Chapter-VI  U.S intervention in the Horn: Revisiting Ethiopia-Somalia dispute
The American policy towards the countries in the Horn of Africa has its own set of complexities. Some of them could be spelt out in the following manner. Being a geopolitically strategic area on the Red sea, the U.S has consistently clamoured to build viable allies among the states within this region. The U.S search for allies was obviously accentuated in the context of the cold war because the Soviet Union was equally involved in finding its naval feet in the horn of Africa. Thus at one level the game of finding allies was also punctuated by the power rivalries between the U.S and the Soviet Union. Under the circumstances choosing an ally merely on ideological grounds was hardly a tenable proposition. If the notions of interventions are kept in mind it would be obvious that both the U.S and the U.S.S.R would be ready to deploy indirect and subtle rather than direct forms of intervention. Such indirect forms could be deployed to nurture covert ambitions in the overall Horn of Africa as well as towards the broader area of the Indian Ocean. Thus entertaining diplomatic ties, signing trade ties, acquiring bases, in connecting strategic regions in the overall global strategy were integral to the Horn of Africa. In the forthcoming pages, this chapter will try to unravel such complex and subtle forms of intervention on the part of the U.S to capture the overall understanding of the forms of intervention. Keeping this background in mind, we can proceed to present the sequence of this chapter by first outlining U.S strategic interests in the region.
Strategic Interests

The Horn of Africa comprising of Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, Sudan and parts of Kenya has been one of the most strategic and volatile regions in the world.\(^1\) Devoid of natural resources, characterized by the presence of deserts along the coast and rugged mountains further inland, the Horn attracted very little economic attention to outsiders except for its strategic location. Sitting astride the route to the Mediterranean through Suez, the Gulf of Aden and the Persian Gulf it presides over international maritime traffic in the Red Sea which mostly consists of oil from the Middle East. The region's proximity to the Middle East oil fields makes it even more important in the context of super power rivalry in the area. J. Bowyer Bell, a strategic analyst has neatly summarized how the U.S national security establishment has viewed the Horn of Africa throughout the post-world war-II period: "The basic strategic importance of the Horn is not the presence of copper deposits, the fate of democracy or the future of the Ethiopian monarchy, it is simple geography."\(^2\)

The strategic interests of the U.S in the Horn dates back to the II world war. The Roosevelt administration in an effort to bolster the beleaguered military forces of Great Britain against the Nazi German and Fascist Italy's forces operating in North Africa included Ethiopia in a military aid programme known as "Land-Lease" in March 1941. Ethiopia thus became an assembly point and distribution centre for this aid designed to strengthen Britain's defences in Libya and Egypt against Germany's famed Afrika Corps.\(^3\) The focal point of these Land-Lease efforts was Eritrea - a former Italian ruled
The U.S war department’s efforts in Eritrea were two fold. First, in the aftermath of a secret meeting held in Washington on November 19, 1941, a Royal Air Force (RAF) support base was established at the Eritrean town of Gura. Codenamed "Project 19", the purpose of the base was to repair and return damaged RAF aircraft to the North Africa battle zone with minimal delay. The war department also refurbished the Eritrean port of Massawa to provide direct support for the British Mediterranean fleet, as well as to maintain naval salvage operation to raise over forty ships scuttled by the Italian navy. By August 1942, less than one year after the war department's decision to establish a presence in Eritrea, 336 US military personnel were directing projects that employed nearly 16,000 workers, including 2,819 US civilians, 5,611 Italians, and 7,384 Eritreans.

The U.S interest in Eritrea was basically to acquire a radio communication centre at a former Italian installation known as Radio Marina located on the outskirts of the Eritrean town of Asmara. But the uncertain status of Eritrean territory under British control with competing claims both by Ethiopia and post-war Italy put on hold U.S moves to acquire the base. With Great Britain deciding to terminate its administration of Eritrea in 1948, the U.S realized the dangers of an independent Eritrea vulnerable to communist aggression. The other option of an Italian trusteeship supported by France and Soviet Union was also ruled out because of the fear that a victory for the Italian communist party in 1948 Italian national elections would also pave way for a communist Eritrea.
meanwhile, had a secret understanding with Ethiopia in 1948 that traded U.S support for Ethiopian claims over Eritrea in return for unrestricted access to and use of Asmara communications centre later known as Kagnew station and other military bases and ah-fields in Ethiopia. In 1953, soon after the U.N implemented its decision to unite Eritrea to Ethiopia in a federation, the U.S government and Haile Selassie signed a treaty which gave a twenty-five year lease on the Kagnew communications centre. The United States in return, agreed to train and equip three Ethiopian military divisions totalling 18,000 men. The strategic significance of the Kagnew communications centre for the U.S was that, it was part of America's world-wide network of linkages that stretched from bases in Morocco to the Philippines. It was used to monitor Soviet activities during the cold war, to gather intelligence in Africa, and especially the Middle East and clearly played a vital role during both the Korean and Vietnam wars.

The U.S strategic interests in the Horn were not just limited to the Kagnew station in Eritrea. The U.S was also interested in the Red Sea and its littoral states as an area with its own strategic and economic significance. The region also weighed in the minds of U.S strategists because of its - proximity to the Persian Gulf region which controls more than half of the world's proven oil reserves and supplies about 60 percent of Europe's oil and 90 percent of Japan's and a fast growing percentage of American oil consumption in the future. The Red sea thus, has been:

(a) The main artery for oil and trade between Europe and the East.
(b) It serves as a major trade outlet for its Coastal states, especially Sudan, Ethiopia, Jordan and Israel.
(c) It has great fishing potential
(d) Along its coasts lie some of the key countries in the Arab, Islamic and African worlds, namely Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia.
(e) It serves as the western arm of the Indian ocean and the Southern outlet for the Mediterranean sea.\textsuperscript{12}

However, despite the strategic significance of the horn of Africa and the Red Sea region, the U.S during the 50s and 60s viewed the area with a measure of complacency, the British presence in the region and the lack of genuine Soviet interest in the Horn of Africa during this period reinforced America's casual attitude towards the region. This attitude became apparent when, the U.S turned down an offer made by Haile Selassie in December 1952 to join a Middle East defence organization tied to N.A.T.O., in which Ethiopia would help to form a 'Southern tier' which could act as a kind of safety valve for the Baghdad pact concept of the 'northern tier' as formulated by the U.S secretary of state, John Foster Dulles.\textsuperscript{13} But Soviet activity in the Horn and in other parts of Africa since the mid 70s made the U.S to wakeup to the dangers of Soviet expansionism. In fact, Soviet Union first real success in the Horn of Africa was achieved in October 1963, when Somalia accepted its unconditional offer of $30 million in military aid.\textsuperscript{14} The Soviet Union essentially outbid the west by agreeing not only to assist the Somali airforce but also to expand the army from 4,000 to 20,000. The United States, along with its Italian and West German N.A.T.O allies, had only been willing to provide $ 10 million worth of equipment and training for a 5000 - 6000 man army oriented primarily towards internal security, and had made the military package contingent upon Mogadishu not accepting
The Soviet-Somali arms agreement, therefore, ended the Western arms monopoly in the Horn of Africa, and effectively undermined the ability of the West to play the role of 'balancer' between Ethiopia and Somalia.

