SUPERPOWER INVOLVEMENT IN THE HORN OF AFRICA, 1974-1982

By

Samuel M. Makinda

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the Australian National University.

August 1985
DECLARATION

Except where otherwise indicated
this thesis is my own work.

Samuel M. Makinda
August 1985
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABBREVIATIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAP 1: Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAP 2: The Persian Gulf and Adjacent Regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Nature of Detente</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: THE REGIONAL EQUATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia and the Status Quo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia's Security Problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya's Role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: THE EVOLUTION OF SUPERPOWER POLICIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Entry into the Horn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Soviet Presence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: RIVALRY IN A CHANGING ORDER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Soviet Moves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The American Strategy of Diversification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: THE 1977-78 OGAĐEN WAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prelude to the War, January-June 1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The War Period, July 1977 - March 1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The War Aftermath, March-December 1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 6: AMERICAN REASSERTION OF FORCE

Defining the Security Threat
Strategy for Rapid Deployment
Organising the Local Friends
Conclusion

Chapter 7: SOVIET POLICY 1979-1982

Continued Presence in Ethiopia
The Libyan-PDRY Connection
Conclusion

Chapter 8: CONCLUSIONS

Superpower Presence
Regional Dynamics
The Stabilising Role
The Paradox

BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDIX 1: OAU Charter
APPENDIX 2: USSR-Somali Friendship Treaty
APPENDIX 3: USSR-Ethiopian Friendship Treaty
APPENDIX 4: USSR-PDRY Friendship Treaty
ABBREVIATIONS

ALF: Afar Liberation Front.
ASLF: Abo Somali Liberation Front.
AWACS: Airborne Warning and Control System.
BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation.
BIOT: British Indian Ocean Territory.
CENTCOM: (United States) Central Command.
CENTO: Central Treaty Organisation.
CIA: (United States) Central Intelligence Agency.
CPSU: Communist Party of the Soviet Union.
EDU: Ethiopian Democratic Union.
ELF: Eritrean Liberation Front.
EPLF: Eritrean People's Liberation Front.
EPRP: Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party.
FLCS: (French) Front for the Liberation of the Somali Coast.
FNLA: (Portuguese) National Front for the Liberation of Angola.
GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council.
MAAG: Military Assistance Advisory Group.
MPLA: (Portuguese) Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola.
NFD: Northern Frontier District.
NSS: (Somalia) National Security Services.
OLF: Oromo Liberation Front.
PDRY: People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.
POMOA: (Ethiopia) Provisional Office for Mass Organisational Affairs.
RDF: Rapid Deployment Force.
SALT: Strategic Arms Limitation Talks.
SEATO: Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation.
SODAF: Somali Democratic Salvation Front.
SRC: (Somalia) Supreme Revolutionary Council.
TPLF: Tigrean People's Liberation Front.
ULFWS: United Liberation Front for Western Somalia.
UNITA: National Union for the Total Independence of Angola.
UN(O): United Nations (Organisation).
VP: (Somalia) Victory Pioneers.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many friends and colleagues in Kenya, the United States and Australia helped me at different stages of the research for this thesis, but I will not list all of them.

I am very grateful to Dr Walter Oyugi and Dr Domenico Mazzeo of the Department of Government at the University of Nairobi for encouraging me to go for doctoral studies. They provided the initial stimulation and invaluable advice.

I would like to give similar gratitude to various researchers at the Brookings Institution in Washington DC, who invited me to that institution and helped me contact African specialists in the US. Special thanks are due to Dr John Steinbruner, Ambassador Raymond Garthoff, Professor William Kaufmann, Dr Michael McCGwire, Dr William Quandt, Mr Thomas McNaugher, Dr Richard Betts and Dr Mark Katz of the Brookings Foreign Policy Studies Program with which was associated.

I also received substantial help from Dr William Kincade, Executive Director of the Arms Control Association in Washington DC; Mrs Helen Kitchen, Director of African Studies at Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies; Professor William Zartman, Director of African Studies at Johns Hopkins University; Professor Tom Farer, President of the University of New Mexico; Gary Sick of the Ford Foundation; and Dr Raymond Copson of the Congressional Research Service.

I would also like to pay special tribute to three US policy-makers who agreed to discuss with me American policy to the Horn: Mr Howard
Wolpe, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa in the House of Representatives; Dr Chester Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs; and Mr Princeton Lyman, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. Other officials in the State and Defence Departments in Washington gave me useful information, but they would like to remain anonymous.

Academically, my supervisors Dr Tom Millar, Mr Geoffrey Jukes and Mr Paul Dibb helped me more than any other person. Without their patience, constant advice and constructive criticism, this thesis would not be what it is. I was also helped in various ways by Dr Desmond Ball, Mr Andrew Mack, Mrs Billie Dalrymple, Mr Rick Agnew and Mrs Elza Sullivan of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre; by Dr Paul Keal, Mrs Shirley Steer, Mrs Robin Ward, Mrs Lynne Payne, Mrs Elizabeth Macfarlane, Mrs Glennys Noble and Mrs Barbara Owen-Jones of the Department of International Relations; and by Dr John Ballard of the Department of Political Science in the faculties at the Australian National University.

I benefited also from discussions with Dr Frank Frost of the Parliamentary Library in Canberra, and my former supervisor Dr Robert O'Neill of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.

The research for this thesis would not have been possible without financial support. The Australian Development Assistance Bureau (ADAB) gave me a generous scholarship under the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan. I am very grateful to ADAB and its officials who often went out of their way to meet most of my financial needs.
Finally, my biggest debt is to my wife Isabella, who served as a loving conscience. Without her understanding and cooperation, I would not have completed this thesis. Our children Wekesa, Lelian and Crispus also demonstrated exceptional cooperation during the period of my study. To them, I am very grateful.
ABSTRACT

For the past 25 years, the Horn of Africa has been a microcosm of the tensions that beset the world. Domestic, regional and global forces have impinged on the Horn's international politics. Somali irredentism has threatened to alter the regional territorial status quo. It also has largely been blamed for the conflicts between Ethiopia and Somalia, on the one hand, and between Kenya and Somalia, on the other. Somali irredentism and the Eritrean struggle for secession have constituted Ethiopia's main internal problem and have also had a big impact on Ethiopia's relations with its neighbours.

Actors external to the region have also tried to exert influence in the region. Middle Eastern countries, namely Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the Democratic Republic of Yemen and Yemen Arab Republic have supported one side or the other in the Horn. The Soviet Union and the United States also have established a presence in the region. The USSR had a military presence in Somalia between 1963 and 1977. Since then, it has had close political and military ties with Ethiopia. The US had a military communications station in Ethiopia from 1953 to 1977. It acquired in 1980 access to military facilities in Kenya, Somalia and Sudan.

The involvement of the superpowers in the Horn between 1974 and 1982 was characterised by considerable competition and little cooperation. Although the policies of détente emphasised cooperation, the Soviet Union and the United States competed over the allegiance of Ethiopia and Somalia. They cooperated briefly in 1977 in the Indian
Ocean arms limitation talks, but their attempts to supplant each other in the Horn, and in the Indian Ocean region as a whole, smacked of Cold War rivalry.

Competition between the Soviet Union and the United States in the Horn and the Persian Gulf region acquired a new momentum following a succession of events in 1979: the fall from power of the Shah of Iran in January; the taking of American embassy personnel as hostages in Tehran in November; and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December. Those situations prompted the United States to establish in March 1980 a Rapid Deployment Force (later renamed Central Command). The motive behind the creation of the Rapid Deployment Force was to demonstrate the American resolve and readiness to intervene swiftly in the Persian Gulf in the event of a threat to vital American interests. While the force was equipped to deal with some local contingencies, it did not appear adequate to deal with instability that might result from unequal distribution of wealth, corruption and many other problems associated with modernisation in the Horn/Persian Gulf region.

Soviet and American assistance programmes have benefited the local states of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. Ethiopia relied on Soviet and Cuban support to regain the territory which Somalia had occupied during the 1977-78 Ogaden war. Kenya used its connection with the United States and Britain to ask these countries and other Western nations to refrain from arming Somalia during the war. And Somalia utilised American military aid after 1980 to revamp its military force which had been weakened and demoralised in the Ogaden war.
In spite of the Soviet and American aid programmes in the Horn, the superpowers did not exercise decisive influence on the decision-making processes in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. These countries often pursued their own goals irrespective of what the superpowers desired.
MAP 1: Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa.
MAP 2: The Persian Gulf and Adjacent Regions.
Since the 1960s, the Horn of Africa has been a microcosm of the tensions that beset the world. Domestic, regional and global forces have impinged on the Horn's international politics. Somali irredentism has threatened to alter the regional territorial status quo. It also has largely been blamed for the conflicts between Ethiopia and Somalia, on the one hand, and between Kenya and Somalia, on the other. Somali irredentism and the Eritrean struggle for secession have been Ethiopia's most serious internal problems, and have also had a big impact on Ethiopia's relations with its neighbours.

Outside actors have also tried to exert influence in the region. Middle Eastern countries, namely Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) and Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) have supported one side or the other in the Horn. But they have been by no means the only external actors there. The Soviet Union and the United States also have established a presence in the region. The USSR had a military presence in Somalia between 1963 and 1977. Since then, it has had close political and military ties with Ethiopia. The US had a military communications station in Ethiopia from...


1953 to 1977. It also has maintained access to military facilities in Kenya, Somalia and Sudan since 1980.\(^3\) This thesis focuses on Soviet and American policies in the Horn from 1974 to 1982.

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the main issues the thesis will address. It also discusses the nature of the detente which is believed, by some policy-makers and analysts in Washington and Moscow, to have governed superpower relations in the 1970s.

1 THE ISSUES

Two main situations provoked this study. The first was the scale of Soviet involvement in the 1977-1978 Ogaden war.\(^4\) The second was the Carter Administration's decision in 1980 to seek access to military facilities in the Horn and the Persian Gulf for the then newly-formed Rapid Deployment Force (RDF).\(^5\) The thesis seeks to discuss and explain these and other related issues in the Horn.

The Soviet involvement in the Ogaden war is said to have been massive and it elicited condemnation from the West. Some commentators,


including various US government officials, saw the involvement as an unwarranted and unilateral assertion of force by the Soviet Union in a Third World conflict. Why did the USSR decide to participate, and to what extent are criticisms of its role justified? This is one of the questions the thesis addresses.

There have been claims that Cuba participated in the war merely at the instigation of the USSR, and that the former, therefore, played the role of a Soviet proxy. The thesis examines Cuba's support for Ethiopia during the Ogaden war and tries to establish whether it was in fact a proxy or had its own motives for intervening.

Another widespread view is that the Soviet Union switched sides in the Horn in 1977, abandoning Somalia and opting for Ethiopia, and that its presence in Ethiopia placed the USSR in a better strategic position than it had been in Somalia. There is a need, therefore, to ascertain whether Moscow voluntarily switched sides, or was just pushed out of Somalia when it was in the process of establishing a position in Ethiopia. The thesis tries also to determine the validity of the view that, for the superpowers, Ethiopia is a better strategic asset than Somalia.


Some Western commentators have also claimed that while the Soviet Union was massively involved in the Ogaden war, the United States remained basically a neutral onlooker. Others have suggested that the US should have played a more active role than it did. The thesis considers these positions. It will also speculate on what the result might have been if Washington had involved itself on the same scale as the Soviet Union.

When the Carter Administration established the Rapid Deployment Force (now Central Command) in 1980, it stated that the objective of the force was to deter the Soviet Union from threatening 'vital' American and Western interests in the Persian Gulf/Red Sea region. Critics of the decision to raise the force have, however, charged that the RDF has created more problems than it is likely to eradicate. One Western writer has even postulated that the force might 'induce the very problems it is supposed to solve'. Might that be the case? The thesis will analyse the functions of the RDF, and explain its implications.

The American demonstration of force since 1980 has raised a number

---

of other questions: Why did the US decide to return to the Horn? What was the nature of the Soviet 'threat'? How could facilities in the Horn help in meeting that threat?

In order to give a background to what took place just before the Ogaden war of 1977-78 and the American reassertion of force in the 1980s, the thesis starts from 1974. It was in that year that the imperial government of Haile Selassie fell, paving the way for the military junta that in due course changed the orientation of the country's policy from pro-American to pro-Soviet. In the same year Somalia signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union, the first sub-Saharan African country to do so. Equally important, the Portuguese coup of 1974 led to the collapse of Portugal's African empire, and that event in turn opened up more opportunities for Soviet involvement in Africa as Angola, Mozambique and other former Portuguese colonies moved to independence in 1975. Thus 1974 provided a good starting point to analyse the superpower presence in the Horn.

A discussion of the Soviet and American presence in the Horn since 1974 raises questions about the depth of their involvement and influence. For instance, some writers have claimed that the Soviet Union had significant influence in Somalia and controlled Somalia's decision-making process from 1970 until 1977. Others have made similar claims with regard to the Soviet position in Ethiopia since 1977. This thesis attempts to see to what extent these claims could be justified.

Some Western leaders and commentators have expressed fears that
the dominance of the Horn and the adjacent Red Sea region by either the Soviet Union or the United States would lead to a denial of oil to the other. Hakan Wiberg has, for instance, said that 'both the East and West may have an interest in stopping the other bloc' from having access to the oil resources of the Middle East if either of them dominated the Red Sea region. Hakan Wiberg, 'Focus on the Horn of Africa', Journal of Peace Research, Vol.16, No.3, 1979, p 193. See also J. Bowyer Bell, 'Strategic Implications of the Soviet Presence in Somalia', Orbis, Vol.19, No.2, summer 1975, pp 402-411.

Others have charged that the Soviet presence in the Horn might interfere with Western trade routes around the Cape of Good Hope and with the stability of the Persian Gulf states and oil supplies to Japan and to the West. Such threats are quite understandable in circumstances of mutual hostility. But were superpower relations in the 1970s characterised by mutual cooperation or antagonism?

2 THE NATURE OF DETENTE

Part of the period under study was characterised by the policies of detente. What is the theoretical basis of detente and, how did the superpowers interpret it? Detente generally means relaxation of tension. In the context of superpower relations, especially in the course of the 1970s, detente was often used to denote a relaxation of

---


international tension, suggesting a rapprochement between the East and the West. But even then, the superpowers tended to interpret it differently in varying circumstances.

One point on which the superpowers agreed was that detente represented a recognition of strategic parity between the East and the West, and that the relaxation of tension was intended to remove the danger of a nuclear war. The question which has often been raised is: Did detente mean the containment of hostility within bounds or the stopping of hostility altogether? There is no consensus on this issue; neither is there any agreement on how detente was to govern superpower policies in the Third World.

2.1 The Soviet View

The USSR's interpretation of detente was largely coloured by the level of its military strength and its global ambitions associated with that military power. In the immediate post-World War II period, the Soviet Union was basically a regional power with virtually no global reach. It was not until the late 1960s that the USSR became a military force with global reach. Coupled with this new-found military strength was the desire to be recognised as a global power. It is these factors that influenced Moscow's view of detente.

One Soviet writer, V. Zhurkin, has argued that detente merely meant 'the lessening of the threat of a world nuclear ... war which hovered over mankind since the early postwar years'.\textsuperscript{15} Indeed, what

---

\textsuperscript{15} V. Zhurkin, 'Detente and International Conflicts', \textit{International Affairs} (Moscow) July 1974, p 89.
the USSR sought to avoid was a large-scale war involving both superpowers. According to Zhurkin in 1974, 'one of the main aims of international detente is to resolve current international conflicts and to create an international climate which rules out the possibility of large-scale international conflicts and crises'. Moreover, the Soviet leaders believed that a relaxation of international tension was a recognition of the emerging popularity and acceptability of the USSR in the world and the increasing rejection of the US.

Even as the then General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), Leonid Brezhnev, pointed out in 1974, 'the main factor [behind detente], we are certain, is the general change in the correlation of world forces - a change damaging to the exponents of the cold war and the arms race and to those who fancy diverse military adventures, a change favourable to the forces of peace and progress'.

But this change did not mean an end to the competition between the US and the USSR. Brezhnev pointed out that the East-West competition would continue. 'The whole point [of detente]', he said, 'is to prevent the process from growing into armed clashes and wars between countries, into the threat or use of force in relations between them, and that it should not hamper the development of mutually advantageous cooperation between states with different social systems'. Moscow thus understood detente to mean a regulation of competition, but not an elimination of such competition between the East and the West.

---

18 Zhurkin, 'Detente and International Conflicts', p 89.
Brezhnev emphasised the continuation of the competition between the East and West in his address to the 25th Congress of the CPSU on 25 February 1976 when he said:

"The detente does not in the slightest abolish, and cannot abolish or alter, the laws of the class struggle... We make no secret of the fact that we see detente as the way to create peaceful socialist and communist construction."

Henry Trofimenko of the Institute for the Study of the USA and Canada said on the third anniversary of the May 1972 Soviet-American summit that detente 'signified the beginning of a move away from confrontation and cold war to peaceful coexistence and cooperation'.

The basic Soviet assumption about detente was that the differences in ideology and social systems between the East and the West were 'no obstacle to normal relations founded on sovereignty, equality, mutual advantage and non-interference in each other's internal affairs'.

Since the USSR thought that detente was possible because of the changing 'correlation of world forces' in favour of socialism, it may have concluded that it would do no harm to detente by continuing to help those Third World forces struggling for liberation from colonial domination. While some people in the United States thought that under the rules of detente Moscow would stop participating in Third World crises, the USSR did not interpret detente to mean withdrawal from

---


22 BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 29 May 1975, SU/4915/A1/1.
supporting liberation movements and new Marxist states in the Third World. Moscow appears to have believed that it was acting within the rules of detente when it helped Third World 'revolutionaries' against 'reactionaries'. Hence its continued support for the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) in 1975-76, and its interest in rallying behind the Ethiopian revolutionaries in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

2.2 The US View

But how did Americans define detente? Unlike in the USSR, the interpretation of detente in the US was not uniform. Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's definition varied slightly from that of Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's National Security Adviser, whose view differed also from those of many other American analysts and policy-makers. Kissinger, the architect of the policy of detente while he was President Richard Nixon's National Security Adviser from 1969 to 1973, has lamented that 'detente has been more a barometer of our domestic controversies than a subject of serious analysis'.

He generally regarded detente as a means of regulating competition between the superpowers. In his own words: 'We did not consider a relaxation of tensions a concession to the Soviets. We had our own reasons for it. We were not abandoning the ideological struggle, but simply trying - tall order as it was - to discipline it by precepts of national interest'. In that light, his view was quite in line with that of the Soviet leaders.

---

23 Henry Kissinger, Years of Upheaval (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982) p 235.
24 Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, pp 236-7.
Defending that policy against the conservatives, Kissinger argued that detente did not prevent resistance to Soviet expansion, but that it fostered the only possible psychological framework for such resistance. Thus, in Kissinger's view, detente was a means of conducting the ideological contest, but not a resignation from it. Moreover, it was also a means of telling the NATO members that the US was not to blame for every confrontation between the East and the West, that it was willing to talk and explore possibilities of lessening international tension.

Kissinger believed that the US would respond appropriately if Moscow interpreted detente to mean a sign of weakness on the part of the US. Addressing a conference in Washington on 8 October 1973, Kissinger stated:

Coexistence to us continues to have a very precise meaning:

- We will oppose the attempt by any country to achieve a position of predominance either globally or regionally.
- We will resist any attempt to exploit a policy of detente to weaken our alliances.
- We will react if relaxation of tensions is used as a cover to exacerbate conflicts in international trouble spots.  

Thus Kissinger believed that there was growing Soviet boldness and ascendancy and that detente did not constrain the US from reacting with force.

While Kissinger thought that the USSR had the ambition and capability to dominate the world if the US remained silent, Brzezinski

---

25Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p 239.
thought otherwise. He saw the USSR as a one-dimensional power, and
that while it could succeed in destabilising the world, it could not
dominate it. He argued:

[The] Soviet thrust toward global preeminence was less
likely to lead to a Pax Sovietica than to international chaos.
The Soviet Union might hope to displace America from its
leading role in the international system, but it was too weak
economically and too unappealing politically to itself assume
that position.\textsuperscript{26}

For that reason, Brzezinski felt that the best American response to
Soviet behaviour in the Third World was not a return to cold war
policies 'but a carefully calibrated policy of simultaneous competition
and cooperation of its own, designed to promote a more comprehensive
and more reciprocal detente.'\textsuperscript{27}

Throughout his tenure in the Carter Administration, Brzezinski
argued that detente ought to be more holistic, integrated and mutual.
On the issue of correlativity, he did not differ much from Kissinger.
But while Kissinger thought that the alternative to detente was chaos,
Brzezinski thought it was not. In a memo to Carter in February 1976,
nine months before Carter was elected President, Brzezinski stated:

1. The East-West detente is desirable, but it is false to argue
   - as Kissinger has - that the only alternative to it is a
   war. The detente relationship is by its very nature a mixed
   one. It combines elements of both competition and
   cooperation.

2. It is in the US interest to strive to make detente both more
   comprehensive and more reciprocal. Only a more
   comprehensive and reciprocal detente can enhance peace and
   promote change within the Communist system.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{26}Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 148.
\textsuperscript{27}Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 148.
\textsuperscript{28}Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 149.
From this memo, it appears that Brzezinski viewed detente as a means by which the US could restrict the Soviet policy in the world and bring about change in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. But at another level, Brzezinski saw detente as a policy of issuing punishments and rewards.

One American Professor, John Lewis Gaddis, has argued that detente did not mean the abandonment but a continuation of the policies of containment. He has said that detente was a means by which 'containment [was] made to work better at less cost by reducing the number of threats to be contained'. Gaddis has also pointed out that the Nixon Administration pursued detente because it had been confronted by the necessity of cutting costs without abandoning containment. According to Gaddis, 'detente was a means of maintaining the balance of power in a way that would be consistent with available resources. It was a redefinition of interests to accommodate capabilities.' Comparing the policies of detente with the Eisenhower strategy of the 1950s, Gaddis has argued that detente was 'a way to make containment function more efficiently, but through a method at once more ingenious and less risky than the old "massive retaliation" concept.'

All these cases indicate that some people in both the USSR and the US interpreted detente as a policy that incorporated elements of cooperation and competition. The thesis tries to assess the level of cooperation and competition between the superpowers in the Horn.

30Gaddis, 'The Rise, Fall and Future of Detente', p 359.
3 THE STRUCTURE

The first two of the following seven chapters form a background study. They discuss the relationship among Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, and trace the evolution of superpower policies toward the Horn from the end of World War II until the early 1970s. The other four chapters that follow systematically analyse and explain Soviet and American policies in the Horn between 1974 and 1982. They analyse the superpower rivalry in the Horn, discuss the 1977-1978 Ogaden war and the participation of the United States and the Soviet Union in it, and explain superpower policies following the Ogaden war. The last chapter is the conclusion which summarises the main arguments and findings of the thesis.
Chapter 2

THE REGIONAL EQUATION

The Horn of Africa is difficult to define in precise terms. According to an American specialist on the region, Tom Farer, the Horn is 'a metaphor rather than a political entity' and that is partly because 'it has no precise boundaries'.\(^1\) Some writers think it consists of only Ethiopia and Somalia. Other researchers often consider these two states and Djibouti, which lies between them, as comprising the Horn,\(^2\) while still others, including the United States government, add Kenya and Sudan.\(^3\)

This thesis defines the Horn to include all the northeast African states that have within their borders a significant presence of Somali people, namely Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, but not Sudan. This is an appropriate explanation because it puts together states which have one thing in common - the presence of the Somali people within their borders. The significance of this definition rests on the fact that Somali 'nationalism' has been a major factor in inter-state conflicts in the region. But as this thesis is basically concerned with the superpower presence in the region, Djibouti will not feature centrally in it because this former French colony has no superpower

---


presence, although it hosts about 4,500 French troops. The thesis gives most attention to Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. The peripheral states, namely Djibouti, Egypt, Yemen Arab Republic (YAR), Saudi Arabia, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) and Sudan will be considered where necessary.

This chapter mainly looks at the relations among Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia in the light of the major problem issues in the region, namely, Somali 'nationalism' and the Eritrean struggle for independence. Although these are important matters which require close attention, this thesis is not concerned with them per se, but only in so far as they affect inter-state relations and threaten to change the territorial status quo in the region. Its emphasis is on inter-state relations and the way the three states have exercised their military and diplomatic resources to pursue their goals.

1 SOMALIA AND THE STATUS QUO

Somalia is, like most African states, a recent political entity. It is a product of British and Italian colonialism in the Horn. But it claims a long history and tradition in which it has considerable pride. The Somali government has even claimed that the word Somali appeared in written documents in the fifteenth century. Such a claim enables Somalia to argue that the Somali nation existed long before

---

4 *Africa Contemporary Record 1977-78* (London: Africana Publishing Company, 1978) p B206. The figure quoted at that time was 5,000 troops. But their numbers vary at different times.

What is beyond dispute, however, is that there was no Somali state in its present form until 1960.

1.1 Pan-Somali Tendencies

One of Somalia's main goals since 1960 has been the desire to unite all Somalis under one nation-state. In an interview with an Italian newspaper, La Repubblica, in January 1981, Somalia's President Mohammed Siad Barre said: 'As far as Somalia is concerned, the roots of the conflict [in the Horn] must be sought in the colonialism which split the country into five parts - two under Britain, one under Italy, one under France and one under Ethiopian occupation'.

Barre implied that Somalia's view of the situation in the Horn was coloured by the presence of Somalis in neighbouring states. He indirectly indicated also why Somalia's foreign policy has focused on the need to 'liberate' Somalis in other countries and unite them in one nation-state. Somalia has gone to war with Ethiopia, broken diplomatic relations with Britain and Cuba, and sought new alliances in pursuit of that goal.

The present Democratic Republic of Somalia is a union between the former British and Italian Somalilands which attained independence in 1960. From that year, Somalia's objective was to 'liberate' and unite in a Greater Somalia nation the other three Somali-inhabited territories of Djibouti (formerly French Somaliland, later named the French Territory of the Afars and Issas), Ethiopia's Ogaden region and Kenya's northeastern province (formerly known as the NFD).

6Ottaway, Soviet and American Influence in the Horn, p 16.
In a pamphlet in 1978, Somalia referred to the principle of self-determination enshrined in the Charters of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations (UN) and said: 'It is likewise the position of the Somali Democratic Republic that Somalis—whomsoever they have been colonised by in historically recent times—are as entitled as any other peoples to the rights so defined'.

But Article 3 of the OAU Charter forbids the use of force to change African borders.

The five-pointed star on Somalia's flag has symbolised the colonial division of Somalis into five parts and served also to remind them, and perhaps the rest of the world, that the Somalis might one day be united in a single nation-state. Thus the flag has been one instrument with which Somalia has expressed its dissatisfaction with the regional territorial status quo.

The other instrument has been the constitution. Article 6(4) of the 1961 Somali constitution made explicit Somalia's territorial ambitions when it stated: 'The Somali Republic promotes, by legal and peaceful means, the union of the Somali territories'. Although the constitution suggested peaceful means, Somalia fought a war with Ethiopia in 1961 and 1964 over the Ogaden. Somalia also encouraged and helped the Somalis of northeastern Kenya to fight a protracted war with the Kenyan government forces from 1963 to 1967, with a view to

---

detaching that region from the rest of Kenya. The constitution was suspended in 1969 by Barre after taking power through a military coup, and it was not until 1979 that another constitution was drawn up. The new constitution refers to 'liberation' rather than 'union' of Somali territories, but does not renounce the claims on adjacent states which are implicit in its predecessor.

The idea of a Greater Somalia nation appears to have been partly encouraged by British policies in the Horn, especially after the Second World War. For instance, in June 1946, the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, seemed to support that idea when he told the House of Commons that his government had 'proposed 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 decent economic life as understood in that territory'.

The British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan later reversed that position when he told the House of Commons in June 1960 that his government 'did not and will not encourage or support any claim affecting the territorial integrity of French Somaliland, Kenya or Ethiopia. This is a matter which could only be considered if that were the wish of the governments and peoples concerned'. But this view had only a transient hold, for in 1962 the British government reversed

---

11 Drysdale, The Somali Dispute, p 103.
itself again when, without consulting Kenyan nationalist leaders, it
appointed a commission to 'ascertain and report on, public opinion in
the Northern Frontier District ... regarding arrangements to be made
for the future of the area in the light of the likely course of
constitutional development in Kenya'. The establishment of a
commission raised hopes of secession among the Kenyan Somalis, and
contradicted Macmillan's assurances of two years previously.

On the eve of the commission's arrival in the NFD the Somali Youth
League, which had led the struggle for the independence of Somalia and
was urging for the unification of all the Somali-inhabited territories,
campaigned extensively and transported some people from Somalia to the
NFD to influence the commission's report. The report stated that more
than 80 percent of Kenyan Somalis expressed the wish to join Somalia on
Kenya's independence. The British government again changed heart and
could not allow secession to take place, making it possible for Kenya
to move to independence in 1963 with all its constituent parts intact.
That was when Somalia severed diplomatic relations with Britain and
started helping separatist guerrillas in the NFD.

Under the leadership of President Sharmake and Prime Minister
In September of that year, Egal and Kenya's President Jomo Kenyatta met
in Arusha, Tanzania, under the chairmanship of Zambia's President

12 Drysdale, The Somali Dispute, p 124.
13 The report and other issues relating to Somali nationalism are
discussed at length in I.M. Lewis, A Modern History of Somalia: Nation
and State in the Horn of Africa (London: Longman, 1980) second edition,
pp 166-204. See also Drysdale, The Somali Dispute, pp 122-9.
Kenneth Kaunda, and signed a memorandum of understanding calling off mutual hostilities. The following month Egal travelled to Addis Ababa and signed a similar agreement with Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie.

The hopes for peace appeared to have been dashed when Egal's government was overthrown by the army, led by General Mohammed Siad Barre, in October 1969. The Barre government, however, spent the first five years consolidating its own power position, toying with the idea of introducing 'scientific socialism', organising a political party, and strengthening the military establishment. It did not pursue vigorously the issue of Somali unification until the mid-1970s.

1.2 The Diplomatic Offensive

Somalia went on a diplomatic offensive in 1974. That year, it started playing an active international role, while renewing its interest in the concept of Somali unification. Many of Somalia's diplomatic activities appeared to have been geared towards achieving three main goals: to 'liberate' the Somalis in neighbouring territories, to weaken Ethiopia, and to increase Somalia's own power and influence. That was when Somalia joined the Arab League. Somalia is not predominantly Arab, but it joined the League apparently to attract more aid and drought relief from the Arab states. Somalia's membership of the League was sponsored by Egypt and Saudi Arabia which wanted to lessen Somalia's dependence on the Soviet Union. That year, Somalia was promised aid by Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Saudi Arabia and the

In an attempt to gain influence in Africa and act as the continent's official spokesman in world forums, Somalia's President Barre won in June 1974 the chairmanship of the OAU. At the same time he unsuccessfully tried to promote his own Foreign Minister as a candidate for the post of OAU Secretary-General.  

In his capacity as OAU chairman, Barre in 1974 started putting pressure on France to give independence to Djibouti. Somalia might have hoped that with the departure of the French Djibouti would voluntarily agree to form part of Greater Somalia. Barre's consistent demand for self-determination in Djibouti further improved his image in African and Arab circles.

Somalia also had close ties with the Soviet Union which was willing to train and equip the Somali army. The USSR started building Somalia's military and internal security system in 1963, and in the 1970s the military aid increased. In July 1974, Barre sought to cement the relationship when he signed a Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation with the visiting Soviet President Nikolai Podgorny, making Somalia the first sub-Saharan country to sign such a treaty. This appeared to ensure the necessary military alignment at a time the situation in Ethiopia was becoming opportune for Somalia's intervention.

15Africa Contemporary Record 1974-75, p B274.
16This issue and Somalia's foreign policy in the mid-1970s are discussed well in Farer, War Clouds on the Horn, pp 100-103.
Somalia, which welcomed Haile Selassie's fall in 1974, started to improve relations with the Baghdad-based United Liberation Front for Western Somalia (ULFWS) immediately. The ULFWS was formed in the 1960s to fight for the 'liberation' of the NFD and the Ogaden, but it was ineffective militarily. During the 1974 OAU summit in Mogadishu, Somalia permitted the ULFWS to distribute leaflets, laying claim to the Ogaden and northeastern Kenya. \(^{18}\) That strained Somalia's relations with Ethiopia and Kenya, after about seven years of relative tranquillity. But Barre visited Nairobi in September 1974 in a bid to reassure and improve relations with Kenya. \(^{19}\)

As OAU chairman, Barre exercised caution in his country's relations with other African states except with Ethiopia. He openly supported the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), which had an office in Mogadishu. Eritrea was an Italian colony from 1889 until 1941 when it came under British military administration. At the Paris conference of 1946, Italy, which had been defeated in the Second World War, formally renounced its right to its three African colonies, namely Eritrea, Libya and Italian Somalia. \(^{20}\) The disposal of these colonies was, however, to be determined by an agreement among the war-time allies, namely Britain, France, the Soviet Union and the United States. If these four powers could not agree within a year, the matter was to be referred to the United Nations. However, it dragged on until 1950 when

---

\(^{18}\) Third World Reports (London), January 1975; and Africa Contemporary Record 1974-75, p B273.

\(^{19}\) Africa Contemporary Record 1974-75, p B274.

the UN decided that Libya was to be granted independence in 1952; Italian Somalia was to be placed under a ten-year Italian trusteeship; and Eritrea, as an autonomous unit, was to be federated in 1952 with Ethiopia under Ethiopia's sovereignty.21

The federal arrangement lasted only ten years, and in 1962, Emperor Haile Selassie abrogated the federal treaty and made Eritrea one of Ethiopia's 14 provinces. By the time the treaty was ended, the ELF, established in 1961, had already launched the struggle for Eritrea's independence. The ELF split in 1971, giving rise to the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). Throughout their struggle, Eritreans have argued that their problem 'is a colonial question, not an issue of secession'.22 In the words of an Eritrean scholar, Bereket Selassie:

At the same time, the Eritrean struggle is an anti-imperialist struggle, for Haile Selassie's alliance with the United States, his military and economic dependence on it, and the United States' tacit support of his colonialist ambitions have turned Ethiopia into a neo-colony and thus brought the entire question into the realm of international politics.23

Somalia claimed that its support for the Eritrean guerrillas was 'in the spirit of Muslim and Arab brotherhood'.24 But neither Somalia nor Eritrea was predominantly Arab, and while Somalia was a Muslim state, only half of the Eritreans were Muslims. Somalia's objective, therefore, had little to do with Islam and with Arabs. The most likely reason was to weaken Ethiopia.

22 Selassie, Conflict and Intervention in the Horn, p 63.
23 Selassie, Conflict and Intervention in the Horn, p 63.
While pursuing its Greater Somalia goal, Somalia in the mid-1970s talked merely of striving for the self-determination of the Somalis. That was when it started helping liberation movements in the Somali-inhabited territories. It supported the Front for the Liberation of the Somali Coast (FLCS) in the French-ruled Djibouti, the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) in Ethiopia, and the Mogadishu-based NFD Liberation Front in Kenya.25

Somalia had apparently decided on a change of tactics. One Somali cabinet minister, Mohammed Sheikh Aden, has said:

We realised that [as] of 1970 many countries were cynically refusing to understand the nature and truth of the situation. Therefore, since 1970, the birth of our revolution, it has been the policy of the Somali government, if unity could not be achieved, to support the right of freedom for the Somalis wherever they are. We accept the fact that when they reach their right to independence, they have a choice, either to stand by themselves as an independent state, or to unite with the Somali Democratic Republic; or to unite with whatever state they want.26

This statement implies that Somalia changed tactics because the notion of a Greater Somalia had no international appeal. No African or Western or Soviet bloc country was willing to help Somalia in its bid to expand its borders. Although some Arab countries were sympathetic to some of Somalia's objectives, they often appeared to pay mere lip-service to the idea of a Greater Somalia. Thus by the 1970s, the issue of a Greater Somalia had become a diplomatic burden. As one writer has said:

Somali diplomacy was not able to effectively counter the Ethiopian argument that the conflict was not one of self-determination but rather of territorial aggrandizement and that it was not between the people of the Ogaden and the Central government of Ethiopia, but rather between Addis Ababa and Mogadishu.\(^{27}\)

The cause of self-determination and the struggle against foreign domination was more appealing and acceptable to Somalia's socialist friends also. The Greater Somalia objective entailed the acquisition of foreign territory, an action that the Soviet Union could not support.\(^{28}\)

Even with all these diplomatic moves, Somalia started facing problems resulting from some of its own actions as early as 1975. Its major efforts that year were concentrated on Djibouti's struggle for independence. Hoping that the territory would become part of a Greater Somalia, the Barre regime intensified its pressures through open diplomacy and clandestine methods. Somalia's relations with France deteriorated considerably when on 23 March 1975, FLCS guerrillas kidnapped the French ambassador to Somalia and demanded the release of two of their own men who were serving life imprisonment in France. The French government agreed to their demands, but the incident strained relations between France and Somalia.

Nearly a year later, on 3 February 1976, a group of FLCS guerrillas hijacked a school bus carrying the children of French troops


\(^{28}\) The acquisition of territory would have resembled the Soviet reincorporation of Georgia in 1919 and the Baltic States in 1940 and 1945. But the USSR was reluctant to support a breach of Article 3 of the OAU Charter - which calls for respect for the borders inherited from colonial powers - because to do so would have alienated many of its actual and potential African friends.
in Djibouti and fled across the border into Somalia. France agreed to
the demands for independence later that year, but that merely served to
increase suspicions between Ethiopia and Somalia. Although Barre
insisted that Somalia had no designs on Djibouti, he affirmed in a
broadcast in December 1976 that he would never deny the historic
connection between the people of the two countries: 'We will never say
that our brothers are not our brothers'. When Ethiopia proposed
signing a joint agreement with Somalia to guarantee Djibouti's
independence, Somalia refused arguing that there was no need for such a
formal declaration.

These activities, together with the increased incidence of armed
Somalis crossing the border into Kenya, led to a deterioration of
relations between Kenya and Somalia in 1975 and 1976. In those years,
Somalia aroused hostility in all its neighbours: France over its
activities in Djibouti; Ethiopia with its support for what the
Ethiopian junta regarded as 'rebel and reactionary forces'; and Kenya
over armed infiltrators.

At the same time, Somalia's relations with its Arab friends were
also strained. Conservative Arab states mistrusted it because of its
close links with the Soviet bloc, its enthusiasm to implement
'scientific socialism', and because of the suspicion that it had
anti-religious tendencies - the Soviet Union had established
sophisticated military facilities at the Somali port of Berbera (see

29 Africa Contemporary Record 1975-76, p B309.
30 Africa Contemporary Record 1976-77, p B331.
chapter 4), and in January 1975, the Somali government executed a group of Sheikhs who had criticised the government decree on sexual equality as being contrary to the Koran.31

Perhaps as a consequence, some conservative Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, refused to provide the famine and drought relief they had promised in 1974. To try to win them back, Somalia invited some Arab and Western journalists to Berbera.32 Some of the journalists declared that they had seen no sophisticated Soviet military installations in Somalia, but others complained that they had been denied access to one military building. The journalists were followed by a United States congressional delegation, which confirmed the existence of a missile handling facility at Berbera.33

If Somalia arranged the two tours to buy Arab and Western goodwill, it enraged the USSR by allowing the inspection of Soviet military facilities without approval. These visits and Somalia's attempts to build closer ties with conservative Arab states that were openly working for the reduction of the Soviet military presence in the Red Sea region were embarrassing to Moscow. Although Somalia continued to get increased aid from the Soviet Union in 1975 and 1976, relations between the two countries were not smooth.

33Visit to the Democratic Republic of Somalia, Report to the Committee on Appropriations, US Senate, by members of the fact-finding team sent to Somalia at the invitation of the President of Somalia, 14 July 1975, pp 9-33.
1.3 Changing Prospects

On the surface, Soviet-Somali relations appeared cordial in the mid-1970s. For instance, President Barre was one of the foreign leaders who attended the 25th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in Moscow in February/March 1976. He thanked the USSR for drought relief aid, adding: 'The Somali working people, like so many others struggling to uproot evil social orders and build in their place a truly humane society have, for the Soviet people and their great party, the deepest respect and love'. Towards the end of the year, Somalia's Vice-President and Minister of Defence, Mohammed Ali Samatar, went to Moscow and held talks with a CPSU Central Committee Secretary, Boris Ponomarev and other Soviet leaders.

But there were several issues in 1976 about which Somalia was not happy with the Soviet Union. Barre was disappointed when the Soviet press referred to Eritrea as an administrative province of Ethiopia. He also was apprehensive about the Soviet offer of arms to Ethiopia, fearing that those weapons might be used in Eritrea or against Somalia. In addition, he was anxious about Moscow's attempt to portray the Ethiopian military junta (or Dergue) as 'a truly revolutionary movement' and thereby imply that Somalia should respect it. Thus Somalia was unhappy with the Soviet Union, and was possibly looking for an alternative arms supplier. This was the time when a former American ambassador to Saudi Arabia, James Akins, said at a

---


35Africa Contemporary Record 1976-77, p B332.
Congressional hearing that Somalia had indicated to Saudi Arabia its interest in closer relations with the United States.$^36$

Somalia was by that time planning to detach the Ogaden from Ethiopia. A number of events combined early in 1977 to convince Somalia that the time to invade the Ogaden had arrived. It was encouraged by the deterioration of order in Ethiopia, the Carter Administration's dislike for the Dergue (see Chapter 5) and its willingness to support Somalia,$^37$ and the independence of Djibouti which had been slated for June 1977. Between May and June, Somalia sent some troops to the Ogaden to fight alongside the WSLF guerrillas.

