The Ogaden war between Ethiopia and Somalia (1977-78) occurred over a 25,000 sq.mile of territory mainly occupied by the Somali tribes. Ogaden territory was a British trusteeship which was ceded to Ethiopia in 1948. After the integration and independence of Somalia in 1960, Somalia laid claim to the land of Ogaden. Since Ethiopia had accepted the majority Somali inhabitation in the Ogaden it rejected the claims of Somalia. Ethiopia stated that like many other states in Africa it was a multi-national state endorsing the boundaries at the time of independence.

Eventually Ogaden emerged as a bone of contention between the two most important states of the Horn of Africa. As a result, for Ethiopia the Ogaden conflict was a secessionist movement while for Somalia it was an expression of its ‘nationalism’, which aimed to integrate the people of Somali origin from Ethiopia and Kenya. Therefore to analyse the heart of the problem i.e. the Ogaden, it is necessary to understand the political dynamics of Ethiopia and Somalia, the two parties in the fray.

Geo-Political realities of Multi-ethnic Ethiopia:

The Central Ethiopian ‘table land’ dominates the landscape of the state. The vast highlands which are 6,000 to 8,000 feet above sea level are thickly populated. In the north-west the plateau gives way to undulating grasslands which stretches into neighbouring Sudan. On the east facing the northern part of Somali Democratic Republic the topography forms the Great Rift Valley before rising to form the Somali
Plateau. In the north, the Rift Valley extends to meet the Red Sea. It comprises of a desert waste land known as the Danakil Depression where the temperature reaches 140 degree F. To the South - South east of the highlands is a bush country which continues into Kenya and Southern Somalia and towards the south west of the table-land are the rich tropical forests.\(^{(4)}\)

The geographical topography of the country influenced the political, economic and social landscape of the Ethiopian society. The 'political heartland' of Ethiopia was centred around the highlands. The political rulers always remained distanced from the other ethnic groups inhabiting the other areas on the periphery of the state. During the Imperial rule of Haile Selassie (1930-1974) an extremely rigid and centralized monarchy ruled over all the ethnic groups of Ethiopia. The monarchy was based on the traditions of the ancient national church. The ruler was assisted in his administration by nobles, an obedient bureaucracy and a huge military. Modernization was acceptable as long as it enhanced the power and prestige of the monarchy. Therefore progress and development was very limited in the 20th century Imperial Ethiopia.\(^{(3)}\)

Economically Ethiopia was one of the poorest countries in the world with a GNP that was ninety dollars in the seventies. It was rated among the twenty most impoverished nations of the world with a daily average calorie intake of less than 1,600. It had a literacy rate of less than 5%.\(^{(6)}\) In Ethiopia the transport and communication network were one of the worst in the world. The country had no roads connecting
the rural areas. People walked more than eight to ten hours to reach a pliable road. The geographical distance combined with political distancing of the people resulted in large starvation deaths while the administration imported grains from outside.\(^8\)

The economic division coincided with the social divisions as well. In the multi-ethnic Ethiopian society the three major ethnic groups were the Amharas, the Tigres and the Gallas or Oromos. These ethnic groups dominated the political institution of the state. The Amhara and the Tigres were of Semitic origin. Both the groups speaking the same language occupied the northern and central highlands. Majority of these groups followed the Coptic Christian faith.

The Gallas were the third major ethnic group. Originally this Hamitic group lived along the Somali coast, but moved into the highlands in the 16th and 17th centuries.\(^8\) They were soon assimilated into the above mentioned social fold and a substantial number of them converted to Christianity and also married into Amhara households. The Gallas joined the military, bureaucracy and the feudal order. The emperor and the ruling elites belonged to Shoa, the central highland province of Ethiopia. They were the Amharic speaking Shoans. The above mentioned ethnic groups of the Ethiopian society formed the upper strata and mainly occupied the highland region.\(^9\)

The lower strata of the Ethiopian society comprised mainly of the Somalis and the Eritreans on the northern and eastern frontiers of
Ethiopia amongst other non-Amharic groups. The Somalis lived in the greater part of the Ogaden region in Eastern Ethiopia sharing their affinity with Somalia. The Eritreans were another important ethnic group. They shared the quest for a common independent homeland based on common ethnicity, past colonial experience under Italy. These ethnic groups did not participate in any of the institutions of central administration or the state and existed as separate groups in the periphery of Ethiopia. Thus the higher strata of the society not only were the most favoured groups occupying the central highlands, but also were the over who enjoyed the best in the state. The masses in the meanwhile lived in the lower lands and participated in the ‘miseries’ of the state.

The peasants as a social group lived under great pressure from the hostile climate poor economic conditions in Ethiopia. Their suffering was further enhanced by the adamant attitude of Haille Selassie who was opposed to any change or development. Nothing penetrated the aura the Emperor had created around himself. Infact all the strata of the Ethiopian society gradually felt the impact of his mis-rule by the mid-sixties of this century. The country’s impoverished economy took another step towards the nadir with rise in oil prices which affected the cities, the industrial workers, civil servants and soldiers. Even the agricultural parts of the highlands were consumed by droughts.

Between 1970 and 1972, because of negligible rainfall, men and animals suffered alike as they moved about in search of livelihood and died of starvation. All information on this critical situation of drought and famine was systematically obliterated by the Imperial Ethiopian
Government. By March 1974, 100,000 peasants had already perished. The ruler refused to acknowledge the crisis and dismissed it as a part of the cycle of survival. Even though Haile Selassie relented to allow international aid he refused to publicise the crisis.

