

Towards Resolving the Ethiopia-Somalia Disputes

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Abstract:

The 46-year-old dispute between Ethiopia and Somalia has been commonly called a “border dispute.” Contrary to that description, it may be more appropriate to portray it as a dispute that has been driven principally by economic interests and by the effort to control scarce resources. Among these interests and resources are the following: the struggle for water wells and fresh grazing pastures for nomads; the insecurity Somalia feels about the Juba and the Wabi Shibeli rivers, as their sources are in Ethiopia; the discovery of gas and oil in the Ogaden; Somalia’s challenging geographic shape that makes communication between the north and the south cumbersome in transport terms, in the sense that a road through the Ogaden could reduce the distance by 50%; and Ethiopia’s long standing trade needs for outlets to the sea through Somalia’s Indian Ocean ports. Furthermore, the uneven distribution of resources, environmental degradation, drought, desertification, and widespread poverty create propitious grounds for violence. Under such circumstances, economics is overlaid on ethnicity, and economic problems pass either for border disputes or for ethnic and religious conflicts between the two countries. Somalia and Ethiopia have not been able to resolve the conflict as speedily as possible so that both countries could attend to the many pressing social and economic problems that have been crying out for solutions. There have been diplomatic attempts - both bilateral and multilateral - to solve the problem, but in vain. Even military means have been utilized, only to result in creating more problems and the further impoverishment and suffering of the peoples of both countries. What about economic cooperation? It has never been attempted. It is an approach worth taking. The resumption of trade, communications, and other exchanges between formerly warring parties has been known to ameliorate historical enmities between states. Development cooperation could be conducted under the umbrella of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Joint financing of multi-purpose dams on the two rivers; cooperation in such area as agricultural research; education and public health; afforestation; settlement of nomads; integrated rural development; the building of roads and the common infrastructure for trade and other purposes; cooperation in the exploitation of gas and oil deposits ; and so on, could be carried out. Even some measure of development cooperation can open possibilities for political accommodation. And once the benefits of cooperation, however limited, are demonstrated, they can have multiplier effects to change perceptions, and open the way for increased cooperation and integration. The envisaged cooperation can assuage internal frictions, minimize external interference, especially now that of Islamic fundamentalism in the affairs of the two countries, and create propitious conditions to help address various bilateral questions, including the overlapping problems of nomadism and incessant drought, and facilitate the wide-spread mobilization of resources for growth and development. As the economies of the two countries evolve into modern surplus economies, the interdependence between the different regions for sources of supply and markets can be enhanced, and that would contribute to peace and stability. In time, the border would hopefully lose its significance and meaning. In order to understand the complex problems of the relations of the two countries, a brief appraisal of the historical background would be helpful.

Brief Historical Background:

The Horn of Africa has been the site of one of the largest externally funded military build-ups in the Third World that was undertaken by a wide array of foreign powers. As a result, it has experienced some of the bloodiest conflicts in recent memory. The primary causes of these conflicts have been super-power rivalry for hegemony in the region, on one hand, and at the local level, competition over a declining resource base, on the other. The history of the sub-region includes massive population movements pushed by other groups and pulled by the search for better pasture, farmlands, and water resources. The sub-region has also some of the highest population growth rates. Cultivable land is becoming limited, and intense farming and grazing are depleting soils.¹

To be sure, over the last forty years, the Horn of Africa has been virtually synonymous with crisis. Civil wars, inter-state wars, proxy wars, incursions of Islamic

fundamentalism, assertive sovereignty, clan conflicts, power struggles, economic competition, bloody revolutions, famine, refugee flows, brutal dictatorships, state collapse, war lordism, and unremitting poverty have all been, one way or the other, the chief images and realities associated with the sub-region.² The conflicts between the Somalis and the Ethiopians have contributed, directly or indirectly, the lion's share to such a state of affairs.

Addressing the Addis Ababa Heads of State Summit of 1963, which created the Organization of African Unity, President Aden Abdullah Osman of Somalia said: "Ethiopia has taken possession of a large portion of Somali territory without the consent and against the wishes of the inhabitants. The Somali government has no claims for territorial aggrandizement, but is asking for the application of the principle of self-determination."³

In exercising his right of reply, Prime Minister Aklilou Habte Wolde of Ethiopia argued, "the statement made by the Somali leader was an outrageous and an unthinkable accusation, without any factual basis. The historical frontiers of Ethiopia stretched from the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean, including all the territory between them. That is a fact. There is no record in history either of a Somali State or a Somali nation. I regret to say it, but that too is a fact. An international treaty regulates the frontiers between the two countries. If the Somali Republic does not recognize the treaty, then it will not even exist. If he is not seeking territorial aggrandizement, then, what is he seeking? On what does he base the claim? On linguistic reasoning or on religious grounds?"⁴

From the Ethiopian standpoint, no doubt, the well-known Somali port of Zeila was controlled by the ancient Ethiopian Kingdom of Axum and was one of its major outlets to the sea. Having recovered Massawa from the Arabs in 854,⁵ Ethiopia still continued to control the Port of Zeila in 977 A.D.⁶ Zeila was again recovered by Emperor Amde Tsion [1312-1342] when he reduced Muslim principalities like Ifat and Fatagar to tributary states in 1328.⁷ In 1332, all hostile Muslim states were brought under one ruler, Jamal al-Din, who paid tribute to the Ethiopian central government.⁸ Zeila was again re-conquered by Negus Dawit [1382-1411] and in 1415 by Negus Yeshaque (1414-1429), and it remained an important trade centre between Ethiopia and Arabia in the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries. Adal and Mogadisho were defeated in 1445 by the forces of Emperor Zere Yacob [Emperor 1434-1468], and control of the southern trade routes were secured.⁹

The word "Somali" appeared for the first time in the victory celebration songs of Negus Yeshaque.¹⁰ There after, commercial centres like Mogadisho, Brava and Merca became dependent for their prosperity upon the entrepot trade between Ethiopia and Arabia and the markets of the East. Having brought an end to Harar as a military power in 1577, the Emperor Sertse Dengil (1563-1597),¹¹ also led an expedition and recovered Inarya- today's Illubabor and Kefa Provinces in 1586.¹²

As far as Somalia is concerned, our knowledge of its pre-colonial history is not anchored on certified scholarship because it has not been systematically studied. In fact, hardly any archeological research has been done. Whatever little is known about Somalia, is largely based on oral tradition. For example, let us take the word Somali or "Samaal." "Sa" means cow, and "maal" means milk, indicating a culture of nomadism, which can be explained as a response of the people to the ecological conditions of the terrain. Because of the scant rainfall and absence of rivers and lakes in much of the country, the

nomads and their livestock – camels, goats, sheep and cattle- are constantly on the move, in search of fresh pasturage and water. In the process, they cover long distances in a single year. Such economic and social conditions make the writing of history extremely difficult, especially in the absence of a written language.¹³

According to I.M Lewis, one of the doyens of Somali studies, the Somalis are a pastoral people, as they have always been. They expanded from the shores of the Gulf of Aden to the plains of Northern Kenya, and that it is generally assumed that the north was largely inhabited by the Galla and the south by Bantu speaking groups before the Somali migrations westward and southward from the 10th to the 19th centuries pushed them into their present areas. By the end of the 17th century, the Galla, whose strength must have been considerably reduced by their great thrusts into Ethiopia, had lost to the Somali all their former territory as far south as the Juba.¹⁴ Lewis observes that the Somalis have been congeries of disunited and often hostile clans which themselves were regularly divided by bitter internecine feuds and periodical raiding and looting between clans and upon caravans was normal.¹⁵

On the other hand, Herbert Lewis provides a different perspective. By relying on language distribution and migration theories, he places the homeland of the Somalis not on the shores of the Gulf of Aden, but in Southern Ethiopia.¹⁶ If Herbert Lewis is sound in his conclusion, we could then raise a legitimate question: Why would Somalis abandon the fertile plains of southern Ethiopia and choose nomadism as a way of life in the deserts of Somalia? According to William Zartman, the Somali nation is not a historic kingdom or a centralized social unit, but a segmented identity and kinship group, where four out of every five inhabitants are nomads, forced to move from place to place to find the next source of water and nourishment when its current pasture is worn out, and that they crossed the Juba River in the 1840s, and by 1910, had reached the Tana River, in East Africa. The very idea of a state is, therefore, totally alien to Somali culture, and was unknown to them before the colonial period. A settled population is needed before any form of state can be established. There had never been enough economic surpluses for that to happen. Nomadic society is essentially anarchic. But this is not to deny the existence of Arabized trading city-states in the form of mini sultanates that had been set from the 14th to the 19th century. However, these were oriented towards the sea and never controlled the hinterland.¹⁷

Somalia had, therefore, never constituted either a political or an administrative entity before 1960. Part of it was controlled by the Ottoman Turks, part of it by the Arabs and the Persians, and part of it by the Omanis from Zanzibar. The Italians paid 40, 000 Indian rupees to the Sultan of Zanzibar, and agreed to pay an annual rent of 160, 000 for Mogadisho, and Brava.¹⁸ Ahmed-ibn-Ibrahim (1527-1548), or Gragne [the left handed], as the Ethiopians call him, employed the services of a large number of Egyptian mercenaries in his fifteen year plunder of Ethiopia. The military support he had obtained from the Ottomans and his use of the Egyptians was to provide the “historical” basis of Egypt’s 1874-1876 claims to the Ethiopian province of Harar.¹⁹

