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BALANCE-OF-POWER THEORY AND THE
ETHIOPIAN-SOMALI CONFLICT
OF 1977-1978

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Balance-of-Power theory was tested by examining the 1977-1978 Ethiopian-Somali conflict and its outcome. The theory, according to Waltz (1979), claims to explain the international outcome arising from realpolitik or power politics, namely, the formation of balances of power. Given the close fit between the major developments leading to the eruption of conflict and the principal propositions of balance-of-power theory, the outcome of the conflict was expected to be consistent with that posited by the theory. This expectation was borne out by the study's finding which indicated that the conflict has produced a similar result. Confirmation of the theory was achieved by further subjecting the finding to the verification test established by Waltz.

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CHAPTER I

THE ETHIOPIAN-SOMALI CONFLICT OF 1977-1978

Introduction

In 1977, the Horn of Africa was the scene of perhaps the most serious regional conflict in Africa in a decade. This conflict, resulting from a rapid series of political developments among the states in the area, also involved other external participants, but the principal actors in this fierce battle were Ethiopia and Somalia. This study focuses exclusively on the Ethiopian-Somali conflict.

As is the case with most wars, the 1977-1978 Ethiopian-Somali conflict had been brewing for some time. The Ogaden War, as it is often called, grew out of decades of hostility, territorial claims, and border clashes between Ethiopia and Somalia. The final blow came in July, 1977, when Somali forces occupied part of Ethiopian territory with the intention of regaining territory lost earlier. For the next ten months, both countries were engaged in a bloody battle, with the Ethiopians, backed by the full power of the Soviet Union and Cuba, finally emerging as the victor.

An attempt is made in this study to provide a theoretical analysis of the conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia in the period from 1964 to 1977. The period is significant for two main reasons. First, it was a time of

major political developments in both countries--developments which, as will be shown later, had a substantial influence on the outbreak of the 1977 Ogaden War. Second, it was during this period that the Soviet Union began to project its military power on a large scale into this area, causing the United States to worry about its declining influence in the region (Bell, 1975, p. 402). This rivalry and competition for power and influence between 1968 and 1977 also had great implications for the conflict and its outcome.

It should be noted that the focus here on a specific period in a conflict which dates as far back as the late nineteenth century neither indicates nor implies the secondary role for the historical basis of the dispute. The conflict between the two countries centers undoubtedly on territorial disputes stemming from the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century colonial arrangements. Yet until 1964, the conflict consisted of minor skirmishes, accusations and counteraccusations, and even of proclamations of intentions to resolve the dispute by peaceful means (Hoskyns, 1969). However, starting in 1964, a series of political developments took place that involved both countries and which had a substantial impact on the eruption of conflict in 1977. The period after 1964, therefore, provides an appropriate historical context for exploring contemporary developments in the Ethiopian-Somali

conflict, and for testing some explanations of power politics.

This study has both a descriptive and an explanatory aspect. Descriptively, it examines five major developments in the Ethiopian-Somali conflict beginning from 1964 and leading to the outbreak of war in 1977. They are: 1) the 1964 Ethiopian-Somali war, 2) the growth of Somali military power from 1970 to 1977, 3) Ethiopia's internal crisis starting in late 1974, 4) the realignment of superpowers between 1975 and 1977, and 5) the breakdown of the balance of power between the two countries.

The explanatory portion of this study seeks to account for the above-mentioned developments and their outcome by using the explanations of balance-of-power theory provided by Kenneth Waltz in his Theory of International Politics (1979). The thesis of this paper is that the Ethiopian-Somali conflict, which culminated in the 1977-1978 Ogaden War, was the result of some conscious but rather uncoordinated actions of each country, centering ostensibly on disputed territory, but actually involving attempts by one side to establish a new power relationship and by the other side to maintain or restore the status quo between the two countries. The Ethiopian-Somali conflict between 1964 and 1977 reflects a jockeying for position of power by one

country over the other, the outcome of which is presently a balance of power between the two nations.

Later in Chapter Three of this paper, an attempt is made to analyze the major developments identified above, and in Chapter Four, to relate them to the propositions of balance-of-power theory. Chapter Five, the final chapter, examines the aftermath of the conflict for the purpose of confirming the theory as well as the thesis presented above.

Finally, this paper deals with a single case study of the Ethiopian-Somali conflict. Case studies are open to several criticisms. They are often said to be non-scientific, biased toward traditional scholarship, and insufficient for disproving established generalizations. However, says LaPolambara (1974, pp. 21-23):

What distinguishes the case study method is that it involves exploring a hunch or theory, or hypothesis about politics in a single situation or perhaps in a few of them. These analyses presumably will permit the analyst to pay attention to a great number of variables of perhaps a subtle nature, that often defy precise measurement but that are nevertheless important.

According to Lijphart (1971, pp. 691-693), case studies can indirectly make important contributions to the establishment of general propositions and thus to theory-building in political science.

Review of the Literature

A summary of the existing literature on the conflict in the Horn of Africa and, in particular, between Ethiopia and

Somalia, reveals some significant research efforts in this area. The Ethiopian-Somali conflict, in Clapham's analysis (1975, p. 93), is more than a dispute about frontiers. It is also "a dispute about definitions of nationhood; a Somali definition based on ethnic common feeling, to which land is irrelevant, and an Ethiopian definition based on territory, to which ethnicity is a more divisive tribalism which stands in the way of nation-building." As seen separately by Touval and Sheik-Abdi, Somali nationalism is the principal factor in the Ethiopian-Somali conflict. According to Touval (1963), the two main issues in the conflict are 1) the border dispute between the two countries, and 2) the Somali claim for a "greater Somalia." These two issues derive their importance from Somali nationalism, the origin of which dates back to the late nineteenth century. Somali nationalism, explains Sheik-Abdi (1977, pp. 657-665), is the major factor behind the 1969 military coup in Somalia and the ensuing radicalization of Somali politics--developments which he considers to be particularly germane to the outbreak of the 1977 Ogaden War. The same author, in another study (1978, pp. 61-65), examines the actions of Sayyid Mohammed Abdille Hassan, the great Somali nationalist, and compares his struggle against foreign, particularly British domination, to the current Somali fight against Ethiopia, Cuba, and the Soviet Union. A similar

study by Laitin (1979, pp. 95-115) also examines the role of Sayyid Hassan as found in Somali history and compares it with the performance of Siad Barre, the present Somali leader. The author's argument is that future historians will not look kindly on the latter because his leadership in the Ogaden War failed to measure up to the standards set by his great predecessor.

Focusing on more recent developments, Marina and David Ottaway and Colin Legume examine separately the impact of the Ethiopian revolution on the Ethiopian-Somali conflict. According to the Ottaways (1975), the effect of the Ethiopian revolution on the conflict between these two countries consists largely in the opportunity it provided for Somalis to press their claims in a more direct manner--that is, by attacking Ethiopia. The Ethiopian revolution, as Legume (1978, pp. 336-345) also points out, created the conditions which led to the decision by the ruling Dergue to seek external support in 1975. The fierceness of the internal struggle for power among various Ethiopian factions was such that the Dergue could not hope to maintain its grip on the reins of power by relying on local support alone. Russian support of the Ethiopian regime, of course, turned out to be the decisive factor in the 1977 Ogaden War, but the decision by the Dergue in 1975 to turn toward Moscow was based, for the most part, upon the regime's realization of

its own vulnerability and the need to consolidate its power position.

Each of the above studies, whether focusing directly or indirectly on the Ethiopian-Somali conflict, deals essentially with the domestic or internal influence on the conflict. In addition, other studies can be found dealing with the international dimensions of the conflict. Gupta (1978, pp. 19-57) explains the conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia in terms of the external forces operating behind the conflict. These forces consisted of the two superpowers and some regional powers such as Iran, Egypt, Sudan, Cuba, and Pakistan. Their involvement in the Ethiopian-Somali conflict was motivated by certain self interests, and these explain their desire to maintain tension in the area. Schwab (1978, pp. 6-20) sees continuing cold war between the two superpowers despite supposed detente and examines the conflict in the Horn on the basis of superpower rivalry in the area. Although he considers the rivalry to be the result of the political changes taking place among African states in the region, his analysis, for the most part, dwells on how that rivalry is shaping the nature and dynamics of the conflict in the Horn.

Chaliand (1978, pp. 116-131), while suggesting what policy the United States should follow in this particular region, also points out that the conflict in the Horn of Africa, and between Ethiopia and Somalia in particular, is

not ideological but, above all, strategic and military. The heart of the matter, he says, is control of the Red Sea, and whatever its outcome, it is bound to have a major impact beyond the Horn, affecting the course of superpower relations. According to Castagno (1972, pp. 155-180), the conflict in the Horn, and especially between Ethiopia and Somalia, can be explained partly in terms of the geopolitical interests of some major powers, most especially the superpowers. The major value of the Horn, he points out, is in its geographic position. It fits snugly into the peculiar structure of the cold war spatial relationships. The Horn is linked with the Middle East, East Africa, and the Sudanic belt that runs from Djibouti to the Senegal. And the two countries, Ethiopia and Somalia, have become the footholds of the superpowers in this important region that connects the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean.

Finally, Mathies's analysis (1978) focuses on three important new developments which, in 1975, were leading to renewed escalation of the conflict in the Horn. These were: 1) the "Greater Somali" policy, which was being forcefully pursued through Somali arms buildup and alliance with the Soviet Union, 2) the superpower involvement in the conflict, largely as a result of the area's strategic importance, and 3) Ethiopia's internal dissension, which was reducing her military power vis-a-vis Somalia. According to Mathies, the

consequence of these developments was a possible shift in the then existing balance of power in the Horn.

All of the above-mentioned studies deal with the various aspects of the Ethiopian-Somali conflict. All (except for Mathies's analysis, which is purely descriptive) can be classified into two general categories: studies that focus on the internal influences on the conflict and studies which examine the conflict's external dimensions. Each approach, no doubt, is useful and destructive. Each is particularly susceptible, however, to the criticism that its analysis focuses too narrowly on one level of analysis. In his own study of the political conflict in the Horn of Africa, Gorman (1981, p. 2) begins with criticisms of what he sees as the tendency among studies of international conflict to focus on one level of analysis, whether individual, societal, or systemic. The problem with such studies, as he points out, (p. 2) is that "each fails to capture the potential dynamics of interactions between levels of analysis ... (and) each illustrates the tendency in conflict analysis to artificially impose analytical barriers on the scope of the inquiry." Gorman applies a theoretical framework which is intended to break down these barriers. Using the linkage model popularized by James Rosenau, he examines the roles of domestic and international influences and the political linkages between such influences on the conflict. A major purpose of his study,

says Gorman (1981, p. 2), "is to identify and analyze those linkages between the local conflict situation and trends in the international system that contributes to the outbreak, conduct, and termination of the Ethiopian-Somali war."

Gorman is well aware, of course, of the criticisms of the linkage model offered by some international relations scholars. He also notes that some students of African politics reject both the normative and the empirical assumptions of most Western analyses of African conflict. He contends, however, that the linkage model best captures the study of conflict in the contemporary African context. Says Gorman (1981, p. 2),

Like the study of international conflict generally, the study of conflict in Africa has not always been mindful of the need to consider the interaction of local and international factors in the evolution of conflicts between African nations. Yet the analyst of African conflicts must be ever aware of the potential and actual interplay between a combination of local instabilities and vulnerabilities to external influence that characterizes contemporary African politics.

