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# UNITED STATES POLICY TOWARDS THE HORN OF AFRICA; THE BALANCE OF EXTERNAL AND REGIONAL INTERESTS

## Introduction

The conflict in the Horn of Africa and its internationalization since 1977, has given rise to a great deal of debate in the American policy making establishment. American involvement in the conflict implies expenditures, and that, among other reasons, explains the continued congressional debate on the whole question. This has inevitably raised the question whether the costs of expanded U.S. involvement in the region are commensurate with the strategic and other benefits. This question has defined the terms of the debate as can be gleaned from congressional hearings beginning in early 1976. The latest phase of the debate took place in the wake of the realignment of forces in which Somalia has become, since 1978 a U.S. ally and Ethiopia a Soviet ally.

The larger debate has sometimes been summed up in terms of two seemingly opposed perspectives, i.e. the 'globalist' view which is stressed by those who favor expanded U.S. military presence, and the 'regionalist' perspective advanced by those who advocate that U.S. policy in the region should be oriented primarily toward developmental and humanitarian goals.

The 'global' argument submits first that the Horn is strategically located on the Indian Ocean and within 900 - 1500 miles of the oil-producing area of the Persian Gulf. Second, oil shipped from the Persian Gulf and destined to Europe and USA must pass through sea lanes off the Horn of



Africa. Third, access to facilities in the Horn of Africa would allow the United States to supply Israel during a regional crisis without depending on facilities in Southern and Eastern Europe. Allied with this is the consideration that access to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean is important for Israel, a crucial U.S. ally. Fourth, the Soviet and Cuban presence in Ethiopia (since 1977) across the Red Sea from Saudi Arabia, and adjacent to Kenya and Sudan, two countries friendly with the United States, makes it imperative for the United States to have some counter-veiling power in the area. Fifth, denial of access to the Arabian Sea to Soviet ships may have some military value because the sea lanes there are useful to the Soviet Union for shipping from the Black Sea to the Soviet Far East. Also, the Arabian Sea may have some nuclear strategic value to the United States since nuclear-missile carrying submarines deployed there would be within range of large parts of the Soviet Union.

The 'regional' argument holds first that U.S. security assistance in the countries in the Horn would run the risk of polarizing international politics in the region. Second, U.S. use of military facilities in the region as launching pads for crises in other regions could widen the crisis and implicate the countries in the Horn in conflict not of their own making nor in their interest. Third, U.S. military assistance to Somalia may only encourage that country in its territorial claim over Ethiopia's Ogaden and the NFD of Kenya.

Fourth, a U.S. presence in Somalia might draw the United States into any Somalia-Ethiopia conflict, particularly in the event of Ethiopian attacks against Somali territory. Fifth, a close U.S. - Somali relationship would identify the United States with a country that most African govern-

ments view as an aggressor, damaging the U.S. diplomatic position on the African continent. Sixth, security assistance to Somalia could drive a wedge between the United States and Kenya a country with which the United States has enjoyed close relations. Seventh, the principal needs of the countries of the Horn are developmental and humanitarian. By devoting itself to these needs the United States will do more over the long term to advance its interest in the region.

The introductory section of this paper seeks to add another dimension to this externally oriented debate on a regional conflict. To that end it draws attention to two neglected points which are pertinent to the discussion on the conflict on the Horn of Africa and U.S. policy towards that conflict. The first point concerns the salience of local, national, forces as autonomous actors and the balance that needs to be drawn in relating them to external actors. The second point, which must be seen in relation to the first, concerns the scope and limits of the power of intervening external actors in a regional conflict, in the contemporary world.

#### National Forces and External Actors

As could be seen from the opening paragraphs of this paper discussions on the Horn of Africa have tended to focus on the strategic geopolitical and other interests of the big powers in the context of their rivalry. Even the so-called 'regionalist' view is a subtler argument towards the same end - the interests of an external power. The strategic importance of the region is not in dispute. What is disputed is the subordination of all legitimate local, national interests or the manipulation of local claims and counter-claims, to external strategic advantages.



It is therefore necessary to issue a reminder which I put in what may sound like a tautology: any discussion of a nation's policy towards a region in conflict must involve due considerations nature and sources of the conflict in the region as well as the policy of the nation concerned towards the conflict. The operative phrase is "due consideration" applied to both international and local actors.

The conflict in the Horn of Africa involves several local, national forces contending over some complex, historically conditioned issues. It also involves external forces intervening on behalf of one or more of the regional forces. The recent switch of alliances in which Ethiopia is now aligned with the Soviet Union and Somalia with the United States, underscores the primacy of the strategic factors in external intervention and brings to mind Palmerston's dictum that in international relations there are no permanent friends, nor permanent enemies; only permanent interests.

In view of the fact that policy discussions on the conflict have been framed more in terms of its international dimensions, and in order to redress the balance this paper aims to help expand and deepen the debate by arguing that any discussion that loses sight of the historical roots of the crisis, or that minimises their importance by laying undue emphasis on strategically motivated, foreign policy analysis would be seriously flawed. A discussion that ignores or minimizes the significance of local, national forces and the burning issues that animate them would be tantamount to an abdication of responsibility. And that in turn would imply an abnegation of the legitimacy of 'objective analysis'. That in the end would imply irrelevance. For, in reality, the local, national, forces have not only persisted, but in some cases, they have gained irresistible momentum,

contrary to the prediction of some foreign analysts. The crisis in the Horn of Africa, which involves a number of armed conflicts throughout the region, essentially reflects two related historical processes. These are:

- the continuation of the crisis of empire within the borders of the Ethiopian state, which was created through military expansion in the late 19th century;
- the persistence of certain unresolved questions inherited from the European colonial era.

The legacy of the imperial Ethiopian state has been reaffirmed by the government that overthrew Emperor Haile Selassie. In other words the emperor was overthrown, but the empire remains. The local, national forces that were incorporated through conquest would insist that the empire is a "prison of people" and their respective armed national movements are their liberators.

Similarly, the borders of the post colonial African states - reaffirmed colonial history by accepting the colonial boundaries, most of which cut across national, (nationality) lines. The 1964 Cairo Resolution of the OAU which adopted the colonial boundaries to define the new African sovereign statehood, though defensible on several grounds, did nonetheless deny the Somali people in the Ogaden among others their right to self-determination. The OAU Resolution was adopted over the objection of the Somali government and the OAU did not, as it had promised, reexamine the issue, despite continued conflict. The Eritrean question is the converse of the Ogaden question, in terms of the colonial boundaries. Eritrea was a former Italian colony. Its territory was recognized in international law, but the strategic and geopolitical interest of the U.S. which coincided with Emperor Haile Selassie's territorial ambitions caused the denial of the Eritrean people the right to self-determina-



tion and independence. Yet the OAU forgot to apply the Cairo Resolution to the case of Eritrea. That error or oversight has not yet been openly admitted.

The other issues involving the crisis of the empire and the national question left unresolved by the changes of 1974 are no less persistent than the Somali or Eritrean questions. Indeed there is ample evidence for those who care to examine it - of a growing military power of the TPLF (Tigray Peoples Liberation Front) which is indicative of a trend that is altering the balance of power in favour of forces intent upon self-determination, and which demand closer attention.

#### Scope and Limit of Foreign Intervention

Three events of the recent past will serve to illustrate this point. All occurred in the 'arc of crisis' in quick succession. The first was the Russian/Cuban intervention on Ethiopia's behalf in the war of the Ogaden (1977/1978) and the Soviet intervention in Eritrea subsequently. The second event was the Iranian revolution of 1979 which overthrew the Shah laying to rest the Nixon doctrine of a regional surrogate power expected to police the region. The subsequent seizure of American hostages dramatized the demise of the Nixon doctrine and further exposed the limit of U.S. power, in the face of assertive national forces. The third event was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a little over a year after the Iranian revolution. Subsequent events have demonstrated that the Soviets too have experienced the same limit to their power, despite the size of their intervening forces, their ruthlessness and the geographical proximity of Afghanistan to the U.S.S.R.

All these three events seemed to signal a changing reality perhaps in shifting balance of power in the U.S. -

Soviet global contention. There was the drama of a super power "held hostage" to the "whims" of local, Iranian forces, and its failure to organize and execute a swift, coercive or punitive assault (in contrast to the "good old" gunboat days, when Dr. Mossadeq, for instance, was ousted by an Anglo-American concerted action in the early 1950s). Here we must note a difference in the style of mode of operation between American and Soviet interventions, in the post-Vietnam era. The Soviet intervention in Ethiopia was not only massive but bold, speedy and impressive in the efficiency with which it came to the rescue of a new ally in dire need - the military government of Ethiopia. The organization, efficiency, speed and scale of the operation reflected hitherto undisclosed Soviet airlifting capabilities, or what an observer has called its "leapfrogging capacity".

The impact of the Soviet intervention in Ethiopia, seems, on the face of it, to contradict the argument put forward above on the salience of local, national, forces, because it changed the fortune of the Ogaden war, tipping the balance in favour of the Ethiopian military. We will return to this point in later sections. It seems to have taken Western policy makers and analysts completely by surprise. And the feebleness of the response of the Carter administration seemed to presage the extraordinary events that were to unfold in Iran a year later.

President Carter's answer to charges of betrayal of the Somalis was couched in legalistic terms: the African, post-colonial, legal order must be observed; the colonially fixed borders must be maintained in accordance with OAU principles. The Soviets also invoked the same principles, adding that a sovereign state has the right to call on any other state to come to its rescue in times of need.



Now, power in terms of military force, and the manner and scale of its use has always been an important instrument of foreign policy. And a discussion on the foreign policy of a big nation like the U.S. or the U.S.S.R. inevitably involves reference to the use or projection of such nation's power. The objective of such exercise is obviously to promote, protect and/or maintain a given national policy in regard to a country or region. And the manner in which the exercise is carried out is at once a function of the technological advance or capability of the big nation, as well as of the attitude of the nation towards prevailing international norms of conduct. The constraints that such prevailing norms can impose on the conduct of the foreign policy of a big power is also a function of the degree of adherence to them by the international community as a whole. The evolution of the international community since 1945 has tended to reinforce the value of restraint and pondered conduct, and the Vietnam war and its outcome have sharpened awareness on the limit to big power by exposing the folly of unilateral decision to wage war against a small nation.