The Colonial Period:

The British established themselves in what was to become British Somaliland - a country of 180, 000 sq. kms with half a million inhabitants, in order to control the strategic Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb and to keep an eye on the

French, who had already established themselves in Djibouti. At the same time, they sought to find a source of cheap food supplies for their garrison in Aden, where they had 182 officers.²⁰ Largely encouraged by the British, the Italians took over southern Somaliland, in order to serve London as a counterweight to France and to watch Ethiopia. But after the Ethiopians dealt a crushing defeat to the Italian army at the historic Battle of Adwa in 1896 - the British, French and Italians all felt constrained to make their own arrangements and to establish boundary lines with Ethiopia – the only indigenous state capable of holding its own with the European powers in the Horn of Africa.²¹ As a result, they signed a series of boundary agreements with Ethiopia in 1897, something that the Somali nomads had no need for or had encountered before. Accordingly, the boundary between Ethiopia and what became British Somaliland was agreed upon in 1897 and marked on the ground by a joint commission in 1932-1934. To that end, concrete posts were installed to mark the boundary line. The boundary separated some Somali tribes from either side of the border. However, an agreement annexed to the Treaty provided freedom to cross the border for grazing purposes.²²

Likewise, in 1897, Ethiopia and Italy negotiated the boundary line between Ethiopia and what had become Italian Somaliland. They agreed upon a boundary and marked it on two maps, but did not put the agreement in writing. The maps disappeared and have never been found. Italy claimed that the agreed boundary lay about 180 miles inland parallel to the Indian Ocean coast. Ethiopia claimed that the boundary was much nearer to the coast. In an attempt to settle the dispute, the parties entered into a second agreement, and hence, the Convention of 1908. Article IV of the Convention, among other things, declares, “That all of the Ogaden, and all of the tribes towards the Ogaden, shall “remain” dependent on Abyssinia [Ethiopia.]” In case people miss the point, Ethiopians underline the word *remain* to stress that the Ogaden was Ethiopian in the first place.²³

An Italo-Ethiopian joint boundary commission was appointed in 1911 to mark the boundary on the ground. Demarcation was progressing well, when suddenly; the Italian team was recalled home because of the breaking out of the Italo-Turkish war. With the coming to power of Benito Mussolini in 1922, far from carrying out its obligations to complete marking the boundary line on the ground, Fascist Italy had a different political agenda, i.e., to revenge the defeat at Adwa, and possibly colonize Ethiopia. In 1934, it used the unmarked border as a pretext to occupy Wal-Wal - a village located 60 miles inside Ethiopia. But when the Ethiopians fiercely resisted the occupation, Italy branded them “aggressors” for defending what was internationally recognized as an Ethiopian territory.²⁴

Both Italy and Ethiopia were members of the League of Nations. The Covenant of the League bound the members to respect and to preserve against aggression their independence and territorial integrity and not to employ force for the settlement of a dispute until they had first submitted it to the League or to arbitrators.²⁵ When Ethiopia submitted the case to the League of Nations, the League accepted the 1908 Convention as a legal basis for solving the boundary dispute, and recommended that it be demarcated on the ground. However, prompted by the rapid increase in population and a lack of raw materials, and itching to avenge its defeat at the Adwa debacle of 1896, Fascist Italy used

the Wal-Wal incident as an excuse to commit its unprovoked and premeditated aggression against Ethiopia (1934-1941).²⁶

For the Italian Minister Titoni, Ethiopia was the main target for Italian expansion, especially after achieving the occupation of southern Somalia. Indeed, Italy regarded Somalia only as a means of penetrating Ethiopia and for using it as a base for conducting military operations.²⁷ To that end, some 30,000–40,000 Somalis, including former President Siad Barre were mobilized in the service of Italian colonialism.²⁸ Fascist Italy attacked Ethiopia by mobilizing 800,000 soldiers, 600 aircraft, 400 tanks and 30,000 transport vehicles, as well as by the extensive use of mustard gas.²⁹

Ethiopia made no threats, mobilized no troops and issued no proclamations. But nevertheless, Mussolini made no secret of his intentions. The western powers were guilty of a clean breach of treaty obligations. They were supplying and selling arms to Italy. However, Ethiopia- the victim of aggression- was refused permission to buy even six airplanes from surplus British government stocks. Invoking Article Ten of the Covenant of the League of Nations, Ethiopia applied for a loan of 10 million pounds, Britain and France opposed the loan. It was a gross injustice and a cardinal sin, in which, the victim of aggression was sacrificed at the altar of political expediency. Courageous peasants turned soldiers overnight, fought with limitless courage against a mechanized brutal enemy, and turned the tide of the war.

After the defeat of Fascist Italy in 1941, the entire Horn of Africa, including what was yet to become Somalia, was brought under British Military Administration for some ten years. But in 1950, the Somaliland Protectorate was mandated to Italy as a U.N. Trust Territory. As such, since the 500 mile border of the southern section of Somalia's boundary with Ethiopia had not still been marked on the ground, the U.N. General Assembly recommended that the governments of Ethiopia and Italy expedite their current direct negotiations so that the question of frontiers could be settled as soon as possible.³⁰ The U.N. Trusteeship agreement on Somalia also stipulated that Somalia's boundaries with Ethiopia should be those fixed by international agreements, and in so far as they were not already delimited, should be delimited in accordance with a procedure approved by the General Assembly.³¹

Both sides accepted the principles of the 1908 Convention. Accordingly, negotiations began in 1955. There were eighteen meetings between Ethiopia and Italy, which took place in Addis Ababa. The Somali leaders expressed no reservations on the negotiations. In February 1956, the Italian delegate spent ten days in Mogadisho. During his stay there, he was able to reach an agreement with the leading political figures of the country to the effect that the Italo-Ethiopian Convention of May 16, 1908, should be taken as a basis for negotiation.³² They implicitly acknowledged the validity of the Treaty. But unfortunately, the Italy of the 1950s had not yet atoned for its atrocities to come to terms with its past guilt. Italian policy even during the Trusteeship period still encouraged Somali irredentism against Ethiopia and was bent on instigating and exploiting Christian and Muslim antagonism to its advantage.³³ When the negotiations failed, both Ethiopia and Italy reported to the United Nations. Italy proposed mediation, while Ethiopia favoured arbitration. The General Assembly approved the latter procedure, and a tribunal was formed in 1958.³⁴ However, they were unable to agree on an independent person to assist in framing the necessary terms of reference. In 1960,

Somalia became independent and inherited the problem. What exists today is the Provisional Administrative Line formed by the Ethiopians and the British in 1950.³⁵

The Creation of the Somali Republic:

The Somali Republic was created in 1960 with the merging of former British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland. Since then, Somalia had made it its avowed national policy to unite all the lands wherever Somalis live in order to establish what is called “Greater Somalia.” In point of fact, article IV (4) of its constitution states: “The Somali Republic shall promote by legal and peaceful means, the union of all Somali territories.” To that end, the national flag and emblem is a five pointed star – the five points representing Djibouti, the North-Western Province of Kenya, the Ogaden Province of Ethiopia, and the two territories which had already united to form Somalia.³⁶

The term “Greater Somalia” which became a rallying cry for Somali politicians, first came into use in the 1930s by Italian colonial officials, to describe their dream that the Italian colony of Somaliland – enlarged to include a part of Ethiopia - would be prosperous and provide a home for Italian immigrants. A decade and half later, the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, also referred to “Greater Somalia” in proposing the Bevin Plan for post-World War II Somalia. He outlined a plan calling for a British-supervised Trusteeship over the Somali-inhabited areas of British and Italian Somaliland-then under the British Military Administration, and, suggested, if Ethiopia would be willing, to include the Ogden Province. Bevin’s proposal was presented in 1946 to the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Allied Powers during the deliberations on the disposition of the former Italian colonies. The self-serving plan was withdrawn when the USA and the Soviet Union accused Britain of seeking its own aggrandizement at the expense of Ethiopia.