Gorman's work is one of the most elaborate studies of the Ethiopian-Somali conflict. Its particular advantage over other studies has to do, more than anything else, with the theoretical framework which underlies the study. However, Gorman's failure to indicate the comparative weights of systemic and subsystemic causes and to show how forces and effects change from one level to another limits

the matters that his model can handle. Granted that he is able to identify a number of systemic and unit level trends that contribute to the outbreak of conflict, he still cannot weigh and interrelate these trends in a way that permits one to distinguish between causes and effects. Because he is not able to do so, his model turns out to be reductionist,¹ and his work suffers from the same criticism he has levied against others.

Since Gorman's objective was to show how systemic and subsystemic factors combine or interact to produce an international event, in this case, the 1977-1978 Ethiopian-Somali conflict, and since this led him to employ the linkage model for his analysis, one wonders if another theory, model, or approach could not have achieved the same goal, albeit in a better and less controversial fashion. Balance-of-power theory is chosen here for two reasons. First, the theory, as will be seen later in Chapter Four, enables one to distinguish and to capture the dynamics of interaction between levels of analysis. Second, preliminary investigation into the causes of the 1977-1978 Ethiopian-Somali War shows that there is a parallel relationship between the major developments leading to the outbreak of conflict in 1977 and the principal underlying assumptions or propositions of the theory. This tends to suggest 1) that balance-of-power theory can be applied to the Ethiopian-Somali conflict in the period in which these major

developments took place, that is, from 1964 to 1977; and 2) that the conflict and its outcome can be used as a test-case for the theory.

Balance-of-power theory, of course, claims to explain the international outcome arising from realpolitik or power politics; namely, the formation of balance of power. Analysis of the postwar situation between Ethiopia and Somalia should indicate whether or not the conflict has produced a similar outcome. Thus while the main purpose of this study is to provide a different theoretical perspective on the conflict, a second underlying purpose is to test the empirical validity of balance-of-power, and to see if the theory remains a valuable tool for analysis of the international political system or its subsystems.

The Ethiopian-Somali conflict covered many centuries and, for this reason, this study begins by examining the historical enmity between the two peoples and the territorial dispute between the two countries.

CHAPTER II

ROOTS OF ETHIOPIAN-SOMALI CONFLICT

The roots of the Ethiopian-Somali conflict can be found in the historical enmity and territorial dispute between the two nations. Historical hostility between Ethiopians and Somalis dates back many centuries and is a direct result of four distinct but related factors: 1) the religious rivalry of Islamic Somali and Christian Ethiopians; 2) the cultural competition between them; 3) the competition for economic resources; and 4) the ethnic differences that produced mutual jealousies and biases (Gorman, 1981, p. 44). The territorial dispute has had the most impact on the conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia, and is the product of the nineteenth-century European colonial occupation of the Horn.

Historical Factors

The history of the Horn of Africa for over two thousand years is that of many different peoples, each possessing its own unique traditions, language, religion and local economy, and contesting with one another for exploitation of natural resources. Prior to the fourteenth century, a variety of people including the Oromos, Amharas, and the Somalis lived to the east and south of the present Ethiopia in what is now modern Somalia. The origins of the Somalis remain a subject of debate. One account is that they made an ambiguous

appearance on the historical stage at about A.D. 1000 along the coast of the Gulf of Aden, then gradually edged their way south during the next nine hundred years. By the turn of the twentieth century, they had reached the Tana River (Farer, 1979, p. 70).

Because of their cultural uniformity, the Somalis are considered to be one of the few ethnic groups in Africa with a distinct national identity. Says Farer (1979, p. 70-71),

The Somalis share a number of cultural attributes which include a common language, a rich oral literature centered on poetic forms, a communal life organized around similar egalitarian institutions, a claim to Arab ancestry dating back over many thousand years, and a powerful devotion to Islam. These cultural attributes, as well as a long history of Somali occupation of contiguous territory, and at least 500 years of intermittent conflict with the Christian Ethiopians are responsible for the shared sense of nationhood which exists today among Somalis.

But the author is also quick to point out that despite their cultural bounds, the Somalis are less homogenous than their outward appearance indicates. A major cleavage, he says, exists in Somali society between two main tribal groups, the Saab and the Samalee. In addition to this basic Saab-Samalee cleavage, the Somalis are also divided into six great clan-families, which are further subdivided into patrilinear kingship groups.

The Ethiopians are a mix of various groups. For many centuries these groups engaged in constant conflict with one another. Prior to 1300 A.D., there was no group strong

enough to dominate others. The synthesis later of two rival cultures, the Aksumites of Tigre and the Amharas of Wallo, soon led to the dominance of these two groups over others. The Amharas were the stronger of the two and their expansion over the surrounding areas established the great Abyssinian empire of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

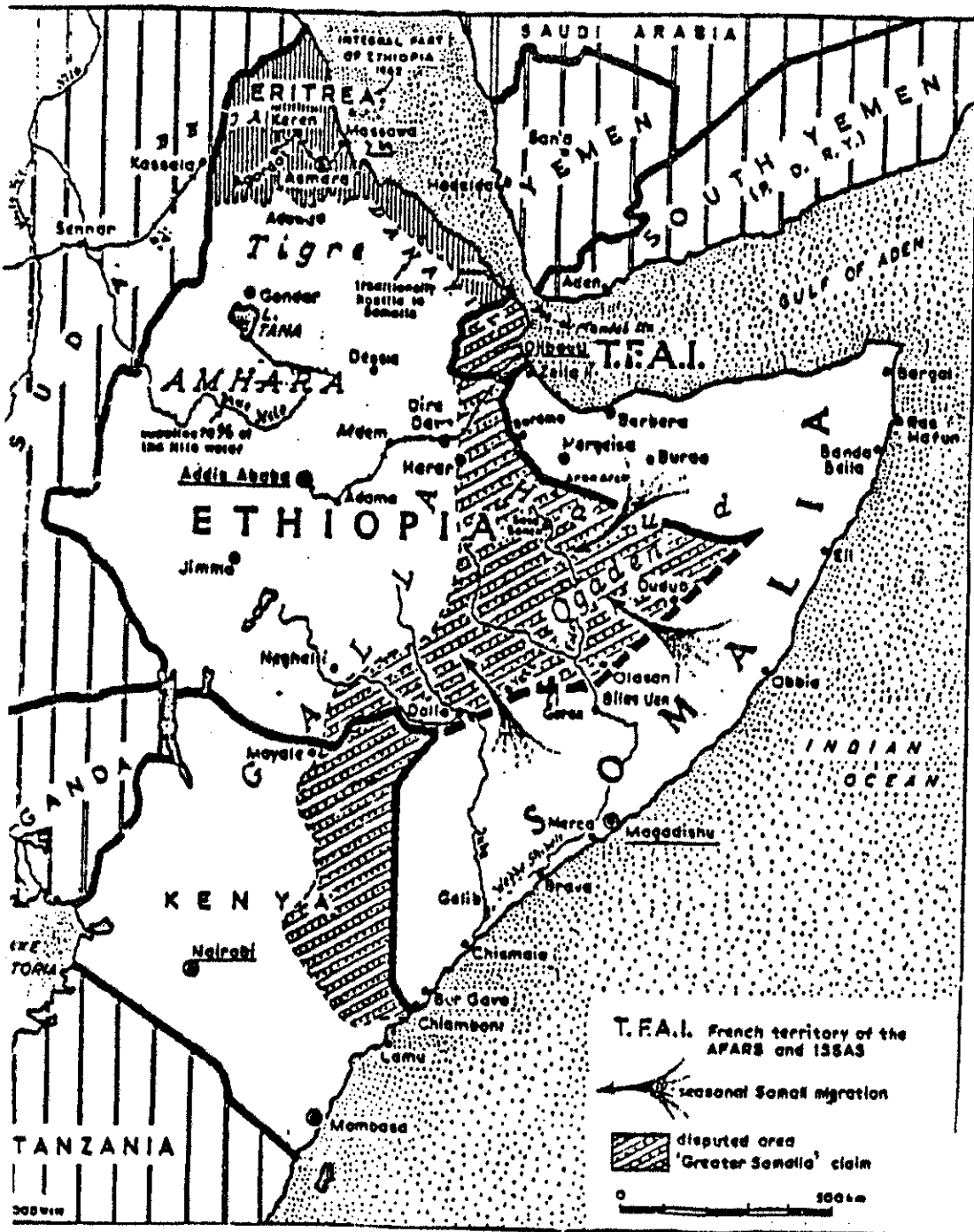
Amharic expansion brought several disparate groups under the Abyssinian empire but, for the most part, excluded the Somalis, who remained much further apart geographically from Ethiopians than were most other groups at the time. But this would not last for long. The Amharic expansion in the fifteenth century coincided, incidentally, with the expansion of Muslim Arabs to coastal areas all along the Horn of Africa. As a result of the latter, the Somalis and Ethiopians were soon brought into closer contact.

The expansion of Muslim Arab influence from Egypt down the Red Sea coast and the Horn of Africa caused large numbers of Islamized Somali to move westward away from the coast and to expand inland. The story of Somali expansion is largely one of violent expulsion of the existing inhabitants along the way, a process which finally resulted in the establishment of a single cultural nation in a vast though impoverished territory, spreading westward from the sea to the long interface with Ethiopian power. Geographical propinquity between Ethiopians and Somalis led to intense cultural, economic, and religious competition

between the two groups. But it was the religious and cultural effect of Islam that initially exerted a greater influence. Partly as a result of Muslim expansion in the north, the Christian areas of Abyssinia were forced to unite not only against the Muslim Arab invaders but also against the expanding Islamic Somalis. The action set the stage for future religious division and war between Ethiopians and Somalis (Gorman, 1981, p. 24).

Also, at the heart of Somali-Ethiopian conflict is the fight for control of economic resources of the Horn. Prior to the late nineteenth century, the territory inhabited by Somalis stretched from the coast westward to the margin of Ethiopian highlands. For the most part, this territory consists of impoverished lands, except for three or more less distinct areas: 1) the small but relatively well-watered region in the north running between the Somali provincial center of Harghessa and Haran, an ancient Muslim city annexed by King Menelik of Ethiopia in 1887; 2) the broad sweep of dry grassland south of the above region, now entirely under Ethiopian administration called the Haud; and 3) the larger plain of the Ogaden rolling south across the Kenya border and sweeping up, on the west, to the Ethiopian highlands and, on the east to the southern highlands of Somalia (See Figure 1).

Figure I. The Horn of Africa: The Disputed Area.



Source: Copied from Abir Mordechai, "The Contentious Horn of Africa" Conflict Studies, 1972, p. 8.

The economic links among these areas and between them and the remainder of Somali-occupied territory are as intimate as the cultural ones. The very livelihood and survival of the Somali people, most of whom are nomads, depends on the existence and availability of pasture and grazing lands for their livestock. Farer (1979, p. 72) renders a vivid account of the economic situation of Somalis in these areas:

Spring and autumn see several hundred thousand herdsmen from both northern and central Somalia flooding into every part of the Haud. Somalis from the Ogaden move their herds and flocks into the Haud's periphery. After the rains, some northern clansmen, rather than returning home, go down to the wells of Ogaden clans who welcome them in reciprocity for assistance rendered by the northerners in connection with the export of livestock through the port of Berbera. Ogaden Somalis, some of whom move back and forth across the political border in their restless search for better pasture, also export livestock through the southern ports Mogadishu and Kismaya.