Although the USSR was just beginning to arm Ethiopia, Somalia reckoned that the American-trained Ethiopian troops would take some time before they could handle Soviet arms effectively. There was considerable chaos in Ethiopia following the overthrow and death of the chairman of the Dergue, General Teferi Bante, and his replacement by Mengistu Haile Mariam on 3 February 1977.$^38$ Eritreans had had considerable success in the north where most of the Ethiopian troops were, while the Dergue was involved in internal struggles for power in Addis Ababa, and a number of troops were deserting the service. These factors probably convinced Barre that it was the right time to strike.


Somalia's campaign in the Ogaden ended in disaster when Ethiopia, using Cuban troops, Soviet military advisers and its own soldiers, defeated the Somali forces early in 1978 (see Chapter 5). That war, however, demonstrated that Somalia was not merely interested in 'liberating' the Ogaden, but in detaching from Ethiopia most of the non-Amhara regions.

The capture of towns like Jijiga, Harar and Dire Dawa made sense from the point of view of Somali nationalism, because they were Somali-inhabited cities. The war was, however, extended to non-Somali provinces like Arussi, Bale and Sidamo where the Abo Somali Liberation Front (ASLF) - which had been formed in January 1976 - became very active. By extending the war to the Oromo territory, Somalia indicated that it was out to reduce Ethiopia's size and weaken it considerably. Somalia's interest was to damage Ethiopia so badly that it would not regroup and fight for the return of the Ogaden.

Somalia has never hidden its dislike for the Ethiopian state. Its leaders have termed Ethiopia a colonial empire which should allow its various nationalities to exercise their right of self-determination. Somalia has argued that as a coloniser, Ethiopia was the aggressor since 'colonialism [was] permanent aggression'. Thus Somalia did not regard Ethiopia's borders as sacrosanct. According to Somalia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

Every African, with the apparent exception of the past and

---


40 *The Somali Nation and Abyssinian Colonialism*, p 41.
present rulers of the Ethiopian empire-state, knows well that colonialists are aggressors by definition and that colonialism itself is the real aggression. The record of Abyssinian colonialism, a terrifying document in human—or rather inhuman—terms, is particularly relevant in this context. There is no denying that Ethiopia is an empire and the Somalis of the Western Somali area 'a people under a colonial and alien regime'.

Somalia sent its troops back to the Ogaden again in 1979 and they remained there until late in 1980. But between 1978 and 1982, Somalia was not able to mount a full-scale attack on Ethiopia, partly because it lacked adequate arms for such an offensive, and partly because Ethiopia had reorganised its forces with Soviet assistance. Even then, Somalia could hardly renounce claims on Ethiopia.

Somalia wanted to take the Ogaden just before Djibouti's independence in June 1977 so that the two could unite with it that year. Somalia's Vice-President, Hussein Kulmiye Afrah, who attended Djibouti's independence celebrations on 27 June 1977 described that day as 'the third national day in the history of the Somali people'. Two weeks later, Barre visited Djibouti and said the two countries had equal responsibilities towards each other: 'It is necessary for us to help each other ... be it for our general interests or in defence against the enemy'. In a revealing commentary on 12 July 1977, Radio Mogadishu said:

41 The Somali Nation and Abyssinian Colonialism, p 41.
42 A Somali ambassador I have known since 1977 told me in 1983 that under the present situation in the Horn, no Somali leader would turn his back to the Ogaden.
43 Africa Contemporary Record 1977-78, p B386.
The fatherly visit to Djibouti of Challe Siad is an occasion for mutual self-congratulation between separated brothers, for Greater Somalia to become free is a just cause and a responsibility of those parts which have achieved their independence. Their unity is entirely a Somali issue which does not concern anyone else. Our goal is the freedom of all Somalis...45

In fact, when Djibouti gained independence, Somalia had virtually appointed itself the 'guarantor' of its security, had taken steps to ease travel and citizenship requirements between the two, and welcomed its independence as paving the 'way for the complete freedom of the Somali nation as a whole'.46 Djibouti's President Hassan Gouled also appeared to be inclined to support Somalia's claims to the Ogaden, partly out of his loyalty to his fellow Somalis, and partly as a form of gratitude for the support he received from the FLCS. In July 1977, just after the Ogaden war had broken out, and following Barre's visit, Djibouti allowed the FLCS to recruit and discreetly train guerrillas to fight in the Ogaden.47

But within a few months of becoming president, Gouled had second thoughts about Somalia's territorial ambitions. The prospect of Djibouti's absorption into a Greater Somalia became less attractive to the Issas who saw more freedom in ruling themselves than in becoming a part of Somalia.48 There was also a possibility that the French, who had stationed about 4,500 troops in Djibouti to protect its

---

47 Africa Contemporary Record 1980-81, p B156.
48 Djibouti is occupied by the Afars and Issas in approximately equal proportions, but the Issas are politically preponderant.
independence, may have prevailed on its leadership to keep out of the Somali-Ethiopian conflict. Moreover, as the tide of war in the Ogaden started turning against Somalia, the influx of Somali immigrants and refugees into Djibouti reached alarming proportions and put Djibouti's economy under stress. All these factors persuaded Gouled to distance himself from both Ethiopia and Somalia over the Ogaden conflict.

Mogadishu's relations with Djibouti nevertheless remained good. Somalia's northern rangelands represented a rich natural hinterland for Djibouti's modern port facilities, and a large proportion of Somalia's livestock exports went to the Arab world through Djibouti. In June 1979, Somalia and Djibouti signed trade and tourism agreements, dealing in particular with road links, immigration and trans-border mobility. The two countries also exchanged official visits at ministerial level and pursued negotiations to increase trade and improve communications. Late in 1980 and early 1981, Gouled visited Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia in an attempt to sell a peace plan that appeared to have the backing of France and Saudi Arabia.

Djibouti's diplomatic activities in the late 1970s and early 1980s indicated that if Somalia had any hopes of Djibouti moving voluntarily to join it, those hopes were diminished. But the fact that Djibouti agreed to a French military presence suggested that it was not quite

---

49 Africa Contemporary Record 1979-80, p B179.
sure of the intentions of its big neighbours - Ethiopia and Somalia.  

Somalia, however, realised that it was futile to pursue the liberation and unification of Somalis in Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya all at the same time, and it accordingly decided in the late 1970s to improve relations with Djibouti and Kenya.

To try to convince Djibouti and Kenya of its change of heart, Somalia adopted in 1979 a new constitution in which the pledge to regain the 'lost territories' was couched in more moderate terms than in the previous constitution. Yet, it was not a renunciation of any claim that Somalia had on neighbouring states. The new constitution, *inter alia*, stated:

> The Somali Democratic Republic, adopting peaceful and legal means, shall support the liberation of Somali territories under colonial occupation and shall encourage the unity of the Somali people through their own free will.

This was apparently aimed primarily at Ethiopia, the only country in the region that the Somalis regarded as a colonial power.

Somalia tried to assure Kenya that it had no designs on Kenyan territory, and that its role in Ethiopia was to support a 'legitimate' liberation movement. In an interview with a Kenyan daily, *The Standard*, in September 1981, Barre said: 'We in Somalia have no claim whatsoever on any part of Kenyan territory.' But his position on Ethiopia was different when he said:

---

51 The French troops in Djibouti play also an important economic function. They bring in a considerable amount of trade and foreign currency which Djibouti officials find crucial for the buoyancy of their economy.
The case of the Ogaden ... is a straightforward colonial case. The colonised people of the Ogaden ... do not stop demanding self-determination and freedom from oppression just because the colonising power is black and not white.\footnote{The Standard, 8 September 1981, p 1.}

There were other reasons for Somalia's change of attitude towards Djibouti and Kenya. In Djibouti, it risked antagonising the French while in Kenya it would have met with an American disapproval at a time when it was struggling to improve its image in the West. Moreover, in Djibouti, Somalia feared antagonising not only the OAU but the Arab League as well. Somalia might have calculated also that continued hostility to Djibouti and Kenya would move them closer to Ethiopia when it was trying to isolate Ethiopia and increase its security problems. It possibly thought that continued opposition to Ethiopia could be seen in the West as an anti-Soviet struggle.

2 ETHIOPIA'S SECURITY PROBLEMS

Ethiopia is the oldest state in the Horn, but it did not occupy the whole of its present territory until late in the nineteenth century under Emperor Menelik II.\footnote{For a good description of Ethiopia's history up to the 1960s, see Richard Greenfield, Ethiopia: A New Political History (London, Pall Mall Press, 1965).} Its present territory took form partly as a result of Menelik's conquests and partly as a consequence of the European colonialism which, in turn, created Djibouti, Eritrea, and Italian and British Somalilands. Ethiopia's boundaries were expanded considerably in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

As Ethiopia acquired more territory, its insecurity increased

because of the large numbers of people it had to control and the many rebellions it had to contend with. Indeed, Ethiopia's main challenges have stemmed from its people's resistance to centralised authority, their yearning for self-determination and the external support they get in their struggles. Those problems have been exacerbated by the desire of Ethiopia's rulers to exercise authoritarian leadership, to keep the country's borders intact and, where possible, to expand them. It is these conflicting interests and the resultant struggles that have characterised Ethiopia's history and shaped its foreign policy.  

2.1 The 'Leader Image'  

Ethiopia has always seen itself as unique in the Horn and as an African leader. This image has played a significant part in shaping Ethiopia's external relations - including its association with the United States, the Soviet Union and Israel. Another factor that has contributed to the shaping of Ethiopia's foreign policy has been the country's pride in its long Christian tradition and the fear that as the only Christian nation in Africa for a long time, it was isolated. As one Ethiopian scholar has pointed out: 'Ethiopia's, especially Christian Ethiopia's, image of itself is of a beleaguered country surrounded mostly by hostile or potentially hostile countries with no natural friends in the immediate vicinity'.  

This self-image was behind Ethiopia's desire to seek alliances with the strongest powers in the world. In the nineteenth century,  

---

57 Ayele, 'The Foreign Policy of Ethiopia', p 50.
Ethiopia's leaders sought alliances with the various European powers in their scramble for African colonies, and in the process Ethiopia also expanded its borders. After the Second World War, Haile Selassie remained friendly to Britain for some time. That was because Britain was still a very powerful nation which had defeated the Italians and given him back the throne which he had vacated in 1935 during the Italian invasion. But before long, Haile Selassie fell out with the British over the Ogaden issue. He could not accept British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin's proposal in June 1946, that the Ogaden should in due course become a part of Somalia.\(^\text{58}\)

As Ethiopia became disenchanted with the British government, it sought close relations with the United States, the richest and most powerful country at the time and the first to make an atomic bomb. During the Korean War of 1950-52, Ethiopia offered troops to fight alongside American forces. The participation in the Korean War not only demonstrated Ethiopia's involvement with the superpowers in postwar reconstruction - a significant action for a country seeking a high international profile - but it also helped Haile Selassie in his efforts to obtain American support for his bid to annex Eritrea. As expected, the US supported Ethiopia's claim to Eritrea, and was instrumental in ensuring the adoption of the 1950 UN resolution that federated Eritrea to Ethiopia.

That Eritrean deal revealed the symbiotic relationship between the

US and Ethiopia. Ethiopia's interest was to acquire more territory and the American arms with which to put down rebellions in its relatively large empire. The US, on the other hand, was mainly concerned with its global strategic interests. As the US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, said in 1953:

From the point of view of justice, the opinions of the Eritrean people must receive consideration. Nevertheless, the strategic interest of the United States in the Red Sea basin and considerations of security and world peace make it necessary that the country has to be linked with our ally, Ethiopia. 59

Although Dulles referred to 'the opinions of the Eritrean people', what appear to have counted were American and Ethiopian interests (see chapter 3). From that year, Ethiopia maintained close ties with the US for more than 20 years.

After its relations with the US had gone sour, Ethiopia, now under a Marxist regime, sought closer relations with the USSR. From 1977, the USSR and Cuba helped Ethiopia retain control over its vast territory, (see Chapters 5 and 7).

2.2 Self-Determination versus Territorial Integrity

Ethiopia's major threats from the 1960s to the early 1980s came from Eritrea and the Ogaden. The Eritrean nationalists saw their struggle in a colonial context and demanded their right to self-determination. Ethiopia, on the other hand, wanted to retain control over Eritrea to maintain its territorial integrity, and to have access to the sea. Thus, in Eritrea, as in the Ogaden, it was these two principles that clashed, i.e. self-determination versus territorial

59Cited in Selassie, Conflict and Intervention in the Horn, p 58.
integrity. If the struggle for self-determination had succeeded, Ethiopia would have lost control over part of its territory.

During Haile Selassie's leadership, the Eritrean nationalists partly saw their struggle in ideological terms, as a struggle of the progressive forces against a conservative, feudal regime. They hoped also that their success would lead to the transformation of the Ethiopian state, as other groups followed their example to demand freedom. They, therefore, welcomed the overthrow of Haile Selassie in 1974.

Indeed, when the Provisional Military Administrative Council (the Dergue) took power from Haile Selassie on 12 September 1974, the Eritrean nationalists had good reason to expect a change in Addis Ababa's policy. First, the Dergue appeared socialist-leaning, and therefore ideologically closer to the majority of the Eritrean nationalists than Haile Selassie's regime had been. Second, in an attempt to gain popular support, the Dergue immediately promised it would redress all the wrongs perpetrated by the imperial regime. And third, the Dergue's chairman, General Aman Andom, an Eritrean, was expected to be more understanding of the Eritrean problem than people from other parts of Ethiopia.

But between 1974 and 1982, there was no change in Ethiopia's position on the Eritrean question. Ethiopia still regarded Eritrea as its province, and was determined to subdue the Eritrean fighters militarily. Eritreans were equally uncompromising on the issue of self-determination, and between 1976 and 1978, they made significant
military gains, although those gains were substantially offset by diplomatic losses.

As had been expected, General Andorn appeared more conciliatory on the Eritrean problem than the two vice-chairmen of the Dergue, Mengistu Haile Mariam and Atnafu Abate. General Andorn was immediately accused of compromising on the principle of territorial integrity and of attempting to overlook the Dergue in arriving at his decisions, and was accordingly assassinated on 23 November 1974, less than three months after taking office.60 His successor, General Teferi Bante, was as uncompromising on Eritrea as were Mengistu and Atnafu. But after the death of General Andom, the Eritrean nationalists intensified their armed struggle.61 The Dergue also decided to send more troops, together with ill-equipped peasant armies to Eritrea, but most of them either defected or were killed. Thus in 1977 and 1978, the Eritrean fighters controlled about 90 percent of the Eritrean province.62

Attempts at negotiation in 1976, 1978 and 1980 failed; the military situation remained stalemated; and Eritreans adhered to their principle of self-determination, while the Ethiopian government stuck to that of territorial integrity. The military successes of the Eritrean fighters were, however, reversed in 1979 and 1980.

How did the Eritrean nationalists make significant gains between...

---

60 Selassie, Conflict and Intervention, p 30.
1976 and 1978 and yet fail to hold on to some of the territory after 1979? While many of the gains were possible because of the increasing sophistication of the guerrillas, their success was aided by ideological and power struggles in Addis Ababa and the chaos that went with them. It was helped also by the 1977 Ogaden war that diverted Ethiopia's military resources to the south of the country. The reverses, on the other hand, took place after Mengistu had securely established himself in control of the Dergue and following Eritrea's diplomatic losses characterised by the lack of support from some of its traditional supporters, namely Cuba, Libya, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, and the Soviet Union.

Between 1974 and 1978, Ethiopia faced enormous problems at the centre. Though at the start most of the opponents of the Dergue were members of the ancien regime, in due course most of the opposition came from students, workers and other revolutionaries who did not want military rule. Some of the anti-Dergue revolutionaries belonged to the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), formed in 1975, and the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (MEISON) whose leaders at first served in the Dergue's politburo. To ride the storm presented by these two groups and many others in the countryside like the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU), the Dergue resorted to mass killings of its opponents. Its resources were thus divided between dealing with the Eritrean problem and consolidating its own power position in Addis

---

Ababa.  

This situation was complicated by the internal power struggle within the Dergue itself. The chairman of the Dergue, General Teferi Bante, attempted to consolidate his own position by curtailing the powers of his two vice-chairmen, Mengistu and Atnafu, and this eventually led to the reorganisation of the Dergue in December 1976, following which Mengistu and Atnafu were given fewer responsibilities than they had previously. But two months later, on 3 February 1977, Teferi Bante and some of his close associates were assassinated, paving the way for Mengistu to become chairman of the Dergue and Atnafu its vice-chairman. In October 1977, Atnafu visited parts of Eritrea under the control of the Ethiopian troops, and when he went back to Addis Ababa, he recommended a political solution to the Eritrean problem. He was later executed, having been accused of putting ideology above Ethiopia's unity. That left Mengistu as the most powerful figure in the Dergue.

While these internal power and ideological struggles weakened Ethiopia's capability to deal with the Eritrean problem, the proliferation of other liberation fronts in the country after 1974 threatened to tear Ethiopia apart. Movements like the Tigrean People's

---


65Ottaway, Ethiopia, pp 141-2.

66Ottaway, Ethiopia, pp 142-4.

Liberation Front (TPLF), the Afar Liberation Front (ALF), the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Abo Somali Liberation Front (ASLF), and the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) - all demanding self-determination - threatened Ethiopia's apparent unity and ran counter to the Dergue's principle of territorial integrity. 68

The TPLF, formed in 1975, took advantage of the chaos in Addis Ababa and made a spirited attempt to create an independent state in Tigre province. It also tried to establish an alliance with the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), but the more militarily experienced EPLF refused. The TPLF was later weakened by its rivalry with the more conservative Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU), which was also headed by Tigreans.

Just next to Tigre, in the eastern part of Ethiopia, the Afar people rallied behind the ALF in a bid to secede from Ethiopia. The ALF wanted either to establish an independent Afar state or join their kinsmen in Djibouti when the latter became independent. Though the ALF obtained some support from Saudi Arabia and Somalia, it did not make any gains on the ground. In the southern provinces of Bale and Sidamo, the Oromo Liberation Front also struggled to achieve self-determination. 69 Although these 'liberation' movements represented a national security problem, they did not control any areas as did the Eritrean nationalists and the WSLF guerrillas.

68 Ottaway, Ethiopia, 82-98; and Africa Contemporary Record 1977-78, pp B216-232.
Apart from Eritrea, Ethiopia's biggest national security problem was presented by the WSLF, formed in Mogadishu early in 1976 under the leadership of Abdellahi Hassan Mohamud. The WSLF made some military gains in late 1976 and early 1977 in the Ogaden, taking advantage of the chaos in Addis Ababa and the fact that most of Ethiopia's troops were tied down in Eritrea. By the time Ethiopia recognised the danger presented by the WSLF early in 1977, the guerrillas had taken control of large areas of the Ogaden, and Somalia was sending in its regular troops to consolidate the gains made by them. Just at that time, in March 1977, the Cuban leader, Fidel Castro, stepped in and called Mengistu and Somalia's President Barre to a meeting in Aden, attended also by the PDRY President, Salim Ali Robayya (See Chapter 5). Castro proposed the creation of a socialist confederation in the Red Sea region comprising Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and the PDRY.

That proposal was rejected by both Ethiopia and Somalia (see chapter 5). It was after that meeting that Somalia increased its involvement in the Ogaden. The Ethiopian government, which could not agree to any loss of territory, concentrated on regaining the Ogaden.

---


2.3 Diplomatic Initiatives

Although the Dergue had serious problems establishing its authority and legitimacy in the country in the mid-1970s, its diplomatic efforts appeared to be generously rewarded. In the first two years after the overthrow of Haile Selassie, Ethiopia's foreign policy remained more or less the same. It continued to rely on the United States for economic and military aid, retained a significant presence of Israelis, remained on good terms with Kenya, and was suspicious of most Arab states.

Although Ethiopian leaders started making efforts as early as 1974 to improve relations with the Soviet Union, Ethiopia did not sign an arms deal with Moscow until December 1976. That year Ethiopia's foreign policy started changing, and the reasons for this change were mainly to help consolidate the revolution, to keep order in the country, and to maintain its territorial integrity. To pursue these objectives, Ethiopia sought and won the friendship of Cuba, Libya, the PDRY and the Soviet Union — the four countries that helped Ethiopia regain the Ogaden from the Somali troops early in 1978. When the Ogaden war was over, they helped Ethiopian troops retake part of Eritrea. From the perspective of the Ethiopian junta, these countries performed a vital stabilising role.

---

72 Africa Contemporary Record 1974-75, pp B193-5; and Africa Contemporary Record 1975-76, pp B204-207.
73 Ottaway, Soviet and American Influence in the Horn, p 106.
These four countries had supported Eritrea in the 1960s and early 1970s, but they switched sides and started aiding the Dergue in the mid-1970s. Their motivation was ideological, although for the Soviet Union the reasons included a desire to establish a military presence in the region (see Chapter 7). Before the Ethiopian revolution, they helped the Eritrean fighters because they saw them as socialist allies that could be used to destabilise the pro-American government of Haile Selassie. When the Ethiopian government became anti-American and pro-Soviet, the goal of those four countries was to help Ethiopia move towards the socialist path and maintain its territorial integrity.  

The other backers of the Eritrean guerrillas from the 1960s were Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan and Syria. They also had their own motives which might have been different from those of the liberation fighters. Although only half of the Eritreans were Muslims, most Arab countries supported them out of religious affinity, and from 1976, some countries like Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Sudan were in addition supporting Eritrea partly out of their dislike for the Soviet presence in Ethiopia. They saw the conflict as an ideological struggle, as an attempt to reduce Soviet influence in the Red Sea region, notwithstanding the fact that some Eritrean liberation movements, especially the EPLF, were Marxist.

Some of those who supported Eritrea aided Somalia as well. For instance, Egypt and Saudi Arabia were Somalia's closest friends in the

---

75 For a good analysis of Cuban-Eritrean relations, see Nelson P. Valdes, 'Cuban Foreign Policy in the Horn of Africa', Cuban Studies, Vol. 10, No. 1, January 1980, especially pp 63-75.
Arab world. As a protector of the holy places of Mecca and Medina, and as a bastion of Islamic values, Saudi Arabia felt it had an obligation to help other Muslim peoples. But as a politically weak and pro-Western state, Saudi Arabia was apparently governed by the fear of being encircled by pro-Soviet and potentially hostile regimes. It was for that reason that it worked against pro-Soviet states like Ethiopia and the PDRY. Like Saudi Arabia, Egypt in the 1970s and early 1980s worked for the reduction of Soviet influence in the Red Sea. During the 1977-78 Somali-Ethiopian war, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iran came to the support of Somalia when no Western country was willing to give Somalia arms.

Arab hostility to Ethiopia made it a natural ally of Israel. Before 1973, Israel was involved in Ethiopia's counter-insurgency measures in Eritrea. Following the break in diplomatic relations between OAU members and Israel late in 1973 and early in 1974, there was a reduction in the visibility of Israelis in Addis Ababa, but that did not mean Israel's complete withdrawal from Ethiopia. Even after the fall of Haile Selassie, Ethiopia apparently continued to rely on Israel for counter-insurgency training and to lobby for American military aid. Shortly after the end of the Ogaden war early in 1978, a former Israeli Foreign Minister, General Moshe Dayan, admitted that Israel had helped

Ethiopia during that war. It was ironical that Israel, which relied heavily on the US for military and economic aid, gave support to a Soviet ally in the Horn.

Israel's concern was to prevent Arab states from getting control of both sides of the Red Sea if Eritrea were to be separated from Ethiopia. Although Israeli actions helped Ethiopia maintain its territorial integrity, Israel's own objective was to engage Arab states in battles far from its own borders and to prevent them from turning the Red Sea into an 'Arab Lake'. But Israel's fear of the Arab control of the Red Sea began to wane after signing in 1979 the peace treaty with Egypt, the most powerful Arab state. In spite of that, Israel continued to maintain a small presence in Ethiopia.

On many issues, Israel did not see eye to eye with Libya. But both of them were Ethiopia's friends. Although Ethiopia and Libya shared a certain amount of radicalism in foreign policy and both got their arms from the Soviet Union, Libya's interest in Ethiopia had little to do with Ethiopia's main concerns of suppressing rebellions and maintaining its territorial integrity. Libya's objective was to open up a channel through which it could destabilise the Sudanese government of Gaafar Numeiri from the south. While maintaining a presence in Ethiopia, Libya also hoped to be close enough to the Red Sea to make its presence felt in conservative Arab circles.

---

79 This was confirmed in a personal interview with an Israeli official in Washington, D.C., in May 1983.
Ethiopia, which had a large Soviet military presence in the early 1980s, was quite critical of the American military presence in Somalia. Just before the US signed in August 1980 an arms deal with Somalia, Ethiopia accused the latter of having invaded it again. \(^{80}\) Independent sources ascertained that there were some Somali troops in the Ogaden in 1979 and 1980, and that delayed the American despatch of arms to Somalia until January 1981 when the US Congress was satisfied that Somalia had withdrawn (see Chapter 6). Despite American assurances that Somalia would not use American arms in the Ogaden, Ethiopia maintained that those arms would be used to undermine its territorial integrity.

From 1978, when Cuban troops and Soviet military advisers helped Ethiopia expel Somali forces from the Ogaden, up to the early 1980s, Ethiopia and Somalia were on a war-footing. Relations between the two countries worsened in July 1982 when Ethiopian troops and Somali dissidents belonging to the Ethiopian-based Somali Democratic Salvation Front (SODAF) invaded the northern Somali towns of Ballenbale, Galdogob and Galciao. \(^{81}\) Ethiopia immediately denied any involvement in the incident, but Somali and US government officials maintained that Ethiopian troops and Somali dissidents remained in occupation of those towns by the end of 1982.

\(^{80}\) See Reprogramming of Military Aid to Somalia, Hearing before the Subcommittee on Africa, Committee on Foreign Affairs, US House of Representatives, 26 August 1980.

\(^{81}\) 'Flare-up in the Horn of Africa', The Middle East, No.95, September 1982, p 8. See also 'Statement by Honorable Chester A. Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs before the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations of the [US] House [of Representatives] Committee on Appropriations', 26 April 1983, p 2.
While Ethiopia was on bad terms with Somalia, its relations with Sudan, a pro-American Arab neighbour, were quite good between 1980 and 1982. Sudan, which shares a border with the Eritrean province and western Ethiopia, was involved in the Eritrean problem from the 1960s. Before 1972, Sudan used to give arms and sanctuary to the Eritrean guerrillas. But its attitude towards the Eritrean question started changing in 1972 when Haile Selassie helped Sudan solve its secessionist problem in the south. In the early 1970s, Sudan unsuccessfully tried to persuade Ethiopia to offer regional autonomy to the Eritreans. When the Dergue insisted on seeking a military solution, Sudan changed heart and declared in February 1977 that it was again going to back Eritreans. Sudan's change of attitude assisted the Eritrean guerrillas in their military campaigns of 1977 and 1978.

The increasing flow of refugees into Sudan and the military stalemate in Eritrea forced Sudan to change its attitude again in 1980. It started emphasising the need for a political solution to the Eritrean problem. While Sudan did not give up the issue of self-determination for the Eritreans, it called for the realisation of self-determination within a federal framework. It, therefore, showed that it did not favour the dismembering of Ethiopia. Moreover, Ethiopia, Sudan and Kenya also sought ways of improving communications and commercial links among themselves in the late 1970s. They set up a council of ministers which met annually to review their progress towards improving communications and establishing trade. Through these

---

meetings Ethiopia and Sudan maintained good relations between 1980 and 1982.

During the 1981 tripartite ministerial council meeting, Djibouti was allowed to attend as an observer. Djibouti has been the main entry and outlet for Ethiopia's goods (the Addis Ababa railway line terminates at the port of Djibouti), and its location on Ethiopia's lifeline has accounted for the importance of Djibouti to Addis Ababa. Ethiopia was quite happy while the French were in control of Djibouti, but when Somalia laid claim to Djibouti in the mid-1970s, Ethiopia also claimed it. Ethiopia, in fact, indicated that it was prepared to go to war with Somalia if the latter tried to absorb Djibouti by force.

While there might have been people among Djibouti's Issa population who wanted a union with Somalia, Djibouti steered clear of the Somali-Ethiopian conflict from the end of 1977. The fact that President Hassan Gouled of Djibouti distanced his country from both Ethiopia and Somalia was a form of reassurance for the Ethiopian leaders. Ethiopia would have liked Djibouti to move closer to it, but Djibouti's leaders, who were mainly Issas and therefore ethnically related to Somalis, would not want to do so.

3 KENYA'S ROLE

Unlike Djibouti, Kenya consistently supported Ethiopia against Somalia until the 1980s. But unlike Ethiopia and Somalia also, Kenya did not regard the buying of sophisticated armaments for security as a priority, although Kenya was evidently concerned about the security situation on the border with Somalia.
From the time of its independence from Britain in 1963 up to the 1980s, Kenya's foreign policy was motivated by three main factors, although they were by no means the only ones. First, there was an overriding need to attract capital, especially Western capital, into the country. That meant Kenya's dependence on the West for investment and economic aid. Second, because of the inflow of capital into the country, Kenya's foreign policy was shaped by the desire to establish good commercial links with its neighbours. That was why Kenya valued the East African common market highly. When that market was destroyed as a result of the collapse in June 1977 of the East African Community of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, Kenya started looking for markets in Ethiopia, Sudan and some Middle Eastern countries.

The third factor that motivated Kenya's foreign policy was the need to protect its borders and prevent any attempts to dismember it. The biggest threat to dismember Kenya came from the Somalis when the so-called shiftas (Somali insurgents) and Somalia tried in the 1960s to take the northeastern region. That threat brought Kenya and Ethiopia politically closer, culminating in the signing in 1963 of a mutual defence pact.

---

83 John Okumu, 'Kenya's Foreign Policy' in O. Aluko (ed) The Foreign Policies of African States, pp 136-59. At the time of independence there were fears that Kenya's coastal region might secede and join Zanzibar and that the Kenyan Masai might want to join their brethren in Tanzania. These fears were dispelled in subsequent years. In 1976, former Ugandan leader, Idi Amin, laid claim to the whole of Western Kenya, but he later backed down.
3.1 The Struggle for Survival

Kenya's entry into the Horn conflict was thus primarily determined by security considerations. By signing the mutual defence pact with Ethiopia, Kenya hoped that the two partners would jointly contain what they saw as Somalia's expansionist goals. Kenya's main concern, therefore, was to survive as a national entity. 84

It is not difficult to see why Kenya was so concerned with the problem of the Northeastern Province. The dismemberment of that region would not only have undermined its territorial integrity, but it would also have set in motion other disintegrative forces in the country. 85 If all the Somalis had broken away at that time, other ethnic groups in the country would have been encouraged to also seek secession or other forms of autonomy.

3.2 Coping With Rapid Change

The rapid increase in oil prices in the wake of the Arab-Israeli war of October 1973 threatened to slow down the pace of Kenya's development. The rising oil bill in the mid-1970s also dictated a diversification of the Western sources of assistance. Britain was the main aid donor, but during the 1970s, Kenya started getting increased aid from the United States and West Germany.

After the October 1973 Middle East war, Kenya, like all OAU member states, severed diplomatic relations with Israel and made efforts to

---

84 Hoskyns, The Ethiopia-Somali-Kenya Dispute, pp 18-89.
improve relations with some Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The break with Israel meant the loss of technical and security assistance which Kenya had been getting from that country, and greater reliance on Britain, which was already Kenya's biggest donor.

Just as the Middle East war was beginning to have its effect on Kenya's economy, differences among the East African Community partners sharpened. Kenya and its two partners kept trading insults in the mid-1970s. By 1975, the three partners had lost the spirit of comradeship and when the Community finally collapsed in 1977, most of the multilateral corporations like the railways, the postal services, the airways and the harbour services had already broken up into national corporations. The demise of the East African Community came shortly after the Kenya-Tanzanian border had been closed. By that time, Kenya was at loggerheads with all its neighbours, except Ethiopia and Sudan. This meant that Kenya's industries, which had been established for the wider East African market, would not operate at full capacity, forcing Kenya to look for alternative markets in Ethiopia, Sudan and the Middle East. But by that time also, Ethiopia was increasingly coming under Soviet influence.

3.3 Testing Russophobia

Russophobia is here defined as a fear and dislike for the Soviet Union and its influence. In Kenya, Russophobia has persisted since the colonial period. During the struggle for independence, the liberation fighters were depicted as Soviet-inspired communist agitators although they had no connection with Moscow. When some of those former fighters, including former President Jomo Kenyatta, took over the leadership of the country in the 1960s, they also developed a fear and dislike of Soviet influence, and since then Kenya's leaders have been associating most of the criticism of the country's policies with Soviet or communist influence. Russophobia has thus been an entrenched phenomenon in Kenya's ruling circles.

There was also a strong anti-Soviet feeling in Ethiopia's ruling circles before the fall of Haile Selassie in 1974. Thus apart from the common Somali threat to Kenya and Ethiopia, Russophobia was another issue that brought these two neighbours politically closer. The feeling of Russophobia was apparently strengthened by Somalia's association with the Soviet Union. There was, therefore, a curious coincidence of not only Kenya and Ethiopia forming an alliance against Somalia; the two were friends of the United States while their adversary was a friend of the USSR.

Kenya had established close ties with Ethiopia in the 1960s, based on their common fear of the Somali threat, their pro-Western policies and their hate for Soviet influence in the region. In the mid-1970s, when Haile Selassie was replaced by a socialist-leaning military junta, there was speculation, especially in the Western media, that Kenya would withdraw from security co-operation with Ethiopia.
Contrary to those expectations, Kenya did not withdraw, for a number of reasons. As long as the Somali threat to both Ethiopia and Kenya remained, Kenya did not see any compelling reason for withdrawal. Kenya also appeared to consider the Somali threat to be more serious and immediate than socialism or Soviet influence in Ethiopia. Finally, until late in 1977, there was still a Soviet military presence in Somalia. The Kenya government feared that its abandonment of Ethiopia could lead to a rapprochement between Ethiopia, which was moving politically closer to the Soviet Union, and the Soviet-backed Somalia, resulting in an isolated Kenya more vulnerable to Somali attacks.\(^{87}\)

It was also largely because of the close Kenya-Ethiopian co-operation and the mutual fear of Somalia's intentions that Kenya vigorously opposed Somalia during the 1977 Ogaden war. What major contribution Kenya made to Ethiopia's war efforts was not disclosed, but Kenya's former Foreign Minister, Munyua Waiyaki, said in March 1978 that his country had given material support to Ethiopia, and promised 'Kenya will give total support to Ethiopians in their struggle to protect their independence, integrity and unity'.\(^{88}\)

Most of that support was given shortly after the Somali-Ethiopian war in the Ogaden region had spilled over into northeastern Kenya. A heightened sense of crisis had developed in that part of Kenya when about 3,000 Somali troops attacked a Kenyan border police post in July

\(^{87}\)Fidel Castro's abortive efforts early in 1977 to persuade Somalia, Ethiopia and South Yemen to form a confederation of socialist states in the region would, for instance, have resulted in the isolation of Kenya.

\(^{88}\)Africa Contemporary Record 1978-79, p B277.
1977. At that time, the Kenyan government radio service, the Voice of Kenya, expressed Kenya's concern when it said:

Somalia's expansionism is unacceptable. Somalia is an aggressor both in word and deed. It has invaded Ethiopia militarily and lays claim to large chunks of Kenyan territory. Her expansionist adventures must not be allowed to succeed because they will set the continent and the world aflame.\textsuperscript{89}

At the diplomatic level, Kenya played a significant role in explaining to many countries why Somalia should not be provided with arms before it had renounced claims on neighbouring states. In 1977 and 1978, Kenya made representations to Britain, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United States with a view to persuading them to stop arming Somalia while its troops were still in occupation of Ethiopia's territory. Britain and the United States agreed to maintain an arms embargo on Somalia as long as its troops remained in the Ogaden region,\textsuperscript{90} but the other three countries went ahead and provided Somalia with some arms, apparently with the encouragement of the United States.\textsuperscript{91}

Even after the Ogaden war, Kenya and Ethiopia remained politically close. Their intimacy was demonstrated in January 1979 when Kenya's President Daniel arap Moi, four months after acceding to the presidency, made his first state visit to Ethiopia and signed a ten-year Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation. Having Somalia's

\textsuperscript{89}Africa Contemporary Record 1977-78, p B273.
\textsuperscript{90}Africa Contemporary Record 1977-78, p B274.
\textsuperscript{91}Former US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, at one time said that Saudi Arabia was involved in the Ogaden war on Somalia's side 'partly at our urging'. See Africa Contemporary Record 1977-78, p A73. But these were few weapons in comparison with the USSR's supplies to Ethiopia.
territorial ambitions in the background, the treaty stressed the
determination of the two countries to ensure their independence,
territorial integrity, and the inviolability of their borders. In
fact, Article 5 of the treaty clearly stated: 'The contracting parties
reaffirm their unswerving opposition to expansionist policies pursued
by any country or group of countries'.

Similar sentiments were expressed by the two countries in December
1980 when Mengistu Haile Mariam went to Nairobi. In their communique,
Mengistu and Moi called on Somalia to 'renounce, publicly and
unconditionally, all claims to the territories of Ethiopia, Kenya and
Djibouti, and declare null and void all instruments asserting such
claims'. A little earlier, in welcoming Mengistu, Moi had castigated
the 'expansionist policies and military adventurism' of Somalia, which
he said were 'a thorn in the flesh of both Ethiopia and Kenya'.

All this went a long way to show that in the Horn, ideology per se
was not crucial in determining the local countries' choice of friends.
Other national considerations appeared to take pride of place. In the
Somali-Ethiopian conflict, Kenya sided with Ethiopia against Somalia
because it saw Somalia's readiness to send troops into the Ogaden as a
dress rehearsal for what might take place in its own northeastern
province. Kenya has also argued that its opposition to Somalia has
always stemmed from its commitment to a universal principle, namely the
belief that sovereignty is non-negotiable and that every country's
territorial integrity has to be respected.

3.4 The Search for Peace

If Kenya's opposition to Somalia's ambitions was a matter of principle, why did it begin to improve relations with Somalia in mid-1981? What was the basis of Kenya's search for peace with its former enemy? A possible answer is that Somalia had renounced claims to Kenya. But it had not given up claims to the Ogaden.

In the final session of the 1981 OAU summit in Nairobi, Somalia totally rejected the report of the OAU Good Offices Committee which reiterated that the disputed Ogaden region was an integral part of Ethiopia. But three days later, Kenya's President Moi and Somalia's President Barre held talks in Nairobi and issued a joint communique reaffirming their 'commitment to continue to promote better understanding and collaboration in the interests and welfare of the people' of the two countries. One plausible explanation for this rapprochement is that the two countries, which allowed the United States forces access to their military facilities in return for economic and military assistance in 1980, were under American pressure to ease the tension between them.

When Kenya's relations with Somalia started thawing in 1981, there was speculation that the pro-American Kenya and Somalia might be

97 US government officials have said on many occasions that it is part of their objective to encourage co-operation between Kenya and Somalia. See, for instance, Foreign Assistance Legislation for Fiscal Year 1981, part 7: Economic and Security Assistance Programs in Africa, Hearings and Markup before the Subcommittee on Africa of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, US House of Representatives, 7, 12, 13, 20, 25, 26, 27, 28 February; 5 and 6 March 1980, pp 305-332.
looking for a way of isolating the pro-Soviet Ethiopia, but Kenya remained on good terms with Ethiopia. In fact, the Kenya-Ethiopian border commission met in Mombasa, Kenya, in January 1983 and condemned Somalia's 'expansionist policies'. (But in July 1984, President Moi paid a visit to Somalia, the first ever by a Kenyan head of state, and called for the lessening of tension between Ethiopia and Somalia. Moi also said that Kenya and Somalia should forget their past differences and search for peace as 'the only logical and positive way towards economic and social' development in the Horn. His trip to Somalia took place after a number of exchange visits by senior officials of the two countries. Two months later, he went to Ethiopia to attend the tenth anniversary of the Ethiopian revolution and conferred with Mengistu Haile Mariam.)

If an exchange of high-level visits and the periodic holding of joint meetings are an indication of the existence of good relations or a willingness to cooperate, then Kenya's relations with both Ethiopia and Somalia were good in 1981 and 1982. In those years, some Kenyan officials claimed that in seeking a rapprochement with Somalia, Kenya wanted to influence Somalia's relations with Ethiopia just as the American presence in Somalia had changed that country's attitude toward Kenya. But Somalia, which has always wanted to isolate Ethiopia, could not soften its attitude. While Kenya's intention was to draw Somalia closer to Ethiopia, Somalia's intention was to draw Kenya away from Ethiopia. Kenya's aim was, in fact, to bring Somalia into the regional

---

co-operation network which it had been trying to establish with Ethiopia and Sudan, but that was not possible because Somalia's entry into the network depended on its unconditional renunciation of all territorial claims.

4 CONCLUSION

Somalia's relations with its neighbours were shaped, to a large extent, by its irredentist ambitions. It employed diplomatic means and military force, at different times, to try to realise its goal of 'liberating' and uniting all Somalis in a Greater Somalia nation.

There was, however, a change in Somalia's emphasis regarding the objective of uniting all Somalis under one nation-state. In the 1960s and mid-1970s, Somalia made a blanket claim to all Somali-inhabited territories in the region, but by the late 1970s, the claims on Djibouti and Kenya were quite muted. The only demands Somalia made in the early 1980s concerned the situation in the Ogaden, which Mogadishu insisted should be given a chance to exercise its right to self-determination.

Between 1980 and 1982, Somalia sought to improve relations with Djibouti and Kenya, partly to try and overcome its own isolation in the Horn, and partly to weaken Ethiopia's regional links.

The biggest external threat to Ethiopia has, since the 1960s, come from Somalia. But even without the Somali issue, Ethiopia's internal security problems would remain because of the demands of its various ethnic groups for autonomy. Emperor Haile Selassie's policies towards different ethnic communities were continued by the military leaders who
came to power in 1974. They did not appear willing to concede autonomy to any ethnic community. As an empire-state, Ethiopia always feared that giving autonomy to any community would lead to the break-up of the entire country.

