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COLD WAR ON THE HORN OF AFRICA

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THE HORN OF AFRICA, an area comprising Ethiopia, Somalia, and Djibouti, is an area of the world whose strategic location has thrust it into the international arena as a potential crisis zone. Overlapping the Middle East and the Indian Ocean, it flanks the oil-rich states of Arabia, controls the Bab el Mandeb Straits which in turn is one of the narrow arteries of Israel's lifeline (a 'chokepoint' William H. Lewis calls it[1]), dominates a part of the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean through which oil tankers are constantly moving, and overlooks the passages where the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Indian Ocean converge. These aspects alone would define it as a major geopolitical area of the world. But the internal political dynamics in Ethiopia, Somalia, and Djibouti have combined with the wider geographic importance of the area to thrust the Horn of Africa into the international limelight. It is the argument of this paper that the recent radicalization of political systems in Ethiopia and Somalia has generated a response amongst a multiplicity of states in and out of Africa that has led to the crisis that presently brews on the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea. Radicalization first opened up for the Soviet Union a large presence in Somalia and South Yemen, and the result of this was then a response by the United States believing its own international strategic interests weakened and threatened thereby. Superpower rivalry on the Horn of Africa, on this view, has become intense principally because of political changes taking place among African states.

Internationalization of the Horn

Traditional American naval strategy as it applies generally, and in particular in so far as it affects the Indian Ocean, was articulated by Admiral Stansfield Turner, presently Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). He maintained in early 1977, while still associated with the military, that in order for the navy to play a coherent role in support of American foreign policy objectives, an increase in the quantity and quality of the United States Navy was necessary.[2] This projection was based most particularly on the growing Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean, and his own analysis of naval strategy.

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1. William H. Lewis, 'How a Defence Planner Looks at Africa,' in *Africa: From Mystery to Maze* (ed. Helen Kitchen, Lexington, Mass., 1976), p. 293.
2. For note 2, see next page.

> The fundamental role of our Navy has been sea control. . . . The capability to assist one's own use of the seas and to deny that use to others. There are fundamentally two threats that the presence of a naval force can imply: to do harm to a nation by projecting power directly onto its territory or to sever a nation's sea lines of communication through blockade or sea denial.[3]

A specific argument on this point was also put forward by former Defence Secretary James R. Schlesinger. In attempting to obtain from the US Congress additional funds for the construction of increased naval facilities on the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia, Schlesinger stated:

> The Soviet Union has become a major sea power only in the last decade. . . . It is worth remembering that the entire Soviet buildup in the Indian Ocean . . . has occurred during the period since the Suez Canal closed in 1967. . . . The level of US presence in the Indian Ocean has been prudent. Since an effective military balance is essential to the preservation of regional security and stability in this area of great importance to the economic well-being of the industrialized world, we feel we should have logistical facilities which will permit us to maintain a credible presence. In a period of historical transition toward a new set of power relations, only the United States among the Western nations has the stature to insure that the balance is maintained.[4]

American foreign policy on the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean was basically defined by these two policy statements. In effect a strong American presence on the Indian Ocean was perceived as absolutely necessary if (1) the economic security of the West was to be maintained; if (2) stability and regional security were to be upheld in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa; if (3) a potential blockade of Western oil lanes by the Soviets was to be prevented, and (4) if the Red Sea and Indian Ocean were to be kept open for Israeli and Israeli bound shipping. The key to all this was the maintenance of a powerful and

2. 'From the end of the Second World War through the mid-sixties, US naval planning concentrated on the development of sea-based forces for the projection of US power abroad . . . . Thus the heart of the 1974 American fleet still consists of aircraft carriers . . ., amphibious assault forces, escort ships . . . . In the late sixties, however, the increase in Soviet naval capabilities, US experience in Southeast Asia . . . brought about a gradual restructuring of American naval priorities. This new naval doctrine stresses 'sea control' . . . .': Barry Blechman, *The Control of Naval Armaments*. (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1975), p. 12. Presently the State and Defence Depts. in the United States are pressuring Congress to allocate more money for the Navy, and pressure is also being placed on President Carter. The Navy maintains that in relation to quantity the United States is now 'second' behind Soviet shipping.

3. Stansfield Turner, 'The Naval Balance: Not Just a Numbers Game', *Foreign Affairs* (v. 55, No. 2, 1/1977). pp. 342–343. For a discussion of the changing role of the Soviet and US navies in the Indian Ocean see, Geoffrey Jukes, 'Soviet Policy in the Indian Ocean' in *Soviet Naval Policy* (ed. Michael MccGwire, Ken Booth and John McDonnell, New York: Praeger Pub., 1975). See also, Raymond W. Copson, 'East Africa and the Indian Ocean—A Zone of Peace?' *African Affairs*, **76,** No. 304, July 1977.