This, according to Farer (1979, p. 72), was "the timeless order of life before the devastation wrought by the drought and the Ogaden War". It should be pointed out, of course, that the creation of political borders between Ethiopia and Somalia occurred during the colonial period. One important effect of nineteenth-century colonial partition of the Horn was the disruption of the economic lives of Somali people caused by the incorporation of the Haud and Ogaden regions into Ethiopian territory. The addition of these Somali-inhabited areas into Ethiopian controlled territory limits

the movement of Somali herdsmen across borders in search for better pasture and grazing lands, and helps to foster a powerful irredentist sentiment already generated by cultural homogeneity, and a tradition of conflict with the Ethiopian Ambaras.

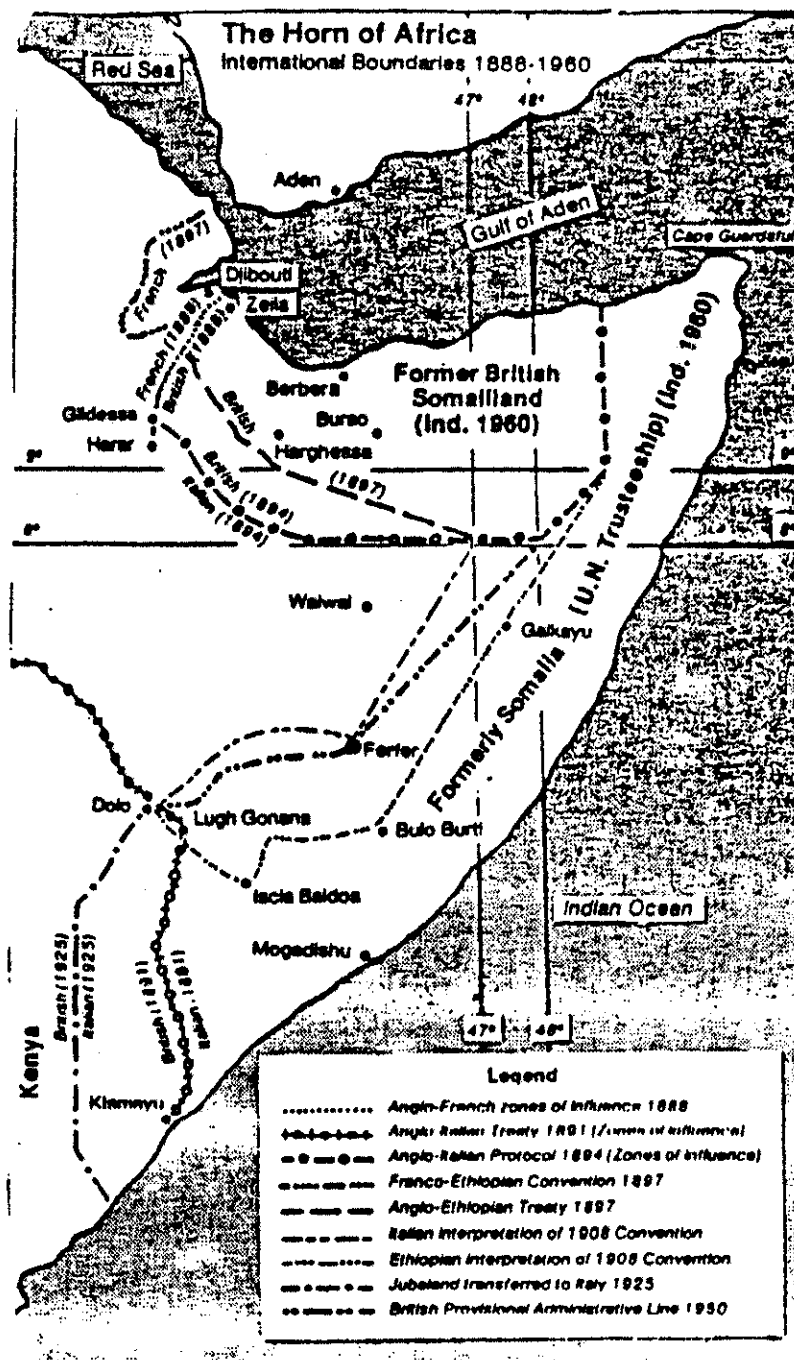
The Territorial Dispute

The nineteenth century was the most crucial period in the development of Ethiopian-Somali relations as they exist today. One important reason for this is that the partition of Somali-inhabited territory between the European powers and Ethiopia took place in this period. The result of that partition is the existing frontiers on the Horn of Africa.

The territorial or boundary dispute between Ethiopia and Somalia began as a result of competition between Ethiopia and three European powers, Great Britain, France, and Italy, for control of the Horn.

The 1897 treaty between Britain and King Menelik of Ethiopia established the first political boundary between Ethiopia and Somalia (see Figure 2). Under the terms of the treaty, Ethiopia assumed de facto control of the Haud regions which was then under British administration. Much of the controversy surrounding this treaty occurred for two reasons; first, the Somalis considered the treaty to be a violation of the 1884 Anglo-Somali agreements which called for British protection of Somalis and their territories from

Figure 2. The Horn of Africa: International Boundaries, 1888-1960.



Source: John Drysdale, The Somali Dispute, 1964, p. 24.

their powerful Ethiopian neighbors and from foreign incursions as well; and second, throughout the negotiations between Great Britain and King Menelik of Ethiopia, the Somalis who inhabited the area were never informed of the termination of British authority in the Haud region nor were they informed of the terms of agreement or their potential implications (Farer, 1979, p. 73).

A similar treaty between Menelik and Italy in 1908 also resulted in Ethiopia gaining control of the Ogaden area of what was then known as Italian Somaliland. Not surprisingly, the Somali government since independence has refused to negotiate on the basis of any earlier treaties or conventions.

In 1935, following the rise of Fascism in Italy, Italian forces regained control of the Ogaden region after defeating Ethiopian forces in a war which resulted from a border incident (otherwise known as the Walwal incident) and involving troops of the two countries. But the Italian gain was short-lived due to the Second World War. As a result of Italy's defeat in that war, her imperial holdings were temporarily repossessed by the victorious Allied Powers. The administration of the Ogaden was handed temporarily in 1946 to the British, despite Ethiopian protests (Ottaway, 1982, p. 19). This was in addition to that area of Somaliland which the British already controlled. It was to

be the second time in more than fifty years that the two occupied areas of Somali territory, the Ogaden region and the British-controlled Somaliland, would become united under British Administration. The two areas were first united under the British prior to the demarcation of formal boundaries between Britain and Italy in 1894.

The reassertion of Ethiopian control in the Ogaden in 1946 marked the second time that the British, in violation of 1884 Anglo-Somali agreements, and again for reasons of political expediency, had betrayed the Somalis. Attempts by Ogaden Somalis to resist Ethiopian administration led to the Jijiga incident in which over two dozen members of the Somali Youth League, a newly formed nationalist group, were killed by Ethiopian troops (Corman, 1981, p. 33).

Somali Nationalism

All along, the reaction of the Somalis to Ethiopian occupation of their territory had been that of undisguised hostility mixed with latent nationalistic feelings and emotions. Later during the colonial period, Somali nationalism was to come full cycle. But the origin of it could be said to date back to the activities of a man considered by many Somalis and students of Somali history as the founder or pioneer of Somali nationalism. For twenty years, Sheik Mohammed Abdille Hassan (or the "Mad Mulla" as he was called by his British adversaries) conducted one of

the earliest modern guerilla campaigns against British and Ethiopian forces. His was a holy war fought to liberate all parts of Somalia from alien domination. He appealed not just to his own clans but to all Somali clans and sought to unite them into one great entity. He was defeated in 1920 by a combination of British and Ethiopian forces, but his persistent and unswerving opposition to foreign occupants of Somali territories became a source of inspiration to future generations and imbued them with deep feelings of national pride (Farer, 1979, pp. 79-81). Along with this came the recognition of the distinctiveness of Somali culture which after the Second World War was to foster a deep sense of nationhood.

Somali Independence and Territorial Claim

For some time after the Second World War, the big four powers--Great Britain, the United States, Soviet Union, and France--debated the status of the former Italian colonies. In 1950, a compromise formula was adopted in which the United Nations General Assembly, acting on the direction of the Security Council, federated Eritrea with Ethiopia, and placed Somalia under a limited ten-year trusteeship administered by the reformed Italian government.

The ten-year period under Italian and British trusteeship witnessed a significant growth of Somali nationalism. Saadia Touval has identified three major

developments which contributed to the significant rise in Somali national awareness during this period: 1) resentment against foreign rule which was seen to interfere with traditional Somali ways of life; 2) religious antagonism between Islamic Somalis and Christian Ethiopians and 3) the deliberate encouragement of Somali national feelings by various colonial authorities to undermine the authority of neighboring government (Touval, 1963, pp. 61-62). Another important factor in this regard is the emergence of a significant elite whose outlook transcended traditional clans and whose activities were directed towards the establishment of a Somali nation. The creation of the Somali Youth League in 1943 at Mogadishu marked the first official expression of this elite. This organization later became a political party and went on to form the first independent government of Somalia (Gorman, 1981, pp. 33-34).

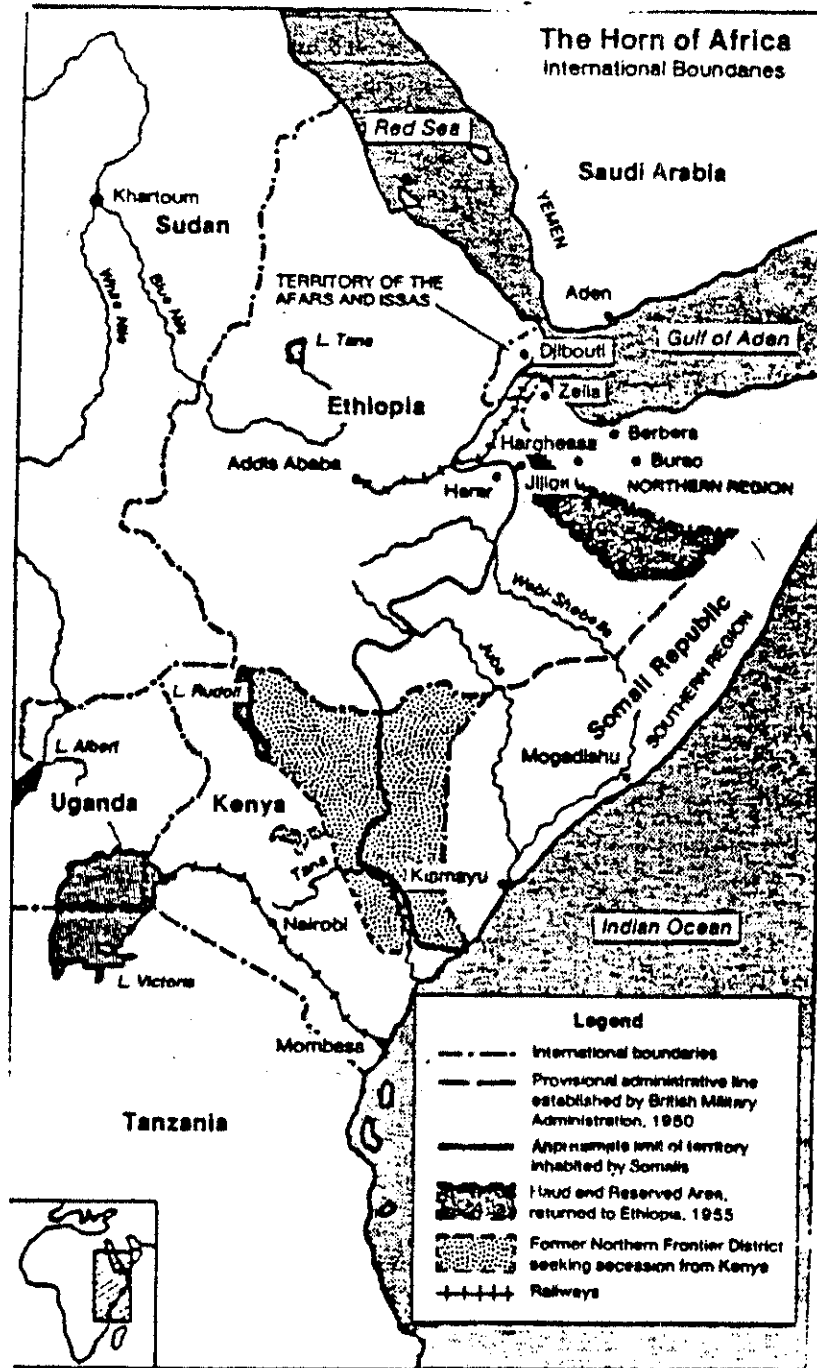
The trusteeship decade of the 1950s was the period of official preparation for Somali independence in both British and Italian Somaliland. On the Italian side, the preparation went smoothly. The only question left unresolved was the establishment of a legally binding border between Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland. The largely undemarcated 500-mile provisional border constitutes the Italian legacy for the current Ethiopian-Somaliland. The largely undemarcated 500-mile provisional border constitutes

the Italian legacy for the current Ethiopian-Somali conflict (see Figure 2).