Partly because of its unique history as the oldest Christian and independent country in Africa, Ethiopia has always felt surrounded by hostile or potentially hostile neighbours. Although Ethiopian leaders tried to build bridges with their neighbours from the 1960s, they have not been very successful. The normalisation of relations with Somalia in 1967 was aborted two years later when the army took over in Somalia. With Sudan, Ethiopia enjoyed improved relations only between 1972 and 1975, and again from 1980 to 1982. The hidden mutual suspicions between Ethiopia and Sudan exploded into hostilities in 1976 when Sudan started aiding Eritrean fighters.

Kenya was Ethiopia's most reliable ally in the Horn. The two countries maintained a mutual defence pact from 1963 into the 1980s, and this showed that the new leaders who took over in Kenya and Ethiopia in the 1970s decided to continue the security policies of their predecessors. But in 1981, Kenya agreed to improve relations also with Somalia, with which it was trying to establish commercial ties. Kenya's major foreign policy goals revolved around the need to attract capital into the country and to have unhindered access to neighbouring markets, and the security of its border with Somalia and Ethiopia. While Kenya's close ties with Ethiopia were based on security, its rapprochement with Somalia were influenced partly by economic considerations, and partly by the American military presence in both Kenya and Somalia.
The superpower presence in the Horn was aided considerably by the local states. For Ethiopia, a feeling of being threatened from all sides played a role in its decision to seek close ties with the United States in the 1950s. When relations with the US became sour in the mid-1970s, Ethiopia turned to the Soviet Union for military and economic support. Up to the early 1980s, Ethiopia's leaders still felt insecure and threatened by internal liberation fronts and Somalia's claims to its territory, and that made them more dependent on the Soviet Union for arms.

It was also the ambition to establish a Greater Somalia nation through the 'liberation' and unification of all Somali-inhabited territories that made Somalia seek closer relations with the Soviet Union in the 1960s. When in 1977 the USSR refused to support Somalia's invasion of Ethiopia, Mogadishu ended all military ties with Moscow and turned to Washington for help. Thus Somalia sought ties with the superpowers with a view to expanding its borders.

All this indicates that both Ethiopia and Somalia have found security and satisfaction in maintaining relations with the superpowers. That is partly why Marina Ottaway has observed:

For all the disparity of power existing between the Soviet Union and the United States on the one side and the countries of the Horn on the other, Ethiopia and Somalia have not been the passive victims of manipulation by the great powers... The great powers were invited to intervene - and invited, more significantly, by regimes they had not installed in power in the first place.  

But that did not mean that the superpowers did not have their own reasons for moving there, as will be seen in the following chapters.

99Ottaway, Soviet and American Influence in the Horn, p 2.
The beginning of a superpower presence in any region can take various forms. It might start as a pledge by one of the superpowers to defend a country in that region or even to defend the whole region in the event of either an outside attack or an internal insurrection. This often includes the signing of defence pacts or other treaties. The involvement can also take the form of military or economic aid to a country or group of countries in a region. In this case, the United States' and the Soviet Union's participation in the affairs of the Horn of Africa and the surrounding region could be said to have started in the 1950s. The US signed a defence agreement with Ethiopia in May 1953 (see Part I below), and the Soviet Union concluded an arms deal with Egypt in September 1955 (see Part II below).

This chapter attempts to trace the evolution of superpower policies towards the Horn/Red Sea region, especially Ethiopia, Egypt, Somalia and Sudan, but it does not restrict itself to only those policies that directly affected the region. It also looks at the emergence of superpower policies in the Indian Ocean, and points out how developments elsewhere affected these policies. Decision-makers in both Moscow and Washington often deal with scores of global issues at the same time. It is, therefore, possible that what happens elsewhere in the world can affect their decisions about, and policies towards, the Horn and Africa.

The superpowers entered the Horn/Red Sea region at the height of
the Cold War when their mutual hostility and suspicion were very strong. Did they seek a presence and influence in the region as part of their global competition? Might confrontation in other parts of the world have affected the pattern of Soviet and American association with this area?

The differences in the strategic outlooks of the two superpowers emerged at the beginning of the Cold War in the late 1940s. From that time until the late 1960s, Soviet-American relations were characterised by mutual hostility, suspicion and confrontation. Indeed, from the Truman Administration in the late 1940s, the basis of American national security policy has been the deterrence of Soviet military aggression, and containment of Communist influence worldwide.¹

The Soviet Union saw the American strategy of containment as a threat to its national security and global ambitions, and was determined to challenge it. Moreover, the US and the USSR seemed to pursue their relations largely as a zero-sum game in which one gained when the other lost. That appears to have been the position at the time they established a presence in the Horn. The US was the first to move into the Horn, in 1953. The Soviet Union followed by forging ties with Egypt in 1955, and later reaching the Horn in 1963.

¹For an excellent analysis of American policies of containment, see John Lewis Gaddis, Strategies of Containment (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1982).
1 AMERICAN ENTRY INTO THE HORN

The American presence in the Horn from 1953 to the 1970s appears to have been concerned primarily with the desire to gain influence in the area, to enhance its policy of containment in the Middle East, and to prevent the Soviet Union from having influence there. The economic and military aid which it has given to its friends appears also to have been given partly with a view to attaining those goals. The US had established diplomatic relations with Ethiopia in 1903, but it did not take a strong interest in Ethiopia until shortly after an American diplomat, Averell Harriman, had visited Eritrea in 1942.2

1.1 The Cold War Sign Post

To the extent that American policy towards the Horn since the 1950s has been geared towards containing the spread of communist influence in the region, it could be said that the US has been looking at this region in Cold War terms. The US indicated an interest to establish a military presence in Ethiopia during World War II. The consolidation of the American position in Ethiopia took place after the war, especially when it became clear that the US would play a global anti-communist role.

The American entrenchment in Ethiopia began at the same time as the US was establishing its positions in Greece, Turkey and Iran between 1947 and 1953. The withdrawal of the British military mission3

---

2United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad: Ethiopia, Part 8, Hearings before the Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad, US Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, 1 June 1970, p 1882.

3A British military administration had been established in Eritrea and Italian Somaliland after the defeat of Italy during World War II.
in Ethiopia in 1952 provided an opportunity for Washington to increase its presence there. The main instruments of US policy in Ethiopia from the 1950s until the 1970s were two agreements signed on 22 May 1953. The first agreement permitted the United States to establish an Army Strategic Communications Station at Asmara, named 'Kagnew' after the Ethiopian contingent that fought with the American troops in Korea. According to George W. Bader, who was the Director of the African Region, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Affairs in 1970:

[Kagnew was] a primary relay station of our worldwide defence communications system. Also there [was] an earth terminal for the Defence Satellite Communications System. It also provide[d] a high frequency transmitter for the diplomatic telecommunication system.

The communications base was ideally situated for the American global radio communications network. It was established at the height of the Cold War, and apparently there was an attempt both in Washington and Addis Ababa to see Ethiopia as forming 'a southern tier or secondary line of defence against communism in the Middle East'.

The Kagnew station was established to play a global anti-communist role and had little to do with the security of Ethiopia or the Horn. In testimony to the Senate Subcommittee on African Affairs, John Spencer, former chief adviser to the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said:

---

4United States Security Agreements, p 1883.
5United States Security Agreements, p 1911.
6Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Africa Affairs, Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate, 4, 5 & 6 August 1976, p 27.
The US wanted the communications base at Asmara ... because it was located in the tropics far from the north and south magnetic poles, ... and magnetic storms, in a zone where the limited degree of seasonal variations between sunrise and sunset reduced the need for numerous frequency changes. It was, therefore, important to the worldwide network of US communications through the Philippines, Ethiopia, Morocco and Arlington, Virginia, and important as well for NATO communications within Western Europe itself when electrical and magnetic disturbances upset communications in those higher latitudes. In other words, the base at Asmara had little to do with either Ethiopia or Africa.

This station subsequently served also as a link in the western Indian Ocean to the radio communications base at Northwest Cape, Australia, which was established in 1963. Thus it was important for the American defence network in the major theatres of Western Europe and Southeast Asia.

To try to insulate the communications base from internal Ethiopian turmoil, the US publicly stated that the base would not be used for activities inside Ethiopia. It refused also Emperor Haile Selassie's request to formally commit itself to defend the station if it came under attack. Even when the guerrilla war in Eritrea intensified in the 1960s, the US publicly continued to refuse to provide Ethiopia with counter-insurgency personnel for actual operations in the Eritrean province where Kagnew was located. (But the US and Israel trained Ethiopia's counter-insurgency force).

---

7Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, p 26.
1.2 Economic and Military Aid

The second agreement signed by the United States and Ethiopia in 1953 'governed the provision of grant military assistance and training to the Ethiopian forces'. Ethiopia obtained also economic aid from the United States. The 'original economic assistance agreement between the United States and Ethiopia [had been] signed in 1951'.

Washington provided Ethiopia with military and economic aid because that was what Haile Selassie wanted as payment. According to Edward Korry, former US ambassador to Ethiopia:

The US interest in Ethiopia was simple ... for Washington. The government defined it as 'the unhampered use of Kagnew Station'. This facility was deemed then to be 'strategically' vital to the United States, the only such military installation in black Africa... The defacto price the United States paid for Kagnew was military aid, roughly, $10 million to $12 million a year on the books. I say 'on the books' because the Pentagon in those days often put replacement-cost price tags or near-replacement costs for certain military items in order to get more from the Congress in appropriations for new equipment.

By 1976 the US was reported to have given Ethiopia 'over $350 million in economic aid since 1952 and over $275 million in military assistance'. In the economic field, the US directed its efforts mainly to education, health and transportation. According to David Newsom, a former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, the US helped in a wide range of projects:

We also made important contributions as well to projects in agriculture, communications and mapping. Our programme was

---

9United States Security Agreements, p 1883.
10United States Security Agreements, p 1909.
12Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, p 114.
characterised by a multiproject approach and concentrated on institution building and infrastructure... We are supporting programmes which aim to assist Ethiopia to mobilise its own resources and to expand the monetary economy. We have given Ethiopia as of fiscal year 1969, $97.2 million in loans and $131.5 million in grants for these projects.  

By 1970, Ethiopia had received $228 million in economic aid.

The US also equipped and trained Ethiopia's armed forces in the 1960s and early 1970s. Most of this training was done under the supervision of a Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) which arrived in Ethiopia in 1953. The official role of MAAG included 'the administrative function of receipting the equipment, periodically checking into it, [and] assisting the host country in the operations of the equipment'.

From 1953 until 1960, the US trained and equipped three Ethiopian divisions of 6,000 men each. A fourth division was established in 1960. The US military programme in Ethiopia was the largest in sub-Saharan Africa.

Two factors combined in the 1960s to induce the United States to increase aid, particularly military aid, to Ethiopia. They were Somalia's independence in 1960 and its public commitment to incorporate Ethiopia's Ogaden province, Northeastern Kenya (formerly NFD), and Djibouti into a Greater Somalia nation; and the Soviet offer in 1963 to

---

13 United States Security Agreements, p 1909.
14 United States Security Agreements, p 1914.
15 United States Security Agreements, p 1884.
train and equip Somalia's armed forces and establish the internal security system (see Part II below).

When Somalia became independent in 1960, Ethiopia feared its irredentist intentions, and moved quickly to sign another military agreement with the US, as an insurance against a possible Somali attack. The US responded positively in an attempt to 'outbid the Soviets'. The US signed other agreements with Ethiopia in 1962, 1963 and 1964, 'each of which ... resulted in more military aid of some sort to the emperor'. The 1964 agreement involved the sale of 12 F-5A jet fighters to Ethiopia. The US was guided by the Cold War policies of containment of communism. As Marina Ottaway has said:

By 1960 ... Kagnew was no longer considered the sole reason why the United States should maintain good relations with Ethiopia and provide it with military aid. Fear of the Soviet Union in that part of the world had also become a major factor.

The 1960 US-Ethiopian agreement, in part, stated: 'The United States government also reaffirmed its continuing interest in the security of Ethiopia and its opposition to any activities threatening the territorial integrity of Ethiopia'. Although that agreement indicated an American willingness to help Ethiopia if its territorial integrity was violated, the US did not commit itself to send troops to Ethiopia if the latter came under attack. As Newsom told a Senate

17 United States Security Agreements, p 1917.
18 United States Security Agreements, p 1893.
19 United States Security Agreements, p 1889.
20 Ottaway, Soviet and American Influence in the Horn, p 27. The USSR wanted to compete with the US in Ethiopia when it offered Ethiopia credits of about $100 million, but Haile Selassie did not draw on them.
21 United States Security Agreements, p 1905.
Committee in June 1970: 'The implication of this we have always understood to mean a readiness to use our good offices in the United Nations, in the event of an attack on Ethiopia'.

Another important reason why the US was interested in Ethiopia was the growing role that the latter was playing in African affairs. Ethiopia sent a contingent of more than 3,000 troops to help re-establish order in the former Belgian Congo (now Zaire) under United Nations auspices in 1960; and three years later, Haile Selassie was one of the political leaders who mediated in the war between Morocco and Algeria. Newsom said in June 1970 that he considered Haile Selassie 'of critical value in guiding the new [African] nations into responsible nationhood'.

Moreover, Addis Ababa was chosen in 1963 as the headquarters of the newly-formed Organisation of African Unity (OAU), and Haile Selassie was elected the first chairman of that organisation. These developments enabled Ethiopia to occupy 'a special place in US relations with Africa'. Ethiopia was also very friendly to Israel, which provided counter-insurgency training for operations against Eritreans. But Israel's role does not appear to have been very big:

Israel consistently supported the imperial regime in its nationalism, but its role in training the Ethiopian military remained minor compared with that of the United States. Israel mainly helped to set up commando units for counter-insurgency operations and provided security in special areas, for example, on the airline.

---

22 United States Security Agreements, p 1904.
23 United States Security Agreements, p 1883.
24 United States Security Agreements, p 1882.
Thus for the United States, Ethiopia had useful diplomatic connections both in Africa and the Middle East.

But the US did not always identify with the Ethiopian government on every issue. According to Newsom, there were some differences with regard to Ethiopia's domestic policy:

While there are those who would identify our position solely with that of the Emperor, we feel this a narrow evaluation. Our close ties with Ethiopia have every chance of surviving an orderly succession. 26

The US in fact suggested some reforms in Ethiopia in the 1960s, but they did not go far. And when the succession came in 1974, it was not orderly and the American relationship did not survive it.

In the early 1970s, however, the US started reducing its presence in Ethiopia for various reasons. Improved satellite technology had significantly reduced the importance of the Kagnew communications station. And at the end of 1973 the United States decided to expand its military facilities on the island of Diego Garcia.

By the early 1970s, improvements in 'Earth satellites had made obsolete the tropical system of radio communications'. According to John Spencer:

That the cancellation of the [Kagnew] Base Agreement had little to do with Africa was demonstrated by the Pentagon's explanation that Earth satellites had made obsolete the tropical system of radio communications. In a somewhat broader perspective, that decision was reached at a time when the Soviets were completing just to the south, their large missile and naval base at Berbera in Somalia. That withdrawal reflected the fact that the 'Northern Tier'-Baghdad Pact concept had already disappeared in 1958 with the overthrow of King Faisal and Prime Minister Nuri es Said in Iraq. With the

26 United States Security Agreements, p 1909.
disappearance of the structure of Middle East defence against communism upon which the two agreements with Ethiopia had been based, Ethiopia became significantly less important to the United States, as the withdrawal from Kagnew demonstrated. Those agreements could be concluded free of the inhibitions of the Monroe and NATO doctrines because they related not to Africa but to the Middle East, but they lost most of their significance for the same reason.27

Spencer exaggerated when he spoke of the disappearance of the anti-communist defence structure in the Middle East. It continued to exist as the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) and collapsed in 1979 following the fall of the Shah of Iran. But the American defence network in the Middle East was weakened after Iraq's withdrawal. What effect Iraq's departure had on the importance of Kagnew is difficult to ascertain. The reduction of personnel from Kagnew started in 1971, at which time there were about 3,200 Americans at the station.28

1.3 The Indian Ocean Dimension

The decision to leave the Kagnew communications station took place as the American interest in the expansion of facilities on Diego Garcia was growing. By 1973 when the withdrawal from Kagnew was well underway, it had become obvious that the Pentagon had a strong attraction to Diego Garcia, which is about 3,000 miles from the Persian Gulf.

But American interests in the Indian Ocean took root much earlier, and do not appear to have stemmed from the Soviet threat alone. According to an American scholar, William Stivers of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, US naval strategists saw decolonisation in the 1950s and 1960s as a force that would upset the

27Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, p 27.
balance of power in favour of anti-Western interests. Among those strategists was Admiral Roy L. Johnson, the then Director of the Navy Department's Long Range Objectives Planning Group, who highlighted one of the navy's fears when he wrote on 5 September 1958 that 'as dismemberment of friendly colonial empires into neutralist nationalisms proceeds', the US would lose access to foreign bases and ports vital for sustained naval operations.²⁹

For that reason, the Navy's Long Range Objectives Planning Group proposed in 1960 that the United States should sustain a military presence in the Indian Ocean, both to support its prestige with displays of force, and, when required, to 'intervene promptly to defeat aggression or subversion, restore order, and/or evacuate Western inhabitants'.³⁰ Such interventions would partly be aimed at the defeating or deterring of Soviet bloc interferences and would partly be concerned with supporting friendly governments and forestalling local communist coups in the region. The US Navy's Long Range Objectives Group hoped that by doing so the United States would eliminate opportunities which the USSR was likely to exploit.

As the US Navy advanced its plans to deploy in the Indian Ocean, it started searching for bases that would ensure refuelling and


communications facilities, and where ship repairs could be carried out also. The Long Range Objectives Planning Group recommended in 1959 that the US Navy should look for bases in 'strategic islands' which were sparsely populated, immune from pressures of independence, and where the US could build facilities and use them without any fear. That was how Diego Garcia came to feature in American strategic plans.

Diego Garcia, which was incorporated into the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) in 1965 when Mauritius achieved independence, was leased the following year to the United States for 50 years. The Pentagon then started building naval facilities on the island just as the British were preparing to withdraw from 'East of Suez'. The US Navy first asked the Senate for funds for 'a proposed logistic facility on ... Diego Garcia' in the Fiscal Year 1970. But the Senate only reluctantly agreed to approve funds for the construction of a communications station in Fiscal Year 1971. 'The rationale ... for the communications station was that ... the United States would have to withdraw from the main continent of Africa the large communications facility that the US Government had at Asmara'.

Another reason given for the decision to expand Diego Garcia in the early 1970s was that the United States had had problems in resupplying Israel during the October 1973 war. As one Congressional committee noted:

32 Visit to the Democratic Republic of Somalia, Report to the Committee on Appropriations, US Senate, by members of the Fact-Finding Team sent to Somalia at the invitation of the President of Somalia, 14 July 1975, p 3.
33 Visit to the Democratic Republic of Somalia, p 3.
The short answer given [for the decision to upgrade Diego Garcia] revolved around the October 1973 Middle East war, the US need for continued access to the Persian Gulf and its oil resources, and the desire of the Defence Department to have logistical support necessary for the regular deployment of a carrier task force in the Indian Ocean.  

Thus the decision to improve facilities on Diego Garcia came at the time the withdrawal from Kagnew was starting.

Diego Garcia, like Kagnew, was initially used as a communications station, but it had several advantages over Kagnew. It was far from other countries, and there was, therefore, no fear that it might easily be attacked by a neighbour; it could store fuel and harbour ships; and it had no permanent indigenous population.

At a Senate Committee hearing on Ethiopia in June 1970, Senator Stuart Symington asked George Bader of the Defence Department whether it was not appropriate for the US to carry out the functions of the Kagnew communications station 'from an island or from a ship'. He expressed fears about the situation in Ethiopia and said: 'I just do not like to see another Vietnam come up overnight or another Cambodia or another Laos or another Korea. Couldn't we put those 3,200 people on communications somewhere else?'

Moreover, Diego Garcia would play not only a strategic function but, indirectly a diplomatic one as well. Explaining this to a

---

34 Proposed Expansion of US Military Facilities in the Indian Ocean, Hearings before the Sub-committee on the Near East and South Asia, Committee on Foreign Affairs, US House of Representatives, 21 February, 6, 12, 14 and 20 March 1974, preface, p V.

35 United States Security Agreements, p 1911. The security deletions in this document are so many that one cannot just know what the Pentagon's full position was at that time.
Congressional committee in March 1974, James Noyes, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security said:

First, we wish to provide an effective alternative to the growth of Soviet influence in the region; second, we wish to have continued access to vital Middle Eastern oil supplies for ourselves and other nations of the free world; third, we want to insure the continued free movement of US ships and aircraft into and out of the area... Also ... the purpose of our task forces deployments from time to time can be related to diplomatic efforts, to negotiations, to show our resolve, our interest. So our purposes are not simply the sea lanes, but go on to include such matters as real or perceived military balance as related to negotiations or other diplomatic efforts.36

The US felt it could not have played this role effectively if it had remained in Ethiopia alone. While Kagnew was in the heart of Eritrea where the insurgency was rapidly increasing, Diego Garcia was a comparatively much safer place where the indigenous population had been moved to Mauritius in the 1960s. That was the reason the expansion of facilities on Diego Garcia was speeded up just when problems in Ethiopia were increasing. Those problems, which were sparked off by the famine of 1972-1973, led to the overthrow of Haile Selassie in 1974 and his replacement by a Soviet-leaning military junta.

2 THE SOVIET PRESENCE

As it was stated earlier, the Soviet Union established ties with the Horn ten years after the United States. Its entry to the Horn was linked to its involvement in the entire Red Sea region, stretching from Egypt to Somalia and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY).

2.1 The Egyptian Connection

The Soviet presence in the Red Sea dates back to the 1950s, when the USSR, under Nikita Khrushchev, established relations with Egypt, then ruled by Gamal Abdel Nasser. The two countries' first agreement was a military deal. Czechoslovakia and the USSR agreed in September 1955 to supply Egypt with some weapons.\(^{37}\) Nasser's successor, Anwar Sadat, later said that Egypt had approached the USSR - having been given a cold shoulder by Washington - as early as 1953 before Stalin's death, but the Soviet Union refused because 'Stalin's principles prevented him from supplying weapons to non-communist states'.\(^{38}\) The USSR agreed to give Egypt military aid two years after Stalin's death.\(^{39}\)

According to Mohamed Heikal, former editor of the semi-official Egyptian daily, Al Ahram, the Soviet arms shipment was already on the way when Nasser announced the deal in September 1955.\(^{40}\) That was the beginning of the Soviet military presence in Africa, and in particular, in the Red Sea region.

The Anglo-French-Israeli Suez invasion of Egypt in July 1956 also enabled the Soviet Union to demonstrate its willingness to help Egypt ward off its attackers. On 5 November, the USSR threatened to intervene


\(^{38}\)Sadat, In Search of Identity, p 127.

\(^{39}\)For a good explanation of the circumstances under which that aid was given, see Mohammed Heikal, The Sphinx and the Commissar: The Rise and Fall of Soviet Influence in the Middle East (New York, Harper & Row, 1978) pp 56-63.

\(^{40}\)Heikal, The Sphinx and the Commissar, pp 56-63.
militarily, hinting that Soviet rockets might be used against the attackers unless they ceased operations against Egypt. The Suez crisis also saw Khrushchev's first threats to send volunteers to oppose the invasion.

The Suez incident helped Soviet diplomacy in a number of ways. It came almost at the same time with the Soviet intervention in Hungary, and for a while it distracted world attention from Hungary. It also seriously damaged French and British, and possibly Western, prestige in the Middle East. The Arab opponents of continued Western dominance in the area, namely Egypt and Syria, turned increasingly to the Soviet Union for arms and economic aid. According to two British scholars: 'Suez gave the USSR a foothold in the Middle East, and in effect demonstrated what had been suspected since the founding of the Baghdad Pact: the Cold War had arrived in the Middle East'.

The Soviet Union was opposed to the Baghdad Pact because the pact threatened its southern flank. From the time the treaty was signed, the Soviet Union's interest was to attempt to undermine it by championing Egypt and Syria which were also opposed to the Pact and could, therefore, be relied upon to advance Moscow's goals. Following the Iraqi revolution of July 1958, the Soviet Union extended military and economic aid to Iraq. Thus, by the end of 1958, the USSR was involved in Egypt, Iraq and Syria, and that helped undermine the Baghdad Pact.

41See Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 3-10 November 1956, pp 15173-87; 10-17 November 1956, pp 15189-94.
This shows Moscow's early moves to cultivate ties with nationalistic regimes in the Middle East.

What might have been of great interest to the USSR also was the role of Nasser in African and Middle Eastern politics. Nasser was well aware that he belonged to three subsystems in Africa and the Middle East, namely, the Arab circle, the Muslim circle and the African circle. He was respected in all three circles, and that meant that he carried considerable influence in Africa and the Middle East. By associating itself with Egypt, the Soviet Union, which had not had any experience of operating in Africa, might have attempted to use Nasser as a front man to penetrate the three subsystems.

In Africa in the early 1960s, Nasser belonged to a small group of radical states — the so-called Casablanca Group — that included Algeria, Ghana, Guinea, Mali and Morocco. All these states opposed the Western dominance of the region and, indirectly, advanced Soviet objectives. From that point of view, the Soviet Union's presence in Egypt placed it in a key country.

But Nasser appears to have been wary of Soviet motives and of the activities of the local Communist Party, which he banned. There is, however, no doubt that Nasser was the Soviet Union's closest friend in Africa and the Middle East in the 1960s.

The Soviet Union's major economic undertaking in Africa was Egypt's Aswan Dam hydroelectric power project. When the United States reversed its decision to help finance the construction of the dam in July 1956, Nasser turned to the USSR, which agreed to finance the
scheme. The dam was of immense importance to Egypt, both for irrigation and for the generation of electricity.

Soviet economic assistance, especially public-sector aid, went also to Egypt's Casablanca allies, namely, Algeria, Ghana, Guinea and Mali between 1960 and 1965. Soviet economic assistance also embraced projects for harbour, airport and road construction that held potential strategic interest for the USSR.

In turn, Egypt provided the USSR with access to military facilities at Alexandria, Mersa Matruh, Sollum and Port Said. Nasser allowed the Soviet Union use of Egyptian military facilities because, as one of his former aides said, he believed that 'it was to the advantage of the whole nonaligned world for Russia's naval presence in the Mediterranean to be strengthened'. He hoped that by allowing the USSR a military presence in the region, 'some sort of parity might be reached between the Soviet and American Sixth fleet'. But with the death of Nasser in September 1970, Moscow lost one of its greatest friends in the Third World.

Although Nasser's successor, Anwar Sadat, signed in March 1971 a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the USSR, Soviet-Egyptian relations were strained shortly thereafter. Without warning, Sadat expelled in July 1972 Soviet military advisers and denied the Soviet

44 Heikal, The Road to Ramadan, p 47.
45 For Sadat's personal views on that treaty, see his In Search of Identity, pp 283-5.
navy access to Egyptian facilities. He gave three reasons for his action. First, that the friendship treaty was just imposed on him by the then Soviet President, Nikolai Podgorny. Second, he believed that the USSR was plotting to overthrow his government. And third, he said that the USSR was not willing to underwrite his military policy towards Israel.

It appears also that Sadat expelled the Soviets in order that Egypt might reassert its independence in foreign and defence policies, and partly to humiliate the USSR. As Sadat has subsequently explained:

Yet another reason for my decision was that I wanted to put the Soviet Union in its place - in its natural position as a friendly country, no more, no less. The Soviets had thought at one time that they had Egypt in their pocket, and the world had come to think that the Soviet Union was our guardian. I wanted to tell the Russians that the will of Egypt was entirely Egyptian; I wanted to tell the whole world that we are always our own masters.46

Of the 12,000 military personnel expelled, about two-thirds belonged to independent units that manned missile sites, naval and air bases, and Soviet aircraft.47 In spite of that expulsion, the USSR helped the Egyptians considerably during the October 1973 war both by resupplying them and by negotiating a ceasefire on their behalf when the war turned against them. One probable reason why Moscow did so was that it looked at its role in the Middle East in the long-term and was not immediately put off by Sadat's policies. Some of the Soviet military advisers who were expelled from Egypt in 1972 went straight to

46Sadat, In Search of Identity, p 231.
Somalia where, in the same year, they started the modernisation of the port of Berbera.

2.2 From Egypt to Somalia

The Soviet Union's military ties with Egypt had thus a bearing on later Soviet developments in Somalia.

The USSR did not have any military presence in Somalia until the early 1960s, and it came as a result of the failure of Western countries to meet Mogadishu's request for military assistance. On gaining independence in 1960, Somalia approached a number of Western countries for military assistance, but none of them was enthusiastic about giving it the level of military assistance it wanted - namely, the creation of a force of 10,000 troops. As Marina Ottaway says, there were several reasons why these countries were not interested in meeting Somalia's request.48

First, Somalia, having emerged from the union of Italian and British Somalilands, was a child of no particular colonial power. There was, therefore, no country that felt responsible for Somalia. Second, most of the prospective donors thought that Somalia was asking for military assistance far beyond its resources and population. And, third, most Western countries did not want to be identified with Somalia's goal of pursuing the annexation of Kenya's northeastern region, then under British rule; Ethiopia's Ogaden region, when Ethiopia was a close American ally; and Djibouti, then under French

48Ottaway, Soviet and American Influence in the Horn, p 28.
rule. Moreover, since Somalia's neighbours were then firmly in the Western camp, Mogadishu did not offer anything that the West did not already have.

In spite of these reservations, Italy, the US and West Germany agreed to raise $10 million to build for Somalia a domestic-oriented force of 5,000 to 6,000. Somalia turned down that offer and accepted in 1963 a Soviet aid package of $33 million to train and equip a force of 10,000 troops. That was the beginning of the Soviet military involvement in Somalia. But it was a military presence not initially accompanied by any appreciable influence on the political system, for Somalia was largely a pro-Western country until 1969 when the Soviet-trained armed forces, headed by General Mohammed Siad Barre, toppled the civilian government.  

Barre's government immediately declared its intention to create a Marxist-Leninist political system, while making efforts to establish close links with the USSR. By the time of the coup about 800 members of the Somali armed forces had trained in the USSR. Might this have affected the orientation of the policies of the Somali military junta? It is not easy to establish what role the USSR played in the Somali coup. As Marina Ottaway says:


There is no concrete evidence that such exposure really affected the political orientation of the army. It is easy to conclude that the SRC [Supreme Revolutionary Council] turned to socialism because the Somali army from which it was extracted had been indoctrinated to socialism by Soviet advisers. The validity of the conclusion appears somewhat doubtful when one considers that only a few years later the US-trained Ethiopian army spawned the Dergue, which was as committed to socialism in words and deeds as the SRC.51

But it could be added that in Somalia, the army was trained by advisers who did not approve of the existing political system. The Soviet advisers and the Somali army might, therefore, have held similar views about the political situation in Somalia.

It is not easy to determine the role of Soviet advisers in the Somali coup, but it is possible to trace the Soviet role in Somalia's subsequent policies. In 1969, the SRC merely spoke of having staged a 'revolution'. The fact that Barre did not immediately declare the SRC's intention to introduce 'scientific socialism' until a year later suggests that the orientation of the Barre regime towards that ideology might have been influenced by Soviet advisers. 'Scientific socialism' was referred to on the first anniversary of the 'revolution' in October 1970.

The following year, Barre announced his intention to launch a political party. Why did he want a political party at that time? One important reason was that the military leaders did not fear competition from civilians:

Several factors were behind this decision [to launch a party]. The Soviet advisers were pressing for the formation of a vanguard party... The SRC had no particular reason to worry

51Ottaway, Soviet and American Influence in the Horn, p 62.
about civilian competition. Finally the Somali government was increasingly involved in attempts to mobilise the population for development projects, and it needed a political organisation for doing so... The formation of the party was controlled by the SRC, with Soviet advisers offering help.  

The party was not, however, launched until 1976 (see chapter 4). But what all this shows is that after the coup and particularly in the early 1970s, the Soviet Union helped Somalia to build some important institutions in the country. The party was only one of those institutions.

Another was the army, which it had been training since 1963. From 1972, the USSR embarked on a massive expansion of the Somali army. Although Moscow enlarged its military aid programme in Somalia in February 1972, most of the aid came after the Soviet expulsion from Egypt in July of that year. This increased Soviet military assistance looked like part of a very specific exchange between the two countries. The Soviet Union requested and obtained access to the port of Berbera and started developing military facilities there. Somalia, on the other hand, received greater support. In addition to the growing arms aid, the Soviet Union helped with the creation of Somalia's internal security system. The USSR thus appeared interested in establishing a strong presence in Somalia by the early 1970s.

Barre's rise to power in 1969 coincided with the USSR's interest in projecting its military power in the Indian Ocean region. Moscow's

---

52 Ottaway, Soviet and American Influence in the Horn, p 65.
53 Ottaway, Soviet and American Influence in the Horn, p 67.
54 Ottaway, Soviet and American Influence in the Horn, p 67.
first naval appearance in the Indian Ocean was in 1968 (see next section), and by the early 1970s, it was thinking of establishing a permanent military presence in that area. Several factors in the early 1970s helped to drift the USSR towards Somalia. First, the death of Nasser of Egypt in 1970, as has been stated, weakened the Soviet position in, and eventually led to the expulsion of Soviet military advisers from, that country. The Egyptian expulsion apparently made Moscow see Somalia as a useful alternative friend.

Second, although Moscow had tried to increase military ties with Sudan following the May 1969 military coup that brought Gaafar Numeiri to power, Soviet prospects in that country appeared quite dim in the early 1970s. In fact, by the time Numeiri came to power, the USSR had already indicated an interest in Sudan. Moscow signed an aid agreement in 1968 with the civilian government of Mohammed Ahmed Mahgoub. The agreement covered fighter planes, transport aircraft, tanks and smaller arms. Numeiri's coup, however, took place before deliveries of those weapons began.

Numeiri got the support of the local communists during the coup, and the USSR enjoyed improved relations with his government for some time. Moscow also actively assisted Numeiri against the Anya-Anyaa guerrillas between 1969 and 1972, when the civil war in Sudan came to an end. But by 1971, Numeiri had turned against the local communists. When the communists attempted that year to overthrow him and failed, thanks to the support he got from Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, Numeiri claimed to see the Soviet hand in the attempted coup and immediately became critical of the USSR. Numeiri's increasing hostility
to the communists and criticism of the USSR after the coup may have given Moscow a signal that its stay in Sudan did not have a long future. That was perhaps another reason why the USSR stepped up its aid to Somalia and started modernising Berbera in 1972.

The third reason for Soviet interest in Somalia was that Barre not only appeared to have a keen interest in forging ties with Moscow, but he was also ready to grant it military facilities. Moscow, therefore, saw that the political conditions in Somalia were favourable to the establishment of a military presence. That seemed to fit well the collaborative views of some Soviet writers who argued in 1972 that:

"[The] task of increasing the strategic mobility of the Soviet Union's naval forces and ensuring a Soviet military presence in this or that area of the world's oceans is being worked out at a time of all-round growth not only of our country's economic and technological capabilities but also of expansion of its foreign policy opportunities."  

They further pointed out that there was 'full understanding of the fact that the foreign policy wherewithal of a military presence is a no less complicated and difficult matter than the economic and military technology wherewithal'. These Soviet writers believed that the nature of their country's military presence in any region was determined both by the prevailing conditions in that region and by the changing situation in the whole world. Possibly having in mind the emerging Soviet-American detente at the time, they argued:

"It goes without saying that the question of the character and form of a Soviet military presence in this or that region

can be decided only with full consideration both of the concrete situation in the said region and of the international situation as a whole.  

It is apparent, therefore, that Barre allowed the USSR to establish a military facility when Moscow was looking for an expanded military role in the world. That facility significantly helped the Soviet Union in its quest for parity with the United States in the Indian Ocean.

2.3 The Indian Ocean Policy

Soviet interests in the Indian Ocean started taking shape in the 1950s (especially after Stalin's death in 1953) when Moscow apparently realised that it was losing opportunities of influencing Third World states. The Soviet Union's objective in the Indian Ocean was probably to demonstrate that it, too, had important maritime interests, 'both purposive and positive' around the world. It wanted also to counter American attempts in 1954-55 to attract Third World countries into alliance systems, for example, the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) and South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO), which were aimed against it. As Geoffrey Jukes has pointed out:

After 1953 ... the Soviet Union became an active provider of economic and military aid to several Indian Ocean countries along its southern periphery - Iraq, Afghanistan and India - and indulged in a diplomatic 'counter-offensive' by providing Indonesia with quantities of arms, aircraft and ships far beyond her capacity to man or maintain... None of this activity, however, included a direct armed presence, nor was Soviet aid used as a form of persuasion to attract the recipients into any form of alliance.  

---

57Kulish, Military Force and International Relations, p 137.
The Soviet navy became a global force long after World War II, but its traditional objective was to defend the 'homeland', which meant '(1) supporting army operations on land, and (2) repulsing attacks from the sea'. Like other branches of the Soviet armed forces, the navy was modernised in the 1950s and 1960s with a view to challenging the American global military dominance. But in those years, it was still a very small force compared to the US navy. According to Jukes:

During the 1950s the Soviet navy expanded greatly, to rank behind the United States navy as the world's second largest, but in form it remained a 'have not' navy. A large force of submarines gave the ability to mount an anti-carrier screen, capable of attacking US carrier-strike forces before they were close enough to Soviet territory to launch their aircraft against city targets... Large numbers of destroyers and frigates provided protection for its coastal trade against submarine attack... But neither the submarines nor the surface ships provided the capability to exercise control of the high seas out of range of land-based aircraft. The submarines could challenge Western control of the high seas by attacking maritime commerce, and make it impossible for seaborne air attacks on Soviet territory to be launched with impunity, but they could neither control the high seas in the Soviet interest nor provide a counter-vailing air-strike threat to Western, especially American, cities.

The USSR revised its concept of naval strength in the late 1960s, when it modified and scrapped some of the old types of vessels. The reason was probably connected with developments in the Western navies. In other words, it was a response to Moscow's changing perceptions of threat, technological innovations and shifts in national priorities.

The USSR was seriously threatened by the emergence in the early 1960s of the American fleet ballistic missile submarine and by the increases

---

60 McCGwire, 'Soviet Naval Doctrine and Strategy', p 146.
in range and payload of the Polaris A1 and A2 missiles which came into operation in 1962. Polaris A1 had a range of 1,200 nautical miles while Polaris A2 had a range of 1,800 nautical miles. These developments provided the USSR with 'an additional incentive for a forward deployment'.

Jukes says that the Indian Ocean entered the calculations of Soviet naval strategists in 1964, following the launching in 1963 of Polaris A3, with a range of 2,500 nautical miles:

In making the necessary calculations, they would have been bound to discover that the north-west corner of the Indian Ocean ..., an area of low interest for possessors of the Polaris A1 and A2, becomes more attractive to the possessor of A3, because from there the A3 exposed to attack all areas between the Western Soviet border and Eastern Siberia, extending almost as far north as Leningrad and including all main industrial areas from the Ukraine to the Kuzbas.

Another development that may have increased Soviet fears about American intentions in the Indian Ocean was the announcement in 1963 that a US navy communications facility would be built at North-West Cape in Western Australia. The Soviet Union must have linked this communications station with a likely American plan to deploy Polaris A3 missiles to the northwestern quadrant of the Indian Ocean.

Hence the Soviet diplomatic move at the United Nations in December 1964 proposing that the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea be

---


declared nuclear-free zones. The call was made with a view to serving Soviet defence needs:

The proposal corresponded to Soviet self-interest, in that a ban on the deployment of nuclear weapons on those two areas of sea would deprive the United States of two of its 'best' areas for deployment of nuclear weapons against Soviet territory, while depriving the Soviet Union only of areas from which secondary counter-city targets ... could be attacked.

Since March 1968, after the British government had announced that it would withdraw from 'East of Suez' by 1971, the Soviet Union has maintained a constant naval presence in the Indian Ocean. Initially, 'this presence was primarily of a flag-showing nature with port visits scheduled in quest of acceptance and information on port facilities', and in that earlier period, Soviet forces 'lacked staying power, logistic support, air cover and balance'. One significance of these visits was that they demonstrated that the Soviet navy had grown 'from a coastal defence force to a global manifestation of Soviet might'.

The Soviet Union soon followed its initial flag-showing missions with an active interest in pursuing naval diplomacy. A classic example of this was the Bangladesh crisis of 1971 (When East Pakistan, with help from India, broke away from West Pakistan and declared itself the independent state of Bangladesh.) When the crisis started in December 1970, the Soviet naval presence in the area was small - 'a destroyer, an F-class conventional attack submarine, a minesweeper, and a tank

---

landing ship'. But within a few weeks of the war, the USSR sent to the area two task groups, each with four combatants with 12 surface-to-surface missile launchers. This looked like a reaction to the US despatch of carrier Task Force 74 in December 1970. According to Anne Kelly and James McConnell, the Bangladesh crisis 'revealed the high value now placed by Moscow on coercive naval diplomacy'.

In testimony before an Australian Parliamentary Committee in 1976, Jukes said that 'the presence of Soviet naval units in the Indian Ocean is occasioned in the first instance by a perceived need for area familiarisation against the prospect that United States naval forces (missile firing submarines and attack aircraft carriers) will find the Arabian Sea an attractive deployment area from which to attack the Soviet Union'. This reinforced the view that the Soviet entry into the Indian Ocean was primarily defensive and reactive. The Soviet Union might have sought to balance the United States or to reach parity with it in the Indian Ocean region.