4. *Statement of James R. Schlesinger, Secretary of Defence, Before the Senate Armed Services Committee.* United States Senate, Washington, D.C. June 10, 1975. For a discussion of the US role in Diego Garcia see, Jack Fuller, 'Dateline Diego Garcia: Paved-Over Paradise'. *Foreign Policy*, No. 28, Fall 1977.

dominant American presence in the Indian Ocean. This policy was succinctly summarized by *The Wall Street Journal*. Through the lower end of the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa 'passes all the Persian Gulf oil moving to the US, Western Europe, and Israel. All Suez Canal traffic to and from the Indian Ocean must pass the narrow strait of Bab el Mandeb between Djibouti and the two Yemens. Super tanker traffic heading for Africa's southern tip rides off the Somali coast. Whoever controls this area controls the oil flow to the Western world.'[5]

Discussion in the United States over the size of its navy was a response to the growing Soviet involvement in the Indian Ocean/Red sea area and fear of Soviet intentions. Soviet naval policy is predicated along lines similar to those of the United States. There are four primary aspects to it: (1) Strategic deterence; (2) Naval presence; (3) Sea denial or sea control; and (4) Projection of power ashore.[6]

After the fall of Nikita Khrushchev in 1964 the new Soviet leadership revamped its naval policy. Due to Russia's perception of its own weakness during the 1962 Cuban misile crisis 'the Soviet Navy's role was no longer defined (solely) to defence of the Soviet Union's coast, but became long range',[7] as was clearly shown in 1970 by the *Okean* manoeuvres in which 250 Soviet ships took part in almost every ocean in the world. James Schlesinger has said that 'for this event the number of Soviet ships in the Indian Ocean was approximately doubled (from 19–40). Activity was centred in the northern Arabian Sea at the crossroads of the tanker lanes from the Persian Gulf.'[8] Long range Soviet naval policy was seen as directly threatening to US interests in the Indian Ocean. The increased naval presence of the Soviet Union was also observed in December 1971 during the Indian/Pakistan war when war elements of a Soviet naval squadron were sent towards India from the Indian Ocean. In response the US Seventh Fleet was sent into the Bay of Bengal. Although this war ended quickly enough the US was made aware of the new dynamic Soviet naval policy. Movement in the direction of the Indian Ocean has been a tendency of the Russians since at least World War Two, and with the new policy articulated by the post-Khrushchev leadership along with allocation of additional funds to a larger and more quality oriented navy this became more feasible.

US and Soviet foreign policy, as applied to the area around the Horn of Africa, came more and more into conflict in the decade of the 1970s. The Soviet Union intent on establishing a larger presence in the area via the auspices of a more dynamic naval policy, increased its activity at a time when the United

5. Ray Vicker, 'North Yemen Becomes One of Pivotal Nations In an East–West Tilt,' *The Wall Street Journal*, June 2 1977.
6. *Turner*, op. cit., p. 342.
7. Robin Edmonds, *Soviet Foreign Policy 1962–1973* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 42.
8. Schlesinger, *op. cit.* The United States maintains only a small squadron in the Indian Ocean. It consists of a command ship—*La Salle*—and two destroyers. It is this Middle East Force that the Navy would like to see enlarged.

States was downgrading its own naval program and emphasizing its landbased and air misile program.[9] It also came at a time when the United States was withdrawing from Ethiopia, a country on the Horn of Africa that it had a political/military relationship with since 1953. Recognition on the part of the US State and Defence Departments that the Indian Ocean and the Horn of Africa were areas of increased Russian interest led to a re-evaluation of US naval policy, particularly as regards the concept of sea control and denial. As Seymour Weiss, director of the State department's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs stated in March 1974:

> It is a simple fact . . . that powerful maritime nations are active in the Indian Ocean, including the Soviet Union, which had virtually no forces there . . . prior to 1968 and which of late has maintained a presence approximately four times that of our own. . . . We seek nothing more than an ability to stage forces in the area similar to the ability the Soviet Union presently has. . . .[10]

This was as strongly stated by William H. Lewis. In the view of US officials, 'the traditional military-economic importance of the Eastern Mediterranean bases, Northeast Africa, and the Red Sea/Persian Gulf areas, which seemed to be declining in the mid-1960s, has been reaffirmed in the mid-1970s.'[11]

US policy makers, however, were not only concerned about the area because of increased Soviet involvement in the Indian Ocean. A problem almost complimentary in scope was occurring for it on the Horn, in Ethiopia, which threatened to isolate the United States from political events on the northeastern part of the continent itself. It thus faced the prospect, in the early 1970s, of being outflanked by the Soviet Union both on the seas and in Northeast Africa itself. The US was becoming more and more isolated from northeast African events. It had lost influence in its once client state of Ethiopia, while the Soviet Union was enlarging its presence in Somalia. Its naval power was being delimited on the Indian Ocean due to the increased Soviet deployment of shipping.