The then existing situation added on to the rule of deliberate indifference and neglect of the past. There were no roads by which food could be brought to the interiors. Even attempts at famine relief were not bereft of corruption. The increasing hardship and travail penetrated deeper into the Ethiopian society till it affected the student community and the armed forces. The armed forces were no longer satisfied with the scarcity of food and meagre income. Dissatisfaction was more pronounced among the military forces that had to continuously face Eritrean and Somalia separatists forces. Moreover the composition of the military did not follow the aristocratic pattern as in the other institutions of the state. With the exception of the top brass of the military its personnel were drawn from all parts of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian armed forces were considered to be the most organised institution of the state.

There was also a growing realisation within the military that its high rating of the past could hardly remain after the rapid modernisation of the Somali army by 1974. Earlier the overthrow of the Somali government by a military junta in 1969 and the beginnings of a social revolution had an impact on the members of the army in Ethiopia.
For instance the Somalia revolution was commanded by the armed forces and their leader, was Major General Said Barre. The twenty five member group that seized power in Somalia comprised of only officers who represented the major clans and were above the rank of captain. The revolution in Ethiopia in 1974 was also led by the military but the group ranged from soldiers to majors. Non-commissioned officers formed the largest group. This was a markedly different composition from the Sudanese and Somalia juntas.\(^{17}\)

The first signs of revolution in Ethiopia were thus witnessed in February 1974 when the military division in Asmara led the mutiny. The mutiny could become a complete revolution and engulf the entire armed forces only in September, 1974. That day all traces of monarchy or any chances of civilian rule were wiped out by the Revolutionary Command when Haile Selassie was deposed. The Revolutionary Command was called the Dergue, an Amhara term.\(^{18}\)

The new political regime was forced to first overcome the diverse challenges such as bringing about unity between the urban and rural areas of the state and institutionalizing a new political order. In substance the Dergue had to face the teething troubles of consolidating its own rule. Simultaneously it had to contain the separatist movements that had erupted in the north in Eritrea, and in the east in the Ogaden.\(^{19}\) The Ogaden crisis worsened by July, 1977 when the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) backed by the regular army of Somalia from across the border occupied key positions in the Ogaden territory.\(^{20}\) The
to understand the political situation in Somalia, particularly the Somalian quest for nationhood.

The Republic of Somalia and its quest for nationhood:

Somalia is an East African littoral state of the Indian Ocean. On its northern coastline is the Gulf of Aden and its eastern and southern coastline is the Indian Ocean. Somalia stretches from the borders of Djibouti in the north to Cape Guardafui in the south. The East African Rift which is a plateau that stretches almost all along its western borders. The total land mass of the Democratic Republic of Somalia is 240,000 sq.miles. The Somali territory is a vast expanse of dry grassland of coarse grass and some thorny bushes or trees. Only the land between the southern rivers such as Juba and Shebelle are cultivable. Some parts in the north west region of the rift along the Ethiopian border are also agriculturally productive. Huge ant hills and thick baobas mark the harsh contours of this land mass.\(^{(22)}\)

Somalia had a population of 3.5 million to 5 million people in the seventies and most of its people were nomads. The nomads who were pastoralists raised sheep, goats and cattle sometimes. The possession of camel was held in high esteem in the Somali society.\(^{(22)}\)

The most outstanding feature of Somalia was its cultural homogeneity that was diametrically opposite to the heterogeneous cultural composition of Ethiopia. The Somalis were distinguished for their common
language, common culture, and common religion which was Islam. Though the cultural, social and linguistic oneness of the people did not reflect in the political behaviour of the Somalis. The people of Somalia in thought and expression lacked political unity. The Somalis were divided into clan-families which were sub divided into clans and clansmen divided into patrilineal-kinship-groups. Individually every Somali was attached to the smaller groups. The spirit of nationalism, nevertheless cut across all clans and sub clan divisions. Culturally uniform the Somalis occupied the entire land mass from Djibouti in the North to the Tana River in Kenya, a total area of 370,000 square miles extending well beyond the political frontiers of Somalia. Somalia’s quest for nationhood stemmed from this common experience.[24]

Amongst the important states of the Horn like Sudan or Ethiopia state nationalism was determined by the ruling elite or the economically and politically dominant social groups. For instance Ethiopian nationalism was determined by the socially dominant Amhara group of the Coptic Christian faith. Somali nationalism was not the desire of any one single dominant group because of its cultural homogeneity.[25] Nationalism was expressed in terms of consolidation of the Somali areas in other states and the realisation of Greater Somalia. Somalia’s quest for nationhood resulted in rivalry with its Coptic Christian neighbour Ethiopia. The aggressive pursuit of national goal received further impetus when the political boundaries of the state remained unchanged from the Berlin conference of 1885 with slight alterations during British and Italian colonisation of Somalia.[26]
On the 26th June, 1960, Somalia became an independent state when British Somaliland and the Italian Trust Territory merged to form the Somalia Democratic Republic. For the average Somali this was only one step towards achieving full independence. The newly independent state immediately launched its programme of achieving full nationhood. After 1960, Radio Mogadishu often gave the call to arm for the liberation of the Ogaden and other unredeemed Somaliland. In 1963 when the liberation groups, namely the Nasser Allah launched their rebellion against Ethiopia, the new government of Somalia extended its support to it. The rebellion could not gain any momentum despite support from Somalia because of the superiority of the Ethiopian military. The rebellion was therefore restricted to isolated clashes in the Ogaden territory. According to John Markakis the 1963 rebellion was restricted to the pastoralists and was unable to create self sustaining political base for a protracted struggle. The nationalist movement in the Ogaden remained entirely dependent on the Somali state, though it was not an adjunct of the Somali government at this stage. Nevertheless in the words of Somalia’s first President Adam Abdullahi Osman, “No politician in Somalia can suspend his preoccupation with the problem of unification.”