The USSR eventually established naval facilities at Berbera. Some of those facilities included storage for ammunition, spares and stores and fuel and repair equipment. The installation of oil storage

---

71 Australia and the Indian Ocean Region, Commonwealth of Australia, Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, 1976, p 628.
facilities at Berbera was crucial in easing the task of maintaining the Arabian Sea squadron and the Indian Ocean fishing fleet. But the main Soviet interest in the Indian Ocean, apart from wishing to challenge the West, was to identify closely with some nonaligned states and help the emerging Marxist states in the region. As Jukes observed in 1972:

The main Soviet interest in the Indian Ocean lies not upon its sea-lanes, but on its shores, where the bolstering of established nonaligned states, such as India and Ceylon [now Sri Lanka], the wooing towards nonalignment of aligned states such as Iraq, Iran and Pakistan, and the encouragement of newly-independent states, such as South Yemen [also called the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen], in nonalignment ... have been major objectives of Soviet policy ever since the death of Stalin. The manifestation of naval strength in the Indian Ocean plays its part in this process, but it is not a major part, while relative smallness of the presence, the congruence of the ships forming it with an anti-Polaris policy, and the zeal with which the nonaligned countries have been encouraged to express hostility to an Indian Ocean naval race, suggests that beyond flag-showing, the preferred solution is likely to be a naval-limitation agreement, particularly one involving a self-denying ordinance on deployment of seaborne strategic weapons - namely the strike-carriers, of which the Soviet navy has none, and the ballistic missile submarine, where the Soviet Union is behind but catching up.

The Soviet Union did not have aircraft carriers until the late 1970s.

Some Western analysts believe that the Soviet interest in the Indian Ocean has mainly been the desire to play an antisubmarine role there. Tom Farer, for example, says:

Whether or not [the development of Polaris A3] influenced the initial [Soviet] decision to deploy east of Suez, development of antisubmarine capability now appears to be a significant part of the Russian mission there. During the worldwide naval exercise called OKEAN, conducted by the Russians in 1975, this seems to have been the only function assigned to their Indian Ocean squadron.

---

The evolution of superpower policies towards the Horn was influenced a great deal by Cold War politics and remained so up to the 1970s. American interests were quite clear, namely, to use a military presence in Ethiopia to reinforce its containment policies in the Middle East and South Asia. The global dimension of that American presence was underlined by the worldwide functions of the Kagnew communications station.

The Soviet entry into the region had also clear-cut aims, namely, to outflank the United States Middle East defence structure and defeat the policies of containment. The Soviet military presence in Egypt from the late 1950s did just that, and Moscow's subsequent support for the Iraqi revolutionary leaders undermined the American security networks in the Middle East.

The superpowers established a diplomatic and military presence in the Horn as one way of furthering their Cold War policies, but they made other gains as well. The United States benefited from Ethiopia's influence in some parts of Africa, while the Soviet Union gained from Egypt's prominence in both Africa and the Middle East.

Both superpowers initially tried to court prominent political figures in the Horn/Red Sea region. Moscow relied on President Nasser of Egypt while Washington used Haile Selassie. These two leaders commanded respect among some African states and had connections with the Middle East. Nasser was respected by radical African leaders while Haile Selassie was admired by some of the conservative leaders on the continent.
Nasser had, however, a larger following in Africa and the Middle East than Haile Selassie. As a Muslim, Nasser was respected by most Muslims in Africa and the Middle East. Thus he could easily exploit religion to his advantage. Moreover, he was seen as a pioneer of Arab and African nationalism. But Haile Selassie belonged to the Coptic Church that did not have many adherents in the region. In the Middle East, he had close ties with only one state, Israel. Essentially, Haile Selassie was identified with 'imperialist' and conservative circles while Nasser was associated with forces of liberation and change.

But Haile Selassie had an advantage over Nasser. While Nasser belonged to the Casablanca group of states - one of the regional blocs in Africa in the early 1960s - Haile Selassie appeared neutral in African matters. His country's neutrality in African affairs might have played a role in the choice of Addis Ababa as the OAU headquarters.

By the mid-1960s, the USSR was a friend of both Egypt and Somalia, and that was the start of its policy in the western part of the Indian Ocean. The strategies of the two superpowers in the Indian Ocean represented their rivalry at a higher level of competition as it hinged on the possible deployment of nuclear weapons there and antisubmarine warfare plans. By involving nuclear weapons, rivalry in the Indian Ocean went beyond the realm of containment of communism in the Third World.

Both Washington and Moscow provided a considerable amount of economic and military assistance to their friends. But their policies
in the Horn/Red Sea region kept changing over time in response to the shifting local political realities and to meet new superpower goals that grew out of their competition and their increasing understanding of each other's motives and tactics.
Chapter 4

RIVALRY IN A CHANGING ORDER, 1974-76

As the two superpowers shoulder global responsibilities, their participation in any region is often affected by their activities in other parts of the world. While the United States may have been concerned about the nature of the changes that took place in Ethiopia from 1974, the problems that accompanied them were only of marginal significance compared with its efforts to withdraw from Vietnam, its management of relations with the Soviet Union and its interest in the Middle East.

Indeed, an administration concerned with the repercussions of retreating from Vietnam and, worse still, confronted with the Watergate scandal at home, was not likely to pay much attention to the deterioration of the situation in Ethiopia. Thus the American view of the events that unfolded in the Horn starting in January 1974 was affected by US commitments worldwide.

For the Soviet Union also, the Horn was not, and has not been, a priority area. Moscow's primary concern in foreign policy has been to maintain a tight grip on Eastern Europe and manage its relations with the West, particularly the US. Equally important to the USSR has been the need to ensure the security of its border with China, especially since the mid-1960s. Developments in the Third World have been of great concern only where Moscow has seen a good opportunity for helping new Marxist governments or for improving its position vis-a-vis the West.

Despite, or perhaps because of, all these wide-ranging interests
across the world, the superpowers still appeared ready to compete with each other in the Horn. This chapter discusses superpower competition in the Horn from 1974 to 1976.

1 THE SOVIET MOVES

As was stated in the previous chapter, the Soviet presence in Egypt and Sudan had become quite tenuous by 1972. Although the Soviet Union helped Egypt during the October 1973 Middle East war, the two countries' relations remained cool, and Egypt increasingly moved towards the United States for economic and military support. The only countries that still maintained good relations with the USSR in the Horn/Red Sea region were Somalia and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). The PDRY, which had initially wavered between China and the USSR, started identifying more closely with Moscow as it became disenchanted with Beijing following the Sino-American rapprochement in the early 1970s.

1.1 Entrenchment in Somalia

After the USSR's relations with Sudan had plummeted further in the mid-1970s, Moscow's only hope of retaining a presence in the region rested with Somalia. By 1974 Somalia was politically the closest Soviet friend in sub-Saharan Africa.

A few factors helped the USSR consolidate its position in the Horn between 1974 and 1976. First, the US was still withdrawing its troops from Vietnam, and that seemed to absorb the attention of most of the

---

1 This change in Egypt's foreign policy has been explained well in Anwar al-Sadat, In Search of Identity (New York, Harper & Row, 1978) pp 271-313.
policy-makers in Washington. Second, revelations of the Watergate scandal, which had surfaced in 1973, made it difficult for the Nixon Administration to exert influence on what was happening around the world. Third, the Portuguese African empire started disintegrating in 1974, following a change of government in Portugal in April that year.

These developments encouraged Moscow to seek ways of replacing a Western presence in the former Portuguese colonies. One Western writer has observed:

For the Soviet Union, Portugal's change of regime in April 1974 offered an enormous potential of future advantage, whether in terms of European politics; of Western defence posture vis-a-vis the USSR; or of scope for the furtherance of Soviet interests in both tropical and southern Africa.²

The fourth factor was that the government of Haile Selassie in Ethiopia was overthrown by a socialist-leaning military junta in 1974, thus paving the way for improved relations between the Soviet Union and Ethiopia. Applauding the Ethiopian revolution, a Soviet commentator, Vladimir Kudryavtsev, said that the Haile Selassie government had been among 'the regimes that served as conductors of imperialist influence and as a brake on the democratisation and social and economic progress'.³ Policy planners in Moscow must have felt that the time was ripe for their country to make a move to increase its influence in a region which was previously dominated by American or Western influence.

In July 1974 the USSR signed a Treaty of Friendship and

Cooperation with Somalia.⁴ That treaty would probably have been signed earlier in the year, but it was delayed until two weeks after the June 1974 OAU summit in Mogadishu. A lot has been said about the treaty, but there is nothing spectacular about it (see Appendix 2).

There is also no way of telling whether Somalia had asked for the treaty or it was suggested by the Soviet Union. In the case of the Soviet-Egyptian treaty, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser asked for it for a long time but Moscow declined. However, a year after Nasser's death, Moscow appeared to want the treaty even more than Egypt.⁵ Just a year before the Soviet-Somali treaty was signed, some Western commentators had speculated that Moscow wanted the treaty and that Somalia had declined.⁶

Under the circumstances of the mid-1970s both Somalia and the Soviet Union appeared to have wanted such a treaty. Somalia, which was already friendly to the USSR, might have desired a treaty, which one writer has described as an 'institutionalised high point of relations,'⁷ as a way of cementing ties with Moscow and thereby preventing the latter from establishing close ties with Ethiopia which was also beginning to move towards socialism. The USSR, on the other hand, might have sought such a treaty to consolidate its position in a

⁴For some Soviet comments on the treaty, see Vladimir Kudryavtsev, 'USSR-Somali Treaty and Africa's Growing Part in World Affairs', BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 26 July 1974, SU/4661/A5/2.
⁵Sadat, In Search of Identity, pp 283-285.
⁶One of the exponents of this view was J. Bowyer Bell, The Horn of Africa: Strategic Magnet in the Seventies (New York: Crane, Russak & Co., 1973) p 42.
sub-Saharan African state at a time a liberation war was shaping up in southern Africa.

The pact promised protection and aid for Somalia. For instance, Article 4 stated:

In the interests of strengthening the defence capacity of the Somali Democratic Republic, the High Contracting Parties will continue to develop cooperation in the military field on the basis of the corresponding agreements between them. Such cooperation will provide, in particular, for collaboration in training Somali military personnel, and in familiarising them with armaments and equipment supplied to the Somali Democratic Republic with the aim of strengthening its defence potential.\(^8\)

After signing the treaty, the USSR continued to provide Somalia with military assistance and established its internal security system.

Two organisations were created in the early 1970s for purposes of internal control and surveillance, namely the National Security Services (NSS) and the Victory Pioneers (VP). The all-powerful NSS, which was headed by Col. Ahmed Suleiman, Barre's son-in-law, was responsible for state security. The Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) relied heavily on the NSS to monitor the activities of opposition groups in the country. The VP supplemented the NSS in some ways. Some of its functions included ensuring that people worked 'voluntarily' on public projects and attended ideological classes to learn the elements of socialism.

In addition to organising the internal security network, the USSR contributed substantially in the building of the Somali army. By 1976, Somalia was estimated to have more than 250 tanks, more than 300

---

armoured personnel carriers, and over 52 fighter planes. During this period, Somalia's army increased from 13,500 troops in 1973 to 25,000 in 1976. This military build-up was undertaken in spite of the fact that Somalia had no internal security problems at that time. One conjecture that can be made about this military expansion is that Somalia was, among other things, planning to invade Ethiopia.

Moreover, Moscow had 'nearly 4,000 military and civilian advisers in Somalia' in 1976. That shows how deeply the Soviet Union was involved in Somalia during this period. Of particular significance was the fact that the Somali army played a 'central political role' in the country. The Soviet Union was thus involved in the building of a very important institution in Somalia.

The Soviet presence in Somalia was conspicuous in the mid-1970s, but whether the USSR controlled Somalia's decision-making process is difficult to tell. Some Western commentators thought in the mid-1970s that the USSR had tremendous influence in Somalia. Brian Crozier has, for instance, stated:

---


The Russians have access to all investigations and reports, and advise their Somali counterparts in evaluation and administration. They are thus in a unique position to influence security activities, and by the same token to protect their own position in the country, since the NSS now has a network of informers from the top levels of government down to the villagers. Soviet advisers also have right of access to separate secret services maintained by the army, the police and the political office of the presidency. The Soviet influence on Somali intelligence activities extends beyond the country's borders.

There is no doubt that Soviet advisers operated at many levels of the Somali government, but Crozier exaggerated when he claimed that they had 'the right of access' to every information that went to the Somali government. If the Soviet Union had controlled Somalia to the extent claimed by Crozier, Barre would not have been able to order out Soviet military advisers and close their military facilities in 1977.

The Soviet Union might have persuaded Somalia to move in a pro-Soviet direction at a general level. But it did not exercise much influence on specific decisions that Somalia wanted to take. There were cases, as was pointed out in Chapter 2, where the Soviet Union and Somalia clashed on foreign policy issues.

By helping Somalia, the USSR was principally concerned with maintaining influence in the Horn and increasing its presence in the Indian Ocean. Soviet installations at Berbera included a dry dock, missile handling and storage facilities, a communications station, a large fuel storage facility and a 15,000 foot runway capable of

15See Ottaway, Soviet and American Influence in the Horn, pp 77-81, for an interesting discussion of this issue.
accommodating large Soviet aircraft. Some of these facilities, especially the communications receiver and transmitter sites were accessible to Soviet personnel alone.

There were reports in the Western media in 1975 that the Soviet Union had 'missiles' in Somalia, but those missiles were later found out to be 'the old, 1950s vintage Styx antiship missiles which the Russians had given to over a dozen other countries'. The USSR had also a communications centre at Kismayu and access to air facilities at Mogadishu.

On the political side, the Soviet Union helped Somalia organise a political party based on Marxist-Leninist principles. As a first move towards the formation of the party, the SRC established an organisation called the National Public Relations Office. That body, later renamed the National Political Office, was responsible for setting up branches of the future party throughout the country. Most of those branches, in turn, started party classes through which people were introduced to socialist ideas. These party classes or 'orientation centres' also 'mobilised the population to participate in work projects, collected information for security purposes, and even conducted literacy campaigns'. Somalia eventually launched the political party, the Somali Socialist Revolutionary Party, in 1976.

---

17 Soviet Military Capability in Berbera, pp 15-16.
18 Congressional Record, 6 May 1976.
19 Ottaway, Soviet and American Influence in the Horn, pp 65-66.
One geopolitical issue in the Horn that seemed to have concerned the USSR in the 1960s and early 1970s was the US presence in Ethiopia. But by 1974, the American presence in Ethiopia was on the decrease, especially after the overthrow of Haile Selassie. Keen Soviet planners must have seen at that time an opportunity of increasing their country's presence in the region at the expense of the US.

1.2 Cautious Approach to Ethiopia

Although the 1974 Ethiopian revolution gave the USSR an opportunity of improving ties with Ethiopia, the Soviet Union's interest in that country dates from the 1940s. The principal Soviet goal at that time was to gain leverage in Ethiopia, which Moscow considered a key African country. The USSR established a diplomatic mission in Addis Ababa shortly after World War II, and before long it embarked on a medical aid programme, which culminated in the completion of a hospital in 1948.

While on a visit to Moscow in 1959, Haile Selassie was given an aid credit of US $100 million, and the USSR agreed to build an oil refinery at Assab. Haile Selassie, who was heavily dependent on the US for economic and military assistance, occasionally played the Soviet card whenever Washington appeared not to be forthcoming with the kind of assistance he wanted. For instance, he went to Moscow in 1973 to ask for aid when the US seemed unwilling to meet some of his requests for military assistance. But by that time his days were numbered.

---

With the fall of Haile Selassie's government and its replacement by a socialist-leaning military junta in 1974, the USSR had an opportunity for establishing influence in that country. But it was quite cautious until late in 1976. From February 1974, when the armed forces started challenging Haile Selassie's leadership, the Soviet press kept publishing commentaries favourable to the military junta. For instance, within a month of the disturbances, Pravda wrote that the conflict in Ethiopia was 'a struggle of the forces of democracy and progress against those of reaction'. At that time Haile Selassie had not been overthrown, but Pravda was already taking a stand in support of those who were opposed to the imperial regime.

Haile Selassie was finally deposed on 12 September 1974. Three months later, a Soviet commentator wrote that the 'old regime of Ethiopia [was] responsible for many crimes, and especially the death of 200,000 peasants from famine at a time when the gentry kept hundreds of millions of dollars in Swiss banks'. In his view, it was necessary for Moscow to identify itself with the Ethiopian revolution even if it did not fully understand the policies of the military junta. He, for example, suggested:

Even without analysing the measures taken by the present-day Ethiopian leadership, it can be said that the national democratic revolution is expected to open the doors to social and economic progress for Ethiopia.

In a commentary on the Ethiopian situation in July 1974, Moscow

---

22 BBC, Summary of World Broadcasts, 21 December 1974, SU/4787/A5/1.
23 BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 21 December 1974, SU/4787/A5/1.
Radio stated that the 'main causes of the workers' actions, supported by the army, were a steep rise in the cost of living, the bureaucratic tyranny of the officialdom and the unresolved land problem'. The Soviet press also often criticised the Western media for playing 'into the hands of the reactionary and counter-revolutionary forces'. In 1975 and 1976, the Soviet press tried to identify closely with the Ethiopian revolution, while the Soviet leaders quietly watched developments in that country.

Sensing this cautious approach by Moscow, the Ethiopian leaders started talking openly about their intention to establish a socialist system and about the necessity of forging closer relations with the socialist bloc. As early as 20 December 1974, Mengistu Haile Mariam, who was then the first Vice-Chairman of the Dergue, declared that Ethiopia was establishing socialism. The primary concern of the Dergue at that time was to strengthen relations with African countries and to continue obtaining aid from the US, while only partly wooing the USSR. But as the Dergue increasingly faced challenges from other Marxist groups in the country, it started sending feelers to the USSR, to which Moscow responded positively in 1976. When a Soviet delegation visited Ethiopia early in 1976, its leader praised the Dergue's 'correct progressive stand'.

---

24 'Moscow in English for Africa', BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, SU/464/A5/1' 3 July 1974.
25 BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 6 May 1975, or SU/4896/A5/1.
26 Henze, 'Communism and Ethiopia', p 57.
28 Africa Contemporary Record 1976-77, p B211.
In an attempt to impress the USSR, the Chairman of the Dergue, General Teferi Banti, announced in April 1976 that Ethiopia was launching a socialist programme and promised to establish a socialist party within a few months. A Moscow Radio commentary the same month said 'the strength of the Ethiopian revolution lies in its very inevitability in the world revolutionary process'.

In the meantime, the Ethiopian press became very hostile to the US while describing the USSR and other socialist countries as friends of the Ethiopian revolution. The junta again emphasised its commitment to establish socialism on 12 September 1976, the second anniversary of the overthrow of Haile Selassie. Three months later, Ethiopia signed a military deal with the Soviet Union. That was the beginning of the Soviet military presence in Ethiopia, another important step in the Soviet move to challenge the American presence in the Horn.

As Moscow moved closer to the Dergue, it simultaneously distanced itself from the Eritrean struggle. Before the Ethiopian revolution, the USSR, Cuba, Libya, the PDRY and the East European countries supported the Eritrean guerrillas. By and large, the USSR's support for the Eritreans was not direct. Moscow used to channel its support through its allies. But in 1975, Moscow Radio started referring to Eritrea as an Ethiopian province and expressed the hope that 'a peaceful solution' would be found to its problem. That was when the USSR and its friends,

29 Africa Contemporary Record 1976-77, p B211.
particularly Cuba, the PDRY and Libya, started to improve relations with the Dergue at the expense of Eritrea.

Writing about conflict in Ethiopia, a Soviet analyst stated:

Many researchers recognised the progressive character of the Eritrean movement in the years when it opposed the anti-popular monarchist regime of Haile Selassie. However, by identifying the revolutionary regime with monarchy, the Eritrean insurgents showed their political immaturity and acted as a tool in the hands of those hostile to the cause of national liberation.  

Although the above statement is not an official Soviet view, it shows what some people in Moscow thought about the Eritrean problem after 1974. The Ethiopian revolution forced Moscow to re-orient its policy not only in Ethiopia, but in the surrounding region as well.

1.3 The Surrounding Region

While seeking to challenge the American presence in the Horn, the Soviet Union tried also to improve relations with other countries in the Red Sea region in the mid-1970s. Moscow's attention was focused on Libya, a new friend, and the PDRY, an old acquaintance. Libya's relations with the USSR started to improve remarkably in 1974. That was partly because of Libya's role among the Arab oil producers and partly because of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's increasing radicalisation of his country's foreign policy. During this period Libya nationalised a number of foreign interests, a move which the Soviet press termed an 'anti-imperialist stand'.  


Gaddafi had criticised the Soviet role in the October 1973 Middle East war, but in 1974, he tried to cultivate warmer relations with Moscow. Gaddafi took this move for several reasons, namely, his country's quarrel with Egypt; his quest for arms; and Sadat's improvement of relations with the US. The USSR also appeared anxious to get closer to Libya, especially after Egypt's shift to the West. But the Soviet press was quite critical of Libya for some time mainly because of Gaddafi's inclinations to pursue an independent foreign policy. One Soviet commentator severely criticised Libya in May 1974 when he stated:

Libya's friends could not but feel perplexed at some of its external moves, at some zig-zags in its foreign policy course. Its legitimate striving for Arab unity at times took the form of rash actions damaging to the country's prestige. Other Arab states have been regarding with caution the absolutisation in Libya of Islamic dogma, all the more so since some Libyan leaders are known to have attempted to export this course to other Arab countries. The fact also remains that Libya's anti-imperialist and, on the whole, progressive position has been weakened by occasional anti-Communist sallies on the part of certain Libyan leaders and Press organs.

That stinging criticism of Libya's foreign policy came at the time Gaddafi's deputy, Abdel Salam Jalloud, was visiting Moscow. Jalloud, who was in the USSR from 14 to 20 May, held talks with the then Soviet Prime Minister, Alexei Kosygin, the Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko, and the then Defence Minister, Marshal Grechko. Previously dependent on France for military hardware, Libya started looking for military assistance from Moscow that year. During Jalloud's visit, the USSR agreed to supply Libya with anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons.

33 Africa Contemporary Record 1974-75, pp B64-5.
In July 1974, a Soviet delegation also visited Libya and signed an agreement for cooperation in mineral prospecting, iron and steel production, natural gas production, and the development of water resources.

A year after Jalloud's trip to Moscow, Kosygin visited Libya and signed another military deal. The Soviet press described Kosygin's visit to Libya as 'further definite evidence of the strength of Soviet-Arab friendship and cooperation'.

A Cairo newspaper, Al-Ahram, reported on 22 May 1975 that Libya had allowed the USSR to set up military facilities in the country in exchange for Soviet arms supplies and the Soviet training of new Libyan divisions. Both Libya and the USSR denied charges about military facilities, but Gaddafi confirmed that some Libyan army units had been sent to the USSR for training. He said also that Libyan pilots had been sent there to train in flying Soviet aircraft. Thus the USSR added Libya to the list of its friends in north and northeast Africa.

The Soviet Union had also good relations with the PDRY and could rely on the latter to advance its goals. The Soviet presence in the PDRY dates back to the late 1960s, when Moscow started taking an interest in the Indian Ocean region. But the PDRY did not start playing a significant regional role in Soviet strategy until the mid-1970s.

In the early 1970s, the PDRY's two strongmen, Abdel Fattah Ismail, 35 'Moscow in Arabic', BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 1 - USSR, 20 May 1975, SU/4908/A4/1.
the then general secretary of the ruling National Liberation Front party (now called Yemen Socialist Party), and Salim Ali Robayya, the President, were both committed socialists, but they occasionally disagreed on the brand of socialism they wanted to adopt for their country. Robayya initially preferred the Chinese model, while Ismail was committed to the Soviet line from the beginning, and had started establishing links with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as early as June 1970.

Moscow could thus use its influence with Ismail to frustrate the anti-Soviet elements in the party, especially in the mid-1970s. For instance, Ismail used the Cabinet reshuffle in October 1976 to give important positions to the Moscow-leaning politicians, leaving Robayya with very little support.

One beneficiary of these developments was Ali Ahmad Antar, another Moscow line politician, who was given the post of Defence Minister, which had previously been held by the then Prime Minister and now President Ali Nasser Muhammed. Although Muhammed preferred close relations with Moscow, he often tended to side with Robayya and could not be relied on to do what Ismail wanted.

But while the USSR succeeded in coordinating its policies with those of Libya and the PDRY in the mid-1970s, its relations with Egypt were deteriorating fast during the same period. The Soviet party secretary, Leonid Brezhnev, had arranged to go to Egypt in December

1974, but the visit was cancelled a few days before it was due. Soviet-Egyptian relations got worse in May 1975 during Kosygin's visit to Libya, where he pledged to give the latter more military assistance. President Sadat felt that Libya was getting the Soviet arms which his country ought to have had, and which he had so long asked for.

Parallel with this Egyptian resentment against Moscow was Soviet resentment against Egypt for falling in with the 'Kissinger plan' for step-by-step Israeli withdrawal. The two countries' relations kept deteriorating until finally Sadat abrogated in 1976 the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the USSR.

Thus as the USSR was gearing up to challenge the US in Ethiopia, Washington was making efforts to displace Moscow in Egypt. But what policies did the United States pursue in the Horn/Red Sea region in this period?

2 THE AMERICAN STRATEGY OF DIVERSIFICATION

American policy in the Horn between 1974 and 1976 seemed to reflect some fears and anxiety about the future US role in the region. Washington wanted to avoid any entanglement in Ethiopia's internal problems, but at the same time, it appeared interested in diversifying its ties in the area by seeking new friends.

During this period, the US tried also to reduce its visibility in the region while working through 'regional influentials' such as Iran and Saudi Arabia. These two strongly opposed the Soviet presence in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf areas and tried to promote American foreign
policy goals. They must, therefore, have viewed with apprehension the events that unfolded in Ethiopia in the mid-1970s.

2.1 Low Profile in Ethiopia

As explained in Chapter 3, American withdrawal from Kagnew was speeded up as internal problems in Ethiopia intensified. The troubles in Ethiopia were not the only cause, and may not have been the main cause, of the US decision to phase out Kagnew, but they were an important factor. While the US did not want to withdraw completely from Ethiopia, it decided to maintain a low profile as the situation in that country worsened.

Ethiopia's major problems in the early 1970s were sparked off by the famine of 1972-73, which led to the undermining of Haile Selassie's authority and precipitated a military takeover in September 1974. On the verge of the collapse of Haile Selassie's government, the US distanced itself from the emperor in the hope of establishing better relations with his successors. The US did not even send an ambassador to Addis Ababa from January 1974. Although the Kagnew station had lost out to Diego Garcia, Washington was still interested in maintaining good relations with the post-Selassie regime for several reasons.

Haile Selassie's government fell just two months after the

Soviet-Somali Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation had been concluded, and shortly after Moscow had started modernising Berbera rapidly. The US was, therefore, not eager to leave the Horn when the USSR was in the process of establishing a permanent presence.

At the same time, a US backing of Ethiopia was necessary to prevent the Arab-supported Eritrea from becoming independent. For that reason, Israel also took an active part in lobbying for American aid to Ethiopia. Some American officials also argued that if the US was perceived to condone an Eritrean secession, it would lose respect in Africa because the inviolability of African state boundaries was endorsed by all members of the OAU.

It was partly due to these considerations that Washington continued to provide Ethiopia with military and economic aid right up to the end of 1976, notwithstanding the ideological character of the Ethiopian Dergue. Although the Dergue had come to power on the wave of revolutionary rhetoric, Washington took comfort in the fact that it was dominated by an army trained and equipped by the US. The first chairman of the Dergue, General Aman Andom, and his successor, Teferi Banti, were trained in the US.

The US had refused in 1973 Emperor Haile Selassie's request for increased military aid to modernise the Ethiopian army.\(^\text{40}\) The US, in fact, reduced the level of military aid to Ethiopia in 1973 to $9.439 million in grants from the previous year's $10.645 million. In 1971,

\(^\text{40}\)Halliday, 'US Policy in the Horn', p 14; and Ottaway, Soviet and American Influence in the Horn, p 100.
the level of $11,763 million in grants had been over 20 per cent higher than that of 1973.  

But after the revolution, US military aid to Ethiopia kept rising for three years. American military assistance to Ethiopia in 1974 was $11,715 million in grants and $7,440 million in cash sales. This went up in 1975 to $12,999 in grants and $22,127 in sales. In 1976, the grants went down to $7,277 million, but the sales shot up to $135,339 million. The increase in sales in 1975 and 1976 was part of the general expansion of US arms exports, for as Senator Frank Church stated on 4 May 1976, Washington 'quadrupled its sales of arms worldwide, and particularly in the Persian Gulf area' following the 1973 oil price rises. It appears to have been prompted also by the heightened concern in the US about the Soviet military facilities at Berbera. As Marina Ottaway has pointed out:

The interesting thing is that although the Dergue persisted in

---


43 Multinational Corporations and United States Foreign Policy, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations of the Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate, 4 May 1976, p 423.

44 Ottaway, Soviet and American Influence in the Horn, pp 101-102.
making anti-American statements, it also continued to ask for more military assistance from Washington. The Dergue was evidently not united, and while some of its members felt embarrassed at being closely linked with 'an imperialist' power like the US, others felt that such a link was necessary to keep the arms flowing in. At the end of 1976, when US policy towards Ethiopia was 'frozen in a "wait and see" attitude', about 90 per cent of Ethiopia's military equipment had been US-supplied.45

When in August 1976 the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, William Schaufele, was asked at a Congressional hearing whether he would consider the Dergue anti-American, he denied it, saying: 'Certainly in the press there are attacks on the US but by and large the government, although it is attempting to set up some kind of leftist or socialist system in Ethiopia, however unfocused and disorganised it may be, is not systematically or instinctively anti-United States'.46 His words, however, seemed to convey his displeasure with the Dergue's 'sometimes inconsistent attitudes'.47

---

45 United States Arms Policies in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea Areas, p 172.
46 Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, Hearings before the Subcommittee on African Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate, 4, 5 & 6 August 1976, p 123.
47 Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, p 123.
2.2 Widening the Base

While maintaining its links with Ethiopia and expanding the military facilities on Diego Garcia, the US tried also to improve relations with other countries in the Horn and the Red Sea region. American relations with Egypt started to improve markedly after the October 1973 Middle East War.

Sudan's relations with the US cooled in 1974, when Sudanese President Gaafar Numeiri released from detention some Palestinians who had killed the American ambassador to that country. But by 1976, partly through the intervention of Saudi Arabia and Egypt which had signed a defence pact with Sudan that year, American-Sudanese relations were improving. Sudan started getting American military assistance the following year and expelled Soviet military advisers.

Kenya's relations with the US had been good since independence in 1963, but it was not until 1974 that Washington started 'a small military assistance program'. In 1976, when Kenya was facing an increasing threat from Somalia and Uganda, which were both being armed by the USSR, the US Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, visited Nairobi to complete details for the sale of 12 F-5 jet fighters. These activities suggested that the US was taking precautions to maintain a substantial presence in the Horn even if relations with Ethiopia were strained.

---

48 *Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa*, p 122.
2.3 Somalia and Diego Garcia

In 1975, Washington received feelers of friendship from a very unexpected quarter in that region - Somalia. At the time the US administration was battling with the Congress to get approval for funds for the expansion of Diego Garcia to counter the Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean, Somalia is said to have indicated through Saudi Arabia that it was ready to expel the Soviet Union from Berbera if the United States could provide it with the economic and military aid it was receiving from Moscow.

According to the testimony of a former American ambassador to Saudi Arabia, James Akins, to a Senate subcommittee on multinational corporations, Saudi Arabia had agreed to finance military and economic assistance programmes in Somalia as a means of eliminating the Soviet presence there. Saudi Arabia offered to take over economic-aid projects being financed by Moscow, and to buy US arms for Somalia as substitutes for Soviet weapons then being delivered. Akins said that the Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, turned a deaf ear to the offer. The apparent reason for Kissinger's lack of interest was that the Congress might not have approved funds for the expansion of Diego Garcia facilities if the Soviets - the official rationale for building the Diego Garcia base - had been expelled from Berbera at that time.

Senator Stuart Symington observed that some American officials were determined to establish a military base on Diego Garcia.

'regardless of whether the Soviets had a base in Somalia or not'.\textsuperscript{50} Senator Church came to the conclusion that the 'circumstantial evidence would suggest that there was a connection between the desire of the administration to persuade the Congress to establish Diego Garcia and the convenience of a continued Russian presence in Somalia as the basic justification for the base'.\textsuperscript{51}

Writing in the \textit{Congressional Record} on 6 May 1976, Senator John Culver stated that in 'its headlong rush to build the base at Diego Garcia' the administration had resorted to dirty tricks. He accused the Ford Administration of having 'consistently ignored the explicit guidance of the Congress to seek mutual naval arms limitation agreements with the Russians before proceeding with construction'.\textsuperscript{52}

Some sections of the US Congress felt also in 1976 that the administration was not interested in limiting the superpower arms race in the Indian Ocean. The Ford Administration was accused of reverting 'to the old cold war formula of military expansion and manipulation through secrecy and deception to frighten Congress and the American people into concurrence'.\textsuperscript{53} Senator Culver, in particular, called for 'full-scale investigation by Congress of the administration's military expansionist policies and cold war coverup in the Indian Ocean'.\textsuperscript{54}

Somalia's interest in forging closer relations with the US stemmed

\textsuperscript{50\textsuperscript{Multinational Corporations and United States Foreign Policy, p 431.}}\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{51\textsuperscript{Multinational Corporations and United States Foreign Policy, 433.}}\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{52Congressional Record, 6 May 1976.}}\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{53Congressional Record, 6 May 1976.}}\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{54Congressional Record, 6 May 1976.}}}
from a number of factors. First, it was increasingly coming under the influence of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which had sponsored its membership of the Arab League and which wanted to reduce Soviet influence in the Red Sea region. Second, with the fall of Haile Selassie in Ethiopia, Somalia thought the main obstacle in its relations with the US had been removed. Third, it was apparent that some friction was developing in Somali-Soviet relations, and Somalia wanted to get rid of the Soviets.

Finally, the Portuguese African empire started collapsing in 1974, the year Somalia's President Siad Barre acceded to the chairmanship of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). Sensing American concern about the ideological character of the liberation movements in Mozambique and Angola, Barre wanted to use his position as spokesman for the African continent to move politically closer to the US.

It was against this background that in 1975, apparently without notifying Moscow, he invited a US Congressional delegation to visit Somalia and ascertain for itself his claims that there was no Soviet military base in the country. But the Congressional team, headed by Senator Dewey Bartlett, found that there were Soviet facilities at Berbera.55

On its tour of Berbera, the delegation was escorted by Barre's son-in-law, who was also head of the all-powerful National Security Services, Colonel Ahmed Suleiman. Although Barre had promised Senator

Bartlett that his team could 'go to Berbera and see anything [it] wanted', a Soviet commander prevented Suleiman and the Congressional delegation from visiting the communications receiver and transmitter sites. The Soviet commander's action indicated that the Soviets controlled the communications facilities at Berbera, and that those facilities might have operated exclusively for the Soviet Union.

Barre's invitation of the Americans might have been made either in total ignorance of what the Soviet Union actually had at Berbera or it was just a calculated move to expose Soviet facilities at Berbera. It is, however, doubtful that Barre did not know of the existence of Soviet facilities there. One conjecture is that Barre was unhappy with the Soviet relationship and probably wanted the world to know what the Soviets had at Berbera. Barre's other motive was to try to improve relations with the United States.

The initial itinerary of Senator Bartlett's delegation included a stop in Saudi Arabia, 'but that stop was eliminated at the direct request of the State Department'. With hindsight, it has been assumed that the State Department did not want the delegation to learn from Saudi Arabia the offer to 'buy' the Soviets out of Somalia. Somalia would not have invited the US Congressional delegation if it had not wanted closer relations with the US.

The previous year, in October 1974, President Barre had told

---

56 Visit to the Democratic Republic of Somalia, p 6.
57 Soviet Military Capability at Berbera, pp 15-16.
58 Multinational Corporations and United States Foreign Policy, p 445.
President Ford in Washington that he desired to have close relations with the US. And in July 1975, Barre told Senator Bartlett's delegation that he had invited it to Somalia 'not necessarily to see Berbera but that the Congressmen would witness Somalia's struggle to improve conditions within the country and thereby improve the relationship between Somalia and the United States'. If at that time Barre did not want to embarrass Moscow, at least he wanted to improve Somali-US relations and possibly place them on a par with Somali-USSR relations.

As was stated earlier, the United States tried to increase its military presence in the Indian Ocean in the 1970s by establishing a base on Diego Garcia. In 1975, the US Congress approved $13.8 million 'for a permanent naval base' on the island. This was after Secretary of Defence, James Schlesinger, had presented to the Congress on 10 June 1975 aerial photographs allegedly showing major Soviet facilities under construction at Berbera. Schlesinger contended: 'It is evident that the USSR is in the process of establishing a significant new facility, capable of supporting their naval and air activities in the northwest Indian Ocean'.

In 1974, the then Director of the American CIA, William Colby, had warned the Congress that 'should the United States have a substantial increase in its naval presence in the Indian Ocean, a Soviet buildup faster and larger... would be likely'.

61 Visit to the Democratic Republic of Somalia, pp 3-4.
62 Multinational Corporations and United States Foreign Policy, p 449.
The question one might ask is: Why did this competition take place in the Horn during the era of detente? One reason is that that level of rivalry was consistent with Kissinger's and Brezhnev's views of detente. Both of them argued that detente did not rule out competition in the Third World. Another reason is that during the period 1974-76, the Horn was, in relative terms, a low priority area for both superpowers. Rivalry in such an area would not, therefore, seriously affect the relationship between the US and the USSR.

CONCLUSION

During the period 1974 to 1976, the emerging realignment of superpower relations in the Horn began to take shape. Both Moscow and Washington were interested in adding new friends to their old lists. As both superpowers were no doubt interested in improving their active power positions in the region as a whole. As it was stated earlier, the resulting competition between the US and the USSR in the Horn during this period was consistent with Kissinger's and Brezhnev's views of detente, and did not risk a clash between the superpowers because the area was of low priority for both of them.

By the end of 1976, the USSR was still well-entrenched in Somalia, was making an effort to supplant the US in Ethiopia. Although both Ethiopia and Somalia professed Marxism and were keen to maintain relations with the USSR, they remained hostile to each other. The US, which was increasingly becoming the dominant power in the Horn, sought it could use ideology to bring these two countries politically together.
The two countries had, however, irreconcilable differences. Somalia, which had for many years wanted to absorb the Ogaden region, sought to take advantage of the turmoil which had engulfed Ethiopia from 1977 to realise its long-cherished goal. But Ethiopia was determined not to lose any part of its territory. How was the USSR going to deal with this problem? And what role would the United States play in the emerging conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia? These questions, and others, will be tackled in the next chapter.
THE 1977-78 OGADEN WAR

In the recent history of the Horn, 1977 was by far the most momentous year. It is remembered most for the United States withdrawal from Ethiopia, for Somalia's invasion of Ethiopia and its expulsion of Soviet military advisers and closure of their military installations in the country, and for the combined Cuban-Soviet involvement in Ethiopia's war efforts. Many accounts of that war have ignored the American participation and over-emphasised the Soviet role. Although it is true that the USSR was more directly involved than the US in that war, an examination of the records reveals that the American role has been played down considerably.

As in the earlier period, Washington's major foreign policy priorities lay outside the Horn. President Carter's interests were to resolve problems of the Panama Canal treaties, to forge a new relationship with China, to conclude the second Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT II) agreement, and to bring peace to the Middle East.

Moreover, Carter had come to power partly on the promise of restoring the moral basis of American foreign policy. He accordingly placed great emphasis on human rights in his foreign policy. His

administration, which was, from the start, critical of Ethiopia's human rights record, cancelled American military and economic assistance to Ethiopia, making the latter more vulnerable to a Somali attack.

At the same time, the US indicated a willingness to give Somalia 'defensive' weapons (see below). This promise of an alternative source of arms might have encouraged Somalia to disregard Soviet warnings against invading Ethiopia. But once Somalia had attacked Ethiopia, the American role in the Horn became indirect, and was exercised through its friends such as Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia, the last two playing the role of US regional 'policemen'.

During this period, the Soviet Union played a more direct role in the Horn, although it also used extensively expatriate forces from Cuba and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). The USSR's successful airlift and sealift of weapons and Cuban troops into Angola in 1975 and 1976 had given it some encouragement. The Angolan faction that it aided, the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola), had achieved victory over the other two factions supported by the West and South Africa, namely the FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola) and Unita (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola).

Although some African states had been frightened by the scale of Soviet involvement in the Angolan civil war, many of them publicly endorsed the MPLA in a bid to dissociate themselves from the other factions, particularly Unita, which had obtained South African support. In the Angolan civil war, the USSR tested its military logistical
capacity in a distant area. The victory of the MPLA might have given Moscow confidence in its ability to help win a war far away from the Soviet homeland.

The situation in the Horn in the previous three years (1974-76) had also given the USSR reason to feel confident. Not only had Moscow increased its presence in Somalia, but it was also making inroads into Ethiopia.

This chapter examines the roles of the superpowers in the 1977-78 Ogaden war.

1 PRELUDE TO THE WAR, JANUARY-JUNE 1977

The Somali-Ethiopian war was not publicly declared until July 1977. But in the previous six months, the superpowers had made a number of attempts to supplant each other. While the American policy appeared confused and ad hoc, the USSR's aim was to have a presence in both Ethiopia and Somalia.

1.1 Moscow's Two-Pronged Approach

The success of Moscow’s double-track policy in the Horn required the exercise of Soviet influence in both Ethiopia and Somalia. By the mid-1970s, the Soviet Union had a substantial military presence in Somalia. The Soviet interest in Ethiopia took on a new dimension in December 1976 when the USSR and Ethiopia signed a military agreement 'worth roughly $100 million for second-line equipment such as T-34 tanks'.

political move that eventually led to the change of government on 3 February 1977. On that day, the Chairman of the Dergue, General Teferi Bante and his close supporters were shot, and Mengistu Haile Mariam, then First Vice-Chairman of the Dergue, seized power. Within 24 hours of Bante's death Mengistu met with the Soviet ambassador to Ethiopia 'who assured him of Soviet backing'.