In British Somaliland, the chief problem was the disposition of the Haud and Reserved areas which were parts of the Somali territory that Britain administered and both of which were being claimed by Ethiopia (see Figure 3). In their characteristic way of resolving territorial disputes between Ethiopians and Somalis, the British in 1955, and for the third consecutive time, agreed to withdraw from those areas and to recognize Ethiopian sovereignty over them, again without the consent of the Somalis. To assuage Somali feeling, the British did include in the agreement with Ethiopia a clause in which neither party was to prevent Somali nomads from traveling into or out of the Haud region on their periodic search for pasture and water for their flocks. But this was a futile gesture and the British must have known that this part of the agreement might in the future lead to conflict between Ethiopians and Somalis. Not surprisingly, the agreement drew enormous protests from Somalis both in the British and Italian Protectorates (Drysdale, 1964, pp. 74-79). The aftermath of this British action, was a more vocal demand by Somalis for independence.

On June 14, 1960, British Somaliland finally gained independence from Britain, and five days later joined Italian Somaliland to form the present Somali Republic. Since independence, Somali energy has been directed in large

Figure 3. The Horn of Africa: International Boundaries, 1950-1960.



Source: Tom Farer, War Clouds on the Horn of Africa, 1979, p. xii.

measure toward retrieving parts of Somali territory still under foreign control, most especially those under Ethiopian control. The political problem of the Horn of Africa today revolves around the Somali claim for "national unification" (see Figure 1). This claim, which Ethiopia has unequivocally rejected, has foreshadowed the latest crisis between the two countries.²

Finally, one other important development in the period starting from the seventeenth century to the late nineteenth century needs to be mentioned for its effect on the future state of Ethiopian-Somali relations. Between 1670 and 1880 Ethiopia was engulfed in domestic turmoil which led first to civil war, and then to complete dissolution of the Ethiopian empire. In Somalia, this was a period of geographic expansion but it was one in which the Somalis were without a meaningful central political authority.

By 1799 however, the Ethiopians were able to re-establish their imperial power while the Somalis found themselves under European domination. The change in fortunes was the extent to which central government had developed in the two societies. In Ethiopia, the tradition of central government and political hierarchy was severely weakened by internal fragmentation of power, but it somehow managed to survive and it eventually led to the revival and consolidation of the Ethiopian empire. In Somalia, by

contrast, the tradition of clan autonomy and the absence of organized central government helped to facilitate the process of foreign incursions into the country (Gorman, 1981, pp. 26-27). This differing state of affairs in each society going into the late nineteenth century provides one important explanation of why Somalia was readily colonized by European powers and Ethiopia was not. Having established a strong central government, Ethiopia, unlike Somalia, could fight and repel foreign encroachments on its territory, and at the same time participate in the dismemberment of Somalia. Ironically, it is Ethiopia which, in recent times, has complained about Somalia's meddling in its internal affairs. This is an indication of how much the situation between countries has changed since Somalia's independence. It is also an indication of how the tradition of domestic instability in both societies now seems to pose a much more serious problem for Ethiopia than for Somalia. The presence of many ethnic groups in Ethiopia, many of whom are dissatisfied with Ethiopian rule, has made it possible in recent times for a relatively united Somalia to explore their disaffection and to foment trouble inside Ethiopia.

Summary

In examining the pre-conflict stage in this chapter the focus has been on the extent to which historical enmity and territorial dispute constitute the underlying sources of

Ethiopian-Somali conflict. It is the territorial dispute, however, that has had such a profound impact on contemporary Ethiopian-Somali relations. The nineteenth century's European colonial foray into the Horn of Africa led to the creation of artificial and colonially-imposed boundaries; boundaries which themselves are glaringly disrespectful of tradition, cultural history, and local realities of human settlement patterns. The underlying basis of the 1977/78 Ethiopian-Somali conflict is Somalia's claim to that part of Ethiopia which it considers as its own. The territorial dispute continues to foster and to exacerbate the deep-seated enmity already existing between the two nations.

Chapter 3 discusses the events leading to the eruption of conflict in 1977, and Chapter Four tries to relate these events to the propositions of balance-of-power theory.

CHAPTER III

THE ETHIOPIAN-SOMALI CONFLICT, 1964-1977

One important feature of the Ethiopian-Somali relationship before 1960 is the extent to which these relations were strongly determined by Ethiopian strength. One reason for this, of course, is the Somali status at the time. As a colony of foreign powers, Somalia had little or no direct influence on issues or matters affecting its interests. The country, particularly in its dealings with Ethiopia, had to rely on the decisions made by Britain and Italy, situations in which it often came out as the loser.

All of these conditions were to change, however, when Somalia achieved its independence. Soon after becoming a sovereign nation, Somalia began to demand and to seek a reversal of the territorial situation between itself and Ethiopia. In 1964, Ethiopian and Somali military units met in bloody combat on their common border, and this was to have serious implications for subsequent Ethiopian-Somali relations.³ The border incident confirmed the long-held belief of Ethiopians that Somalia, on achieving independence might one day go to war to fulfill its irredentist claim to Ogaden. It was, therefore, a sign of what to expect in the future.⁴

From the Somali viewpoint, the border clash was a costly exercise both in human and material terms. Its forces made some initial advances inside Ethiopian territory, only to be overpowered later by superior Ethiopian forces (Farer, 1979, p. 100). In fact, had it not been for American intervention, the Ethiopian forces might have reached the Somali coast. The war, therefore, taught Somalia two important lessons: 1) that the military balance is heavily tilted in favor of Ethiopia, and 2) that a more subtle method of achieving Somali territorial aspirations lies in the gradual internal disintegration of its recalcitrant neighbor. According to Mordechai (1972, p. 12), Somalia, as early as 1964, was already providing logistic and military support for the leaders of the Eritrean Liberation Front (EDF), a regional secessionist group in Ethiopia. But it was in 1970 that Somali leaders began large-scale attempts to change the power balance in their country's favor. These attempts provide the main thrust of a series of actions leading to the 1977-1978 Ogaden War--actions which are similar to those posited by balance-of-power theory.

Somali Military Development, 1970-1977.

The period between 1964 and 1968 was relatively uneventful in the context of the Ethiopian-Somali conflict as both countries pursued their border dispute through

diplomatic channels. However, following the 1969 military coup in Somalia, a new round of the conflict began to unfold. The aftermath of the Somali coup did not immediately result in a new conflict. For a while, the new military government headed by Siad Barre adopted the policy of peaceful settlement of disputes of its civilian predecessor. Thus, the contribution of the military takeover to the ensuing conflict was only indirect. Sheik-Abdi (1977a, p. 660) sees the effect of the 1969 military coup in terms of the radicalization of Somali politics--a development which, according to him, was one of the proximal factors responsible for the renewal of conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia.

Once firmly secured in power, the new military government of General Siad Barre once again began to raise the issue of Somali claims to Ogaden. Ethiopia's adamant and consistent refusal to yield an inch of its territory was one major reason for the Somali decision to resort to more forcible measures. Another reason was the type of reprisal forays used by the Ethiopian military to collect taxes from its Somali subjects. This involved the seizing of cattle from Somali nomads and the closing down of wells and waterholes which supplied the pasture and the grazing lands for Somali livestock. It was inconceivable that such brutal treatment of Somali ethnics in the presence of an independent Somali nation would be tolerated by any Somali

government, much less by a nationalistic military government. However, the new government realized that without a massive build-up of Somali military power the country could not hope to achieve its territorial ambitions. For these reasons mostly, the new Somali military rulers embarked on the modernization of Somali armed forces beginning from 1970 and reaching its peak in 1975.

The phenomenal growth of Somalia's military power between 1970 and 1977 is one of the most-mentioned aspects of the latest Ethiopian-Somali conflict. During this short period, the Soviet Union provided Somalia with substantial military aid: more than one hundred million U.S. dollars. The extent of the increase in Somalia's military power is shown in Table 1. Between 1970 and 1974, a period of four years, Somali regular army had doubled in size. In 1976, the army strength stood at 40,000, twice its 1974 level and four times more than its 1970 level. In Somalia's military arsenal were sophisticated Soviet armored tanks and combat aircraft.

The accelerated growth of Somalia's military power within such a short period was the result of a substantial increase in Soviet military aid to Somali in 1972. Prior to this time, Soviet military assistance had come in moderate proportion but was still relatively higher than those

Table I. The Growth of Somali Military Power, 1970-1977

| SOMALIA | 1970-71 | 1974-75 | 1976-77 |
|------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Regular Army | 10,000 | 20,000 | 40,000 |
| Population | 2,925,000 | 3,080,000 | 3,500,000 |
| *Combat Aircraft | 18 | 31 | 66 |
| *Tanks | 150 | 250 | 250 |
| ETHIOPIA | | | |
| Regular Army | 41,000 | 40,940 | 55,000 |
| Population | 25,200,000 | 26,920,000 | 28,620,000 |
| *Combat Aircraft | 43 | 40 | 36 |
| *Tanks | 90 | 90 | 178 |

*Spare parts are short and not all equipment is serviceable.

Sources: The Military Balance, 1970-1971, London Institute for Strategic Studies, 1970, pp. 42, 43, and 44; The Military Balance, 1974-1975, pp. 48, 51, and 52; Nelson, Harold D., ed. Somalia: A Country Study, 1982, pp. 258-259.

provided by the United States and other Western nations (Castagno, 1970, p. 25-27).

Soviet involvement in Somalia actually began in the early 1960s. Shortly after Somali independence, government leaders sought assistance from the United States to develop a 20,000 man force which was considered as the minimum amount necessary to defend and protect Somalia's sovereignty and national interests. Unable to secure more than \$10 million in United States aid, the Somali government turned elsewhere and in 1962 found the Soviet Union ready to grant loans worth \$32 million United States dollars (increase later to \$55 million) to expand and modernize Somalia's armed forces (Ottaway, 1982, p. 28).