The emergence of the 'Third World' as a group of 'non-aligned' nations desperately trying to steer clear from involvement with one or the other of the big powers, has added a new dimension to international relations. The anomaly of the present formal 'leader' of the Third World, Cuba, being involved in tandem with Soviet intervention in the Horn of Africa, reflects the emerging complexity of international relations. In terms of international law, as noted earlier, there is nothing anomalous of one sovereign state responding to the urgent call of another sovereign state in distress. But in terms of international (Third World) politics the Cubans have been reminded not to "overstay the hospitality" of African states. And the OAU, in

the best of times collectively represents the sovereign will of African autonomy in all respects. There is no doubt but that other big powers are sensitive to such autonomy, despite the contradictions within the OAU over a number of issues, which they may at times manipulate to their respective advantages.

The difference between Soviet and U.S. intervention (since Vietnam) reflects the difference in their respective domestic politics. The diffidence of the Carter response in all of the events outlined above can be explained in terms of the post-Vietnam and post-Watergate political climate in the USA. President Carter also faced an election year immediately, a factor, that may have entered in Soviet calculations. Indeed, for President Carter these events could not have happened at a worse time, and the limited response that he gave may have hurt him later; it is reasonable to surmise that domestic (economic) problems alone did not cause his defeat in the 1980 presidential election. The theme of a humiliated America - a wounded giant, fallen victim to a vacillating presidency with an incoherent policy - was frequently expressed by the Republican candidates in the presidential campaign of that year.

The newly elected President Reagan proposed to vindicate the damage to the American image. Right from the start he demonstrated an aggressive posture and strident language in his eagerness to prove to friends and foes that America will no longer take any nonsense from anyone. His posture was also meant to send a clear signal of American resolve to contain what was perceived as a "creeping Soviet gain in the arc of crisis".

In concluding this introductory section it is worth underlining that this American perception of Soviet audacity, including their action in Angola in 1975 and later in the



Horn of Africa is as important as the Soviet action whatever the ultimate Soviet motives might be. It is this fact of mutual perception and a guessing game between the Americans and the Soviets which has become the subject of inordinate attention to the near exclusion of considering the root cause of the conflict. But the strategic and geopolitical imperative as the sole or even dominant factor of foreign policy would reap a harvest of failure if it did not know its own limit and cannot appreciate the full measure of local, national or popular feeling and aspirations.

The Soviet success in Angola in 1975 was premised on the favourable popular political climate. The presence of Soviet naval forces in the area, the air lift capacity noted earlier, and the timely delivery of large quantities of weapons, as well as the long-range air lift facilities which brought in Cuban forces, were critical factors. But all this military capability would have come to naught had there been significant political opposition to its advent in the country.

One final word of introductory import. The actions, reactions and interactions, in U.S. - Soviet regional rivalry should be seen in the broader context of the global rivalry. In this respect, it should be remembered that the military balance changed steadily in favour of the U.S.S.R. which by the early 1970s achieved parity with the United States as borne out by the 1972 SALT I treaty. In U.S. analysts the accelerated development of Soviet conventional weapons has "injected a new element on the overall balance of power". The size of the defence budget in the current fiscal debate reflects a preoccupation on this as on the nuclear military balance.

## II. Nature and Sources of the Horn's Conflict

As noted already, the conflict in the Horn of Africa is rooted in history and geography. At the heart of the region, and the center of the conflict, lies an unreconstructed Ethiopian empire. This fact implies militarily a unity of all the forces struggling against a common enemy: the central Ethiopian state. This is true also politically in at least two of the fighting guerilla forces - the EPLF in Eritrea and the TPLF in the neighboring Tigray. A history of armed struggle against a common enemy since 1975 and similar ideological inspiration has drawn these two forces closer, reinforcing their military capability.

This is an important fact which has contributed to their military success against overwhelming numbers and superior arms at the Dergue's command since 1978. The Oromo are also increasingly being drawn to a 'tripartite' alliance with the EPLF and the TPLF, benefiting from training and other facilities from the EPLF. The Somalis are geographically too distant to forge a closer alliance with the EPLF and TPLF. But they are expected to develop a closer alliance with the Oromo who are their closest neighbors. This has not happened yet for historical reasons that will be explained later.

There are four main elements in the conflict in the Horn of Africa. First is the Ethiopian state. Second is the Eritrean liberation struggle. Third are the struggles for self-determination of the people of Tigray in northern Ethiopia and of the Oromo in southern and western Ethiopia. Fourth is the Somali conflict with an 'Ogaden' as the stake. There is of course the fifth, factor of foreign intervention, which has not only internationalized and complicated the regional conflict, but has operated to postpone an earlier resolution by turning Ethiopia into a regional, if



not a continental, arsenal. We will deal with the fourth and fifth factors in section III below.

### The Ethiopian State

It is not commonly known that there are two Ethiopias, historically speaking. There is first, the Ethiopia of ancient history and mythology going back to 3000 years. The reference to 3000 years, though mythically based, has important political connotations in official Ethiopian accounts. Its starting point in the misty distant past, is the visit of the Queen of Sheba from northern Ethiopia to King Solomon. The visit was motivated, according to the legend by the good queen's thirst for knowledge: her desire to behold the wisdom of Solomon. The good king behold her beauty and used his wisdom to "play his will upon her" with the result that she begot a son, whom she called Menelik.

Later Ethiopian Christian scribes, the ideologies of the monarchy, developed the legend as a further source of legitimacy, by connecting the blood kinship of Ethiopian kings with Jesus Christ, whose pregenitor Solomon was, since the Jewish people (the Israelites) had relinquished their status as God's chosen people. The political implications of this powerful legend are deep, and has profoundly affected the course of the Christian Ethiopian state, which started in Axum, in Tigray, and moved southwards after the fall of Axum towards the end of the 10th century A.D. The central state or kingdom wandered from place to place to avoid the constraints of isolation and eventual destruction. It settled in Gondar in the 15th century and changed hands a few times, before it settled in Showa towards the end of the 19th century.

This brings us to the second Ethiopia - historical Ethiopia,

shorn of legends. Menelik II, of Shoa, who assumed the imperial throne in 1889 following the death of emperor Yohannes of Tigray, is the father of modern Ethiopia. After the fall of Axum, Ethiopia historically was a highland kingdom with its center limited to central Shoa Gondarins and Tigran highlands. The outlying lowland areas, including the bulk of the Oromo and Somali inhabited areas of today; Ethiopia was not an integral part of the Christian highland kingdom.

Menelik II, acquired enormous arms through suitable contacts and astute diplomacy with European colonial powers. Using arms thus acquired he expanded his kingdom by conquering the outlying areas south, west and southeast of Shoa. By the time of the battle of Adua in 1896, at which his army defeated an Italian army which invaded Tigray from Eritrea, Menelik had conquered and consolidated most of the territories that are now formed within the boundaries of present day Ethiopia. The people incorporated in this process of conquest include the Oromo, the majority nation in Ethiopia today, as well as the Somali in the 'Ogaden'. In 1897 he signed a treaty with the European powers (Britain and France) who formally recognized his conquest and imperial territory. From then on he was recognized an African partner in the era of European colonization. Indeed his observers had attended the Berlin Conference of 1884/1885, but of which came the Treaty of Berlin 'legalizing' the division of Africa.

Menelik is thus a heroic figure for Ethiopians who are proud of this history. He is a villain from the viewpoint of the Somalis and the Oromos, who believe that his glorious history was their inglorious defeat, colonization and loss of their birth right.

Menelik's eventual successor, emperor Haile Selassie further



consolidated the empire after his ascent to power in 1916, as Crown Prince and in 1950 as emperor. His 'modernization' work began in 1931 with the promulgation of an European style constitution which provided the legal framework for the further centralizing imperial power. One of the paradoxes of the Ethiopian revolution of 1974, which was later taken over by the military, is the fact that all the forces that emerged to challenge and eventually overthrow the emperor were products of his 'modernization' work - the students, teachers, the labor union and the military. The military who now hold central power in a centralized imperial state would be the last as a corporate interest group, to preside over the liquidation of the Ethiopian empire. To begin with there is the notorious fact that its military are indoctrinated and trained to maintain the integrity of their territory and would lose prestige and power if they shirked from this traditional duty. Secondly, in the case of the Ethiopian military elite, which is dominated by the ruling Amhara nation, Menelik's empire is regarded as the sacred trust - a legacy of their fore-fathers. They feel the burden of this legacy acutely, and are not impressed by arguments of the oppressed nationalities. To them the preservation of the empire comes first. They also now maintain that the ruling class of former landlords that oppressed and exploited the conquered nationalities has been overthrown and the land returned to the tiller. We will come back to this point.

Since the emperor's overthrown Marxism-Leninism has become the ideology of the Ethiopian state, at least in rhetorical terms. In 'Socialist Ethiopia', the class and not ethnic consciousness is said to be the overriding factor in the affairs of people. This means that anyone who raised any question of ethnic oppression, who laments for example the

fact that Amharic being the official language of communication and of instruction, his children are educationally and otherwise at a disadvantage, would be dismissed as 'narrow nationalist' and reactionary. He must subordinate his ethnic (or national) to his class consciousness. He must work for the triumph of workers and peasants over all other classes.

The central fact of Ethiopian state politics has been the refusal of the imperial power-holders to share power with members of other nationalities, who were prepared to accept the legacy of imperial conquest in exchange for peaceful and cooperative reconstruction. This was denied them soon after the first days of the creeping coup (February-July 1974) when the Amhara dominated coordinating committee of the armed forces (later known as the Dergue) followed a historic pattern of exclusion from power of members of other nationalities, notably the Oromo. Many young Oromo intellectuals later decided to join the Oromo liberation front.