The Soviet Union since then began taking active interest in the Political developments of the Red sea region and looked for opportunities to establish friendly ties with states in the region. Between 1967-72 it maintained friendly ties with Egypt under Nasser and had access to substantial air facilities and naval base in Alexandria. Similarly from 1974 until 1977 the Soviet Union had a major naval facility at Berbera in Somalia at which ships were refuelled and arms stored. Since 1969 it has also been able to use facilities at Aden in South Yemen. Since 1977 some facilities have also been available in Ethiopian ports - at Assab and Massawa in Eritrea, and on the Dahlak Islands off the Eritrean Coast. These facilities provided Soviet Union in undertaking aerial reconnaissance, and since 1978 Russian planes often Ilyushin-38s, are believed to have been operating from Aden, monitoring U.S naval deployments in the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean areas. Moreover Soviet Intervention in Angola in 1975, Ethiopian intervention in 1978 followed by the fall of Shah of Iran and the Afghan invasion in 1979 set the alarm bells ringing in Washington about Soviet motives in the region.

The Americans perceived that the Soviet presence in the Horn and the Indian ocean region constituted a vital threat to its interests in the Middle East, especially the Persian Gulf. In order to counter Soviet presence in the region, the Americans began looking for allies who could provide military bases to checkmate Soviet moves.
Here, before we begin to analyze American objectives and policy towards Horn of Africa and the Red Sea region, it is important that we also understand Soviet strategic concerns in the region.

**Soviet Strategic Concerns**

Soviet strategic interests in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea form part of its overall interests in the Gulf and Indian Ocean region. Soviet interests in the Gulf area predates the discovery of oil there and oil remains but one of several interests that drew Moscow's attention southward. With a common border running from Turkey to Pakistan through Iraq, and Afghanistan on the South, the Soviet Union cannot be indifferent to any political developments in the region which might affect its national security. The overlapping of religions and ethnic minority Muslim population across borders can be a serious source of instability for the Soviet Union. With about 16 percent of the Soviet population being Muslim, i.e 43 million people out of the total of 262 million, and their relation to 100 million people living in the Turko-Iranian world of important nationalities such as the Azeria, the Turkmen, the Tajiks, the Kurds etc is quite unsettling to Moscow.\(^\text{17}\)

Apart from this, the Soviet Union was also concerned about its Southern neighbour, Iran and its friendship with the U.S. Moscow felt threatened by the Iranian-U.S alliance and the possible use of Iran as a U.S base.\(^\text{18}\) Although the Shah of Iran announced in
September 1962 that he would not allow any nation to base missile forces on his territory, the Soviets were apprehensive about the presence of U.S military personnel in Iran. During Iran's revolution the Soviets were quick to assert that foreign intervention in Iran would be perceived as a threat to the Soviet Union.¹⁹

In the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean the Soviet Union was mostly concerned about the possible deployment of N.A.T.O aircraft carriers with planes carrying nuclear weapons and submarines capable of launching rockets against its territory. During the early 1960s the emergence of Polaris A₁ and A₂ missile carrying submarines having a range of 1200 nautical miles and 1800 nautical miles seriously threatened the security of the Soviet Union. According to Geoffrey Jukes, the Indian Ocean entered the calculations of Soviet naval strategists in 1964, following the launching in 1963 of Polaris A₃, with a range of 2,500 nautical miles. 'In making the necessary calculations', says Jukes 'they would have been bound to discover that the north-west corner of the Indian Ocean... an area of low interest for possessors of the Polaris A₁ and A₂, becomes more attractive to the possessors of A₃, because from there the A₃ exposed to attack all areas between the Western Soviet border and Eastern Siberia.²⁰ With newer generations of submarines such as the Poseidon and the Trident, which have a much longer range, the whole of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean has been turned into a potential basing site to launch nuclear attacks against the Soviet Union.²¹

Besides the strategic interests which are relevant in specific war time situations, it is the Peace time role that best explains the Soviet interests in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean
region. The Suez canal - Red Sea maritime route that connects the Indian Ocean provides Soviet Union with the shortest sea route open year-round between its European and the Far Eastern ports- something that does not apply to the Arctic route. The canal is therefore in some degree, to the USSR what the Panama canal is to the USA- a waterway for its own domestic economy.\textsuperscript{22} This route is also vital because it has become possible for Soviet ships to reach the Indian Ocean through the Suez canal, a distance of around 4,800 Km as compared with a distance of 8,000 Km or more form Vladivostock and 18,500 Km from the Black Sea around the Coast of Africa: indeed, prior to the reopening of the Suez canal, the Red Sea was one of the furthest points on the globe for ships operating out of the Black Sea\textsuperscript{23}.

The Suez canal - Red Sea route is also considered as an alternative to the Trans-Siberian railway. In a contingency such as a conflict with the People's Republic of China, the Trans-Siberian railway might be either interrupted or insecure and hence the importance of this maritime route in connecting the farthest corners of Russia.\textsuperscript{24}

Thus, given Soviet Union's interests in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean and its attempts at safeguarding these interests by deploying Soviet navy in the Indian Ocean and along the Red Sea Coast at bases in South Yemen and in Somalia until 1977 and later in Ethiopia, created apprehension in Washington about the real Soviet motives in the region.

The U.S in order to protect and promote its interests in the face of Soviet expansion in the region began to define certain objectives. These objectives have varied over time,
depending on the ranking of U.S interests at any given moment and perceptions regarding the main threats to those interests. However certain objectives can be identified that have been basic throughout the period from 1945 to the present. These include:

* Containing Soviet expansionism through collective security;
* Maintaining uninterrupted access to the region's oil resources;
* Preserving the independence and self-determination of regional states;
* Preventing the spread of communism and other radical social economic doctrines;
* Deterring intra-regional conflict, especially a new Arab-Israeli conflict;
* Enhancing US economic and commercial interests; and
* Avoiding war with the Soviet Union.25

But in the wake of Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Americans were quite convinced that the Soviet Union had expansionist motives than just access to the waterways in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. After December 1979, the Persian Gulf came to be seen as a crucial area whose defence was essential to the very viability of the U.S position in Europe and the North east Asia. President Carter made this view official policy in this state of the Union address of January 1980, when he declared that "an attempt by an outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the U.S" and the such action "will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force".

In trying to protect its interests in the Gulf, the U.S suddenly realized the acute problem of access to military bases and facilities in the region. Although, the U.S had been
developing the military base at Diego Garcia since the mid 70s, the Carter administration felt that Diego Garcia by itself was not adequate considering the distance it is from the strategic focal point - i.e. the straight of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf- in the event of a surprise Soviet attack. The U.S administration thus began to look for naval ports with adjacent air fields in friendly countries of the region to provide for logistic support facilities for American warships in the region. In fact, even before the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan, the United States had already despatched a defence team to the Persian Gulf and the Horn of Africa to negotiate for military facilities.

Carter's initiative succeeded and the U.S managed to engineer access to a network of facilities in the north west quadrant of the Indian Ocean to support its increased naval presence in the region. By August 1980, the U.S had secured air and naval facilities in Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, Kenya and Oman.27

Now, having discussed the strategic interests of the super-powers in the Red Sea, Indian Ocean and the Gulf, we can focus our attention in the next section on the regional issue of conflict in the Horn of Africa and the super power intervention. Here we shall discuss the question of how the divergent interests of the super powers and regional states combined to create an unstable situation in the region during the seventies and eighties.
II

Background to the Conflict in the Horn:

The conflict in the Horn of Africa is essentially rooted in its history and geography. Conflicting territorial claims, historical and ethnic differences, and political incompatibility existing between the regions have led to a seemingly never-ending situation of tension, violence and armed conflict between Ethiopia-Somalia over the contested Ogaden and the continuous struggle in Eritrea. According to Bereket Habte Selassie, "The crisis in the Horn, encompassing several armed conflicts, reflects two interrelated historical processes: 1) a continuing 'crisis of empire' within the borders of Ethiopia, a state created through military expansion and the subjugation of national groups in the area from the late nineteenth century onwards, and 2) the persistence of unresolved national and social questions and contradictions shaped by, and inherited from, the European colonial era in Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya". A similar viewpoint is expressed by William Zartman, when he characterizes the Somalia-Ethiopian conflict as "a clash between nation and state, or between nation-state and multinational empire. On another level, it is the expression of a literally legendary hatred between two ethnic groups in the region, one of them in the midst of a historic Volkerwanderung. Thus, the conflict is a long and constant part of history, evolving through different forms. First it was a clash of tribes or traditional nations; then it became part of the process of imperial consolidation and religious war, soon compounded by the intrusion of foreign colonialism with its need to draw geographic boundaries. Then it burst out as part of the politics of newly independent and highly expectant states, complicated by cold war super Power support and most recently by revolution".
One of the central issues of conflict in the horn has been Ethiopia's attempts at the consolidation of its empire. Throughout its history the imposition of a single centralized authority over the whole of Ethiopia has never been an easy matter because of the rugged nature of the topography, which has tended to divide the country into large number of isolated blocks of territory bounded by steep scarps and separated from each other by deep river gorges. Added to this geographical impediment is the very composition of Ethiopia's population which is highly varied consisting of diverse ethnic groups with different religions and cultural practices. Some of the largest groups are the Amhara, the main branch of the Abyssinian family and the traditional rulers of Ethiopia; The Galla or the Oromo, and the Tigrinya speakers, the smaller Abyssinian branch, occupying the province of Tigray in the north and the Eritrean highland. The other groups are the Somalias, the Sidama, and the Afars.30

Among these diverse people, the Amhara, Tigre and the Oromo have played the leading historic roles. The former two are Semitic in origin; speak related languages and live in central and northern highlands, and are mostly Coptic Christians. The Gallas, are a Hamitic people who were originally the inhabitants along the Somali Coast and moved into the highlands during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Although they arrived as hostile forces, they were quickly assimilated into the local cultures and a substantial number of them converted to Christianity. Galla chiefs and Amhara nobles also intermarried.31 However, the process of assimilation was never complete and the historical animosities continued, partly because many of the Gallas embraced Islam and also perhaps because their interests in land was seen to have been subordinated to
Christian aristocrats and soldiers who were beneficiaries of imperial patronage. But unlike the Gallas, the pastoralist and nomadic tribesmen of the lowlands such as the Somali and Afars who are mainly Islamic, and distinct socio-culturally never intermixed with the highland peasantry and bore animosity towards the Christian rulers of Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian state before Emperor Menelik II (1889-1913) thus, consisted of several virtually autonomous provinces and smaller subdivisions ruled by powerful local chiefs. Ethiopia during the 17th and 18th centuries was only a small highland kingdom with its centre limited to the central Shoan, Gondarin and Tigrayan highlands. The outlying lowlands, including most of the areas inhabited by the Gallas and Somalis today, were not integrated into or ruled by the Christian kingdom. But the events during the second half of 19th century that witnessed intense rivalry among the imperialist European powers in the horn after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, provided opportunities for Menelik to use his astute diplomacy in acquiring enormous weapons from these rival powers. With this newly acquired military power, Menelik carried out a series of campaigns of conquest among the Oromo and Sidama in the south. But in the North, the Italians had laid claim to the land beyond the Mareb river and to a long stretch of the Red Sea Coast, including Massawa, where they established the colony of Eritrea. Intent on seizing the whole of the plateau, they invaded Abyssinia in 1896, but were heavily defeated by the Abyssinians led by Menelik in the battle of Adwa.

With Italy defeated and France confined to the Djibouti enclave, Britain and Abyssinia went on to seize the remaining unclaimed territories of the region. Menelik sent
expeditions as far as the white Nile in the west, Lake Turkana in the South-west, and the land of the Boran in the South. Menelik obtained most of the territory he coveted, settling the boundaries of his empire roughly where they stand today.\textsuperscript{35} In 1897, Menelik signed a treaty with Britain and France, who formally recognized his conquests and imperial territory. From then on he was acknowledged African partner in the era of European colonization. Indeed, his observers had earlier attended the Berlin conference in 1884-1885, which 'legalised' the colonial division of Africa.\textsuperscript{36}

But the new multi-ethnic state of Ethiopia created largely by conquest, now faced the enormous task of consolidation of its power. The solution sought by Ethiopian kings and nobility had been the forceful imposition of the Amhara culture that included the use of Amharic language and the special status of the Ethiopian orthodox church. Anyone ambitious for a place in the state apparatus, and especially for national political power, must to some degree assimilate into this culture.\textsuperscript{37} Ethiopian politics thus has been the domination of the political system by the representatives of the highland core particularly by the central province of Shoa which provided some 60-70 percent of high central government officials, the imperial family and the seat of government in Addis Ababa.\textsuperscript{38} The exclusion of many aspiring elites from other ethnic groups however, brought great resentment within their ranks and ethnic animosities smouldered beneath the surface of much of Ethiopia. They gathered force as communication increased in the 1960s. The Oromo had always resented their subordination as a conquered people, and frequently rose in rebellion. The Tigreans, though historically are of the main components of Ethiopia, resented the Shoan ascendancy and found their language treated as badly as
those of all other non-Amhara speakers. From 1960 onwards, with the advent of an independent Republic of Somalia claiming to be the government of all Somalis, the Southeastern Ogaden region became increasingly insecure. The most serious threat of all to Ethiopian territory, however, came from the Red Sea province of Eritrea, which had been under a succession of non-Ethiopian rulers until the Italians were driven out in 1941.\textsuperscript{39} Thus consolidating the empire since the time of Menelik II has been a constant source of conflict in the region as separatist movements fought for their self-determination.

The other important source of conflict in the region has been the Somali irredentism. Ever since Somalia attained independence on 1\textsuperscript{st} July 1960 with the amalgamation of British Somalia and (26 June 1960) and Italian Somaliland (1 July 1960), it has been struggling to unite all the Somali inhabited areas of the region, i.e., Ogaden in Ethiopia, Northern Frontier district of Kenya and the French territory of Afars and Issas, formerly known as French Somaliland and present day Djibouti. Somalia claims that the boundaries drawn up by the Italians, the British and the Ethiopians at various times during 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries, were arrived at arbitrarily, without recourse to geography and ethnicity and therefore illegitimate. To stake its claim over the areas inhabited predominantly by Somalis, it advanced two justifications: (a) the right to self-determination in the sense of claiming independent statehood for a large ethnic group that possesses considerable cultural cohesion and is conscious of a common historical destiny; (b) that, the borders between Somalia and its neighbours, which were drawn by the
colonial powers are part of the colonial order that the new states should aim to overthrow.40

This Somali claim was viewed by Ethiopia and Kenya as more than merely threatening the loss of territory or population. They viewed the claim as a challenge to their very existence. Like most African states, Ethiopia and Kenya are multi-tribal and granting the right to self-determination or secession to any tribe or region would threaten the very integrity of these states and create a dangerous precedent. According to Saadia Touval, "the conflict is rooted in the incompatible self-images of the parties and concerns the core values. The self-image of Somali nationalism of the Somali tribes constituting a Somali nation entitled to form its own nation-state -cannot be realized without inflicting severe injury on both Ethiopia and Kenya. The viability of these two states is contingent upon the acceptance of the legitimacy of their present boundaries by all tribes presently incorporated within them. And conversely, as long as Ethiopia and Kenya continue to exist within their present boundaries, the Somali aspiration for national unity within a nation-state cannot be realized. Thus, the conflict arises out of the incompatibility of the most fundamental values of the parties concerned - the essence of their national existence.41