Geography is undoubtedly the force that has evoked superpower concern with the Horn of Africa, as the contending interests of the Soviet Union and the United States converge at this point around both the Middle East and oil diplomacy, particularly since the oil embargo of 1973 forced the US to recognize the full extent of its interest in the Middle East. The Horn's proximity to the Middle East and its significance as regards the worldwide defence strategy of both superpowers places it in the position of being caught up in the strategic military and political policies of both the Soviet Union and the United States. Events in Somalia and Ethiopia, beginning in the 1960s, increased the possibility of Soviet/American confrontation on the Horn of Africa, and now appears to be leading to a realignment of forces within and between those countries in

9. Turner, *op. cit.* Blechman, *op. cit.*, 1975, p.12.
10. Seymour Weiss. *Statement Before the House Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee on the Middle East and South Asia.* US Congress, April 10 1974.
11. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

Africa straddling the Horn. The turmoil in Ethiopia and the Somali/Soviet and Ethiopia/Soviet connections have altered the whole political complexion of the Horn. In addition, the role of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan within this context must be analysed.

Ethiopia and Somalia: The Complicating Factors

The coming of independence to Somalia in 1960 brought with it traditional claims to an area of Ethiopia. The Somalis have long pursued an irredentist policy towards the Ogaden province of Ethiopia by claiming that the area is populated by nomadic Somalis, and since Somalia stresses the unity of its people in terms of religion, language and ethnicity, it soon became official policy to claim this land from Ethiopia. David D. Laitin's analysis of the Somali claims is precise.

> Unlike all the other new states of Africa, Somalia was a 'nation' before it became a state. Some four million people inhabit the Horn of Africa, and they share a common language, a common religion, a common culture, and notably . . . a common understanding of themselves as a long-standing political community. In the early 1960s, therefore, when most African states were attempting a strategy of 'nation-building'—the creation of a new identity consistent with their former colonial boundaries—Somalia could engage in 'state-building', or the enhancement of political control at the new centre. Further, the Somalis were unique in Africa in that they had multi-irredentist claims. The five-pointed star on their flag represents the Northern and Southern regions of the present Republic, as well as the 'unredeemed' North-eastern province of Kenya, the Ogaden province of Ethiopia, and the French territory of Afars and Issas [Djibouti]. These three political entities are largely Somali in population.[12]

In relation to Ethiopia a border war between the two states was initiated shortly after Somali independence and has continued off and on since then. Until July 1977 the border war fluctuated between major and minor skirmishes. In July, however, the Western Somali Liberation Front, heavily supported by Somali troops and weapons, stormed the Ogaden and by October had captured virtually the entire province with the exception of the cities Harar and Diredawa.

The Ogaden province not only includes Somalis but has deposits of oil and natural gas, resources which both countries desire. Since the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and almost all African states recognize the importance of the sanctity of borders, Somalia has received no major support in its policy of obtaining lands from other African states. The Somali claim has been rejected by Ethiopia, and the governments of both Haile Selassie and the present military junta both kept large numbers of Ethiopian troops on the Somali border.

12. David D. Laitin, 'The Political Economy of Military Rule in Somalia', *Journal of Modern African Studies* **14**, 3, 1976, pp. 449–450.

Until the summer and fall of 1977, when these troops were all but decimated by Somali liberation fighters, some 10,000 Ethiopian troops were stationed in the Ogaden. It is important also to keep in mind that the claim of Somalia over Djibouti is almost as vital to Ethiopia's national interest as is its claim to the Ogaden region of Ethiopia proper.

In September 1974 Haile Selassie, emperor of Ethiopia since 1930, was overthrown by a Provisional Military Administrative Committee. Intent on uprooting the feudal social system that had flourished for so long in Ethiopia, the junta was expected to take radical steps to create a new social system for Ethiopians.

The ruling class of Ethiopia prior to the military *coup* was made up essentially of individuals responsible to or supportive of Haile Selassie prior to the fascist invasion by Italy in 1935. As the great war lords of 19th century Ethiopia died off Haile Selassie appointed his comrades to key positions in the central and local administration. Most were given large quantities of tax-free land as patronage and were permitted to freely tax tenant farmers. As I have commented elsewhere:

> These landlords, and former government leaders, together with the leaders of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church own[ed] the bulk of the land in the country and control[led] the everyday lives of the peasantry. Supported since 1953 by the United States this elite . . . stabilized its position secure in the knowledge that monies, aid, and weaponry would be forthcoming. The partnership was twofold. America was pleased to establish a strong foothold in Northeastern Africa which was 'stable' and the Ethiopian elite was able to entrench itself firmly. . . . This landed elite imposed upon an oppressed class of tenant farmers a colonial violence, in which [the latter] held no legal, political, or economic rights.[13]