Mengistu Haile Mariam, the leader of the Dergue, is an interesting compromise. His culture and upbringing is Amhara, although his parentage is of diverse minority sources. But the entire structure of the Ethiopian ruling elite - the bureaucracy, the officer corps and the cabinet - is predominantly Amhara. Mengistu, who admires Menelik, serves the imperial purpose admirably. His slogan, "revolutionary motherland or death" for example, served that purpose in 1977/1978 being instrumental in mobilizing public support for the Dergue at a time when it was tottering, and the empire with it. This period also saw the advent of Soviet power in a country at the cross-roads - either continuation as an unreal constructed empire state or transformation through by full and democratic participation of



all the people.

The Soviets supported a military group that chose the first route. As a result they became allied to an imperial state and against the national groups who demanded self-determination in all parts of Ethiopia. The latter have congenitally argued that this fact alone gives the lie to Soviet international revolutionary solidarity as the declared motive for Soviet intervention. These nationalities have been fighting a much strengthened Ethiopian army equipped, trained and advised by the Soviet and their allies. Their victory thus would spell disaster to Soviet diplomacy. Hence a continued Soviet military involvement in Ethiopia. Whatever strategic or other considerations motivated the Soviet involvement in the first place the logic of the Soviet decision to side with the Dergue seems to have precluded a conciliatory role for them or their allies. In Tigray, Oromoland, Ogaden and especially in Eritrea, which the Soviet supported earlier, war will be thus the final binding arbitrator.

#### The Eritrean Liberation Struggle

The Eritreans have been waging a war of liberation whose phase of armed struggle began in September 1961. Of all the peoples who have been victims of strategic power manipulation, in the post World War II era, the Eritrean people can make the greatest claim for prior consideration. The fact that very few nations have dared to raise the case of the rights of the Eritrean people is a sad commentary on the international community, and especially the United Nations.

The essence of the 'Eritrean question' is that Eritrea, a former Italian colony, was singled out for denial of independence contrary to the universally recognized principles

of self-determination. This denial was caused by the coincidence of two interests - U.S. strategic and geopolitical interests in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea region on the one hand, and the demands of emperor Haile Selassie, on the other. The Ethiopian government, of course, has continued to label the Eritrean liberation movement as a secessionist one instigated by outsiders including some Arab states. The facts speak differently.

Eritrea was a creation of colonial history, like most of the African states of today. Its pre-colonial history is long and complex, and need not concern us here.

Italy began its colonization of the country by first establishing a protectorate over Assab in 1882, and completed it in 1890. In that year, baptized its colony by giving it the name 'Eritrea'. A year earlier a treaty was signed with Emperor Menelik recognizing the border with Ethiopia.

Italian rule continued until 1941, when British and allied forces defeated Italian forces declaring Eritrea a British protectorate.

For over a decade after that the Eritrean people were ruled by the British, while the future of Eritrea and those of the other former Italian colonies - Libya and Somalia - was the subject of international debate and national agitation. Italy was forced to renounce its claim over its former colonies in the Treaty of Paris of 1947. Under the Treaty of Paris, the four allied powers - USA, U.S.S.R., Britain and France - were required to settle the future of the former Italian colonies by agreements and failing agreement, to refer the matter to the U.N. General Assembly. As the 'Four Powers' could not agree among each other, the matter was referred to the U.N. General Assembly.

The U.N. General Assembly resolved to grant Libya independence by 1953, and Somalia by 1960, after a ten year period



of U.N. trusteeship with Italy as the administering authority. The case of Eritrea proved to be more contentious, because of Ethiopia's demand that Eritrea should be united with Ethiopia. Ethiopia advanced several reasons for making the demand, the main grounds being historical and economic - Ethiopia's need of access to the sea. Ethiopia's ambitious - or felt needs - and U.S. interests in the area coincided as Emperor Haile Selassie was regarded as an ally to the United States.

In 1950, the United Nations, which was dominated by the United States at the time, passed a resolution under which Eritrea was made an autonomous unit "under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown". The Eritrean peoples' demand for self-determination was ignored. A short time before the resolution came into effect in September 1952, John Foster Dulles, U.S. Secretary of State bluntly expressed U.S. interests, when he said:

"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 makes it necessary that the country has to be linked with our ally Ethiopia."

"The point of view of justice" was not considered, "the opinion of the Eritrean people" did not receive much consideration. A year after the federation between Eritrea and Ethiopia came into force, Ethiopia and the United States entered into a 25 years agreement which, as will be discussed in section III, lasted until the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie. 10 years after, the emperor abolished the federation and incorporated Eritrea as one of his provinces. Whence the Eritrean contention that their struggle is just and legally defensible in international law. The Eritrean liberation movements claim that the people of

Eritrea were, in the first place, denied the right of self-determination which other former colonial people enjoyed. They further contend that even if the Eritrean people might be said to have consented to the U.N. imposed federation, which is not admitted, the abolition of the federation was a break of international law which led to the revival of the Eritrean peoples' right to self-determination and independence. The history of their armed struggle and the sacrifices they have made is evidence that they are ready to fight in the name of that principle.

The case of Eritrea involves just about all the issues of great interest to the world community which nevertheless has kept its silence until recently, after the Soviets switched to the Ethiopian side. All the issues - historical, political, legal, military - ultimately boil down to justice, and justice as Daniel Webster said "is the greatest interest of men on earth". Justice, like peace is indivisible. Eritreans organized peaceful protest on this premise, and tried all means to secure a hearing at the U.N. Ultimately they resorted to a historic pattern of rectification of people denied justice - armed struggle.

The Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) was limited in the first few years to the western lowlands of Barka. It gradually expanded its size of military activities striking at Ethiopia's police and military outposts. The news of its exploits spread throughout Eritrea and beyond. From a handful of armed bands in 1961 it grew to a sizeable well armed guerilla by 1965, when it divided its areas of guerilla activities into five semi-autonomous zones. This decision was accompanied by the developments. The first was an expansion of the Ethiopian army in Eritrea and the commission of the earliest massacres and village burning by the Ethiopian army. This produced the earliest batch of refugees,



that by 1982 had increased tenfold to some 500.000, living in the Sudan. The second was the development of internal contradictions within the ELF, which by 1969/1970 led to a split and the emergence of a second front - the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Forces (EPLF).

The history of Eritrea, and perhaps of the region has been significantly affected by the emergence of the EPLF. After a few years of civil war between the two fronts, the EPLF emerged as a better organization, eclipsing the ELF's role in all but a few activities, and by 1981 displacing it completely from the field. It is of the greatest moment to understand why and how this happened, in order to appreciate the incredible military successes of the EPLF, and its survival against heavy odds, particularly after the Soviet involvement on the side of the Dergue.

From its inception the EPLF impressed upon its members the primacy of politics and the supremacy of the people. It is not arms that should command politics, it is rather politics that should command arms and men. The EPLF was a patriotic fighting front, and for that reason had enjoyed the overwhelming support of the Eritrean people including those whose relatives were assassinated in the order of some ELF leaders. But by 1965 it had degenerated. Its leadership was still imbued with the feudal ideology of regional and tribal division. The more highly educated and politically conscious elements within its rank were harassed, isolated, and in many cases murdered, on the order of one or more leaders without due process of any kind. The more politically advanced, democratic elements within the ELF then secretly organized an internal resistance movement which eventually resulted in the creation of the EPLF; in 1970. By 1976 its size had more than quadruppled, with the mass exodus of young Eritrean who joined.

The EPLF's superiority even in military matters could be seen in the early years (1970-1973 when as a much smaller, but internally cohesive, organization, it successfully defended itself against the ELF). Its superiority was also, of course, demonstrated in its innumerable battles against a much stronger Ethiopian army, first in 1973/1974, in the Sahel area, then again in 1975/1976 around Mara. After the Soviet backed Ethiopian offensive began in 1978, it ordered a strategical withdrawal from key towns which it had won from the Ethiopian army in the previous year. The informed world held its breath at the sight of a massive Ethiopian army, newly trained and equipped by the Soviets and, in the earlier phase, logistically supported by Cubans. The Ethiopian army was confident of a quick victory, coming as it did after a resounding victory over the Somali army in the 'Ogaden' war. The strategic retreat of the EPLF, seemed to forebode a fateful end.

The EPLF has instead not only survived but defeated and repulsed six major Ethiopian offensives. How has it done this? Who aids the EPLF? These are questions which are frequently asked. The answer is disarmingly simple: the Eritreans depend on their people's support and their own ingenuity and efficient administrative and military machine. Several outside observers, especially from Europe have visited the war zone and the liberated area, coming back with accounts of impressive infrastructures and social services, in underground offices, hospitals, workshops etc.

Over and above patriotic nationalism which always causes the initial impulse to rebel, and an outraged sense of justice and betrayal, EPLF is imbued with a sense of historic mission to lead the Eritrean people to a new and independent country. The EPLF maintains that national in-



dependence classically (or peacefully) decolonized 'independence' would not be enough as a study of Africa of the past 20 years has shown: Another, and important dimension must be added - a social and political dimension. An independent Eritrea must be a state utterly responsive to the needs of its people. In order to achieve that goal after independence the task of the liberation army is to lay the groundworks before independence. The people must organize their own powers, including legislative, administrative and judicial powers. And the EPLF must provide the backing, enforcing the decisions of the popularly chosen committees of the people. It must also provide training in various fields as well as educational, health and other facilities. It must seek popular mandate and support. And it must not, under any circumstances, take any property by force.

These are some of the most important reasons why the EPLF has successfully mobilized behind it the entire Eritrean people. The rest is detail and organizational ingenuity. All the financial or military support in the world would not have enabled the EPLF to endure without these reasons. Humanitarian aid still comes from several sources, and is helpful.

In the last two years the EPLF has also achieved some success in the diplomatic field. In January 1981, the Islamic Summit Conference held at Ta'if, Saudi Arabia, urged for a just and peaceful settlement of the Eritrean question and set up a committee to investigate the issue and report back to the Council of Foreign Ministers in May of that year. Perhaps of equal importance is the recognition of the justness of the Eritrean question by the French Socialist Party in 1981 and the British Labour Party in 1982, as well as by the Norwegian Government. Within Africa also an increasing number of states have quietly stated this

support and have been urging a peaceful settlement of the war.

