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MOHAMMED AYOOB

The Horn of Africa: Regional Conflict and Super Power Involvement

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Regional Conflict and Super Power
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Mohammed Ayooob

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Regional rivalries in the Horn of Africa have been intense for many centuries but never has there been such a clash between neighbours as the present full-scale war between Ethiopia and Somalia. However this conflict is more than simply a local war between neighbours because of the involvement of the superpowers, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., and several other regional powers. Furthermore it is a contest replete with dramatic changes and sudden switches of allegiance such as the shattering of the close military relationship between Ethiopia and the U.S.A., the expulsion of the Soviets from Somalia and the substantial military support given by the U.S.S.R. and Cuba to the embattled Ethiopians.

Dr Ayooob examines the historical roots of conflict in the Horn of Africa, the impact of the European colonial powers, and the rise of superpower involvement in the Horn. Of particular note are the great changes which have taken place and contradictions which have arisen in both the internal politics and the international alignments of Ethiopia and Somalia. After analysis of the war for the Ogaden he draws important conclusions regarding the extent to which the superpowers can achieve real and cost-effective influence both in this conflict and in regional conflicts generally. As a seasoned scholar of conflicts in and around the Indian Ocean, Dr Ayooob offers some penetrating insights into the balance between regional and super power dynamics in the Third World.

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Editor, *Canberra Papers*
and Head, SDSC

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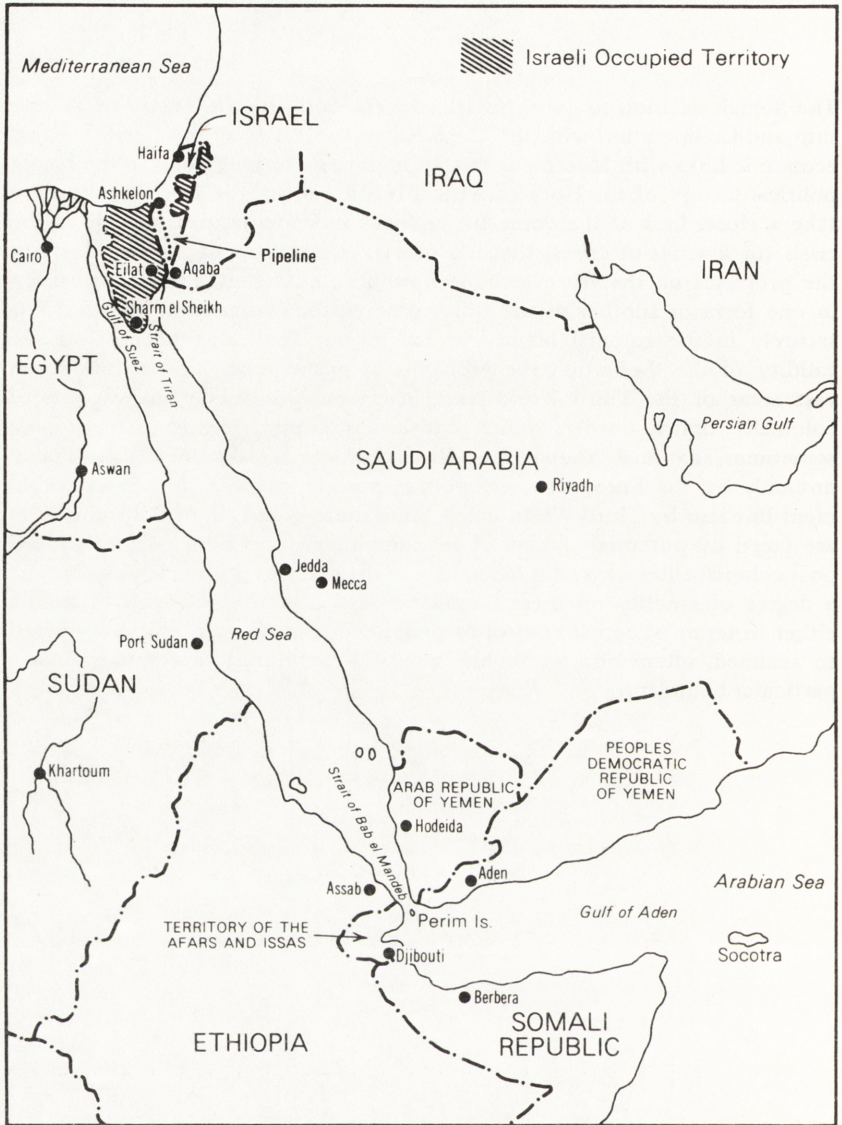
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Introduction

The Somali decision to expel Soviet advisers, abrogate the Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation with the U.S.S.R., and sever its military, political and economic links with Moscow forms an important turning point in the recent political history of the Horn of Africa. It also provides an incentive for us to take a closer look at the domestic, regional and international aspects of the crisis (or a series of crises) that has overtaken that part of the world. While the problems on the Horn seem to have been exacerbated by the intrusion in one form or another of the global powers, they seem to have their roots securely in the colonial history of the region. They also demonstrate the validity of the thesis that the problems of post-colonial nation-building in vast areas of the Third World have been compounded by the vagaries of colonially drawn borders which cut across ethnic, linguistic, tribal and, sometimes, national boundaries. These borders are considered sacrosanct not only by the European metropolitan powers involved in their establishment but also by Third World elites. Since most, if not all, of these countries are faced by potential threats of secessionism in one form or another, the post-colonial elites who have fallen heir to the colonial powers tend to impose a degree of sanctity on these boundaries which is often difficult to sustain either in terms of actual control of peripheral areas or of actual, as opposed to assumed, interaction within the 'political community' encompassed by a particular boundary.



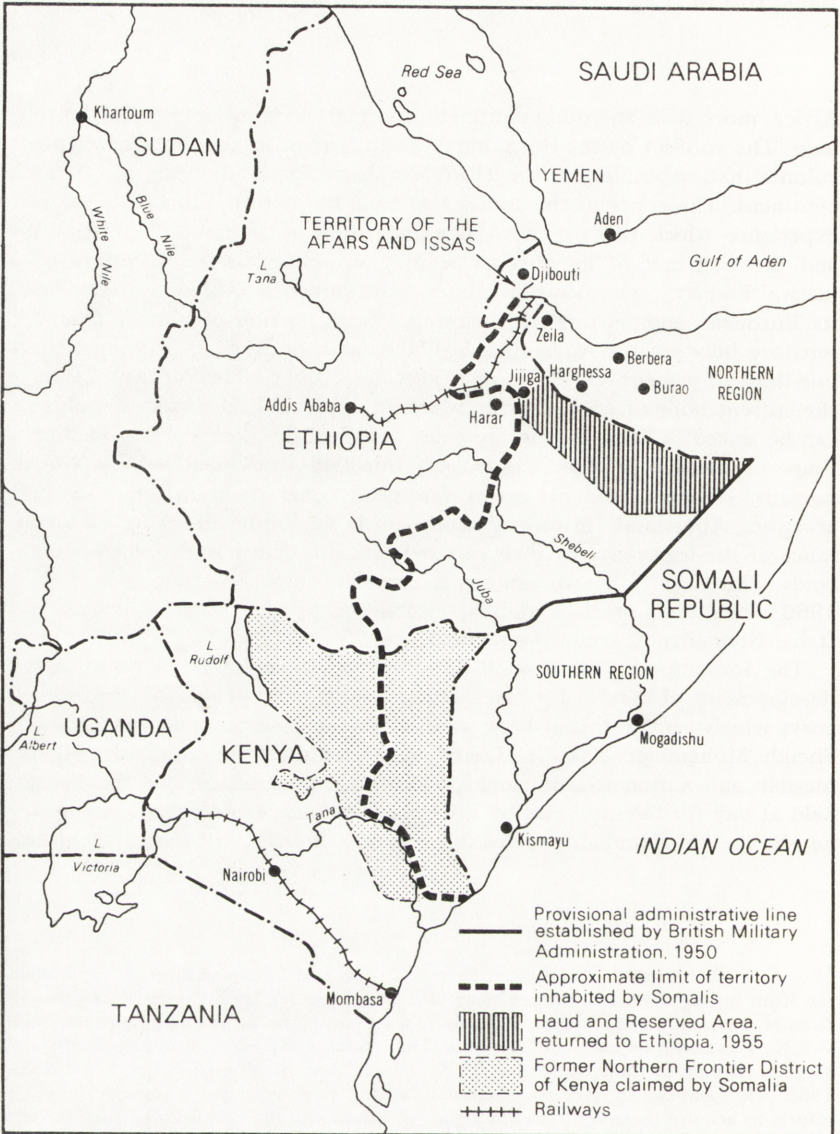
**Map 1: STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT OF THE HORN:
THE RED SEA AND THE PERSIAN GULF**

Background

Africa, more than any other continent, is replete with instances of such problems. The conflict on the Horn dramatically symbolises the problems of post-colonial nation-building in the Third World, and particularly on the African continent. The roots of the conflict go back both to the European colonial experience which this part of Africa underwent in the last half of the 19th and the first half of the present century as well as to the ambitions of a 'native' Empire — viz. Abyssinia, later to be known as Ethiopia — to forestall its European competitors by acquiring a large portion of Somali-inhabited territory between the Abyssinian highlands and the Red Sea, forming almost one-third of present day Ethiopia.¹ Therefore, the problem of the Ogaden — the current bone of contention between Ethiopia and the Somali Republic — can be traced back to the closing years of the 19th century when the Shoan Emperor Menlik acquired control of this arid land inhabited by Somali nomads. He persuaded his major European competitors to acquiesce into accepting Abyssinia's 'historical' claims to the region in return for his acceptance of the legitimacy of their rule over Italian, British and French Somalilands. This dispute has threatened to erupt into open conflict since at least 1960 when the Somali Republic, established by the union of British and Italian Somalilands, attained independence.

The formation of the Somali Republic was the culminating point of the development of national consciousness among the people of the Somali coast which can be traced back at least to the emergence in the 1890s of Sheikh Mohammed Abdille Hassan who combined the roles of religious messiah and national leader in his charismatic personality. 'To the British, held at bay for twenty years by his tactical brilliance and political virtuosity he was the "Mad Mullah", as if no sane Somali could object to such a benevo-

¹For a detailed discussion of Italian, French, British and Ethiopian imperial exploits on the Horn during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, see John Drysdale, *The Somali Dispute*, London, 1964; Robert L. Hess, *Italian Colonialism in Somalia*, Chicago, 1966; G.K.N. Trevaskis, *Eritrea: A Colony in Transition: 1941-1952*, London, 1960; and Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, *Djibouti and the Horn of Africa*, Stanford, 1968. The Abyssinian claim to Somali-inhabited territories and Emperor Menelik's efforts to acquire these territories as a part of a deal with the European colonial powers are set forth clearly in his letter to the rulers of Britain, Italy, France, Germany and Russia which has been reproduced in Appendix I.