The historical antecedents to the Somali border dispute is rooted in the various treaties entered into by the British, French and Italians with Ethiopia at various stages during the 19th century and early 20th century. The borders of present day Somalia kept changing according to the changing power equations of the colonial powers during this period.
1884 and 1886, the British made protection agreements with the clans along the coast and hinterland opposite Aden; the French did the same with the clans around Djibouti (1885) and the Italians also, with various Sultans on the Indian ocean coast (1889). The three powers then came to agreements with one another delimiting their respective spheres, the British and French in 1888, the British and Italians in 1894. The last two also reached agreement (1891) regarding the far south, where the Juba was to be the line between the British in East Africa and the Italians in Somaliland. Jubaland, to the South of the river was transferred to Italy by a treaty in 1924.\textsuperscript{42}

But at the same time, the three powers also had to reckon with the growing strength of the Emperor of Ethiopia, who laid claim (1891) to the whole of the Horn of Africa. After his victory over the Italians at Adowa (1896), Italy and Britain made agreements with him (1897) drawing back substantially the line of their protectorates in the Haud and Ogaden respectively, and so in effect ceding territory inhabited by Somali tribes whom they had taken under protection.\textsuperscript{43}

However, these boundary agreements agreed to by the colonial powers and Ethiopia left the Somalis unawares and life went on much as before and the Somali tribesmen used to grazing their cattle in the Ogaden region found no difference to their rights to graze even after the new boundaries have been established. But soon disputes erupted between the Ethiopians and the Italians over the location of their line in Ogaden (placed by their 1897 agreement irreconcilably, thanks to an erroneous map at 180 miles from the coast and at various specified points, and little clarified by their treaty of 1908).\textsuperscript{44} Infact, at that point,
neither side had extended its control to the area. In the Haud, the British did not tell the
tribesmen of their 1897 agreement with the Ethiopians; but as yet the Ethiopians troubled
them little.

By the 1930's, the Ethiopians were making themselves felt in both the Haud and Ogaden.
In the Haud, an Anglo-Ethiopian commission sought to demarcate the 1897 line, rousing
the opposition of the tribesmen. In Ogaden, the Italians, who had meanwhile used some
force to convert their protectorate into a direct-rule colony, were likewise advancing. The
outcome was the Walwal incident (1934), the Italian conquest of Ethiopia (1935-36) and
the joining of Ogaden to Italian Somaliland. Then followed the second world war, the
brief Italian conquest of British Somaliland (1941) and, from the end of 1941, a situation
in which, with the exception of French Somaliland, the British administered all the lands
inhabited by the Somalis. After the war, in April 1946, the British proposed in the four-
power commission set up to consider the matter (Britain, France, Soviet Union, United
States) that the whole area currently under its administration should be unified into a
Greater Somalia under British trusteeship. However, the three other opposed this solution
and so did Ethiopia, to which Britain had restored full Sovereignty by a treaty of 31 Jan,
1942 following the ejection of the Italians. Accordingly, in 1948, the British returned
Ogaden to Ethiopia; in 1950, the Italians began a ten-year trusteeship of Italian
Somaliland; and in 1954, the British returned the Haud to Ethiopia.45 Legally speaking,
therefore, little had changed for the Somalis after the twenty-year upheaval, except that
there was now a ten-year limit on the Italian presence.
Soon after Somalia gained independence in 1960, its relations with Ethiopia worsened. Ethiopia on its part conceded as before that the Ogaden border was in dispute and had stated its willingness in principle to embark on the necessary procedures for border demarcation in accordance with the 1897 and 1908 treaties; but it would not discuss the wider contention that the nineteenth-century treaties were wholly invalid and that the future of the Somalis in Ethiopia was an open question to be decided by self-determination. Meanwhile Shifta attacks began and a Somali liberation movement developed in Ogaden which Ethiopia accused Somalia of fomenting and which Somalia declared was a spontaneous local movement against Ethiopian oppression and restrictions on grazing rights.

In May 1963, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was inaugurated at Addis Ababa, Somalia took the opportunity to stake its claims but this was received coldly. In August, Ethiopia carried out a large scale campaign in Ogaden in an effort to stamp out the liberation movement. In November, it alleged that Somali regular army units had entered Ethiopia, and in January 1964, Somalia counter-alleged that Ethiopian planes had bombed Somali villages. In February, serious border clashes broke out.

Both sides called for an extraordinary meeting of the council of Ministers of the OAU and this recommended a cease-fire and bilateral negotiations to be followed by a report to the organization. Negotiations began in Khartoum with the good offices of Sudan, and on 20 March an agreement was reached. There was to be a cease fire and a demilitarized
zone of 10-15 kilometers, to be supervised by a joint military commission drawn from both sides, and a cessation of hostile propaganda.\(^{49}\)

Somalia wanted the negotiations to extend to the wider issue of the future of the Somalis in Ethiopia but Ethiopia would not agree to this interpretation of the OAU recommendation. Further talks were held in Cairo in July immediately before the OAU meeting but came to nothing. At the meeting, Ethiopia successfully promoted a resolution (with Somalia dissenting) in which the members "pledged themselves to respect the frontiers existing on their achievement of national independence".\(^{50}\)

In Ogaden, over the next few years, incidents continued and Somalia continued to complain of restrictions on the grazing rights of the nomads and various forms of Ethiopian oppression. Ethiopia answered that it was merely taking the measures necessary to curb the Shiftas and Somalia's request to OAU (April 1965) for a fact finding commission made no progress. Thus, the Ogaden border dispute between Ethiopia and Somalia continued to be a constant source of conflict in the Horn of Africa drawing super power attention and eventually their intervention during the seventies and eighties.

Now, having broadly discussed the U.S strategic interests and the regional sources of conflict in the Horn, we can focus our attention on U.S intervention in the region during the Seventies and Eighties.
Between 1953 and 1974, the year Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown in a military coup, the U.S policy towards Ethiopia was mostly guided by geopolitical and strategic concerns. The U.S was primarily concerned about access to the Kagnew station in Eritrea, an intelligence gathering installation which was only of its kind in that part of the world before the use of satellite technology. In order to have continued access to this station, the U.S was forced to cultivate good relations with Ethiopia. The U.S policy was also aimed at keeping Haile Selassie in power and keeping the region relatively stable and free of communism. Ethiopia too, with its internal turmoil in Eritrea and external threats from Somali irredentism badly needed American help. Thus the strategic interests of the U.S coincided well with Haile Selassie's domestic and regional interests paving the way for long term friendship. The American use of bases in return for Arms to Ethiopia became a permanent feature in this relationship. Perhaps, in a sense this situation could also be seen as a complex interplay of patron-client relationship where, each actor tried to serve its own interests in the context of perceived cold war threats and regional instability.

The U.S, despite its keen interest in the Kagnew station in early 50s was cautious in its approach of developing friendly ties with Ethiopia. Lack of any immediate threat to Haile Selassie regime from neighboring states and the absence of Soviet interest in the region during this phase did not warrant any serious U.S commitments to Ethiopia. In fact, Haile Selassie's requests for military assistance program initially was rejected by U.S policy makers and a U.S Army mission led by Lt General Charles L. Bolte concluded in June 1951 that the creation of a military training program was both politically unadvisable and
militarily of little strategic benefit to the United States. This report reinforced an earlier assessment of the joint chiefs of staff that, scarce U.S military resources were much needed in places like Korea, Europe and elsewhere threatened by direct communist aggression.\(^{52}\)

But Haile Selassie's persistent demands for military assistance in return for giving long-lease (25 years) of the Kagnew station finally bore fruit and resulted in the signing of two U.S - Ethiopian military agreements on May 22, 1953. The first consisted of a twenty-five year access agreement which assured the complete freedom of access to facilities on Ethiopian soil by surface, land and sea, as well as freedom of flight throughout the country. The second military agreement required the U.S to establish a Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) Mission in Addis Ababa to oversee a $5 million military assistance program that entailed the equipping and training of three Ethiopian divisions, of 6,000 men each.\(^{53}\)

This agreement thus, marked the beginning of a long list of Ethiopian demands (and at a later stage Somali demands) for military assistance and American bargaining for the use of base facilities in the Horn. And Arms assistance became a policy instrument for U.S administrations in influencing regimes in the Horn.