That coup took place when many ethnic groups in Ethiopia were clamouring for regional autonomy and the Ogaden Somalis were making attempts to break away and join Somalia. Mogadishu also encouraged the Somalis to secede and took steps to help them militarily.

Cuba and the Soviet Union did not want Somalia and Ethiopia to go to war, and so they tried, though unsuccessfully, to mediate in the conflict. First the Cuban leader, Fidel Castro, made brief visits to Ethiopia and Somalia on 14 and 15 March 1977 respectively, before organising a secret meeting in Aden on 16 March which was attended by Mengistu, Somalia's President Said Barre, and PDRY President Salim Ali Robayya. In an effort to overcome the Somali-Ethiopian differences, Castro proposed the establishment of a socialist confederation comprising Ethiopia, Somalia and the PDRY, in which Eritrea would

---


5 For a description of Castro's tour, see Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 17 June 1977, pp 28401-2. Castro later went to East Germany and to the Soviet Union.
participate as an autonomous entity. Both Ethiopia and Somalia rejected that proposal.

Ethiopia would not accept an arrangement in which it was on a par with Eritrea, one of its 14 provinces. Somalia, on the other hand, argued that the confederation could be formed only after all the people comprising it had exercised their right to self-determination. In effect, Barre wanted Ethiopia to relinquish its hold over Eritrea and the Ogaden, after which Eritrea could join the confederation as an independent entity and the Ogaden would also join either as an independent unit or as a part of Somalia.

Shortly after Castro's visit, the then Soviet President, Nikolai Podgorny, who had made a general tour of eastern and southern Africa, visited Mogadishu on April 2-3 when it was quite clear that Somalia wanted to invade Ethiopia. He presumably advised Barre against taking that action. And probably underestimating the Somali readiness to invade Ethiopia, Moscow assured Addis Ababa the same month that the Somalis would not attack. The following month, Mengistu went to

---

6 Castro revealed this proposal in a speech a year later, on 18 March 1978. See Granma, 19 March 1978. But its substance had already been leaked by Somali officials late in 1977. Although some writers have suggested that this proposal was a Soviet initiative, there is so far no evidence to that effect. Nelson P. Valdes believes the federation was a Cuban idea which was backed by the USSR. See his 'Cuban Policy in the Horn of Africa', Cuban Studies, Vol.10, No.1, January 1980, p 49.

7 For useful discussions of this issue, see Remnek, 'Soviet Policy in the Horn', p 12; and Ottaway, Soviet and American Influence in the Horn, pp 113-14.

8 Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 17 June 1977, p 28401.

9 Podgorny was removed from his post on 24 May 1977. For details, see Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 29 July 1977, p 28483.

Moscow to sign the second arms agreement and to urge the prompt delivery of those weapons. Some sources indicate that this was a 'large military agreement of approximately $500 million for more modern weapons'.

At that time, Mengistu was facing numerous problems. Although he had been one of the most powerful men in the Dergue ever since the overthrow of Haile Selassie in 1974, his hold on power appeared uncertain in the period immediately following the disturbances of 3 February 1977. In addition, insubordination and desertions in the military, and the struggle for self-determination by various ethnic groups throughout the country had increased. At the same time, the traditional arms supplier, the US, had terminated all military ties with his country (see below). Finally, Sudan, which had normalised relations with Ethiopia in 1972, announced in February 1977 that it would resume active support for the Eritrean guerrillas as well as other Ethiopian opposition groups. Against that background, Ethiopia urgently needed arms.

But the May 1977 Soviet-Ethiopian arms deal angered Somalia which made a strong verbal protest, giving Moscow a hint that its ambition to maintain a military presence in both Somalia and Ethiopia would face problems. Somalia, which was helping the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) guerrillas to detach the Ogaden from Ethiopia, increased

---

12 Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1 July 1977, pp 28421-3.
its aid to them and allowed some of its regular troops to join them. At this time, the Carter Administration also tried to woo Somalia with promises of arms. The USSR, therefore, got the message that Somalia was looking for alternative sources of arms.

It was at that time that Moscow made a commitment to Ethiopia and tried to bring the PDRY closer. Although the PDRY had been relying on the USSR for arms since 1972, there were signs in 1976 and 1977 that President Robayya wanted closer relations with Saudi Arabia, a country which never concealed its dislike of Moscow. The USSR's anxiety about the PDRY's foreign policy orientation was reinforced by the PDRY's participation in a secret meeting organised by the conservative Arab states early in 1977 to discuss what was generally called 'Red Sea security'. The first meeting in February took place in Khartoum and involved Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Sudan. The second meeting in May took place in Taizz, Yemen Arab Republic (YAR), and was attended by the host government, Somalia, the PDRY and Sudan. It was convened just a few days after Sudan had expelled Soviet military advisers and terminated military ties with Moscow.

According to one source, the objective behind the Red Sea initiative was 'to construct a Pan-Arab policy and a united Arab bloc, backed by Saudi Arabia, that would guarantee the Red Sea area against superpower involvement and Israeli infiltration'.

15 Africa Contemporary Record 1977-78, p B127.
commentator has argued that the Soviet Union saw that idea as 'a Saudi-inspired effort to forge a pro-imperialist military bloc in the area, with the aims of obstructing both Israeli and Soviet shipping through the Red Sea, and of eventually eliminating Soviet influence in the area as well'. If this was an anti-Soviet move, why were the pro-Soviet states of Somalia and the PDRY involved? One assumption is that, like most Arab summits, these meetings discussed the Arab-Israeli conflict and might have included on their agenda Eritrea and the growing Soviet presence in the region.

A Soviet writer, V. Kudryavtsev, has said that the idea of Red Sea security was designed 'to incite the Arab countries against Ethiopia - which itself has a Red Sea coastline of 625 miles, and which has its only outlet to the sea in this stretch of it'. These developments might have disturbed the USSR. The Soviet Union was concerned that with an unfriendly Egypt commanding the entry to the Red Sea, its shores and exit should not also be under hostile control. Also, it felt that American interests would gain and Soviet interests lose from those defence initiatives because of the hostility of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Sudan to Soviet ambitions.

In an effort to improve further relations with the PDRY, a Soviet First Deputy Defence Minister, General Sergei Sokolov, visited Aden in February 1977. Four months later, the new PDRY Defence Minister, Ali Remnek, visited Aden in February 1977. Four months later, the new PDRY Defence Minister, Ali

---

17 Africa Contemporary Record 1977-78, pp A96-97. See also Izvestiya, 16 April 1977.
18 Africa Contemporary Record 1977-78, p A97.
Antar, went to Moscow. Between October 1976 when he took over the defence portfolio and June 1977 when he visited the USSR, Ali Antar, who was reputed to have a pro-Moscow stance, had removed from the army all officers that were loyal to President Robayya. It was probably during his visit, and that of the then Prime Minister (now President) Ali Nasser Muhammed in July 1977, that the USSR raised the issue of the PDRY's help to Ethiopia in case of a Somali invasion.

Meanwhile, Somalia ignored Soviet warnings against invading Ethiopia. Probably believing that the Carter Administration would be forthcoming with arms in case the Soviet supply was cut, Somalia attacked Ethiopia in July 1977. But it did not secure American arms.

1.2 Washington's Confusing Signals

In its first few months in office during early 1977, the Carter Administration publicly showed an inclination to move close to Somalia and abandon Ethiopia. But there was also evidence that few of its key policy-makers understood the situation in the Horn. Carter's first Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, later admitted that he 'inherited a complex and shifting political situation in the Horn'.\(^\text{19}\) It was perhaps the complex nature of that situation that gave rise to confusing signals from Washington and caused divisions in which the National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, was pitted against Vance, while President Carter watched, displaying what Senator Henry Jackson called an aboulia (lack of will).\(^\text{20}\)

Some of the problems involved Somalia, which was inclined to terminate military ties with the USSR, but was also pursuing irredentist goals towards Ethiopia. At the same time, Ethiopia was caught in a bloody civil war in which much of its army was tied down fighting the Eritreans. The Carter Administration, which was concerned about the Dergue's human rights violations and its tilt towards the USSR, lost no time in criticising the Ethiopian government. Within a month of being sworn in, Vance told a Senate hearing on 25 February that he had removed Ethiopia, Argentina and Uruguay from the list of recipients of American aid because of human rights violations.

Vance's decision came barely three weeks after Mengistu had taken power, indicating perhaps that the Carter Administration was not happy with the 3 February 1977 change of government in Ethiopia. The US also informed Ethiopia in mid-April that it planned to reduce personnel in the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) and that it would close down the Kagnew station in September of that year.\(^{21}\)

The Dergue responded on 23 April by asking Washington to close down the Kagnew station and the US Information Service in Addis Ababa within four days and gave marching orders to the remaining MAAG personnel.\(^{22}\) Then on 27 April, the Pentagon suspended all US arms supplies to Ethiopia, including those that had been paid for, thereby

\(^{21}\) Ottaway, Soviet and American Influence in the Horn, p 117.
\(^{22}\) Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1 July 1977, p 28423.
forcing Ethiopia to turn to the USSR for weapons. 23

While its relations with Ethiopia were chilling, the US was trying to improve ties with Somalia, although Carter's first few statements were full of contradictions. In his initial interview with the American press, Carter talked of 'the necessity for reducing arms sales or having very tight restraints on future commitments'. 24 But at the same time he proposed the sale of arms to Somalia which already had one of the best equipped armies in sub-Saharan Africa. The first clear hint that Carter wanted to challenge the Soviet presence in Somalia occurred in April when Time magazine reported him urging his Vice-President, Walter Mondale, to tell Vance and Brzezinski 'to move in every possible way to get Somalia to be our friend'. 25

The following month, Carter made a major foreign policy speech in which he asserted: 'Being confident about our own future, we are free from that inordinate fear of Communism which once led us to embrace any dictator who joined us in our fear'. 26 He ridiculed those who viewed every international issue in East-West terms and those who adopted 'the flawed principles and tactics of our adversaries'. 27


25 Time, 18 April 1977, p 35. See also Sunday Times, 17 April 1977.


But on 10 June, Carter said he was inclined to 'aggressively challenge, in a peaceful way, of course, the Soviet Union' in many areas of the world, including Somalia.\(^{28}\) Asked at a press conference three days later to clarify this point, Carter vaguely said: 'We don't want to be in a position that once a country is not friendly to us and once that they are completely within the influence of the Soviet Union, they should forever be in that status.'\(^{29}\) He again mentioned Somalia (and surprisingly, Ethiopia) as some of the countries in which he wanted to challenge the Soviet presence, explaining that he was determined 'to win the friendship of nations that in the past have been close to us who may have been heavily influenced by or very closely friendly with the Soviet Union and who may still be'.\(^{30}\)

Although Carter's statements were vague, they gave Somalia the impression that the US might give it arms if the Soviet supply was cut. To add credence to that, Barre received in June a message from the State Department through his personal doctor, Kevin Cahill, that Washington was considering providing Somalia with arms.\(^{31}\) Although Cahill's word was not an official American commitment, Barre was inclined to accept it as true in the light of Carter's previous statements.


Moreover, on 1 July, Vance expressed concern about the increase in Soviet weapons and Cuban troops in Africa, especially the Horn, and remarked: 'We seek friendship with all the governments of that region... We will consider sympathetically appeals for assistance from states which are threatened by a buildup of foreign military equipment and advisers on their borders, in the Horn and elsewhere in Africa.'\textsuperscript{32} Ethiopia seemed to fit that category more than Somalia.

But given US relations with those countries at the time, that statement went further to convince Somalia that Washington was ready to give it military support. In retrospect, Vance says that his strategy was 'to retain a presence and as much influence as we could in Ethiopia, while strengthening our relations with Somalia'.\textsuperscript{33} If that was the strategy, the tactics were poor. By the time Vance made his statement of 1 July, Somalia had already committed most of its troops in the Ogaden, something which Vance must have known not only through intelligence reports, but also through the press.

In the meantime, Barre took Vance's, and other official but vague, statements as signalling an American approval for his offensive. But as the war in the Ogaden continued to receive wide publicity, Washington started re-thinking its position on Somalia.

\textsuperscript{32}Secretary Vance, 'The United States and Africa: Building Positive Relations', Address to the NAACP in St. Louis, 1 July 1977, Department of State Bulletin, Vol.77, No.1989, 8 August 1977, pp 169-70.

\textsuperscript{33}Vance, Hard Choices, p 72.
To pinpoint the date the Ogaden war broke out is difficult. The WSLF guerrillas intensified their activities early in 1977, but it was not until late May that Somalia started sending regular troops to the Ogaden. On 25 May 1977, both Addis Ababa and Mogadishu confirmed that between 3,000 and 6,000 heavily-armed WSLF guerrillas had invaded the Ogaden. By mid-July, the guerrillas and Somali troops had occupied much of the Ogaden, and that was when Ethiopia declared publicly that Somalia was waging a full-scale war against it.

The Somali invasion violated Article 3 of the Charter of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) which forbids the use of force to settle border disputes, and the 1964 Cairo Resolution of the OAU which sanctifies the African frontiers established during the colonial era. Since Somalia had contravened those OAU principles, were the superpowers going to help it take the Ogaden?

2.1 Direct Soviet Participation

The USSR stood to lose respect and some friends in Africa if Somalia had succeeded in detaching the Ogaden from Ethiopia. As Somalia's main arms supplier, the USSR would have been blamed for having trained and equipped a force that carried out the Ogaden operation. Although the USSR did not train the Somali army for the purpose of invading Ethiopia, one Somali official went on record as saying: 'The Russians knew at the outset that we aspired to reunite the Somali nation... When they helped build our army, what did they think

---

34 Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 28 October 1977, p 28633.
our intentions were?'. In the light of this situation, Moscow was under pressure to prevent Somalia from taking the Ogaden. Having failed to stop the Somali invasion earlier on, Moscow in the first three months of the war concentrated on pressing Somalia to withdraw.

From July the USSR was determined not to provide further arms to Somalia unless the latter withdrew from the Ogaden. Although Barre went to Moscow in August to present his case and ask for more arms, he did not get any; he conferred with Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, and the leading ideologue Mikhail Suslov, but was not even allowed to meet the Soviet party leader Leonid Brezhnev. At that time Moscow was still fence-sitting in the hope that a peaceful solution would be found.

It was after that Barre visit that Ethiopian leader Mengistu made a veiled criticism of Moscow in his speech of 18 September, charging: 'If socialist countries are still supplying arms to Somalia, then this is not only violating one's principles, but also tantamount to complicity with the reactionary Mogadishu regime'. He also hinted that he might request assistance from the US when he spoke of the American arms still owing. Mengistu probably believed that Barre's mission to Moscow had been successful and wanted the Soviet Union to make its position on the war clear.

Ten days later, Brezhnev openly criticised Somalia over its Ogaden

---

35 The Baltimore Sun, 28 October 1977, p 16.
offensive. At a luncheon for President Agostinho Neto of Angola on 28 September, Brezhnev said:

Many of the dangerous armed conflicts, including some very recent ones, have stemmed from attempts to revise and forcibly change existing borders between states. A regrettable example is the fighting between Somalia and Ethiopia... Of course, the frontiers of the present African states have in most cases not been established by them but by foreign colonialists... There is no doubt that as mutual trust and friendship grow stronger between peoples of the liberated states, problems of this kind between them could be settled by mutual accord on the basis of good neighbourliness. But today the most important thing, as we see it, is that the principle of the inviolability of borders be universally observed in the interests of peace, security and the progress of peoples.  

In other words, the USSR was not going to be seen supporting a violation of Article 3 of the OAU charter which calls for respect for the borders inherited from colonialism.

On 19 October, Anatoly Ratanov, the Soviet ambassador to Ethiopia, announced that Soviet arms deliveries to Somalia had stopped. It was precisely the Soviet refusal to give Somalia more arms that prompted Barre to expel Soviet military advisers and to order the closure of their military installations at Berbera on 13 November 1977. According to official Somali sources, 1,678 Soviet military advisers and their families were evacuated. Somalia also expelled about 750 Cuban advisers, and severed diplomatic relations with Cuba.

37 BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Part 1 - USSR, 30 September 1977, SU/5628/A5/3; and Africa Contemporary Record 1977-78, p A14.
Surprisingly, the expulsion order came shortly after the USSR had signed two economic aid agreements with Somalia. One agreement, which included the continuation of work on the Fanole Dam project, was signed in August 1977. The second agreement, signed in October, was for a water exploration project. Why did the USSR sign those agreements at a time its relations with Somalia were at their worst? Two explanations look plausible. Moscow wanted to remind Somalia of its pressing needs for economic development and of the enduring value of Soviet assistance for this purpose. Again the USSR wanted to demonstrate that its sympathy for Ethiopia during that war did not necessarily mean it had abandoned Somalia. There is also a possibility that Moscow was not convinced that Somalia would decide to end military ties over the Ogaden war.

Moreover, although the Soviet Union made known its sympathies for Ethiopia by emphasising respect for the principle of territorial integrity as the basis for a negotiated settlement of the conflict, it 'avoided antagonising Somalia unnecessarily, by not directly accusing it of aggression against Ethiopia until Mogadishu's unilateral abrogation of the friendship treaty and termination of Soviet naval facilities'.

Given that kind of situation, it is difficult to say, as does David Morison, that Moscow repudiated its links with Somalia. Morison argues that in 'entering the fray as the committed partisan of one side

41 FBIS: Sub-Saharan Africa, 15 November 1977, p B3.
(Ethiopia) and repudiating its former friendship with the other side (Somalia), the Soviet Union - unlike all the other contestants - was making a calculated strategic decision in which national sentiment or sympathy with a struggle for independence had no part and provided no justification'. If by 'national sentiment' Morison means a Soviet foreign policy goal, then it was present. The USSR was concerned with helping an emerging Marxist state, which is one of its foreign policy objectives.

Most of the Soviet military advisers who were expelled from Somalia went to Ethiopia, and two weeks later the USSR embarked on the massive sealift and airlift of weapons and Cuban troops to Ethiopia. It is estimated that 'the first of approximately 16,000 Cuban ground combat troops arrived to take part in the fighting' in December 1977. There is, however, no source for this number of Cuban troops. The estimates range from 10,000 to 18,000. What cannot be disputed is that a large number of Cuban troops were called in from late November 1977, and their participation enabled Ethiopia to push back the Somalis. According to some Western sources, the tasks of Cuban troops in the war included training, air support and heavy infantry.

---

44 Africa Contemporary Record 1977-78, p A96.
46 Remnek, 'Soviet Policy in the Horn', p 2.
47 See, for instance, Remnek, 'Soviet Policy in the Horn'. On page 2, he says there were 16,000 but on page 16 he says there were 15,000 Cuban troops in Ethiopia. Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 184, notes that there were 10-11,000 Cuban troops.
48 Fontaine, 'Cubans on the Horn', p 41.
Cuban infantrymen and fighter pilots are said to have been used in direct combat roles.

The Soviet involvement in this war was the first of its kind in Africa. Some of the Soviet advisers went beyond the purely advisory role and commanded and directed the Ethiopian war efforts. Shortly after Somalia's eviction order to the Soviet military advisers, General Vasily I. Petrov, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Soviet Ground Forces, arrived in Ethiopia 'to direct the war against the Somalis'. He was assisted by three other senior military officers including the former chief of the Soviet military advisory mission in Somalia, General Grigory Barisov.

Even Ethiopian officials have admitted that without the combined Cuban-Soviet military intervention, Ethiopia would not have repulsed the Somali attack. A CPSU Central Committee secretary, Boris Ponomarev, emphasised that view in February 1979, stating:

> When international imperialism in alliance with reactionary and aggressive forces tried to strangle revolutionary Ethiopia, the Soviet Union, Cuba and other countries of socialism came to the aid of the freedom-loving people of Ethiopia, in accordance with UN principles.

There have been claims also that the cost of Soviet involvement in that war was $1 billion, but it is not clear how this figure was

---

arrived at. The actual cost might have been lower. What is clear is that the Cuban and Soviet participation ensured Ethiopia’s success in March 1978.

But the large Cuban involvement did not start until the fighting had stalemated. Indeed, it was only after Ethiopian defence lines had stabilised outside of Harar in late September that arms began to pour into Ethiopia. While Soviet weapons started arriving in September, the commitment of large numbers of Cuban troops in direct combat, was not until December 1977 - well after the battle lines had stabilised and the morale of Ethiopia’s armed forces had improved.

There are many conjectures as to why the USSR decided to arm Ethiopia massively when the battle lines had stabilised. Some writers have speculated that the USSR considered other broader issues prior to its intervention in the Ogaden war. One American writer argues, for instance, that developments in the Middle East had some influence on Moscow’s level of commitment:

Just a few days prior to Mogadishu’s abrogation of the friendship treaty, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat made his

52 Stephen T. Hosmer & Thomas W. Wolfe, Soviet Policy and Practice Toward Third World Conflicts, (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath & Company, 1983) p 92, estimate the Soviet cost at $850 million. Most of the weapons sent to Ethiopia were second-hand and included T-34 tanks. Their actual value must have been quite low. The financial figures given do not, therefore, reflect the quality and quantity of arms Ethiopia received during the Ogaden war.
53 This is the impression I got while reporting on the war from Addis Ababa in 1977. I was then a political correspondent of the Nairobi-based Weekly Review.
54 Remnek, 'Soviet Policy in the Horn', pp 16-17.
55 Remnek, 'Soviet Policy in the Horn', p 11.
dramatic announcement that he would visit Jerusalem — a move that unhinged plans for reconvening multilateral talks at Geneva and suddenly removed the Soviets from playing a direct role in the Arab-Israeli negotiations. Moscow may have hoped that a graphic demonstration of Soviet intervention capabilities would convey the message that the USSR could still play a major role in obstructing, if not promoting, peace in the Middle East and would be neither ignored nor slighted.\textsuperscript{56}

While that is plausible, it does not appear to have been the main consideration. Ethiopia was fighting a war on three fronts — the Ogaden, Eritrea and the Oromo region, south of Addis Ababa. The Ethiopian request for foreign military assistance, therefore, took into account other factors beyond the situation in the Ogaden. Second, there is an immense difference between a stalemate deep inside Ethiopia and the expulsion of the invader. The fact that the invasion force had been stopped did not mean that Ethiopia received Soviet help only after it had ceased to need it. It is likely also that the USSR moved quite fast to supply Ethiopia, once Somalia had made a definitive break in November, and Moscow could hardly have done so without Somalia's abrogation of the friendship treaty.

Thus by the end of 1977, the USSR had lost influence in Somalia and had also stopped pressing Barre to withdraw his troops. Instead, it had decided to help Ethiopia defeat Somalia militarily. The USSR lost its position in Somalia basically because it misjudged Barre's intentions and underestimated the force of Somali nationalism. Moscow had also overestimated its own ability to control Somalia. At the same time, the USSR expected Somalia to exercise more circumspection than it really did. One Soviet writer, V. Vorobyov, says:

\textsuperscript{56}Remnek, 'Soviet Policy in the Horn', p 16.
The Soviet Union, for its part, did everything possible to avert an armed conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia. However, when the leaders of the latter country, despite common sense and the efforts of the true friends of the Somali people, began in the summer of 1977 military operations against Ethiopia and Somali troops invaded its territory, the Soviet Union, as always in such situations, came out on the side of the victim of aggression: at the request of the Ethiopian government the Soviet Union rendered Ethiopia material aid to repulse the attack. Our country did so proceeding from the principled purpose of its foreign policy.57

In their first crisis deployment in this region, Soviet naval units directly participated in the sealift of materiel via Aden to Ethiopia and provided protection for that sealift.58

By going to Ethiopia's help, the USSR was not only instrumental to the repulsion of the Somali attack, but it also saved Ethiopia from anarchy. Moscow earned also the respect of the OAU by upholding the principle of the inviolability of borders and by helping the victim of aggression.

Towards the end of the war in March 1978, the US accused the USSR of having violated the principles of detente by unilaterally seeking advantage in the Horn. Yet in January that year, the Soviet Foreign Minister, Gromyko, had proposed a 'joint US-Soviet mediation effort', but Brzezinski had dismissed it as 'pointing to a condominium' and as tending to 'legitimise the Soviet presence in the Horn'.59 But, how did the US react to this war?

59 Brzezinski, Power and Principle, pp 180-81. That proposal by Gromyko for collaborative mediation was not publicly disclosed until Brzezinski's memoirs were published in May 1983.
2.2 The American Ambivalence

For about a month after it had become obvious that Somalia had invaded Ethiopia, the US continued talking of providing Somalia with weapons. But it did not want to go alone in this complex situation, so it sought to coordinate its strategy with some Western allies and regional friends. Washington thought it was necessary to involve Britain, France, Italy and West Germany because they 'had experience and weight in the region'. It consulted also with Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Sudan, which were inclined to support Somalia. Although Iran had provided Ethiopia with weapons the previous year, that was because the US was also supporting Ethiopia; and when Carter showed a positive attitude toward Somalia, the Shah followed suit.

On 26 July, a Department of State spokesman said that the US, Britain and France had agreed 'in principle' to provide Somalia with arms. Two days later, Carter commented that while the US did not want to begin a competition with the USSR in arms supply, in the case of Somalia the US was 'trying to work not on a unilateral basis but in conjunction with other nations, like the Saudis'.

The following day, Vance talked about the same issue and disclosed that Somalia had approached Washington for economic and military assistance, indicating that 'they wished to have an alternative source

---

60 Vance, Hard Choices, p 72.
of supply to meet their defensive needs'. He further explained that 'insofar as military assistance is concerned, we have indicated that, in principle, we would be prepared to consider the furnishing of some military assistance for defensive arms ... in conjunction with a number of other countries'.

Vance apparently wanted to supply 'defensive arms' to a country which had already invaded its neighbour.

As it turned out, the agreement 'in principle' to supply defensive arms to Somalia had been made early in July and conveyed to Somalia on 15 July in a coordinated response by the US, Britain and France. But, with continued publicity of the Ogaden war, the US changed its mind in August about arming Somalia. Early that month, a Somali delegation arrived in Washington to discuss arms requirements, but it did not succeed in getting any firm commitments.

Fearing to lose face in Africa if Somalia went ahead with the war while claiming American support, two US officials told Somalia that it would not get American arms either directly or from third parties while the war lasted. First, on 4 August, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Richard Moose, told the Somali ambassador to the US that although their 'agreement in principle to provide defensive arms to Somalia still stood', Somalia's involvement in the Ogaden prevented its implementation. Two weeks later, the Under-secretary

---


63 That decision was not publicly known until 27 October 1977 when Anthony Lake, Director of Policy Planning Staff in the State Department, gave an official address. See his 'Africa in Global Perspective', Africa Report, January-February 1978, pp 44-48.

64 Vance, Hard Choices, p 73.
for Political Affairs, Philip Habib, told the Somali ambassador that Washington 'would not approve transfers to Somalia of US-manufactured arms in the hands of third countries while Somalia was involved in the Ogaden'.

Thus, starting in August, the US, while appearing neutral, tried to maintain diplomatic pressure on Somalia to withdraw. It 'emphasised with varying success three policy lines - neutrality, containment and damage limitation'. The initial position of neutrality seemed to enjoy some domestic support, for as the New York Times wrote in an editorial: 'Unaccustomed as they are to watching international drama from the sidelines, Americans must be pleased with their recent role as onlookers of events in the African Horn'.

By pressuring Somalia to pull out, the US hoped to pre-empt the invitation of large Cuban forces into Ethiopia and thus indirectly contain the Soviet-Cuban factor in the crisis. But Somalia's persistence led to the invitation of many Cuban troops and forced Washington to adopt the policy of damage limitation 'with the immediate aim of halting any counter-offensive at the Somali border'.

Barre had been led by Saudi Arabia to believe that once he had expelled the Soviet military presence, he would get American arms. A Western commentator has claimed that when Barre visited Riyadh in July,

---

he was told that an arms package of $460 million would be supplied by the US, paid for by Saudi Arabia, if Somalia broke completely with the USSR. And a month before expelling the Soviet advisers, Somalia informed the US that in return for American cooperation and friendship, it would abrogate the treaty with Moscow and end all Soviet military ties, but the US insisted that although it wished to cooperate in meeting Somalia's legitimate defence needs, it could not do so while Somali troops were in the Ogaden.

Shortly after abrogating the treaty with the USSR, Somalia went back to Washington with a new appeal for arms. But the US reiterated that Somalia accept the OAU mediation of its dispute with Ethiopia, seek a negotiated peace, and offer its neighbours assurances of respect for their territorial integrity. Earlier in November 1977, Britain, France, West Germany and the US had met and agreed that Soviet aid to Ethiopia, coupled with Cuban troops, would lead to the expulsion of the Somalis from Ethiopia. But those Soviet and Cuban activities in Ethiopia polarised opinion in Washington, setting Brzezinski against Vance.

Some of Carter's advisers, who presumably included Brzezinski, believed that the war in the Horn 'offered an opportunity to damage the Soviets by tying them down in a costly endless struggle and even

---

70Vance, Hard Choices, pp 73-4.
71Vance, Hard Choices, p 74.
72Vance, Hard Choices, p 74.
forcing them to back down in a confrontation'. Brzezinski in particular argued that in his view 'the situation between the Ethiopians and the Somalis was more than a border conflict... It represented a serious setback in our attempts to develop with the Soviets some rules of the game in dealing with turbulence in the Third World'.

Brzezinski is reported to have also urged that the best American response was to take a military option which included large-scale US naval deployments to the area; provision of US air cover for Somali forces if the Ethiopians and Cubans crossed the border in pursuit; and the funneling of military aid to Somalia and the Eritrean guerrillas through proxies, 'to tie down the Soviets and Cubans in a bloody and inconclusive struggle'. In defence of this proposition, Brzezinski has argued: 'My view was that the deployment of an American aircraft carrier task force near Ethiopia would send a strong message to the Soviets and would provide more tangible backing for our strong words.'

But the Secretary of Defence, Harold Brown, felt that the option of deploying an aircraft carrier for the purpose of bluffing was risky. He pointed out that if the carrier were sent to the area and Somalia were invaded, the credibility of future carrier task force deployments

73Vance, Hard Choices, p 75.
74Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 178.
75Vance, Hard Choices, p 86.
76Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 182.
in crises would be compromised.\textsuperscript{77}

Unlike Brzezinski, Vance and Andrew Young, the then US representative to the United Nations, felt that the conflict in the Horn could not be seen in East-West terms. They argued that support for Somalia would have been received negatively in the whole of Africa where the colonial-inherited boundaries are inviolate. They said that the conflict needed an African solution and that the US should encourage key African countries to solve it within the OAU framework. This was the position Vance sold to the Western allies, and in a meeting in January 1978, representatives of Britain, France, Italy, the US and West Germany agreed to press for a negotiated settlement. They agreed to support the continuing OAU mediation efforts, proposed the idea of having discussions with Moscow to secure its cooperation in ending the war, and agreed to put pressure on Somalia and Ethiopia to reach a negotiated solution.

Another issue of major disagreement among US policy-makers was how they should tie Soviet involvement in the Ogaden war to other US-Soviet negotiations. Some members of the Carter Administration 'suggested linkage [which] included slowing down the SALT and other arms control negotiations, and limiting economic relations and high-level visits and exchanges'.\textsuperscript{78} In response to a reporter's question whether there was linkage between the conflict in the Horn and SALT on 1 March 1978, Brzezinski said: 'We are not imposing any linkage, but linkage may be

\textsuperscript{77}Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 183.
\textsuperscript{78}Vance Hard Choices, p 85.
imposed by unwarranted exploitation of local conflict for large international purposes'.

When the Senate Foreign Relations Committee asked Vance the following day whether there was such linkage, he said: 'There is no linkage between the SALT negotiations and the situation in Ethiopia'.

Vance believed that SALT needed to be viewed in its own terms, and objected to linkage because: 'First, most of the suggested actions would adversely affect American interests. Second, these steps would probably have little effect on Soviet actions in the Horn'.

Brzezinski thought the fact that Moscow had acted to uphold Ethiopia's territorial integrity was a 'preposterous notion'. Presumably hiding his apparent misunderstanding of the regional dynamics, and while agreeing that SALT in itself was of benefit more or less equally to the US and the USSR, Brzezinski argued that SALT could be used to punish Moscow's assertiveness in the Horn. In a memo to President Carter on 3 March 1978, Brzezinski argued:

The Soviets must be made to realise that detente, to be enduring, has to be both comprehensive and reciprocal. If the Soviets are allowed to feel that they can use military force in one part of the world - and yet maintain cooperative relations in other areas - then they have no incentive to exercise any restraint. The conclusion to be drawn may be unpleasant and difficult, but I see no other alternative: ... our limited actions in regard to the specific conflict must be designed to convey our determination, while our broader response must be designed to make the Soviets weigh to a greater extent the consequences of their assertiveness for detente as a whole.

---

79 Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 185.
80 Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 185.
81 Vance, Hard Choices, p 85.
82 Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 186.
Carter entered the fray on 2 March and appeared to side with Brzezinski when he said that Soviet actions might make difficult the ratification of SALT, but stated: 'We don't initiate the linkage'.

The following day, the New York Times summed up the struggle in a headline that read: 'Top Carter Aides Seen in Discord on How to React to Soviet Actions; Brzezinski Appears Tougher than Vance - President Leans toward Security Adviser'.

While the debate was raging in Washington as to whether or not to link SALT to the conflict in the Horn, Somali troops started pulling back. When Brzezinski's deputy, David Aaron, called on Mengistu in February 1978, he was assured that Ethiopia had no interest in invading Somalia. That gave great satisfaction to Vance who believed that in the 'long-run... the Ethiopians would oust the Soviets from their country as had happened in Egypt and Sudan'.

When Aaron returned from Addis Ababa later that month, the Carter Administration was in the process of formulating a five-point 'cohesive strategy', stating that the US needed to:

- Work with its NATO allies to achieve agreed Western goals, namely a negotiated settlement, stopping an invasion of Somalia, and preventing an increase in Soviet and Cuban influence in the area.

- Ensure that its friends in the region - Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Sudan - also understood and supported these goals and would urge them on Barre.

- Obtain Somalia's agreement to withdraw from the Ogaden.

- Lay the diplomatic and political groundwork to help Somalia

---

83 Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 185.
84 Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 185.
85 Vance, Hard Choices, p 74.
defend its territory, including supplying defensive arms after it had withdrawn, and;

- Keep pressures on the Soviets to stop the Ethiopians and Cubans at the Somali border and to support a negotiated resolution of the problem.86

This was the strategy that guided US moves in the weeks leading to, and following, the Somali withdrawal in March 1978. Vance maintained that the US could claim success if the Ethiopians and Cubans stopped short of invading Somalia. But he thought that working for the removal of the Soviet and Cuban presence from Ethiopia was not realistic and that the Administration would later be blamed if it gave the public the impression that that was its goal.

The American regional friends, particularly Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Sudan provided Somalia with a few weapons that kept the war going when no Western power was willing to help. Egypt and Sudan gave Somalia some of their old stocks of Soviet weapons, paid for by Saudi Arabia. In February 1978, Kenya intercepted some of those arms when it forced down an Egyptian cargo plane overflying its airspace. Egypt retaliated by impounding two Kenyan passenger planes in Cairo until the Kenyan government allowed the Egyptian aircraft to fly back.87

The previous month, Egyptian President, Anwar Sadat, had raised with the US the possibility of deploying his own troops to Somalia, to which Washington agreed, but he later quietly abandoned the idea.88

86 Vance, Hard Choices, p 86.
87 Africa Contemporary Record 1977-78, p B276.
88 Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 181.
Brzezinski speculates that Sadat had hoped for American financial and logistical support, and did not follow through when that was not volunteered. But there is also a possibility that Sadat may have come to the conclusion that the situation did not warrant the deployment of his troops there. Sadat might also have established, ahead of the Americans, that Ethiopia would not invade Somalia.

In addition to Egyptian and Sudanese arms, Somalia received other weapons from Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, which surreptitiously included American-made arms. President Carter visited Tehran in January 1978, and one of the issues he discussed with the Shah concerned the deteriorating situation in the Horn. Shortly after Carter's visit, the Shah said he would commit his troops to the defence of Somalia if the Cuban and Ethiopian troops crossed the border.

That was when Kenya severed diplomatic relations with Iran over its involvement in the war. Of the American friends in the region, it is only Kenya that refused to side with Somalia, because of the latter's previous claims to northeastern Kenya. In fact, during this war, Kenya made many appeals to the West and Arab countries to refrain from arming Somalia until it had renounced its irredentist goals.

---

89 Shimshon Zelniker, The Superpowers and the Horn of Africa (Tel Aviv, Centre for Strategic Studies, 1982) p 29.
What roles did the superpowers play in the Horn from March to December 1978? Following Somalia's admission of defeat on 8 March 1978, the US virtually forgot the Horn, except for occasional calls for the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Ethiopia. The US, in fact, behaved as if it had written off Ethiopia.

But American relations with Ethiopia's regional treaty partner, Kenya, were quite good. In March, Carter received a Kenyan delegation led by Vice-President (later President) Daniel arap Moi which stated Kenya's concern about the situation in the Horn and requested greater arms support. Carter reaffirmed American arms and financial support for Kenya and promised to maintain an arms embargo on Somalia.

Less than two weeks after Somalia's withdrawal, Barre sent an arms mission to Washington. In response, the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Richard Moose, sent Barre a letter on 22 March in which he urged the Somali President to give assurances that his government would 'refrain from the use of force against any other country', and that it would not use US arms 'for any purposes other than the internal security or legitimate defence of the internationally-recognised territory' of Somalia.90

Washington's condition was that Barre should renounce finally his country's claim to the Ogaden - something which any Somali leader would find very difficult to do. Between that time and the end of April,

---

there was a frequent exchange of letters between the US and Somalia, but it was not until 29 April that Barre agreed to respect the internationally-recognised frontiers of other states. It took, however, more than two years before the US finally agreed to give Somalia arms.

The American arms embargo on Somalia did not go down well with Saudi Arabia, one of the two pillars of American policy in the Persian Gulf. Saudi Arabia did not subscribe to Washington's fears about Somalia's foreign policy and kept pressuring Washington to act. According to William Quandt, 'even in later years this reluctance of the Carter Administration to aid Somalia was frequently mentioned by the Saudis in their list of grievances'.

President Carter's attention in the Red Sea region during this period was absorbed by the Egyptian-Israeli peace process that culminated in the signing of the Camp David Accords later in 1978. That was the time Egypt politically moved very close to the US and farthest from the USSR. In the course of 1978, the US decided to pull out of the Indian Ocean naval arms limitation talks. Washington's interest in those talks appears to have been staked on the Soviet presence in Somalia, but after Barre's expulsion of the Soviet military presence in November 1977, the US had no interest in pursuing the negotiations.

The USSR, on the other hand, spent the rest of 1978 trying to

91 Reprogramming of Military Aid to Somalia p 16.
consolidate its position in the region. From the Ogaden, Soviet military advisers turned to Eritrea where they helped to direct the Ethiopian offensive against the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). But on the Eritrean issue, the USSR did not go along with Cuba and the PDRY which had had a long association with the Eritreans. For the rest of 1978, Cuba refused to support the war against the Eritreans although it continued to patrol the Ogaden, releasing Ethiopian troops who concentrated on Eritrea.

But it was not only on Eritrea that Cuba and the PDRY differed with Mengistu. Apparently these two countries wanted to see more civilian Marxists represented in decision-making in Ethiopia. Accordingly, in April 1978, Cuba secretly returned to Ethiopia a former dissident leader, Negede Gobedze, on a PDRY passport. Gobedze, a French-educated intellectual and former leader of Meison (the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement), once served as Vice-Chairman of the Dergue's 'politburo', but he went into exile in mid-1977 during the purge of Meison. When Mengistu learned that Gobedze had been returned secretly, he expelled the Cuban and PDRY ambassadors.\(^{93}\) Cuba and Ethiopia, however, patched up their differences when Castro went to Addis Ababa in September of that year to attend the celebrations of the fourth anniversary of the Ethiopian revolution.

The PDRY also changed its position and started supporting the Ethiopian military campaign in Eritrea later in the year, following the

---

\(^{93}\) *Africa Contemporary Record 1978-79*, pp B217, B246-47.
assassination of President Robayya on 26 June and his replacement by the pro-Soviet Abdel Fattah Ismail. Under Ismail's leadership, the PDRY moved politically closer to the USSR.

During this period, the USSR and Somalia approached their relations very cautiously. Barre did not want to alienate Moscow completely, and at one time he even indicated that he might resume military ties with the USSR. For quite some time, Radio Mogadishu kept blaming Somalia's defeat in the Ogaden on the Cuban involvement, but there was very little criticism of the USSR. But in his speech of 21 October 1978, marking the 9th anniversary of the Somali 'revolution', Barre complained about the USSR, saying: "We call upon the Soviet Union, and those governments allied with it, to review and change their present policies, respect the rights of human beings for freedom and independence, and stop the threats and aggressive designs against the Somali Democratic Republic".

The USSR was also quite cautious, probably fearing to push Somalia further into the Western camp, but it could not do much to please Somalia, because that would have required pulling out of Ethiopia.

Towards the end of the year, the USSR and Ethiopia sought to cement their relations further by signing a 20-year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation on 20 November. The text of the 15-point treaty called for, inter alia, cooperation in military affairs and for consultation on international questions of mutual interest in order to

---

coordinate policies (see Appendix 3).^  

Superpower involvement in the Ogaden war revealed the basic differences between the Soviet view of detente and the interpretation of that policy by some of President Carter's foreign policy advisers. The Soviet intervention in the conflict was in line with Brezhnev's view that detente did not rule out East-West competition. But Brzezinski, who insisted that detente ought to be comprehensive and reciprocal, tried, though without success, to establish a linkage between the Soviet role in the Horn and progress in arms control negotiations. Brzezinski's attempts at linkage failed because the Horn was not important to the US at that time while arms control negotiations were very important to American national security. That was well before the fall of the Shah of Iran and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan (see chapter 6).