Until the 1969 coup, Soviet aid to the army did not result in any significant influence for Moscow in Somalia for two reasons; first, although the Mogadishu government was receiving military aid from Moscow, its political inclinations were towards the West; and second, the United States, and West Germany were still at that time the principal supplier of aid to the Somalia's police force, which helped to counter-balance the Soviet aid to the army. However, by 1969 the army had become dominant over the police. After the coup, the Soviet Union became Somalia's supplier of military hardware (Nelson, 1982, p. 258).

Moscow's interest and involvement in Somalia was facilitated by the ideological disposition toward Marxism

and socialism of many Somali army officers, including leaders of the 1969 coup (Nelson, 1982, p. 258). By 1974, as many as 1,500 Soviet military officers were in Somalia serving as advisers to the Somali armed forces. Between 1972 and 1975, the Soviet Union supplied the Somali National Army with the largest tank force in Sub-Saharan Africa, transport vehicles (including armored personnel carriers) for a largely mechanized infantry, supersonic MIG-21 fighter bombers, and SAM-2 missile defense system for Mogadishu (Crozer, 1975, p. 4). The close ties between the Siad Barre regime, which by the early 1970s was espousing scientific socialism, and the Soviet Union were formalized by the treaty of friendship and cooperation signed by the two countries in 1974 (Nelson, 1982, p. 258).

The Ethiopian army at this time remained twice as large as Somalia's 23,000-man force, but because of reduced military aid from the United States, the Ethiopians were not well-equipped. Also, the Ethiopian government collapsed in stages during this period; Haile Selassie was overthrown, violent conflict ensued among those responsible for his deposition and several ethnic groups sought to secede from the empire. The result of the Somali arms build-up when combined with Ethiopian weakness was the complete breakdown of the balance of power that for fifteen years had limited tensions in the region.

Social and Economic Development Programs in Somalia,
1970-1977

The new military government in Somalia did not focus its attention solely on the modernization of the Somali armed forces. In what appears to be a recognition of the linkage between socio-economic power and military power, the government also sought to improve the socio-economic basis of Somali political life.

At the time of the coup, Somalia was among the least developed countries in the world. Its estimated per capita gross domestic product (GDP), equivalent to less than 80 U.S. dollars, made it one of the world's ten poorest countries. Some 60 percent of the population consisted of nomadic and seminomadic pastoralists, about 15 to 20 percent were fully engaged in agriculture, and 6 percent of the economically active work force were employed in industrial activities (Nelson, 1982, p. 258). Soon after the coup, the military government announced a new set of objectives for economic development that centered on raising the standard of living of the people, providing opportunities for employment of the entire labor force, and eradicating all forms of exploitation. The new economic development program also had as its objective the reduction of Somalia's dependence on foreign aid considered by the military leaders to be the source of undue interference in Somalia's internal affairs.

According to Mehmet (1971, pp. 31-47), Somalia, in the 1960s, relied heavily on foreign assistance not only for development but to meet basic economic needs. Through 1969, 41.2 percent of Somalia's total development expenditure came from grants-in-aid, 41.8 percent from foreign loans, and a marginal 2.1 percent from foreign private investments. Only 8.9 percent of the total was from the Somali government's budget account. This state of affairs could not but produce undesirable consequences, including external interference in Somali politics.

Two development programs launched by the military government were aimed at remedying Somalia's economic plight as well as eliminating or reducing its foreign dependence. The first development program from 1971 to 1973 was moderately successful, most especially in the area involving the extension of the agricultural crash program. The second from 1973 to 1974 was less so, due to some unforeseeable factors that included the rise in world oil prices after 1973 and its attendant inflation, and the 1974-75 drought which exerted more drain on local resources.

However, not every development scheme was a failure. Considerable success was achieved, for example, in the formation of agricultural cooperatives and resettlement of nomads in agricultural and fishing cooperatives. Impressive advances were also made in the social sectors, most

especially, in the areas of education, sanitation, and health improvement (Nelson, 1982, pp. 54-55).

Laitin (1976, pp. 449-468) has compared the performance of the military leaders in the five-year period after their take-over of the government to that of their civilian predecessors. His assessment is based on three of the dominant themes of the revolution--honesty (attempts to end corruption), nationalism (attempts to end foreign dependence), and socialism (attempts to end stagnation and inequality). According to Laitin, the new military government headed by Siad Barre has made tremendous progress in restoring honesty both among the bureaucrats and the public at large. It has been able, through mass participation and mass mobilization, to restore deep nationalistic feelings among Somalis. Attempts to eradicate tribalistic feelings were less successful, but progress was made, judging by the decline of tribal bases of identification.

On the economic front, efforts to reduce Somali dependence on foreign aid have met with little success. In addition to a burgeoning trade deficit, Somalia's reliance on foreign aid and food sources has continued unabated. By contrast, important achievements were registered in the area of linguistic independence which has made possible mass literacy, and mass participation in the government's development projects. By adopting socialist policies, the

military government has also been able to restore social equality and to foster progress. Its attempts to reduce urban-rural disparities, for example, have been moderately successful as have been its efforts to reduce Somalia's regional imbalance. Overall, the performance of the military government in the period between 1970 and 1975, says Laitin, is remarkable in comparison with that of the civilian administrations.

Evidence of considerable progress and change in Somalia has also been documented in some other studies and reports. According to Adnrzejewski (1977, pp. 4-5; 1978, pp. 39-49), the decision by the military government to make Somali the sole official language has resulted "in sudden transformation of the country from national illiteracy to a leading position in the continent of Africa as far as the use of the patrilineal language in education and public life is concerned, a transformation which had taken only five years." A special report by the Times of London (1971, pp. 1-4) described the enormous changes taking place in Somalia under the new military administration. Particularly evident was the government's attempts to modify tribal tradition to meet contemporary standards and to instill, through mass participation and mass mobilization, nationalistic feeling among Somali citizens.

Table II. Somalia's Food Imports, 1967-1974.

| | | Civilian Administration | | |
|-------------------|--|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | | (in Million Shillings) | | |
| Imports of: | | 1967 | 1968 | 1969 |
| Rice | | 20.6 | 19.9 | 26.3 |
| Cereals | | 14.7 | 15.3 | 22.5 |
| Fruits/Vegetables | | 10.8 | 10.9 | 13.4 |
| Other Food Stuffs | | 15.0 | 10.0 | 16.5 |
| Total | | 61.1 | 56.1 | 78.7 |

| | | Military Administration | | | | |
|-------------------|--|-------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| | | (in Million Shillings) | | | | |
| Imports of: | | 1970 | 1971 | 1972 | 1973 | 1974 |
| Rice | | 26.5 | 104.8 | 24.3 | 57.3 | 71.5 |
| Cereals | | 24.0 | -- | 32.1 | -- | -- |
| Fruits/Vegetables | | 15.4 | 15.6 | 10.1 | 13.3 | 13.2 |
| Other Food Stuffs | | 16.4 | 18.9 | 21.4 | 13.9 | n/a |
| Total | | 82.3 | 139.3 | 87.9 | 84.9 | -- |

Source: Laitin, David. 1976. Political Economy of Military Rule in Somalia. Journal of Modern African Studies, 14: 457.

Table III. Somalia's Trade Balance, 1967-1977.

| | Civilian Administration | | |
|---------------|-------------------------|-------|-------|
| | (in Million Schillings) | | |
| | 1967 | 1968 | 1969 |
| Imports | 286.4 | 339.8 | 369.8 |
| Exports | 198.5 | 212.0 | 231.9 |
| Trade Deficit | 87.9 | 127.8 | 137.9 |

| | Military Administration | | | | | | | |
|------------|-------------------------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|-------|-------|
| | (in Million Schillings) | | | | | | | |
| | 1970 | 1971 | 1972 | 1973 | 1974 | 1975 | 1976 | 1977 |
| Imp. | 322.2 | 447.6 | 523.9 | 646.2 | 967* | 1021 | 1108* | 1296* |
| Exp. | 233.9 | 246.4 | 298.4 | 294.0 | 403 | 558 | 410* | 449* |
| Trade Def. | 98.3 | 201.2 | 225.5 | 342.2 | 564 | 463 | 598 | 847 |

*Taken from: Nelson, Harold D., ed. Somalia: A Country Study, 1982, p. 281.

Source: Laitin, David. 1976. Political Economy of Military Rule in Somalia. Journal of Modern African Studies, 14: 457.

Table IV. Somalia's External Debt, 1967-1977.

| | Foreign Contributions to Current Budget | External Debt Newly Incurred |
|------|--|---------------------------------|
| | (in Million Schillings) | |
| 1967 | 26.5 | 32.2 |
| 1968 | 22.0 | 39.8 |
| 1969 | 15.5 | 40.3 |
| 1970 | 18.0 | 104.6 |
| 1971 | 13.7 | 26.6 |
| 1972 | 13.7 | n/a |
| 1973 | 13 | 28 |
| 1974 | 27 | 62 |
| 1975 | n/a | n/a |
| 1976 | n/a | n/a |
| 1977 | n/a | n/a |

Source: Laitin, David. 1976. Political Economy of Military Rule in Somalia. Journal of Modern African Studies, 14: 457.

Table V. Primary and Secondary Education, 1968-1977
Total Enrollment.

| | 1968-1969 | 1972-1973 | 1975-1976 | 1976-1977 |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Primary | 35,306 | 78,133 | 219,517 | 229,030 |
| Secondary | 3,133 | 9,457 | 7,046 | 13,666 |
| Total | 38,439 | 87,590 | 226,563 | 242,696 |

Source: Nelson, Harold D., ed. Somalia: A Country Study, 1982, p. 281.

The development of Somalia's communications, particularly in its four main seaports--Mogadishu, Berbera, Kismayu, and Merka--is seen by some observers as one of the main achievements of the new military government. Most of the financing of these projects came, of course, from the Soviet Union, who sought to convert the port of Berbera to a communication post for its naval ships in the Indian Ocean (African Development, 1970, p. 57).

One common problem often encountered by students of African politics, whether domestic or international, is the lack or absence of relevant statistical data on which to base explanations of issues and events in the region. Where data can be found they are often inadequate or, at best, offer partial explanations. Analysis of Somalia's national development programs is fraught with the latter problem. Tables II, III, IV, and V give a rough picture of Somalia's progress in the areas of food importation, trade balance, external debt reduction, and education respectively. The figures from 1967 to 1977 show that only in the area of education was Somalia under the military rule able to make any progress. Even then, the given yearly figures for education are hardly enough for a complete assessment of educational progress in Somalia during this period. This is because they show only total enrollment for each year rather than as percentages of the school age population.

In the other three areas, Somalia appears to have made little or no progress as the yearly figures from 1967 to 1977 show an increase in food importation, trade deficit, and external debt. This calls into question the whole idea of Somalia's progress in this period. Yet, there seems to be a general consensus among scholars and observers of Somalia that the country under the new military government has witnessed progress in many areas, even if less so in the economic area. For Laitin (1976, p. 449), that progress was more remarkable in the five-year period between 1970 and 1975 than in any other period.

From all indications then, Somalia, at the end of 1975, appeared to be much stronger militarily, and more united than ever before. The modernization of its armed forces had progressed well with the Soviets providing massive support in arms and equipment training. Economically, Somalia continued to be saddled with trade deficits and to rely on foreign aid for development. But for the first time in more than a decade, consensus and order reigned in the country. Somalia had finally found its feet as a nation and was now in a stronger position to challenge its neighbors on matters of historical dispute. Its attempt in this regard was facilitated by the collapse of the Ethiopian central government in late 1974 and the ensuing gradual disintegration of domestic order in that country.

