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in 1982 with P'yongyang.

— Iran has been the largest purchaser of North Korean weapons since 1980, with deliveries worth \$1.2 billion.

— Libya has been North Korea's second-best customer, with deliveries of military equipment worth some \$350 million since 1980. There are several hundred North Korean civilians and about 100 military technicians in Libya.

— The closeness of Libyan-North Korean ties is difficult to gauge

but that cooperation exists on security and military matters. P'yongyang may have also provided limited support last year for at least one Libyan terrorist plot in Europe.

— Syria's relations with North Korea are limited.

41. Libya provides training and military and financial support to the Moro Liberation Movement in the Philippines, and Iran provides the Moros with financial aid, but the degree of Libyan-Iranian cooperation cannot be determined. The Moros have an office in Damascus as well—reportedly to satisfy a request by Qadhafi. Elsewhere in Asia, each country independently supports various Islamic causes or groups.

The USSR: Benefits and Drawbacks of Association With the Radicals

42. Despite close ties with Syria and Libya, the Soviets cannot generally control the foreign policy of either, and Moscow is shut out of any close relationship with the Khomeini regime in Iran. The Soviet Union, nevertheless, derives significant benefits from the anti-US activities of these states:

— US personnel and installations are under attack in the Middle East, rendering an effective US presence nearly untenable in Lebanon and seriously complicating the conduct of US policy elsewhere in the region.

— The overall thrust of radical activity is anti-US and anti-Israeli; only in Iran is it also anti-Soviet. (At the same time, there have been no Iranian-sponsored attacks against Soviet targets other than Mujahedin activity in Afghanistan.)

— Moderate leaders in the Middle East are repeatedly threatened and potentially intimidated from closer cooperation with the United States or from granting strategic access rights.

— US-sponsored Arab-Israeli peace efforts are opposed by the radicals.

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— The activities of the radical states creates situations of instability that can serve Soviet interests by providing opportunities to weaken the West and to increase Soviet influence.

43. At the same time, there undoubtedly exist drawbacks for the Soviets in maintaining too close ties to the radical states:

- Radical and adventuristic behavior can affect Moscow's relations with states neighboring the radicals, and possibly push these states toward the United States for security.
- Miscalculated adventurism could bring about direct confrontation with the United States or could trigger US retaliation against Soviet clients.
- In the case of Iran, its actions can be, and have been, directed against Soviet interests as well—such as the crackdown on the Tudeh Party or support for Mujahedin in Afghanistan—although the damage to Soviet interests is not nearly as great as that to Western interests.
- The radical states can sometimes hinder Soviet efforts to develop or maintain ties to other radical activist groups with which the Soviets would like to maintain independent influence—Syria's efforts to dominate the Arafat-led PLO is a particular case in point.
- The radicals sometimes seek to undermine other states that are also Soviet clients—such as Syria against Iraq, or Libya against Algeria.
- The USSR has little desire to see Tehran successfully export Islamic fundamentalism to its neighbors⁶ and is strongly opposed to Tehran's pursuit of the Gulf war and support for the Afghan insurgents.

44. Although Moscow probably is skeptical that these three states will be able to cooperate effectively, it will continue to encourage Libya and Syria to improve ties to other pro-Soviet states and groups in

⁶ *The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army, believes that the Soviet Union favors the export of Iran's Islamic revolution to the Gulf states, although the Soviets do not view Iraq's defeat as the most appropriate vehicle for this because that could easily draw the United States into the military defense of the Gulf states and greater involvement in the region. The role of Islamic radicalism in the region is "objectively progressive," in the view of Moscow, because it decreases "imperialist"—that is, US—influence in the region. The damage to Western interests resulting from the undermining of the conservative regimes and the exclusion of the United States would be of major benefit to Moscow and outweigh any accompanying disadvantages.*

the region and around the world, and will continue to seek over the long run a lessening of tensions with Iran—with the long-term objective of a broad accommodation.