The EPLF itself put forward a proposal for a peaceful settlement. In essence the proposal urges that the Eritrean people should be asked to decide on their future through an internationally supervised referendum, from one of three choices: complete independence, federation with Ethiopia, or regional autonomy within Ethiopia. There has been no response from the Dergue, except to continue the war. The last (6th) offensive (February through May 1982) which was called 'Operation Red Star' was launched after the EPLF proposal.

Since the failure of the 6th offensive, the EPLF has mounted many pronged counter-offensives, amid reports of large-scale desertions from the Ethiopian army. The Dergue army in Eritrea has shown signs of fatigue, and has sent delegations to the Ethiopian leadership requesting for a peaceful settlement. The leadership's response to this request will largely depend on the Soviet position to the war in Eritrea.

If the theory advanced above that the Soviets would prefer a stalemate in the war in order to ensure their continued presence, is well founded, the likely steps which the Soviets will take would be to resupply the Dergue arms and material at a level in consonance with such a policy. Other factors that would influence the final outcome of the war are: the behaviour of the Ethiopian army stationed in Eritrea; the continuation of military and diplomatic successes of the EPLF and events in other parts of the region, notably 'Ogaden', Tigray and the point of this paper, the local national forces - aided by external events such as diplomacy in Europe, Africa and the Middle East - will ultimately be the decisive factors.



### The Tigrayan and Oromo Liberation Struggle

When geographical proximity is backed by demographic density in the relation of two straggling peoples, then everything else being equal, the chances for success are favorable. Such has been the case with the Eritrean and Tigrayan people. Common language and culture have also contributed to the success of cooperative (and at times joint) military operation of the EPLF and the TPLF. Such is not the case with the TPLF and the OLF (Oromo Liberation Front).

There is, of course, an area in parts of the central Ethiopian province of Wollo, inhabited by the northernmost segment of the Oromo people. This area borders in the southern part of Tigray. And while cooperative guerilla activities between the TPLF and the OLF can conceivably be organized, from the position of the OLF it is not the first area that would be selected as an Oromo guerilla base for many reasons. Historically, it is an Oromo frontier area where the Oromo have consorted with other nations, including the Amhara, for over two centuries, resulting in some parts in the loss of their language and a strong national consciousness. But even where this is not the case, it is too remote from the main Oromo guerilla bases in Hararghe, Bale and Wallaga.

The chain of national liberation struggles from Eritrea to Ethiopia stops at the moment at the southern Tigray border. Recent reports also indicate that the TPLF has been helping a main stream Ethiopian liberation front in parts of Wollo. The new front is reportedly a democratic Ethiopian national front aiming to overthrow the Dergue and replace it by a democratically elected, and representative government. This does not necessarily preclude a future TPLF-Oromo cooperation in that area.

The TPLF represents the latest armed phase of the Tigray

peoples resistance to the central Ethiopian state. As mentioned before, Tigray forms part of the highland of Ethiopia, and historically has been a part of the Ethiopian state system. The emergence of the supremacy of the Shoa kingdom under Menelik and its expansion and consolidation in the late 19th century gradually resulted in the absorption of Tigray under central Shoa hegemony. This was eventually rationalized by intermarriage among the ruling circles of Tigray and Shoa, which facilitated the conquest of the south, with the Tigrayan ruling class playing the role of a junior partner. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church to which most of the peoples of Tigray and Shoa kingdom belonged, played a crucial cementing role in this joint venture.

This venture of unequal partners frequently involved rebellion in Tigray and repressive responses by the Ethiopian army. The most recent of such events before the emergence of the TPLF, was the 'Weyyane' revolt of 1943, which was ruthlessly crushed by Emperor Haile Selassie with the help of his British allies. The bombing of the market place in the city of Makale by British Royal Air Force planes represented the most brutal aspect of the emperor's campaign.

The EPLF's name in the Tigrinya language contains the word 'weyyane' (meaning revolt) which commemorates the 1943 national revolt of Tigray and links the present struggle to the events of that revolt. The Tigrayan National Organization (TNO) continued to operate underground keeping the resistance alive through several means. Cultural resistance, including poems, songs and war dances was part of this resistance. Fund-raising to build local clinics and libraries was another mode of struggle practised by Tigrayans until the emergence of the TPLF in 1975.



The overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie's regime galvanized the TNO to organize open demonstrations in Tigray. The Eritrean struggle next door provided an inspiration and military opportunities for the TNO to be transformed into a proper guerilla organization, dedicated to a protracted war. The TPLF was born in February of 1975 with such dedication, and has steadily grown in strength and popularity. It has successfully engaged the Dergue army in many battles out of which it has built an arsenal and a formidable battle tested, guerilla army, drawing thousands of youth from the cities and the countryside. It has organized a militia and peasant self-governing bodies. Its land reform and social services have also contributed to the improvement of the conditions of the peasants, again drawing more support to its side. Its youth and women organization based on equality and full participation of all members of the Tigrayan people have consolidated its popular base embarking it on an irreversible social and political transformation similar to that of the EPLF.

Militarily, it is the most important liberation organization, next to the EPLF. Together with the EPLF, they have altered the military balance in favor of the popular forces fighting the Ethiopian army in the whole region. The failure of all the six offensives of the Dergue some of which were fought in Tigray, have placed in the hands of the EPLF and the TPLF enormous weapons captured from the Dergue army. It is now, in fact, possible for the TPLF to begin training and other military assistance to other, democratic Ethiopian forces determined to overthrow the Dergue. When that happens the chain of connection will stretch from Eritrea right through the heart of Ethiopia down to the Oromo guerilla base areas.

The OLF is the latest armed expression of the Oromo peoples'

resistance to imperial conquest and rule began in the 19th century.

The Oromo are the single most populous nation in Ethiopia, numbering some 15 million. All these Oromo, inhabiting over half of Ethiopia, speak a common language and share a common culture, tracing their origin to a common ancestor. Their occupation of the central highlands of Ethiopia began in successive waves of migration in the 16th century. They have a distinct culture and social structure where central feature is the gada system. Simply stated, the gada system is a democratic form of social and political organization which ensures orderly participation in all public affairs in accordance to age groups. This was partially affected in some Oromo areas after Menelik's conquest, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's proselytizing activities which went hand in hand with the military occupation and imposition of an alien rule.

Oromo resistance to this rule continued in various forms, even after Menelik's 'pacification'. Although militarily disarmed the Oromo could not be culturally disarmed. Here again we see the role of culture in resistance, expressed in different forms. A central feature of Menelik's conquest was the confiscation of their land and its distribution among Menelik's army of occupation. This reduced them to serfdom; they became tenants to the new landlords. It is for these reasons that the OLF speaks of the conquest as colonization and of the landlords as colonizers, drawing a parallel with the British settler-colonialists in Kenya.

Armed resistance continued sporadically in parts, including Arsi and Bale. The Arsi were the last Oromo people to be pacified, and conducted hit and run wars sporadically until 1934, on the eve of the Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia.



pia. Five years of Italian rule restored a measure of equality between the Oromo and the Amhara people, who faced a common alien ruler.

With the return of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1941, after five years of exile in England, past social relationships were restored, with minor modifications. Haile Selassie's policy of centralization was carried out by the Italians to an extent which was beyond what his feudal regime could have accomplished in 30 years, judging by the development of infrastructure and the provincial administrative machine which the Italians left him, and comparing those with what he accomplished in the following 30 years. One of the consequences of these developments was the greater ease with which his security apparatus could deal with national revolts, and the greater efficiency with which his tax collectors could gather revenue. Taxation (without representation) and a more efficient security apparatus to which the bulk of the revenue was allocated exacerbated Oromo (and other) national grievances. There were more revolts which were crushed.

Educated Oromo, notably protestants from the provinces of Wallaga continued a more subdued form of resistance, in which demands for the use of the Oromo language in education figured prominently. But it was in the mid-1960s that these subdued forms of resistance suddenly exploded into open organizations in Shoa, Arsi, Wollaga and elsewhere. This was called the Tulama-Mecha Association, an Oromo self-help organization led by an army general named Tadesse Birru. This too was crushed with the arrest of Tadesse and his associates. But it left an important organizational infrastructure linking students, teachers, civil servants and even some members of the armed forces and the police.

The overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie galvanized the Oromo too. The OLF had already been formed in 1973 out of section of the Oromo students in the university of Addis Ababa. Bands of Oromo guerillas were also operating in the Chercher mountains that year. These two forces joined up in 1974/1975 to launch the present armed struggle under the leadership of the OLF. Earlier Oromo resistance movements suffered from a lack of coordination and an organized national leadership.

In 1976, the OLF started armed attacks on military outposts from its base in the Chercher mountains of Hararghe. This gradually expanded to several other provinces including Bale and Arsi. After 1981, a new front was opened in the west of the Wollaga provinces. The geographical spread covering an area of some 600,000 square kms of Oromo inhabited land, made it difficult to launch well-coordinated military operations. In addition to the geographical distance, there were also some factional contradictions based on religious and provincial grounds.

The Oromo in the southeastern provinces of Hararghe and Bale are Muslim while those in Wallaga and Shoa are predominantly followers of Christianity and traditional religion. These contradictions delayed more effective campaigns as earlier expected, but they appear to be resolved in favour of a united, democratic Oromo liberation, leaving behind all differences.

Another reason for the slow development of military operation is related to a historically conditioned Oromo-Somali contradiction in the Hararghe and Bale region. This contradiction is sometimes expressed in terms of disputed claim over adjacent territory. In effect, Somali claim over the 'Ogaden' and parts of Bale spills over into Oromo inhabited areas, and some Somalis in the past have spoken



loosely of greater Somalia extending as far as the Awash river valley. This has been corrected by official Somali policy statement in recent years, but mutual suspicions and fears linger and have been exploited by the central government.