Does “Greater Somalia” have any acceptance in the Horn of Africa outside of Somalia? The Republic of Djibouti, for example, is inhabited by the Afars and Issas. The Afars could not be expected to identify themselves with Somali nationalism. In fact, former Djibouti Prime Minister, Ali Aref Bourhan, was speaking for many Afars when he said that “the malicious and totally unwelcome aspirations of the Somali Republic are not acceptable to us, and we are ready to resist any attempt at annexation, and any move against our independent nationhood in the future. The territory belonged to the Afar people from time immemorial. The Somalis came here to work only when the town of Djibouti was founded in the late 19th century, and after the Franco-Ethiopian railway was built.”³⁷ What about the Issas? Since their Zeila Congress of 1960, the Issas have been dreaming of establishing an Issa state, composed of southern Djibouti, the Dire Dawa and Gurgura provinces of Ethiopia, and the Issa Province of Somaliland.³⁸

The Kenyans find Somalia’s claim to Jubaland uncanny and offensive.³⁹ It should be noted that to compensate Italy for changing alliances in WWI, an area the size of Belgium that included the Port of Kismayou was taken away from Kenya by Britain and added to Italian Somaliland.⁴⁰ When the Government of Somalia made its views known in the early 1960s about the North-Western Province of Kenya, and claimed that Kenya was unlawfully exercising sovereignty over Somali territory to which it was not entitled, Kenya considered it as adding insult to injury. Nairobi was quick to point out that “Britain went as far as giving a large eastern part of Kenya, known as Jubaland [including the Port of Kismayou] to Somalia in 1924. If every territory to which people of the

Somali tribe migrate and graze their livestock is to become part and parcel of the Republic of Somalia, in accordance to Pan-Somalism and the policy of creating “Greater Somalia”, then the concept of territorial integrity of any other state becomes meaningless. If they do not want to live with us in Kenya, they can pack their camels and go back to Somalia.”⁴¹

Despite such reactions, however, Mogadisho continued in being enmeshed in its dreams of territorial aggrandizement in pursuance of “Greater Somalia.” Perhaps, the truth lies in what some acute observers of the scene had detected. Some of the Somali politicians encouraged militant irredentism on behalf of creating a “Greater Somalia,” merely to divert attention from internal problems. Some did so, in order to win election votes. But there were other politicians also who seriously believed in it.⁴²

Nevertheless, the unresolved question of the Ethiopian –Somalia border provided the Somali politicians with some ground on which to challenge Addis Ababa’s control over the Ogaden.⁴³ In fact, less than six months after Somalia’s independence, there were military clashes with Ethiopia, the outcome of which was not favourable to Mogadisho.⁴⁴ Similarly, when fighting in the Ogaden erupted into full-scale war in February 1964, the Somali army was soundly defeated. Some of the Ethiopian generals like the popular General Amman M. Andom had requested permission to cross the border and March all the way to Mogadisho in order “to teach Somalia a lesson that it would not forget.”⁴⁵ The request was flatly rejected by Haile Selassie.

However, Somalia was not restrained. It continued to do its very best to foment instability in order to take advantage of Ethiopia’s domestic woes, with a view to advance its own interests.⁴⁶ It was soon discovered that Somalia alone was no match for Ethiopia. If ever it were to “liberate” the Ogaden, it would have to find allies for itself. One way of going about it was to invoke the principle of self-determination. When there seemed no progress in that sphere, Somali politicians started to express solidarity with the Arabs and joined the Arab League, even if the people of Somalia are not Arabs and do not even consider themselves to be so. The Northern Frontier District Liberation Front which aimed at independence for the 200,000 Somalis living in Kenya was created. The leaders even toured Arab capitals in quest of financial support. When being “Arab” had no political or financial dividend, Somalia became “Marxist”, not because of the objective conditions of the country, but for the sole purpose of acquiring arms from the USSR. In fact, as Tom Farer acidly, but accurately put it: “Even a careful search conducted by the late Sherlock Holmes- the master of detectives- would fail to unearth either a recognizable proletariat or any economic height to be dominated in Somalia. Most of the classic Marxist and socialist ideas have little relevance to the actual circumstances of the country.”⁴⁷ And to cap the absurdity, when its “Marxism” failed to advance its territorial ambitions, Mogadisho’s politicians were willing to abandon Marxism, put on a three-piece suit, and preach the virtues of capitalism and private enterprise to gain the support of the west.

On the other hand, its adversary - Ethiopia - given its huge population - did go for self-reliance and built an army of 200, 000. It signed a military alliance with Kenya in 1963 – an alliance that was directed against the “common” enemy - Somalia. It was reaffirmed in 1979. Moreover, Ethiopia put to good use Addis Ababa’s position as a centre of Pan African unity and consistently invoked one of the sacrosanct and cardinal principles of the OAU – “the inviolability of state frontiers.” It could neutralize

provocative neighbours like the Sudan, by reminding them of their own secessionist problems. Ethiopia could also appropriate the tactics of its Mogadisho adversary and foster “liberation fronts”, and when the regime was pushed by its own leftist, Stalinist, Maoist, and Marxist rivals assembled in the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement, and the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Party, it could outwit and outleft them, by developing a strong alliance with the first socialist state in the world - the Soviet Union. Another factor which influenced the decision of the military regime in Ethiopia to move in that direction was the knowledge that, unlike Washington, Moscow would use all its military resources to meet its commitments to client states.

Arming the Horn of Africa:

Ever since 1945, when the Emperor Haile Selassie met President Franklin Roosevelt, Ethiopia had been making a conscious effort to extricate itself from the undue influence of the dominant European powers, whose historical treachery it knew only too well, and to get closer to the USA – a country whose geographic distance, and history of anti-colonialism that Ethiopia’s leaders found most attractive. Subsequently, the USA began to replace the traditional European powers and became Ethiopia’s important arms supplier. The emergence of the United States as the dominant western power in the post-World War II era further facilitated this process.

Somalia at first turned to the western powers for military aid. But it discovered that they did not want to flout the basic OAU principle of respect for existing boundaries. Furthermore, they were not also willing to arm it to fight Ethiopia- a country that was the principal ally of the United States in the region. Although Somalia turned to the Soviet Union, both Washington and Moscow preferred to be entrenched in Ethiopia.⁴⁸ Ethiopia was the strategic prize to be won. Its climate, physical size and population, history, its development potential in every sector, and central position in Africa, were all very attractive. It was claimed that alliance with Ethiopia would provide a great power with some tempting opportunities for internal political and economic cooperation, as well as for a regional power base. Whereas an alliance with Somalia was of interest primarily for geo-strategic reasons. It brought as many burdens as advantages. The Russians were equally attracted to Ethiopia for the same reasons as the Americans, with an even older historic interest going back to the days of Peter the Great (1672- 1725).⁴⁹ It was a while, though, before their wish was to be realized. Mogadisho turned to the Soviet Union, and signed a series of agreements with Moscow.⁵⁰ As noted earlier, the Soviets were biding their time in Somalia until they could lever the Americans out of Ethiopia. In fact, they were simply waiting for Haile Selassie’s demise.⁵¹

Over the past four decades, therefore, both the USA and the USSR played great-power arms patrons owing to their capability and willingness to provide vast quantities of sophisticated military hardware of all types. Yet, the local actors were also constantly diverting scarce resources from programmes that were designed to help improve the living conditions of the people. This can be illustrated from the fact that military spending over a decade and half (1967-1984) typically accounted between one-fourth and as much as one third of Ethiopia’s military spending. Mogadisho’s defence expenditures were approximately of the same magnitude, ranging between 13.3% and 27.5% of the national budget during the period.⁵²

From 1953-1977, the United States provided Ethiopia with over \$185 million worth of grant military assistance.⁵³ However, the Soviet Union was able to demonstrate

a determination to arm its Somali client in every major weapons category more effectively than the USA had done for Ethiopia.⁵⁴ Although Moscow was arming Somalia to the teeth, on the military balance sheet, the Soviets thought that Somalia would lose a war against its bigger and stronger neighbour. Yet, arming Somalia might be used as leverage to force Ethiopia to distance itself from the United States.⁵⁵ In fact, in 1964, Soviet officials had reportedly offered Haile Selassie anything he wanted, including as many military weapons as Ethiopia desired, if he kicked out the Americans.⁵⁶ But Haile Selassie would have none of that.

From 1967-1976 Mogadisho imported \$185 million worth of arms, of which \$181 million arrived from the USSR.⁵⁷ Thanks to the Soviets, Somalia began to enjoy sizeable margins of superiority over Ethiopia in combat aircraft, tanks and armoured personnel carriers. And as might be expected, it started to foment instability in Ethiopia and gamble at a calculated chaos, in order to advance its own interests. In fact, in 1972, a small probing force of Somali soldiers had crossed into the Ogaden near the area where an American company had discovered oil and natural gas deposits.⁵⁸

Even in Haile Selassie's days, Washington remained unwilling to commit itself fully to Ethiopia. Despite Addis Ababa's perception of high-level threats to Ethiopia's security and territorial integrity, and perpetual sense of encirclement by hostile forces, the United States did not provide the weapons that the regime needed so badly. The strategic superiority of the Somali Army that had very much worried the Ethiopian authorities was dismissed by the State Department as a "myth".⁵⁹ Instead, Washington recommended basic reforms. The Kennedy Administration, in particular, insisted that Haile Selassie's government carry out basic reforms in the legislative, executive and judiciary branches of government. It recommended land reform, local government to the provinces, more power to parliament, expansion of educational facilities, a liberal investment law that would attract private investment, more freedom to the press, and so on, to which the Haile Selassie government lent deaf ears.

However, to keep western aid flowing, Haile Selassie put on a face of reform while underneath, the Ethiopian state remained unchanged.⁶⁰ Haile Selassie's 1973 appeal to Nixon not to abandon Ethiopia in its hour of need therefore fell on deaf ears. The other reason why the Americans did not want to provide arms to Ethiopia was that they had a world-wide communications centre outside Asmara called, Kagnev Station. It beamed intelligence to the Pentagon. Since satellites appeared on the scene in the early 1970s, Kagnev had already outlived its usefulness to Washington.