Under this feudal order taxes were shifted illegally by landlords onto tenant farmers, evictions could and did occur without notice because most leasing arrangements were oral, more than 50 per cent of the produce was demanded as rent, interest on loans was frequently 100 per cent, free services were demanded by landlords, and a 10 per cent tithe was collected by landlords despite its illegality. The oppressed had little recourse to any higher authority because landlords also manned governmental and legal structures.[14] The tenant farmer was seen as the primary taxable entity in a political order made up of an oppressor group unwilling to make any concessions. The peasant under the regime of Haile Selassie thus bore the brunt of supporting financially three layers of government: the landed elite, the central government, the Ethiopian Orthodox

13. Peter Schwab, 'Haile Selassie: Leadership in Ethiopia,' *Plural Societies* **6**, 2, 1975 p. 20.
14. For analyses of the feudal system see, Peter Schwab, *Decision Making in Ethiopia* (London, 1972), chs. 3, 5; Patrick Gilkes, *The Dying Lion* (London, 1975), ch. 4.

Church, a political complex that together owned about 80 per cent of all the land in the country.[15]

Between 1953 (when the United States first took a leading role in Ethiopia) and 1974 the United States supplied Ethiopia with over $200m in military assistance. Until 1970 this represented nearly half the total US military assistance to all African states. In 1953 Kagnew, an American military base near Asmara, Eritrea, was set up for tracking space satellites, relaying military communications, and monitoring radio broadcasts from Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Until 1974 when the US all but closed its base and opened a new base on the island of Diego Garcia, Kagnew quartered more than 3200 military personnel.[16] The US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, chaired by Senator William Fulbright, discovered in 1970 that the United States had had counter-insurgency teams in Ethiopia since 1964, had been involved in aiding Ethiopia in opposing the Eritrean Liberation Movement, and had been committed to training the Ethiopian army, air force, and navy since the mid-1950s.[17]

The strategic geographic location of Ethiopia on the Horn of Africa served it well in that it was able to obtain funds and military aid and supplies from the United States; in return the US obtained base rights that allowed it to keep tabs on the Red Sea/Indian Ocean area. It felt secure in Ethiopia because the long reign of Haile Selassie seemed to assure stability and such stability assured the United States a continuing presence on the Horn.

In the mid-1960s American military aid to Ethiopia increased substantially as it became clear to American policy makers that the Soviet Union was increasing its aid flow to Somalia.[18] Initial military assistance agreements between the civilian government of Somalia and the Soviet Union, calling for $35m in grants and credits, were signed in 1963. After 1969 when the civilian government was overthrown by the armed forces, General Siyad Barre, heading the 'socialist' Supreme Revolutionary Council, developed Somalia's connection with Russia, and by 1971 $50m in grants had been approved by the Soviets. Additionally, in 1962 the Soviet Union began assisting Somalia in constructing port facilities at Berbera overlooking the Red Sea. The facilities were completed in 1969. Naval support networks including two Soviet communication facilities were opened in Berbera in 1972, and the Soviet air base was opened at Harghessa the same year. By October 1977 Russia had granted more than $250m in military aid to Somalia. According to J. Bowyer Bell, there were 'now some 2000 Soviet personnel in Somalia including 300 military advisors'.[19] Former Defence

15. Schwab, *op. cit.*, 1975, pp. 21–22.
16. *US Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad, Ethiopia.* Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate, Part 8, June 1 1970, p. 1902.
17 *Ibid.* pp. 1903–1904.
18. *Ibid.* Note testimony throughout. See, Richard H. Deutsch, 'Fueling the African Arms Race', *Africa Report* (March–April 1977).
19. J. Bowyer Bell, *The Horn of Africa* (New York: Crane, Russak & Co., 1973), p. 41. *The New York Times*, July 19 1977, claims there were 6000 Soviet advisers in Somalia.

Secretary James Schlesinger also claims the Soviets then established a missile storage and handling facility at Berbera.[20]

There is some question as to how extensive these facilities at Berbera actually were. Yet, in so far as American policy-making is concerned, the perception is as important as the reality and all major US government authorities seem to agree that they were extensive enough to be threatening to American strategy in the Red Sea area.

The harbour at Berbera is almost directly opposite the Soviet naval facilities in South Yemen's port of Aden. This had obvious strategic benefits for the Soviet Union. Utilizing these harbours for shipping and docking altered to some degree the balance of power in the Indian Ocean/Red Sea/Gulf of Aden area. It was possible to choke off Israel; and it was possible to dominate the seas through which oil passes to the Western industrial states. American policy, predicated on retaining its position on the Horn of Africa, maintaining the lifeline to Israel, and preventing a potential blockade of Western oil lanes, had clearly received a setback. Utilizing South Yemen and Somalia, the Soviets had thus succeeded by the mid-1970s in crucially affecting the balance of power off the Horn of Africa in their favour.