The Ethiopian Crisis, 1974-1977

The Ethiopian internal crisis began just about the same time that Somalia's military power had increased considerably. From 1974 to 1977, the country would be ravaged by domestic and ethnic violence.

The Radicalization of Ethiopian Politics.

Following the 1974 army mutiny, the country's central government collapsed and was replaced by a military dictatorship. The ruling military junta, on taking over the government, immediately began a systematic elimination of political moderates in its midst, thus paving the way for the radical elements to gain control of the Dergue, the ruling military body. Having successfully achieved their primary aim, the junta members led by Colonel Mengistu followed with the adoption of Marxist ideology and the enactment of socialist policies, such as land reform and public control of major sectors of the economy. It was this radicalization of Ethiopian politics that led the United States, which traditionally has been the main supporter of Ethiopia, to decide to cut off its financial support for the country. But the vacuum was quickly filled by the Soviet Union which, in 1976, was only too willing to supply arms worth \$100 million to its newly found client (Time, 1977, p. 34).

Patterns of Superpower Realignment. If the radicalization of Ethiopian politics induced the shifting of

support for Ethiopia from Washington to Moscow, it also had the effect of further exacerbating tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia. By fraternizing with Ethiopia, the Soviet Union made Somalia, its traditional ally, feel betrayed and suspicious of Soviet intentions. This was the pattern of alignment going toward the end of 1976. In discussing the developments leading to the final realignment of Ethiopia and Somali foreign policies, we shall focus on its two main aspects: 1) changes in United States and Soviet relations with Ethiopia; and 2) changes in U.S.S.R.-Somali relations.

The break in United States-Ethiopian relations occurred in February, 1977, when the United States decided to cut off totally its military aid to Ethiopia as part of a protest over the treatment of dissidents by the Dergue. This and other subsequent United States behavior engendered a set of responses from Ethiopia, one of which was the decision by the Dergue to seek military aid from several communist and "non-aligned" nations. By May, 1977, Soviet and Cuban military assistance to Ethiopia had been fully secured and relations between the three countries were on the upswing. The increasing association between Ethiopia, Cuba, and The Soviet Union brought more intense strain to the United States-Ethiopian relations, and by late July, the United States was considering the possibility of providing military

assistance to Somalia to counter the growing influence of Moscow in the area.

While the relations between the United States and Ethiopia were undergoing considerable upheaval, similar strains also had begun to occur in Soviet-Somali relations. The Soviet Union had not succeeded in its efforts to bring Somalia into the international Marxist fold. The Islamic tradition of Somalia was hindering any such efforts (Gorman, 1981, p. 53). For its part, Somalia was frustrated with Soviet reluctance to support its irredentist claims in the Ogaden, Kenya, and Djibouti. For some time, these differences were glossed over because of the mutual need for each other's support. However, with the change in the internal situation of Ethiopia and in U.S.-Ethiopian relations, the Soviet Union saw a new opportunity to extend its influence on the Horn. As Ethiopia gradually embraced socialism, and found a new ally in Moscow, it became increasingly difficult for Somalia and the U.S.S.R. to hide their differences.

The Soviet Union did, of course, try to bring the two warring nations into dialogue and into seeking a diplomatic solution to their conflict. By doing so, it hoped to cement its influences on the Horn as well as its control over the economically vital entrance to the Red Sea. But the Russians either underestimated or did not fully comprehend the nature of the conflict and more importantly Somalia's

deep feelings for its lost territory. Soviet attempts at international solutions produced no result as Somalia refused to consider or take part in any Soviet-sponsored initiative that did not consider the national question of "Greater Somalia."

By March, 1977, Soviet and Somali relations were grinding to a halt as both nations started accusing each other of betrayal. It was at this time that the United States started making overtures to Somalia with Saudi Arabia acting as intermediary. Having lost Ethiopia to Soviet influence, the United States was hoping to recoup its losses in the area by seeking to establish a closer relationship with Somalia. These overtures caused the Somali government to start thinking in terms of military assistance from the United States.

This was the situation prior to the outbreak of the Ogaden conflict and the active involvement of Somali forces. The realignment of Ethiopia and Somalia with the United States and the Soviet Union had begun as a result of the radicalization of Ethiopian politics. But as the war escalated, it was Ethiopia, as Gorman has pointed out, that had a truer ally in the Soviet Union than Somalia did in the United States (Gorman, 1981, p. 56).

Political Instability in Ethiopia, 1975-1977. The period from 1975 to 1977 could be described as one of the

worst moments of Ethiopian nationhood. As had often happened in much of its history, Ethiopia was once again faced with several regional separatist revolts and urban guerrilla resistance. This time, however, the level of violence was raised to an unprecedented level. The new Marxist regime, in 1977, faced more than four regional secessionist groups. These included the Somali-based Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF), which began to receive substantial logistical support from Somalia as early as 1975 in its effort to recover the Ogaden region from Ethiopia.

The Dergue was also plagued by political assassinations and urban guerrilla resistance, and by serious internal power struggles. By late 1977, several officers who took part in the 1974 military putsch against the Emperor had either been killed or had fled into exile. Those who escaped death went underground and became a major segment of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), an urban guerrilla group that opposed the ruling Marxist regime.

Ethiopia between 1975 and 1977 was thus a country in disarray. Regional rebellion, political violence in urban areas, political division in the internal operations of the Dergue, and breakdown of authority and administration--these were, in effect, the formidable problems which confronted the new Marxist regime. It was in this context of political and social disintegration that Ethiopia expelled the United

States and began a determined effort to seek financial and military support from the Soviets and several other communist countries.

The Balance of Power on the Horn in August, 1977. The preceding analysis has, so far, focused on the major political developments leading to the eruption of conflict in 1977. These developments also appear to have been associated with the breakdown of the balance of power between Ethiopia and Somalia. In order to determine the extent to which there was a breakdown of power balance between the two countries, it is necessary to examine the power situation on the Horn in August, 1977.

No other study of the Ethiopian-Somali conflict has examined the question of balance of power on the Horn in the Summer of 1977 in a more detailed manner than that of Gorman. Gupta, Farer, Schwab, Chaliand, Matthies--all mentioned or referred to it in their analyses of the conflict but it was Gorman who actually devoted a section of his study to this aspect. In examining the "short-term trends" leading to the outbreak of conflict, Gorman (1981, p. 65) sought to find out, among other factors, if "an objectively observable power imbalance existed prior to Somalia's decision to intervene," and how Somalia perceived the distribution of forces between itself and Ethiopia. The

following is his account of the balance of forces on the Horn in August, 1977.

If the calculation of balance of forces is based on aggregate factors alone, Ethiopia, says Gorman (1981, p. 65), appeared to have a clear advantage over Somalia, especially with regard to the number of troops and militia at the disposal of the two countries. Ethiopia's population, which is eight times that of Somalia, provided it with a numerically superior manpower pool from which to draw its forces. But this, says Gorman (1981, p. 66), obscures some critical factors. Ethiopia, at the time, was besieged by several regional separatist movements which meant that the effective population at its disposal was sharply reduced, although this was still substantially larger than Somalia's population.

With regard to the availability of armed forces for commitment to a specific arena, Ethiopia's military strength was being sapped by the deployment of its forces on two major fronts; Eritrea and Ogaden. Somalia, on the other hand, was largely unaffected by domestic dissension and, therefore, could commit all its forces to the Ogaden offensive. Also, Somalia's air force and armored vehicles enjoyed a clear advantage over Ethiopia, especially since Ethiopia had to divide its weaponry between two fronts. Somalia had in its possession twice the number of tanks and airplanes and three times the armored personnel vehicles

available to Ethiopia (Gorman, 1981, p. 67). However, Ethiopia's air force, although numerically inferior, was far better trained. Both countries faced a similar problem of adequate supply of spare parts for the operations of their forces. Somalia was probably more affected by this, since it was no longer being supplied arms by the Soviet Union and was finding it difficult to establish a new weapons connection. Ethiopia, on the other hand, had access to spare parts as a result of its recent overtures to Moscow. As long as the Soviet Union continued to increase its aid to Ethiopia, whatever edge Somalia had on its rival neighbor could only have diminished with time. According to Gorman (1981, p. 69), the realization that in the long run the trend in the balance of forces lay in Ethiopia's favor may have been one of the proximal factors in the Somali decision to intervene (See Table VI).

Beside the difference in the quantity of the two nations' military forces, an equally important aspect is the difference in qualitative factors in the societies of both countries. Although there is no precise measure of societal cohesion, all available evidence, says Gorman (1981, p. 70) suggests that Ethiopia was a beleaguered country in 1977. It suffered from internal dissension, rebellion, and turmoil to a far greater extent than Somalia, and its condition was such that the country was on the verge of societal

Table VI. The Balance of Forces of the Horn, August, 1977.

| Aggregate | | |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Military Factors | Ethiopia | Somalia |
| Regular Army | 55,000 | 40,000 |
| Militia | 250,000 | 3,000 |
| Foreign Guerrilla Insurgents | | |
| Supported by Each Country | 0 | 5-10,000 |
| Population | 28,620,000 | 3,500,000 |
| Tanks | 178 | 250 |
| Armored Vehicles | 150 | 310 |
| Combat aircraft | 33 | 66 |
| Spare parts | Poor Supply | Poor Supply |
| Adjusted Army | 25,000 | 40,000 |
| Militia | 125,000 | 3,000 |
| Guerrillas | 0 | 55,000 |
| Adjusted Population | 26,620,000 | 3,500,000 |
| Tanks | 120 | 250 |
| Armored Vehicles | 100 | 310 |
| Combat Vehicles | 30 | 66 |

Source: Gorman, Robert F., Political Conflict on the Horn of Africa, 1981, p. 66.

disintegration. Somalia, on the other hand, was relatively free from internal dissension. Its authoritarian government was not a repressive one, and it allowed relative freedom and free opinion for its citizens. Consequently, no significant opposition group challenged the legitimacy of Barre's regime, while the Dergue was challenged on all fronts.

Somalia, therefore, enjoyed a decidedly more favorable degree of governmental stability, societal cohesion, and economic stability than Ethiopia. In addition, says Gorman (1981, p. 72), it had a population whose morale was high and whose armed forces were superior to those of their Ethiopian counterparts. The Ethiopian people, having witnessed nearly a decade of governmental incompetence and bloodshed caused by regional insurgencies and civil unrest, could not be relied upon for their support in a war to retain the barren Ogaden countryside. Somalia, by contrast, had good reason to expect generally hearty support from its population for a war to regain control of a land it considered its own. Overall, the power situation between the two countries in the summer of 1977, according to Gorman (1981, p. 72), appeared to favor Somalia more than Ethiopia.

The 1977-1978 Ethiopian-Somali (Ogaden) War

From all indications, the Somali decision to commit the troops to the Ogaden conflict in August of 1977 was the

spark that ignited the Ethiopian-Somali war, or the Ogaden War as it is commonly called. That decision, says Gorman (1981, p. 82), derived in part from the Somali perception that the short-term balance of forces was in its favor. However, to account for this and other policy decisions, such as Ethiopia's declaration of war, requires the use of approaches or theories other than balance-of-power theory. This is because balance-of-power theory, as the next chapter indicates, is a theory of system level constraints rather than of subsystem factors. The theory provides the context for the war but does not explain the motives for it. From the perspective of the theory, war provides one of several ways by which a balance-of-power system, once disputed, can be restored. Says Waltz (1975a, p. 41),

Balance-of-power theory makes assumptions about interests and motives of states, rather than explaining them. What it does explain are the constraints that operate upon all states. To understand how motives and constraints combine to form policy, one would have to add the missing factor--the characteristics of the states themselves. To add the missing factor would take us beyond the realm of international-relations theory.