4 CONCLUSION

In the Ogaden war, the superpowers were more concerned with their relationships and their global images than with the issues at stake. The war also brought out their different interpretations of detente, with the US complaining that the USSR had violated the 'rules of the game'. Brzezinski's attempts to use detente to link events in the Horn to other areas of US-USSR relations failed. The way the superpowers reacted to the fighting from 1977 to 1978 portrayed them in slightly different lights. The US was primarily concerned with the need to

challenge the Soviet presence in the region and paid little attention to the other implications of Somalia's invasion of Ethiopia. Although the USSR was also concerned with retaining its foothold in the region against Western attempts to oust it, there is evidence that Moscow took seriously the question of helping Ethiopia to maintain its territorial integrity.

But, what losses did the war cause the superpowers? As the US had pulled out of Ethiopia before the start of the war, it did not stand to lose much, whichever way the war went. The USSR, however, lost substantially when it failed to sustain its double-track policy in the Horn. Moreover, Moscow's failure to preserve its access to Somalia's military facilities prompted the US to discontinue the Indian Ocean naval arms limitation talks. Those talks had been based on the Soviet presence in Somalia and the US presence on Diego Garcia. The USSR made gains also, as one writer has pointed out:

From the Soviet perspective ... it seems that Moscow gained more than it lost on the Horn. The Soviets can also claim that in supporting Ethiopia they were doing the right thing. Through the course of their involvement, they did indeed pursue (more than less) a 'principled policy'. By performing their 'proletarian internationalist' duty toward a revolutionary regime ..., by defending the inviolability of sovereign borders, by assuming responsibility for past decisions (e.g., to arm first Somalia and later Ethiopia), and finally, by acting boldly but not rashly when openly challenged, the Soviets 'walked on the side of the angels' in the Horn.96

The Carter Administration was accused of lacking the will to act in the Ogaden, but if the region had been perceived to be of much importance to the US at that time, President Carter would have played a

more active role. It was not until 1979 that the US again started regarding the Horn as an area of some strategic importance. That was basically because of the Iranian revolution and the events that overtook Southwest Asia in the late 1970s.
Chapter 6

AMERICAN REASSERTION OF FORCE, 1979-1982

Although the United States appeared to have little direct interest in the Horn of Africa between 1977 and 1978, its involvement in this region acquired a new dimension in 1979. The Reagan Administration, which took office in January 1981, continued with President Carter's later policies, making only a few changes in emphasis.

A number of factors made the US rethink its policy and appreciate the usefulness of maintaining a military presence in the Horn in the late 1970s. The first, and probably the most important of all, was the fall from power of the Shah of Iran in January 1979. A 1980 Congressional report on US security interests in the Horn and the Persian Gulf stated that one of the 'most crucial developments' in that area included the 'fall of the Shah and the impact of ongoing events in Iran on other states in the region'.¹ For more than a decade, the US had relied on Iran and, to a lesser extent, on Saudi Arabia to guarantee security for the weaker pro-American states in the Persian Gulf region and to protect oil supplies to Japan and to the West.² Moreover, the Shah played the role of 'a regional policeman as well as

---


a first line deterrent to Soviet aggression'.

Iran's importance in the American security network increased particularly after the 1969 Nixon Doctrine which called for more US support for, and reliance on, regional powers. That policy remained intact up to the late 1970s, for even the Carter Administration made efforts 'during 1977 to reassure Iran and Saudi Arabia, ... [which] could be understood as a continuation and elaboration of basic principles of the Nixon Doctrine'. The crisis in Iran, therefore, weakened the American twin-pillar policy in the region, prompting Washington to establish a new security arrangement for the Persian Gulf region.

It was because of the rapid changes in Iran that the National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski proposed to President Carter in a memorandum on 28 February 1979 that a new security framework be established in the Persian Gulf region 'as the basis for a reassertion of American influence and power'. That meant also more American involvement in the Horn because the US loosely defines the Persian Gulf

---


region to stretch from Kenya in East Africa to Pakistan in South Asia. 6

The second event that prompted the US to increase its military presence in the Persian Gulf was the 'hostage crisis' that started on 4 November 1979, when Iranian militants held in captivity the American embassy personnel in Tehran. 7 At about the same time, the American embassy in Pakistan was burnt down and three American diplomats killed, while in Libya the American embassy was attacked. These incidents not only indicated that anti-American feelings in the Islamic world and especially in the Persian Gulf region were growing, but they also made the US appear powerless at a time when its citizens and diplomats were threatened.

That was when Brzezinski and Defence Secretary Harold Brown prevailed on President Carter to accept the idea of augmenting the American military presence in the region. 8 Although some US officials thought that these problems would be solved by the American show of force, their deployment of a carrier task force to the Arabian Sea late in 1979 did not seem to worry the Iranian militants who were holding


the hostages in Tehran. Then in April 1980, Washington made an abortive attempt to rescue the hostages, an action that led to the resignation of the Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance.9

The failure of the rescue mission due to technical problems convinced some American strategic planners that had the United States had free access to military facilities in the region, coupled with a Rapid Deployment Force, the task of rescuing the hostages would have been much easier.

The third factor was the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan on 26 December 1979.10 This reinforced among US officials 'growing apprehension about expansionist Soviet policies, including the possibility of a direct Soviet military intervention in the Gulf'.11 Thus, in addition to coping with the problems unleashed by the Iranian revolution early that year, the United States was worried about a Soviet presence in Afghanistan. The intervention took place two weeks after a Pentagon team had left Washington for Egypt, Kenya, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Somalia to negotiate for access to these countries' military facilities.

From January 1980, such efforts intensified and the US increasingly spoke of the Soviet troops in Afghanistan as 'a clear


threat to peace'. At that point, the Carter administration decided on a response that took three forms:

- The adoption of sanctions directed at the USSR.

- The formulation of a doctrine linking the security of the Persian Gulf with that of the US and an American effort to shape a regional security framework.

- And, 'the acceleration of [US] strategic renewal, in terms of both doctrine and defence budget'.

This chapter examines the way the United States has defined security threats in the Persian Gulf, established a Rapid Deployment Force, and tried to organise its local friends in the Horn/Persian Gulf region in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

1 DEFINING THE SECURITY THREAT

As was stated earlier, the basis of American national security policy since the end of World War II has been the deterrence of Soviet aggression and the containment of Communist influence worldwide. This policy has been based on the assumption that the US has 'the primary responsibility for preventing regional instability and for containing the spread of Soviet influence globally'. But how was this policy related to the situation in the Horn and the Persian Gulf in the late

---

12Brzezinski Power and Principle, p 429.
13Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 430.
1970s and early 1980s? What security threats did the US face in this region?

The US has found it easier to define its interests than the security threats in the area. The main American objective has been to have access to oil and secure its free flow to the industrialised Western countries. According to one Congressional report:

Important US objectives in the Indian Ocean region include access to the oil resources of the Persian Gulf area, trade, security of the air and sea routes through the region, accessibility of the ocean as an operating and transit regime for warships, and a favourable military balance between the US and the USSR.\(^{16}\)

Though that report was first published in 1979, US objectives have not changed. The Reagan Administration has repeatedly confirmed its commitment to those aims. US Secretary of Defence Caspar Weinberger for instance, told Congress in 1984:

It is our policy to support the independence and territorial integrity of friendly countries in this politically unstable region and to prevent a further spread of Soviet domination. In addition to our interest in the security of several friendly countries in the region, the fact that one-third of the free world's oil supply is produced in [Southwest Asia] makes the area vital to the interests of the United States and its allies.\(^{17}\)

But when asked what the main security threats are, most US officials have spoken in generalities. The closest they came to defining the threats was when the Defence and State Departments said that those threats "vary from direct Soviet aggression to regional

\(^{16}\)United States Foreign Policy Objectives, p 85.
conflict and internal instability'. Thus the US has perceived threats to its interests in three forms:

**First**, Soviet military action, which is considered the most dangerous but also the most unlikely scenario.

**Second**, regional conflict that might be exploited by the USSR. That is more likely than the first.

**Third**, internal instability that can lead to the disruption of oil supplies from the Persian Gulf. That is also a possibility, but it might not necessarily be exploitable by the Soviet Union. The situation in Iran is a clear case of internal instability that cannot be exploited by Moscow.

After analysing these scenarios, the Congressional Research Service was of the view that:

While a Soviet military invasion is not necessarily the most likely threat, it is the most serious and consequently is currently driving our military contingency planning thus far... The danger is that while the United States concentrates its efforts on combating the 'worst case' scenario, a Soviet invasion, we might not be prepared for a more likely emergency; a regional war that could spread throughout the area or beyond.

Generally, the US considered the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, Ethiopia and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) to be a serious threat to American interests in the Persian Gulf region. That was partly why a 1980 Congressional report noted that one of the most serious issues in that region was 'the persistent growth in Soviet

---

military capability, coupled with increased Soviet military activities in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, Ethiopia and Libya'.

That document stressed that Soviet arms deliveries to the region were 'far in excess of the capacities of those countries to absorb with indigenous manpower. This raises the prospect that the Soviets may be seeking to stockpile or preposition equipment in the region for other contingencies'. The acquisition of military hardware or any kind of military assistance is supposed to be assessed on the basis of the nature of the security problem, but not necessarily on the level of the indigenous absorption capability of the countries asking for arms. For that reason, there is no logical jump from the premise that these countries' indigenous absorption capabilities are low, to the conclusion that their arms are for 'other contingencies'. Ethiopia, Libya and the PDRY are virtually islands in a sea of pro-Western states.

But the United States seemed to have felt that the Soviet navy and those states constituted a threat to oil fields and the sea lanes. The American position at the start of the 1980s was, therefore, to counter 'Soviet influence in the region', minimise 'conflicts which might undermine US interests or bring about superpower conflict', and obtain 'support for US objectives from littoral states'. Militarily, the US had five objectives in the Persian Gulf in the early 1980s, namely, to:

22 United States Foreign Policy Objectives, pp 85-6.
1. Protect US economic interests in the region.

2. Employ or threaten force in support of US diplomatic objectives in the Middle East.

3. Secure the Indian Ocean air and sea routes against harassment or interdiction.

4. Intervene in support of other objectives in the littoral.

5. Balance Soviet forces in the region and attain superiority in a crisis.23

The American determination to restrict the expansion of the Soviet military presence in the Persian Gulf came out clearly in President Carter's State of the Union message on 23 January 1980 when he warned:

Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.24

With that statement, President Carter is said to have formally committed the US to the defence of the Persian Gulf region against a possible Soviet attack. The question which was not answered by that warning is: What action could be considered as constituting an attempt to 'gain control of the Persian Gulf region'? The Carter Doctrine was silent on that issue.

President Carter did not even specify what part of the Persian Gulf the United States would be most seriously concerned with. His doctrine was thus vague with regard to the geographical delimitation of the region considered vital to American security. The Reagan Administration also went ahead with the implementation of the Carter

23United States Foreign Policy Objectives, pp 88-93.
24Carter, Keeping Faith, p 483.
Doctrine without defining clearly which area of the Gulf was most important to the United States.

Brzezinski, who participated in the formulation of the Carter Doctrine, says that Carter's warning 'represented a formal recognition of a centrally important reality; that America's security had become interdependent with the security of three central and interrelated strategic zones consisting of Western Europe, the Far East, and the Middle East-Persian Gulf area'. But he does not specify what part of the Persian Gulf the US considered most important.

The American government's impreciseness on this issue came out on several occasions at Congressional hearings in the early 1980s. For instance, when asked on 10 May 1982 whether the US would go to war with the USSR if Moscow invaded Iran, a former Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East and South Asian Affairs (later ambassador to Egypt), Nicholas Veliotes, said it would not, adding: 'It is just that the future orientation of Iran is very important as we contemplate the preservation and promotion of American vital interests in the Gulf area'.

What about the other area extending to Kenya, including Egypt, Sudan and Somalia? Would a Soviet military move into these countries be regarded as an assault on vital US interests, one Congressman asked. 'No, sir, that wasn't the point I was making', said Veliotes. 'In order to protect the Gulf, however, you have to work in

---

26 US Policy Toward the Persian Gulf, p 11. Veliotes had been an ambassador to Israel and Jordan before becoming an Assistant Secretary of State in 1981. He was posted to Egypt in November 1983.
its periphery as well. In the areas that are not only important from our perspective but important to our friends who are there'.\textsuperscript{27}

The Persian Gulf was thus largely undefined, although the Carter Doctrine stood as evidence of the American resolve to go to war if the USSR moved militarily into that undefined area. The Horn was important to the US because it happened to be near the oil-producing countries and the oil sea lanes.

Another reason why the US was concerned about the Soviet threat in the Gulf was that some US officials felt that the global security situation was changing in favour of the Soviet Union. Indeed, as Brzezinski has observed, Soviet strategic capabilities had improved dramatically by the mid-1970s:

The Soviet Union, first of all, significantly enhanced its conventional-war fighting capability; secondly, it energetically sought a long-range deployment capability and started more actively exploiting the Cuban proxy in the context of Third World turbulence; finally, the Soviet side appeared to be reaching out for a genuine nuclear-war fighting capability, through its command, communications, control and intelligence structures, hardening of key command sites, etc...\textsuperscript{28}

Through the Carter Doctrine, the US, therefore, wanted to give a strong warning to the USSR, although Washington 'was aware that it was not in a position to meet the Soviet Union on the ground,... matching man for man or tank for tank'.\textsuperscript{29} Arguing that the Carter Doctrine was modeled on the Truman Doctrine, enunciated in response to the Soviet threat to Greece and Turkey in the 1940s, Brzezinski has said:

\textsuperscript{27}US Policy Toward the Persian Gulf, p 10.  
\textsuperscript{28}Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 455.  
\textsuperscript{29}Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 445.
The point of both the Truman Doctrine and of what later came to be called the Carter Doctrine was to make the Soviet Union aware of the fact that the intrusion of Soviet armed forces into an area of vital importance to the United States would precipitate an engagement with the United States, and that the United States would then be free to choose the manner in which it would respond.  

Brzezinski has confirmed that he instructed the Defence Department, 'to develop options involving both "horizontal and vertical escalation" in the event of a Soviet military move toward the Persian Gulf', by which he meant that the US 'would be free to choose either the terrain or the tactic or the level of [its] response'.  

This shows that the major threat the US considered in the Persian Gulf was a Soviet invasion, which was, according to the Congressional Research Service, the most unlikely scenario.

Brzezinski, who thought that the Persian Gulf was more important to the US than it was to the USSR, started advocating soon after the overthrow of the Shah that the US should have a military preponderance there in order 'to protect the region from Soviet intimidation'. He has further said:

A series of particularly important meetings was held in the middle of June 1979, in which the overall strategic issues were sharply debated... At one point in that debate, [James] Schlesinger argued forcefully that American military presence in the Indian Ocean-Persian Gulf area should 'balance' the Soviets, and when Vance and [Warren] Christopher reacted negatively, I not only backed Schlesinger but stated that in fact our objective ought to be military preponderance, since the area was vital to the United States while not of equal

---

32 Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 447.
significance to the Soviets.  

Brzezinski under-estimated the importance of the Persian Gulf to the Soviet Union. Since the area is very close to the Soviet borders, it could be assumed that Moscow watches developments there as closely as Washington monitors the situation in Central America.

In the course of 1980, the US also sought worldwide support for its strategy to deal with the Soviet presence in the region. The result was a tougher policy vis-a-vis the Soviet Union, a major effort to shape a new regional security framework for the Middle East, and a sustained commitment ... to forge a broader relationship with China.  

The American government, however, thought that Western security interests in the Persian Gulf were threatened not only by the USSR but also by the Soviet-supported states.

On some occasions, the US coupled its tough policy stance towards the USSR with a condemnation of Cuba, Ethiopia, Libya and the PDRY. In September 1979, when the USSR was increasing its presence in Afghanistan, Brzezinski wrote a memo to President Carter complaining that Moscow was becoming more assertive while Washington was becoming more acquiescent. He proposed that the US should, therefore, 'be less hesitant in explicitly condemning Soviet-Cuban exploitation of instability in the Third World and that we ostracise Cuba and share intelligence more widely on Cuban activities'.

---

33Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 447. Schlesinger was the Secretary for Energy while Christopher was the Deputy Secretary of State in the Carter Administration.

34Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 401.
Brzezinski suggested also that the US 'should consider the transfer of sensitive technology to China and the opening of a military dialogue with the Chinese' as it needed to 'convey to the Soviets that their use of the Cuban proxy would entail severe costs for them.'

Some analysts in the US also felt that Cuba and the USSR were exploiting regional conflicts to their advantage and that they would help rebel forces to overthrow pro-American governments. That view was endorsed by a Congressional report in 1982 which said:

The Soviet Union also continues to support terrorist and revolutionary groups seeking to overthrow governments friendly to the United States. By working through such indigenous factions to achieve these ends, the Soviet Union is able to obscure the full nature of its role and thereby impede US efforts to apply and legitimise countervailing assistance.

But, as Helen Kitchen has asked: 'What is the line between an obvious external threat and internal challenge that is believed to have, or may in fact have, some active outside support?'

Since the Carter period, the US has been defining security threats in the Horn and Red Sea region with Cuba and the PDRY in mind. Even when there was a skirmish between North Yemen and the PDRY in March 1979, the US saw it as 'a growing threat to Saudi Arabia from South Yemen'. That gave the Carter Administration reason to increase the

---

35 Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 428.
38 Helen Kitchen, US Interests in Africa (New York: Praeger, with Georgetown University's Center for Strategic & International Studies, 1983) p 59. Kitchen is the director of African Studies at the CSIS.
39 Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 447.
American military presence in the region. It 'despatched immediately the aircraft carrier Constellation to the Arabian Sea and two AWACS [Airborne Warning and Control System] planes] to Saudi Arabia, as well as an emergency airlift to North Yemen'. President Carter used his emergency authority to waive the 30-day waiting period for Congressional consideration of major arms sales.

But that brief war, which started as a tribal feud across the two countries' border, did not appear to present a security threat to Saudi Arabia. Although the US intervened swiftly by airlifting arms to North Yemen, leaders of both Yemens announced plans to merge their two countries even as American weapons were arriving. The US seemed to have failed to understand the local cause of the clashes between those two neighbours because of its inclination to see Soviet intrusion in most Third World crises. In the 1979 Yemeni crisis, Brzezinski felt gratified that the State Department was overruled by the President and, unlike the crisis in the Horn a year before, his proposal to demonstrate American resolve and force was accepted. But whether the action was warranted is doubtful. The US military attache in North Yemen at the time, Col. John Ruszkiewicz, has said that the reports about the fighting were grossly exaggerated and that his advice

40 Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 447.
42 Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 447.
was ignored.\textsuperscript{43}

Three months after the US had taken speedy action to 'save' North Yemen from Soviet influence, the North Yemeni President, Abdullah Saleh, went to Moscow for arms and was given them. Commenting on this issue, Raymond Garthoff, who was American ambassador to Bulgaria in the Carter period, has argued:

In part this serious error in judgment was a consequence of our earlier 'intelligence and policy error in believing that there was a serious South Yemeni threat and that the North Yemeni leaders needed American support. In fact, the Yemeni had exaggerated and used the 'threat' to get aid from us... they simply used their new American connection to get a better deal (on credit) from the Soviets.\textsuperscript{44}

The USSR has often benefited from such turmoil, but it has not always played the instigatory role attributed to it.

The new American security framework for the Persian Gulf region was designed to deal also with a Soviet-inspired attack on a local state friendly to the US. For instance, just before the December 1982 military exercises in Oman, Somalia and Sudan, an American government spokesman announced that those exercises were designed 'to underline the US ability to make good its pledge to support Middle East friends if they face an external threat'.\textsuperscript{45} Earlier, on 15 April 1982, Assistant Secretary Veliotes had conveyed a similar view to the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee when he said:

---

\textsuperscript{43} US Interests In, and Policies Toward, the Persian Gulf 1980, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle east, Committee on Foreign Affairs, US House of Representatives, 5 May 1980, pp 112-117, 153.

\textsuperscript{44} Raymond L. Garthoff, The Rise and Fall of Detente (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, forthcoming), Chapter 19.

\textsuperscript{45} Kitchen, US Interests in Africa p 59.
The Southwest Asian and Persian Gulf region, a critical source of energy to the free world, is simultaneously threatened by the Soviets through Afghanistan and radical forces from within the area. Therefore, our programme is directed at supporting our efforts to bolster the security of countries both in the region and en route which are crucial for US access to and presence in the region in times of crisis.46

One major instrument of carrying out these policy goals from 1980 was the US Central Command (CENTCOM), formerly known as the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF). As Perry Fliakas of the Defence Department told a Congressional committee in March 1981, the US has been acting to counter the Soviet presence in the region 'and to improve significantly the capability to maintain forces in the region during peacetime and to project appropriate elements of the Rapid Deployment Force during contingencies'.47

2 STRATEGY FOR RAPID DEPLOYMENT

It was for the purpose of meeting some of the above goals that the Rapid Deployment Force 'was officially established in March 1980 at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida'.48 But its origin went back more than two years, when the idea of having such a force came out of the findings of Policy Review Memorandum (PRM) 10, which had been submitted by the National Security Council for Presidential consideration in June 1977. The aim of PRM-10 was 'to assess the international situation and

design a national security policy to support future US foreign policy aims'.

The ideas of PRM-10 were later incorporated in Presidential Directive (PD) 18, which postulated strategic equivalence as a major American objective. 'In PD-18, the NSC initiative for what later came to be called the Rapid Deployment Force was also approved', says Brzezinski, 'and during the next two years I kept pressing the Defence Department for progress on that score'.

Initially, that document was not given much significance, and the force was perhaps not needed in the Persian Gulf because of the towering role of the Shah of Iran. But the need for it became more urgent in 1979 following the fall of the Shah in January, the hostage crisis from November, and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December. Brzezinski has said that such a step was inevitable after 'the collapse of Iran and the Soviet move into Afghanistan, preceded by the unimpeded Soviet military intrusion into Ethiopia and South Yemen'.

But, how was the RDF organised? The full programme of this force emerged in the Fiscal 1981 budget and had some of the following main features:

---

50 Power and Principle, p 465.
51 Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 454.
First, the RDF headquarters was established at MacDill Air Force Base, but no new combat forces were created. Instead, 200,000 troops were assigned to it. These included one Marine Amphibious Force; three Army divisions, namely the 82nd Airborne, 101st Airmobile, and the 24th Mechanised division which had previously been designated for a European contingency; and two carrier battle groups that had been on station in the Indian Ocean since late November 1979. The establishment of this force resulted in plans for a Strategic Air Command Projection Force of B-52Hs, some of which already had begun reconnaissance missions in the Indian Ocean, and accompanying tanker aircraft. 53

Second, the plan also required the US Navy to purchase 8 SL-7 fast deployment container ships that were to be converted into roll-on/roll-off and be ready for use by 1986. These ships would be capable of moving a mechanised division to the Persian Gulf via the Cape of Good Hope in less than three weeks, although it would take about ten days to load and unload ships. 54

The third set of initiatives for this force involved prepositioning equipment in the region. In 1980, the US Navy leased seven 'Near Term Prepositioning Ships' (NTPS), loaded them with equipment for a Marine Amphibious brigade and reserve stocks for some Air Force fighter squadrons and some Army units, and anchored them at Diego Garcia. It also began to purchase 'Maritime Prepositioning

Ships' (MPS), aiming ultimately for 12 ships by 1987, sufficient to house equipment and 30 days' supplies for three Marine brigades. The NTPS programme gave the RDF the capability to put a Marine brigade ashore in about 48 hours, though only at fairly well-equipped ports. The MPS would be capable of moving a division ashore using its own off-loading equipment.  

Other prepositioning initiatives included the storing of US Army war reserve stocks on Diego Garcia, with plans to store more at Masirah in Oman and at Ras Banas in Egypt. The US Air Force has also had plans to store spares and munitions at Masirah and Ras Banas, in addition to using ships of the NTPS. The four AWACS aircraft deployed to Saudi Arabia at the onset of the Iraqi-Iranian war in September 1980 constituted forward deployment of some air defence assets to what is regarded as a critical base in the Persian Gulf. In reference to the deployment of the AWACS to Saudi Arabia, Veliotes has said:

Our continued deployment of AWACS to buttress Saudi air defence, as Saudi Arabia and its smaller neighbours in the gulf develop a greater sense of security cooperation, is a striking example of how we can make a contribution to the region's security in a way consistent with the political realities there.

Fourth, steps were also taken to improve the US strategic lift capacity and efficiency. The RDF benefited from the C-141 programme, begun in the 1970s and completed in 1982, which increased the capacity

---

55 DoD FY81, p 116; See also McNaugher, 'Balancing Soviet Power in the Persian Gulf', p 23.
57 US Policy Toward the Persian Gulf, p 5.
of the US Air Force fleet of 279 C-141s. To enhance refuelling further, the Air Force accelerated the purchase of KC-10 tankers. A programme to procure 50 C-5Bs between 1982 and 1988 will increase by over 60 per cent the size of its fleet of cargo aircraft. Since 1980, the US has reached agreement with Egypt, Morocco and some NATO allies for use of airbases for refuelling, thereby seeking to maximise the load each aircraft can carry to the Persian Gulf.  

Fifth, the US sought four types of facilities, namely, those that support a peacetime presence; those that could be used for sea control operations; rear-staging facilities for use in a crisis; and forward operating facilities for use in a conflict. Some of the sea control facilities included those in Kenya, Oman and Somalia, while the rear-staging facilities included Ras Banas in Egypt (and possibly the Sudanese facilities). The forward operating facilities were not named, but they were assumed to be in Saudi Arabia. In addition, the facilities at Mombasa in Kenya were designed to be used for rest and recreation, and for the prepositioning of food, medicine and hospital equipment.

That was the basic structure of the RDF from the point of view of military facilities in the Persian Gulf and the equipment and units that were designated for it. The initial 'estimated programme cost for the RDF [was] approximately $10 billion, not including still

unspecific smaller procurement efforts necessary to prepare the RDF for combat.\textsuperscript{60} But the estimated cost of various construction projects and improvements to the facilities was $1 billion.\textsuperscript{61} Another report said in March 1981 that the construction projects would cost 'about $1.5 billion in the next four years in five countries'.\textsuperscript{62}

By the time the Carter Administration left office in January 1981, some progress had been made towards putting that force in place:

American force capabilities were enhanced by the acquisition of access to regional facilities and by increased Navy and Marine presence; contingency planning with some key countries was initiated and combined exercises were scheduled; defence capabilities of the regional states were to be improved and more streamlined Foreign Military Sales (FMS) procedures were adopted; and... NATO allies were pressed to codify shared responsibilities through an enhanced effort to make up for the consequences of the US 'swing' strategy pointed at the Middle East-Persian Gulf area.\textsuperscript{63}

The terms of the access agreements are shrouded in secrecy, and none of the parties have disclosed how long they will last. Interviews with some US officials revealed that those military facilities would only be used in emergencies and with the approval of the host governments.\textsuperscript{64}

The organisation of the RDF, however, faced a number of problems, some of which related to the very structure of the force while others concerned the reliability of access to regional facilities in times of crisis. Indeed, when the Reagan Administration took office early in 1981, some aspects of the RDF were still in bad shape. One of the

\textsuperscript{60}\textit{US Security Interests in the Persian Gulf}, p 3.
\textsuperscript{62}\textit{Military Construction Appropriations for 1982}, p 102.
\textsuperscript{63}\textit{Brzezinski, Power and Principle}, p 450.
\textsuperscript{64}Personal interviews in Washington, D.C., from April to June 1983.
problems 'was the tangled command structure..., with the Marine lieutenant-general in command reporting to both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Commander of US Readiness Command, an army general'.

This issue took on greater significance when it became clear that one of the causes of the failure of the US attempt to rescue the hostages from Iran in April 1980 had been the lack of a clear chain of command within the RDF.

The Reagan Administration examined a number of options, one of which was to assign the RDF to the US Commander-in-Chief in Europe. That made some sense in view of the involvement of European-based facilities and forces in supporting any major deployment in the Persian Gulf. But it assumed that the focus of the RDF would be narrowed to the Persian Gulf, and even then, 'it would still leave the RDF Commander some 4,000 kilometres away from the Persian Gulf'.

To deal with that issue, the Reagan Administration in January 1983 converted the RDF into a Central Command (Centcom), 'a unified command reporting directly to the Secretary of Defence'. Moreover, 'supporting naval forces were increased to include elements of three carrier battle groups, but the US Navy will retain control of these forces as well as US Marines until they go ashore'.

---

Explaining the role of the Central Command in January 1984, its Commander in Chief, Robert Kingston, said:

The United States Central Command is the product of an evolutionary process which sought the best methods for integrating our nation's military and security interests with those of nations of the region and our allies. The establishment of a new unified command ... that can concentrate on security issues facing the entire region was a visible sign to friends and potential adversaries of the importance that the US places on stability and security in South-West Asia, the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa.

The creation of a 'unified command' seemed to have solved some problems, but, according to some Pentagon officials, Centcom's control over its forces is slightly looser than that previously enjoyed by the RDF. Compared with other unified commands, Centcom had a number of disadvantages also. Kingston pointed out some of those handicaps when he said:

[By comparison with the European and Pacific Commands, [these are] some of the challenges facing the US Central Command. There are sizeable US forces in-place in the European and Pacific theatres. The Central Command area has almost none. There are in-place Command and Control Communications systems in both the European and Pacific theatres. But in the Central Command area there is none. There are extensive host nation support agreements between the United States and the nations of Europe and the Pacific. In the Central Command area we have none. And we have long-term alliances with Western Europe and many nations of the Pacific. We have none with nations in the Central Command area.

Thus despite its apparently elaborate structure, Centcom lacked a supporting local politico-military infrastructure.

But if the US had increased its forces in the Horn/Persian Gulf region, it would probably have caused some political problems for the

---

70Kingston, 'From RDF to CENTCOM', p 16.
local pro-American regimes. As one reputable journal has pointed out 'it would not be easy to balance military requirements with political realities' in the Persian Gulf:

Sealift and airlift requirements could be vastly diminished if American soldiers were stationed in considerable numbers within the region... Yet, even if one of the states in the region were willing to host a major US deployment, ... the strain on regional politics caused by such a deployment could outweigh the military benefit derived from deterring Soviet threats. 

While many countries in the Persian Gulf might have felt reassured by an American military presence in that region, hardly any of them wanted to host it, apart from perhaps Somalia and Sudan. A senior Pentagon official has said that these two countries were happy to host American forces, but the US did not appear to find either of them suitable. Both Somalia and Sudan had serious internal problems as well as conflicts with their neighbours, and the US did not want to be involved in their tangles. The US very much wanted to maintain access to Egyptian and Saudi facilities, but these two countries refused to sign a formal agreement with Washington for the use of their facilities.

Even so, Egypt allowed US forces access to Ras Banas on the Red Sea, but as for Saudi Arabia, 'US right of access to [its] bases... [has been] the subject of understanding but not explicit agreement'. The US has installed in Saudi Arabia more than $23 billion worth of military equipment, part of which might be used by the RDF. The US also

---

72 Personal interviews in Washington, D.C., from April to June 1983.
despatched AWACS planes to Saudi Arabia following the outbreak of the Iraq-Iran war in September 1980. A year later, Washington agreed to sell five of those planes to Saudi Arabia at a cost of $8 billion. The Saudis have also 'purchased F-15 spares and maintenance sets in larger quantities for their fleet'.

Most of the sophisticated American equipment in use in Saudi Arabia 'would give US air power excellent coverage of the northern Gulf and Iran'. According to James Buckley, US Undersecretary for Security Assistance, Science and Technology, the equipment Washington provided to Saudi Arabia was going to improve the security of American friends, 'strengthen [the US] posture in the region, and make it clear both to local governments and to the Soviet leadership that the United States [was] determined to assist in preserving security' in the region. But their use might not always be taken for granted. As Tom McNaugher of the Brookings Institution has said:

[C]overage would depend on Saudi willingness to allow the United States to use their bases. Such use is not guaranteed in the Saudi case, or in the case of other regional powers, all of which are reluctant to allow the United States unrestricted use of bases on their territory. Even Egypt, a close partner to the United States Middle East peace process, has been unwilling to clarify arrangements for the use of Ras Banas sufficiently to satisfy Congress, which in Fiscal Year 1983 held up half of the requested funding for base construction there.

---

76 Strategic Survey 1982-1983, p 137.
Thus the US faced the problem of visibility in the Persian Gulf. Even in Kenya, which is fairly far from the Persian Gulf, Washington feared that 'a highly visible United States presence, any increased permanent presence, or incidents involving United States military personnel in highly publicised activity could have a negative impact on Kenyan public opinion'.

But did the RDF have the capability to guarantee security for both the local pro-American states and for US interests in the Persian Gulf? An American specialist on the Horn, Tom Farer, believes that the RDF is too large for local contingencies and inadequate for a Soviet threat.

As was stated above, Moscow's invasion of the Gulf is the most unlikely scenario. But if there was a Soviet aerial attack on Saudi oilfields, some military specialists believe there would be little that the RDF could do to prevent it.

With local contingencies, the US would be capable of preventing a hostile neighbour from attacking a US ally with much less force than that envisaged for the RDF. There were, however, other local contingencies about which the RDF would do very little. For instance, the US could do nothing to prevent the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. Moreover, the RDF could not do much about the situation in Sudan, which was exacerbated in 1983 by President

---


80 Personal interview with Professor Farer in New Jersey, USA, in May 1983.

81 On the death of Sadat, see Mohammed Heikal, Autumn of Fury: the assassination of Sadat (New York , Random House, 1983), especially p 265.
Numeiri's introduction of Islamic law, or disaffection with the Siad Barre government in Somalia.

Given these problems, the US came to the conclusion that it was in its best interest to help the local countries stabilise themselves. As the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Chester Crocker, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in relation to economic and security assistance to Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and a few other African countries: 'Africa's security concerns are real ... and include hostile neighbours, subversion from abroad, and the political instability which generally accompanies troubled economies'.

3 ORGANISING THE LOCAL FRIENDS

In its relations with local friends, the US pursued three main objectives. It wanted to upgrade and maintain access to their military facilities; to provide them with economic and security assistance; and to encourage them to unite and resist Soviet influence at the regional level. As has been stated, the US acquired access to military facilities in Egypt, Kenya, Oman, Somalia and Sudan in 1980, and the upgrading of these facilities started immediately.

A few months after the establishment of the Rapid Deployment Force, Paul Nitze, who later became President Reagan's arms negotiator and adviser, wrote:

The principal task of the early 1980s must be to check, blunt and as far as possible frustrate the interrelated Soviet strategies while the energies of the many nations similarly threatened have an opportunity to become mobilised and linked

82 Fiscal Year 1983 Security Assistance, p 270.
so as to reverse the currently adverse trends in the correlation of forces.  

 Nitze did not specifically suggest an alliance, neither did Brzezinski nor President Carter. They were merely concerned with the mobilisation of pro-Western states in the area to resist Soviet influence at a regional level.

 By mid-December 1979, a little before the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the US was working out plans that would 'generate a broader and more energetic response to the deterioration in [its] position brought on by the collapse of the Shah's regime and the growing Soviet involvement in the area'.  

 The idea to ask for access to military facilities, which was formally proposed during a National Security Council meeting on 4 December 1979, was part of an attempt to encourage the local states to play a role in the containment of Soviet influence. That, according to Brzezinski, was considered 'necessary to inject effectively American power into a region that had become an "arc of crisis", and in which the Soviets were both militarily and politically on the offensive.'

 Earlier in February 1979, when Defence Secretary Harold Brown visited the Middle East, Brzezinski had used the occasion to urge him to emphasise the US strategic concern and to stress 'the need not only to involve core countries of the Persian Gulf but also to engage friendly peripheral states, such as Morocco, Sudan and Turkey, in a

---

84 Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 426.
85 Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 446.
wider response'. That was what Brzezinski later termed an effort 'to shape a United Muslim front'. This move acquired greater significance early in 1980 when Brzezinski and Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher visited Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in further attempts to drum up support for a regional pro-Western strategy. According to Brzezinski:

[Saudi leaders] stressed the grave security threat that the region now faced, and they were much more prepared than before to consider, on a quiet basis, enhanced American-Saudi military cooperation. They made no bones about stating their desire for closer military ties, they asked for better intelligence regarding Soviet activity in the region, and they particularly stressed the growing threat to Saudi Arabia from the growing Communist military presence in South Yemen.\(^{87}\)

This was part of the diplomatic efforts to sell the idea of a regional security framework in the Persian Gulf.

President Carter also hinted at such an arrangement in his State of the Union message on 23 January 1980 when he said: 'We are prepared to work with other countries in the region to share a cooperative security framework that respects differing values and political beliefs, yet which enhances the independence, security and prosperity of all.'\(^{88}\) US officials also subsequently stressed that one of their major objectives in the Horn was to encourage cooperation among Kenya, Somalia and Sudan.\(^{89}\)

To enhance its position in the Horn, the US provided Kenya,\(^{86,87,88,89}\)

---

86 Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 447.
87 Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p 450.
89 Personal interviews in Washington, D.C. in May and June 1983.
Somalia and Sudan with generous economic and military assistance from the late 1970s (see tables below). The Deputy Secretary of State for African Affairs, Princeton Lyman, in June 1983, stressed (in a personal interview) that one of Washington's main objectives in the Horn was to provide economic and military assistance to its friends, namely, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan. The US also continued to provide Ethiopia with 'humanitarian' aid. One report in 1983 said that 'US food aid programmes in Ethiopia' for the Fiscal Year 1983 were worth $6.5 million.90 (The US was one of the many Western nations that sent famine relief aid to Ethiopia in late 1984 and early 1985).

### Table 1: US Military Aid to the Horn in $ Million

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1981</th>
<th>1982</th>
<th>1983</th>
<th>% increase 1981-83</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>508.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>30.55</td>
<td>52.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.2</td>
<td>216.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>57.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>172.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>167.25</strong></td>
<td><strong>189.9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2: US Economic Aid to the Horn in $ Million

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1981</th>
<th>1982</th>
<th>1983</th>
<th>% increase 1981-83</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>63.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>107.72</td>
<td>127.85</td>
<td>128.4</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>211.32</strong></td>
<td><strong>253.05</strong></td>
<td><strong>265.1</strong></td>
<td><strong>25.5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the American assistance in the Horn went to Sudan, the largest recipient of American aid in sub-Saharan Africa. Sudan successfully played the Soviet and Libyan cards, and the United States considered it 'a strategically and politically important country' partly because of its geographical location and partly because of its support for the Camp David Accords. One Congressional document stated in 1982 that Sudan '[stood] as a constraining factor against radical Libya... against communist Ethiopia... and as a haven of moderation for refugees.'

US military and economic assistance was vital in helping President Gaafar Numeiri deal with his economic and internal security problems. (Numeiri was overthrown in a military coup on 6 April 1985).

The second largest recipient of American assistance in sub-Saharan Africa was Kenya. Although Kenya had no Soviet or Libyan card to play, it got much of this aid partly because it was considered a reliable pro-Western state.

Somalia, which also used the Soviet threat approach, did not get as much military assistance as Kenya and Sudan because its past relations with Kenya and its continuing claims to the Ogaden forced the US to review its requests for arms more cautiously. Somalia was scheduled to receive American military assistance in Fiscal Year 1980, but the aid was not delivered to Mogadishu until 1981, after the US Congress had been assured that there were no Somali troops in the Ogaden.

---

91 See United States Economic Assistance to Egypt and Sudan, Report of Staff Study Missions to Egypt and Sudan to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, US House of Representatives, October 1982, p 40.
Defending the Reagan Administration's interest in providing security assistance to African countries, Crocker told Congress on 22 March 1983 that:

The Administration is often criticised for requesting funds for large expensive military assistance programmes that wind up in ruins and that detract from the critical need for economic development... The United States can point with pride to the fact that the great majority of our programmes in Africa are successful. These programmes run the gamut from engineering in Liberia, Senegal and Sudan to aviation in Kenya and mechanised infantry and armour in Botswana, Gabon and Somalia. These programmes have not only added to the capabilities of host military but have introduced senior officials to the concepts of planning, budgeting and logistics that are vital to the success of any military organisation.92

Crocker said also that the US military assistance to these countries provided civilian benefits as well. He cited the 'engineering and construction programmes in Kenya, Liberia, Senegal and Sudan [which] have made direct contributions in the form of new facilities and housing construction and of building and improving roads in both urban and rural areas'.93 The same applied to 'communications programmes in Somalia and Sudan [which] allow units in remote areas to communicate with population centres, not only for military purposes but also to obtain needed attention to civilian requirements and emergencies'.94

The bulk of US military assistance programmes and foreign military sales, called MAP/FMS respectively, was 'concentrated in a few key countries such as Sudan, Somalia, ... and Kenya'.95 In justifying US assistance to these countries for the Fiscal Year 1984, Crocker said:

---

95 Crocker 'FY 1984 Assistance Requests for Africa', p 22.
Our interests in East Africa and the Horn reflect to a great extent the region's considerable strategic significance to the West because of shipping and oil tanker lanes leading to Europe. Somalia and Kenya are critical to our logistical supply systems in the event of a security crisis in the Gulf or Middle East, and Sudan plays a key role in containing Libyan aggression in East and Central Africa. The three recipients of a major portion of our total assistance to East Africa are Sudan, Somalia and Kenya, which together account for $498.9 million of the total $520.6 million (including development assistance, PL 480, and security assistance) we are requesting for East African and Indian Ocean countries in 1984.\footnote{Crocker, 'FY 1984 Assistance Requests for Africa' p 23.}

This statement confirmed also that the strategic significance of those countries stemmed from their closeness to the Middle East-Persian Gulf region. It was in this vein that Crocker, in his testimony to a House subcommittee on foreign operations in April 1983, said:

Our strategic interests in the Horn of Africa are strictly corollary to our broader interests in Southwest Asia and the Indian Ocean, and our military activity in the Horn, including our acquisition of access rights in Kenya and Somalia, is directed at protecting these larger interests.\footnote{Statement by Honourable Chester A. Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, before the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations of the House Committee on Appropriations', 26 April 1983, p 2.}

This view carried two implications. First, that the US would continue to regard the Horn as a strategically important region as long as there was uncertainty in the Persian Gulf and in the Middle East and the potential for the USSR to extend its presence there.