Until 1973 the United States, secure in Ethiopia, was able at least to maintain a major presence in the area. Together with its bases in Greece and Italy it could utilize air power to negate *any* Soviet action. After 1973 this possibility disappeared. Greece made it clear during the Arab/Israeli war that its sympathy lay with the Arab states and it prohibited the US landing or refuelling rights to aid Israel. The creeping *coup* in Ethiopia, together with increased military activity in Eritrea, forced the United States to abandon its base in Asmara and opt for base facilities on an island in the Indian Ocean—Diego Garcia—that is some 1,500 miles off the coast of Africa.

1973 and 1974 were the key years as far as US policy on the Red Sea/Horn of Africa was concerned. The growing penetration by the Soviet Union in Somalia and South Yemen, its own weakened naval position in the Red Sea, the oil embargo, the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and the anti-American government in Ethiopia all appeared to negate the once-powerful American position on the Horn. The apparent weakness of its own navy and the lack of allies on the strategic Horn caused a reappraisal of American policy. Such a consideration soon led to a near-break with Ethiopia and also caused the United States to attempt to open new avenues to the Horn.

Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti

Massawa and Assab, the two Red Sea ports deep within Eritrea, are the only outlets to the sea that Ethiopia has access to within its own territory. Djibouti, which received its independence from France on 27 June, 1977, offers another avenue to the sea. A railroad line between Addis Ababa and the port at

20. Schlesinger, *op. cit.*

Djibouti has existed since 1917. Since the mid-1960s when the war with Eritrea became intense some 40–60 per cent of Ethiopia's exports and imports have flowed through Djibouti, although this avenue is periodically curtailed by insurgent Somali activity as a result of which the railroad line is often severed.

In so far as foreign and domestic policy is concerned, Ethiopia has since 1962 (when it annexed Eritrea) viewed the crisis in Eritrea and its relationship with French Djibouti through one lens. When the Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM) began its secessionist movement in 1962 Haile Selassie immediately reacted by sending in armed forces. There was to be no consideration of separatist demands for independence. As the Ethiopian/Eritrean war increased in scope and violence the military was reinforced and by 1965 some 50 per cent of the Ethiopian army—20,000 troops—were stationed or fighting in Eritrea. US military aid was increased, US counter-insurgency teams were operative, and the Israelis constructed a military communications network to aid the battle against the ELM. With Christian Ethiopia closely connected to Israel and supportive of its anti-Arab stand, Israel hoped to prevent a breakaway by Eritrea, an essentially Muslim area that Israel viewed as essentially hostile to it. An independent Eritrea could make more difficult Israeli access to the southern end of the Red Sea. This played into the hands of Haile Selassie who needed all the aid and weaponry he could obtain to stave off the Eritreans. In 1973, however, as a result of the Arab/Israeli war, pressure from African states forced the Emperor to break diplomatic relations with Israel.

Throughout this period Haile Selassie placed pressure on France to remain in Djibouti. With France removed as a colonial power Djibouti would be at the mercy of Somalia which has consistently claimed it as part of its territory. With the war in Eritrea, with increasing border problems with the Sudan resulting from the flow of refugees from Eritrea and Sudanese accusations that the war was spilling over onto its territory, with internal rebellion in 1967 in Gojam province, and with the then low-keyed war with Somalia over the Ogaden Ethiopia was in no position to contend with an independent Djibouti. And dealing with Djibouti meant a potential full-scale war with Somalia. It had been policy under Haile Selassie not to permit Somalia control over Djibouti as Ethiopia would then be totally dependent upon Assab and Massawa, and with the secessionist war raging such dependence was intolerable to Ethiopia's national interest.

In 1974 the political situation within Ethiopia changed drastically. Haile Selassie was overthrown and a Provisional Military Administrative Committee comprising some 120 troops took over direction of the country. The Committee maintained that it would turn Ethiopia into a socialist state eradicating the feudal system that 'permitted the exploitation of man by man' and would construct a society based on 'equality, the right to guide one's own destiny, the right to work and earn.'[21] And as I have written elsewhere,

21. *The New York Times*, Dec. 21 1974.

> Accordingly, the new rulers approached the politically stultifying social system in Ethiopia by arguing that the old structures and traditions have to be eliminated rather than modified, and must be replaced by a new society in which each individual may develop personally, while participating in a fair share of the necessary work of the nation, even that which no one wishes to undertake.[22]

The land tenure system was torn apart as rural land was made the collective property of the Ethiopian people, and all privately held land was limited to 10 hectares. Many businesses were nationalized and the junta began attacking the United States as the major arms supplier of the Haile Selassie regime. Relations between the United States and Ethiopia soured. In fact, the rhetoric of the Ethiopian leaders was so doctrinally dogmatic that it would have been too obvious a political contradiction to publically continue their connection with the United States along the lines of the past. Military aid however was requested.

There was at this point expectation on the part of the Muslim Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM) and the Marxist Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front (EPLF)—the two insurgent political groups fighting for independence—that the new regime would accept Eritrean independence and negotiate a peace settlement. They were mistaken. A major question here is why the junta did not settle the issue then and there. The answer to this particular conundrum is, I believe, multiple.