The U.S in order to maintain its credibility as a friendly partner had to concede Ethiopian demands time and again for Military assistance. Between 1953 and 1977 Ethiopia received some $279 million in U.S military aid and more than 3,500 Ethiopian military
personnel were trained in the United States. This military assistance was, however, by no means automatically accepted by the U.S policy makers and at each point involved a lot of bureaucratic wrangling between the Pentagon and the State department about the wisdom of arming Ethiopia in the absence of any clear threats on the one hand and the bargaining leverage of the Selassie regime on the other. During the period 1957-60, the U.S granted approximately $20.9 million in military aid towards a limited package of military equipment and training suitable for maintaining internal security. The aid was mainly to equip 28,000 soldiers of the Ethiopian Army (including 4000 support troops), the purchase of coastal patrol vessels for the navy and a survey to determine the needs of the Ethiopian Airforce.

Haile Selassie, however, was not satisfied by the limited aid provided by the Americans and was basically looking for a more formal and expanded military commitment from the U.S. In the wake of Somali claims over Ogaden since the mid-fifties which posed serious threat to territorial integrity and the American decision in 1959 to support for the unification of the British and Italian Somali land territories in accordance with the wishes of the former European colonial powers, Ethiopia began to pressure the U.S for more military aid as a mark of friendship. It was at this point, the Soviet Union extended Ethiopia credits of about $110 million and apparently also offered military aid in excess of what the Americans had been providing. This move by the Soviet alerted the policy makers in the U.S to the possibility of Ethiopian alignment with the Soviet Union in the event of American neglect of Ethiopian military needs and the U.S, quickly decided in 1959 to supply Addis Ababa with a Squadron of F-86 Saber Jet-Fighters. Again in 1962,
the U.S, as a follow-up to an August 1960 secret executive agreement agreed to train
and equip a 40,000 man army. The American secretary of Defence, Robert McNamara
and the Ethiopian Defence minister, Mengesha Merid, also signed a memorandum in
which the Americans not only promised to continue supporting Ethiopian's airforce but
also agreed to supply more T-28s, F-37s and F-86s. 57

Besides regular Arms aid to Ethiopia, the test of American commitment to Ethiopia came
by in two potential crisis situations during the early 1960s. The first test began on
December 13, 1960, when Haile Selassie's imperial Bodyguard arrested the members of
Royal family and senior leaders of the Ethiopian Army in an attempted Coup d' etat
against the government while the emperor was on a tour to South America. As the coup
leaders tried to establish control over Addis Ababa, they summoned U.S Ambassador
Arthur L. Richards and asked him to contact Washington for a formal recognition of the
new regime which called itself the people's Republic of Ethiopia. 58

The initial reaction of the U.S embassy in Ethiopia to the unfolding crisis was to stay
neutral. However, as the Haile Selassie loyalists began regrouping with superior force to
thwart the Coup attempt, General Chester de Gavre, chief of the US MAAG Mission
along with other embassy staff announced on December 15 that "the time had come" for
U.S MAAG to meet its advisory obligations to the Ethiopian government as provided for
in the U.S - Ethiopian military agreements. 59 During the next three days, the U.S gave
tactical advice to the loyalists in the field apart from airlifting urgently needed medical
supplies. The U.S military personnel also terrorized the rebels in control of the Imperial
palace by over flights that broke the sound barrier and created sonic booms. This timely response from the U.S embassy was greatly appreciated by Haile Selassie on his return to Addis Ababa on 17 December.

The second test of commitment came during 1960 and 1964 border clashes with Somalia over Ogaden. Soon after Somalia became independent in June 1960, it started a nationalist propaganda over Radio Mogadishu and sounded the call to arms for the liberation of the Ogaden and other unredeemed Somali lands. According to Colin Legum, this propaganda was a clear 'incitement to violence and some of the songs aired were worded, 'I shall not feel well until we go to war to unite the Somali'. The patriotic fervour among Somalis resulted in fierce border clashes in July 1960 between Somali fighters and the Ethiopian Army northeast of the Ogadeni city of Dire Dawa, claiming 800 Somali and 1000 Ethiopian casualties. Again in August, some 300 Somalis attacked and derailed a train travelling on the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railroad Ethiopia's economic life line to the outside world.

After a brief lull in their activities, the Somali insurgents in Ogaden launched rebellion at Hodayo, a watering place north of warden on 16 June 1963. About 300 insurgents infiltrated the area and planned a long guerrilla campaign to make the Ogaden ungovernable. During the next three months isolated clashes occurred throughout Ogaden. The rebels attacked outlying posts manned by few policemen who were armed with antique Enfield 303 rifles, and forced the government to abandon them, thereby yielding over large areas of the Ogaden. The guerrilla ranks also increased during this
time to around 3000 and with the help of Somali provided weapons began spreading rebellion in Bale and Sidamo provinces in Southern Ethiopia, as well as in the NFD in Kenya. In response to this serious threat from the insurgents, Haile Selassie decided to put direct military pressure on Somalia - the chief instigator and source of insurgency. In mid-January 1964, the third division of the Ethiopian Army headed by General Aman Adorn launched air and ground attacks on somali border posts and nearby towns. The Somali government retaliated Ethiopian attacks and during the first three months of 1964, heavy fighting took place at several border points particularly at Tug Wagale in the north, 65 km from Jijiga, and Ferfer and Dolo in the south. Ethiopia, with its superior airpower bombed many towns in Somalia including Hargeisa.

The American response to these events was one of unequivocal support for Ethiopia. This was reflected in the U.S MAAG Mission's advisory role on deployment of Ethiopian forces and the employment of counterinsurgency tactics to counter Somali attack. The U.S support was also underscored by the State Departments Africa Bureau viewing Somali insurgency as illegitimate and applying pressure on Mogadishu to end its support for the insurgents.

Thus U.S - Ethiopian security relations during the first decade moved on an even keel. The arrival of the Soviet Union in the Horn in 1963 with its military aid to Somalia and the continuing insurgency in Eritrea where the U.S had a greater stake in the 'Kagnew station' further enhanced U.S - Ethiopian security ties. This scenario gave Haile Selassie another opportunity to demand for newer and more sophisticated weapons, and in May
1964 as two giant parabolic antennas arrived for installation at Kagnew, Selassie forced a commitment from the U.S government for the delivery of F-5 jet fighters in exchange for access to the Kagnew station.67

This demand for F-5s like the earlier ones was not devoid of controversy. As Ambassador Korry advocated Ethiopian case by arguing that 'Ethiopia's geographic location alone warranted Washington's interest,68 the State Department and the Pentagon were not convinced and preferred a go-slow approach. But Washington's attitude began to change during 1966 and was premised on two reasons:

1. The notion that the Soviets would not acquire bases in Somalia became suspect and the construction at the port of Berbera began in 1964 by the Soviets neared completion, suggesting the Moscow might strike a base deal with Mogadishu and

2. The idea that Moscow would not put any heavy armament into Somalia began to crumble in 1965-1966, as Moscow executed a rapid buildup of the Somali Air Force including delivery of six MiG-15s, twenty Yak Us, and twelve MiG-17s.69

Now with very little pretext for delaying Ethiopian request for F-5s the Johnson Administration to maintain its credibility quickly proceeded with the delivery of F-5 freedom fighter squadron during the second half of 1966 and completed the transaction in 1967. The F-5 episode was thus "a classic example of a weak client state manipulating the weakness and vulnerability of its arms patron."
The Revolution of 1974 and the Fall of Haile Selassie

The Haile Selassie regime during the 1950s and 60s, in trying to consolidate power from the onslaughts of Eritrean and Somali insurgents failed to give priority to the much needed Social and Economic reforms to modernize Ethiopia. The constant attacks from internal and external forces distracted the regime to concentrate its energies in modernizing its army rather than changing the character of the semi-feudal social and economic structure of the Ethiopian state. Although Ethiopia began receiving increasing amounts of economic aid along with military aid from the United States, in the form of point four and AID-funded education, health and agricultural projects since the mid-fifties, in order to effect social change and economic development, the centralized decision making power of the regime which rested with the emperor and a few hand picked ministers and bureaucrats thwarted any reform process leaving intact the historical inequities which inevitably led to the revolution.