No doubt, the regime was disappointed and disillusioned with the Americans. Haile Selassie's government wanted only more arms with which it could keep itself in power. It never realized that carrying out those reforms would have provided it legitimacy and served as pillars of its strength. In the end, it was as President Kennedy aptly put it: "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable." The Ethiopian Revolution which erupted in 1974, swept aside Haile Selassie's government and ushered in a reign of terror, blood shed, mass displacement, and destruction of property, which could have been avoided had Haile Selassie's regime taken timely reforms.

As far as weapons were concerned, the military government which came to power in 1974 shared the established perception about Washington. The leaders also strongly believed that the USA would never be sympathetic to the socialist system the new regime

wanted to build. Once they correctly perceived the Somali threat, they started looking in the direction of Moscow. The Soviet Union was only too eager and too happy to embrace them. Washington was not comfortable with the new regime, especially with its policy of nationalization of private property, the summary executions of political prisoners, the gross violations of human rights, and a foreign policy that the Americans considered reckless. USA-Ethiopian relations, therefore, went from bad to worse, to the extent that Washington was not even willing to release weapons for which Addis Ababa had already paid. It appears that there was also considerable pressure from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran and Egypt, which influenced the decision. To be sure, the best policy path for Washington lay in mending old fences with Addis Ababa. But given the Vietnam syndrome, it was suffering from what was called “cognitive dissonance” and “self-induced paralysis.” In effect, neither Ethiopia nor the USA exhibited much interest in salvaging a relationship that had been allowed to atrophy.⁶¹

Fortunately for Somalia, a bonanza was coming. From 1975-1978 ten of Ethiopia’s fourteen provinces were in rebellion against the policies of the radical leftist regime that had overthrown Haile Selassie’s government. The revolutionary upheavals going on in Ethiopia appeared to offer a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Somalia, therefore, exploited Ethiopia’s momentary weaknesses and seized the Ogaden. It did so, according to Ethiopian government sources, by deploying (1977-1978) some 100,000 soldiers who were fully equipped with up-to-date Soviet weapons and attacked Ethiopia. As a result, thousands of innocent people were killed, and thousands were made homeless and destitute. Development projects in eastern and southern Ethiopia worth millions of dollars were destroyed. Schools, hospitals, bridges, farms, power plants, water supply systems, industrial plants, and even United Nations financed settlement projects for nomads were not spared. Whole villages and towns were razed to the ground.⁶²

Addis Ababa had consistently claimed that not one inch of Ethiopian territory would ever be relinquished. Yet, when Somalia succeeded in occupying the Ogaden, the national humiliation was deeply felt by all Ethiopians. After all, fighting and dying for the state has always been a compelling occupation of Ethiopians. Even if it was not always done with the greatest technological sophistication, nevertheless, Ethiopian army units have always been distinguished by a high ability to suffer casualties and a low rate of surrender.⁶³

A detailed examination as to why the super-powers exchanged partners in the Horn as dispensable toys is beyond the scope of this study. It needs to be said, however, that in exchanging partners, they were quite adept and did not even have the slightest compunction or scruple.⁶⁴ By 1976-1977, the honeymoon between Moscow and Mogadisho was over. Since better prospects were available in Ethiopia, the Soviet Union had no hesitation in switching its alliance from Somalia to Ethiopia.⁶⁵ The USA, too, switched to Somalia.⁶⁶ Given the recent defections of Egypt and the Sudan from the USSR to the West, Ethiopia might be a more dependable client to the Soviet Union. While Somali forces continued their successful offensive in the Ogaden, the USSR mounted a massive military airlift to Ethiopia in November 1977. By March 1978, the Soviet Union had delivered to Ethiopia military equipment of an estimated value in excess of \$1 billion, roughly four or five times the value of all U.S aid delivered to Ethiopia since 1953.⁶⁷ But shifting from one system of military technology to another has never been easy. Nevertheless, along with the East Germans and the Cubans, the

Soviets began to train the Ethiopian armed forces in the use of the new military technology. And the Somalis never gave Ethiopia much time to absorb it. Nevertheless, with the help of the socialist countries, a formidable fighting machine was created which became equal to the task waiting for it.

It would be hard to believe that Somalia was encouraged by Moscow to attack Ethiopia. But it would also be equally difficult to believe that the Soviets, who so lavishly and so generously armed Somalia, were not unaware against whom all the arms build up was directed. Besides, they had no interest in restraining Somalia's skirmishes, even if at low level, as long as Ethiopia was an American ally. In any event, Addis Ababa gave priority to the diplomatic struggle. Having gained the support of the OAU, the diplomatic offense was taken to the United Nations, where Ethiopia declared that "the root cause of the conflict was the expansionist ambition of successive Somali regimes – an ambition that is based on an untenable and absurd assumption - that any land on which ethnic Somalis live, must be part and parcel of the Somali Republic."⁶⁸ The Somalis, in turn, answered by arguing that "the root cause of the conflict was Ethiopian colonialism, and the solution to the problem lies, in allowing the people of the Ogaden to exercise their right to self-determination."⁶⁹

But diplomacy alone, no matter how skillful, unless backed by military strength, has no leverage, and does not give clout. When Ethiopia's counter-offensive began, the Somalis first lost air control. Somalia's MIGs were no match for the American F-5s - still used by the Ethiopian Air Force. Within days, the Somali Air Force was put out of commission. By March 1978, some 40,000 regular Ethiopian troops and 80,000 members of the People's Militia mounted a counter offensive and were repelling the occupying Somali forces.⁷⁰ In the process, Somalia's 6,000 elite force was crushed at Jijiga. The strategic reserve of 2,000 soldiers was let loose, only to be devastated a few kilometers inside the Ethiopian border. Somalia also lost its tanks, armoured personnel carriers, and tons of military equipment, and suffered an estimated casualty of 100,000.⁷¹ Without doubt, Somalia was decisively defeated. Mogadisho had miscalculated very badly, and it was not for the first time. This time, too, some Ethiopian military strategists recommended the invasion and occupation of Somalia. However, after a lengthy debate, the government decided otherwise.⁷²

While Somalia was given a free hand to destroy Ethiopia, it was ironic that the victim of aggression was denied the right of hot-pursuit that is permitted by international law – the right to go after the enemy and destroy his war making capacity. There were warning signs from the governments of the USA, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, who were prepared to intervene militarily if Ethiopia had crossed the border. Washington's main concern was to ensure that the Somali Army was not completely destroyed.⁷³ Perhaps speaking for the many who are fair-minded the world over and reflective of the fact that Kenya had its own boundary dispute with Somalia, Nairobi's Daily Nation wrote: "Now that the tide has turned, the world is being fed by a hysterical claptrap about Ethiopian invasion of Somalia. The time has come for Somalia to swallow its medicine. Whipping up religious sentiments by linking strategic issues to Islam in order to widen the conflict by drawing other nations to the conflict, is no solution. The only way in which Somalia can call off the Ethiopians is to renounce its territorial claims."⁷⁴

Mogadisho had even denied its involvement in the fighting. It claimed that the “Western Somali Liberation Front” was doing all the fighting. In actual fact, the so-called liberation front was the Somali army in another name. However, when the moment of truth arrived, white gloves could not hide blood-stained hands. The convenient fiction of non-involvement was dropped, and Siad Barre himself declared to the world that “as of March 15, 1978, Somalia has withdrawn its armed forces from the Ogaden.”⁷⁵

As an expression of Arab and Muslim solidarity, Saudi Arabia gave financial aid to Somalia. Iraq, Syria and the Sudan provided military aid. Egypt gave millions of dollars worth of Soviet weapons. In fact, Sadat was quoted as saying that in addition to sending arms, Egypt might send troops to help Somalia. It was at that time that Egyptian planes which were transporting weapons to Somalia were forcefully landed at Nairobi airport by the Kenyan Air Force.⁷⁶ To be fair, it should be stated that not all Arab countries were for Somalia. On the contrary, such countries as Algeria, Libya and the People’s Republic of Yemen supported Ethiopia.

After the USSR switched its alliance to Ethiopia, the USA started arming Somalia. Between 1979 and 1983, Somalia imported \$580 million worth of arms, of which \$30 million came from the USA. Over seven years (1980-1987), however, the USA committed almost \$500 million worth of military resources to Mogadisho – more than \$100 million above what the USA has supplied to Ethiopia during the course of their twenty five years arms partnership.⁷⁷

But Ethiopia’s military successes of 1978 did not bring the Ethio-Somali conflicts to an end.⁷⁸ A year after the Ogaden war ended, an estimated 10,000-30,000 Somali insurgents were involved in harassment operations against Ethiopian forces.⁷⁹ As a result, Addis Ababa had to devise a means by which Somalia could either be checked, or reduced to its size, or be devoured by its own contradictions. To that end, Ethiopia appropriated Somalia’s own tactics and began to foster “liberation fronts.” Addis Ababa encouraged the establishment of the Mejeretein-based Somali Salvation Democratic Front that was led by Abdullahi Yusef.⁸⁰ It also started to establish very close relations with another dissident movement, the Somali National Movement, (SNM) – an Issaque-based clan group founded in London in 1979, which moved its headquarters to Ethiopia in June 1982.⁸¹ At the end of 1986, SNM launched a military campaign in the north of Somalia that resulted in the fighting between the military forces of Somalia and Ethiopia in 1987. A year later, the SNM launched a new offensive. The military response ordered by Barre was simply brutal and barbaric. As many as 10,000 innocent Somalis were slaughtered.⁸² Moreover, in order to give Somalia a dose of its own medicine, a mechanized unit of some 9,000 Ethiopian troops crossed over into Somalia to support the operations of the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), and helped to bring under the control of SSDF- two Somali towns – Galdogob and Balanballo, north of Mogadisho.⁸³

Finally, after his army’s defeat in a series of skirmishes, Barre destroyed Hargeisa in 1988 with 50,000 deaths. When Issaque, Dulbehante and Gadabursi pilots refused to bomb their own people, the Somali government hired ex-Rhodesian Air Force pilots flying British Hawker Hunter aircraft to carry out bombing missions over Hargeisa. Indiscriminate killings and severe government repression of innocent people resulted in the slaughter of thousands of northerners and in the immigration of some 110,000 refugees to Ethiopia.⁸⁴ With Somalia’s defeat, each of the sixty Somali clans reaffirmed

their sovereignty, and were ready to return to their previous forms of governance.⁸⁵ All this was to precipitate the declaration of independence of the Republic of Somaliland, the emergence of the self-declared autonomous region of Puntland, and the complete disintegration of Somalia, whose breakup actually started with its defeat by Ethiopia in 1978. Let us then summarize the conflicting positions of Ethiopia and Somalia – positions that have negatively affected their relations for over forty years.