Has the 1977-1978 Ethiopian-Somali war resulted in a balance of power between the two countries? The answer to this question is central to the thesis of this study and should, therefore, be left until the balance-of-power theory has been fully examined in the next chapter.

Summary

The preceding analysis has focused on the dynamics of Ethiopian-Somali conflict from 1964 to mid-1977. The 1964 Ethiopian-Somali border clash created a situation in which Somalia became aware of its capability in relation to its rival neighbor. Between 1969 and 1977, Somalia embarked on a large-scale modernization of its armed forces, and on social and economic developments, the purpose of which was to enable Somalia to be in a position to recover the Ogaden, a land it considered its own.

During this period, Ethiopia became engulfed in a serious internal crisis. Beleaguered by several regional separatist movements and internecine strife at the governmental level, Ethiopia, at the end of 1976, was on the verge of societal disintegration. The socialist orientations of its new government was one factor that led the United States, Ethiopia's traditional ally, to withdraw its support. But it was Ethiopia's fraternization with the Soviet Union that forced Washington to consider switching its support to Somalia. However, the alliance picture was so unsettled by the middle of 1977 that the Soviet advisers could still be found in Somalia. A new pattern of superpower realignment was to emerge prior to the outbreak of conflict, and more than any other factor, the change in the configuration in alliances determined the outcome of that conflict. But in 1977, Somalia had reasons to believe

that it had found a new ally in the United States, and that the short-term balance of forces was in its favor. Indeed, judging by the quantity of the two nations' military forces and the qualitative factors in the societies of both countries, the balance of power in mid-1977 appears to be decidedly in favor of Somalia.

From all indications, the Somali decision to commit its troops to the Ogaden conflict marked the beginning of the war between Ethiopia and Somalia. However, balance-of-power theory cannot account for the reasons why both countries decided on going to war with one another. What the theory seeks to explain is the environmental constraints that produced the war as well as the outcome of that war. The next chapter is, therefore, devoted to the analysis of balance-of-power theory.

CHAPTER IV

BALANCE-OF-POWER THEORY

Balance-of-power theory has been called one of the oldest, most persistent, and most controversial theories of international relations (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, 1981, p. 23). In the past, historians and observers have used the theory to explain the international political behavior of independent states, and especially of the great powers. Contemporary writers have also found the theory to be very useful. Their description of the balance of power ranges from that of a basic principle of international relations (Palmer and Perkins, 1973, p. 30), to a manifestation of a general social principle (Morgenthau, 1973, p. 55), and to as nearly a fundamental law of politics as it is possible to find (Wight, 1946a, pp. 45.46). Today, the theory still retains some attraction for those scholars who see it as a tool that may be used for interpreting events and for statesmen who view it as a guide to practical politics. The theory, moreover, has preserved its predominant position in most contemporary textbooks in international relations.

The theory of the balance of power has drawn its most consistent support from that breed of political analysts called realists. Many realist scholars assume that nations are constantly motivated by a desire for survival which, in

a state system, means a striving to enhance a state's relative position. They see the balance of power as the condition or situation which obtains when every state strives to enhance its relative power or when some members of the international community try to react to the aggression of others. For them, the great powers are constantly engaged in building, maintaining, and defending the international balance of power. Realists have devised methods or rules which statesmen may use to achieve and maintain the balance of power which they consider to be necessary for international peace and stability.

The balance-of-power theory has been criticized and defended on several grounds. Idealists have long condemned power politics in general and the balance of power in particular on the ground that the pursuit of power lacks moral meaning and that nations engaged in this pursuit often trample over moral principles. Realists have defended the balance of power on two contradictory grounds; first, that nation-states, unlike individuals, are governed by totally different moral principles; and second, that the pursuit of balance results in the greatest good for the greatest number. Many other arguments exist for and against the theory and so let us examine the theory of balance of power. We shall first present the theory, itself, and then some of the many criticisms which have been levied against it.

Finally, we shall focus on Kenneth Waltz's explanations of the balance-of-power theory.

The Theory of Balance of Power

Given the massive literature that exists on the balance of power, any attempt to present a fairly concise summary of the theory runs the risk of being grossly inadequate or over-simplified. The main points of the theory of balance of power can be set forth, nevertheless, as follows.

Because the international system is by nature anarchic, states in the system must constantly strive to maximize their relative power positions. As a result, there is a tendency for the system to be in balance; that is to say, various nations group themselves together in such a way that no single nation has preponderant power over others, for its power is checked or balanced by that of some opposing powers.

A simple balance is formed when the nations in each camp are of equal power. A simple balance may involve only two nations, or it may involve a large group of nations, but in each case, the nations are divided into two opposing groups of roughly equal strength. Multiple balance exists when many further balances exist within balances. There is no limit to the variations and combinations that are possible in a multiple balance of power. A multiple balance tends to be formed in peaceful times, and a simple balance

tends to prevail in times of crisis. That is because as a major struggle for power by the main contenders develops, other nations tend to be drawn to one of the two competing powers. In the process, the complex, separate balances that prevailed earlier in the system are slowly transformed into a simple balance between two groups of nations. The approximately equal distribution of power between the Anglo-French combination and the Axis nations of Germany and Italy just before World War II offers a good example of the simple balance. A similar balance is said to exist today between the Western democracies and the Communist bloc (Organski, 1960, p. 273).

Aggression is a basic characteristic of the international system. Nations engage in aggression or aggressive acts toward each other not only because many of their interests differ, but far more important, because each nation is bent on preserving its security and independence. In a state system this means a striving to enhance a state's power position. This constitutes the principal underlying assumption of the realist power theory. To be sure, the quest for security is not always offered by the realists as the underlying cause for aggression. Whatever its cause, aggression usually triggers the power cycle by destroying the equilibrium or balance. Consequently, some members of the international community must respond to this danger and must act to restore equilibrium. Their efforts may

sometimes involve efforts to rearm, to form alliances, to strengthen domestic economies, and to wage war. However, the purpose of any of the adopted measures must be to restore the initial equilibrium or balance. Thus the balance of power has been described as the system that emerges when each member-state acts to keep other member-states from combining into a single menacing unit (Quester, 1975, pp. 204-205). The system is self-regulating at least in theory.

In practice, however, the balance often breaks down. At this point, a new concept is introduced--that of the "holder of the balance" or "balancer". The "balancer" is a nation or group of nations that remains aloof from the rivalries of others as long as the balance is maintained. However, in the event of one side gaining enough strength, the weight of the balancer is thrown behind the weaker side for the purpose of restoring the balance. The balancer, presumably, is motivated by the desire to see that the balance is maintained, although realists do acknowledge that self-interests may be involved. For a nation to fulfill this role, it must possess great powers, and it must be strong enough to tilt the scales decisively in favor of the weaker side (Organski, 1960, p. 278). The "balancer" is a concept that may have been useful in the past, when England was able to perform this role successfully. Today, no

longer is a single nation able to perform the role of a balancer on an international scale as was England, but the concept may still be relevant for the analysis of contemporary international political systems.

Consequences of the Balance of Power

Successful maintenance of the balance of power is said to have four important beneficial results. First, it prevents the establishment of a universal hegemony. Second, it preserves the independence of small nations that would probably be swallowed up if one ambitious state were allowed to achieve a tremendous preponderance of power. Third, it insures stability and mutual security in the international system. And fourth, it produces peace because it insures that any single nation's attempt to expand its power would meet with a countercoalition. Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff (1981, p. 25) identify the traditional methods and techniques of maintaining or restoring the balance as follows:

1. The policy of divide and conquer;
2. territorial compensations after a war;
3. creation of buffer zones;
4. the formation of alliances;
5. spheres of influence;
6. intervention;
7. diplomatic bargaining;
8. legal and peaceful settlement of disputes;
9. reduction of armaments;
10. armaments competition or races; and
11. war itself.

As Organski (1960, p. 278) has pointed out, some of these methods, ironically, may be used by a nation to achieve

tremendous power. But the result of all these manipulations is said to be a balance of power.

Gareau (1962, pp. 6-8) has identified three common areas of agreement in the writings of the balance-of-power theorists or "equilibrists" as he describes them. First, the balance of power is seen to confine its action to rather well-defined geographical areas called "arenas" or "sub-arenas". Equilibrists, he says, "recognize this locational and individualizing characteristic of the balance in South America, the Near East, and so on. These phrases imply that, if the balance of power now embraces the whole world, it operates in discreet and peculiar individuality." Second, the balance of power is said to be capable of considerable contortion. It can be applied to the soil of Europe, America, Asia, and Africa. Third, although its liability is seen to be in the wide spectrum of responses it offers for the solution of a given international system, it does not dictate one solution to a set of international circumstances, but rather allows equilibrium to be established in a number of ways.

Balance of Power: Problems of Definition

The term "a balance of power" has been criticized for its semantic vagueness, as can be seen from the discussion above. Haas (1953, pp. 370-398) discovered at least eight meanings for the term. Wight (1966b) found nine.

Morgenthau (1973), in his revealing historical analysis of the concept, makes use of four different definitions. Claude (1962, pp. 13, 22) points to the difficulty of analyzing the concept of balance of power for students of international relations because of its multiplicity of meanings. Gareau (1962, pp. 24-25) observes that the term "equilibrium" has been defined:

As a state where opposing forces are equal or approximately equal, as a condition which obtains when no single power is in a position to overwhelm all of its neighbors, as a state to which the system strives even if it never reaches it, or as a condition existing when the rights and existence of all states are successfully guaranteed.

Finally, Dougherty and Pfaltzgraf (1981, pp. 24-25) after reviewing the works of Haas and Claude, conclude that:

It is theoretically possible to conceive of the balance of power as a situation or condition, as a universal tendency or law of state behavior, as a guide for statesmanship, and as a mode of system-maintenance characteristic of certain types of international systems.

Unlike others, however, these authors regard these four usages as not necessarily being inconsistent with the notion of equilibrium.

Critiques of Balance of Power

The balance-of-power theory has also been criticized in recent decades for reasons other than the problem of its definition. Spykman (1942, pp. 21-22) has noted that states are interested only in equilibrium which is in their favor. Beyond this, he says, a genuine margin is their objective.

However, as Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff (1981, p. 25) have pointed out, "these internal inconsistencies in the theory and in the practice [of balance of power] ... were probably unavoidable given the historic oscillation between stable and unstable equilibria within the nation-state system." Like Spykman, Morgenthau (1973, pp. 184-194) criticized the balance of power as a means of preserving independence of individual states. Noting that it failed to protect the independence of Poland, Morgenthau's conclusion was that the balance of power as the guiding principle of international politics is uncertain, unreal, and inadequate.