The new government of Somalia adopted the goal of national unity without concieving or implementing a minimum policy of growth and development for the state. Economically the past colonial pattern continued even after independence. The economic pattern could not meet the basic needs of the country’s population. The Government revenues were dependent on the export of bananas and cattle which
was also reduced later.\textsuperscript{30} The country was naturally poor. It was starved of natural resources, lacked minimum education, health, nutrition, technology, plant or equipment. Therefore independent Somalia emerged as a state dependent on foreign aid for its survival.

Among the foremost donors to the new Government since independence were Britain and Italy with an amount of 1.5 million pounds sterling and 3 million pounds sterling respectively. The donated amount included monetary support, technical knowledge and also projects. Apart from Britain and Italy there were other donors such as the U.S.A., West Germany, the U.S.S.R., Czechoslovakia, China, the UAE, the UNDP and other U.N. agencies. In addition to aid Somalia also received development proposals from these sources.\textsuperscript{31}

However, the new government which lacked any kind of planning or a proper administrative set up was hardly in a position to take the best advantage of the foreign aid that was offered. For instance, the bureaucracy was small in number. It was trained partly by the British (in the north) and partly by the Italians (in the south). They operated at different levels of efficiency, though Italian influence dominated. Mogadishu the capital city was located in Southern Somalia and it was under Italian control before independence. A languid administration in addition to the existing poverty had 80% of Somalia's population struggling for survival.\textsuperscript{32}
The government that assumed power in Somalia continued to administer the state almost, like the pre-colonial times. There was no governmental participation or involvement in the country's clan dominated society at the rural or urban levels. This was because the survival of the government was dependent more on balancing representation of a clan influenced Somali society. It explained the lack of coerciveness of the government authority or its determination to implement any policies of social transformation. To the political observers Somalia presented an image of a real democratic society in comparison to the other African states. There was total freedom of speech and expression at all levels, from the National Assembly to the roadside coffee houses. In reality this democracy was peculiar to Somalia alone.

As mentioned earlier, if nationalism bound the Somalis into one, in internal politics, kinship and clan loyalty fragmented the state and society. In the pre-colonial times the expression of clan loyalty remained limited in scope. In the post-independence era elections, employment, new projects and development witnessed the role of the clan families at its highest involvement. At higher levels of political position like ministerial or cabinet ranks, there were enough vacancies to give representations to the major clans and clan families.

This made the nature of politics more ethnic and made the state an unstable one. Ethnic pressure disallowed the representative of the people to govern the state with a will of its own or with an aim to fulfil the promises and programmes of the elections. Traditional beliefs of
the different clans continued to dominate the politics in Somalia even after independence. Political power was shared between the more powerful clans of society.

Potentially capable candidates were thwarted in their attempts to work for the progress and development of the state. The candidates personal qualities held no significance faced with the upper hand of the elders of the clans and clan families. Therefore Somalia did not have a government which could stabilise the internal politics of the state and work towards modernization. Democratic institutions in Somalia were affected by clan divisions. This prevented any social transformation or similar changes in Somalia. It nevertheless created an environment of stability as long as major groups received their share of goods. As time passed lack of development, industry and commerce, affected Somalia. Employment opportunities for the new educated Somalis did not exist while the government jobs which were considered to be prestigious were few.\(^{35}\)

Political tensions now added up in a state which had remained in a backward condition close to a decade after independence. The new graduates who had joined the civil services, the military and police, and the students felt a growing sense of frustration. The poverty stricken state was further impoverished and Somalia had barely taken a step towards progress. It had fallen further backward compared to its counterparts in Africa. As the domestic condition worsened, democracy in Somalia ended even before it could complete a decade of independence.
In the early hours of 21st October, 1969, parliamentary democracy ended in Somalia very suddenly. An army coup led by Major General Mohammed Siad Barre, the commander of the Somali army occupied the police headquarters and the radio station in Mogadishu. At the time of the coup the elected civilian government was headed by Abdar-Rashid Ali Shermarke, as President and Mohammed Haji Ibrahim Egal as Prime Minister. On the 15th October 1969, Shermarke was assassinated while on a tour of some drought stricken areas in the north. Egal returned cutting short his visit to the U.S.A. On the 20th October 1969 Haji Musa Boghor was made President and on the 21st October 1969 the coup established Siad Barre as the President of ‘socialist’ Somalia.

Siad Barre was assisted by a Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) comprising of twenty one army and police officers. All policy decisions evolved from this council and an educated bureaucracy was responsible for its implementation. The daily administration of evolving a socialist order of society like mobilization of the people for public work for the removal of illiteracy, promoting agricultural cooperatives, or nationalization of the commercial sector was the responsibility of the bureaucracy. A special group was created known as the National Security Service that comprised of men from the police and the army which was mainly responsible for the socialisation process. It reported directly to the SRC.

‘Barre’s regime was successful in achieving certain tangible goals by consistent efforts and monitoring by the new government.
Development and progress were reported in the fields of public health and education. Education expanded in the fields of secondary and university levels, and students were mobilized to initiate universal national literacy. The government was to achieve self-sufficiency in foodgrains in a span of 3 years. Agriculturally, cotton was to be cultivated for export purposes. All these changes were designed to penetrate to the nomadic section as well. The country’s administration was firmly in the grasp of the S.R.C. - headed new government.