Ethiopia’s Position:

Ethiopia argues that its dispute with Somalia centres on Mogadisho’s unwillingness to negotiate the demarcation of the borders of former Italian Somaliland and Ethiopia. The northern portion, (i.e. the Ethiopia-British Somaliland border) it says, has already been demarcated, and therefore, cannot be a subject for discussion, let alone negotiation. In point of fact, Ethiopia maintains that its borders with Somalia are internationally recognized, and have been confirmed on nine different occasions from 1897 to 1981.

1. On July 28, 1897, when the Anglo-Ethiopian boundary treaty was affirmed by the British Parliament and duly ratified by Queen Victoria;
2. On June 16, 1908, when the Italian Parliament ratified the Italo-Ethiopian boundary treaty of 1897 and the Convention of 1908. Duly concluded, signed and ratified, it legally binds the signatory parties and their successors, either directly or by right of devolution;
3. By the very fact of Ethiopia’s membership to the League of Nations in 1923, and when the League of Nations registered these treaties (art.1, para.3 and art.18);
4. In 1934, when the members of the League of Nations accepted the 1908 Convention as the legal basis for solving the Italo-Ethiopian boundary dispute, and when Ethiopia went to war with Fascist Italy (1934-1941) in the defence of the very same province now claimed by Somalia;
5. In 1945, when the U.N. registered these treaties;
6. In 1950, when the U.N. General Assembly approved the Trusteeship Agreement of 2 December 1950, affirming that Somalia’s boundaries with Ethiopia shall be those fixed by international agreements. And in so far as they are not delimited, they shall be delimited in accordance with a procedure approved by the General Assembly;
7. In July 1964, when the OAU Heads of State Summit in Cairo adopted the Resolution (AHG/Res.16 (I) on the inviolability of state frontiers;
8. In 1964, when the Non-Aligned Heads of State Summit in its meeting in Cairo decided that existing frontiers should be maintained;
9. In 1981, when the OAU Heads of State Summit in Nairobi adopted the Recommendations of the 1980 Logos meeting of the Good Offices Committee, and declared that “the Ogaden is an integral part of Ethiopia”.⁸⁶

Somalia’s Position:

For the Somali Republic, the dispute with Ethiopia has nothing to do with problems associated with border demarcation. Rather, it is a question of respecting the rights of the people of the Ogaden to self-determination, and of recovering land, which Somalia claims, that it “lost” because of the 19th century treaties that Ethiopia signed with the various European colonial powers.

1. Somalia contends that both the U.N and OAU Charters affirm the rights of peoples to self-determination, and that Article 103 of the U.N.Charter on self-determination prevails over rights which Ethiopia claims under treaties that it signed with the various European colonial powers;
2. Somalia accuses Ethiopia of being a colonialist state, and argues that the people of the Ogaden are under alien domination. They must therefore be beneficiary to all the relevant resolutions on de-colonization in order to be able to exercise their rights to self-determination;
3. Somalia says that it was never a party to these treaties, and as such, it should not be expected to accept them;
4. That such resolutions adopted by the OAU and the Non-Aligned countries refer to new disputes, and not to those which already exist; and
5. That Somalia has registered its serious reservations to such resolutions and therefore is not bound by them.⁸⁷

The Ethiopians have countered the argument by claiming that, to begin with, a state has to have defined boundaries. Since there was no state in history called “Somalia” before 1960, they could not have taken land from a non-existent entity. Ethiopia has also referred to Article 62 (a) of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, which provides that “A fundamental change of circumstances which has occurred with regard to those existing at the time of the conclusion of a treaty, and which are not foreseen by the parties, may not be invoked as a ground for terminating or withdrawing from a treaty, if the Treaty establishes a boundary.”⁸⁸

Addis Ababa has also referred to the International Law Commission’s Report that was approved by the U.N. General Assembly, which maintains, “that the clean state principle does not in any event relieve a newly independent state of the obligation to respect a boundary settlement and certain other situations of a territorial character established by Treaty.”

For Ethiopia, the right of self-determination cannot have preponderance over the principle of sovereignty, and it emphasizes that Ethiopian Somalis, who live in the Ogaden Province, enjoy the right to govern themselves, to establish their own regional constitution, to elect their own representatives to regional and federal assemblies, and to use their language as a medium of instruction in schools, and in that way exercise the right to self-determination. As if the border or territorial dispute between the two countries was not enough, Islamic fundamentalism has now emerged as the new destabilizing force.

Islamic Fundamentalism and the Horn of Africa:

At one time, the presence of the USSR in Northeast Africa served as a stabilizing function by making sure that local conflicts did not spill over into direct confrontation with the USA. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, however, it may be deduced that Northeast Africa and the Middle East have now been transformed into areas of overt and exclusive U.S domains. But such preponderance is likely to remain quite superficial and even brittle, largely because there are no underlying bonds of shared values and political culture between the USA and the Arab/Muslim world. American influence in the region is largely limited to regimes like the one in Saudi Arabia, that have no significant influence even on their own populations, and which can be overthrown at any time. In fact, Arab and Muslim hostility to the USA will increase if there is no substantial

improvement in the social and economic well being of the peoples of the region, and if Washington fails to deliver in helping to resolve the Arab-Israeli disputes.

The gross national product (GDP) of 260 million Arabs is less than that of 40 million Spaniards. And even if the production of the 67 million Iranians is included with that of the Arabs, the total is still only two-thirds of that of Italy. They generate barely 1% of the world's non-oil exports. Barley one person out of a hundred has access to a computer, and while 65 million Arabs are illiterate, the rate of illiteracy for women is more than 50%.⁸⁹ It should also be noted that 70% of the current Arab population has been born since 1970 with no memory of previous Arab-Israeli wars, that twenty two Arab states have a declining gross national product, and that the total exports of the twenty two Arab countries, excluding oil, is not even equal to the exports of Norway. At the current growth rate of 3.2%, in the next 20 years, the population of many Arab countries could double. These states would be ungovernable through secular ideologies. Internal repression of minorities like the Christians, Jews, Kurds and Berbers, or mobilization of religious fanaticism and nationalist radicalism against the USA and Israel, or against Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa, could become the wave of the future. The Coptic Christians of Egypt, whose church dates back centuries before the Arab and Muslim conquest of Egypt, are a case in point. Because of their refusal to accept Islam, they are hated, persecuted, and despised by Islamists. Speaking in general terms, therefore, since the existing regimes cannot provide social services and basic security to the unemployed, the frustrated, and the marginalized, puritanical Islam of virulent and fiery mullahs- of Hamas, Hizbullah, the Muslim Brothers, and Al-Qaeda - is on the rise. In the process, while making minorities in their midst convenient scapegoats and outlets for their frustrations, these Muslim fundamentalists are also busy undermining the influence of the U.S in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, hoping to fill the void left by the Soviet Union.

Islamic fundamentalism thrives in areas of poverty and destitution. It has already begun its creeping inroads into the Horn of Africa and has established tentacles throughout the sub-region. According to the New York Times, "Fears are mounting again among Christians in Ethiopia about another onslaught from Muslim Fundamentalists. The new government led by Meles Zenawi is not only unsympathetic to the Church but is more accommodating to Islamic Fundamentalism, Ethiopian officials and diplomats say."⁹⁰ Eritrea has been repeatedly invaded from the Sudan. In 1996, a series of bomb blasts rocked hotels in Addis Ababa and in the eastern Ethiopian town of Dire Dawa. Al-Itihad al-Islami, that is based in Somalia, and that has links with al-Qaeda, has been blamed for it. There was also an attempted assassination of President Mubarek of Egypt on June 26, 1995, in Ethiopia. In January 2002, five Somalis who belonged to the Al-Itihad al-Islamiya were sentenced to death by an Ethiopian court for carrying out a series of bomb attacks in the country. These terrorist activities have continued. The followers of Osama bin Laden continue to use Somalia as a base for carrying out terrorist activities in the Horn of Africa.