Map 2: THE HORN OF AFRICA: INTERNATIONAL FRONTIERS AND ETHNIC BOUNDARIES

lent protector' [as the British].² It is no matter for surprise that Sheikh Abdille Hassan's phenomenal rise coincided with the extension of Menelik's imperial authority to the Ogaden and the consolidation of European colonial possessions on the Somali-inhabited Red Sea Coast. The first conscious rumblings of Somali nationalism were, in fact, provoked by these very events. This embryonic consciousness was nurtured on the one hand by growing opposition to European colonial power on the coast, which became more and more evident as the three occupying powers — Britain, Italy and France — found themselves involved in the Second World War, and on the other by the harsh treatment meted out to the Somali inhabitants of the Ogaden by the Christian Amharic rulers of Addis Ababa — a treatment which was often a mixture of feudal condescension and military plunder.

The national aspirations of the Somali people received a boost both during and immediately after the Second World War, when all areas inhabited by the Somalis, with the exception of French-ruled Djibouti, came under the control of a single power, viz. Great Britain. Britain occupied Italian Somaliland and also took over administrative control of Ethiopia from the retreating Italians, pending the return of Emperor Haile Selassie. This area, of course, included the Somali-inhabited territories of the Empire. To these were added British Somaliland and the Northern Frontier District (NFD) of Kenya, which itself was a British colony. The return of the Ethiopian Emperor to Addis Ababa in 1941 after the expulsion of Italy from the Horn created a difficult situation for Britain, particularly in relation to the Somali-inhabited territory which had formed a part of Ethiopia since Menelik's annexation. The British, however, got around the problem by concluding an agreement with the Emperor in 1942 which restored full sovereignty to Ethiopia and confirmed its pre-war boundaries. It was, however, qualified by a military convention granting Britain temporary administrative control over the Ogaden and the reserved area which included the Haud and the grain-producing areas west of British Somaliland.

This unification of almost all Somalis under the British 'raj' had two far-reaching results. First it accelerated the growth of Somali national-consciousness, and, as a corollary, of nationalist activity, particularly among the urban sector of the population. The Somali leadership also found that its leverage *vis-à-vis* the colonial power had increased since the British, in the midst of the war and faced initially with a hostile Vichy French Administration in Djibouti and a disgruntled Italian population in Italian Somaliland, were keenly interested in preserving the goodwill of the local population. As a result of the changing needs of the time, the British administration approved

²Tom J. Farer, *War Clouds on the Horn of Africa*, New York, 1976, p. 81.

the efforts of a group of young activists to establish the first modern Somali political movement called the Somali Youth Club (SYC). One of the major planks on which the SYC was formed was firm opposition to the renewal of Italian rule in Somalia. The SYC became by 1947 the 25,000 strong Somali Youth League (SYL).

A second off-shoot of this unified administration was an increasing appreciation among the local British officials of the need to continue this experiment in order to alleviate the economic misery of the Somali tribes, a large number of whom were denied access by artificial political boundaries to traditional sources of pasture and water.³ The needs of the British Empire and humanitarian considerations coincided to prompt the then British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, to propose in 1946 that:

British Somaliland, Italian Somaliland, and the adjacent part of Ethiopia, *if Ethiopia agreed*, should be lumped together as a trust territory, so that the nomads should lead their frugal existence with the least possible hindrance and there might be a real chance of a decent economic life, as understood in that territory.⁴

As Tom Farer has pointed out,

The proposal, however well intentioned, was intrinsically flawed by the provisions requiring Ethiopian agreement and proposing a British trustee. The former could not be satisfied. The latter, although it was not put forward as an essential condition, nevertheless encouraged perception of the plan as a strategem for British imperial expansion.⁵

However in 1950 Italian Somaliland became a U.N. trust territory under Italian administration on the condition that it should become independent in ten years. With the failure of what was essentially a feeble British effort to establish a unified Somali entity, the grounds for conflict on the Horn between a truncated and, therefore, irredentist Somali state and the Ethiopian Empire,⁶ were firmly laid. Compared to the polyglot nature of the Ethiopian state, the Somali people have been one of the few in Africa who, despite tribal and clan cleavages, have had a well-developed sense of national identity even before they attained formal statehood. This view is borne out by the evidence of leading authorities on the area, including Farer who has stated that:

³For details see Drysdale, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

⁴*House of Commons Debates*, 4 June 1946, Cols. 1840-41. Emphasis added.

⁵Farer, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

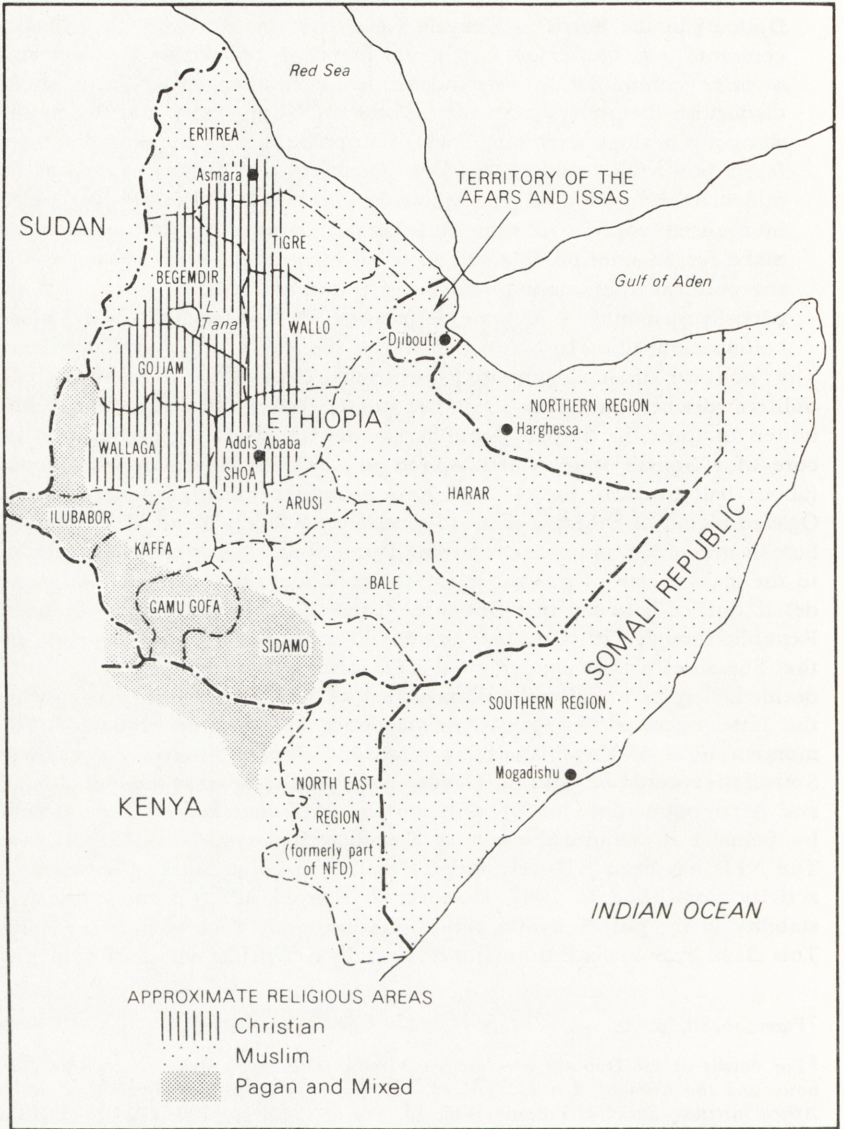
⁶The Ethiopian ruling elite's own perception of Ethiopia as an empire rather than a nation state was demonstrated by the fact that it was one of only two countries (until the recent addition of Bokassa's Central African Empire) in the post-war world – the other being Iran – which boasted of an emperor.

The Somalis are as culturally uniform as the Ethiopians are mixed. From Djibouti in the north to Kenya's Tana River in the south, they speak a common language, enjoy a rich oral literature centred on poetic forms, organise communal life around similar, egalitarian social institutions, distinguish themselves from their Bantu and Nilotic neighbours by emphasising a genealogy stretching back to an original Arab ancestor, and manifest a powerful devotion to Islam. These cultural factors as well as the millennial occupation of contiguous territory and at least 500 years of intermittent conflict with the Christian occupants of the Ethiopian plateau make for an undisputable shared sense of nationhood. Surviving as well the political divisions imposed initially during the colonial scramble and partially sustained — in some ways aggravated — through the era of decolonisation, that sense now constitutes the root of the Somali problem.⁷

The 'political divisions' imposed during this colonial period were partially obliterated when on 1 July 1960, the former Italian and British Somalilands united to form the Somali Republic and to constitute themselves into the core of a Somali state which aspired to unite French-controlled Djibouti (about half Somali), the NFD of Kenya (overwhelmingly Somali) and the Ogaden region of Ethiopia (almost exclusively Somali) to the new Republic. Somali irredentist ambitions regarding Djibouti and the NFD, while relevant to the main theme of this paper, are marginal and cannot be analysed in any detail. Suffice it to say that Djibouti has recently emerged as an independent Republic though with a sizable French military presence in the tiny state and that Somali efforts at annexing the NFD failed to bear fruit when the British decided, despite initial vacillation, against its detachment from Kenya when the latter received its formal independence in December 1963.⁸ At the moment both of these issues are relatively dormant, partially because of Somali preoccupation with the Ogaden and partially because the Issa (Somali) and Affar populations of Djibouti are so evenly matched that any attempt by Somalia to acquire the former French territory may lead to civil war. The NFD has been relatively quiet after an initial outburst of anti-Kenyian activity from 1964 to 1967. However, if Nairobi suffers from political instability in the post-Kenyatta period, the issue may once again become live. This claim by Somalia is the major reason why Kenya has supported Ethiopian

⁷Farer, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

⁸For details of the Djibouti problem see Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, *Djibouti and the Horn of Africa*, Stanford, 1968, and 'Affar vs Issa: Looming Conflict' *Africa Institute Bulletin* (Pretoria) Vol. 15, No. 5, 1977, pp. 100-110. For details of negotiations about the NFD and the British decision see Drysdale, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-166.



Map 3: THE HORN OF AFRICA: PROVINCIAL BOUNDARIES AND RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS

claims to the Ogaden despite the vastly different character of the two regimes at present.

Superpower Involvement

While the basic contradiction between the Ethiopian Empire and the Somali Republic emerges out of the fact that 'Perhaps as many as one million Somalis occupy, more or less exclusively, nearly one fifth of Ethiopia',⁹ tension on the Horn has been exacerbated by the involvement of great, and particularly super, powers for reasons which are often not directly related or relevant to the Somali-Ethiopian rivalry. For example, the conflict-potential of the region has been enhanced by its proximity to the major theatres of Arab-Israeli conflict and because of the strategic importance to Israel of the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, the narrow waterway between the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.¹⁰ Because of the West's, and particularly America's, commitment to Israel's conception of 'absolute security' for the Jewish state — often to the extent that Israeli conceptions are allowed to determine US policies towards the Middle East at the expense of America's own interests in the region¹¹ — regional conflicts on the Horn have in the West come to be viewed largely as extensions of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The accession to power of radical regimes, particularly in Somalia and South Yemen (PDRY) which received political and military support from the Soviet Union, further convinced policy-makers and strategists in the United States that the area had become an important target for the expansion of Soviet political influence. On its side, Soviet involvement in the Horn has evolved partially from its involvement in the Middle East conflict and partially from its desire to find counterweights to US-supported regimes in Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia on the Red Sea littoral. Soviet interest in the Horn has also been partially deter-

⁹US Senate, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa*, Hearings before the Subcommittee on African Affairs, 4-6 August 1976, Washington 1976, p. 75.