Second, it implied that the Horn was of little intrinsic value to the US apart from its location close to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. Indeed, the strategic significance of the Horn alone for the US seemed to be derivative. It was based on the need to reassure American friends in the Persian Gulf and to ensure the security of the oil sea lanes to Western countries.
American diplomacy in the Horn/Red Sea region was supplemented by Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia's involvement was part of its objective of supporting fellow Muslims and reducing Soviet influence in the Red Sea region.

The objective of Saudi policy in this region has been to encourage cooperation among Kenya, Somalia and Sudan, possibly with a view to isolating Ethiopia, a Soviet ally. Immediately the Ogaden war was over in 1978, Saudi Arabia started moves to reconcile Kenya with Somalia. Shortly after Saudi Arabia had played host to Presidents Barre and Moi simultaneously in September 1979, it announced that Prince (later King) Fahd had had contacts with the two leaders 'with the aim of creating a constructive atmosphere for the development of relations between [their] countries'.

That attempt at reconciliation foundered because Barre could not renounce unconditionally Somali claims to parts of Kenya, but the Saudi influence on these countries increased in subsequent years. Saudi Arabia continued to work for cooperation between Kenya and Somalia, and in the early 1980s, it was one of the major financiers of a Kenya-Somalia road. Saudi Arabia's ultimate goal has been to bring about some unity among Egypt, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan on the western side of the Red Sea.

On the eastern side of the Red Sea, Saudi Arabia encouraged cooperation between North Yemen and the Arab Sheikhdoms on the Persian Gulf.

---

Gulf. The formation in May 1981 of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) comprising Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Oman was part of the efforts to resist Soviet influence in the Persian Gulf. North Yemen did not join the GCC, which it saw as an attempt to isolate the PDRY, a Soviet ally. The Gulf Cooperation Council, which was initially concerned with the economic and security cooperation of the member countries, represented the triumph of Saudi diplomacy in that region. Of the GCC members, only Kuwait has diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.

4 CONCLUSION

The new American security framework for the Persian Gulf put in place in 1980 by the outgoing Carter Administration was subsequently endorsed by the Reagan Administration in 1981. This new defence arrangement, especially the RDF, was, to a large extent, based on the notion that the greater the supply of modern weapons to a country, the greater are the chances of enjoying security. But while armaments could enhance security in most places, including the Persian Gulf region, they were unlikely to reduce significantly the causes of regional instability in the area.

Notions of security which have placed a premium on weapons often have ignored or paid little attention to the significance of internal struggles and the inequalities of wealth which have been some of the greatest destabilising factors in Third World countries.

The US attempted to address the problem of security in the Horn by also providing some economic assistance to its friends. The ultimate impact of its economic assistance programmes was, however, diminished by the corruption, unequal distribution of wealth and some of the many effects of modernisation in these countries, but that was a situation over which the US could do little. For that reason, the American security framework for the Persian Gulf/Horn of Africa region was not likely to guarantee security for that region in the long-term.

This is not to argue, as some writers have done, that the emphasis placed on the role of the RDF could be counter-productive. One such writer, Philip Allen, has said: 'To the extent that the RDF represents a counter-insurgency or counter-terrorist strategy, its dependence on unpopular governments helps induce the very problem it is supposed to solve'. There has so far been no evidence that the RDF was counter-productive. It could not achieve some of its goals, but there was nothing to support the view that it could induce terrorist or insurgency problems in the region.

But a few other observations could be made about American policy in the Horn from 1979 to 1982. While the US sought to influence the policies of Kenya, Somalia and Sudan, it also appeared accommodating to the interests of some of these countries. The American decision to give Somalia less military assistance than Kenya and Sudan was most likely taken to allay Kenya's fears of Somalia's territorial ambitions. At

the same time, the US partially succeeded in bringing these two neighbours politically closer. The US also relied on the local states and other 'regional influentials', like Saudi Arabia, to restrict Soviet influence in the region. Thus, the security picture for the US in the region was a mixed one, with some of its policies likely to be successful but with others — especially the military ones — risking failure or minimal success.
Chapter 7

SOVIET POLICY 1979-1982

The USSR's loss of access rights to Somalia's military facilities in November 1977 initially reduced the Soviet military presence in the northwestern part of the Indian Ocean. As was stated in Chapter 5, the Soviet facilities in Somalia were important for power projection in the Indian Ocean as a whole because they were the only ones that Moscow had in the region. Ethiopia replaced Somalia as the USSR's best friend in the Horn, but Ethiopia could not offer the type of facilities that Somalia had provided.

Although some writers have argued that the Soviet Union gained an advantage by opting for closer ties with Ethiopia,¹ from a strategic point of view Ethiopia is not better placed than Somalia. The Ethiopian Red Sea ports of Assab and Massawa could offer anchoring facilities for Soviet ships, but they are not as conveniently placed as the Somali ports of Berbera and Mogadishu on the Indian Ocean. In addition, the Ethiopian port facilities are in an area subject to an internal insurgency, whereas the Somali ports are not.

The view that Ethiopia has considerable influence in Africa is also wrong, because the Ethiopian revolutionary leaders have inspired little, if any, admiration from the rest of Africa. Ethiopia was relatively influential in Africa before the 1974 revolution, but that was because of the respect Emperor Haile Selassie commanded in some African quarters.

Another viewpoint generally expressed by some Western commentators is that Ethiopia has more resources and better opportunities which the USSR can exploit. It is true Ethiopia has a larger population and is potentially richer than Somalia, but it has also more problems than Somalia. Moreover, unlike Somalia which is internally relatively peaceful, Ethiopia faces numerous problems from different ethnic groups clamouring for autonomy.

Soviet policy in this region has always been determined by its global aims, which did not change after the Ogaden war. The USSR continued to pursue its ideological goal of helping emerging Marxist states in the region, namely Ethiopia and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY). It also sought an increased military presence in the two countries for the purpose of projecting its power in eastern Africa, the southern areas of the Middle East and the western Indian Ocean region.

An additional impulse for the Soviet Union was that it was a relatively new power on the global stage and did not want to lose its foothold in some areas of the world. According to Colin Legum:

As the newest of the world's naval powers, the USSR naturally has an interest in acquiring adequate facilities around the major oceans to improve the ability of its naval and fishing fleets (as well as its civil airlines and military aircraft) to operate worldwide and free them from the climatic constraints of their home ports. Furthermore, for their own defence the Russians must be able to neutralise strategic areas to prevent Western powers from bringing their forward positions close to the Soviet borders, as well as to deal with the possibility that nuclear missiles will be launched from US submarines in the Mediterranean, Red Sea, or the northern Indian Ocean.  

That statement further supports the proposition that Soviet policy in the Horn/Red Sea region, like American policy there, has been coloured by Cold War precepts.

The Soviet press has also consistently attacked the Chinese presence in the region, thereby implying that the USSR considers China a threat to its own goals in the area and would probably like to limit the growth of Chinese influence there.

One American military analyst, Richard Remnek, has postulated that the 'Soviet naval forces around Africa ... could play a minor role in wartime interdiction of oil supplies by targeting oil terminals'.

Remnek believes the Soviet forces on Dahlak Islands in the Red Sea could be used to launch an attack on the Saudi oil terminal of Yanbu. This reasoning does not look convincing. A war between the Soviet Union and the United States would most likely involve the use of nuclear missiles for which the USSR would not need military facilities in Africa. Secondly, in a real war, the Soviet forces on Dahlak Islands would not only be subject to a blockade at the Bab al-Mandeb straits and at Suez, but they would also be most probably exposed to attack from American forces in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Diego Garcia, and from French forces in Djibouti.

Moreover, with the AWACS aircraft in Saudi Arabia, it is quite unlikely that Soviet naval forces could launch an attack on a Saudi target without being detected in advance. Even granted that such an

---

attack could be carried out, what benefit would the Soviets gain by, say, attacking Yanbu which carries less than 2 million barrels of oil per day? Finally, if the USSR wanted to destroy Yanbu or any other oil terminal in Saudi Arabia or anywhere else in the Persian Gulf/Horn of Africa region, aircraft from Soviet bases in Transcaucasia appear to have a far better chance of success and survival than small naval forces operating from Dahlak.

That should, however, not obscure the possibility that the Soviet Union could be interested in influencing Ethiopian politics and making use of Ethiopia's military facilities in the Red Sea. This chapter examines Soviet policy in Ethiopia between 1979 and 1982. It also discusses the roles of the PDRY and Libya in Soviet strategy.

1 CONTINUED PRESENCE IN ETHIOPIA

Summing up the role of the Soviets in Ethiopia in 1979, one American scholar rightly pointed out:

They transformed a country racked by external invasion, internal dissension, and provincial secession, into a country which has preserved the sanctity of its borders, maintained the stability of its ruling elite, and kept its empire intact. One may quarrel with Soviet methods but, especially from the Dergue's perspective, one cannot fail to appreciate their results.4

Thus it could be argued that the Soviet intervention in 1977-78 played a politically stabilising role. But what did the Soviet Union expect in return?

4David, 'Realignment in the Horn', pp 80-81. See also Richard B. Remnek, 'Soviet Policy in the Horn of Africa: The Decision to Intervene', Strategic Issues Research Memorandum, 10 June 1980.
In November 1978, a few months after the end of the Ogaden war, Ethiopia and the Soviet Union signed their Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. The treaty was ratified in February 1979. At the Supreme Soviet session that preceded the ratification of the treaty, a CPSU Central Committee secretary, Boris Ponomarev, said:

The successful advance of the people of Ethiopia along the road it has chosen is one more clear indication of the growing alliance of the forces of national liberation and of world socialism. When international imperialism in alliance with reactionary and aggressive forces tried to strangle revolutionary Ethiopia, the Soviet Union, Cuba and other countries of socialism came to the aid of the freedom-loving people of Ethiopia, in full accordance with UN principles.⁵

That statement revealed that in helping Ethiopia during the Ogaden war, one of Moscow's aims was to move Ethiopia firmly on to the socialist road. Indeed, after the Ogaden war, most Soviet efforts in the Horn were directed at bringing Ethiopia politically close to the Soviet bloc of countries. The USSR used political, economic and military instruments to try to influence Ethiopia. Soviet policy focused on three main issues, namely the war in Eritrea, the acquisition of access to Ethiopia's military facilities, and the formation of an Ethiopian Marxist-Leninist party.

The Eritrean Question

The Eritrean issue has been one of Ethiopia's most important problems since the 1960s and Ethiopian governments have always sought

to involve their allies in it.\(^6\) In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Ethiopia sought Soviet, Cuban, Libyan and PDRY support to deal militarily with that problem. The USSR, Cuba and the PDRY, however, urged Mengistu in 1978 to negotiate with the Eritrean guerrillas. Having supported the guerrillas in the past, these countries were initially unwilling to turn against them.

Cuba initially refused to help Ethiopia in the Eritrean campaign. In February 1978, the Cuban Foreign Minister said: 'We feel that there has to be some political solution. But Eritrea is an internal [Ethiopian] problem.'\(^7\) This indicated that Cuba did not favour a military solution to the Eritrean issue. The Cuban statement also implied that Cuban troops, which had gone to Ethiopia to help repel an external attack, would not be used against Eritrea which was an internal problem. Mengistu went to Havana in April 1978 in a bid to persuade President Fidel Castro to support his military campaigns in Eritrea, but he was not successful.\(^8\)

Cuba and Ethiopia patched up their differences when Castro went to Addis Ababa in September 1978 to attend the celebrations of the fourth anniversary of the Ethiopian revolution. But Castro still did not support Mengistu's plan to crush the Eritreans militarily. The claim that it was 'a Russian led Cuban/Ethiopian army' that pushed back the Eritrean guerrillas in 1978 and 1979 does not appear to be supported by

---

\(^6\) A brief history of Eritrea was given in chapter 2.

\(^7\) The Observer, 27 February 1978.

\(^8\) A good analysis of Cuban-Ethiopian discord over Eritrea is found in Nelson P. Valdes, 'Cuban Foreign Policy in the Horn of Africa', Cuban Studies, Vol.10, No.1, January 1980, pp 63-75.
What the Cubans initially did was to patrol the Ogaden and release Ethiopian troops for combat in Eritrea. That meant that although Cubans were not involved in combat in Eritrea, they effectively helped Ethiopia against the Eritreans. Cuba did not appear to have played a direct role against Eritrea until the early 1980s, but even then it was basically an advisory role.

The Soviet Union continued to participate in the Eritrean war on Ethiopia's side. The USSR's support for Ethiopia was partly to frustrate the efforts of some former Soviet friends like Egypt and Sudan who were assisting the Eritreans. Moscow also hoped that it would eventually pressure Mengistu to seek a peaceful solution. During the Ethiopian fifth military offensive against Eritrea in July 1979, the Soviet Union helped Ethiopia considerably. According to EPLF sources, which could be correct but are liable to be tainted, Soviet officers commanded the offensive while Soviet ships and aircraft carried supplies to the Ethiopian garrisons at Mersa Teklai and Asmara. That offensive, like four previous ones between 1974 and 1978, failed. But in 1980, the Soviet Union attempted to instigate negotiations between the Dergue and the Eritrean guerrillas. Through the Italian Communist Party, Moscow initiated contacts between the Dergue and the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) in March 1980.

---

9 See, for instance, Steven David, 'Realignment in the Horn', p 69.
10 Personal interviews with Ethiopian officials in October 1981.
11 The first offensive was undertaken in 1974 and since then an offensive has been launched each year. For a good discussion of the Eritrea problem, see David Pool, Eritrea: Africa's Longest War (London, Anti-Slavery Society, 1982) revised edition; and Richard Sherman, Eritrea: The Unfinished Revolution (New York, Praeger, 1980).
Moscow was by no means the only party interested in a peaceful settlement of the Eritrean problem. The conservative Arab countries, which had been backing the guerrillas, were now getting worried about the Cuban and Soviet presence in the region. They too played a role in pressuring the guerrillas to negotiate. Moreover, Sudan was being drained economically by the burden of about 500,000 refugees from Eritrea and was eager to improve relations with Ethiopia. The Sudanese government helped in promoting an initiative between the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Dergue.\textsuperscript{12} By early 1980, therefore, the guerrilla movements had come under pressure from all sides to consider a political solution.

Prior to the talks, the EPLF Central Committee made a statement outlining conditions for negotiations. It demanded that the Dergue: agree to 'resolve the Eritrean question peacefully and begin negotiations without preconditions'; drop the concept of regional autonomy; and accept to negotiate with the 'joint supreme political leadership' of the EPLF and ELF.\textsuperscript{13} But the talks broke down before the parties could reach any agreement, and towards the end of 1980, the Ethiopian government launched the sixth offensive against Eritrea.

The war in Eritrea continued into the 1980s, and the guerrilla movements used a good deal of their resources fighting each other as well as resisting the Ethiopian attacks. At a meeting in Tunis in March 1981, the EPLF, the Eritrean Liberation Front-Revolutionary Council

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Africa Contemporary Record 1980-81} pp B168-9, B171-5.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Africa Contemporary Record 1980-81}, p B172.
(ELF-RC) and the Eritrean Liberation Front-Popular Liberation Forces (ELF-PLF) signed an agreement to unite, hoping that the agreement to unify their forces would return to them both the political and military initiatives. They also signed a five-point declaration at the end of four days of discussions initiated by the Arab League's secretary-general, Chadli Klibi.

The unity agreement specified that the rival guerrilla forces should stop all internecine hostilities and propaganda campaigns against each other; direct all their efforts 'against the common enemy'; strive to create 'a favourable atmosphere for the future stage of unity'; and establish 'a joint committee representing all forces of the Ethiopian revolution' to work with the Arab League Secretariat in implementing unity. But before long the 'unity agreement' dissolved in recriminations.

The disunity among the guerrilla groups gave the Ethiopian forces an opportunity to launch a major offensive in September 1981, calculated to cut off the remaining guerrilla forces once and for all from the supply lines through Sudan, but they did not succeed. Also working in favour of the Ethiopian government at the time was the thawing of relations between Ethiopia and Sudan which began in 1980. By early 1982, when Mengistu himself went to the Eritrean capital of Asmara to plan the 'Operation Red Star' offensive, Ethiopian forces had regained control of various parts of Eritrea previously held by the guerrillas, but EPLF troops remained dug in around Naqfa and a few other places near the Sudanese border.

14 Africa Contemporary Record 1981-82, p B156.
The Eritrean conflict and the worsening rebellion in the neighbouring Tigre province remained major obstacles to the Ethiopian government's efforts to consolidate its control. The conflict was a heavy drain on economic resources, forcing the Mengistu regime into heavy dependence on military aid from Cuba and the Soviet Union. In a statement which, though exaggerated, probably gave some idea of the extent of the burden, an EPLF spokesman, Nafi Kurdi, claimed in Paris on 15 January 1982 that 90,000 Ethiopian troops had been deployed to Eritrea, backed by arms and advisers from the Soviet Union, financial support from Libya and naval and helicopter units from the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY).

The Military Presence

As the US increased its military presence in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf regions in the late 1970s, the USSR also appeared to attach greater significance to the use of military facilities in the region. One of Moscow's primary interests in the Horn and Red Sea region has been to secure and maintain naval and air facilities so as to project more effectively its power in the Indian Ocean region as a whole.

Soon after the US Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) was created in March 1980, the USSR started charging that security in the Persian Gulf region was 'particularly threatened by the course being pursued by the Carter Administration'. In a Pravda interview, Brezhnev pointedly said:

The militaristic tendencies in US policy of late find their expression in the new long-term armament programmes, in the establishment of still more military bases far beyond the US borders, including the Middle East and the Indian Ocean, in the organisation of the rapid deployment forces, an instrument for
the policy of armed interference.  

The USSR, which has shown an inclination to undermine the systems of government supported by the US, not surprisingly asserted that the security of the Persian Gulf region was threatened by the US military build-up there, while its own role was seen as serving 'to stabilise world economic relations, peace and security both on the regional and global levels'.

In the early 1980s, the USSR maintained between 20 and 30 vessels, including supply ships, in the Indian Ocean at any one time and some of them were given anchorage privileges at the Dahlak Islands. As one writer indicated in 1981, 'the Soviet fleet includes far-ranging destroyers and amphibious landing craft, ... nuclear submarines, intelligence collecting merchant ships and trawlers, and, on occasion, the 38,000-ton aircraft carrier Minsk from the formidable Pacific fleet'. But the Minsk visited the Indian Ocean very few times, probably only twice. Furthermore, the Soviet landing craft often carried stores, not marines, except on the rare occasions when the Rogov was there.

When Admiral Sergei Gorshkov, Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet

---


navy, visited Ethiopia in July 1980, he reportedly sought greater use of military facilities in Ethiopia. Gorshkov toured Eritrea, visited the naval base at Massawa, and was 'briefed' on the political and military victories won in the area. His week-long tour included what were described as 'very fruitful' talks with Mengistu. Gorshkov no doubt appreciated the continued use by his fleet of military facilities on the Dahlak archipelago which lies about 50 kilometres off the Eritrean coast. Some writers have suggested that Gorshkov unsuccessfully sought permission to use also facilities on land, but there does not appear to be evidence that such a request was made and turned down.19

The USSR continued to provide Ethiopia with military aid, and an estimated 2,400 Soviet military advisers were in the country. Some reports have also indicated that the USSR installed modern equipment on the Dahlak islands for use by its Indian Ocean Naval Squadron and by ships of the Mediterranean fleet. It moved the dry dock from Aden to the Dahlak Islands where repairs on Soviet, as well as Ethiopian, ships could be carried out.20

The US repeatedly claimed in 1981 that the Soviet Union was developing the Dahlak archipelago into 'the largest Soviet naval base in the Indian Ocean' area. The Pentagon said in March 1981 that a 13,000-ton amphibious vessel, Rogov, was docked there with 5,000

19 That claim was made by Africa Contemporary Record 1980-81 pp B187. See also Marina Ottaway, Soviet and American Influence in the Horn of Africa, (New York, Praeger, 1982) p 149. But the claim has not been confirmed by any of the Ethiopian officials the author has interviewed. 20 Kingston, 'From RDF to CENTCOM', p 16.
marines. But the Ethiopian Foreign Minister, Felleke Gedle Giorgis, denied those reports, saying: 'We have no intention of giving bases to anyone, including the Russians'. He said that no Soviet personnel were stationed on the Dahlak Islands, although Soviet ships called there. The US claims were exaggerated. As a naval base, the Dahlak Islands were of limited value, because the Red Sea could easily be blocked at the Bab al-Mandeb in a crisis.

Ethiopia's defence ties with the USSR, however, remained strong. In 1981 and 1982, for instance, 'military aid continued to be the main Soviet contribution' to Ethiopia.

Although the actual amount of Soviet military assistance to Ethiopia was difficult to know, a former Carter Administration official estimated that Ethiopia's arms imports from the USSR were worth $1100 million in 1978 and $192 million in 1979. Ethiopia's estimated military expenditure was $362.8 million in 1980 and $439.6 million in the 1981-1982 period. US government sources have estimated that the total Soviet military assistance to Ethiopia between 1977 and 1982 was $2 billion.

26 Personal interviews in Washington, DC, in May and June 1983. But these financial figures say little about the quantity and quality of arms Ethiopia received.
Ethiopian military delegations to the USSR were quite frequent after 1978. For example, between 1980 and 1982, about eight Ethiopian delegations went to Moscow for military and other forms of assistance. Commenting on one such delegation, David Morison wrote:

The standing importance of the military factor in the Ethiopian-Soviet relationship was also reflected in the talks in Moscow on 13 March [1980] between Haddis Tedla, leading an Ethiopian delegation, and the top Soviet military authorities - the Defence Minister, Marshal Dmitri Ustinov, and the Chief of General Staff, Marshal Nikolay Ogarkov - and also by the fact that the Ethiopian Defence Minister, Gebre Kidan, accompanied Lt Mengistu Haile Mariam when he visited Moscow in October.27

In June 1980, just a month before Gorshkov's visit, the Soviet Union sent Ethiopia some Mi-24 helicopter gunships. Those helicopters, which were sent in crates and assembled in Ethiopia, were armour-plated and equipped with guns and air-to-ground rockets.28 Later that year, Mengistu visited the Soviet Union, from 27 October to 10 November. At a welcoming banquet, Brezhnev paid tribute to Soviet-Ethiopian cooperation in 'all major spheres of public life - politics, economics and culture'. Brezhnev also urged Mengistu to look for a negotiated settlement to his country's problems, an indirect reference to Eritrea, but in reply, Mengistu said: '[O]ur struggle is your struggle and our victory is your victory'.29

On Party Organisation

The third issue on which the USSR tried to influence Ethiopia was

---

28 Africa Contemporary Record 1980-81, p B186.
29 Africa Contemporary Record 1980-81, p B186. See also 'Mengistu Haile Mariam's Visit', BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 29 October 1980, SU/6561/C/1-8; and 30 October 1980, SU/6562/C/1-3.
that of party organisation. As an emerging Marxist state, Ethiopia was expected by its socialist allies to be ruled by a political party and not a military junta. After 1978, several of the communiques issued jointly by Ethiopia and the USSR referred to the desirability of a political party. Although it was difficult to know what went on behind closed doors when Ethiopian and Soviet delegations met, there were reports that the Soviet Union was not happy with Mengistu's failure to launch a political party within a few years of his rise to power.

According to *Africa Contemporary Record* in 1982:

> Although Soviet advisers remained attached to Government Ministries and to the army, reports persisted that Moscow was still concerned at Mengistu's failure to replace his military regime with a civilian one almost two years after the formation of COPWE [Commission for Organising the Party of the Workers of Ethiopia].

This statement confused a party government with a civilian one. Ethiopia could have a party government which was dominated by military men.

While announcing the formation of COPWE in December 1979, Mengistu adopted an apologetic tone in reference to the failure to create a Marxist-Leninist party: 'Today, when the formation of the [COPWE] ... is being disclosed, many revolutionaries and supporters of the revolution are bound to wonder why the party itself should not be set up once and for all.' He said it would have been better if the party had existed even before the 1974 revolution, but its absence had made

---

30 *Africa Contemporary Record* 1981-82, p B169.
it necessary for the military to provide the Ethiopian people with leadership.

He also added that the circumstances had not called for the formation of a party 'just for the sake of having one'. It had taken time and effort to overcome the 'misunderstandings and skirmishes' which had erupted among the other mass organisations that were formed after February 1974. Explaining some of those problems, he said: 'Disputes, arguments and conflicts have arisen and a considerable life-and-death struggle has been undertaken to decide on the nature and formation of the party required by the Ethiopian revolution'.

Mengistu was alluding to organisations like the Provisional Office for Mass Organisational Affairs (POMOA) which was set up by the Dergue in April 1976, but which was later disbanded when it was infiltrated by anti-Dergue elements in 1977. There was also the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (MEISON) which was established in 1975 by civilian Marxists, including Haile Fida and Negede Gobedze, who initially served as political adviser to the Dergue. When Mengistu and his colleagues on the Dergue realised that MEISON was trying to undermine their leadership, they outlawed it and executed most of its leaders during the 1977 struggle of 'revolutionary red terror' against 'counter-revolutionary white terror'.

Another Marxist organisation that was outlawed during that period

---

32Ottaway, Afrocommunism, p 148. For Soviet comments on COPWE, see 'Ethiopian Commission to Establish Workers' Party', Tass in English, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 28 December 1979, SU/6305/A5/3.

33Ethiopian Herald, 18 December 1979; and Africa Contemporary Record 1979-80, p B187.
was MEISON's arch-rival, the Trotskyite Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP). The purging of these Marxist organisations indicated that although members of the Dergue had assumed the leadership of Ethiopia as socialist revolutionaries, they did not consider the establishment of a Marxist party an immediate goal. The Dergue used ideology as an instrument for consolidating its own power position.

In 1977, the Dergue also helped to bring together five small Marxist groups to form a Union of Ethiopian Marxist-Leninist Organisations, but the differences between those groups prevented them from merging, and the effort was given up in 1978. As Mengistu explained then:

Although Marxist-Leninist organisations and individual communists who stand genuinely for the revolution have struggled for ideological and organisational unity, many were those who focused their attention on the form rather than on the lasting union of the progressives. Struggle made it evident, therefore, that the working class party cannot come into being through the merger of organisations.34

Mengistu had learnt from experience that it was not easy to launch a party under the conditions that Ethiopia was going through.

In a veiled criticism of those who had been urging the formation of the party, Mengistu said: 'Our nascent revolution which erupted spontaneously has achieved so many victories, which were not attained by radical socialist revolutions under the leadership of famous communist parties'.35 That looked like Ethiopia's warning to its

34Ethiopian Herald, 18 December 1979.
35Ethiopian Herald, 18 December 1979.
socialist allies, including the Soviet Union, that it wanted to proceed at its own pace towards the establishment of a party.

Shortly after the creation of COPWE, Mengistu ordered the detention of two members of COPWE who were known to have sympathies with the Soviet Union. A Moscow-trained political commissar, Lt Desta Tadesse, was arrested and charged with corruption, while the then Justice Minister, Zegeyye Asfaw, was reported detained. Although the two pro-Soviet vice-chairmen of COPWE, Legesse Asfaw and Fikre-Selassie Wogderes, remained on COPWE, leaflets started appearing in Addis Ababa in 1980 accusing COPWE members of being right-wing and 'not true Marxists'.

In the course of 1980, the Dergue was quietly phased out, and its authority was assumed by the seven-member Executive Committee of COPWE which was constituted on 24 June 1980 and headed by Mengistu. Although it had been assumed that the formation of a party would put more civilians in powerful positions, three-quarters of the COPWE leadership came from the military. A Soviet writer, however, applauded the first COPWE Congress of June 1980 as 'an important stage in the founding of a vanguard party, showing the growing unity of the country's revolutionary forces'.

After June 1980, the military men who had previously served on the Dergue continued to dominate the Executive and Central Committees of

---

36 Africa Contemporary Record 1979-80, p B188.
COPWE. At the third regular session of the COPWE Central Committee on 19 and 20 November 1981, Mengistu said that progress had been made and obstacles overcome, but the aim was to build a 'strong Marxist-Leninist party'. Without it, he said, 'all our sacrifices would have been unnecessary and a party would already have been created'.

A number of writers have accused Mengistu of foot-dragging on the issue of launching a party, but such accusations have failed to take into consideration the conditions under which he was operating. Faced with the war in Eritrea and continuing unrest in the Ogaden, Mengistu's priority would not have been the formation of a party. Furthermore, the majority of Ethiopians had never had a chance to participate in political organisations. It, therefore, required a considerable effort to explain to them the meaning and role of a political party.

Moreover, in 1974, more than 95 per cent of Ethiopians were still illiterate. By 1980, the illiteracy level had been brought down to 65 per cent. The majority of Ethiopians, therefore, began appreciating the meaning of party organisation several years after the revolution. Under these conditions, Mengistu was not solely responsible for the delay in forming a party.

But Mengistu also appears to have been less than enthusiastic about launching a party while the leadership struggle was still going on in the late 1970s. There is no doubt that he considered his political survival paramount. He also probably felt that the party

might have weakened his hold on power at the time. (The Ethiopian Workers' Party was launched on 12 September 1984 and Mengistu was elected its first Secretary-General).

So far as it is known, the Ethiopian revolution started without any support from Moscow. This fact, coupled with the pride and sense of independence of the Ethiopians, made it difficult for the Soviet Union to influence strongly the direction of the Ethiopian revolution. As Marina and David Ottaway have said, 'Ethiopia did not simply adopt Marxism-Leninism by a fiat of the leadership but also experienced a real revolution'.

The Ethiopian leaders saw the Soviets as allies who could help against an external enemy and suppress internal dissidents, but not as instructors in the school of revolution. Moreover, not until February 1977, when Colonel Mengistu purged his opponents within the Dergue, eliminated its chairman, General Teferi, and personally took over as leader did the Soviets and Cubans send a clear signal indicating their willingness to support the Ethiopian revolution.

The USSR provided Ethiopia in 1977 with professors and lecturers who were in charge of teaching ideology at Addis Ababa University. Soviet professors also taught at Ethiopia's Yekatit 16 party school, whose goal has been to train cadres and provide Marxist political education for civil servants. By early 1979, the party school had

---

40 Ottaway, Afrocommunism, p 128.
41 Ottaway, Afrocommunism, p 155. See also Legum, 'Angola and the Horn of Africa', pp 605-637.
42 Yekatit literally means March.
trained some 7,500 people in three-month courses on Marxism-Leninism'. But as the majority of the young educated Ethiopians were to the left of the Dergue, Soviet professors often preached to the converted.

Some writers have tried to play down the role of ideology in the Soviet intervention in the Horn. But the Soviets themselves have claimed that they decided to help Ethiopia against the 'forces of reaction and imperialism'. As Legum has pointed out:

As an ideological power, the USSR is also able to pursue its state interests by championing causes that attract allies to its side from among third world anti-imperialist 'progressive' elements. For example, Soviet foreign policy assumes responsibility for contributing to the 'solidarity of the progressive forces in the international working-class movement' and supporting 'genuine progressive revolutionary movements and movements of national liberation'. These commitments enable the USSR to decide when, and how far, it should involve itself in any particular conflict in the third world.

The Economic Dimension

The USSR also tried to use economic means to establish and maintain influence in Ethiopia, but it is not clear how much economic assistance Ethiopia received from Moscow. In 1979, several Soviet delegations went to Ethiopia to try to identify various projects that the USSR would support. In April, the USSR announced that it had given Ethiopia 'loans on easy terms for a number of industrial projects'.

43Ottaway, Afrocommunism, p 147.
46Legum, 'Angola and the Horn of Africa', p 572.
projects included the oil refinery at Assab, the development of 'around 123,000 acres of land and Ethiopia's food industry'.

Five months later, Soviet Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin visited Ethiopia and inaugurated the Lenin Square in Addis Ababa. He also signed on 15 September 1979 economic agreements on matters including prospecting for oil and gas, and plants for the assembly of agricultural machinery. That was an indication that Moscow was not just interested in giving Ethiopia military hardware alone. It also wanted to assist the economic and social development of Ethiopia.

According to one report on Kosygin's visit, his delegation discussed with the Ethiopians a wide range of issues:

The communique signed at the end of Kosygin's visit said Ethiopia and the USSR would try to create an atmosphere of mutual understanding and good neighbourly relations in the Horn of Africa 'on the basis of the progressive development of all the states of the region'. It added that the renunciation of territorial claims and mutual respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of state frontiers must form the basis for an enduring peace and regional stability. The Red Sea should be preserved as a 'zone of peace' on the basis of strict respect for the rights and interests of all littoral states.

Some of the economic issues discussed during that visit included industrial projects such as the construction of repair workshops for tractors and combine harvesters. These projects had been agreed by the Joint Economic, Scientific and Trade Cooperation Committee in June 1979. The Ethiopian Foreign Trade Minister, Wollie Chekol, went to

---

47 MOSCOW IN ENGLISH FOR AFRICA, BBC SUMMARY OF WORLD BROADCASTS, 2 APRIL 1979, SU/6082/A5/5.
48 AFRICA CONTEMPORARY RECORD 1979-80, PP B211.
49 AFRICA CONTEMPORARY RECORD 1979-80, PP B211-2. SEE ALSO 'KOSYGIN IN ETHIOPIA FOR FIFTH REVOLUTION ANNIVERSARY', BBC SUMMARY OF WORLD BROADCASTS, 13 SEPTEMBER 1979, SU/6218/A5/3-5.
Moscow in November 1979 to sign formally the agreement which included exchange deals for Soviet farm equipment, cement and other goods in return for Ethiopian produce.  

All these economic deals were probably intended to ease Ethiopia out of the Western-dominated economic system, but they did not. And the reasons have to do with the nature of Soviet economic relations with Third World countries.

Soviet economic aid and trade have been poor instruments of influence. The Soviet Union has consistently maintained a favourable balance of trade with developing countries. This trade is usually bilateral, with Soviet manufactured goods being exchanged for Third World raw materials and crops. In the case of Ethiopia, there have been claims that the Soviet Union took most of Ethiopia's coffee as part of the payment for arms, and that left Ethiopia with little hard currency for other goods on the international market.

2 THE LIBYAN-PDRY CONNECTION

The Soviet position in Ethiopia has been politically significant when viewed in connection with Moscow's wider ambitions in the whole Red Sea region. The USSR has had also access to military facilities in the PDRY, a military presence in Libya and remains Syria's treaty partner and main military supplier. These countries are linked with Ethiopia in Soviet strategy for the Middle East and Indian Ocean area, and some of them, especially Libya and the PDRY, have interests in developments in the Horn. As one writer observed in 1980:

50 Africa Contemporary Record 1979-80, pp B211.

51 Personal interview with a former Ethiopian Minister for Finance.
The consolidation of the Soviet position in Ethiopia — where the victory of Soviet arms had been one of 1978's major events — became a chief component in an arc of Soviet power projection which, by the end of 1979, led from the USSR's own southern territories, through those of two of its neighbours, across southern Arabia, and into Africa itself, southward.52

The Libyan Factor

Although the USSR does not have a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Libya, it has been counting on the latter to play an 'anti-imperialist role' in the Arab world and Africa. Indeed, from the mid-1970s, Libya's relations with the Soviet Union improved considerably, and the Soviet press lost no opportunity of paying tribute to Libya's leaders for their 'steadfastness' against the United States and 'world imperialism'.

Libya is not a Red Sea littoral state, but it has had very close links with, and an interest in, the Red Sea region since the early 1970s. Some of its aims there are similar to those of the USSR.

The USSR and Libya very often appear to pursue similar foreign policy goals.53 Like the USSR, Libya opposes the American military presence in the Red Sea-Persian Gulf region. Again like the USSR, Libya's interest in this region has been partly to frustrate the efforts of conservative Arab regimes. As a power which is committed to the reduction of Western influence in the region, the USSR has been impressed with Libya's condemnation of the US, and the Soviet press has

occasionally described Libya as 'a vanguard in the national liberation movement of the Arab and African nations'.

As was stated in chapter 4, Libya's close military ties with the USSR date back to May 1974 when the two countries signed their first major arms deal. During the 1977 Ogaden war, Libya joined the USSR and its other allies in helping Ethiopia, and from then Libya and the USSR have continued to maintain close relations.

The USSR has supplied a large quantity of sophisticated arms to Libya. According to Western sources, Libya had more than US$13 billion worth of Soviet-made weapons, including over 2,800 tanks and 535 modern combat aircraft in the early 1980s. Its estimated defence expenditure was $557.244 million in 1981, and $709.22 million in 1982.

The two countries' relations improved further in 1980 when the United States acquired access to military facilities in the Persian Gulf region (see Chapter 6). In that year, the USSR supported the Libyan intervention in Chad, claiming that 'the US, France, Israel, Saudi Arabia and South Africa' were assisting the then rebel forces of Hissene Habre against the transitional government of Goukouni Oueddei. Libya's involvement in Chad from June 1980, and the announcement of a merger between the two countries in January 1981, did a lot of harm to Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's ambitions to become chairman of the OAU in 1982. Although Libya withdrew its troops in November 1981 when it

54 'Radio Moscow in Arabic', August 31, 1979 in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 3 September 1979, SU/6209/A4/1.
55 The Military Balance 1984-85, pp 66-7. This source did not say how it arrived at the figures about military expenditure.
was asked by the OAU and former Chadian President (later Libyan-supported rebel leader) Goukouni Oueddei, the damage had already been done. The Soviet press toned down its support for Gaddafi as criticism of him in Africa and the West increased.

Following the coming to power in 1981 of the Reagan Administration, which has sometimes described Libya as a Soviet agent, these two countries seemed to coordinate their activities even more closely. In April of that year, Gaddafi went to Moscow and held talks with top Soviet officials and leaders, including Brezhnev. Two months later, Gaddafi's deputy, Abdul Salam Jalloud, visited Moscow and held talks with the Soviet Defence Minister, Dmitri Ustinov, and other high-level military officials.

Libya sometimes turns to Moscow whenever it faces hostility from the US. It did so, for example, in September 1981 and March 1983. When two American F-14 Tomcat interceptors, which were participating in military manoeuvres in August 1981, shot down two of Libya's Soviet-built SU-22 fighter bombers over the Gulf of Sirte, which Libya claims to be its territorial waters, the Soviet media strongly

---

56 Some Libyan troops were sent back to Chad in June 1983, following Gaddafi's failure to win the OAU chairmanship.
57 For an American view of Libya's policy in Chad, see Libya-Sudan-Chad Triangle: Dilemma for United States Policy, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Africa of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, October 29 and November 4, 1981. The Reagan Administration has repeatedly accused Gaddafi of sponsoring terrorism.
denounced the US. Later that year the Soviet press applauded Libyan initiatives to mobilise opposition to the US 'Bright Star' manoeuvres that took place in November in Egypt, Somalia and Sudan.

In February and March 1983, Gaddafi complained that the US had sent an aircraft carrier to the Libyan coast to provoke him. He also said that the United States, which had despatched AWACS aircraft to Sudan, was planning to invade Libya and overthrow his government. The following month his deputy, Major Jalloud, went to Moscow probably to ask for protection in case of a US military action against Libya. At the end of Jalloud's visit, the USSR announced that it had 'agreed in principle' to sign a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Libya.

Some of these activities indicated that Libya's foreign policy goals were in tandem with some Soviet interests. In 1981, Libya started providing the Soviet Mediterranean fleet with limited support facilities at Benghazi and Tobruq.

Libya's usefulness to Soviet policy in Africa and the Middle East lay also in the fact that in the late 1970s, Libya started coordinating its policies with other Soviet friends, namely Ethiopia, the PDRY and

---


60 'Bright Star 82' were American military exercises initiated in the Persian Gulf region in 1981. Participating countries included Egypt, Oman, Somalia and Sudan.

Syria. Gaddafi, Mengistu, and the PDRY leader Ali Nasser Muhammad met in Aden in August 1981 and signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. They also condemned African and Arab countries that had granted the US access to their military facilities.

In reference to the 'Bright Star' exercises that were due to take place later that year, the three heads of state said that the American military activities in the region were aimed at 'beating the ominous drums of the cold war in preparation for an all-out global conflict'.

According to some Ethiopian sources, these three countries signed their pact as a reaction to the creation in May 1981 of the Gulf Cooperation Council comprising pro-Western nations, namely, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Some Soviet writers described the Ethiopian-Libyan-PDRY defence pact as one of the 'defensive measures' peace-loving countries were taking against US activities in the region.

Some pro-Western states in the Red Sea region were quite critical of the pact. For example, Sudan's President, Gaafar Numeiri, claimed in

---


64 Galperin & Platov, 'Revolutionary Transformation in Ethiopia', p 64.
September 1981 that the three leaders had discussed in Aden plans to overthrow his government. Somalia's President Siad Barre closed down the Libyan embassy in Mogadishu, after accusing Gaddafi of backing the rebel Somali Democratic Salvation Front.

The significance of the treaty, however, lay in the fact that for the first time the pro-Soviet regimes in the Red Sea region were trying to coordinate their policies to oppose the pro-American states and condemn the US military build-up there. Two of the states they criticised, namely Saudi Arabia and Sudan, had been expressing fear about Soviet influence in the PDRY for some time.

The PDRY Role

As it was pointed out in chapter 4, Abdel Fattah Ismail, the then general secretary of the PDRY's National Liberation Front party (later renamed Yemen Socialist Party) was an ardent supporter of Soviet policy while President Salim Ali Robayya was not regarded as a Moscow line politician.