By 1974, the emperor's regime was rife with corruption, inefficiency and apparent disregard for the welfare of Ethiopian people. Indeed, during 1972 and 1973, a massive famine swept the north-central provinces of Welo and Tigray killing thousands, while the government denied any such disaster. The callous attitude of the regime provided an opportunity for the radicals to discredit Haile Selassie regime in the eyes of the world as they put up posters of the emperor feeding hunks of meat to his dogs, juxtaposed with another of starving peasants of Welo. Thus a series of events culminated in the
overthrow of Haile Selassie. However the most immediate cause was the mutinies in the army during January and February of 1974, over the living conditions and pay. These mutinies were also joined by student revolts and taxi drivers in Addis Ababa as the government imposed a sudden and ill-timed price hike of gasoline creating economic chaos and social disorder. These events prompted Haile Selassie to sack his Prime Minister of sixteen years, Aklilu Habte Wold and appoint Endalkatchew Makonnen as a new Prime Minister and agreed to draft a new constitution that makes the Prime Minister responsible to parliament and also implement a major land reform program. These steps quieted unrest for a time before there were renewed attacks on the regime. Thus a series of events finally culminated in the overthrow of Haile Selassie on 12 September 1974 and a Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC) assumed power with General Aman as its Chairman.

PMAC, also known as the Dergue soon began to implement policies to destroy Ethiopia's feudal system and to establish Socialism. As early as December 1974, the new government declared that it sought to transform the country into a Socialist State with a one-party system, collective farms, and government control of all productive property. On April 21, 1976 PMAC announced a political program centered on the formal adoption of "Scientific Socialism". Since then, the Dergue has emphasized government control of the economy, centralized political control, nationalization of property, and the creation of a "new Ethiopia". 
For the U.S, the crisis in Ethiopia came at a time when the whole of U.S polity was seized of the Watergate scandal. This distracted most of the top officials from giving priority to third world crises, leaving the State Department to monitor events such as the Ethiopian revolution of 1974. The initial American reaction to the crisis was to step up arms supplies as a measure to strengthen the government and friendly elements in the military. The Americans felt reassured when the moderate elements within the Dergue initially assumed leadership under General Aman. In the early summer of 1974, Washington approved a new program of credits and cash sales that would allow Ethiopia to obtain about $100 million in American military equipment during 1974-75. As Gerald Ford assumed the Presidency in mid-August, the State Department urged that the supply of military hardware to Ethiopia be continued. In a memorandum sent to the National Security Council on 29 August for briefing the new President, the Department wrote:

"As long as there exists a distinct possibility that the present situation will result in a strengthened, more moderate state, and in a continuation of the traditional Ethiopian ties with the west, we should continue to carry out program of military aid and sales as agreed. Suspension of these shipments would only strengthen the hands of radical elements among the military and further frustrate the moderates, perhaps leading them to concur in more radical initiatives."

The state department's memorandum also concluded that it was in the U.S interest to 'assist Ethiopia to remain an independent, cohesive, moderately inclined and responsible nation'. Interestingly, the memorandum does not talk about the Kagnew
communications centre in Asmara, which during all previous policy decisions provided good rationale for assistance to Ethiopia. In fact by 1970s the important of Kagnew station began to diminish with the development of Satellite technology and perhaps also because of the development of the military base on the Indian Ocean Island of Diego Garcia.

The U.S optimism of a moderate leadership in Ethiopia however proved to be short lived as the radical elements within the Dergue began to push a hard line and clashed with the moderate views of General Aman. Being an Eritrean himself, General Aman tried to broker peace deal with the Eritrean groups fighting for self-determination. But his proposals met with stiff opposition from a group of radical elements within the Dergue who wanted to send additional forces to Eritrea and crush the rebellion. Similarly, General Aman's views on being lenient towards the top figures of the Haile Selassie regime too met with criticism. Unable to push forward his proposals in the face of stiff opposition from leaders like Mengistu and Atnafu Abate, General Aman resigned. This proved a fatal mistake and on the night of 22 November soldiers were sent to arrest General Aman. When he resisted, fire from anti-tank weapons was directed against the house and Aman was killed. The same night 57 other top figures of the earlier regime were summarily executed. These killings proved to be a turning point for the Ethiopian revolution which until then was bloodless. Aman's death heralded the beginning of a long reign of terror by which the Dergue struggled to create an authoritative state apparatus and establish its
legitimacy. The Dergue faced serious political challenge from groups within Ethiopia and groups on the periphery over its vision of the new social order. Radical left parties such as the Ethiopian people's revolutionary party, a self-styled Marxist group opposed to military rule conducted anti-Dergue activity in Addis Ababa itself. On the right, the conservative royalist Ethiopian Democratic union fought PMAC's rule. On the periphery the Eritrean liberation groups, the Ogaden irredentists and the Oromo liberation movements seriously threatened the existence of the Ethiopian state and the Dergue under Mengistu. But the most serious challenge of all came from the Eritrean insurgency which after General Aman's death gained momentum and by early 1977 was in control of most of the rural areas and towns except Asmara and Massawa.

Besieged on all sides with political challenges and insurgency by nationalist groups, the Dergue requested the U.S for a $30 million emergency military aid consisting of small arms and ammunition. The U.S, although opposed to the Derg's human rights abuses finally approved only $7 million worth of arms after some delay angering the PMAC, which interpreted the delay and small quantities offered as "an unambiguous sign that Washington was opposed to the revolution and was backing out of a long-term commitment to supply Ethiopia with arms". In mid 1975, the U.S confronted a new problem regarding the transfer of two squadrons of F5-E fighter bombers to Ethiopia. The F5-E deal was actually part of an earlier promise by the U.S administration to modernize the Ethiopian Air Force. But in the changed context of the U.S-Ethiopian ties after the revolution the U.S State Department sought Congressional approval for the delivery of the aircraft when Ethiopia's turn on a Pentagon waiting list came up in October 1975. In
a confidential letter addressed to the speaker of the House and other Congressional leaders, the State Department however emphasized that provision of the F-5Es had become a matter of "great importance" to the Dergue and a "touchstone" of U.S- Ethiopian relations. The U.S finally proceeded with the delivery of eight F-5Es which arrived in Addis Ababa on April 15, 1976. The U.S administration also agreed in early July 1976 to provide approximately $175 - $200 million worth of arms to Addis Ababa on a cash and credit basis. The proposed arms package was to include two squadrons of F-5E and a Squadron of F-5G jet-fighters, several dozen M-60 heavy tanks, three to six C-130 transports, an early warning radar system, a number of armored personnel carriers (APCs), and several thousand anti-tank weapons.

The U.S willingness to extend such large amounts of military aid to Ethiopia even after the Derg's anti-western rhetoric and human rights abuse underlines its desperation to go to any extent to preserve the U.S-Ethiopian security relationship and counter balance Soviet influence in the Horn of Africa. The victory of the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) in Angola and the final defeat of the South Vietnamese army in Spring 1975 also perhaps weighed in the minds of the U.S policy makers for approving such a large military package.