¹⁰A good example of the Israeli preoccupation with the strategic importance of the Bab and therefore of the Horn is found in Mordechai Abir, 'Red Sea Politics', in *Conflicts in Africa, Adelphi Papers*, No. 93, December 1972, pp. 25-37.

¹¹For an interesting discussion of how the Jewish lobby influences US policy-making towards the Middle East, see Jane Rosen, 'US Middle East Policy Courtesy of the Jewish Lobby', *The Guardian Weekly*, 25 September 1977, p. 9.

mined by its newly acquired active role in the Indian Ocean from the late 1960s and its desire to find facilities on the Indian Ocean littoral for its increased naval deployment.

The Soviets have, however, been late arrivers on the Horn. They began to establish their links with Mogadishu at least a decade after the United States has established itself firmly as Addis Ababa's major external supporter and arms supplier in the early 1950s. Moreover, it was not until after the military takeover in Somalia in 1969 that the Soviet-Somali relationship began to acquire the warmth which made the latter the most firm ally of the U.S.S.R. in the African continent until its recent decision to cut all ties to Moscow.

The United States, the first superpower to arrive on the scene, looked upon its Ethiopian connection to a large extent in the cold war context. It not only gave Washington a foothold in a continent poised for decolonisation, but also conferred certain concrete dividends, the most important of them being the (formerly Italian) Kagnew communications base near Asmara in Eritrea. For two decades this base remained an important link in the worldwide network of US military communications stretching from the Philippines through Ethiopia and Morocco to Arlington, Virginia. The US acquired the Kagnew facility as part of a deal with Ethiopia under which Washington extended support at the UN to the Ethiopian annexation of Eritrea and also provided military aid to Addis Ababa.¹² American support to Ethiopia on the Eritrean issue was crucial at that stage and swung a large number of votes in the UN to Ethiopia thus giving the proposal for annexation a majority in the UN — an action whose negative repercussions vibrate throughout the Horn to this day in the form of the Eritrean nationalist uprising against Addis Ababa's autocratic rule. The Kagnew base, named after the Ethiopian contingent that fought in Korea,¹³ was leased to the U.S.A. in 1953 for 25 years. While the lease technically was to run out in 1978, in the mid-1970s the US began to transfer the functions of the Kagnew base to its newly established facility in Diego Garcia. This transfer had far-reaching implications for the level of US support to Addis Ababa to which we will return later.

John Spencer, the former (American) Chief Adviser to the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has pointed out in his testimony to a US Senate Subcommittee that Ethiopia was able to persuade the US to extend arms

¹²For details of the origins of the US-Ethiopian agreement, see the testimony of John H. Spencer, former Chief Adviser to the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in US Senate, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa*, *op. cit.* pp 26-28.

¹³Ethiopia was the only black African country to have supplied a military contingent for UN operations in Korea.

assistance to Addis Ababa by exploiting the 'Northern Tier' concept being developed at that time by Secretary of State Dulles, culminating in the Baghdad Pact. The negotiations for Ethiopia [apparently John Spencer included] presented the argument that Addis Ababa should form part of a 'Southern Tier' or secondary line of defence against Communism in the Middle East. That type of argument made it possible for the Secretaries of State and Defense to 'find' that the defence of Ethiopia was essential to the defence of the 'Free World'. Again, as in the case of the base agreement, the arms assistance agreement was related not to Africa as such but to the Middle East and 'defence' against Communism.¹⁴

On the basis of the above-mentioned considerations, to which were added new ones, particularly those of close Soviet-Somali relations from the mid-1960s onward, the U.S.A. supplied Ethiopia \$350* million in economic aid and \$278.6 million in military assistance until 1976. An additional \$6 million worth of military aid to Ethiopia had been programmed for 1977.¹⁵ According to the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) estimates, from 1966 to 1975 Ethiopia received \$151 million of arms of which \$120 million came from the United States.¹⁶ According to International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) estimates, this equipment has included 24 M-60 medium and 54 M-41 light tanks, about 90 M-113 armoured personnel carriers (APC), 4 Canberra B-2 bombers, 11 F-86F fighter bombers and 16 F-5/AE fighter bombers.¹⁷ According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) estimates, Ethiopia was the largest importer of major weapons in sub-Saharan Africa through the 1950s and the 1960s, accounting for over 12 per cent of the total throughout the period. It also became the first black African country to acquire supersonic aircraft when it received the F-5 Freedom Fighters from the U.S.A. in 1965. Moreover, up to 1962 nearly the entire US military aid to sub-Saharan Africa went to Ethiopia and from 1962 to 1969 Ethiopia's share of this aid averaged 70 per cent.¹⁸

¹⁴US Senate, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa*, p. 27.

¹⁵*ibid.*, p. 2.

*All dollar values are in US dollars.

¹⁶US ACDA, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers, 1966-1975*, Washington, 1976, p. 79.

¹⁷IISS, *The Military Balance 1976-77*, London, 1977, p. 42.

¹⁸SIPRI, *The Arms Trade with the Third World*, Stockholm, 1971, pp. 650-651.

Until 1960, when the Somali Republic gained independence, and in fact for a further three years, US influence in the Horn was practically unchallenged. Throughout the 1950s two of its NATO allies – Italy and Britain – were in effective control of the major Somali territories, and France was firmly ensconced in Djibouti. Moreover, during the initial years of Somali independence, Mogadishu was primarily dependent upon its erstwhile colonial masters, Italy and Britain, for external political support and for the supply of the limited quantity of military hardware it was able to obtain. However, in 1963 Somali relations with the Western powers deteriorated considerably mainly because of the British refusal to separate the Somali-populated northern district from Kenya before granting that country independence, and because of continued US support to Ethiopia which kept the regional balance of power tilted very much against Somalia. It was in this context that Mogadishu turned to the only other major source that could help redress the regional imbalance and, if possible, tilt it in Somalia's favour, viz, the Soviet Union.

On its part, Moscow, having attained both a degree of strategic parity with Washington and, for the first time, a global reach in terms of its military and political capabilities, was not averse to extending aid to the Somali Republic if it helped diminish the military superiority of the American ally, Ethiopia. Such an opportunity was all the more welcome from the Kremlin's point of view since it provided the Soviet Union with a foothold in the Horn of Africa, strategically placed next to the volatile middle East and at the junction of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. In October 1963 Somalia accepted a Soviet offer of military assistance in the form of a long-term rouble credit worth \$30 million. The main objective of this aid was to expand the Somali army from 4,000 men to 10,000 – this target was revised to 20,000 after the military came to power in 1969 – and to build, by African standards, a significant air force. Somalia received its first supply of MiG aircraft (6 MiG-15 UTI trainers) in November 1963 and additional MiG-15 and -17 aircraft in 1965-66. It also received T-34 tanks from the U.S.S.R. in 1965. The Somali-Soviet relationship, although it had its ups and downs, remained very close, particularly since 1969 when the military came to power until recently when dramatic events in the Horn led to equally dramatic shifts in international alignments thus making obsolete all the traditional assessments of regional conflict and superpower involvement in that part of Africa.

According to the IISS estimates, Somalia had an army of 22,000, before the outbreak of the Ogaden war, as compared to Ethiopia's 47,000. The Somali army had at its disposal 200 T-34 and 50 T-54/55 tanks. It had an airforce of 2,700 men with 66 combat aircraft (as compared to Ethiopia's 2,300 and 36 respectively) which included 10 IL-28, 44 MiG-15 and -17 and 12 MiG-21. However, the IISS publication also pointed out that 'spares are

short and not all equipment is serviceable'.¹⁹ With the outbreak of the Ogaden war not only have both armed forces lost a great deal of equipment and trained manpower²⁰, but the shift in international alignments has affected the composition of their arsenals as well. This has been particularly true of Ethiopia which has received a good deal of modern weaponry from the Soviet Union and its East European and Cuban allies. But to this we will return later.

As a *quid pro quo* for Soviet military and economic assistance to the Somali Republic, the latter had extended certain base facilities to Moscow at the port of Berbera. These included a military airport and two Soviet communication facilities that opened in December 1972. Despite Soviet and Somali denials, the first and unrevised report of the three experts appointed by the UN Secretary General in 1974 to report on great power naval rivalry in the Indian Ocean had identified Berbera as a Soviet base.²¹ There is enough evidence on record now – including US aerial photographic reconnaissance and the visits of US Congressional teams – to conclude that it was a naval facility used by the Soviet Union and had storage and handling facilities for naval missiles and although 'nothing has actually been seen here that is bigger than the Styx [missile] which has a range of about 20 miles ... the handling gear and the buildings could obviously handle something much larger'.²² In 1974 the Somali Republic and the Soviet Union signed a Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation which made provisions for 'training of the Somalian military personnel and the mastering of weapons and equipment delivered to the Somali Democratic Republic for the purposes of enhancing its defence potential'.²³ Recent political and military changes in the Horn have radically transformed the character of the Soviet-Somali relationship resulting in the abrogation of the Treaty, the termination of Soviet base facilities at Berbera and the repatriation of Soviet military and civilian advisers in Somalia who at the height of the relationship had numbered between

¹⁹IISS, *The Military Balance 1976-77*, p. 44.

²⁰According to one assessment the Somalis lost a quarter of their tanks and over half their combat aircraft in their successful offensive in the Ogaden. Gwynne Dyer, 'Half-Time in the Horn of Africa', *Canberra Times*, 4 January 1978.

²¹UN General Assembly Document A/AC.159/1 dated 3 May 1974, p. 14.

²²Testimony of Geoffrey Jukes before the Australian Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, Reference: *Australia and Indian Ocean Region, 1976, Official Hansard, Transcript of Evidence*, Canberra, 1976, p. 669.

²³Quoted in *Australia and the Indian Ocean*, Report from the Australian Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, Canberra, 1976, p. 21.

5,000 and 6,000. But in order to understand this drastic alteration of international alignments one must first look at recent changes in the domestic environments of Ethiopia and Somalia — particularly of the former — and evaluate their effects on the balance of power within the region and consequently in intra-regional relationships.