Robayya was assassinated in June 1978 and posthumously accused, inter alia, of having conspired with Saudi Arabia to establish a reactionary regime. Two days before his assassination, Robayya had sent an envoy to Sanaa to deliver a message to President Ahmad Hussein Ghashmi of Yemen Arab Republic (YAR or North Yemen), but that envoy and Ghashmi were killed instantly when a bomb exploded from the envoy's briefcase as he was opening it. The mystery of that bomb has not been

explained, but some reports have indicated that anti-Robayya elements in Aden swapped the envoy's briefcase with the one containing the bomb before his departure from the PDRY, thereby 'setting up' Robayya. Their intention was to kill Ghashmi but to have Robayya blamed for it. Robayya's death came also just a few days before he was due to receive an envoy from Washington.

As Ismail took up the presidency following Robayya's death, new Cuban troops arrived in Aden and the USSR promised to help against any outside intervention. Ismail's presidency, which lasted from June 1978 to April 1980, differed markedly from that of his predecessor. In October 1979, the PDRY signed the Friendship Treaty with the USSR and, in the same year, gave unqualified support to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

Like most treaties which the USSR has signed with Third World countries, the USSR-PDRY treaty provides for mutual defence. Article 11 of the treaty, for instance, states:

In case situations arise which threaten peace or violate international peace, the parties will strive to enter into contact with each other without delay for the purpose of coordinating their positions in the interests of removing a threat to peace or restoring peace.66

Some writers have claimed that the USSR-PDRY treaty was the first of its kind, but, in fact, its text is similar to that of the USSR-Ethiopian treaty.67


67 See Bidwell, The Two Yemens. Bidwell claims that Moscow had not signed a similar treaty with a Third World country.
During Ismail's leadership, the PDRY moved closer to Ethiopia. On a visit to Ethiopia in May 1979, Ismail said that the PDRY had supported the Eritreans in the past because Haile Selassie's regime had been sustained by imperialism. But after the Ethiopian revolution, the PDRY had decided to oppose 'any movement aimed at expansion or separation'. Commenting on Ismail's talks with Mengistu, Radio Moscow said the two leaders had discussed Red Sea security:

The main topic of the discussion was the situation in the area of the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa. This is hardly surprising, since the very existence of the two progressive states, Ethiopia and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, in one of the key strategic regions of the world, is a disturbing factor for the forces of imperialism.

Later in the year, Mengistu visited Aden and signed with Ismail the PDRY-Ethiopian Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. Mengistu paid tribute to the PDRY soldiers who had died fighting for Ethiopia and promised that the two countries would cooperate to combat 'reactionary' forces in the Red Sea region.

It was also under Ismail's presidency that the PDRY was accused of waging war against the YAR in March 1979. The war prompted the US to despatch 'immediately the aircraft carrier Constellation to the Arabian Sea and two AWACS [Advance Warning and Control System aircraft] to

---

68 Ethiopian Herald, 2 May 1979.
69 'Moscow in English for Africa' in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 10 May 1979, SU/6112/A5/3.
Saudi Arabia, as well as emergency airlift to North Yemen'. Washington supplied over $200 million worth of arms to the YAR, which was part of a total military package of $400 million. But the PDRY's Ismail and the YAR leader, Ali Abdullah Salih, announced plans to discuss the unification of their countries even before American weapons started arriving.

The US sent the YAR weapons through Saudi Arabia, but Salih, who wanted to deal directly with Washington, was not happy with that arrangement. In protest, he turned to the USSR in June 1979, and Moscow immediately agreed to a $700 million arms deal, on credit. Salih visited Moscow in October 1981 and asked for, among other things, more arms. In spite of these Soviet-YAR military ties, Moscow appeared to have little influence on Sanaa's domestic politics. Salih, who was suspicious of Ismail's intentions, tried, though with little success, to balance his interests between the East and West.

As President of the PDRY, Ismail was regarded by some of his colleagues, and by the PDRY's neighbours, as an extremist. There was, therefore, little regret when he was removed from power on 20 April 1980.

The former PDRY Prime Minister, Ali Nasser Muhammed, who succeeded Ismail as President, was also a committed socialist and a supporter of the Moscow line. When Muhammed removed Ali Antar from the Defence

Ministry in April 1981, some observers thought he was purging the Moscow sympathisers and that he would eventually disengage from the USSR. But the change of Ali Antar's positions from Defence Minister to the relatively less powerful post of Vice-President was a result of an internal power struggle and was not primarily concerned with the PDRY's relations with the USSR.

Like his predecessor, President Muhammad also sought to retain close ties with Ethiopia, Libya and the USSR. He visited Ethiopia from 13 to 17 February 1981. While in Addis Ababa, Muhammad stressed that the Yemen Socialist Party, of which he was President, would strengthen links with the COPWE 'on the basis of scientific socialism and proletarian internationalism'. He and Mengistu expressed 'grave concern over ... the establishment and expansion of US military bases in the Red Sea, Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf regions'. That was six months before the two leaders and Gaddafi signed a tripartite defence pact in Aden.

One of the most visible signs of Soviet interest in the PDRY has been the Soviet military presence. Although that presence was established in 1970, it was low-key until late in 1977 after Somalia had expelled Soviet military advisers and ordered the closure of their facilities at Berbera. Some of those expelled from Berbera went to Aden and took with them the dry dock and other important military equipment. The fact that the PDRY's importance in Soviet strategy had increased was demonstrated by the visit in May 1978 of Admiral Gorshkov. Moscow

---

72 *Africa Contemporary Record 1980-81*, p B188.
stepped up its military build-up in the PDRY following the American acquisition of access to military facilities in the Persian Gulf region in 1980.

There have been claims in the Western media that the USSR has a military base on the PDRY-owned island of Socotra. The media has, however, exaggerated the significance of Socotra. The water around Socotra is too shallow for large ships to berth.

Although US interests shifted towards the Persian Gulf after 1979, Soviet policy in that region did not change after that year. The lack of change in Soviet policy has been due to several factors. First, although events in Iran - the fall of the Shah and the hostage crisis - eroded American influence in the Persian Gulf, they did not necessarily benefit the USSR. Second, Soviet friends in the region - especially Ethiopia and the PDRY - were not under any serious threat after 1979. Third, the USSR did not have as heavy investments in the Persian Gulf as did the US. Fourth, the leadership changes in the USSR since 1982 have not been as radical as that between Carter and Reagan in the US in 1981; the new Soviet leadership has maintained Brezhnev's policies.

3 CONCLUSIONS

Soviet policy in the Horn from 1979 to 1982 thus revolved around three main issues: the desire to exercise influence in Ethiopia; the ambition to forge a network of relations between Ethiopia, Libya and the PDRY; and the determination to challenge the American and Western presence in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf regions. But while the US sought to increase its influence in those regions after 1979, Soviet policy did not change.
Moscow did not control Ethiopia in the way it controlled its East European allies. But it established a military facility on Ethiopia's Dahlak Islands, provided professors to teach ideology at Addis Ababa University and at the Yekatit 16 party school, and maintained about 2,400 military advisers in Ethiopia. The USSR also remained Ethiopia's main arms supplier and provider of economic assistance, and maintained strong links with members of the Executive Committee of COPWE.

The wider regional ambitions of the Soviet Union appeared to have received a boost when Ethiopia, Libya and the PDRY came together in August 1981 and signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. That tripartite alliance served Soviet goals to the extent that it opposed the American military presence in the area and showed a desire to frustrate the aims of the conservative Arab states.

The Soviet military presence in Ethiopia and the PDRY had a more direct bearing on US policy in the Persian Gulf region than it has had on the policies of regional states. The Soviet aim has been to challenge the so-called American 'global strategy of imperialism', and project power in the northwestern part of the Indian Ocean. Moscow also has hoped to be taken into account, even if indirectly, in whatever developments take place in the Middle East.
Chapter 8

CONCLUSIONS

What has emerged in this thesis is that both the superpowers and the local states have benefited from the Soviet and American involvement in the Horn. For the superpowers, a presence in the Horn, and the Indian Ocean region as a whole, has enabled them to monitor each other's movements and reactions to adverse circumstances, and that has helped, in its own way, the success of global superpower diplomacy. An understanding by the superpowers of each other's movements worldwide is necessary if they want to avoid a confrontation. For the local states, the benefits have come in the form of military and economic assistance, and in the form of reassurance against adverse conditions.

1 SUPERPOWER PRESENCE

Superpower involvement in the Horn is a dynamic process which has been changing over time. Both the United States and the Soviet Union have been modifying their methods and instruments of policy, partly to accommodate or confront each other, and partly to respond appropriately to the changing regional and local political realities. Strategic developments in other parts of the world and technological breakthroughs in military science have also had effects on the policies of the superpowers in the Horn. Thus Soviet and American roles in the region have been multi-dimensional.

In the earlier period, from the 1950s up to the early 1970s, the superpowers' interests in the Horn were governed, to a large extent, by Cold War policies. The United States established a military facility in
Ethiopia in 1953 with a view to reinforcing its containment policies in the Middle East and South Asia. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, started supplying arms to Egypt in 1955 and later established a military presence in that country and in Somalia and Sudan, partly in an attempt to undermine the American strategy of containment in the Middle East, and partly to project its power in that part of the world.

In the mid-1970s, especially after 1974, superpower policies in the Horn changed much faster and became more unpredictable than at any time before. The US withdrew from Ethiopia following the fall from power of Emperor Haile Selassie and after establishing substantial military facilities on Diego Garcia. At the same time, the Soviet Union strengthened its position in Somalia by signing with it in 1974 a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. In a bid to have a military presence in both Somalia and Ethiopia, the Soviet Union concluded an arms deal with Ethiopia in December 1976.

But the Somali-Ethiopian war of 1977-1978 changed the situation when it led to Somalia's expulsion of Soviet advisers and the closure of Soviet military facilities in November 1977. One result of the Soviet-Somali break was massive Soviet and Cuban support for Ethiopia which, in turn, dislodged Somalia's troops from the Ogaden region. The Soviet Union was primarily concerned with retaining a foothold in the region, but it also was determined to help Ethiopia maintain its territorial integrity, partly to improve the Soviet image in Africa. The USSR signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Ethiopia in November 1978, and has continued to provide Ethiopia with military and economic assistance since then.
A notable feature of the 1977-1978 Ogaden war was the Soviet readiness to intervene quickly and strongly and the American low profile in the region at the time. A closer examination of the participation of the superpowers in the war reveals, however, that their reactions were determined primarily by concerns about their mutual relations and their global images, rather than by the local and regional issues at stake. The USSR relied on Cuban forces extensively in the Ogaden, and this led to charges in the West that Cuba was a Soviet proxy. Indeed, without Soviet logistical support, Cuba could not have despatched large numbers of troops to Ethiopia quickly. To the extent that Cuba helped advance a Soviet goal, it played the role of a proxy. But when the Ogaden war was over, Cuba refused to go along with the USSR to fight against Eritrean guerrillas. That refusal to use military force against Eritreans was an indication that while Cuba supported broad Soviet aims in the Horn/Red Sea region, there were some issues on which it could refrain.

In the 1977-78 Ogaden conflict, the US used proxy intervention by Iran and Saudi Arabia, but their involvement was so slight that it made no change to the outcome.

The Soviet weapons supply to Ethiopia during the Ogaden war was said to have been enormous. But when considered against Ethiopia's multiple internal security problems, it was not excessive.

The claims by some Western commentators that the Soviet Union's loss of facilities in Somalia in 1977 and its subsequent move into Ethiopia was a net Soviet gain do not appear to carry much weight. The
Soviet break with Somalia looks to have been a considerable loss in terms of the facilities the USSR forfeited and from the point of view of the fact that Somalia had fewer internal security problems than Ethiopia.

Although the superpower policies of detente theoretically incorporated elements of cooperation and competition, there was much more competition than cooperation between the US and the USSR in the Horn. Detente also implied a recognition of strategic parity between the superpowers, but the Soviet Union knew that it was not at par with the United States with regard to the influence the two superpowers exercised in the Third World. The USSR, therefore, took advantage of Washington's domestic problems, generated by the Vietnam war and the Watergate scandal, to improve its position in the Indian Ocean region. The Soviet interest in Somalia in the early and mid 1970s was part of that effort.

Detente was, however, undermined by the events of the late 1970s. The Iranian revolution of 1979, which deprived the US of a dependable regional ally and American military installations, coupled with the Soviet move into Afghanistan in December of that year, led to the American reassertion of force in the Horn and the Persian Gulf region in 1980. The United States subsequently acquired access to military facilities in Egypt, Kenya, Oman, Somalia, and Sudan. The American come-back to the Horn reinforced, once again, superpower competition in the region.

Some more observations can be made about the Soviet and American
presence in the Horn and the general trends in the politics of the region since 1974. In the period 1974 to 1982, US policy in the Horn made several swings forwards and backwards. It swung backwards between 1974 and 1978, then forwards from 1979 to 1982, and has remained at more or less the same level since then. The swing backwards in the mid-1970s was attributed partly to the post-Vietnam fear of military involvement in Third World conflicts, and partly to the fact that the Ethiopian military junta that overthrew Haile Selassie was more interested in forging ties with the Soviet Union than in retaining the old close ties with the United States.

But between 1979 and 1982, the Horn acquired greater strategic significance for US Persian Gulf policy because of the Iranian revolution and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. As Washington had relied on the Shah to act as a regional policeman in the Persian Gulf, it was forced to look for a new defence structure, based on the Rapid Deployment Force (converted into the US Central Command in 1983), following the Shah's fall. The American defence build-up in the region slowed down after 1982 when Washington apparently realised that the Soviet Union was tied down in Afghanistan fighting the Mujaheddin guerrillas and could not, therefore, pose any major threat to Western interests in the Persian Gulf.

The new American security framework for the Persian Gulf, put in place by President Carter in 1980 and continued by the Reagan Administration, defines security more broadly than mere armaments and force levels. The US has been attempting to address the problem of security in the Horn and Persian Gulf regions by emphasising the need
for armaments and force levels, but it has been providing economic assistance to its friends there in a bid to help them stabilise themselves. The ultimate impact of its economic assistance programmes might, however, be diminished by the corruption, unequal distribution of wealth, and some of the many effects of modernisation in these countries, but that is a situation over which the US could do little.

The Soviet interest in the Horn appears to have been a desire to challenge the Western military presence in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean regions, and to help emerging Marxist states like Ethiopia and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. Moscow's presence also has enabled it to exercise naval diplomacy in crisis situations in the Indian Ocean region with a view to influencing the outcome in its favour.

2 REGIONAL DYNAMICS

An important feature of the superpower presence in the Horn is that it has been aided by local factors. Ethiopia, which used military force in the nineteenth century to acquire territory, has always feared revolts by some ethnic groups and has been suspicious of some of its neighbours. Its sense of insecurity, coupled with the ambition to annex Eritrea, compelled Ethiopia to seek close relations with the United States in the 1950s. In the 1960s and early 1970s, the United States provided Ethiopia with arms and trained Ethiopian forces that were used to put down Eritrean nationalist guerrillas.

When the United States cut all military and economic ties with Ethiopia in 1977, the new Ethiopian government was socialist--leaning
and, therefore, ideologically closer to Moscow. But the internal liberation struggles and Somalia's irredentist ambitions were among the main factors that forced the Ethiopian revolutionary government to improve relations with Moscow that year. Ethiopia's desire for arms, especially since the 1960s, has largely been determined by the need to maintain control over its relatively large territory.

Somalia's interest in more arms also led it to court the superpowers. It asked the Soviet Union for military assistance in 1963, and that request enabled the USSR to start a military presence in the Horn. The Soviet Union trained Somalia's army and provided it with weapons from 1963 until 1977. When Somalia terminated military ties with the Soviet Union in 1977, it had already started sending feelers to the United States. Unlike Ethiopia, Somalia's desire for arms has been determined by the ambition to 'liberate' Somalis in neighbouring states and possibly expand Somalia's borders.

Kenya's search for military aid in the mid-1970s was also largely a response to Somalia's renewed claims to northeastern Kenya, Tanzania's hostility, and Uganda's unpredictability and its threat to annex Western Kenya using Soviet-supplied arms. Those problems forced Kenya to seek American military assistance in 1974.

Thus the local states also played a significant role in promoting the presence of the superpowers in the Horn.

Another significant feature of politics in the Horn is that the local countries (especially Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia) are not guided solely by the ideologies of capitalism and socialism or Marxism. While
these countries might consider these ideologies important, other issues like nationalism, border security and economic assistance often take precedence. For instance, the 1977-1978 Ogaden war demonstrated that ideology was not a very important factor in determining relations between Somalia and Ethiopia. Although the two countries professed the same ideology, Somalia invaded Ethiopia, hoping to take advantage of chaos there and try to realise its nationalist goals. During that war and after, capitalist and pro-Western Kenya remained close to Marxist and pro-Soviet Ethiopia. That was basically because Kenya also feared that Somalia might violate its own border.

3 THE STABILISING ROLE

The view that the superpowers have been a major factor causing instability in the region does not appear to find supporting evidence. In the period 1974 to 1982, the superpower presence in the Horn proved an aid, rather than a hindrance, to stability. Ethiopia was attacked by Somalia just after the United States had withdrawn, and before the Soviet Union had completely moved in. It is unlikely that Somalia would have attacked if the US had retained a sizeable military presence in Ethiopia.

There is a likelihood also that had the Soviet Union and Cuba not moved in to help the Ethiopians during the Ogaden war, Ethiopia would have fallen apart as a result of the Somali invasion and under the pressure of various ethnic groups in the country clamouring for regional autonomy and independence. The Soviet military and economic assistance to Ethiopia between 1977 and 1982 was one of the most important factors in upholding that country's territorial integrity.
Following the return of the American military presence to the region in 1980, Kenya and Somalia started moving politically closer, with the help of the United States. A rapprochement between Kenya and Somalia, if it was not aimed at destabilising Ethiopia, could be a significant effort towards regional stability in the Horn.

The American military assistance to Somalia from 1980 was also quite important in helping Somalia deal with some problems of instability. Without this aid, there might have been either an internal uprising or an Ethiopian invasion camouflaged as the Somali Democratic Front or other dissident groups based in Ethiopia.

4 THE PARADOX

It looks paradoxical to say that the superpowers have had little influence on the policy-making processes in the countries they have been dealing with, while at the same time arguing that the Soviet Union and the United States have played a relatively stabilising role in the region. It cannot be denied that between 1974 and 1982, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia were able to do what they wanted in spite of objections from their superpower friends. For instance, the Ethiopian military junta pursued socialist reforms with vigour between 1974 and 1976 while the United States was still its main military and economic assistance donor. It was not until 1977 that the United States cut off aid to Ethiopia, but even that step was itself an indication of the failure of the US to influence decision-making in Ethiopia.

The Soviet Union also failed to induce Ethiopia to move in the direction Moscow desired. For instance, in spite of a significant
Soviet military presence in Ethiopia, the USSR was apparently unable to persuade Ethiopia to eschew military campaigns in Eritrea and seek a political solution. On the political front, it might be argued that the Soviet Union pressured Mengistu to establish a Marxist political party. But the party was launched in September 1984, at a time when Mengistu himself probably felt he needed such a party for the mobilisation of the masses. In any case, the Ethiopian Workers' Party was formed only after the Dergue had eliminated all possible civilian challengers to party leadership.

Somalia has also demonstrated its independence of action irrespective of what its superpower friends would like. For example, in 1975, Somalia's President, Siad Barre, invited a United States Congressional delegation to inspect Soviet military facilities at Berbera, apparently without approval from Moscow. Two years later, Somalia invaded Ethiopia against Soviet advice. And when the Soviet Union kept pressuring Somalia to pull out of the Ogaden, Siad Barre terminated all military ties with the USSR and expelled Soviet military advisers.

Somalia has continued to support the Western Somali Liberation Front guerrillas in the Ogaden in spite of the fact that the United States, Somalia's main arms supplier, is opposed to any action that might lead to another conflagration in the region. That again indicates that although the superpowers may have had some influence in Somalia, when it came to the crunch, it was Somalia's own decision-making that counted.
The same could be said of Kenya which has maintained a mutual
defence pact with Ethiopia since 1963. Although Kenya relies on the
United States and Britain for a lot of military and economic
assistance, it has kept its treaty with Ethiopia, a Soviet ally. Some
commentators speculated that a rapprochement between Kenya and Somalia
would lead to a cancellation of the Ethiopian-Kenyan treaty, and that
the United States would pressure Kenya to distance itself from
Ethiopia, but that has not happened. If Kenya decides to terminate the
defence treaty with Ethiopia, it might be because Kenya no longer
thinks such a treaty is necessary for its national security interests,
but not necessarily because the United States has demanded it.

Many outsiders, including the US and the USSR, have, however,
failed to understand the main forces behind the politics of the Horn.
As the superpowers have had relations with countries in the Horn/Red
Sea region since the 1950s, one would expect them to have gained enough
experience to understand well the local political terrain and regional
dynamics, but there is no evidence that they have understood clearly
the fluid local, regional and intra-regional forces.

The Soviet Union did not appear to have sufficiently understood
Somalia's nationalist interests and its determination to carry them
out. It thought that socialism might override nationalism and induce
Somalia to make friends with Ethiopia. But that did not happen and
consequently the Soviet double-track policy in the Horn failed.

The Soviet Union made the same mistake with regard to Eritrea and
Ethiopia, by thinking that Eritrean nationalist guerrillas would give
up fighting for self-determination once Ethiopia had started moving towards socialism.

The United States also appears to have had little understanding of the internal forces at work in Ethiopia even by the mid-1970s. Up to the time of the collapse of Haile Selassie's government in 1974, the United States thought that it might retain its influence in Ethiopia because most of the new Ethiopian leaders had been educated in the West. Indeed, few people in the US knew - and if they did, hardly any could publicly admit - that Haile Selassie's style of government had sown the seeds of revolution.

This lack of understanding or inability to predict the situation in the Horn is one of the main elements constituting the paradox in superpower relations with local states. This paradox is that: the superpowers have inadequate knowledge of the regional dynamics; and, because of that, they have been unable to exercise decisive influence on the decision-making process in the various countries of the Horn; but their economic and military assistance to their local friends has played a stabilising role.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography primarily lists works which have been cited in the text, together with some others which were consulted but not cited. It is divided into four parts: Books and Monographs; Articles; Yearbooks; and Newspapers and Periodicals.

1 BOOKS AND MONOGRAPHS

Abir, Mordechai, Oil, Power and Politics: Conflict in Arabia, the Red Sea and the Gulf (London, Frank Cass, 1974).


Adie, W.A.C., Oil, Politics and Seapower: The Indian Ocean Vortex (New York, Crane Russak, 1975).


Ayoob, Mohammed, The Horn of Africa: Regional Conflict and Superpower Involvement (Canberra, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, 1978).


Brezhnev, L.I. *Report of the CPSU Central Committee and the Immediate Tasks of the Party in Home and Foreign Policy to the 25th Congress of the CPSU* (Moscow, Novosti Press, 1976).


Dougherty, James, The Horn of Africa: A Map of Political-Strategic Conflict (Cambridge, MA: Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, 1982).


Kanet, Roger E. (ed.) The Soviet Union and Developing Countries (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).


Kissinger, Henry, Years of Upheaval (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982).


Peterson, J.E., *Yemen: The Search for a Modern State* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).


________, *Reprogramming of Military Aid to Somalia*, Hearing before the Subcommittee on Africa of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (Washington, DC: 1980).

United States Economic Assistance to Egypt and Sudan, Report of Staff Study Missions to Egypt and Sudan to the Committee on Foreign Affairs (Washington, DC: 1982).

US Interests In, and Policies Toward, the Persian Gulf 1980, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, Committee on Foreign Affairs (Washington, DC: 1980).

US Policy Toward the Persian Gulf, Hearings before the Joint Economic Committee and the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, Committee on Foreign Affairs (Washington, DC: 1983).


United States Senate, Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, Hearings before the Subcommittee on African Affairs, Committee on Foreign Relations (Washington, DC: 1976).

Multinational Corporations and United States Foreign Policy, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations of the Committee on Foreign Relations (Washington, DC: 1976).


United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad: Ethiopia, Part 8, Hearings before the Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad, Committee on Foreign Relations (Washington, 1970).

Visit to the Democratic Republic of Somalia, Report to the Committee on Appropriations, by members of the fact-finding team sent to Somalia at the invitation of the President of Somalia (Washington, DC: 1975).


Zelniker, Shimshon, *The Superpowers and the Horn of Africa* (Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv University, Centre for Strategic Studies, 1982).

2 ARTICLES


Bell, Bowyer J., 'Bab al Mandeb: Strategic Troublespot', Orbis, 16(4), winter 1973, pp 975-89.


Bender, Gerald J. 'Comment: Past, Present and Future Perspectives of Cuba in Africa', Cuban Studies, 10(2), July 1980, pp 44-54.


Brind, Harry, 'Soviet Policy in the Horn of Africa', International Affairs (London), 60(1), winter 1983/84, pp 75-95.


________, 'Soviet Policy in Africa and the Middle East', Current History, 73, October 1977, pp 103-6.


Deane, Michael J., 'The Soviet Assessment of the "Correlation of World Forces": Implications for American Foreign Policy', *Orbis*, fall 1976, pp 625-36.


Dominguez, Jorge I. 'Cuban Foreign Policy', Foreign Affairs, 57, October 1978, pp 83-108.
______, 'Political and Military Limitations and Consequences of Cuban Policies in Africa', Cuban Studies, 10(2), July 1980, pp 1-35.
Fessehatzion, Tekie, 'Comment: One Eritrean View [on Cuban Involvement in the Horn]', Cuban Studies, 10(1), January 1980, pp 80-85.
Fuller, J. 'Dateline Diego Garcia', Foreign Policy, No.28, fall 1977, pp 175-86.

Gorelick, Robert E. 'Pan-Somalism vs Territorial Integrity', Horn of Africa, 3(4), 1980-81, pp 31-36.


Soviet Foreign Policy and Africa', International Affairs (Moscow), July 1982, pp 30-35.


Ladozhsky, A. 'The USSR's Efforts to Turn the Indian Ocean Into a Zone of Peace', International Affairs (Moscow), August 1981, pp 40-46.


_____, 'Cuba Policy Recycled', Foreign Policy, 46, spring 1982, pp 105-119.
Lewis, I.M. 'Recent Developments in the Somali Dispute', African Affairs, 263, April 1967, pp 104-112.


Orestov, O. 'Independent Africa in the Making', International Affairs (Moscow), November 1975, pp 72-81.


Quandt, William B. 'Riyadh Between the Superpowers', Foreign Policy, 44, fall 1981.


Shams, Feraidoon, 'Conflict in the African Horn', *Current History*, 73, December 1977, pp 199-204.


Valdes, Nelson P. 'Cuban Foreign Policy in the Horn of Africa', Cuban Studies, 10(1), January 1980, pp 49-80.


3 YEARBOOKS


4 NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS

Africa (London).

African Index (Washington, DC).


African Recorder (New Delhi).

BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (London).

Boston Globe (Boston, MA).

Daily Nation (Nairobi).

Economist (London).

Ethiopian Herald (Addis Ababa).

Foreign Broadcasts Information Service (Washington, DC).

Keesing's Contemporary Archives (Harlow, England).


Newsweek (New York).

New Times (Moscow).


Soviet News (London).

Sunday Times (London).

Time (New York).

Times (London).

Washington Post (Washington, DC).

Washington Star (Washington, DC).
Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents (Washington, DC).

Weekly Review (Nairobi).
APPENDIX 1

SUMMARY OF THE ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN UNITY CHARTER

ARTICLE 1

Establishment of the Organisation of African Unity. The Organisation to include continental African states, Madagascar, and other islands surrounding Africa.

ARTICLE 2

Aims of the OAU:

- To promote unity and solidarity among African states.
- To intensify and co-ordinate efforts to improve living standards in Africa.
- To defend sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of African states.
- To eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa.
- To promote international co-operation in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations.

ARTICLE 3

Member states adhere to the principles of sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs of member states, respect for territorial integrity, peaceful settlement of disputes, condemnation of political subversion, dedication to the emancipation of dependent African territories, and international non-alignment.

ARTICLE 4

Each independent sovereign African state shall be entitled to become a member of the Organisation.

ARTICLE 5

All member states shall have equal rights and duties.

ARTICLE 6

All member states shall observe scrupulously the principles laid down in article III.
ARTICLE 7

Establishment of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the Council of Ministers, the General Secretariat, and the commission of Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration.

ARTICLE 8-11

The Assembly of Heads of State and Government co-ordinates policies and reviews the structure of the Organisation.

ARTICLE 12-15

The Council of Ministers shall prepare conferences of the Assembly, and co-ordinate inter-African co-operation. All resolutions shall be by simple majority.

ARTICLES 16-18

The General Secretariat. The Administrative Secretary-General and his staff shall not seek or receive instructions from any government or other authority external to the Organisation. They are international officials responsible only to the Organisation.

ARTICLE 19

Commission of Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration. A separate protocol concerning the composition and nature of this commission shall be regarded as an integral part of the Charter.

ARTICLES 20-22

Specialised Commissions shall be established, composed of Ministers or other officials designated by Member Governments. Their regulations shall be laid down by the Council of Ministers.

ARTICLE 23

The Budget shall be prepared by the Secretary-General and approved by the Council of Ministers. Contributions shall be in accordance with the
scale of assessment of the United Nations. No member shall pay more than 20% of the total yearly amount.

ARTICLE 24

Texts of the Charter in African languages, English and French shall be equally authentic. Instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Government of Ethiopia.

ARTICLE 25

The Charter shall come into force on receipt by the government of Ethiopia of the instruments of ratification of two-thirds of the signatory states.

ARTICLE 26

The charter shall be registered with the Secretariat of the United Nations.

ARTICLE 27

Questions of interpretation shall be settled by a two-thirds majority vote in the Assembly of Heads of State and Government.

ARTICLE 28

A mission of new independent African states to the Organisation shall be decided by a simple majority of the Member States.

ARTICLES 29-33

The working languages of the Organisation shall be African languages, English and French. The Secretary-General may accept gifts and bequests to the Organisation, subject to the approval of the Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers shall establish privileges and immunities to be accorded to the personnel of the Secretariat in the territories of Member States. A State wishing to withdraw from the Organisation must give a year's written notice to the Secretariat. The
Charter may only be amended after consideration by all Member States and by a two-thirds majority vote of the Assembly of Heads of State and government. Such amendments will come into force one year after submission.
APPENDIX 2

SOVIET-SOMALI TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION

ARTICLE 1

The high contracting parties solemnly state that stable peace and friendship will exist between both countries and their peoples. The sides will continue to develop and strengthen their relations on the basis of the principles of respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, and equality. They will cooperate in every way in ensuring conditions for the preservation and deepening of their people's socio-economic achievements.

ARTICLE 2

The USSR and SDR [Somali Democratic Republic] will continue to expand and deepen all-round cooperation and exchange of experience in the economic and scientific-technical spheres - in industry, farming and livestock raising, irrigation and water resources, the development of natural resources, the development of power engineering, the training of national cadres, and in other corresponding spheres of the economy. The sides will expand trade and maritime navigation between them on the basis of the principles of mutual benefit and most-favoured-nation status in accordance with the provisions of the trade and payments agreement between both countries concluded in Moscow on 2 June 1961.

ARTICLE 3

The high contracting parties will contribute to the further development of cooperation between them in the sphere of science, art, literature, education, health, the press, radio, the cinema, television, tourism, sport, and in other spheres. The sides will contribute to the
expansion of cooperation and direct ties between the political and public organisations of the working people, enterprises, and cultural and scientific establishments with the aim of deeper mutual familiarisation with the life, labour and achievements of the people of the two countries.

ARTICLE 4

In the interests of strengthening the SDR's defence capability the high contracting parties will continue to develop cooperation in the military sphere on the basis of the corresponding agreements between them. Such cooperation will provide for, in particular, cooperation in the training of Somali military personnel and in the mastery of the arms and equipment supplied to the SDR for the purposes of enhancing the defence potential.

ARTICLE 5

Pursuing a peace-loving foreign policy, the USSR and the SDR will continue to contribute in every way to the preservation of peace and to advocate the easing of international tension, the settlement of international problems by peaceful means, and the achievement of general and complete disarmament and, primarily, nuclear disarmament.

ARTICLE 6

The USSR respects the policy of non-alignment pursued by the SDR, which constitutes a factor in maintaining international peace and security. The SDR respects the peace loving policy pursued by the USSR aimed at strengthening friendship and cooperation with all peoples.

ARTICLE 7

Guided by the ideals of freedom and equality of all peoples, the high contracting parties condemn imperialism and colonialism in all its
forms and manifestations. They will continue to oppose the forces of imperialism and colonialism and to cooperate with each other and with other States in supporting the struggle of the peoples for freedom, independence, and social progress on the basis of the principle of equality and self-determination of the peoples, as expressed in the UN Charter.

ARTICLE 8
Expressing profound interest in safeguarding universal peace and security and attaching great significance to cooperation between themselves in the international arena for the purpose of achieving these objectives, the high contracting parties will consult regularly and exchange views with each other on important international issues. Such consultations and exchanges will encompass: International issues, including situations causing tension in various parts of the world, with a view to contributing to the relaxation of tension, developing cooperation, and strengthening security; issues which are the subject of multilateral negotiations, including those being examined by international organisations and at international conferences; and issues of a political, economic and cultural nature and other issues affecting relations between the two countries. Such consultations and exchanges of view will be effected through meetings between leading statesmen from the sides and visits by official delegations and special representatives and also through diplomatic channels.

ARTICLE 9
In the event of the emergence of situations creating a threat to or a violation of peace the high contracting parties will make contact without delay and consult with each other with a view to eliminating the threat which has arisen or restoring peace.
ARTICLE 10
Each of the high contracting parties states that it will not be party to military alliances or any groupings of States or to actions or undertakings directed against the other high contracting party.

ARTICLE 11
Each of the high contracting parties states that the commitments under existing international treaties are not at variance with the provisions of the current treaty and undertaken not to become party to any international agreements incompatible with them.

ARTICLE 12
This treaty will be in force for a term of 20 years from the date of its validation. Unless either of the high contracting parties expresses its desire to terminate the treaty within one year prior to the expiration of this term, it will remain in force for the next five years and until such time as one of the high contracting parties gives written notice one year prior to the expiration of the five-year period of its intention to terminate the validity of the treaty.

ARTICLE 13
This treaty is subject to ratification and will come into force on the day of the exchange of the instruments of ratification, which will take place as soon as possible in Moscow. This treaty is made in two copies, one in Russian and one in Somali, both texts being of equal validity.
APPENDIX 3

USSR-ETHIOPIAN TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP AND CO-OPERATION

ARTICLE 1
The high contracting parties shall develop and deepen the relations of unbreakable friendship and comprehensive co-operation in the political, economic, trade, scientific and technical, cultural and other fields on the basis of non-interference in each other's internal affairs, respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders.

ARTICLE 2
The high contracting parties declare that they shall closely co-operate in every way in ensuring the conditions for preserving and further developing the socio-economic achievements of their peoples and respect for the sovereignty of each of them over all their natural resources.

ARTICLE 3
The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics respects the policy pursued by Socialist Ethiopia based on the purposes and principles of the OAU and the Non-Aligned movement which constitutes an important factor in the development of international co-operation and peaceful coexistence. Socialist Ethiopia respects the peace-loving foreign policy pursued by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which is aimed at strengthening friendship and co-operation with all countries and peoples.

ARTICLE 4
The high contracting parties shall continue to make every effort to safeguard international peace and the security of peoples, deepen the process of international detente, extend it to all areas of the world, lend it concrete forms of mutually beneficial co-operation between
states, and settle international controversial issues by peaceful means without prejudice to the legitimate rights of states to defend themselves, individually or collectively, against aggression, in accordance with the Charter of the UN. They shall actively contribute to the cause of general and complete disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, under effective international control.

ARTICLE 5

The high contracting parties shall continue actively to work for the complete elimination of colonialism and neocolonialism, racism and apartheid, and the full implementation of the UN Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples.

ARTICLE 6

The high contracting parties shall consult each other on important international questions directly involving the interests of the two countries.

ARTICLE 7

In the event of situations which constitute a threat to or a breach of international peace, the high contracting parties shall endeavour to immediately consult each other with a view to co-ordinating the efforts in the interests of removing the threat that has arisen or restoring peace.

ARTICLE 8

The high contracting parties shall, attaching great importance to economic, trade and scientific co-operation between them, expand and deepen co-operation and the exchange of experiences in these fields. The parties shall expand all-round co-operation between them on the basis of the principles of equality, mutual benefit and most-favoured-nation treatment.
ARTICLE 9
The high contracting parties shall promote the further development of ties and co-operation between them in the fields of science, culture, art, literature, education, health, press, radio, cinema, television, tourism, sports and in other fields for the purpose of more profound mutual acquaintance with the life, work, experience and achievements of the peoples of the two countries.

ARTICLE 10
In the interests of ensuring the defence capability of the high contracting parties, they shall continue to co-operate in the military field.

ARTICLE 11
Each of the high contracting parties declares that it shall not enter into any alliance or participate in any alignment of states or in actions or measures directed against the other high contracting party.

ARTICLE 12
The high contracting parties declare that the provisions of the present treaty are not inconsistent with their commitments under international treaties in force and undertake not to enter into any international agreements incompatible with this treaty.

ARTICLE 13
Any questions that may arise between the high contracting parties with regard to the interpretation or application of any provision of this treaty shall be resolved on a bilateral basis in the spirit of friendship, mutual respect and understanding.

ARTICLE 14
This treaty shall remain in force for 20 years after its entry into
force. Unless either high contracting party declares, one year prior to the expiration of the said period, its desire to terminate the treaty, it shall remain in force for the successive periods of five years until one of the high contracting parties gives, one year prior to the expiration of the current five year period, written notice of its intention to terminate it.

ARTICLE 15

This treaty shall be subject to ratification and shall enter into force on the date of the exchange of instruments of ratification, which shall take place in Addis Ababa as early as possible.
APPENDIX 4

USSR-PDRY TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP AND CO-OPERATION

ARTICLE 1

The high contracting parties solemnly declare their resolve to strengthen the unbreakable friendship between the two countries and steadfastly develop political relations and all-round co-operation on the basis of equality, respect for national sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

ARTICLE 2

The high contracting parties will co-operate closely and comprehensively in ensuring conditions for the safeguarding and the further development of the socio-economic gains of their peoples and respect for the sovereignty of each of them over all their natural resources.

ARTICLE 3

The high contracting parties will exert efforts for lengthening and expanding mutually-advantageous economic, scientific and technical co-operation between them. Towards this end, the parties will develop and deepen co-operation in the spheres of industry, agriculture, fishing, the use of natural resources, the planning of economic development and in other economic spheres, as well as in the training of local personnel. The parties will expand trade and navigation on the basis of the principles of equality, mutual advantage and most-favoured-nation treatment.

ARTICLE 4

The high contracting parties will contribute to the development of co-operation and the exchange of experience in the fields of science,
culture, the arts, literature, education, health, the press, radio, television, cinema, tourism, sports and other fields. The sides will contribute to the development of contacts and co-operation between the organs of state power, trade unions and other mass organisations and also to the extension of direct ties between industrial enterprises and cultural research institutions for the purpose of gaining a more profound knowledge of the life, work, experience and achievements of the peoples of the two countries. Both sides will stimulate the development of contacts between the working people of the two countries.

ARTICLE 5

The high contracting parties will continue to develop co-operation in the military field on the basis of the relevant agreements concluded between them for the purpose of strengthening their defence capability.

ARTICLE 6

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics respects the policy of non-alignment pursued by the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, which constitutes a major factor in the development of international co-operation and peaceful coexistence. The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen respects the peaceful foreign policy pursued by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which is aimed at strengthening friendship and co-operation with all countries and peoples.

ARTICLE 7

The high contracting parties will continue to make every effort to protect international peace and the security of the peoples, for further relaxation of international tension, for spreading detente to all regions of the world, for its realisation in the concrete forms of
mutually-beneficial co-operation between states, for the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means in order to make the principle of renouncing the use of force an effective law of international life, and for the elimination from international relations of all manifestations of the policy of hegemonism and expansionism. The parties will actively promote the cause of general and complete disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, under effective international control.

ARTICLE 8

The high contracting parties will continue a vigorous struggle against imperialist encroachments in order to eradicate colonialism and racism in all their forms and manifestations. The parties will co-operate with each other and with other peace-loving states in support of the just struggle of peoples for their freedom, independence, sovereignty and social progress.

ARTICLE 9

The high contracting parties will make every effort to ensure a lasting and just peace in the Middle East and the achievement, for this purpose, of a comprehensive Middle East settlement.

ARTICLE 10

The high contracting parties will contribute to the development of co-operation between Asian states, to the establishment of peaceful and good-neighbourly relations and mutual confidence between them, and to the creation of an effective security system in Asia through the co-operative efforts of all states on that continent.

ARTICLE 11

The high contracting parties will consult each other on major
international questions directly affecting the interests of the two countries. In case situations arise which threaten peace or violate international peace, the parties will strive to enter into contact with each other without delay for the purpose of co-ordinating their positions in the interest of removing a threat to peace or restoring peace.

**ARTICLE 12**

Each of the high contracting parties solemnly declares that it will not enter into military or other alliances and will not take part in any groupings of states or actions and undertakings directed against the other high contracting party.

**ARTICLE 13**

The high contracting parties declare that the provisions of this treaty do not contradict their commitments under the international treaties now in force and undertake not to conclude any international agreements incompatible with this treaty.

**ARTICLE 14**

Any question which may arise between the high contracting parties as regards the interpretation or application of any provision of this treaty will be settled on a bilateral basis in the spirit of friendship, mutual respect and understanding.

**ARTICLE 15**

The treaty will be in force for 20 years from the day of its enactment. If neither of the high contracting parties gives notice, six months before the expiration of this period of its wish to terminate the treaty, it will remain in force for another five years and will be prolonged each time for another five-year period unless either of the
high contracting parties gives written notice of its intention to terminate it six months before the expiration of the respective five-year period.

ARTICLE 16

The treaty is subject to ratification and will come into force on the day of the exchange of instruments of ratification, which will be done in Aden.