First of all, it is now apparent that no one single ideology was dominant among the officers of the Ethiopian junta. Some were more radical than others, while liberal sentiment was also quite strong. Ideological battles ensued over almost every major policy pronouncement. How extensive should land reform be? How should the personnel of the Haile Selassie regime be treated? What should policy be concerning Eritrea? How much participation should be permitted students and labour, major supporters in the early days of the junta's bid for power? What role should peasants play in the new order? Should foreign friendship be directed towards the Soviet Union or towards the United States? The conflicts played themselves out in erratic policy making and in the increasing use of violence to settle disputes. Within three years two leaders of the junta had been executed: General Aman Michael Amdon, and Brigadier General Teferi Bante. The original 120 in the junta were reduced in number by half. Pro and anti-government factions nowadays settle disputes with 'revolutionary violence' on the streets of Addis Ababa. The present chairman of the junta, Mengistu Haile Mariam, rules over what must now be described as a disintegrating Ethiopia.

22. Peter Schwab, 'Human Rights in Ethiopia,' *Journal of Modern African Studies*, **14**, 1, 1976, p. 155. See also, Paul Brietzke, 'Land Reform in Revolutionary Ethiopia', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, **14**, 4, 1976, and an Observer, 'Revolution in Ethiopia'. *Monthly Review* (July–August 1977).

General Amdon, who was executed upon orders from the radical element in the junta, ruled this disparate group of officers for only two months. An Eritrean, he believed that a negotiated settlement was the only way out of the Eritrean quagmire. He also believed in continuing the American connection. His execution put an end to any possibility of negotiation within the near future. For Teferi Bante and Mengistu Haile Mariam, the primary subsequent figures in the junta, accepted the doctrine that permitting Eritrea to obtain independence would cause the disintegration of a state that was riddled with 'horizontal cultural pluralism.'[23] But ironically the war effort has not permitted the junta to deal with any of these internal problems and the disintegration it most feared is now taking place.

Haile Selassie's policy towards Djibouti was also adopted. Dependency on Djibouti, even allowing that it remained out of Somali hands, would be adverse to Ethiopia's national interest. But the ports in Eritrea were also deemed essential and there was to be no letup in the war effort. The Djibouti/Eritrean connection as regards outlets to the sea, was policy under Haile Selassie and this policy has been kept intact by the junta. Ethiopia must have its own ports.

Thus a multiplicity of factors came together and caused the new Ethiopian leadership to continue the policies of the former regime as regards both Eritrea and Djibouti. Eritrea was to be maintained as part of Ethiopia and Djibouti was to be kept from Somalia.

Unfortunately for Ethiopia the military junta was unable to successfully carry out its policy. The Somali push into the Ogaden forced Ethiopia into a two-front war, in Eritrea and in the Ogaden. With its loss of American weapons and its armed forces too thinly spread out, Ethiopian troops were sent reeling. The Ogaden was soon virtually occupied by the Western Somali Liberation Front, and the ports in Eritrea were under constant attack by the ELM/EPLF who occupied most of Eritrea. Access to Massawa and Assab was intermittent. During October 1977 the railroad line between Addis Ababa and Djibouti was cut and could no longer be utilized by Ethiopia. Its access to the port at Djibouti was very limited.

In early 1975 the Ethiopian junta requested from the United States $25m in arms to stave off the secession of Eritrea. The US after weeks of policy discussions in the departments of State and Defence refused the full request and sent $7m in aid instead. This was the beginning of America's re-evaluation of its aid program to Ethiopia. It was also, as can now be seen, decided in conjunction with the re-evaluation of its naval policy in the Indian Ocean/Red Sea area.

Events in Ethiopia pointed in the direction of a disintegrating country: Gojam province was in rebellion over land expropriation; Gondar province was the centre of the Ethiopian Democratic Union, a group formerly associated

23. Ali A. Mazrui, 'The Anatomy of Violence in Contemporary Black Africa,' in Helen Kitchen, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

with the Haile Selassie regime and intent on re-establishing a similar governmental structure; Addis Ababa was the centre of random and erratic political violence; the war in Eritrea was raging; and the junta was battling within itself too. Under the Ford administration the United States decided in 1975 to limit its aid program to Ethiopia. It no longer had real influence in the country. The Carter administration's objection to human rights violations in Ethiopia, and its cutting off of some military aid to the country clearly parallels policy decided upon during the Ford administration. Both presidents limited relations with Ethiopia and considered increasing the size of the US navy in the Indian Ocean. They also began to seek new allies on the Horn of Africa. This effort was paralleled by activity by the Soviet Union. From 1975 on both superpowers intensified their efforts to increase and diversify their interests on the Horn while attempting to dominate (or at the very least, increase) their control and authority over the Indian Ocean.