Domestic Changes and International Re-alignments

The event that acted as the major catalyst for change in the Horn of Africa was the overthrow of Haile Selassie's *ancien régime* in Addis Ababa in early 1974 and its eventual replacement — after a period of uncertainty — by a military government controlled by the Provisional Military Administrative Committee, better known as the Dergue.²⁴ This body which had begun as a democratic movement within the armed and police forces initially with the objective of forcing reforms on the unwilling Emperor, soon found itself desperately trying to fill the power vacuum which was created by the swift disintegration of the *ancien régime* under the impact of widespread upheaval of protest against the old feudal system. The Dergue, originally a body of 40 representatives of the various units of the armed forces, found itself divided on the basis of policies and personalities and its leadership locked in a power struggle which resulted in a series of purges until in early 1977 Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam emerged as the victor. That the power struggle within the Dergue is far from over was demonstrated by the purge and execution of its Vice-Chairman, Col. Atnafu Abate, in mid-November 1977.²⁵

Under Mengistu the Dergue moved increasingly in a Marxist direction, partially because of domestic requirements and partially because of the leftist predilections of its leadership. Such a left-ward orientation on the part of Ethiopia's new rulers was also the result of their urgent need to enlist external support in order to shore up the Dergue's shaky position *vis-à-vis* local dissidents and secessionist forces, particularly those operating in Eritrea and the

²⁴'Dergue' is the Amharic term for 'Committee'. For the origins and course of the movement that led to the overthrow of the Emperor, the near anarchic situation in the country following the change in régime and the struggle for power within the Dergue, see Colin Legum, *Ethiopia: The Fall of Haile Selassie's Empire*, London, 1975, and Colin Legum, 'Realities of the Ethiopian Revolution', *The World Today*, Vol. 33, No. 8, August 1977, pp. 305-312.

²⁵*International Herald Tribune*, 15 November 1977.

Somali-inhabited Ogaden.²⁶ After an initial bout of enthusiasm for close relations with China,²⁷ Mengistu apparently came to the conclusion that 'although the Chinese maintain a low-profile presence in the Horn of Africa, they are not in a mood to play super-power politics in the area — unlike the Soviet Union'.²⁸

The Ethiopian lurch towards the left, and particularly towards the Soviet Union, was to a considerable extent dictated by a deterioration of relations between Washington and Addis Ababa which in turn was based to some extent on the accession to power in Ethiopia of a régime apparently wedded to 'scientific socialism' (although in a peculiarly Ethiopian fashion). Considerable criticism of the Dergue's Marxist predilections was voiced in US Congressional circles. Simultaneously, as has been mentioned earlier, American interest in propping up the Ethiopian Empire declined with the transfer of the most important functions of the Kagnev communications base to Diego Garcia thereby reducing Ethiopia's strategic significance to the United States. Growing US links with Saudi Arabia also prevented Washington from giving open support to Mengistu's genocidal plans for Eritrea, where the nationalist insurgency was being supported, among others, by Riyadh.

With American support to Ethiopia remarkably reduced, the Dergue decided that it was time to switch sides and in April 1977 Mengistu decided to cut off all ties with the United States, thus formally ending Ethiopia's near-total dependence on Washington for military aid and political support. He turned instead to the Soviet Union to replace the U.S.A. as the major source of arms supply and military training. Among the reasons which seem to have

²⁶ Constraints of space prohibit the author from dwelling upon the recent developments in Eritrea and their effects on the fortunes of the Dergue. For background to the rise of Eritrean separatism and the present situation in Eritrea, see John Franklin Campbell, 'Rumblings along the Red Sea: The Eritrean Question', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 48, No. 3, April 1970, pp. 537-548; J. Bowyer Bell, 'Endemic Insurgency and International Order: The Eritrean Experience', *Orbis*, Vol. 18, No. 2, Summer 1974, pp. 427-450; and Tom J. Farer, *op. cit.*, particularly pp. 5-48. For a comprehensive recent account of the war in Eritrea from an on-the-spot observer, please see John Darnton, 'Eritrean Rebels Brace for a Decisive Battle', *International Herald Tribune*, 13 July 1977. Darnton, after an extensive trip through war-torn Eritrea, concluded that the two major guerrilla forces, the ELF and the EPLF together 'control roughly 85 percent of the 50,000 square mile province of Eritrea and all but 300,000 of its 3.4 million people ... The Ethiopians are now confined to seven cities and towns, including the provincial capital, Asmara, but even there their hold is slipping — it does not extend to roads connecting the towns and it usually stops at dusk'.

²⁷ John H. Spencer, 'Haile Selassie: Triumph and Tragedy', *Orbis*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Winter 1975, p. 1146.

²⁸ Legum, 'Realities...', p. 310.

prompted Mengistu, other than his Marxist predilections, was the way the war was going in Eritrea and the expectations of a showdown with Somalia over Djibouti when the French withdrew from their coastal enclave in mid-1977. Despite American military assistance (and Israeli help in training counter-insurgency units) the war in Eritrea was moving slowly but surely towards a total Ethiopian rout and the two Ethiopian ports on the Red Sea, Assab and Massawa, both in Eritrea, had become virtually unusable because of Eritrean nationalist control of territory between the ports and the Abyssinian highlands. No government in Addis Ababa could have survived the fall of Eritrea. Combined with Somali success in the Ogaden, where the West Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) had been increasing its physical control of Somali-inhabited territory, and with half a dozen other secessionist groups waiting in the wings, Eritrean independence would have heralded the total break-up of the Ethiopian Empire. Mengistu was apparently impressed by the degree of Soviet involvement in Angola where Moscow had done its best, including the introduction of Cuban troops, to help its allies win control of that country. The Soviets, in contrast with the Americans, therefore appeared more reliable allies to him on the Eritrean front. Moreover, given the Soviet Union's leverage with the Somali Republic, Mengistu must have reasoned that a Soviet Union friendly to Addis Ababa would be willing to restrain Somali intrusions into the Ogaden as well as into Djibouti since such intrusions could force Ethiopia into another major war at a time when Eritrea was unmanageable.

The Soviet Union responded with surprising alacrity to Ethiopian overtures. As Colin Legum has pointed out, 'Already in 1974, Moscow began to show a tentative interest in backing the Dergue but without upsetting the Somalis'.²⁹ Moscow's calculations seem to have been based, among other things, on the need to get a firmer foothold in the Horn than was provided by Somalia. Ethiopia, with a population almost nine times that of Somalia and with two outlets to the Red Sea, seemed, at least on paper, a good horse to bet on. At the same time, given the Horn's proximity to the Middle East, Moscow must have felt that the losses it had suffered in terms of reduction of influence in Egypt and Sudan could be at least partially made up by the acquisition of a friendly Ethiopia. This was an inviting prospect, particularly since it was to be, at least technically, at the expense of the United States. Moreover, with Egypt and Sudan, along with arch-conservative Saudi Arabia, as the main supporters of the Eritrean nationalists, Moscow must have calculated that an Ethiopian victory in Eritrea, particularly with a Marxist government in Addis Ababa, would be in the Soviet interest. Moscow also could have been secretly worried that Saudi overtures in the shape of offers of

²⁹*ibid.*, p. 311.

massive economic and military aid plus political support to woo Somalia away from the Soviet orbit might prove too tempting for Mogadishu to decline. The development of intimate relations between stridently anti-communist Saudi Arabia and Somalia was bound to endanger Soviet influence in Somalia as a whole and its presence in Berbera in particular. All through 1976 there had been reports of Saudi offers of assistance to Mogadishu – including funds for the purchase of arms in the West – if Somalia broke with the Soviet Union. According to one report, ‘the figure of proffered Saudi aid mentioned most often in Arab circles here [in Mogadishu] is \$300 million to \$350 million, although Saudi diplomats in the region say that this is a vastly exaggerated estimate of Somali needs. Last year [1976] Saudi Arabia gave Somalia \$28 million, so far this year [1977] it has furnished \$16-18 million.’³⁰ At one stage in 1976, James E. Akins, former US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, charged the Ford Administration with having ignored a Saudi proposal to reduce Soviet influence in Somalia because the removal of the Soviet base at Berbera would have weakened the Administration’s case on Diego Garcia at a time when the US Congress was considering appropriations for the base.³¹

Compared to all this activity on the Somali front, Ethiopia’s isolation in its region, since it had successfully alienated almost all its neighbours as well as the United States for different reasons, made Addis Ababa appear a much more dependable client to Moscow. Ethiopian ‘dependence’ and, therefore, its ‘dependability’ stood out in sharp contrast to an increasingly self-confident regime in Somalia which had become a member of the Arab League and was on friendly terms with rich conservative as well as radical governments in the Arab world. Furthermore, the Soviet Union may have been confident enough of its leverage – political, military and economic – with Somalia to take the risk of wooing its major rival while yet hoping to retain Mogadishu’s loyalty.

There is some reason to believe that Moscow felt relatively optimistic about its capacity to impose a sort of *Pax Sovietica* on the Horn by acting as the Godfather for both the Somali and Ethiopian regimes. Any optimism of this sort must have, however, suffered a drastic setback when Somalia rejected out of hand Fidel Castro’s proposal in March 1977 to join the two neighbours plus the PDRY in a sort of Marxist confederation around the Red Sea. As far as the Somali perception of Soviet activities in Ethiopia was concerned, it was summed up by Somali President Siad Barre’s remark to the Kuwaiti newspaper, *Al-Yaqash*, on 27 June 1977, that:

³⁰*International Herald Tribune*, 4-5 June 1977.

³¹*New York Times*, 5 May 1976.

If it should transpire that the arms sent by the Soviet Union to Ethiopia constituted a threat to Somalia, then Somalia would take a *historic decision* against this armament. We would not be able to remain idle in the face of the danger of the Soviet Union's arming of Ethiopia. Despite our good relations with the Soviet Union, its outlook on Ethiopia is different from ours.³²

However, at the same time, one Somali leader pointed out to a Western correspondent the pitfalls of breaking relations with the Soviet Union and becoming exclusively dependent on the United States: 'Look at what happened to Sadat: Washington promised him the moon and left him defenceless against Israel'.³³

Despite its misgivings regarding the West, Somalia finally decided to cut all its ties with the Soviet Union in November 1977. What was it that prompted Mogadishu to take this 'historic decision'? What happened between June and November that made such a break inevitable? In one sentence, what intervened was the Ogaden war. This conflict made the Somali-Soviet relationship completely untenable in the light of all-out Soviet support for Ethiopia in the latter's desperate action to preserve a semblance of Ethiopian authority in the Somali-inhabited south-eastern region of the crumbling Empire.

War in the Ogaden

The predominantly Somali-inhabited Ogaden, as has been pointed out earlier, had been annexed to the Ethiopian Empire during the closing years of the 19th century by Emperor Menelik. Since the establishment of the Somali Republic in 1960, the Ogaden, which included four Ethiopian provinces — Bale, Sidamo, Arusi and Harar — had remained a major target of Somali irredentism. However, the last major clash between the two countries over boundary claims in the Ogaden had taken place in 1964 when the American equipped Ethiopian army had had much the better of the infant Somali army. Throughout the 1960s and the 1970s a Somali nationalist movement, which came to be known as the West Somali Liberation Front (WSLF), had operated in the Ogaden and had frequently harrassed the

³²Quoted in Legum, 'Realities...', p. 312.