The nature of the contradiction between the Oromo and the Somalis is a function of a long history of conflict over territory which can be resolved when the extent of the Somali territorial claim is defined by the Somali government and by the WSLF. Recent talk between the two sides indicates possibilities of an early resolution of the contradiction. Until this happens both the Somalis and the Oromo will remain vulnerable to manipulation. The fact that this did not happen during and after the disastrous 'Ogaden' war is an indication of that the contradiction is deep seated. This has denied the OLF an important opportunity to use Somali transit, training and other facilities and support.

This is a major reason for the opening of the Wallaga front bordering on the Sudan. All of these contradictions and consequential delays explain the slow rate of development in military strength of the OLF. Meanwhile, the Ethiopian army which comprises of a substantial portion of Oromos forcibly conscripted, has suffered some desertions. The following are reasons for such desertions: the growing activities of the OLF and widespread arrests of Oromo intellectuals by the Dergue, a growing realization that the land reform has not benefited the Oromo peasants, the settlement of several hundred thousands of Amharas from the central Ethiopian highlands in Oromo areas. An OLF leader, explained this development, stating that the much-baunted land reform has only benefited the Ethiopian state, which a property of the Amhara, ruling class, individual land-

lords have now been replaced by the state as a landlord. OLF social and political programs propose to change all this and to establish a state owned and operated by the Oromo masses.

### III. U.S. Policy Towards the Horn of Africa

U.S. policy towards the current crisis in the Horn of Africa is conditioned first by past American involvement which was embedded in strategic and geopolitical interests in the region, and second by what U.S. policy makers perceive to be an aggressive Soviet policy in Africa since 1975 and in the region since 1977.

It will be helpful therefore to review briefly the evolution of U.S. involvement in the area tracing its developments since the end of the Second World War. The earliest recorded manifestations of American interest begin with the debate among the 'Four Powers'. It began after 1945 and ended formally 35 years later in August 1980, with the signing of the Somali-U.S. agreement to which we will return later.

This period may be divided into three periods: the first phase involves American attempts successfully to step into the shoes of the British. The second, begins with the departure of the British from Eritrea and the decline of their influence in Ethiopia and the signing of the Ethio-American Treaty of May 23, 1953. It ends in February 1977, when the military government of Ethiopia announced its alignment with the Soviet Union. This was formalized in November 1978, when a 20 year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Ethiopia and the Soviet Union was signed. The third phase begins thereafter and takes a concrete shape when the circle was complete in the new alignment of forces formalized with the Somali-U.S. agreement of August



1980.

We will review this history briefly and then consider U.S. policy since 1977, in a rapidly changing situation.

#### U.S. Policy in the Region: 1945 - 1977

Beginning in the aftermath of the Second World War and through the end of the 1940s the foreign policy of the U.S. towards the Horn of Africa has been shaped by its strategic and geopolitical interests. In pursuit of these interests the U.S. forged an alliance with Ethiopia, which it regarded as the most important state in the region. The presence of European colonial powers in other areas of the region (Sudan, Djibouti and Somalia) also precluded earlier American penetration in those areas. The end of the colonial era later opened opportunities to an America that was economically and militarily powerful, when the case of the former Italian colonies was referred to the U.N. General Assembly. The latter resolved to grant Libya and Somalia independence in accordance with a different timetable and varying terms and conditions, whereas it denied Eritrea the same right. As already noted the United States masterminded a resolution (Res. 390 A(V)) which a majority of the U.N. Assembly passed in 1950. Under that resolution, Eritrea became an autonomous territory in a federal arrangement under the "sovereignty of the Ethiopian Crown". It will be recalled that John Foster Dulles, U.S. Secretary of State expressed American strategic interests as the dominant issue, ignoring the Eritrean peoples' right to self-determination. This strategic interest of the U.S. government and its determination to obtain and maintain a strategic position in the region had been expressed earlier in 1948 by Secretary of Defence, James Forrestal in a letter written to Secretary of State, Dean Acheson.

These and other related documents prove that the Eritrean people were singled out for a denial to self-determination and independence, despite an impassioned and reasoned appeal on their behalf expressed by a number of minority states led by the U.S.S.R. As mentioned already, the federation between Ethiopia and Eritrea came into force in September 1952, and a few months later a 25 year treaty was signed in May 23, 1953 between Ethiopia and the U.S., under which the U.S. obtained naval and air facilities and control of the communications base in Asmara, the Eritrean capital. The treaty formally embarked America on a dominant role for a quarter century, in which Ethiopia was the linch-pin of U.S. policy. This dominance, which came to an end with the demise of Emperor Haile Selassie's regime, was exercised through the use of military and economic aid and an expanding cultural presence which reinforced the strategic (military) imperative.

Until the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie, Ethiopia was America's consistent and trusted ally in Africa, and received the largest military assistance in the continent. The principal instrument of U.S. policy was military and throughout the 1950s the military segment of U.S. assistance to Ethiopia far outweighed other forms of assistance. The British military mission which had been engaged in training the Ethiopian army since 1942 withdrew in 1952 on the eve of the U.S.-Ethiopian treaty.

The U.S.-Ethiopian had two major components. One component concerned supply of equipment and training of Ethiopian forces by the U.S. In the quarter century between 1953 and 1977 Ethiopia received some \$ 279 million in military aid. Between 1953 and 1975, 3552 Ethiopian military personnel were trained in the USA. The second component concerned what came to be known as the Kagnev Communications Center



in Asmara, and naval and air facilities. The Kagnaw Communications Center was an important part of a world-wide U.S. communications system stretching from the USA in Arlington, Virginia, through U.S. bases in Morocco, Asmara and as far as the Phillipines. Kagnaw was a critical "listening post" for U.S. intelligence gathering in Africa, the Middle East and the Indian Ocean. And it played vital roles during the Korean war and the earlier phase of the Vietnam war.

With the strategic factor as the center-piece of U.S. interests, which claimed the bulk of U.S. aid resources to Ethiopia, it must also be remembered that an increasing amount of economic aid was given especially after the mid 1950s. Between 1953 and 1977, Ethiopia received over \$ 350 million in economic aid. Economic aid gradually outstripped military aid. The key concept to explain this aid is 'modernization' which implied a multi-dimensional process of change embracing administrative reform, land reform, law reform and the progressive opening up of the country to market forces, which would then be expected to do the rest of the work in the American historical agenda.

By contrast there was a progressive scaling down of military aid. Kagnaw's importance declined with the development of satellite communications technology, and the decision of the U.S. to construct a major new base on the island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. An important component in Diego Garcia is communications equipment. By 1976, the U.S. personnel at Kagnaw had been reduced to a mere thirty five from a peak (in 1971) of 3000.

American military and economic aid to Ethiopia, though significant by African standards, did not bring about any significant changes in the country. There are at least two reasons for this failure. The first which has already been

mentioned is that priority was given to military/strategic considerations, which was hardly conducive to the development of the productive resources, even in the best of times. The second reason has to do with the nature of the Ethiopian society. It was a semi-feudal society in which all crucial decision-making was centered around the emperor and his hand-picked ministers and governors, until the abortive coup d'etat of 1960. Attempted by the imperial body guard, no one, including aid donors could insist on any meaningful change, or attach terms and conditions to aid, that might remotely suggest a derogation of imperial power or dignity.

The U.S. ambassador to Ethiopia in the post-abortive coup years, Edward Korry has expressed the American dilemma in his testimony to the Sub-committee in African Affairs of the U.S. Senate in 1976, as follows:

"The U.S. interest in Ethiopia was simple then for Washington. The government defined it as 'the unhampered use of Kagnaw Station'. The facility was deemed then to be strategically vital to the United States ... the reports on the use of our military aid to Ethiopia were depressing ... and if the Emperor wanted it (i.e. Kagnaw rent money) in solid gold cadillac that was his term and he could have it that way."

Although Korry's remarks were made in reference to the Kagnaw "rent money" they express a dilemma symptomatic of the U.S. - Ethiopia relations in the emperor's regime. The emperor was at the same time quite immune to the importance of the emerging ideology of 'modernization', which he would support only if it benefited him and his supportive class which I have called a feudo-bourgeoisie. He was also quite adept at making cosmetic change in legal and institutional terms as witness the codification of laws based on European codes and the establishment of a



House of Parliament which he controlled.

The U.S. nevertheless made some attempts to encourage the emperor's government to introduce reforms. The coincidence of the events of the abortive coup and its aftermath with the election of John F. Kennedy to the presidency of the U.S. lent these attempts a sense of urgency. For a time, it seemed as though there might be some reform and to that end, Kennedy's appointee as ambassador to Ethiopia, Edward Korry, indicated that the U.S. would place greater reliance on its diplomatic resources.

Korry was an energetic and capable ambassador committed to 'modernization' and willing to exert energy more aggressively than any of his predecessors. He represented the youth and vigor of Kennedy's 'New Frontier' spirit. He developed several devices by which he sought to induce change in Ethiopia. These devices were centered on an assiduous cultivation of personal relationships with most of the young government bureaucrats in the cabinet and sub-cabinet levels. He organized seminars on a range of issues, unofficially hosting a revolving batch of target groups, calling it Awassa I and Awassa II etc. At the same time he maintained an active official dialogue with the emperor and his prime minister, through frequent audiences.

Meanwhile, outside the quiet and calm atmosphere of Korry's 'development diplomacy', the clamor for change was taking more and more radical tones. The abortive coup of December 1960 had burst the dam of immemorial political calm and introduced new levels of awareness, giving rise to organized labour union and student resistance. Protest demonstrations, strikes and pamphleteering became the order of the day. Korry, and with him the U.S. was caught in the firing line of this growing protest movement and repressive government action, even as American labor organizations, in co-

operation with the I.C.F.T.U. were working hard to gain and maintain an influence in the newly formed Confederation of Ethiopian Labor Unions (CELU).

The overall effect of these developments was to sow seeds of suspicions of U.S. intentions on the part of the emperor and some of his ministers. By the late 1960s the protest movement had become the principal focus of public debate involving workers, students and parents alike. Meanwhile the Eritrean liberation movement had continued to grow, inflicting some damage to the emperor's prestige and the country's economy.