Over the last couple of years, violent anti-government campaigns in many Middle Eastern countries, including the subversive activities of the hard-line Islamic regime in the Sudan, have been having stirrings in the Horn of Africa that presage its emergence as the new battleground for Islamic fundamentalism. To that end, such fundamentalist organizations as the Mujahedeen of Islamic Jihad of Eritrea, the Islamic Jihad for the

liberation of Ethiopia, the Muslim Brotherhood Wahadiya in Somalia, and the Ogaden National Liberation Front, have all been organized with the active support of the Sudanese regime, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Osama Bin Laden.⁹¹ In fact, Islamist experts had already trained, organized, and equipped some 15,000 Somalis in camps and were ready to lead them into combat.⁹² Some of the groups have recruited experienced preachers and fighters from Mujahedeen and Muslim Brotherhood organizations in Egypt, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Sudan and Saudi Arabia to press their agenda around the Horn. The source of most of the financial support for the radical groups, as well as the weapons, has been traced to Saudi Arabia, which promotes Wahabism - a particular sect of Islam that espouses violence and terrorism. The Sudan and Iran lend support, but cannot match even private Saudi financial resources.⁹³

The ultimate purpose of all this is the establishment in the Horn of Africa of the type of regimes that are found in the Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and until very recently, Afghanistan. The objective was, and still is, to control the vital maritime passage way of the Red Sea, to alter the demographic and religious composition of the sub-region, and ultimately to establish Muslim states of their liking – states where Koranic Sharia laws will be imposed, where women will be treated like third- class citizens, and where people will be punished in accordance with hudud, which provides for amputation of limbs for a crime, and the stoning to death for such offences as adultery. Those who convert from Islam to another religion, including Christianity, can be put to death, as has been the case in several Middle East countries. But why are not religious minorities in the Middle East, including Christians, allowed to enjoy the same freedom of religion as Muslims do? No less a person than Hassan Abdullah Turabi, the chief Islamist ideologue in Khartoum, has said: Ethiopia will be destroyed, thus paving the way for the establishment of a chain of Islamic polities extending from the Sudan to the Indian Ocean.⁹⁴ It should be recalled that it was the same Islamists from the Sudan who invaded Ethiopia in 1888, and among other things, burned 40 out of 47 churches of the city of Gondar, and took 3, 445 Ethiopians as slaves to Khartoum.⁹⁵

Ethiopia is basically a tolerant country. Unlike many in the Middle East, it is also a secular state. Nevertheless, the very same secularism, which is a central tenet of the Ethiopian state and which keeps the religious balance, is being threatened. The country is being forced to navigate between those who are struggling for democracy, religious equality, peace, and development, and those fundamentalists and religious extremists who want to impose Islam through terror and manslaughter. One would have hoped that the regime in power would be even handed and protect the country, but without doubt, it is overly Islamic. While it claims to be struggling against the followers of Osama Ben Laden and Al-Queda in Somalia, at the same time, it has opened Ethiopia's doors to Wahabists from Saudi Arabia, and the Muslim Brothers from Egypt, Libya, Sudan and other countries. For the first time in Ethiopia's history, one can see the striking increase in the number of Muslim women who are now wearing Islamic niqab - the veil that covers everything but the eyes, and hijab- the veil that wraps tight under the chin. The number of new mosques built in Ethiopia has also increased by 120% in the last fifteen years. Several churches have been burned, and Christians have been slaughtered in several provinces by the same fundamentalists and religious extremists. In contrast, Christian missionaries cannot preach, let alone build churches in many Middle East countries. Why is not there reciprocal toleration between Christianity and Islam?

The chaos in Somalia, fractured as it is along clan and tribal lines, and immersed in inter-clan struggle for power, has made segments of the population and their power-hungry leaders amenable to close cooperation with the fundamentalist leaders of the Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Afghanistan, as well as Osama Bin Laden. In spite of the existence of a Transitional Government that has been recognized by the African Union and the United Nations, the Union of Islamic Courts who harbour al-Qaeda members, and who are being bank rolled by Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries, want to establish a fundamentalist Muslim theocracy and to turn Somalia into a safe haven to foreign terrorists. The Islamists also want to unite Somalia, but Somaliland and Puntland are resisting them. Furthermore, Somalia's Islamic leaders want the Northern Frontier District of Kenya and the Ogaden Province of Ethiopia to be part of Somalia.

To help them achieve their objectives, the Islamic leaders of Somalia have been soliciting aid and support from their co-religionists in the Middle East and North Africa. Yemen, Syria, Iran, Egypt, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Djibouti, Eritrea, the U.A.E., Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, and the USA are all involved in the conflict one way or the other. Ethiopia and Kenya which support the Transitional Government have legitimate reasons for taking more than a casual interest in what is going on in Somalia. Ethiopia opposes the Wahabist Islamists because they are terrorists and expansionists. As a result, they have declared "jihad" on Ethiopia. Addis Ababa dismisses the call for Jihad as "foolish" and "cheap" propaganda. Despite denials, some of these counties were providing weapons to the Islamists as well as to the Transitional Government.

Calls for a Federation or Confederation of the Horn:

Several political leaders of the countries of the Horn of Africa and many scholars who have studied the sub-region had, in the past, recommended some sort of a federation or confederation between Ethiopia and Somalia. They believe that federation would end the tension on the frontiers and remove the danger of national chauvinism on both sides of the border. They also argue that common resources of the two countries can be pooled and their products exchanged. The Emperor Haile Selassie was among the first to describe the sub-region as a natural economic unit.⁹⁶ In fact, as early as 1957 he proposed a federation between Ethiopia and Somalia. A year later, he requested the USA to support an association of Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia.⁹⁷ Moreover, as early as 1961, when asked about the possibilities of a federation of the Horn of Africa, President Aden Abdullah Osman of Somalia had the following to say: "If the Ogaden were made available to us [Somalia], we would gladly join Ethiopia in a federation. If the Ethiopians were interested, I would be prepared to undertake it."⁹⁸

A decade later, as soon as the military government came to power in Ethiopia, it made the following policy declaration: "Ethiopia is linked with the Sudan, Somalia, and Kenya by common cultural, ethnic, and economic factors. It will broaden these ties and in order to induce the cooperation of these countries, it has decided to take concrete steps periodically in this direction."⁹⁹ In the same spirit, President Fidel Castro of Cuba had chaired a meeting in Aden in 1977, in which the leaders of Somalia and Ethiopia participated, and where he proposed a federation between Ethiopia, Somalia, and South Yemen - a proposal that the Soviet Union fully backed, but which failed to materialize because of the unfavourable internal and external conditions.¹⁰⁰ Barre arrogantly walked out of the meeting, convinced that because he had the weapons, he would bring a military solution to the problem.

Several scholars have interpreted the conflict as a clash between nation and state. While the multi-national Ethiopian state wants its boundaries to be respected, Somalia wants the nation and the state to coincide. Yet, the two concepts of state and nation need not necessarily clash. They could exist without any need to be coincidental, as is the case with Britain, France, Switzerland and Belgium. For scholars like Tom Farer, the political sub-divisions of the Horn of Africa are potentially symbiotic. Development in the hinterland could foster prosperity in the Indian Ocean as well as the Red Sea ports. If large oil and gas reserves rest under the soil of the Ogaden, the most economic path for export purposes would be to the sea through Somalia. Neither the Somalis nor the Ethiopians can rationalize their meat packing operations without cooperative pricing policies designed to assure a predictable flow of animals to slaughter-houses. Realization of the full agricultural potential of the land adjacent to the Juba and the Wabi Shibelle rivers, the only cultivable area in Somalia, requires an inter-state agreement between Ethiopia and Somalia, because the rivers rise in Ethiopia. Ameliorating the tortured existence of the nomads in Eastern Ethiopia and Southern Somalia necessitates the cooperation of both states. It appears, says Farer that some form of confederation between Ethiopia and Somalia should be worked out.¹⁰¹ Political federation accompanied with economic integration offers the best means of reducing tension.

In this regard, I.M. Lewis believes that the most viable long-term solution would seem to lie in some form of a loose federation between Somalia and Ethiopia.¹⁰² Saadia Touval, too, considers federation as the most viable long-term solution to the problems of the sub-region, and argues that the problems raised by Somali nationalism will ultimately find a solution on a federal basis with Ethiopia.¹⁰³ Similarly, there are some other scholars who hold the view that because of geographic, ethnic, cultural, political and economic considerations, some type of federal or confederal form of association between Ethiopia and Somalia can be worked out in the future.¹⁰⁴

At the practical level, federation of the two countries is a new idea. As such, the hazards that a new idea encounters are many. If it has validity for enough people, and if the idea wins enough devoted supporters and stands the test of time, it may succeed in creating social movements. Some of the movements may seek reform, others may seek revolution. The reform movements would modify the existing social order. The revolutionary movements, in contrast, will challenge existing norms, ends, and means in order to create a new social order. The idea of confederation or federation of the two countries, however, has not reached that stage. There is no social movement or a strong public clamour for it. What is popular in the Horn of Africa today is the demand for change of regime in Ethiopia, and reconstitution the Somali State, and the threat posed by Islamic fundamentalism to the region.