**Realignment in the Horn**

But the continuing military operation in Eritrea and the reported "Peasant March" that was being planned by the Derg where a huge peasant militia was being recruited from the Center and South of Ethiopia to push out or kill recalcitrant Eritreans alarmed the U.S
administration that was still trying to keep the door open for a possible change in attitude by the Derg. As the Derg's policies became more violent and repressive, Henry Kissinger sent a strong message to Lieutenant-Colonel Mengistu who by now rose to being the first vice-chairman of the PMAC that, the U.S would not be able to supply any more weapons if "peasant march" was carried out and there were persistent reports of human rights abuses.83

This proved to be the last straw for the Ethiopians who were harbouring no great hopes in a continued U.S-Ethiopian security relationship. In fact many radical members of the PMAC felt embarrassed to be dealing with an imperial power. They were also sore over the fact that the U.S has drastically reduced MAP assistance and that they have to make cash purchases for weapons delivered by the U.S here after. The growing chasm between Ethiopia and the U.S further widened after Carter administration which came to power on a human rights agenda supported human rights legislation on Feb 24, 1977, that officially designated Ethiopia as a gross violation of human rights, and terminated all grant military aid after 1977.86 This move by the Carter administration triggered a chain of events, which by May had led to the expulsion of all U.S military effectively ending two and half decades of political and military partnership in the Horn.

After severing ties with the U.S Mengistu flew to Moscow to build ties with the Soviet Union. During his stay in Moscow, he declared that the goal of the Ethiopian revolution was to 'lay a firm foundation for transition to Socialism and for the establishment of the people's Democratic Republic' in Ethiopia. Mengistu also managed to convince the
Soviet Union in providing a large arms deal worth $350 million to $450 million. Besides
the arms deal, he also signed agreements on 'principles of friendly relations' and on
economic, scientific and cultural co-operation.\(^8^8\)

For the Soviet Union, Ethiopia's defection proved be a major gain in the region.
Ethiopia's size and population along with its political clout in Africa always impressed
Soviet Union. Moreover, like Somalia, Ethiopia also professed Marxism-Leninism
making it more valuable in the eyes of the Kremlin.\(^8^9\) But courting Ethiopia without
angering Somalia where it had initially gamed foothold in the Horn became a big
dilemma for the Soviet Union. In a effort to resolve this dilemma, tried to bring Ethiopia
and Somalia together to accept the idea of a federation which would also include South
Yemen all of which professed socialism. The question of Ogaden and Eritrea enjoying
autonomous status within this federalism was also mooted and Fidel Castro acted as a
mediator between Mengistu and Said Barre in this secretly held meeting in Aden in
March 1977 "but the support common commitment to socialism of the two regimes
proved inadequate to overcome their nationalist differences" and the idea of a federation
was rejected by both sides.\(^9^0\)

Soon afterwards, in July 1977, Somalia invaded Ogaden. Indeed two factors had
precipitated this action. The first was that the Ethiopian government was facing a major
challenge from the Eritreans in the North, and with the sudden cessation of U.S hardware
would be in a relatively weak position until its forces were trained to use the new Soviet
equipment. Secondly, the advent of the Carter administration had also seen a switch in
policy towards Mogadishu, with the decision that Somalia was one of the countries where the U.S could provide a successful peaceful challenge to Soviet influence. Said Barre construing Carter's decision of 15, July to agree 'in principle' to help meet Somalia's 'defensive requirements' in co-operation with other countries as a signal of encouragement to its irredentist claims launched a full-scale offensive in Ogaden on July 17, with a force of roughly 250 tanks, 12 mechanized brigades, and 30 fighter air craft and bombers. By mid November the Somali army was in control of most of the Ogaden territory and captured Jijinga a big tank base. The Somali army also moved towards Harar an ancient market town and the rail and industrial centre of Diredawa, Ethiopia's third largest city and also the main Ethiopian airbase in the region and a rear supply base for the army. Meanwhile Mengistu alarmed at Somali successes in Ogaden, requested the Soviet Union and Cuba to intervene in order to check the Somali onslaught. Moscow responded to the request by quickly airlifting arms and equipment to a tune of $1-$1.5 billion, which was four or five times the value of all U.S military aid delivered to Ethiopia between 1953 and 1977. Among the weapons delivered were T-54 and T-55 tanks, crated aircrafts, 122- millimeter artillery and undetermined missiles. In addition to the war material, the air lift brought in a considerable number of Soviet-bloc and Cuban technicians to handle the equipment, as well as other military elements. Between November 1977 and early February 1978, an estimated number of 1000 Soviet advisers and between 10,000 and 11,000 Cubans arrived in Ethiopia. This massive military aid and Cuban combat troop presence emboldened Mengistu to launch a counter offensive in late January 1978 that quickly overwhelmed the out numbered and internationally
isolated Somali troops within a matter of weeks, forcing them to flee across the border on March 9.

The U.S, during the war in Ogaden remained as a bystander unable to help the Somali army in any way. The Americans were aware that they had very little case against either Ethiopia or its new patrons the Soviet Union and Cuba who poured large quantities of weapons into Ethiopia since, it was Somalia that was the aggressor. Moreover, American reluctance to intervene on the side of Somalia at any stage during the war was also a policy matter, which the Carter administration always reiterated that U.S arms aid to Somalia can only be for defensive purposes and not for its irredentist goals in Ogaden. The U.S position was perhaps meant to curb any Somali ambitions that would destabilize the entire Horn of Africa.

However, the Carter administration despite its criticism of Said Barre regime for its Ogaden misadventure was ambivalent regarding the future course of its bilateral relations. The bureaucratic wrangling within the administration added to its policy dithering. As the national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski worried over the Soviet-Cuban intervention as part of a Soviet "grand strategy" designed to exploit instability in Africa and elsewhere on the Soviet periphery - the so-called "arc of crisis", senior officials of the State Department like Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance and Richard Moose of the Africa Bureau opposed Brzezinski's idea of looking at the Ogaden issue from an East-West angle. They believed that Soviet Union's action in the Horn were not inspired by any "grand strategy" but stemmed from a desire to simply seize an opportunity to
exploit a local conflict. They also believed that the Soviet Union ultimately would fan in Ethiopia and be ousted as it had been from Sudan and Egypt, and more recently Somalia. Thus the State Department officials argued for a combination of diplomacy, negotiation and restraint by the U.S in resolving the conflict in the Horn rather than rushing in to arm Somalia.

However, two crisis events in 1979 - the November 4, 1979 seizing of all diplomatic personnel stationed at the U.S Embassy in Tehran by the followers of Ayatollah Khomeini and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan two months later, dramatically altered Washington's perceptions of the Indian Ocean region and Somalia's place therein. The Carter administration alarmed at these developments immediately tried to formulate a policy that would seek access to military facilities in Kenya, Oman and Somalia. This policy strategy aimed at developing contingency plans to defend the Persian Gulf at any cost. President Carter, in his state of the Union address announced that "any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United State of America and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force".

In December 1979, the Carter administration sent a delegation of the State and Defence Department officials to negotiate with Somalia for a 'base access agreement'. Somalia agreed to become part of U.S military contingency plans to defend the Persian Gulf but imposed conditions for giving access to the use of naval and air facilities at Berbera and Mogadishu. It bargained for a $1 billion five year arms package that would include long-
range missiles and sophisticated air defense weapons. It even tried to get the U.S recognition for Somali claims to the Ogaden and military support for the liberation of the territory. But the U.S agreed to provide only limited package of $100 million for all the three countries - Oman, Kenya and Somalia, with which it tried to negotiate 'access agreements'. The Carter administration also tired of Somali bargaining at one point gave an ultimatum which brought Mogadishu to its senses about its dispensability if it tried to bargain any further. Finally, on August 22, 1980, it signed a ten-year base rights access security assistance agreement. The U.S on its part, agreed to provide $65 million in credits and grants during U.S fiscal years 1980, 1981 and 1982 for the purchase of arms to Somalia and would undertake repairs and expansion of port facilities at Berbera.