U.S. policy was thus approaching the crossroads - one leading to continue support of its ally, the other distancing itself from his policies. The U.S. chose to follow both courses. In the face of a challenge of an imperial political system with growing tension and emergent new social forces, the U.S. sought to identify and control the forces of change and at the same time help defend the imperial regime against 'communist' manipulation.

The U.S. itself was facing its own domestic turmoil over the war in Vietnam. Some of that spilled over in Ethiopia, when American peace corps volunteers, who were sent to fulfill an American foreign policy objective by helping a friendly government particularly in the field of education, were frequently aligned in active sympathy with the aspirations of the new social forces. Many of them found helping student protests were expelled in 48 hours, thus marking the beginning of a strained U.S.-Ethiopian relation.

The U.S. tried to encourage reforms, in the hope that this would stem the tide of revolutionary upheaval. Ambassador Korry, the architect of these efforts left in 1967, a much disappointed man. The Swedes, on their part were insistent on land reform as a condition of SIDA aid to



some promising, if controversial, development projects. All of this came to naught in a socio-political order that felt threatened by any daring reforms that might weaken its monopoly of power.

The change of American attitude towards the emperor's regime clearly emerged on the occasion of the emperor's last visit to Washington in May 1973. He left Washington disappointed. His requests for new jets and M-60 tanks were refused. American commitment to Ethiopia's prime pre-occupation - territorial integrity was nonetheless still evident. An agreement signed in 1960 stressed this, and the growth of the Somali army, with the assistance of Soviet training and equipment, and the persistence of the Eritrean armed struggle underscored the importance of that agreement to Ethiopia. The advent of Soviet presence in Somalia reinforced American commitment to anti-communist Ethiopia.

Ethiopia had demonstrated its faithfulness as an American ally by sending troops to Korea in the early 1950s, then to Congo (Zaire) in the early 1960s, as part of the U.N. peace-keeping operation, and in 1967 to help Mobutu meet the challenge of a rebellion. Above all, from the viewpoint of a critical lobby in American politics and U.S. strategic interest in the Middle East, Ethiopia was a steadfast ally of Israel. Israeli forces trained and advised counter-insurgency forces to fight the Eritrean liberation fighters. The U.S. also sent some 100 counter-insurgency advisers in 1966.

From the 1972/1973 crisis caused by famine onwards the U.S. vacillated, but seemed to lean towards disassociating itself from a regime that was doomed to fail. The 'famine' of 1972/1973 which the emperor's regime could have anticipated and provided measures to alleviate its effects, un-

leashed popular (Ethiopian) and international wrath, that the U.S. could no longer afford to be too closely associated with the regime. Then in October 1973 after the 'Yom Kippur' war, Ethiopia joined the OAU main stream in breaking off diplomatic relations with its ally Israel. America thus after over two decades of close alliance with the emperor's regime, decided to take events run their course.

As it turned out unexpected events happened, whose quick succession and line of march did not accord with American hopes or expectations. The shadowy coordinating committee which manipulated the revolution of the spring of 1974, eventually emerged with an agenda that took America by surprise. The military group known as the Dergue was nevertheless very much dependent on American good will and help particularly in the military arena. The liberation movements in Eritrea and the Ogaden redoubled their efforts, and new movements sprouted which threatened the existence of the Dergue. Of all these forces the Eritrean guerillas presented the most serious threat; by early 1975 they had started launching attacks in the area around Asmara. The Ethiopian army was almost entirely dependent on U.S. supplies. Did the U.S. have a military interest in Ethiopia in 1975? The course of events of the following two years seems to suggest a negative answer. Yet, economically the U.S. was an important partner. In 1974 alone the U.S. provided \$ 36.4 million worth of aid out of a total of \$ 220 million. And the U.S. took most of Ethiopia's export, coffee.

The decision of the U.S., until February 1977, was to continue to aid Ethiopia's new regime. Three strategic reasons have been advanced as bases for this decision:



1. If the U.S. cut off aid, Eritrea would become independent, aligned to the Arab states what would give the Arab states control over both sides of the strategic Bab-al-Mandab. That would deny Israeli tankers and other vessels access to the Indian Ocean.
2. If Eritrea became independent, for lack of U.S. assistance, it would affect U.S. credibility in the rest of Africa.
3. Since Somalia was under Soviet dominance, and armed by the Soviet Union, the U.S. should back Ethiopia as a 'regional counter weight' and as guarantee of U.S. credibility.

After earlier hesitation in the first year, U.S. aid was authorized by Kissinger in February 1975, following renewed attack by Eritrean guerilla in the Asmara region. Kissinger, having discovered Africa, via Angola, seems to have insisted that as long as the Dergue retained some pro-Western orientation it should be backed, in view of the Soviet and Cuban presence in Angola. U.S. policy at that time was expressed by Assistant Secretary of State, William Schaefe who told a Congressional Committee in August 1976:

"We believe we would incur much criticism from our friends in Africa and elsewhere were we to withdraw support from Ethiopian Government during this time of difficulty - such a move would also be attributed to distaste for Ethiopia's brand socialism ... Whether we can continue this degree of co-operation with Ethiopia will depend largely on the course of finally taken by the new revolutionary regime which assumed power in 1974. It has deliberately decided to alter Ethiopia's previous reliance on the West, and has consequently strengthened its relations with the Socialist countries. To the extent that this does not lead to

systematic opposition to the United States, it still leaves ample opportunity for continued cooperation, particularly as we are sympathetic to many of the new regime's ambitions to improve the living conditions of its people. But the situation is sufficiently volatile to bear close watching."

This is, on the face of it, a level-headed Palmerstonian view. It was made by an appointee of a Republican Administration on the face of some opposition to continued aid to the new regime. Such opposition came from rightists for traditional anti-Soviet reasons, and from liberals who condemned the new regime repression in Eritrea and within Ethiopia.

#### A Changing U.S. Policy: 1977 to the Present

In February 1977, Mengistu Haile Mariam emerged on the ladder of the Dergue, having eliminated his rivals in a palace shoot out which he had carefully staged. There was widespread repression of opposition forces in the urban areas and of civilian populations in areas where armed struggle was being waged notably Eritrea and Ogaden. The urban repression and massacre scores of thousands of people was baptized Red Terror by the regime itself. In these circumstances, the Carter Administration which had placed human rights at the center of its foreign policy, announced that it would suspend aid to the regime. The Dergue reacted on April 23, 1977 by ordering the closure of U.S. installations, with the exception of the embassy and the AID office. Some 300 U.S. personnel left Ethiopia.

On April 28, 1977 the Carter Administration halted arms deliveries to Ethiopia. More than \$ 100 million worth of previously approved supplies were affected. Soon after that the U.S. announced that it would sell arms to Somalia



and Sudan after Sudan expelled some 90 Soviet military advisers on May 18, 1977. Somalia was to be involved in a war in the Ogaden beginning with summer of 1977, and earlier in January of that year, President Numeiry of Sudan had announced his support for the Eritrean liberation struggle in the strongest terms. This came six months after the Dergue in collusion with Qadafi of Libya had attempted to overthrow Numeiry. The Eritrean army of liberation on its part had scored spectacular victories over the Dergue army and by the end of the summer of 1977 had captured Keren and Decameri, the two largest cities after Asmara. Quick Eritrean victory appeared certain.

Reviewing U.S. policy in light of these interrelated set of circumstances, it would be fair to state that human rights violation was only one, and not necessarily the most important factor which actuated the decision to suspend arms delivery to Ethiopia. The break with the past in U.S. policy, switching from supporting Ethiopia to supporting Somalia and Sudan must be seen in the context of the new political and military development in the region which altered the strategic balance. One factor of primary concern to U.S. policy is the Saudi connection. The Saudi's and their allies in the Gulf region had long sought to wean Somalia out of the Soviet embrace and back to the Islamic fold. The emerging Soviet-Ethiopian alliance revived this Saudi quest, and the Dergue's expulsion of U.S. personnel and closure of U.S. facilities must have provided the Saudis with an ace to prompt U.S. support in that direction.

In considering the new U.S.-Somali alliance and its global as well as regional implications it is absolutely crucial to understand the nature and source of Somali claims and interests. First a brief survey of past U.S.-Somali

relations.

As already noted, the 'Ogaden question' is one of the intractable problems in the regional conflict, and one of the most persistent in African politics. U.S. policy on the 'Ogaden question' has always been clearly on the side of Ethiopia. In the early 1960s, Somalia's requests for military assistance were turned down by the United States and its Western allies, on the ground that Somali military strength would jeopardize the security of Ethiopia, a trusted ally. After the creation of the OAU, and especially after the adoption of the Cairo Resolution of 1964, accepting colonial boundaries, U.S. policy on this and related questions has been premised on the inviolability of the colonial boundaries.

It will be helpful to separate the three issues involved in the so-called 'Ogaden question'. First there is the issue of border dispute between two sovereign states, concerning boundaries left undemarkated between Ethiopia and Italy. Second there is Somalia's claim on 'Western Somalia' which includes the Ogaden, the Haud and parts of Bale. Third there is the issue of the right of the Somali population of these territories to self-determination. U.S. policy has rejected the WSLF as an extension of Somali territorial claims. This leaves the border dispute whose amicable resolution the United States has favored.

A question of obvious interest is whether the altered alignment of forces and the strategic imperative of U.S. global interests will cause a change of policy on the local, national issues. At this point we need to summarize the salient points concerning these national Somali forces.

The Somali Democratic Republic (Somalia) was formed with the voluntary union in 1960 of the former British and Italian



Somalilands. Somalia is undeniably one of Africa's few authentic 'nation-states' in that its people share a common history, culture and religion (Islam) and speak a common language.