45. Moscow will continue to provide weapons, guerrilla training (in conjunction with East European states), and intelligence and security training to Libya and Syria despite their terrorist activities. Even where Soviet interests are not served by the radical activities of these states, the Soviet Union will not jeopardize its broader equities in order to try to turn off or redirect certain policies they consider ill conceived—unless serious Soviet interests are at stake. For example, Moscow has tried to prevent the transfer of sophisticated Soviet-origin military equipment by Libya and Syria to Iran. We believe that Moscow has little or no influence on the conduct of terrorism by either Tripoli or Damascus.

Prospects

46. The radical states' efforts to cooperate will persist, and may increase in response to perceived threats to their interests. The strengthening of a moderate Arab alignment responsive to a broader US role in the region and supportive of a Jordanian-PLO peace initiative, or an increase in assistance to Iraq in the Gulf war, would prompt continuing efforts by the radical states to form a "counteraxis." Libya, Syria, and Iran will seek bilateral cooperation and multilateral coordination to impede Egypt's reacceptance into Arab ranks, intimidate Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf states, and to foment dissension among the Palestinians. Moreover, the increasingly anti-US focus of Qadhafi's policies and Khomeini's vision of a new Islamic order throwing off "imperialism" and "Zionism" will provide a basis for growing cooperation among the radicals regardless of the fate of the moderate Arab alignment or recent peace initiatives.

47. Over the period of this Estimate, contacts and cooperation among these states—predominantly on a bilateral basis—are likely to persist and might increase under some circumstances. Syrian-Libyan contacts will continue, and Qadhafi is likely to cooperate with Assad in pressuring Jordan and the moderate Palestinians by providing arms, training, and money to Arafat's opponents. Qadhafi's ties to Iran's Revolutionary Guard might facilitate Libyan cooperation with Iran on anti-US operations if they were designed to mask Libyan involvement. Both Assad and Qadhafi will continue to support Iranian efforts to weaken Iraqi President Saddam Husayn, although neither would want to see a Shia regime in Baghdad.

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48. The possibility of sudden leadership changes is an important variable in estimating the longer term prospects for increased radical cooperation. Each of these states—especially Libya—follows policies heavily dependent on the outlook of its leader, and a change in the top leadership would most likely work against increased multilateral coordination:

- A new regime in Libya would be unlikely to reverse Tripoli's hardline policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict and would maintain ties to Damascus, but the new leader would be less likely to pursue the broad geographic scope of Qadhafi's anti-US activities or to promote terrorist operations.
- Assad's successor almost certainly will lack the strong political position, tactical brilliance, and effectiveness that have made possible Assad's controversial alignment with Iran and adept handling of Libya, and he might shrink from extensive commitments to such unreliable allies.
- Khomeini's heir presumptive—Ayatollah Montazeri—is known in Tehran and Tripoli as a friend of the Libyans, but recently he also has become clearly identified with conservatives on foreign and domestic issues who want improved ties to the West. In any case, the wellsprings of current radical policies probably run deeper in Iran than in Libya or Syria.

49. Unless there are changes in the leadership of radical states, the United States will have to consider cooperation in the use of terror by the radicals in any calculations concerning such regional events as movement in the peace process. The mere acquiescence of one of the parties can greatly facilitate the terrorist activities of another radical state—Syrian acquiescence in Iranian activities in Lebanon is a prime example. Even if the radicals decide to resort to terror to further mutual goals, however, individual constraints will often limit actual cooperation.

50. The casual and disparate nature of the grouping will give the United States limited opportunity to hinder further radical cooperation. Syria, the "weak link" in this radical grouping, will use its relations with the United States to its own advantages—for example, by playing the "US card" to keep its Soviet ally honest. Damascus, moreover, remains relatively more open to US diplomacy, if only to burnish Syria's regional prestige. US interests may occasionally coincide tactically with Syria's, especially in reaching limited tactical accommodations with Israel or restoring a balance in Lebanese confessional relationships. Such willingness to do business seldom occurs between the United States and Libya or Iran. In addition, Assad's drive to be either the paramount warmaker or peacemaker of the region requires that Syria's sphere of influence remain unchallenged by Iran and Libya. In the final analysis, however, Syria's policies on the Arab-Israeli conflict are likely to run broadly counter to US interests in the region for the foreseeable future.

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