³³*Newsweek*, 27 June 1977, p. 11.

Ethiopian rulers. With increasingly chaotic conditions in Ethiopia following the fall of the Emperor and the intensification of the Eritrean insurgency the WSLF had also extended its activities and had been able to wrest substantial portions of the Ogaden from Ethiopian control. The Somali Republic had never tried to hide its sympathy and support for the WSLF although it had denied charges of direct involvement in anti-Ethiopian activities in the Ogaden. As far as Ethiopia's new rulers were concerned, one of the major reasons for their decision to develop intimate links with the Soviet Union was their calculation that Moscow would be able to keep Somali ambitions in check while the Dergue was neck-deep in its troubles in Eritrea and elsewhere in the country. But, paradoxically, the Soviet decision to support the new Ethiopian regime, militarily and politically, was responsible, more than anything else, in triggering off the recent Somali-backed offensive by the WSLF in the Ogaden.

According to relatively reliable Western intelligence estimates in June-July 1977, the Soviet Union started to supply Ethiopia not only T-34, T-54 and T-55 tanks (some of which were brought in from Aden) and armoured personnel carriers (APC) but also Sam-7 anti-aircraft missiles, MI-8 helicopters, 140 mm rocket launchers and self-propelled guns*³⁴. According to the same sources, this augmentation of Ethiopian military strength was very worrisome for Mogadishu. But what was even more disturbing to the Somali leadership and to the West was Mengistu's reported promise to the U.S.S.R. when he visited Moscow in May 1977 'that he would allow the Russians to turn [the Eritrean Red Sea port of] Massawa into a large naval base able to serve warships and submarines with its own shipyard'.* This would drastically reduce Soviet dependence on Somali facilities in the Red Sea - Indian Ocean area as well as present the U.S.S.R. with a base facing pro-West Saudi Arabia, 'behind the backs of Egypt and Sudan'.*

The Somali decision to escalate the fighting in the Ogaden seems to have resulted directly from this shift in Soviet strategy in the Horn since it worked to the detriment of Somali interests. First, with Ethiopia available to the Soviet Union as an ally-client and with Massawa a possible (although given the situation in Eritrea a not very likely) replacement for Berbera, Somali leverage with Moscow would be drastically reduced. This switch would be reflected in Soviet policies in the Horn which would then tend to completely subordinate Somali interests to those of its larger and more important ally, Ethiopia. Second, an accretion in Ethiopian armed strength, particularly when such an

³⁴The information given in passages asterisked here and below is taken from a commercially available publication, which is made available only on condition that it is not cited directly.

augmentation might be at the expense of Soviet arms deliveries to Somalia, might tempt the Ethiopian junta, especially given the unstable conditions at home, to take military action against Somalia in order both to bolster its domestic image and to force Somalia to reduce, if not completely stop, its support to the WSLF. Both these outcomes of the shift in Soviet strategy, but particularly the latter, were unacceptable to the Somali leadership which was specially worried about the adverse effects of a tilt in the military balance on the Horn in favour of Addis Ababa. The intensification of the WSLF activities in the Ogaden and the Somali decision to join the WSLF in an all-out offensive against Ethiopia was, therefore, to a large extent prompted by the desire to take advantage of Somali military superiority *vis-à-vis* Ethiopia while it lasted and before it was altered by the infusion of large scale Soviet weaponry into Ethiopia and the adaptation of the Ethiopian armed forces to Soviet weapon-systems. A secondary objective of the Somali offensive seems to have been the attempted discrediting of the Mengistu regime as a result of military defeat and its replacement by either a right-wing (therefore, anti-Soviet) or an extreme left-wing (therefore, again anti-Soviet) government in Addis Ababa which would force Moscow once again to mend its fences with Mogadishu, this time on the latter's terms.

It was this calculation of speedy military success coupled with the possibility of a reassessment of Soviet policies in the Horn that prevented the Somali government from totally rupturing its ties with the Soviet Union, particularly since in ideological terms the West was still anathema to the socialist rulers of Somalia. The Somali leadership was, however, not averse to shopping for arms in the West to make up for losses in the Ogaden and to augment its military strength generally, particularly through the good offices of Saudi Arabia. It was with this aim in view that President Barre of Somalia paid a visit to Saudi Arabia on 13 July 1977. However, the Saudis, although very interested in helping the Somalis, apparently made the total expulsion of the Soviet Union a pre-condition for any large-scale Saudi help.³⁵ The Somalis responded with a substantial cutback of Soviet advisers in the country — a process which was confirmed by Western sources³⁶ — but, once again, stopped short of complete rupture with Moscow.

While later reports from Western intelligence sources disclosed that President Barre had made a promise to King Khalid of Saudi Arabia and President Sadat of Egypt on the eve of the Ogaden offensive that he would throw the Soviets out of Somalia completely,* the thesis that Barre was signalling

³⁵ *The Australian*, 20 July 1977.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Moscow and giving it time to re-assess its policy on the Horn appears a more plausible explanation of the often contradictory moves and statements emanating from Mogadishu between June and November 1977. The responses from both the Soviet Union and the West (and the latter's friends in the Arab world) were equally mixed and often confusing. Initially, following the Soviet decision to make major political and military investments in Ethiopia and the consequent cool that descended upon Somali-Soviet relations, the U.S.A. seemed prepared to step in to fill the political and military gap left in Somalia as a result of the shift in Soviet policy. President Carter's statement that the United States was prepared to 'aggressively challenge, in a peaceful way, the Soviet Union ... for influence in areas of the world we feel are crucial to us now or potentially crucial'³⁷ appeared to be directed primarily towards parties in conflict on the Horn. This was borne out by the reported American decision 'in principle' to supply arms to Somalia to defend 'its present territory', and the report that Washington was consulting with 'friends and allies' — Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, France, Italy and Germany — on how best to supply arms to Somalia.³⁸ The report that the U.S.A. had decided to supply arms simultaneously to Sudan (which had thrown out Soviet advisers) strengthened the possibility of an imminent American decision to send major weaponry to Somalia, most probably through third parties.

However, indications that Washington was having second thoughts about a major military and political commitment to Mogadishu were available almost immediately after the decision 'in principle' was taken. US vacillation was caused by four factors: first, the socialist character of the Somali regime (even though it was supported by such conservative Arab states as Saudi Arabia); second, its refusal to break totally its ties with Moscow unless a firm offer of military assistance from the West was forthcoming; third, fear of Congressional disapproval of another African involvement after the Angolan misadventure; and fourth, pressure from the Jewish lobby, both inside and outside the Congress, which considered a Somali victory in the Horn anathema both since Muslim Somalia was a member of the Arab League and since it was bound to hasten Eritrean control of the Red Sea ports of Assab and Massawa which Israel was helping to oppose by supplying military advisers to Ethiopia. The outbreak of the Ogaden conflict in July and its intensification in August also contributed to the American decision not to supply Somalia with arms which might be used to dismember the Christian Amharic Ethiopian Empire which, despite its current aberrations, had been America's traditional ally in a

³⁷*International Herald Tribune*, 27 July 1977.

³⁸*International Herald Tribune*, 27 July 1977.

part of the world where distrust of the West had become almost a matter of political instinct. Apparently, the French were also not too happy with any accretion in Somali strength because of the latter's aspirations regarding Djibouti which, although it had gained independence from France in June 1977, was virtually under French military protection. Pro-West Kenya, afraid that the Ogaden example might embolden its Somali population in the erstwhile NFD to rise again in revolt and provide Mogadishu with an excuse to intervene, also reportedly pleaded with Washington not to do anything which might increase Somali capabilities.

The various pressures upon the Carter Administration and its own assessment of what a projected Somali victory would do to the regional political dynamics of the Horn, to Israel's presumed security requirements, and to great power positions in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, led to the State Department spokesman's statement on 1 September 1977 that in view of the current clash in 'Ethiopia's Ogaden region' the U.S.A. had decided that providing arms (to Somalia) 'would add fuel to the fire we are more interested in putting out'. US State Department officials also pointed out that no transfer of US military equipment to Somalia from third countries would be approved.³⁹

Somalia's chagrin at the US decision was understandable, especially since Mogadishu had been led to believe through private communications from Washington that the U.S.A. was not only ready to replace the U.S.S.R. as its major arms supplier if the tab could be picked up by its wealthy Arab supporters, but also that Washington was not averse to the extension of Somali control over the Ogaden in order to teach Ethiopia a lesson for having deserted the Western camp. This seems to have been the gist of the message communicated to President Barre through Dr Kevin Cahill, Barre's long-time American physician, when he flew to Mogadishu in mid-June 1977 after meeting high-level State Department advisers. Cahill reportedly told Barre he had a message from the 'very top' that Washington 'was not averse to further guerrilla pressure in the Ogaden and that the US was prepared to consider Somalia's legitimate defence needs'.⁴⁰ Later denials by US officials were confined to the contention that the message might have been misinterpreted either by Cahill or by Barre and did not dispute the fact that a message was sent through Barre's physician. While the confusion in American policy might have resulted from the tussle within the Administration between the 'White House (backed by the Pentagon) aims of challenging the Soviets and Africa-oriented [State Department] advisers who took Somali claims of non-alignment more serious-

³⁹ *Canberra Times*, 3 September 1977.

⁴⁰ *Newsweek*, 26 September 1977, pp. 15-16; *The Guardian Weekly*, 30 October 1977.

ly and feared a Cold War approach would eliminate possible leverage in Ethiopia',⁴¹ it provoked one high-ranking State Department official to comment that American diplomacy on the Horn of Africa was 'a classic case of incompetence and mismanagement'.⁴²

Washington's Soviet competitor, however, seems to have outdistanced the U.S.A. greatly in 'incompetence and mismanagement'. After having made a major investment in Somalia it performed such an about-turn in its policy as to transform completely the nature of politics on the Horn and trigger off a major conflict in the region. The belief, which from all indications the Soviet Union seemed to harbour until recently, that Moscow could impose a *Pax Sovietica* on the Horn and force Mogadishu to play along with its Ethiopian strategy was, to say the least, misconceived. In its enthusiasm for the Ethiopian 'revolution' and the consequent worsening of US-Ethiopian relations, the Soviet Union completely ignored the real nature of that 'revolution', the imperial character of the Ethiopian State and the Dergue's refusal to change its character into a genuine federation, and above all, the strength of Somali nationalist sentiment and its unwillingness and inability to contemplate perpetual subjection of the Ogaden Somalis even to a Soviet-backed Marxist regime in Addis Ababa. The 'major contradiction', to use a Maoist phrase, in the Horn was not between 'socialism' (and that of a peculiarly Ethiopian variety) and 'reaction' (the U.S.A. and its allies — Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Sudan) but between the requirements of Somali ethnic nationalism (buttressed by a socialism far more genuine than the Ethiopian experiment) and the need of the Mengistu regime in Addis Ababa to maintain the integrity of Ethiopia's multi-national empire (since the fortunes of the regime were inextricably enmeshed with the future of the imperial boundaries). By opting for Ethiopia, the Soviet Union seemed to be putting itself definitely on the wrong side of history.