At the time of Somalia's birth (or rebirth, as Somalis would argue) large segments of Somali populations inhabited the Haud, Ogaden and Bale provinces (all wrongly referred to as the Ogaden) as well as the Northern Frontier District of Kenya and Djibouti. This demographic fact together with the following historical and political facts explain the persistence of the so-called 'Ogaden question' which involves an unending drama of conflict:

1. A history of resistance by the Somali people, especially those of the Ogaden against alien occupiers. In this respect, the story of Mohammed Abdille Hassan (the 'Mad Mullah') must be noted. He fought Ethiopian, British and Italian forces in the Ogaden for 20 years until his death in 1920. He is a Somali national hero and is regarded as the father of modern Somali nationalism.
2. The promise by one of the former colonial powers (i.e. Britain) to create a pan-Somali state embracing present day Somalia and large segments of the Haud, Ogaden and the NFD. This promise was given by the Labour government after the Second World War, but was vitiated as a result of Emperor Haile Selassie's diplomacy conducted with American assistance.
3. The growth of 'irredentist' movements in these provinces outside Somalia, inspired by the historical and political facts noted in 1 and 2 above. The earlier history of this irredentist movement indicates a desire to unite with Somalia, at the time when Somalia was administered as a U.N. trust territory between 1950 and 1960.

4. The transformation of the irredentist movement to a liberation movement (WSLF), whose dominant wing demanded not an automatic union with Somalia, but the right to self-determination to decide whether to remain within Ethiopia with a measure of autonomy, to join with Somalia or to become an independent state.
5. The history of repression by Ethiopian occupying forces in the Ogaden, and the restriction imposed by Ethiopia as the movements of the Somali nomadic herdsman, including restriction or denial of grazing and/or watering rights, particularly in the Haud. The socio-economic and ecological implications of this history of restriction which caused overgrazing and desertification are important conditions for the larger conflict which assumed a political dimension.

Somalia's frustration in the diplomatic field both in the OAU and elsewhere, viewed in the context of the above summarized historical facts, could only have led to war - a war of resistance and attrition. In this sense the development of the WSLF is an extension of Somali policy. Several wars have been fought between Ethiopia and Somalia. The first war was in 1960, at the time of the abortive coup attempted against Emperor Haile Selassie in December 1960. The small Somali army was easily defeated, largely because of Ethiopia's monopoly of an air force. The second war was fought in 1964, again with Somali defeat. It was after that defeat that Somalia redoubled its efforts to forge an alliance with the Soviet Union. Starting in 1965, Somali air force and army cadets were sent to the Soviet Union. This continued for a number of years until Somalia built up a well trained army of about 10,000 by 1969, when the present regime of Siyad Barre overthrew the civilian



regime and seized power. The built-up continued under Siyad and stood at 22,000 by 1976. This included six tank battalions and nine mechanized infantry battalions.

A Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Soviet Union was signed in November 1974, and then was a significant Soviet presence at all levels of the Somali army and even the civilian government. At the time of the Somali invasion of the Ogaden in June/July 1977, then Somalia had a well trained and well equipped army. At the same time the army was constrained by the presence at critical levels of a large number of Soviet personnel, who, when the shift of alliance went into effect, would be an impediment. Hence their expulsion.

#### The 1977-1978 War

A chronology of events leading up to the involvement of regular Somali troops in the war shows international linkages and developments in the wake of Somali defeat. The starting point of the chronology is the closure of U.S. facilities in Ethiopia (April 23, 1977) and the suspension of U.S. arms delivery to Ethiopia (April 28, 1977). But a couple of earlier events affecting other countries in the region should be noted. One is the mutual defence pact signed between Egypt and Sudan (July 15, 1976), following the abortive coup attempted against Numeiry with the alleged collusion of Libya and Ethiopia. The other was an agreement reached between Kenya and the United States on the supply of twelve F-5 jets.

The realignment of forces began to emerge rapidly in early May when Mengistu concluded a five day visit with Soviet Union signing a joint declaration calling for friendly relations between Ethiopia and the Soviet Union (May 8,

1977). Ten days later the Sudan expelled all of the 90 of the Soviet military advisors. In June, WSLF forces made significant advances with Ogaden, and by the end of July a major offensive involving regular Somali forces was under way.

To the shock of the Somalis, the United States announced in September 1977 that it would not send arms to Somalia because of Somalia's invasion of the Ogaden. The Soviet Union on the other hand announced through its ambassador in Addis Ababa total support for Ethiopia in the war with Somalia. Cuba did the same. Then on November 13, Somalia broke the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation and ordered all Soviet advisers out of the country, demanding a reduction in the level of Soviet embassy staff. Somalia also broke diplomatic relations with Cuba.

Meanwhile in the Ogaden war front Somalia's armed forces were suffering defeat at the hand of newly armed Ethiopian troops advised by Soviet officers and with the help of some 12,000 Cuban troops. By March 9, 1978, the Somali government had decided to withdraw its troops from the Ogaden, and have WSLF to continue its guerilla war, as before. U.S. pre-occupation then was to avoid an Ethiopian invasion of Somalia. Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, warned on February 11, 1978 that the United States may send arms to Somalia, if the fighting spills over into Somalia. Vance renewed an earlier appeal for a withdrawal of Somali forces from the Ogaden and of Soviet and Cuban forces from Ethiopia. This appeal reflects U.S. fears that the Siyad regime might be overthrown and replaced by one favorable to the Soviet Union. Evidently enjoying the fruits of victory, and as if he suspected U.S. fears, Mengistu charged, three days later (February 14) that the United States was supplying arms to Somalia through Iran,



Pakistan, Spain and Saudi Arabia. The United States denied this charge and a few days later sent a special mission to Mengistu seeking assurances from Mengistu that Ethiopian forces would not invade Somalia.

U.S. failure to meet Somali expectations of arms in the face of its army's humiliating defeat left Siyad Barre's regime in a quandry. His Arab backers, principally Saudi Arabia could only come up with money but that was no match to enormous Soviet weaponry and Cuban forces. Survival as a regime became his most critical area of concern. The Ogaden defeat, might have been expected to leave him politically so weakened that he might be easily overthrown. To surprise of friends and foes alike he not only survived but consolidated his power.

All observers agree that all the remarkable achievements in development made in some six years (1969 - 1975) were in question. His development programs came to a halt, in part due to new exigencies that required the diversion of resources to help meet a large influx of refugees from the Ogaden and in part due to mismanagement and political instability and misallocation of vast resources towards internal security. Charges of human rights violations were consistently made and still are.

#### A re-aligned U.S. Strategy

U.S. fears of a Soviet 'takeover' of both Ethiopia and Somalia which dominated policy debate after the Somali defeat on the Ogaden were allayed with the survival of the Siyad regime and with the persistence of the WSLF, albeit in much reduced force. But the United States seems to have taken precautionary measures in the meantime. Around the time when a special mission was sent to Addis

Ababa in February 1978, the U.S. Defence Department announced that a four ship task force, headed by a guided missile cruiser, had entered the Indian Ocean. Two other naval vessels were reported in the Red Sea / Gulf of Aden area and one in the Persian Gulf. And on March 16, 1978, the White House announced that the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Richard Moose, had been sent to Somalia to review the Somali government's withdrawal from the Ogaden and to discuss the possible supply of defensive weapons. The way was being cleared for the formalization of the U.S.-Somali alliance based on an acceptance of the fait accompli of Soviet strategic gain in Ethiopia. This was made evident when in November 20, 1978, Ethiopia and the Soviet Union signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation for twenty years, involving Soviet military support for Ethiopia.

This happened at a time when the Ethiopian military government had launched an offensive in the Ogaden, setting off a new wave of refugees entering Somalia. The offensive in Eritrea was also under way to recapture ground lost to Eritrean guerilla forces. Soviet backing of Ethiopian military successes were also overspilling in other parts of the region. The Foreign Minister of the new government of Djibouti appealed to Arab countries, on April 5, 1979, requesting for troops to help Djibouti defend itself against an Ethiopian plot to overthrow the government. A few weeks later the United States sent an aircraft carrier group into the Indian Ocean to increase "show of flag" operations to stress U.S. interest in the region. And such projection of power continued in different forms throughout 1979 and early 1980.



### U.S. - Somali Agreement

This agreement stipulated that the United States would have access to Somali ports and airfields. Somalia would obtain financial and military assistance amounting to \$ 20 million in military sales credits in fiscal year 1980 and another \$ 20 million in fiscal year 1981, on addition to \$ 5 million in budgetary support in fiscal year 1981.

Initial congressional opposition to the agreement was overcome, and upon obtaining a written assurance that the U.S. supplied weapon would not be used in the Ogaden, the U.S. Defence Department proposed the sale of \$ 42 million worth of defensive military equipment to Somalia. Moreover, the navy proposed to spend \$ 24 million in Somalia for fiscal year 1982 for port and airfields expansion, and \$ 400,000 for refurbishing the Berbera airfield. And some 250 U.S. military personnel were in Somalia as an integral part of the November/December 'Operation Bright Star' military maneuver in the Middle East.

In fiscal year 1982, the United States was expected to provide \$ 20 million in foreign military sales credits for Somalia, \$ 10 million as a military assistance grant, \$ 20 million under the Economic Support Fund, \$ 16.2 million in development assistance, and \$ 25 million in food aid. The U.S. Congress approved an additional \$ 5 million for Somalia in fiscal year 1982 under the supplemental appropriations bill (P.L. 97-257; legislation section). The Reagan Administration's fiscal year 1983 foreign aid proposal called for a \$ 1 million drop in economic assistance and a \$ 10 million increase in security assistance.

### Silent U.S. - Soviet Strategic Struggle

As Tom Farer has observed, "when the Soviets were ensconced

in Somalia, NATO governments tended to associate their presence there primarily with the sea-borne threats to Western interests in the Indian Ocean and its littoral. Without diluting that concern, the Soviet shift into Ethiopia has uncovered additional and more intensely threatening vistas". The advent of the Reagan Administration has reinforced this fear enthroneing the 'globalist' perspective referred to above.

The scale and intensity of Soviet military presence in Ethiopia and the role of Soviet arms and men in both Ogaden, Eritrea and Tigray certainly demonstrates their determination to keep the Mengistu regime in power. To some observers this massive presence and critical role is evidence of a sinister strategy to shatter pro-Western governments throughout the region, and thus secure essential materials. Numeiry's perennial vulnerability to an externally inspired and supported coup is perhaps the most readily available example of a pro-Western government in danger of such presumed plans. Another view discounts such fears as exaggerated, and argues the extent of Soviet role in Ethiopia is a function of a Soviet strategy, interested in the region, but anxious not to suffer another failure and expulsion.