Somalia’s military government turned its attention towards national unification of Somalia territories. The SRC however stressed on the necessity of resolving the issue through peaceful means at national and international forums. The SRC continued to express similar views till it resorted to aggressive means when its troops crossed Ethiopia’s border into the Ogaden territory in 1977. The Government of Ethiopia did not respond to the SRC’s quest for a negotiated settlement on the Ogaden issue. In the meanwhile the Revolutionary Government of Somalia initiated a major effort of developing its army and paramilitary with the aid of the Soviet Union, Iraq, Cuba and North Korea.

The most outstanding achievement was witnessed in the growth of the Somali army under the new government. Prior to the assumption of the socialist regime at Mogadishu attempts were made to revitalise the armed forces. The U.S.A. and its Western allies declined to offer any military training or extend any substantial military support to Somali. The Western denial was viewed as a rejection and disapproval of
Somalia's nationalistic ambitions. The U.S.A. and its allies also expressed its displeasure of Somalia's support to the Western Somali liberation Front (WSLF) the secessionist group operating in the Ogaden.\(^{(41)}\)

In comparison the Soviet Union had offered an estimated 32 million dollars aid package to the democratic civilian government of Somalia in 1963. The aid package included training and modernization of 10,000 military personnel and a small air-wing capable of handling jet aircrafts.\(^{(42)}\) Most of the Soviet offer was made in the form of grants to the Somali government. The pay-back to be made by Somalia was relaxed to be paid within a period of twenty years. Almost all the Soviet supported projects had been completed by 1969. The change in political leadership further expanded the Soviet military support programme to Somalia. The following five years (1970-75) witnessed rapid expansion in the Somali military with Soviet assistance.\(^{(43)}\) The Somali military increased from 10,000 to 20,000 men and its weapons grade improved manifolds. By 1975 Somalia's military was one of the best in the Horn of Africa. In 1976 the size of the Somalia army was between thirty to forty thousand.\(^{(44)}\) Somalia had finally worked itself into a superior position on the eve of the Ogaden War.

The SRC having strengthened its army, began to organise the refugees from the different regions of the Ogaden and other areas within Ehtiopia uninhabited by Somalis. This exercise began from 1970. All the refugee groups were organised into one organisation namely the United Front or Jebha in Somali language. Some 50 men were also sent to
North Korea for guerrilla training in 1973 and another group a year later. A large training camp was set up 130 kilometers from Mogadishu where the regular Somali army instructors and Cubans trained the militia men. Similar camps were held at other places in Somalia. The SRC was in charge of conducting the training camps. Both training and guerrilla action were strictly supervised by the Somalia Government. The Somali regime dissuaded the militia from commencing any kind of guerrilla activities in Ethiopia when Haile Selaissie was overthrown following the coup. Certain sections of the militia which defied the SRC’s orders were arrested.\(^{[45]}\)

As the political situation in Ethiopia worsened and the government in Addis Ababa began to alienate the U.S.A. the Somali regime was hard pressed by the forces of nationalism to take action. The government in Mogadishu first released all those imprisoned and organised three camps in 1975 for those willing to fight for the national unification of Somalia. By the end of November 1975 the trained groups were taken to the Ethiopia - Somalia border and were given arms and ammunition. The trained guerrilla groups were split into groups as they crossed the border. As the guerrilla's marched towards thier home bases in the Ogaden they often clashed with the Ethiopian troops resulting in small skirmishes. Thus the second round of conflict in the Ogaden was well underway.\(^{[46]}\)

The SRC government then decided to create a separate political organisation to represent the nationalist forces operating from different
regions within the Ogaden. This led to the formation of Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF). The WSLF came into existence in January 1976 at a meeting in Mogadishu conducted by President Said Barre and a committee was constituted by him. The SALF was formed in mid June 1976 at a meeting held at a place called Koreoli. However, there was a contradiction between the two groups over their territorial claims in the Ogaden. The WSLF began operations in the Ogaden from January 1976. Their units kept radio contact with the Defence Ministry in Mogadishu. No form of direct contact was however maintained with their political representatives in Somalia.\(^{(47)}\)

The guerrilla activities intensified in the second half of 1976 throughout the Ogaden, Bale and southern Sidamo province. Their number multiplied into thousands within months. By January 1977, the WSLF trainees located around Hargeissa were led by a junior officer from the Somali army. The region around which the SALF operated came under the direct control of Somalia’s Southern command. However, the Somali army did not exercise direct control over the region. Training camps continued to operate all along the Somali border. The camps also functioned as supply and communication base for the WSLF and SALF guerrillas reaction to the early Somali guerrilla activities was not forceful. By April 1977 the guerrilla’s in the Ogaden had captured Segeg and opened a road to Hargessa in central Ogarden territory. The SALF was also successful in its attack in Negheli, Moyale, Yabelo though no major town or province came under it control.\(^{(49)}\) By the summer of 1977 the Somali regime decided to commit its own forces. Thereafter the regular
armies of Somalia and Ethiopia, were involved in a direct battle for the control of the Ogaden.

The Ogaden War - 1977-1978:

In June 1977 the Somali army units disguised as guerrilla's crossed into the Ogaden and headed for the besieged centres which were to be attacked simultaneously on the 9th July 1977. The Somali troops faced defeat at Dire Dawa air base in the hands of the Ethiopia garrison positioned there. Following this incident the Somali Government launched a full scale invasion in Ethiopia and also publicly announced the involvement of the Somali military in July 1977.