As has been mentioned earlier, despite Moscow's tilt towards Ethiopia, President Barre desperately tried to maintain Somali links with the Soviet Union as long as Mogadishu's vital interests were not sacrificed. He, in fact, travelled to the Soviet Union at the end of August 1977 and met Soviet Premier Kosygin, Foreign Minister Gromyko and Communist Party theoretician Suslov. President Brezhnev, holidaying in the Crimea, did not meet Barre and this was interpreted in Western circles as a snub for the Somali leader.⁴³ The US announcement regarding its ban on arms supply to Somalia, made

⁴¹ *The Guardian Weekly*, 30 October 1977.

⁴² *Newsweek*, 26 September 1977, p. 15.

⁴³ *International Herald Tribune*, 3-4 September 1977.

when Barre was in Moscow, immeasurably weakened the Somali bargaining position *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union and, therefore, it was no surprise that the mission failed in persuading Moscow to tone down its support for Addis Ababa. The importance of the mission also lay in the fact that it was undertaken two weeks after a *Tass* statement and an *Izvestia* article critical of Somalia's 'armed intervention in Ethiopian internal affairs'.⁴⁴

Despite these diplomatic setbacks, the Somali government was in no hurry to terminate its formal links with the Soviet Union. However, President Barre, more than once, expressed his displeasure at the Soviet and Cuban involvement with the Ethiopian regime and warned that Soviet and Cuban backing of Ethiopia was pushing the Horn of Africa to a 'war conflagration'.⁴⁵ Even at this stage in October 1977, when the Somali thrust into the Ogaden had stalled before Harar and Dire Dawa and Mogadishu was desperately seeking military supplies to bolster its defences against an Ethiopian counter-offensive now that Ethiopian forces had had time to get used to Soviet weapons, the Somali leadership was hesitant to expel Soviet advisers and formally terminate the Soviet presence in Somalia. This cautious Somali stance was, at least partially, related to reports regarding the Ethiopian regime's efforts to patch up its differences with the United States. These efforts were aimed both at neutralising Western support to Somalia and at pressurising the Soviet Union and its proxy, Cuba, to escalate their support to the crumbling Ethiopian regime.

Western intelligence sources reported that in mid-October 1977 the Ethiopian Foreign Minister visited Havana and Moscow to persuade Castro to send Cuban troops to Ethiopia *à la* Angola. Apparently this attempt failed except for a marginal increase in the number of Cuban advisers, but while on his trip the Ethiopian minister reportedly told his hosts that if adequate Soviet bloc aid was not forthcoming then Addis Ababa might be driven to resort to 'desperate options'. These options apparently included renewal of military and political ties with the United States. On their part, 'the Americans are said to have made cautious overtures towards Ethiopia. Fearing that

⁴⁴*The Australian*, 16 August 1977, and *International Herald Tribune*, 17 August 1977. The *Izvestia* article, published on 16 August said that even 'the plausible excuse of implementing the principle of self-determination' does not justify Somalia's action. It went on to state that 'fighting is going on between regular units of the Somalian Army and Ethiopian troops... It is a fact that hostilities are taking place in Ethiopian territory and that it is Ethiopia and no other country that is the victim of armed invasion... Armed intervention is in crying contradiction with the principles of the U.N. Charter and the Charter of the OAU. To justify such a violation by a desire to implement the principle of self-determination is to mislead the broad African public'.

⁴⁵*International Herald Tribune*, 22-23 October 1977.

they would incur Saudi wrath by giving direct aid to Col. Mengistu's regime, the Americans have secretly asked Israel to provide a conduit'.* This type of American response does not seem implausible in the context both of the confusion prevailing in Washington regarding US policy towards the Horn, and of America's virtually total commitment to Israel's definition of its own security requirements. These include the continued control of the Eritrean coast by a regime in Addis Ababa antagonistic to presumed Arab aspirations of making the Red Sea an 'Arab lake'. Curtailment of Somali power in the Horn of Africa was considered essential by Israeli strategists particularly since Somali expansion into Djibouti would mean total control of the Bab-al-Mandeb by Arab or pro-Arab powers. This requirement in turn determined a great deal of American thinking regarding the Horn of Africa.

It was no wonder, therefore, that 'despite Ethiopia's dramatic shift into an alliance with the Soviet Union... a small contingent of Israelis are in Addis Ababa training elements of the Ethiopian armed forces'.⁴⁶ While the number of Israelis in Ethiopia in July 1977 was estimated at 20 to 30, mainly involved in training Ethiopians in anti-guerrilla and counter-insurgency techniques for use in Eritrea, by October the Jewish presence had increased substantially. It was then reported that Tel Aviv was involved in training Ethiopian tank crews in Israel in the use of Soviet tanks supplied to Addis Ababa which were of the same type as those captured by Israel during the October War. It was also reported that Israeli mechanics were in Ethiopia servicing US-made F-5 jet fighters which had been used with great effect against the Somalis in the Ogaden by the Ethiopian airforce, the only wing of their armed forces to have performed creditably in this campaign. These Israeli activities were reportedly undertaken with tacit US approval.⁴⁷

This is merely one example of the peculiar alignment on the Horn where Israeli and Cuban advisers help to train an Ethiopian force armed with Soviet weapons, not infrequently paid for with funds from Libya. The latter's antipathy towards Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Sudan — the major Arab supporters of the Somali Republic — and its new-found friendship with Moscow has placed it in the uncomfortable position of aiding Ethiopia against fellow-Muslim and fellow-Arab League member, Somalia. A further noteworthy contradiction is revealed by Iraqi policy in the conflict. Despite being Moscow's most reliable friend in the Middle East, and a partner in a Treaty of Friendship similar to the now defunct Somali Soviet Treaty, Iraq has openly pledged support to Eritrean and Somali guerrillas fighting for independence

⁴⁶*International Herald Tribune*, 25 July 1977.

⁴⁷*Newsweek*, 31 October 1977.

from Addis Ababa. Iraq, at one stage, warned Moscow in an article in the ruling Ba'ath party newspaper, *Al-Thawra*, against aligning itself too closely with Ethiopia because that policy would mean losing Somalia and thereby 'benefit imperialist strategy'.⁴⁸ There have also been reports from Western sources of Iraq supplying Somalia with tanks, guns, planes and necessary spare parts from its arsenal of Soviet weapons.* These reports only demonstrate the extent to which Middle Eastern rivalries, not only Israeli-Arab but also inter-Arab, do not necessarily harmonise with the affiliations of the individual actors towards the superpowers.

It is in this context that one must point out the substantial role played by Saudi Arabia in weaning away Somalia from the Soviet Union. While Saudi efforts in the form of promised economic assistance considerably antedated the recent Somali disenchantment with Moscow, they nevertheless provided a credible alternative to Mogadishu if and when it decided to cut its ties with the Soviet Union. This assurance was extremely valuable to the Somali leadership, particularly in the absence of a firm American commitment to fill the gap in Somali defence requirements once the Soviets had left. Despite initial disappointment regarding American policies, the Somali government could count on Saudi Arabia's not inconsiderable leverage with Washington to persuade the latter that Somalia's defence requirements were 'legitimate' and should be met (with Western arms and Saudi money) in order to further America's own interests both on the Horn and in the Middle East. Somalia's 'historic decision', to use Barre's phrase, to expel Soviet and Cuban advisers (estimated variously to be between 4,000 and 6,000), to renounce its treaty with the U.S.S.R. and to prevent Moscow from using Soviet-built facilities in Berbera, was predicated to a large extent on the assumption that Saudi Arabia would be successful in swinging American military and political support behind Mogadishu once the latter had demonstrated its 'good faith' by such drastic action.

Usually reliable Western intelligence sources, as mentioned above, had reported that President Barre had made a promise to King Khalid and President Sadat on the eve of the Ogaden offensive that he would expel Soviet and Cuban advisers. 'In return, he received a Saudi pledge to persuade America, Britain and France to sell arms to the Somali army, to pay for Iraqi deliveries of Soviet-made weapons and to pump money into Somalia's war economy'.* It was also reported that the Saudis offered \$750 million to the Somalis if Mogadishu kept its part of the bargain, but for reasons discussed earlier Barre took almost five months to oblige. The decision when it did come on 13 November 1977, was the result of a Somali assessment

⁴⁸*International Herald Tribune*, 17 August 1977.

that Moscow's commitment to Ethiopia was total and irrevocable. This change had resulted in the almost complete cessation of Soviet arms deliveries to Somalia following the outbreak of fighting in the Ogaden, while Soviet tanks, missiles and MiG fighters, accompanied by Soviet advisers (some of them transferred from Somalia), were arriving in Ethiopia in large numbers. Somali leaders could have drawn no comfort from the Western estimate that an 'infusion of \$500 million worth of Soviet arms to Addis Ababa could turn the tide of battle in the Ogaden'.⁴⁹

Once the Somali advance had been halted before Harar, following their costly assault on Jijiga, the time for decision in Mogadishu had become imminent. Somalia, having come to the conclusion that it had used its Soviet card to the utmost extent possible, decided to discard it for a fresh, and hopefully better, hand. Whether Somalia's formal realignment, which has been the culminating point of a process that had started quite some time ago, will provide it with that extra support to conclude satisfactorily its operations in the Ogaden before Addis Ababa can mount a credible counter-offensive with Soviet help is now the major question before all observers with more than a mere layman's interest in the embattled Horn. While on the morrow of Somalia's 'historic decision' there was 'a consensus in diplomatic circles [in Mogadishu] that Barre's government had received some kind of assurances from the West that it will cover Somalia's arms supply losses resulting from the expulsion [of Soviet advisers]' and that 'the United States gave some kind of indication that it would not object to a third party, armed with US weapons, giving assistance to the Somalis',⁵⁰ there was also considerable scepticism about American behaviour because of its erratic pattern in the past. This scepticism was strengthened by President Barre's statement at a news conference on 23 November that the U.S.A. had rejected his appeal to counter Soviet support for Ethiopia despite his expulsion of Soviet advisers.⁵¹ It is, however, still too early to gauge specific Western, and particularly US, reactions in concrete terms to the Somali decision to cut all its ties with the

⁴⁹*International Herald Tribune*, 14 November 1977. In September, Western military sources in Beirut reported that the U.S.S.R. had agreed to supply \$385 million in arms to Ethiopia over the coming months. This deal, concluded in March 1977, was said to include 48 MiG-21s, SA-3 and SA-7 missiles, Sagger anti-tank missiles and a number of T-54 and T-55 tanks (*Flight International*, 17 September 1977, p. 814).

⁵⁰*International Herald Tribune*, 17 November 1977.

⁵¹*International Herald Tribune*, 25 November 1977. Although the United States Administration decided in early December to resume economic aid to Somalia which had been cut off since 1971, 'U.S. officials stressed that the decision to resume development aid does not signal any change in the Administration's policy of refusing to provide arms to Somalia', (*International Herald Tribune*, 7 December 1977).