But even before the 'access agreement' got implemented, Somalia despite repeated American warnings to curb it activities in Ogaden was found, according to American intelligence reports, to be operating with regular Somali Army units during August 1980. This Somali act invited a strong Congressional disapproval and it balked at voting funds for weapons to be provided to Somalia. But in the end, the first instalment of U.S military assistance to Somalia ($20 million) was simply conditioned upon the "verified assurance" that no regular Somali armed forces remained in Ogaden region. The State Department assurance in January 1981, finally cleared the decks for the implementation of US-Somali access agreement. Thus, throughout the Carter's tenure, the U.S policy towards Somalia remained cautious and incremental despite its fear of a Soviet expansion in the region.
Reagan's coming to power in January 1981 on a platform that promised to revitalize American foreign policy and "roll back" communism did not alter U.S policy towards the Horn. This was in marked contrast to Reagan administration activist role in other parts of the world, especially Central America where it tried to support guerrilla insurgencies intent on overthrowing Marxist regimes in the third world. Somalia, despite its attractiveness as a geo-politically important country with anti-Soviet and anti-Ethiopian credentials could not however bring about any dramatic change in Reagan administration's policy to support it. Indeed, the level of military aid negotiated during Carter administration remained unchanged at $20 million and even the Pentagon's promise to refurbish and expand the airfield and harbour facilities at Berbera did not take effect.  

However, the Somali-Ethiopian military clashes which broke out during July 1982, changed American policy towards Somalia. Although ever mistrustful of Somali claims of innocence, the military clash and the subsequent occupation of the Somali border towns of Balenbale and Goldogob by Ethiopian forces during July and August in retaliation for Somali raid on an Ethiopian army unit outside Shilabo, prompted the Reagan administration to airlift an emergency military aid of $5.5 million. The aid consisted of rifles, small arms and ammunition, twenty-four armored personnel carriers (APCS) that were "married up" with TOW anti-tank weapons.  

For the Reagan administration which believed in active support of friendly regimes in distress due to Soviet destabilization moves, this crisis gave an opportunity to pour arms
into Somalia to counter balance Soviet military aid to Ethiopia. Infact, during Reagan's administration, Mogadishu became one of the largest beneficiaries of U.S security assistance programmes ever put together for a Sub-Sahara African state. Washington's initial two-year (FY 1980- FY 1981) $45 million SAP commitment was dwarfed by the aid amounts promised to Somalia throughout the mid-1980's. Over the next seven years, the U.S committed almost $500 million worth of military resources to Mogadishu - an amount that surpassed previous U.S assistance to Ethiopia during its twenty-five year partnership.

As Reagan administration began providing large scale assistance to regimes threatened by Soviet and Cuban forces, during the 80's, Gorbachev's accession to power in 1985 brought about a parallel and opposite trend of military de-escalation in the third world. This approach was the result of "new thinking" in Moscow that viewed protracted regional conflicts in the third world as impediments to the emerging priority of improving East-West relations. Moscow leadership also recognised the economic costs of providing third-world regimes with mounting military assistance in pursuit of apparently unwinnable wars on the Soviet economy.107

This new Soviet approach towards resolving third world conflicts gained acceptance even by the Reagan administration. The initial moves towards such a co-operation between the Soviet Union and the U.S manifested in Moscow's willingness to send observers to the quadripartite meetings that took place during 1988 between Angola, Cuba, South Africa and the United States. Indeed, the Soviet observers acted as conduits of information
between Angolan, Cuban and U.S delegations by helping to fix the timing and agenda of meetings. This co-operation was also complemented by a series of high-level initiatives. The Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Washington in December 1987, for example, considered pursuing a mutual approach to regional conflicts, while a joint declaration in March 1988 singled out Southern Africa as one possible area of action. As the Soviet-U.S initiative in Angola, Namibia bore fruit, there remained very little rationale for a continued rivalry in the Horn. At this point, the Bush administration which came to power in January 1989, realizing that old geo-political reasons for U.S involvement in Africa have vanished began to disengage gradually from Somalia. The said Barre regime which became brutal and corrupt during this period lost American sympathy and with the Congress no longer willing to provide assistance of any kind to persistent violators of human rights cut off funds to Somalia triggering off a bitter cycle of violence leading the disintegration of Somalia and the flight of Said Barre from the capital in January 1991.


4. Ibid; P. 115

5. Ibid; P.115


7. Peter J. Schraeder, Ibid P.118; Under the terms of the Italian peace treaty the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, and France were to decide the fate of the former Italian colonies. The four could not agree with each other, and the decision was transferred to the U.N General Assembly, which finally voted on the issue in 1952 uniting Eritrea to Ethiopia in a federation.


18. Moscow's concern for threats emanating from Iran dates from the early years of the Soviet Republic. In 1920 Lenin supported the "Socialist Republic of Gilan" in northern Iran to undermine the British position in Iran and to limit British support to white Russian forces operating out of Iran. When a coup brought Reza Khan to power in Tehran in 1921, Moscow dropped its support for the Gilanis and signed a treaty with the new Iranian regime, Principally to undercut any pretext for a
British presence in Tehran. Article 5 and 6 of the treaty gave Moscow the right to intervene in Iran should foreign powers seek to use Iranian territory as a base from which to threaten the Soviet Union. Although Iran has since declared the treaty void, the Soviets hold articles 5 and 6 valid action against Iran. See Alvin Z. Rubinstein, 'Soviet policy toward Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan: The Dynamics of Influence', (New York: Praeger) 1982, PP.60-61.


23. Ibid; P.124.


32. Ibid; P. 13.


35. Ibid; P.28.


41. Ibid, P. 325.


44. See Mesfin Wolde Mariam's op.cit, P. 200-206.

45. Marina Ottaway, op.cit, P. 19.


47. Ethiopians described all the Somalis living in Ogaden as 'Shiftas' meaning bandits, while the Somali government considered them as nationalists fighting for their freedom.


52. Peter J. Schraeder, op.cit, P. 119.

53. Ibid, P.I 19, also see Marina Ottaway, op.cit, P.27.


55. Peter J. Schraeder, op.cit, P. 121.

56. Ibid; P. 122.


58. Peter J. Schraeder, op.cit, P. 124.

59. Ibid; P.125.

60. Ibid; P. 125


64. Ibid; P. 179.

65. Ibid; P. 180.
66. Peter J. Schraeder, op.cit, P. 128.

67. Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, 'Arms for the Horn', op.cit, P.123.

68. Ibid; P. 118.

69. Ibid; P. 128.

70. Ibid; P. 129.


72. Ibid; P. 5

73. Ibid; P.6


76. Ibid; P.8.

77. Ibid; P.9.

78. Ibid; P. 10.


84. See Document 662, United States Policy Towards Ethiopia, Statement by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Seelye) Before the Subcommittee on Africa of the House International Relations Committee, March,


88. Ibid, P.29.

89. Steven David, 'Realignment in the Horn: the Soviet Advantage', International


93.Ibid,P.144.

94. Tom J. Farer, Op.cit, P.125 also see Christopher Coker, NATO, the Warsaw pact

95.Ibid;P.125.

96. Stephen Kaplan, Soviet Armed Forces as a Political Instrument (Washington:

97.Ibid;P.13:75.

98. Horn of Africa, Feb25,1980, Statement by Deputy Asst.Secretary for African Affairs,
    William C. Harrop before the Subcomittee on Africa of the House Committee on
    Published by U.S Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Washington D.C.


104. Ibid, P. 152.


108. Ibid,P.5-6.