President Barre ordered full participation of the Somali army units in the Ogaden war in July 1977. By this time the WSLF controlled approximately 60% of the Ogaden territory. Alongwith the Somali troops the WSLF moved towards a major city of Jijiga. Jijiga was a large Ehiopian tank base and its surrender demoralized the Ethiopian troops. The Somalis continued their pursuit without a pause and moved westward through the mountains towards important towns like Harar, a trading city and Diredawa the rail and industrial center of Ethiopia by September, 1977.\(^{(4)}\)

The Dergue Government in Ethiopia was desperate to stop the Somali onslaught. It recalled its retired military personnel below the age of sixty and regrouped its peasant militia men and ordered them to
take the responsibility of breaking Somalia's march forward. On the
diplomatic front Mengistu turned to the U.S. mission at Addis Ababa to
bail it out of this critical situation. President Mengistu was pressurised
to turn to the U.S.A. for aid. By April 1977 the Dergue had ordered the
closure of the U.S.A's activities in Ethiopia. Only the U.S.diplomatic
mission and its embassy remained. The U.S. had also suspended the
$ 10 million military sales credit and the delivery of items in the military
pipeline to Ethiopia.\(^50\)

After his failure to receive any aid or sympathy from the U.S.A.,
Mengistu paid a five day visit to Moscow in May 1977 to acquire Soviet
support in case of escalated Somali offensive against Ethiopia.\(^51\) Initially
Soviet Union's assistance was limited and slow. Cuba also joined the
Soviet assistance programme to Ethiopia. Fidel Castro, the Cuban
President, meanwhile began to have parleys with the Dergue government
in Ethiopia and President Siad Barre in an effort to stop the war.
However President Castro's efforts at pacification ended in a failure by
November, 1977.\(^52\)

Almost simultaneously the Somali momentum within Ethiopia
decelerated. This happened because of three important reasons. Firstly,
the supply of war equipments to the WSLF and Somali troops located in
Ethiopia slowed down because of the distance to be covered. Secondly,
there was reported infighting and tensions between the guerrillas and
the Somali army in the war front. Tension also arose between the
WSLF and the Somali regime in Mogadishu. The WSLF and SRC
government in Somalia clashed over the control of the territories captured in the Ogaden.\(^{(53)}\) Thirdly, Soviet arms in the pipe-line had dried up. The Soviet Union in a complete turn-around in foreign policy had stopped supply of arms to Somalia by August 1977.\(^{(54)}\) Somalia reacted sharply to the Soviet policy and ordered the suspension of all Soviet operations and also ended its diplomatic relations with Cuba. By the end of the year 1977 Somali offensive against Ethiopia virtually halted.\(^{(55)}\) President Siad Barre began his search for new sources of arms supply.

It had been stated in some quarters that President Barre's offensive against Ethiopia was based on the presumption that the Soviets and the Cubans could be easily replaced by the USA and its Western allies.\(^{(56)}\) However no such commitment was offered by the U.S. diplomats in Mogadishu. In August 1977, the U.S.A. went to the extent of stating that it would not transfer any arms to Somalia as long as Somali troops were stationed in Ethiopia. The U.S. also refused third party transfer of U.S. arms to Somalia.\(^{(57)}\)

In the meanwhile by November, 1977, Soviet arms transfer (by air and sea) to Ethiopia began in earnest. The Soviet aid to Ethiopia for a period of five months (i.e. November 1977 & March 1978) was estimated at a value of $ 1 to $ 1.5 billion almost four or five times the U.S. military aid to Ethiopia between 1953 and 1977.\(^{(58)}\) This has been discussed at a later stage.
Somalia faced a critical situation as the Ethiopian troops equipped with Soviet ammunition moved to face the WSLF and Somali army. The Ethiopians were also accompanied by the Cuban troops in their counter offensive. The Ethiopian air force comprising Soviet MIG-21 aircrafts and flown by Cuban pilots were able to effectively control the skies.\(^{[59]}\) The onset of winter brought even greater hardships for the Somali troops to maintain their positions in Ethiopia. They were now restricted to areas around the province of Harar only. The Somali troops became a victim of Ethiopian air-strike quite often.

Somalia's chances of victory catapulted and it faced inevitable defeat at the hands of the Ethiopians. President Siad Barre now resorted to diplomatic missions to all friendly countries in Africa and outside. President Barre was successful in gaining the sympathies of Iran and Egypt which extended their support to Somalia in case of Ethiopian invasion.\(^{[60]}\)

Ethiopia's major offensive against Somalia eventually began in February 1978. The withdrawing Somali forces were routed by the beginning of March 1978, after a major battle between Somali and Ethiopian forces at Jijiga. Four days later i.e. 9th March, 1978, after a bitter battle in Jijiga the Ogaden war ended when the Somali government announced the withdrawal of all Somali units from Ethiopia.\(^{[61]}\)

The Ogaden war, thwarted Somalia's quest for national unification and resulted in a victory for Ethiopia. The war had its own fall-out not
only in the Horn of Africa but Africa in general. This could be assessed by the number of meetings, consultations and resolutions passed by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in order to find a permanent solution to the Somalia-Ethiopian dispute. The Ethiopian government had much earlier expressed its acceptance of the OAU Charter and its provisions regarding the political boundaries. The Somali leadership did not accept the existing political boundaries and hoped for support for nationalistic goal beyond its existing borders. It received very little support from the OAU or any other African states.

Nevertheless, the OAU was involved in the Ogaden Conflict right from its inception. It had made all efforts to prevent the dispute from becoming a major war. We now examine the role played by the OAU in the Ogaden crisis.