To propose federation between Ethiopia and Somalia, for instance, as the scholars have suggested, is an ideal proposal. But idealism should also be tempered with realism. If Somalia's objective in federating with Ethiopia is to be able to annex the Ogaden, as President Osman proposed, it is a non-starter. It will be a cheap way of annexing one-fifth of Ethiopia without firing even a single bullet. Besides, the means and the end would be unacceptable to the Ethiopians. Realism suggests that to begin with, Somalia must renounce its territorial claims to the Ogaden. After that, a series of cooperative agreements could be signed leading to the establishment of a free trade area, then

depending on the outcome, a customs union and eventually a common market could be conceived, leading to a federation. All this has to be built brick by brick.

As is evident, the positions of both countries are far apart. A careful examination of the issues, however, reveals other factors that go beyond the conventional view. At the risk of oversimplifying very complex problems, we may identify the real issues as follows: First, it should be stated that there were no borders separating the two countries before 1897. Secondly, in the ecological conditions of the Horn of Africa, it is estimated that cattle need annually some eighteen sq .miles of land per head for grazing purposes.¹⁰⁵ This means that when a given area is exhausted of its water and pasture, cattle will have to move elsewhere for grazing purposes. Under such circumstances, what is the legal meaning of a border or territorial dispute? Third, there are Ethiopia's justifiable trade needs for outlets to the Indian Ocean through Somalia's ports. Fourth, there is also Somalia's feeling of understandable and warranted insecurity because of the question of the Wabi Shibebe and Juba rivers. If Ethiopia were to build dams on these rivers, and there are plans, the consequences for Somalia would be most catastrophic. Then there is Somalia's geographic shape, which creates a distance of some 480 kms between Mogadisho and Berbera that a road through the Ogaden could reduce by 50%. Finally, there is gas and oil in the Ogaden. That too has contributed its share to hostilities. These are some of the basic problems- problems neither ethnic nor religious, that one can see behind the façade of border disputes, the solutions to which could contribute enormously to the maintenance of peace and security. In effect, we could say that the essence of the conflicts emanate from the struggle to control scarce resources, and that the rational utilization of the resources through development cooperation, could promote measures calculated to benefit the interests of the peoples of the sub-region as a whole. If more attention was given to solve common socio-economic problems, the conflicts could be considerably minimized,¹⁰⁶ and the opportunity for external mischief, including Islamic fundamentalism, considerably reduced.

If the idea of sub-regional economic cooperation and integration recommended by IGAD and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa is therefore to be realized, in whatever form or shape Somalia is reconstituted, it will have to renounce its territorial claims to the Ogaden. In such a set-up, economic cooperation can be launched as a realistic venture and be built brick by brick. There is a symbiotic linkage between peace and security on one hand, and economic growth and social development on the other. If the sub-region is not to be a fertile ground for Islamic fundamentalism, ways and means will have to be found to speed up economic growth and social development. In fact, once an atmosphere of trust and confidence prevails, cooperative agreements in different areas could be advanced to pave the way for joint exploration and exploitation of resources for mutual benefit. The building of the common infrastructure, for instance, will not only facilitate trade, but is a primary condition for effective cooperation in such areas as human settlement, agriculture, manufacturing, and industry. As the economies of the countries of the sub-region evolve from predominantly subsistence into modern surplus economies, the interdependence between different regions for sources of supply and markets can be enhanced and further cooperation made possible. With the passage of time, there could be a customs union leading to a common market and eventually to a federation.

Areas of Cooperation:

Very few scholars have studied the physical, historical, cultural, and economic links of the two countries. This is a subject that has not attracted the attention of researchers and academicians. The stress has always been on what divides them rather than on what unites them. The two countries function as two separate states, but they are also very interdependent. In physical characteristics such as climate, soils, and rivers, they are essentially complementary. They also share similar ethnological characteristics as well as cultural fusion. Common population groups straddle their common boundaries and spill-over across international frontiers.¹⁰⁷

In this respect, cooperation between Somalia and Ethiopia should be understood to mean the coordination, harmonization and institutionalization of particular inter-state activities for the deliberate purpose of facilitating growth and development. The two countries are faced with massive problems. Instead of constantly preparing themselves to fight one another, their energies and finances could be meaningfully directed to addressing social and economic development problems, and to enhancing mutual security. If the relative shortage in factor endowments can be compensated for by some common and satisfactory arrangements, the cooperation envisaged would contribute meaningfully to growth and development. In fact, the key to solving political differences lies in broadening the mutuality of interests through concrete programmes of economic and social cooperation.¹⁰⁸

The creation and establishment of transport and other means of communication which link the two countries is absolutely essential for effective cooperation. Cooperation in trade should not be seen in isolation from cooperation in other sectors, whether industry, agriculture, energy, or the development of human resources. There may be articles of which there is surplus production over and above domestic requirements which are at the same time imported from outside. There may also be articles of which the production in one, small at present because of the small domestic market, would probably increase in proportion to the expansion of the market. According to the IMF, in 1982 for example, Somalia's imports from Ethiopia were valued at nearly 156 million Somali Shillings, while its exports to Djibouti were valued at nearly 3 million. Given a common cooperative policy, and better means of transport and communication, these trade figures can increase considerably because there would be opportunities for trade creation and trade diversion.

If the transport cost of say an Ethiopian product being exported through the Port of Massawa, which is more than 1,000 kms from Southern Ethiopia, can be reduced by 50% through the use of the Ports of Mogadisho or Kismayou in Somalia because of distance and better means of transport, the ultimate effect would be to lower delivery prices, to stimulate volume of sales and hence to increase employment opportunities and the gross national product in both countries.

In the conditions of the Horn of Africa, it is estimated by civil engineers that on the average, primary roads can cost \$150,000 per km. Secondary roads can cost \$100,000 per km, and feeder roads even less. The building of artery roads or upgrading existing ones like the Jijiga – Imi road or the Kebri Bayeh –Gode road, should be left to the governments concerned. Our major concerns are the roads that will open productive lands and that are sub-regional in character.

The labour force in all Somalia's ports in 1980, which served 656 ships, was only 2,800. But if Ethiopia were to use them, the labour force could increase substantially, and

there will be increased revenue for the central treasury. To be able to do that, the 154 kms Jijiga -Togo Uchale road; the 570 kms Gelib-Dolo road, the Mogadisho-Ferfer road, 350 kms of which are completed, and the 1,000 kms Negele-Dolo-Mogadisho roads should, as the case may be, be built or upgraded. These roads will open the virgin lands of southern and eastern Ethiopia for development and be linked economically with Somalia, which will be to the benefit of both countries.

The harnessing of such rivers as the Wabi Shibelle and the Juba that have their headstreams in Ethiopia, and which are crucial for the livelihood of millions of people in both countries for food production, nomadic grazing, irrigated agriculture, settlement of nomads, re-forestation schemes, electricity production, and the like, requires cooperation of the peoples and governments of both countries.¹⁰⁹

The Wabi Shibele and Juba Rivers:

These are two important rivers on which Ethiopia and Somalia could cooperate for mutual benefit. In November 2006, for example, the two rivers had flooded. More than 1,000 livestock were destroyed and 280,000 people made homeless. There was some damage in Gedo, the Middle and Lower Shebelle, the Middle and Lower Juba, and in some areas around Mogadisho. If there was cooperation between the two countries such damages would have been minimized.

While the irrigation potential of both rivers in Ethiopia is estimated as 627, 300 hectares, it is 230, 000 hectares in Somalia, of which 199,000 hectares have already been brought under irrigation. Ethiopia is still in the planning stage. In view of the total available water resource, it will not be possible to irrigate all the areas proposed by both states. According to FAO, if 5kms³ of water is available for agricultural purposes, the total irrigation potential has to be reduced by 60% to 350, 000 hectares. Since Ethiopia has not developed a single hectare so far, it would be unfair to expect it to make the necessary sacrifice. Nevertheless, both countries could establish a joint Ethio-Somalia Water Commission for the purpose of exchanging information on both rivers, for joint utilization and apportionment of water resources, location of possible dam sites, and for utilization of power.

The Wabi Shibelle:

The Wabi Shibele River originates in Ethiopia and flows to Somalia. Over 90% of the discharge of the river originates from runoff in the Ethiopian highlands. The surface water resources in Ethiopia are estimated at 3.2 km³ year. Within Somalia, the discharge decreases rapidly as a result of losses by seepage, evaporation and over bank spillage due to a low channel capacity.¹¹⁰ The irrigation potential of the river in Ethiopia is 204, 000 hectares¹¹¹, whereas in Somalia, if the flow could be regulated, it is some 60,000 hectares. The river basin study in Ethiopia was completed in the early 1970s, at the cost of \$10 million by a group of French firms. A dam has already been built at Melka Wakena. It regulates 600 million cubic meters of water, and generates some 150 MW of electricity. It has linked with the interconnected system of electricity and supplies such neighbouring towns as Harar, Dire Dawa and Jijiga. Plans call for settling 500,000 people. Here is an opportunity for settling the nomads of the Ogaden, as well as a significant number of farmers from the over- crowded Ethiopian highlands. Research results also indicate that crops like cotton, bananas, sugar cane, citrus fruits, vegetables, tobacco, and corn can be cultivated. Research results also indicate that 25 quintals of seed cotton, 45 quintals of corn, and 60 quintals of rice can be produced per hectare. The basin

is also excellent for livestock. Export potential through the ports of Somalia is considerable.¹¹² Somalia has plans to develop 25, 000 hectares of land by exploiting the Wabi Shibe. If the plan is to be successful, it stands to reason that agreement with Ethiopia would be absolutely essential.