Naval and political strategies converged on the Horn of Africa but the United States was on the defensive. It was far more isolated on the Horn. Lacking Red Sea port facilities the US tried to construct a policy that would allow it to gain influence and power to match recent Soviet gains.

Changing Alliances

With the Soviet Union striving to expand its influence inland from Somalia it reacted positively and rapidly to Ethiopian requests for aid. Military aid was vital in 1976/1977 as the Eritreans and Somalis were making significant advances.[24] With Eritrea under virtual control of the ELM/EPLF and with the ports of Massawa and Assab only sporadically open to Ethiopia, the reduced arms from the US were clearly having an effect on Ethiopia's conduct of the Eritrean war. The Soviet Union filled the military aid vacuum. In September 1977 it began delivery of the equivalent of some $385m in arms. Included were 48 MIG jet fighters, 200 T-54 and T-55 tanks, and a number of SAM-3 and SAM-7 anti-aircraft missiles. Also to be included were anti-tank missiles. In addition a handful of Cuban advisers arrived in Ethiopia in the summer of 1977 to organize and train a peasant army to be used in combating the Eritreans. The Soviet Union was pushing hard to establish a connection with Ethiopia and was gambling that its policy would not alienate Somalia. It clearly intended to emphasize ideology in order to maintain its interest in both countries. Fidel Castro's trip to Somalia and Ethiopia in 1977 to attempt to bridge the differences between the two countries was part of Russia's policy of emphasizing ideology. Although Somalia and Ethiopia are in a de facto state of war Somalia was not expected to react strongly to Russia supplying Ethiopia with weapons. It issued warnings to Russia concerning its aid to Ethiopia but until November 1977 these warnings have been purely rhetorical, with Russian aid continuing to flow into Somalia.

24. See, John Darnton's excellent series of articles on the Eritrean war in *The New York Times*, July 11, 12, 13, 1977.

By increasing its influence in Ethiopia Russia hoped to maintain a presence in the two key states of the area. Should its aid prevent Eritrea from seceding it might very well acquire access to the ports of Massawa and Assab, north of Berbera, through which its naval power as against the United States would be greatly augmented still further. Eritrea is perceived by the Soviet Union as already under the sway of the conservative Arab states of the area, particularly Saudi Arabia, and it thus would have no role to play in an independent Eritrea. Although the Soviet Union was expelled by Somalia in November 1977, control of the port in Massawa still placed the Russians almost directly across the Red Sea from Saudi Arabia, and would allow it speedy access to Israel. Together with its facilities in Aden, the Soviets could still make a Russian lake out of the Red Sea. It would then be the dominant naval power in the area and would have the ability to disturb sea lines of communications and oil traffic to and from the United States, Europe, and Israel.

In 1962 the Soviets gambled in Cuba and lost. This time, with its navy in a far superior position and its power augmented by that navy, they may not lose in the final resort. Everything depends on Ethiopia ravaging the Eritreans. Although this policy is frought with difficulties its success is still possible, and given the stakes the power play may well be worth the aggravation. They have port facilities in Aden allowing them to continue to dominate the southern end of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden and they could retain access to Ethiopian ports. Successful implementation of this policy would give the Soviets absolute dominance in the Red Sea, control over the Gulf of Aden and the entrance to the Indian Ocean, quick access to the Persian Gulf. It would also ensure the Soviet Union an overriding position as against the United States on the Horn of Africa.

The Sudan, which straddles the Horn of Africa and the Middle East, borders eight African states, and in its ethnic makeup is a bridge between the Arab North and the Black South, was formerly on good relations with the Soviet Union but has become fearful of Soviet dominance on the Horn of Africa. Major-General Gaafar Mohamed Nimeiri has stated that he sees Ethiopia as part of a Soviet-backed conspiracy to dislodge his regime and control the Horn of Africa and the countries that straddle it.[25] Nimeiri maintains that the July 1976 abortive *coup* in his country was an attempt by the Soviet Union, Ethiopia, and Libya to topple his regime. His recent exaggerated statements to the effect that there are 2500 Cubans in Ethiopia should be seen in the light of his fears of the Soviet Union. Soviet military advisers have recently been expelled from the Sudan, and a concerted effort is now being made by the United States and the Sudan to improve relations.

With the conclusion of the 1967 Arab/Israeli war relations between the US and the Sudan were broken. They were restored in 1972 but still remained tense. In 1976 President Ford placed the Sudan on the list of countries eligible

25. *The New York Times*, June 21 1977.

to purchase arms from the United States. The Carter administration has now approved the sale of six C-130 Hercules military transport planes at a cost of $70m to the Sudan. Negotiations are presently underway for the sale of advanced military equipment. Improved relations with the Sudan are part of America's effort to salvage its position on the Horn of Africa. The recent sale of US planes to Kenya reinforces this effort.