The Role of the OAU:

The Ogaden dispute was a major concern for the OAU since 1964. Following a confrontation between Ethiopia and Somalia in January, 1964, the both parties requested the OAU Council of Ministers to resolve the issue. Sudan intervened and both parties agreed to a cease-fire and demilitarization of the Ogaden-territory. The OAU also advised both the belligerants to negotiate directly in accordance with Article III (3) of the OAU Charter. This clause in the Charter stated that all member states to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all other states.
Somalia continued to make its territorial claims over Ogaden but refrained from any major act of aggression till 1977. Somalia's chances of receiving African support was minimised by its irredentist policy with Ethiopia and Kenya. In 1977, the OAU was also passing through a critical juncture. The member states were divided over certain fundamental issues. One such issue was over the validity the OAU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in light of the change and disorder existing there.\(^{64}\)

The members questioned the location as the Dergue rule was not able to control the different secessionist movements as well as the general law and order in Ethiopia. Somalia pressed its claim for greater Somalian nation in the OAU at this opportune moment and almost foisted war on Ethiopia. Ethiopians failed to gain the support of the two thirds majority required to convene an emergency meeting of OAU Council of Ministers to declare Somalia as an aggressor state in the Ogaden war. The OAU formed a eight nation Mediation Committee that met at Libreville from 5th to 9th August 1977 to resolve the crisis.\(^{65}\) Somalia failed to convince the Committee about the legitimacy of its claims over the Ogaden. The premise of Somalia's claim was that Ethiopia had participated along with the other European powers in drawing the political map of Africa in the 19th century. As a result it was able to annex the Ogaden. Therefore it was a deliberate territorial annexation by the Imperial rulers of Ethiopia.

Following its unsuccessful attempts Somalia withdrew from the Libreville meet of the OAU. Ethiopia had withdrawn from the meet
earlier, in August 1977. After the withdrawal of the two parties in
dispute the mediation committee passed a resolution reaffirming its
faith in Article III(3) of the OAU charter. The OAU reiterated that the
existing borders of the African states could not be re-drawn or violated.
Simultaneously it condemned any kind of political sedition carried out by
any state. As such the OAU continued to pursue a negotiated settlement
on the Ogaden without much gain.\(^{(66)}\) The OAU's effort did not have the
right impact on Somalia.

Without much support from its African counterparts in the OAU,
Somalia sought material and diplomatic backing internationally, particularly
from the Arab-Islamic group. The Arab League, however, did not accept
Somalia's diplomatic manoeuvres completely. President Barre shifted
his attention on individual members of the Arab League such as Saudi
Arabia, Iran and Egypt. These states were also close to the U.S.A and
they could be used as indirect or third party approach lines to Washington
D.C.

Towards early 1978, Somalia complained to the international
community about Ethiopian air-raids on Harghessa and the port city of
Berbera. Iran followed by Egypt announced that Somalia would not be
alone if Ethiopia violated Somalia's territory.\(^{(67)}\) Iran and Egyptian solidarity
with Somalia followed the visit of U.S President Jimmy Carter to Tehran
on the 1st January 1978. Farer and Ottaway were of the opinion that
Iran and Egypt had extended their support only with the approval of the
U.S.A.\(^{(68)}\)
The U.S.A had just faced a major reversal in its policy in the region. It had to withdraw from Ethiopia where it had established a secure base for itself since 1953. It was hardly in a position to make a quick policy decision on the region. Somalia did not receive any U.S support before February 1978 and the Ogaden conflict ended by 9th March 1978. President Barre announced an end to the hostilities and withdrawal of the Somali troops from Ethiopia. The U.S President made a similar proclamation almost simultaneously.

Whatever may have been the future of U.S.A ' s policies in the Horn, its policies in the past and during the Ogaden conflict would help us to analyse the role of the superpowers in the regional conflicts of the Indian Ocean. Superpower involvement had far reaching implications in global politics and geo-politics of the Indian Ocean region. Between the two super-powers the U.S.A and the USSR, the Americans made their presence first in the Horn of Africa. It became a major partner of the Imperial rulers of Ethiopia since 1953.

U.S.A’s Policy In the Horn of Africa:

The U.S.A replaced Britain as a major western adviser in the Ethiopian administration and particularly the Ethiopia military. The official relationship between the U.S.A and Ethiopia was confirmed by the Mutual Defence Agreement signed by them in 1953. From 1953 to 1974 over a hundred million dollars worth of economic assistance and military equipment worth 200 million was given by the U.S.A to Ethiopia.
Fiscal value of Washington’s military sales and aid to Addis Ababa was $24 million in 1974. This was enhanced to $40 million in 1975. In 1975, the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) based in Ethiopia was half of the total number of U.S. advisers in the entire sub-Saharan Africa. In 1976 the U.S. administration confirmed a package of credit sales for a period of twenty seven months to Ethiopia ending in September 1977.\(^{72}\)

U.S. State Administration continued its military assistance policy to Ethiopia, despite change in the political regime there. The U.S. policy objectives towards the Horn of Africa were emphasised by its Deputy Assistant Secretary of State. Two reasons were outlined for continued U.S. support to Ethiopia. First it was felt that the long standing relationship with Ethiopia would not be affected by a change in regime. And secondly, it was felt that U.S.A’s continued support to the Dergue rule could avoid Ethiopia’s tilt toward the Soviet Union. The U.S.A in other words wanted to play the role of a balancer in the region in view of the increased Soviet involvement in Somalia.\(^{73}\)

However in 1977, the U.S. Presidency changed with the election of Jimmy Carter. The U.S. policy in Africa was recast with a clear emphasis on the state of Human Rights violation in respective African states. This directly affected the continued U.S. assistance to Ethiopia. The new incumbents of the U.S. State Department expressed displeasure with suppression of the different political groups or the indigenous secessionist movements by the Dergue rule in Ethiopia. The U.S.A
considered the suppression and political killings to be a gross violation of Human Rights by the Dergue regime. The new administration in U.S.A was against the use of U.S weapons located in Ethiopia for silencing the voices of the revolts in the Ogaden and Djibouti. On this final pretext the U.S.A's Military Assistance Programme (MAP) to the tune of $100 million was cancelled in 1977. The Carter administration also blocked a $200 million World Bank aid to Ethiopia. However it retained its Economic Assistance Programme of $10 million till 1978. Ethiopia reacted to the U.S policy by closing the Kagne military base facilities located near Asmara in the Eritrean plateau. It also expelled 117 U.S personnel from Ethiopia by 1977. We now proceed to analyse the U.S. policy towards Ethiopia in the conflict of the Horn of Africa 1977-78.