Soviet Union. With the fighting in the Ogaden at a critical stage much could depend on the Western response. However, given the inner decay of the Ethiopian Empire, the Somalis may well be able to win the Ogaden war without direct and overt US military support (since Saudi Arabia and Iran⁵² could provide most of the relevant weaponry to Somalia); for the Soviet effort to bolster Mengistu's regime and win the Ogaden war for him falls barely short of 'putting Humpty-Dumpty together again'.

⁵²Recent reports have suggested that Iran is increasingly assuming a major role in support of Somalia. Western news agencies have reported that Tehran is already supplying locally manufactured light weapons to Somalia and that it appears that the Shah is ready to send Mogadishu heavy weapons to counter the Soviet arms build-up in Ethiopia. The Shah has also warned Ethiopia that Iran would not remain indifferent if Ethiopia invaded Somalia in retaliation for the latter's support to Somali guerrillas in the Ogaden. *Canberra Times*, 4 January 1978.

Conclusion

After careful scrutiny of the conflict on the Horn and the involvement of external powers, in both the politics of the region in general and this conflict in particular, one comes to the following conclusions:

1. Recent events on the Horn of Africa, especially the international realignments, demonstrate the validity of the thesis that regional conflicts in the Third World are more deep-seated than either ideological commitments or alignments with big powers. While the regional conflicts are based most often on competing nationalisms and tenuous local balances which can be easily upset, a number of them, and this is particularly true of the Somali-Ethiopian conflict, owe their origins to colonial boundaries drawn by European powers without regard for divided tribes, peoples and nations.

2. The case study also demonstrates that imperial domination of large parts of Asia and Africa in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, although primarily European in character, was not exclusively so. Abyssinian expansionism during the late 19th century was a manifestation of imperial aspirations. This expansion under Emperor Menlik was at least as responsible for the current tensions on the Horn as were the European colonial powers with their legacy of colonial boundaries drawn with scant concern for the sentiments of the local population. It is worth repetition that the partition of Somali-inhabited territories in the Horn was the result of arrangements worked out between the European colonial powers — Italy, Britain and France — on the one hand and Ethiopia on the other as well as among the European powers themselves.

3. The role of World War II as a catalyst for change in the Third World by exposing the mythical nature of supposed European invincibility, although most forcibly demonstrated in South-east Asia, was also in evidence on the Horn, particularly to the Somali population. The consecutive defeats experienced by all the imperial powers in the Horn — Ethiopia (at the hands of Italy in 1935), Britain (by Italy in 1939-40), Italy (by Britain in 1941-42), Vichy France (capitulation of Vichy-ruled Djibouti to the British and the Free French in 1942) — and the later consolidation, however temporary, of all Somali-inhabited territories, except Djibouti, under British control strengthened the foundations of Somali nationalism which had been laid by Sheikh Mohammed Abdille Hassan in the late 19th century. The formation of the Somali Youth League (SYL), initially with the blessings of the British, provided the focal point at least in the cities for Somali nationalist activity which increasingly escalated its demands. The UN decision, following World War II,

to constitute Italian Somaliland into a UN Trust Territory with a set programme for independence in 1960 accelerated the pace of nationalist activity not only in the Trust Territory but in British Somaliland and the NFD of Kenya as well. This evolution of Somali nationalism and its assumption of concrete shape in 1960 with the creation of the Somali Republic (by the merger of Italian and British Somalilands) were bound to have important fallout effects on the Somali populations of French-ruled Djibouti and Ethiopian-controlled Ogaden.

4. Superpower involvement in the Horn of Africa began within a few years of the end of World War II. However, throughout the 1950s and during the early 1960s, the only credible superpower presence in the Horn was that of the United States. While the U.S.A. was firmly ensconced as Ethiopia's major ally providing it with political support and military hardware, America's European allies were in firm control of most of the Somali territories in the Horn (Britain and Italy until 1960 and France until 1977). Its northern hinterland — Sudan — was under effective British control till the mid-1950s. American involvement in the Horn was, however, related not so much to its interest in Africa, as to its general cold war policy of 'containment' or pre-emption of the Soviet Union and, more specifically, to its support for Israel in the Middle East. The utility of the Kagnew Communications Centre near Asmara, in Eritrea, in America's global network of military communications, Ethiopia's role as Israel's only dependable regional supporter and its control of the Red Sea coast, considered to be vital to Israel's security, combined to make Addis Ababa the major recipient of US military and economic aid in Black Africa. The scale of such assistance, not inconsiderable by African standards as described above, demonstrates the importance attached to Addis Ababa in America's global strategy and in the calculation of its strategic interests in the Red Sea, particularly in the southern seaward approaches to Israel.

5. As has been demonstrated in other cases, particularly in South Asia and the Middle East, the American strategy of 'containing' or pre-empting the Soviet Union by denying it local influence in the Horn and the Red Sea, once again, provided the opportunity for Soviet political and military intrusion which this strategy was supposed to prevent.⁵³ Just as US military and political support to Pakistan led to the strengthening of Indo-Soviet ties and

⁵³For the South Asian case, see the section on South Asia in Mohammed Ayoob, 'The Indian Ocean Littoral: Intro-Regional Conflicts and Weapons Proliferation', in Robert O'Neill (ed.), *Insecurity! The Spread of Weapons in the Indian and Pacific Oceans*, Canberra, 1978; for the Middle East, see Fuad Jabber, *The Politics of Arms Transfer and Control: The United States and Egypt's Quest for Arms, 1950-55*, Los Angeles, 1972.

the total US commitment to Israel resulted in the increasing tilt of important Arab powers towards Moscow, so US economic and military assistance, particularly the latter, to Ethiopia provided the opportunity for the intrusion of Soviet power and influence into the Horn of Africa. However, it was not until the mid-1960s that the Soviets could establish a credible and competitive presence in the Horn. This lag was the result, first, of the lack of Soviet global reach in the 1950s, when it was still undergoing the gradual process of transformation from a regionally dominant to a global power, and second, of the absence of a regional power capable of challenging Ethiopian dominance on the Horn. The emergence of the Somali Republic with its anti-Ethiopian bias and its irredentist ideology at a time when the Soviet Union was becoming increasingly confident that it could challenge Western, and particularly American, presence in the grey areas of the globe (having demonstrated this capability successfully both in South Asia and the Middle East), provided Moscow with the opportunity to enter the influence-building game on the Horn of Africa. Somali disenchantment with Western powers in the context of firm US support to Ethiopia led to Mogadishu's receptiveness to Soviet offers of aid and assistance. Although the first major transfer of Soviet weaponry to Somalia took place in 1963 (a decade after major American arms had been first supplied to Ethiopia), it was not until after the military coup in 1969, which brought President Barre to power in Mogadishu, that Soviet-Somali relations attained the high level of political and military intimacy which they retained until the recent Somali decision to expel the Soviet Union from Somalia lock, stock and barrel.

6. This dramatic decision, and the equally dramatic regional re-alignments which preceded it, demonstrated both the autonomy of local powers from their superpower patrons and the fragility of the base of superpower influence in areas of the Third World where such influence rests primarily on the exploitation of local tensions and regional conflicts. Moscow had earlier suffered the same fate in Egypt and Sudan where its services were dispensed with despite no such dramatic shift in Soviet postures *vis-à-vis* Chairo's and Khartoum's regional rivals as was evidenced on the Horn. (The Soviet Union's support to Libya escalated only after its expulsion from Egypt). While the U.S.A. has so far not suffered any parallel dramatic setback in this region (its withdrawal from Ethiopia was more gradual, caused by growing mutual disenchantment), the fragility of its regional influence base in South-east Asia has already been demonstrated by the rout of all American-supported regimes in Indo-China where the Americans had invested much more heavily than any corresponding Soviet investment either in the Middle East or on the Horn of Africa. In the eastern Mediterranean, US influence has also been weakened by the Cyprus dispute. Had it not been for the presence of the

Soviet Union across Turkish frontiers and the history of antagonism between the Turks and the Russians dating back for centuries, the present tensions in the US relations with Turkey might well have tempted Ankara, especially as a result of domestic pressure, to perform a 'Somalia' on Washington. The conflict on the Horn is bringing home to Moscow lessons which should have been learned by Washington long ago from experience elsewhere.

7. Events on the Horn have also demonstrated the close connection which exists between different intra-regional rivalries within contiguous regions in the Third World. The importance of Indo-Pakistani tensions in South Asia and the Iraq-Iran rivalry in the Gulf region for Indo-Iranian relations has been demonstrated and documented by this author elsewhere.⁵⁴ Similar connections between tensions and conflicts within two further contiguous regions, the Horn and the Middle East in this instance, have been demonstrated above. The support extended to Soviet-backed Ethiopia by Israel on the one hand, and by Libya and South Yemen, the two most radical and, *vis-à-vis* Israel, 'rejectionist' Arab states on the other, is a phenomenon that can be explained only in the context of Middle Eastern rivalries, not merely Israeli-Arab but inter-Arab as well. Similarly, the support extended to socialist, but currently anti-Soviet, Somalia by conservative and moderate Arab states like Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Sudan on the one hand and Moscow's most dependable Arab friend, Iraq, on the other can be understood only in the context of the web of Middle Eastern rivalries. Moreover, as has been stated earlier, superpower attitudes toward rivalries on the Horn are also considerably conditioned by their appreciation of their own interests in the Middle East and their involvement with Middle Eastern allies, friends and adversaries. American support for Somalia has been limited partly by the US commitment to Israel. Similarly, Soviet antipathy toward oil-rich and fanatically anti-Communist Saudi Arabia and its desire to teach Egypt and Sudan a lesson for the humiliation inflicted by them upon itself has considerably affected Soviet perceptions of the situation on the Horn and its decision to support Ethiopia even at the expense of sacrificing its long-nurtured relationship with Somalia.

8. If Somalia succeeds in wresting most, if not all, of the Ogaden from Ethiopian control (and to this author it appears a distinct possibility), despite Soviet military and political support for the latter but without major American involvement on behalf of the former (an unlikely possibility except for certain arms transfers through third countries), the autonomy of regional powers on the Horn, particularly on issues considered vital to the local con-

⁵⁴Mohammed Ayoob, 'Indo-Iranian Relations: Strategic, Political and Economic Dimensions', *India Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 1, January-March 1977, pp. 1-18.

testants, would have been effectively demonstrated. However, if Soviet and Cuban involvement on behalf of Ethiopia escalates to the level of the Angolan experience (an unlikely possibility but a possibility none-the-less), the U.S.S.R. might well have been launched on the process of acquiring its own mini-Vietnam although by (Cuban) proxy. Unlike Angola where Soviet-Cuban support to the MPLA was generally interpreted, both within and outside the colony, as basically anti-colonial, anti-Western and, particularly anti-South African in character, any such involvement in Ethiopia would be interpreted in the unfavourable light of rendering assistance to a crumbling empire (a 'native' empire but an empire none-the-less) bent upon crushing a nationalist uprising. Also it would be seen as a losing game from the beginning, given the demonstrated and near-total support of the local population in the Ogaden for the West Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) and the Somali Republic.⁵⁵ It is well-nigh impossible to believe that sensible Soviet policy-makers would want to escalate their involvement in Ethiopia to the point where they, like the Americans in Vietnam, might find it extremely difficult if not impossible to extricate themselves from a very embarrassing situation, particularly if the Mengistu regime collapses. But, one often wonders whether after Vietnam one can take the rationality of superpower decision-makers for granted.