Egypt too fears Soviet dominance of the region. President Sadat has stated that a major priority of his is to keep the Sudan from coming under the dominance of the Soviets as this would totally isolate Egypt leaving it surrounded by hostile Soviet supported states in Ethiopia, Libya, and the Sudan. To shore up the Nimeiri regime, a pact was recently signed by Egypt and the Sudan to aid one another in case of external attack.

Saudi Arabia is extremely fearful of the Soviet presence on the Horn as it wants to establish authority over the Red Sea and is weary of Soviet meddling in the Middle East. Together with the United States Saudi Arabia is engaged in a concerted effort to diffuse Soviet power on the Horn. The Saudis and Kuwait have offered extensive aid to the Sudan.[26] Much of the aid is economic but a large portion of it is designed to enable the Sudan to acquire military supplies from the United States. The Saudis also attempted to woo Somalia from the Soviet camp. In its efforts to extend its dominion over the Red Sea the Saudis have increased their pressure on Somalia, and agreed that it was ready to join other governments in providing military aid to Somalia. The Saudis have also increased their aid to the Eritrean secessionists. Together with Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates Saudi Arabia is 'taking part in a $400 million aid package being offered to South Yemen to woo it from the Soviet camp.'[27] The United States is planning development projects in North Yemen, US banking interests are negotiating banking rights, and Kuwait is investing the equivalent of $442m in North Yemen over the next five years in industrial projects.[28] It would appear that the strategy of the United States in North Yemen is twofold: to prevent the Soviets from gaining a foothold there, and to establish a political relationship with the hope of obtaining US port facilities in Hodeida which would give America a balanced presence with the Soviet Union on the Red Sea littoral.

Saudi Arabia and the United States have mutual interests at stake in the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa. By regaining allies the United States can reconstruct a political/military presence there. By delimiting Soviet influence

26. Richard P. Stevens, 'The 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement and the Sudan's Afro-Arab Policy,' *Journal of Modern African Studies* **14,** 2, 1976. According to Stevens, p. 271, in 1974 the Sudan received £S91.4m in aid from Arab sources; 42 per cent was provided by Kuwait. From 1970–1974 Arab aid totalled £S123.4m. In 1974 Saudi Arabia offered a $200m guarantee to help the Sudan over a serious financial crisis. President James Carter announced in July 1977 that the US would sell Egypt 14 C-130 Hercules military transport planes valued at $180m for ferrying troops in case Egypt had to come to the aid of the Sudan. *The New York Times*, July 27 1977.
27. Ray Vicker, *op. cit.*
28. *Ibid.*

the Saudis hope to reduce Russian involvement in Middle East politics. By obtaining base rights in North Yemen the US can match the Soviet naval position in the Red Sea. The Saudis' desire for an independent Eritrea must certainly have the sympathy, if not the public support, of the United States. The new relationship between Saudi Arabia, the United States, the Sudan, Egypt, and North Yemen must therefore be seen within the perspective of Soviet policy in Somalia, Ethiopia, and South Yemen.

For the United States the altered political scene on the Horn of Africa is merely one part of the power equation. The growth of Soviet naval power, and the ability of the Soviets to obtain port facilities is seen as a threat to the national interests of the United States. To return to Admiral Stansfield Turner's comments, Soviet ability to sever US sea lines of communication through blockade or sea denial is seen as a threat to the United States in the area off the Horn of Africa. The forging of new alliances and Defence and State Department pressure to expand the US navy are reactions to Soviet policy.[29] The Soviet Union has, until now been relatively successful in expanding its influence and effecting its own naval strategy. Whether its policy towards Ethiopia/Eritrea will succeed is still open to question. But even with the Somali expulsion the Russians may still obtain access to Ethiopian ports and thus their policy on the Horn should not be seen as totally dependent upon Somalia. Should the Soviets maintain a presence in *both* Eritrea and Ethiopia, the United States will clearly then have been outmanoeuvred.

It should be evident, however, that the states on and around the Horn of Africa have been thrust into a cold war between the superpowers that is raging despite supposed détente. By internationalizing regional conflicts around the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea, the United States and the Soviet Union have transformed the region of the Horn into a more serious potential flashpoint. The cold war around the Horn shows no signs of abating. On the contrary, the superpowers are intent on increasing their presence there—the Soviet Union in the Horn itself and the United States around the periphery. The Horn of Africa and the states that surround it have thus been pushed into the centre of the cold war. The United States, which early in October 1977 publicly recognized its inability to influence events in either Ethiopia or Somalia, has meanwhile increased its military and political influence in Egypt, the Sudan, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, and North Yemen in an attempt to match Soviet influence in Ethiopia, South Yemen, Libya, and on the Indian Ocean. The lines have been drawn for a superpower struggle over the Horn and the Red Sea which continues to escalate at an alarming rate.

29. On August 25 1977 President Carter directed Secretary of Defence Harold Brown to improve the combat ability of the United States in the Persian Gulf area: *The New York Times*, August 26 1977.