The Juba River:

The Juba River, too, and all its tributaries have their sources in Ethiopia. The annual water flow is estimated at 5.9 km³ a year. The river crosses Somalia for a distance of 875 kms and is one of the important rivers in the sub-region. Its discharge within Somalia decreases for the same reason as the Wabi Shibelle. It can also cease to flow in the early part of the year. Due to geological conditions, its discharge in Ethiopia is almost three times as much as the Wabi Shibelle. Thousands of hectares of land in Ethiopia can be developed through irrigation for growing such crops as peanuts, sunflower, cotton, sesame, ramie, and kenaf. The river has also a high energy potential, and Ethiopia has plans to build dams both for irrigation and also for generating electricity to supply such towns as Moyale, Negele, and Borena. The 162 MW Genale hydro-electric dam is being built. The terrain in Somalia is not suitable for regulating the flow of the river. Since the country cannot fully exploit the potential of the river, much valuable water ends up in the Indian Ocean. Somalia wants to build the Bardeheera Dam at the cost of \$780 million on the Juba to develop some 170, 000. In view of Ethiopia's plans, Somalia has reduced its share to irrigate only 50,000 hectares. and to generate 100 mw hydro-electric power. The engineers think of the project as being costly. They also feel that it will have a negative environmental impact on the region.¹¹³ If Somalia were to come into an agreement with Ethiopia and coordinate its activities with Addis Ababa, the hydro-electric and irrigation dams could be jointly financed and built in Ethiopia with less cost where the terrain is suitable and where the water could be easily regulated. Somalia would still get the electricity and a regulated supply of water. In that way, it could avoid being a one-crop and one-season producer.

Natural Gas and Oil:

An estimated 4 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 13.6 million barrels of associated liquids have been discovered in one well alone in Calub, in the Ogaden Province of Eastern Ethiopia. Given the current price of natural gas at the well-head of \$4.00 in the USA, the monetary value of the gas may be computed at \$16 billion. Its life span is estimated at forty years. In order to exploit the deposits, a 375-mile natural gas pipe-line and a series of processing plants, including a cryogenic liquids plant and two gas-to-liquids process systems with capacity to process 200 million cubic feet of natural gas a day, are to be built at Awash, 75 miles east of Addis Ababa. Synthetic fuels and petrochemical feed stocks as well as steam that will generate electricity and portable water will also be produced.

The Houston-based Sicom private company has signed \$1.4 billion joint venture to develop the natural gas reserves. The planned refinery is estimated to produce products like diesel, gasoline, kerosene, and jet fuels. The gas-to-liquids process system will produce some 500 tons of ammonia per day as feedstock for the plant to be constructed. Apart from providing liquid propane gas, electricity, water, and fertilizers for domestic use, the gas can be used for refrigeration, cooling of houses, cooking, heating, and for water pumping purposes for human, agricultural, and animal use. The project will generate other fuel products for export, including urea and acetic acid. It can also

substitute ethanol for gasoline and natural gas for transport, which will greatly improve Ethiopia's foreign exchange position. But more important, Ethiopia is a country which, like all the countries of the sub-region, still uses wood for fuel, as a result of which it continues to suffer from massive deforestation and soil erosion.¹¹⁴

Substituting gas for wood and charcoal will have a major impact in stabilizing the ecology of the two countries and in the rehabilitation of the land through afforestation and reforestation programmes, which in turn will have a very positive impact on the ecology in combating drought and desertification in the sub-region. The positive impact of the project for the Horn of Africa is such that Ethiopia will be the lowest cost supplier for Djibouti, Somaliland, Somalia and Eritrea. The geological formations on the Somali side of the border are not also different from the Ogaden. Such reserves as there may be seem as likely to be found on one side of the frontier as on the other. To that end, an agreement on joint development, including the laying down of a pipeline to one of the ports of Somalia, could be worked out with the Somali authorities. However, as of December 2, 2002, work on Calub Gas has ceased because the World Bank refused to release the \$74 million loan promised to the government earlier. The reason for this is that the World Bank insists that the whole project be privatized. The government's failure to privatize Calub is attributed by reliable sources to the \$98 million upfront payment that the government has been demanding from potential investors.

By way of a conclusion, it should be noted that Djibouti's independence and sovereignty has been recognized by Somalia, and former President Gouled had obtained a reiteration of Somalia's renunciation of any claims on Djibouti's territory.¹¹⁵ With regard to Kenya, despite the existence of the so-called Northern Frontier District Liberation Front, in June 1981, at the 18th Summit Conference of the OAU in Nairobi, Siad Barre had declared that Somalia was not seeking any territorial gains from Kenya, and that it had no territorial ambitions or claims on Kenya.¹¹⁶ With regard to Ethiopia, we may be tempted to conclude that because the political elite in Somalia is set in its ways, it would never renounce its dream of uniting the Ogaden with Somalia. But the truth is, there have been times also when the Somali leadership was willing to seek peaceful accommodation with Ethiopia. In fact, in the 1960s the government of President Shermarke and Prime Minister Egal seemed to be backing away from the Ogaden issue and striking a deal with Ethiopia by tacitly renouncing Mogadisho's irredentist claim to the province. After Egal met Haile Selassie in September 1969, emergency regulations were lifted along the Ethiopia-Somali border.¹¹⁷

There was also a meeting between Mengistu Haile Mariam and Siad Barre in Djibouti from January 18-19, 1986.¹¹⁸ However, because Mengistu demanded that Somalia pay \$1 billion in war compensation, and make public abandonment of its claims on the Ogaden, the proxy war continued into 1988. Furthermore, on April 3, 1988, a second meeting took place which resulted in the signing of a peace treaty calling for the mutual withdrawal of forces from the Ethio-Somali border area, a reopening of diplomatic relations, and the cessation of support for each other's dissidents.¹¹⁹ To crown it all, by a "secret clause" Siad Barre agreed to accept the existing border and, in essence, to renounce the Somali claims on the Ogaden.¹²⁰

Moreover, not all Somali clans are intransigent believers in "Greater Somalia". Annexing the Ogaden holds a greater potency for the Somali clans of the south than for those of the north. Indeed, the Ogaden issue remains a fundamental part of Ogadeeni and

Darod clan agenda. In contrast, it is viewed with antipathy by other clans like the Hawyie, and the northerners – the Ishaque and the Dulbahante - in particular, who want the Ogaden issue to disappear.¹²¹

The dominant theme of official Somali thinking over the last four decades, no doubt, had been that continued fighting would eventually wear Ethiopia down. But Ethiopia did not collapse. If anything, it is the Somali state that has collapsed and the Somali society that has disintegrated. Anarchy and the establishment of clan fiefdoms have become the order of the day in today's Somalia. Indeed, as an acute observer of the scene put it: Somalia attempted to lift a huge stone, only to drop it on itself.

As a result, some Somali intellectuals have gone into soul-searching and have been prompted to seriously question the very existence of the state and society over which the political struggle had been waged during the last four decades. They have even begun to question the historical and cultural assumptions on which the Somali state seems to rest. They are to be congratulated. They have taken upon themselves a colossal task that is both worthy and challenging. One hopes that they will also question the fundamental premise on which "Greater Somalia" rests. It is recklessness and lack of wisdom and prudence on the part of past Somali leadership that has denied the people peace, stability and the possibilities of gainful cooperation with all their neighbours. One hopes that the country's intellectuals succeed where their leaders have failed, in uniting their country and in creating the conditions for peace and good neighbourliness.¹²²

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⁶ IBID, p.230

⁷ IBID, p.304

⁸ See "The Horn of Africa." In General History of Africa, vol.3, Africa from the 7th to the 11th Century, 1988 edited by Mel Fasi. Berkley, University of California Press.

⁹ IBID, p. 334

- ¹⁰ Cerulli, Enrico (Rome: 1964) Somalia, vol. I, Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, p. 111
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- ¹⁸ op.cit, I.M. Lewis, p. 25
- ¹⁹ See Turton, E.R. "kirk and the Egyptian Invasion of East Africa in 1875: A Reassessment", *Journal of African History Journal of [London]*, 11, no. 3, 1970, pp. 355-70
- ²⁰ I.M. Lewis, *The Modern History of Somaliland*, pp. 40-58.
- ²¹ Zartman, p.20
- ²² See Sir Edward Hertslet, *The Map of Africa by Treaty*, volume II, (London: Frank Cass, 1967), pp. 424-429.
- ²³ Hertslet, *The Map of Africa by Treaty*, no. 380, p. 1225. The Italian text is available in *Libro Verde*, XXII, Leg. 5, 1904-1908.
- ²⁴ Potter, Pitman, *The Wal Wal Arbitration* (Monograph Series, Division of International Law, no. 3) Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1938. See also Ernest Work, *Ethiopia –A Pawn in European Diplomacy* (London and New Concord, Ohio, 1935)
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- ²⁹ Petridis, S. *The Boundary Question Between Ethiopia and Somalia*, New Delhi, 1983, p.52
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- ³³ See Pankhurst, E. Sylvia, *Ex-Italian Somaliland*, New York Philosophical Library, 1951.
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