⁵⁵ Several Western correspondents who have covered the conflict and have visited the Ogaden recently have testified to the near-universal support received by the WSLF and the Somali Republic in the disputed territory. For example, see Gary Jones' despatch 'Reporters see Guerrillas in Control: Somali Rebels Hold Bulk of Ogaden', *International Herald Tribune*, 25 August 1977, and Elizabeth Peer's despatch 'Blood and Bullets', *Newsweek*, 5 September 1977.

APPENDIX I

CIRCULAR LETTER sent by Emperor Menelik to Heads of European States in 1891¹*

Being desirous to make known to our friends the Powers (Sovereigns) of Europe the boundaries of Ethiopia, we have addressed also to you (your Majesty) the present letter.

These are the boundaries of Ethiopia:

Starting from the Italian boundary of Arafale, which is situated on the sea, the line goes westward over the plain (Meda) of Gegra towards Mahio, Halai, Digma, and Gura up to Adibaro. From Adibaro to the junction of the Rivers Mareb and Arated.

From this point the line runs southward to the junction of the Atbara and Setit Rivers, where is situated the town known as Tomat.

From Tomat the frontier embraces the Province of Gedaref up to Karkoj on the Blue Nile. From Karkoj the line passes to the junction of the Sobat River with the White Nile. From thence the frontier follows the River Sobat, including the country of the Arbore, Gallas, and reaches Lake Samburu.

Towards the east are included within the frontier the country of the Borana Gallas and the Arussi country up to the limits of the Somalis, including also the Province of Ogaden.

To the northward the line of frontier includes the Habr Awaz, the Gadubursi, and the Esa Somalis, and reaches Ambos.

Leaving Ambos the line includes Lake Assal, the province of our ancient vassal Mohamed Anfar, skirts the coast of the sea, and rejoins Arafale.

While tracing to-day the actual boundaries of my Empire, I shall endeavour, if God gives me life and strength, to re-establish the ancient frontiers (tributaries) of Ethiopia up to Kartoum, and as far as Lake Nyanza with all the Gallas.

Ethiopia has been for fourteen centuries a Christian island in a sea of pagans. If Powers at a distance come forward to partition Africa between them, I do not intend to be an indifferent spectator.

As the Almighty has protected Ethiopia up to this day, I have confidence He will continue to protect her, and increase her borders in the future. I am certain He will not suffer her to be divided among other Powers.

*Addressed to Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia.

¹Public Records Office (London), Foreign Office 1/32 Rodd to Salisbury, No. 15, 4 May 1897, reproduced in the Information Services of the Somali Government, *The Somali Peninsula: A New Light on Imperial Motives*, 1962.

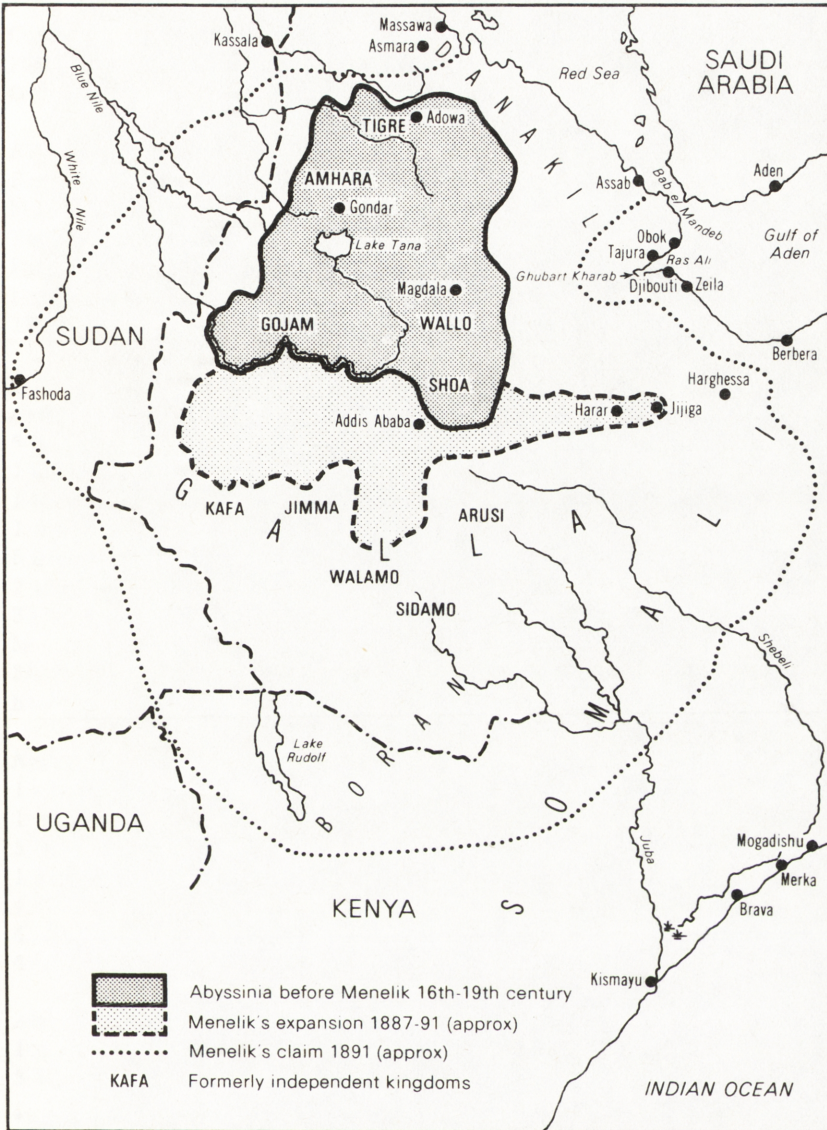
Formerly the boundary of Ethiopia was the sea. Having lacked strength sufficient, and having received no help from Christian Powers, our frontier on the sea coast fell into the hands of the Mussulman.

At present we do not intend to regain our sea frontier by force, but we trust that the Christian Power, guided by our Saviour, will restore to us our sea-coast line, at any rate, certain points on the coast.

Written at Addis Ababa, the 14th Mazir, 1883 (10th April, 1891).

(Translated direct from the Amharic). Addis Ababa, 4th May 1897).

APPENDIX II



Map 4: MENELIK'S CLAIM TO TERRITORY IN HIS CIRCULAR LETTER TO EUROPEAN POWERS IN 1891

APPENDIX III

COMPARATIVE ESTIMATES OF ETHIOPIAN AND SOMALI POPULATIONS, GNP, AND FORCE STRENGTHS AT THE TIME OF THE OUTBREAK OF THE OGADEN CONFLICT (JULY 1977)

ETHIOPIA

Population:	29,330,000
Military service:	voluntary
Total armed forces:	53,500
Estimated GNP 1975:	\$2.9 bn.
Defence expenditure 1976:	215 m birr (\$103.4 m). \$US 1 = 2.08 birr (1976), 2.07 birr (1975).

*Army: 50,000.**

4 inf divs: 3 with inf bdes; 1 with 1 mech, 1 mot, 1 inf bde.

1 COIN div.

1 lt inf bn (possibly bde).

1 AB inf bn.

5 arty bns.

2 engr bns.

35 M-60, 35 T-34/54 med, 70 M-41 lt tks; 56 AML-60 armed cars; about 90 M-113, *Commando*, M-59, 40 BTR-152 APC;

36 75mm pack, 52 105mm, 12 155mm towed, 12 M-109 155mm SP how; 146 M-2 107mm, 140 M-30 4.2-in mor.

Navy: 1,500

1 coastal minesweeper (ex-Netherlands).

1 training ship (ex-US seaplane tender).

3 large patrol craft (ex-US).

1 *Kraljevica* class patrol boat.

4 FPB (ex-US *Swift* class).

4 coastal patrol craft (under 50 tons).

4 landing craft (ex-US, under 100 tons).

Air Force: 2,000; 35 combat aircraft.

1 lt bbr sqn with 2 *Canberra* B2.

3 FGA sqns: 2 with 20 F-5, 1 with 7 F-86F.

*Augmented by 75,000 People's Militia. The Territorial Army has now been incorporated in the army and reservists called up, largely for guard duties.

1 recce sqn with 6 T-28A.
 1 tpt sqn with 6 C-47, 2 C-54, 7 C-119G, 3 *Dove*, 1 Il-14, 1 *Otter*.
 3 trg sqns with 20 *Safir*, 13 T-28A/D, 20 T-33A.
 1 hel sqn with 10 AB-204, 5 *Alouette* III, 2 Mi-8, 10 UH-1H.
 RESERVES (all services): 20,000.

Para-Military Forces: 84,000; 9,000 mobile emergency police force: 75,000
 People's Militia.

SOMALI DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Population:	3,335,000
Military service:	voluntary
Total armed forces:	31,500
Estimated GNP 1972:	\$300 m.
Defence expenditure 1976:	165 m shillings (\$25 m). \$1 = 6.6 shillings (1976), 6.93 shillings (1972).

Army: 30,000.*

7 tk bns.

8 mech inf bns.

14 mot inf bns.

2 cdo bns.

13 fd, 10 AA arty bns.

200 T-34, 100 T-54/-55 med tks; 100 BTR-40/-50, 250 BTR-152 APC; about
 100 76mm and 85mm guns; 80 122mm how; 100 mm ATK guns; 150
 14.5mm, 37mm, 57mm and 100mm AA guns; SA-2/-3 SAM.

Navy: 500.*

3 *Osa*-class FPBG with *Styx* SSM

6 large patrol craft (ex-Soviet *Poluchat* class).

4 MTB (ex-soviet P-6 class).

4 medium landing craft (ex-Soviet T-4 class).

Air Force: 1,000; 55 combat aircraft.*

1 lt bbr sqn with 3 Il-28.

2 FGA sqns with 40 MiG-17 and MiG-15UTI.

1 fighter sqn with 12 MiG-21MF.

*Spares are short and not all equipment is serviceable.

1 tpt sqn with 3 An-2, An-24/-26.

Other aircraft incl 3 C-47, 1 C-45, 6 P-148, 15 Yak-11, Do-28.

1 hel sqn with 5 Mi-4, 5 Mi-8, 1 AB-204.

Para-Military Forces: 12,000: 8,000 Police; 1,500 border guards; 2,500 People's Militia.

Source: IISS, *The Military Balance, 1977-1978*, London, 1977, pp. 44, 46-47.

*Spares are short and not all equipment is serviceable.

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