The U.S.A's Policy During The Ogaden War:

The U.S.A did not offer any assistance to the Dergue regime in Ethiopia. Ethiopia faced the combined attack of the WSLF and the Somalian forces in the Ogaden war (1977) on its own. Inspite of 25 years of relationship, the U.S.A remained a mere witness as the Soviet trained Somalian forces defeated Ethiopia. The Soviet Union however shifted its support to Ethiopia mid-way through the Ogaden conflict and the U.S.A reacted strongly to the Soviet move towards Ethiopia.

The U.S Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance expressed the U.S.A's concern over the increasing conflict in the Ogaden at a News Conference
on the 10th Feb 1978. The U.S.A asked the two parties to end hostilities and bring about a negotiated settlement. The conflict had to be contained, according to the U.S, as it could lead to a nuclear arms race in the area. Cyrus Vance called for a cease fire, and the withdrawal of the Soviet and Cuban forces from Ethiopia.

The President of the U.S.A at two consecutive news conferences on the 16th February 1978 and 2nd March 1978 called for Somalia's withdrawal from the Ogaden area and Ethiopian territory. He simultaneously asked the marching Ethiopian troops not to cross the Somalia border. The U.S. President also asked for a greater involvement of the OAU in working out an African solution to the issue.

Regarding the Soviet Union's growing influence and support for Ethiopia the U.S President expressed the U.S.A's concern in a global perspective. Though not conclusively, President Jimmy Carter stated that increasing Soviet involvement in the Horn of Africa could adversely affect the Strategic Arms limitations Talks (SALT-II). The SALT-II was to be announced shortly between the U.S.A and the U.S.S.R. Apart from rhetorical commitments, the U.S.A chose to remain neutral in the Ogaden Crisis.

In fact U.S.A's policy in the Horn of Africa was more concerned about observing Soviet operations in the region and its status-quo. The U.S.S.R made its first entry by the Treaty of Friendship with Somalia in 1963. With the U.S.A supporting Ethiopia and the Soviets playing an
increasing role in Somalia, Cold war politics became a part of this region as well.

The Horn of Africa was otherwise important only for its geographical location on the Red Sea and the Western Indian Ocean. It was turned into a major factor in global politics after the mid-seventies. Having analysed U.S.A's policies, an assessment of the Soviet Union's presence and influences would complete the study of superpower involvement in yet another regional conflict in the Indian Ocean.

The Soviet Union and the Horn of Africa:

In accordance with the initial agreement signed in 1963, the Soviet Union fulfilled its promises with Somalia of training 20,000 soldiers approximately. By 1975, Somalia's military power was quite close to Ethiopia's fire power at least on paper according to a study conducted by the International Institute of Strategic Studies in 1975. Somalia's military comprised 23,000 men, 250 tanks, 300 armoured personnel carrier and a small workable air force.

Somalia did not fail to recognise the services of the Soviet Union. It signed a Treaty of Friendship & Cooperation with the Soviet Union in 1974. The Russians were allowed to develop and utilise the port of Berbera, though not with all the basing rights. The Soviet supersonic facility was at an instant striking distance from the Bab-el-Mandeb. By 1975 the Soviet Union had a 12,000 ft runway, an advanced Naval
support network and a major communication centre in Berbera. All the facilities were protected by the Surface-to-air Missile System (SAM) installed at the base. An air base commissioned by the Soviet Union at Harghessa in 1972 became operational by the mid-seventies. Prior to the Ogaden war in 1976 Somalia had 50 MiG fighters, 7 Illyushin bombers. This was supported by T-54 tanks one of most advanced war equipment on ground.

Apart from strategic considerations the Soviet-Somali relations also had been shaped Soviet Union's ideological disposition after 1969. The new Revolutionary government of Siad Barre which assumed power in 1969 announced its commitment to the socialist cause in 1970. This was followed by a substantial increase in the Soviet aid to Somalia. From $ 35 million the aid was increased $50 million in 1971. The Soviet Union offered generous support to President Barre's administration in meeting the severe drought conditions in 1975. The Soviet Union helped the Somali administration to resettle around 100,000 nomads into prepared agricultural settlements in the country's southern region and some 20,000 people along the coast. In fact the Soviet Union became a major partner in Somalia's socialisation process and in its nationalistic goals.

The Soviet training allowed a confident WSLF and Somalia's regular forces to fulfil their quest for unification for the first time in July 1977. Somalia was able to make substantial territorial gains. However later in the year (1977), there was a sudden shift in Soviet policy from Somalia
to the new revolutionary Dergue regime in Ethiopia. The Soviet Union's
tilt towards the Dergue came at a time when the Dergue regime was
faced with grave external threats as well as internal dissensions. The
road linking Addis Ababa to the Ethiopia's coastline was threatened by
the Eritreans and the Somalia forces.