One party's misfortune is another's opportunity. The United States and its Western allies would dearly love to see the Soviets bogged down in a quagmire Vietnam style. And Eritrea might provide such an opportunity. In point of fact no Western aid has been for the coming to the Eritrean to cause that to happen, beyond limited humanitarian aid given by some Scandinavian countries and private charitable agencies. It is not unreasonable to assume that the United States still regard Ethiopia as retrievable from the Soviet dominance for several reasons:



1. Ethiopia has real and symbolic political significance in Africa. To be on the side of Ethiopia on the "question of nationalities" and the inviolability of the colonial frontiers is to be on the side of "the angels" in African politics.
2. Ethiopia has much larger resources than Somalia, and with Eritrea, is still of great strategic importance.
3. There are within Ethiopia social and political forces that favor association with the West - for political, cultural and economic reasons.
4. Despite the Dergue's rhetoric the national sentiments of the majority of its members, far outweigh its "proletarian internationalism".
5. Economic and financial problems caused by the wars in Eritrea, Tigray and elsewhere are not matched by any progress in the Soviet model of 'non-capitalist' development imposed on unwilling population. Failure in this field may be the last straw that could break the Soviet camel's back.
6. Finally failure to win the war in Eritrea, Tigray and elsewhere could hurt the Soviet as much as the Dergue. Desertions from and recriminations within the Ethiopian army have further lowered the moral in addition to defeats by the EPLF and TPLF.

These reasons impel U.S. vigilance for any signs of a crack in the Soviet-Ethiopian alliance. The United States has not shown any eagerness to impose any restrictions on economic aid given to Ethiopia, particularly from multilateral donors like the World Bank and the IMF. This should be contrasted to U.S. intransigence on World Bank aid to Vietnam.

At the same time the United States has strengthened Somali

defence capability against attack by Ethiopian and Ethiopian-supported dissident Somali forces. Somali President Siyad Barre announced on August 1982, that more U.S. military aid had arrived in Somalia in response to Ethiopian attacks and that more U.S. aid was on its way. Mengistu on his part denounced U.S. aid to Somalia, in a speech on the eighth anniversary of the emperor's overthrow. The signing of a tri-partite agreement between Ethiopia, Libya and PDRY (South Yemen) provided Mengistu with much needed financial assistance to conduct his war.

The pattern of charges and counter-charges between leaders of Somalia and Sudan on the one hand and Ethiopia and Libya on the other reflect the silent U.S.-Soviet struggle for strategic dominance or for an edge in the strategic balance. In that struggle, the Dahlak archipelago off the Eritrean coast, once a center of Israeli presence has now changed hands to the Soviets. The Ethiopian government has denied reports that the Soviet Union has been granted a base in the Dahlak islands. The Ethiopians denounced U.S. "aggression intentions against the Ethiopian revolution" citing the combined maneuver of U.S., Egyptian, Sudanese, Somali and Omani forces, known as "Operation Bright Star". U.S. presence in Somalia, must be seen in the larger context of its presence in the Indian Ocean at Diego Garcia, in Mombasa (Kenya) and in Oman with access to naval, air and land based facilities. France's similar facilities in Djibouti is a factor of the strategic equation between NATO and Warsaw pact power blocks.

The dilemma facing U.S. policy makers who desire Ethiopia's retrieval, is that military maneuvers organized to strengthen or to calm their allies in the region would have the effect of deepening Ethiopian and Libyan dependence on Soviet support.



#### IV. Summary and Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion the following two sets of conclusions may be drawn with respect to:

- the foreign policy of the United States to the Horn of Africa;
- the conflict in the Horn.

#### U.S. Foreign Policy

First, and foremost, the Horn of Africa remains to be of great strategic importance to the United States and its Western allies. Its importance has not diminished despite the changed value of the Kagnew base in Asmara, caused by the development of satellite communications technology, and the establishment of U.S. base at Diego Garcia. Second, U.S. policy in the Horn should be seen in the larger context of U.S. policy in Africa. There has been a dramatic shift in U.S.-Africa policy since 1975, first after the Soviet/Cuban intervention in Angola and then in Ethiopia. These interventions were interpreted as reflecting an aggressive Soviet challenge to the West's traditional preserve, including its access to and control of vital strategic materials and sea routes. Based on such an interpretation, the Reagan Administration has reacted aggressively, abandoning political niceties represented in the 'regionalist' perspective. Carter had insisted (even after Iran and Afghanistan) that U.S. policy should be based "on the premise that African nations seek international alignments in order to further their own needs: (1) to self-determination, and an end to racial discrimination and white minority rule, and (2) maintenance of territorial integrity, and (3) progress in economic development." (Interview in Africa Report, July/August 1980). The Reagan policy

has rejected that premise.

Reagan's policy shift is indicated by the comparatively higher military aid given to Sudan, Somalia and Kenya, despite Chester Croker's recent lamentation about "congressionally imposed constraints" at the level of military aid to Africa. Between the three of them received 70% of military sales credit to Africa in 1981/1982, with Sudan receiving \$ 100 million, the highest in Africa, next to Egypt. The military activities of the U.S. in the area including 'Operation Bright Star' and the recent maneuver against Libya, raise some grave questions about the possibility that the U.S. might involve the region in a larger conflict. However, the risk of negative international and domestic repercussion may constrain a more adventurous U.S. policy. Vietnam is too fresh in peoples' memory. Third, recent U.S. policy has been a reactive one, as indicated above, launched in response to real or perceived Soviet expansion. Now, Soviet involvement in Africa has been preceded or accompanied by some momentous changes in some African countries. A strategically motivated U.S. policy, that neglects such changes, can only be interpreted by Africans as opposition to such changes, and even in some cases as a U.S. intention to reverse some of the changes. The southern Africa situation is a prime example of the U.S. dilemma in that respect. In the Horn of Africa the dilemma of U.S. policy is made more acute by the range and complexity of the issues, and the changing balance of forces involved in the conflict. Between support for a new ally (Somalia) and adherence to OAU principles of the inviolate status of borders, the U.S. has not been any more sensitive than the Soviet Union to the right of people to self-determination. On the other hand, even though no more sensitive on that issue, the Soviets have been more decisive in



their support of an ally. Perhaps the recent maneuver against Libya shows U.S. desire to send a signal of firmness and loyalty to an ally (Sudan).

The asymmetry in U.S.-Soviet attitudes to conflict and the manner and scale of their operations do not necessarily reflect a moral asymmetry. It is a function of the difference in their respective political systems and historical legacies, including their comparative advantages in Africa. This is a crucial factor and will continue to influence their respective policies in the foreseeable future.

#### The Conflict in the Horn

The conflict in the Horn of Africa, which has been internationalized and complicated, has four main elements:

- the reality of the Ethiopian empire;
- the national question which is the antithesis of the imperial question;
- the Eritrean war of liberation and the colonial question which it raises;
- the Ethiopian - Somali conflict, stemming from the 'Ogaden question'.

Contrary to some earlier expectations and repeated demands, the successors of Emperor Haile Selassie have not shown any principled commitment to any new basis of consent, equality and self-determination of peoples. Failure to respond to peaceful demands has led to the worsening of the crisis. The Dergue is determined to hold on to power, and the national liberation movements are determined to fight on. Thus, war has become, once again, the final binding arbitrator. And an empire may be transformed by force of arms, or it may disintegrate.

The Eritrean struggle, which is part of the larger democratic, national struggle, is also a colonial struggle. Colonial history has forged a story of Eritrean national consciousness and a socio-economic formation resulting in a territorially defined political entity which was internationally recognized. The OAU may well be faced with a fait accompli of an Eritrean nation making a claim on the strength of a military victory. In addition, Eritrean victory may be accompanied or followed by the success of some or all of the other national struggles. And Somalia may lay a claim once more on the "lost territory". At that point, the demand for a reconstructed Ethiopia may force itself on the OAU and the international community.

Finally, what will be the role of external forces? Arms peddling and manipulation of local conflicts has internationalized and polarized the conflicts, creating client states dependent on big power support. Mohamed Siyad Barre has said, in justifying his alliance with the United States, "there is a Somali proverb: either be a mountain, or lean on a mountain". Well, the mountain has come to Mohamed. On the Ethiopian side, the Dergue has deepened its military dependence on the Soviet Union, without which it cannot survive. And it has failed to impose a military solution to a political problem.

The conclusion from this is irresistible: the Soviets would not be interested in causing a complete Dergue victory - even were that possible - because it would weaken the Dergue's dependence on them. A related conclusion is that the Americans would not be averse to Ethiopian victory in Eritrea for the same reason. This may be a new reason in addition to historic U.S.-Ethiopian ties, why the United States has kept a deafening silence in the face of a genocidal war.



Then there is the Israeli - Arab conflict which spills over in the region's conflict. The tripartite agreement between Ethiopia, Libya and PDRY (South Yemen) is a spin-off of the U.S.-Soviet rivalry, and may come to an end if the recently reported return of the Israelis to Ethiopia to resume their intelligence work for the Dergue (and for the U.S. ?) is confirmed to Libya's satisfaction.

There is now a stalemate, and who benefits, at whose cost in a stalemated situation will not be easy to predict.

For the Soviet Union the military presence in Ethiopia must be transformed to a political presence. Soviet efforts to establish a Moscow style communist party and Mengistu's resistance reveals an unresolved struggle for supremacy. The question of party-building is therefore watched with great interest by all concerned, for different reasons. Meanwhile, an Ethiopian economy in crises is continually veiled out by Western economic and financial aid. This fact seen against the tangled web of cross-cutting alliances shows that the Dergue's Marxist-Leninist rhetoric is not taken at its face value by the West.

The game of power, which has put the people of the region out of the picture, involves acting - reacting as well as patiently waiting for events to produce their own momentum.