The Soviet Union arrived in Ethiopia to rescue the latter from a
virtual collapse. It was denied of any support from the U.S.A which had
virtually closed down its operations there. Soviet-Ethiopian friendship
had officially taken off in May 1977. Following Mengistu's five day visit
to Moscow. The relationship was consolidated with a twenty -year
Treaty of Friendship signed in 1977.67 By September, 1977, the Soviet
Union had airlifted approximately $385 million in arms to Ethiopia. These
armaments included 48 MIG jet fighters, 200, T-54 and T-55 tanks and a
number of SAM 3 and SAM 7 anti-aircraft missiles. Cuban military
personnel were air-lifted to Ethiopia to train and strengthen the Ethiopian
forces(86) to fight the irredentist not only in the Ogaden but also in
Eritrea. The Ethiopians were able to avenge their defeat in the hands
of Somalia with Soviet and Cuban forces in March 1978. The Ethiopian
counter attack which was very swift threatened Somalia's territorial
frontiers itself.

The swing in Soviet support from Somalia to its rival Ethiopia in
the midst of a conflict was rarely witnessed in contemporary global
politics. The Soviet move became a debatable issue. Scholars 86 viewed
it as a calculated move in fulfilling the goal of socialist internationalism
or as a 'collective security' programme as envisaged in Asia. Others questioned the Soviet capability of a massive airlift of arms at that time. The Soviets also ran a probable risk in carrying out this sudden shift in policy towards Ethiopia. There was always a chance of the Dergue collapsing under pressure from internal and external sources.

President Said Barre's reaction to the Soviet policy was one to be expected. Somalia felt betrayed by the Soviet Union. The state had come closest to realising its dream of a Greater Somali nation. However it was defeated in the Ogaden war when Ethiopia supported by the Soviet Union and Cuba launched its counter offensive attack against Somalia. The shift in the Soviet policy was a major factor responsible for the defeat of Somalia at the hands of Ethiopia. Following the change in the Soviet policy, President Barre withdrew all military and base facilities extended to the Soviet Union in Somalia.

The Soviet Union lost the utilisation of the strategically located Berbera naval base in the Indian Ocean. It also lost the aircraft landing facility at Harghessa. Somalia ordered the expulsion of Soviet officials from the country. Soviet Union may have redeemed Ethiopia's prestige, but lost credibility as an ally. Finally, Somalia abrogated the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation it had signed with the Soviet Union in 1974.

Having examined the regional and extra-regional dimensions of the Ogaden conflict in the Horn of Africa in this chapter, the following chapter proceeds to discuss the causes and out come of the eight year
CHAPTER - III - FOOT NOTES


2. Ibid p.29.


7. Ibid.


9. Ibid.

160

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid. p.15.


15. Farer, Tom J. op.cit pp.18-19.

16. Ibid.


21. Farer, Tom J. War Clouds on the Horn of Africa. op. cit p.120.


26. Lewis, Ian. 'The Modern History of Somali and op cit pp. 101-108. Also see Bhardwaj Raman G. op cit p. 33. Note: The Ogaden territory was made a part of the Ethiopian empire following an agreement between France, Britain and Italy, in 1897.


32. Ibid. pp. 90-93.


34. Clapham, Christopher. op.cit. p.274.

35. Farer, Tom J. op. cit. p.92.


37. Ibid.

38. Clapham, Christopher. op cit p. 276.


41. Farer, Tom J. op cit pp. 112-114.

45. Markakis, John op. cit pp. 223-224.


47. Ibid. op.cit pp. 225-226.

48. Ibid op.cit p.46.

49. Gupta, Vijay. op.cit p.46


55. As mentioned in Ottaway Marina. Op cit p. 118.


58. Schwab, Peter - notes that the Soviet Union delivered $385 million in arms to Ethiopia by September 1977. This included 48 MIG jet fighters, 200 T-54 and T-55 tanks and a number of SAM-3 and SAM-7 missiles. Cuban troops numbered some 16,500 men.


60. Ibid

61. Refer appendices

62. Refer appendices
63. Refer appendices

64. Ibid

65. Ibid.

66. Gupta, Vijay. op.cit pp. 42-43. Also see Farer, Tom J. op.cit p. 126 & Ottaway, Marina. op.cit p.125.

67. Similar view have expressed by Farer, Tom J. and Ottaway, Marina.


70. U.S. Security Agreements and commitments Abroad, Ethiopia; Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. State Department. Part 8, June 1, 1970. pp. 1902 - 1904.


72. The Horn of Africa: Hearings Before the Sub-Committee on Africa of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. House of Representatives 96th Congress 2nd Session pp. 311-314.

74. Ibid.


77. Ibid.


82. Rubenstein, Alvin Z. *Soviet Foreign Policy* op.cit p. 231. According to Rubenstein “Moscow’s interest in the Horn is an ambitions construction of a blue water fleet”.


85. Ibid. pp. 653-655. Also see Farer Tom J., *Africa Report* op.cit pp. 2-3 According to Chester Crocker - Moscow had approximately, 1,000 Soviet and East European military advisers in Somalia in 1976.

86. Ottaway, Marina. *Soviet and American Influence in the Horn of Africa* op.cit pp.165-166.

87. Schwab, Peter. op.cit p. 17.

89. Refer to: Ottaway Marina. op cit p. 114; Also see Legum Colin and Lee Bill, Conflict in the Horn. op.cit pp. 92-93; Schwab Peter op.cit p. 18 and Crocker Chester ORBIS op.cit 654.

90. Legum Colin, ‘Relatives of the Ethiopian Revolution’, The World Today. Author - "The Russians are gambling for high stakes in the Horn of Africa at a time when the internal power balance"..........."Ethiopia's future will be determined more crucially by the forces of foreign intervention - as happened in Spain in the 1930s - then by the forces engaged in the country's internal power struggle. There are some other interesting parallels with the Spanish civil war".