Organski (1960, pp. 285-286) argues that the very need for a balancer violates at least two of the principal assumptions of the balance-of-power theory; first, the concept of a balancer violates the assumption that there is a universal quest for power by nation states, for it implies that the balancer "is somehow different from all other nations"; second, the idea of a balancer contradicts the assumption that the system of balance of power is self-regulating. Schleicher (1962, p. 368) considers peace to be "in jeopardy when power is rather evenly balanced and war less likely where there is preponderant power." Haas (1953, pp. 373-379, 386-387) rejects the balance of power as a reliable guide to foreign policy formulation. He decries the tendency among the realists to treat the national

interest of all countries as essentially the same; a striving for security through enhanced power position. In his view, other factors such as the influence of competing domestic elites, ideology, and internal pressures deserve to be given a central place and equal emphasis "rather than treating them as exceptions or merely modifiers of power-oriented behavior." Finally, it is said that the balance of power tends to operate rather successfully in a system of cultural homogeneity, such as the European state system from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. Because the state system in this century encompasses states with very different cultural backgrounds, the operation of the balance of power, according to the critics, has been made very difficult (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, 1981, p. 27).

Balance-of-Power Theory: Contemporary Models

Despite the various criticisms which have been leveled against the balance-of-power theory, several contemporary scholars have found it worthy of attention. Kaplan (1954, pp. 22-36) makes it one of his schematic models of international systems. The balance-of-power system, in his analysis, has two major characteristics; first, it is distinguished by an international social system, but lacks a political sub-system because it cannot make decisions concerning interests beyond those of the component national units; second, the balance of power, like the European

system of the nineteenth century, has five major powers or "essential actors" whose presence is crucial to the system. Kaplan (1954, pp. 27-30) enumerates six rules the national actors must rationally observe in a multipolar balance-of-power system:

- 1) Each actor must act in such a way as to increase its capabilities, but must prefer negotiation to combat;
- 2) each must fight rather than miss an opportunity to increase his capabilities;
- 3) each must cease fighting rather than eliminate a "principal national actor";
- 4) each must act so as to oppose any coalition or individual actor tending to assume a position of predominance in relation to the system;
- 5) each must act so as to constrain the actors subscribing to supranational principles of organization;
- 6) each must permit the national actors, whether beaten or constrained, to return to the system as acceptable partners.

Of these six, only the fourth is said to be consistent with the principle of equilibrium. None of the others has been found to be of obvious application (Aron, 1966, p. 129).

Burns (1956, p. 505) examines the problem of the system in a stable balance and concludes that "the most stable arrangements would seem to be a world of five or some greater odd number of powers, independent and of approximately equal strength", since this would not easily degenerate into two equal factions. He is of the opinion that the best arrangement would seem to be a world of "five roughly equal blocs, each including a family of exchangeable client nations", if only because this makes it possible for each bloc to calculate relationships. Quester (1975, pp.

204-205) finds that the international system since 1945, unlike the earlier periods which he examined, appears very much to have emerged into a form of balance-of-power system, perhaps a multipolar system. He mentions two reasons for this; the development of nuclear weapons systems which ruled out a form of world system dominated by a single government, and the reduction of conflict between the superpowers which allowed other states some relative freedom of action.

Various applications of the balance-of-power theory can be found in the writings of the theorists of nuclear deterrence and arms control (Snyder, 1960, pp. 1-34; Herz, 1960). The theory, as pointed out by Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff (1981, p. 28), "retains a charm and a validity for analysis of strategic arms limitations and the triangular relationship of the United States, the Soviets, and China.

Balance-of-Power Theory: Kenneth Waltz

Waltz (1979) has explicated the balance-of-power theory as a central element in a systemic theory of world politics. The theory, as he says, explains state behavior in international politics in much the same way that microtheory of the firm explains company decisions in economics; "if there is a distinctively political theory of international politics, balance of power theory is it" (Waltz, 1979, p. 117).

Earlier theorists of balance of power have sought to explain the pattern that balances of power periodically form in world politics, the puzzle that Waltz addresses is how to cut through such confusion as earlier existed on it, or as Kuhn (1970, p. 36) put it, "to achieve the anticipated in a new way." Earlier in the book Waltz developed the concept of structure which he now uses to account for the persistence and recurrence of patterns of international political behavior of nation-states.

The international system, as conceived by Waltz (1979, p. 117), is anarchic in structure. Balance-of-power theory applies to "anarchic" realism whose structures are formally unorganized and in which, therefore, units must constantly have to worry about their survival. "Self-help is necessarily the principle of action in an anarchic order."

In Waltz's international system, states which are similar to one another in function are the relevant actors, they use external as well as internal means to achieve their goals. The system also consists of a structure and the latter is defined, first, according to its ordering principle, which is anarchic, and second, by the distribution of capabilities across the system's units. The structure of a system changes with changes in the distribution of capabilities among its units. Changes in the relative capabilities of units tend to lead also to changes in their coalitional patterns or patterns of

internal efforts. Waltz (1979, p. 118) states the assumptions of balance-of-power theory as follows:

A balance of power theory, properly stated, begins with assumptions about states; they are unitary actors who, at a minimum, seek their own preservations and, at a maximum, drive for universal domination. States, or those who act for them, try in more or less sensible ways to use the means available in order to achieve the ends in view. Those means fall into two categories; internal efforts (moves to increase economic capability, to increase military strength, to develop clever strategies) and external efforts (moves to strengthen and enlarge one's own alliance or to weaken and shrink an opposing one). The external game of alignment requires three or more players, and it is usually said that balance of power systems require at least that number. The statement is false, for in a two-power system the politics of balance continues, but the way to compensate for an incipient external disequilibrium is primarily by intensifying one's internal efforts.

Together with these assumptions, Waltz adds one condition necessary for the operation of the theory, namely, that two or more states coexist in a self-help system. He describes a self-help system as one in which one of two things happens; either there is no superior power to come to the aid of states that are negligent in their own preservation, or in its absence, states are guaranteed all the available means that they may deem fit as necessary to achieve their objectives. Waltz (1979, p. 118) states:

A self-help system is one in which those who do not help themselves or who do so less effectively than others will fail to prosper, will lay themselves open to dangers, will suffer. Fear of such unwanted consequences stimulates states to

behave in ways that tend toward the creation of balances of power.

From his assumptions, and given the condition of the theory's operation (self-help), Waltz (1979, p. 118) deduces "the expected outcome; namely, the formation of balances of power". In his view, balance-of-power theory is based on assumptions about states behavior. The theory "is built up from the assumed motivations of states and the actions that correspond to them".

According to Waltz (1979, p. 119), it does not follow that deviant cases represent falsification of the theory; "We can freely admit that states are in fact not unitary, purposive actors. States pursue many goals which are often vaguely formulated and inconsistent." Nor is it required that states or leaders intend to balance power: "Balance-of-power theory claims to explain a result (the recurrent formation of balances of power) which may not accord with the intentions of any of the units whose actions combine to produce that result. To contrive and maintain a balance may be the aim of one or more states, but then again it may not be" (p. 119). "Balance of power politics prevails wherever two, and only two, requirements are met; that the order be anarchic and that it be populated by units wishing to survive" (p. 121). States do not have to enshrine the purpose of maintaining such a system.

Finally, balance-of-power theory is a formal theory of international political behavior of nation-states. It operates at the systemic level. It does not explain the particular policies of states any more than the law of gravitation predicts "the wayward path of a falling leaf" (p. 121). "A theory at one level of generality cannot answer questions about matters at a different level of generality" (p. 129). One would not expect balance-of-power theory, therefore, to explain for example, why Somali leaders decided to attack Ethiopia in 1977 or why Moscow suddenly switched sides in support of Ethiopia, although these events might be considered as germane factors which help to produce the final outcome; restoration of balance of power.

Critiques of Waltz's Balance-of-Power Theory

Two scholars, Keohane (1982, pp. 18-21) and Rosecrance (1981, pp. 707-708), have pointed out what appear to be major anomalies in Waltz's explanation of balance-of-power theory. One criticism from Keohane (p. 19) is that Waltz's balance-of-power theory "is very ambiguous, precisely at a point where the Realist paradigm is vague; that is, with regard to the interests or motivations of states." Waltz, says Keohane, wants to avoid attributing any kind of interests to states. But he needs to and does have to attribute some motivations to states if the underlying

assumptions of his theory are to gain any validity. Waltz (1979, p. 118) had stated that nations "at a minimum, seek their own preservation, and at a maximum, drive for universal domination". He had easily dismissed the latter saying it should be unnecessary to assume that any states seek universal domination. But he still could not dismiss the assumption that states seek self-preservation. To do so, says Keohane, would have meant that there would be no reason that "balances of power" would regularly form.

A second criticism from Keohane (p. 20) is that Waltz's balance-of-power theory is inconsistent with the assumption that some states "maximize power", if power is taken to refer to tangible resources that can be used to exercise control over others, through the threat of infliction of deprivations. While it is possible that states may have such resources, their use or application may not and often do not achieve the desired results. Yet, the assumption of power maximization in balance-of-power theory is necessary, says Keohane, if only because it makes possible strong inferences about behavior that would be impossible if we assume that states "sometimes", or "often" seek to aggrandize themselves. Waltz's main contribution is seen to lie in the nature of his explanation which is conceptual. Waltz, says Keohane (pp. 20-21), "helps us think more closely about the role of systemic theory, the explanatory

power of structural models, and how to account deductively for the recurrent formation of balances of power".

Rosecrance's criticism focuses on Waltz's claim that balances of power recurrently form. Waltz had stressed that ideological antagonism does not prevent the formation of balances of power. Citing some historical and contemporary examples, Rosecrance disputes Waltz's claim and argues that balances of power not only do not recurrently form but imperfectly characterize the past and present international systems. Rosecrance (1981, p. 708) declares:

In fact "balances of power" do not "recurrently form", overbalances exist for long periods and as many authors have shown, are more peaceful than periods in which power is precisely balanced. And when countercoalitions are fashioned, it is not always power that is being checked. Aggressive "intentions" are not simply to be determined (as perhaps they were in the age of Louis XIV) by a calculation of strength ... with the strongest power as the putative aggressor. As Prussia showed in the eighteenth century and Vietnam more recently, aggressive intentions are not the monopoly of the strong.

The above outlined criticisms by Keohane and Rosecrance seem to indicate that the assumptions of Waltz's balance-of-power theory rest on shaky theoretical and empirical foundations. These criticisms, however, lose much of their validity when one considers that Waltz's balance-of-power theory is a formal theory with a systemic focus. As Barnes (1968, p. 107) has pointed out in connection with Olson's theory of interest groups,

Formal theory is largely concerned with the systemic level; as long as its propositions facilitate prediction, it is irrelevant whether or not they are realistic descriptions of the behavior and attitudes of individuals. Its validity can scarcely be challenged by empirically unrealistic evidence. Rational models of the economy have not been rejected simply because assumptions concerning "economic man" have been demonstrated to rest on shaky empirical foundations.

The same can be said of balance-of-power theory which, despite its empirical weakness, remains a valuable tool for explanation of the systemic behavior of states.

But are there indeed no empirical grounds for accepting the balance-of-power theory? Waltz's analysis as well as many others, seems to indicate that there are (see Wight, 1973b, pp. 85-115; Claude, 1962). As this study also intends to show, balance-of-power theory may account for certain patterns of international actions, for example, certain conflicts going on in the international system. The case of the Ethiopian-Somali conflict is presented here. In the section below, an explanation of the conflict is offered based on the major propositions and expectations of balance-of-power theory.

Balance-of-Power Theory and the Ethiopian-Somali Conflict of 1977-1978

How and in what ways does balance-of-power theory account for the Ethiopian-Somali conflict between 1964 and 1977? First, the conflict, as explained in Chapter III

involves two principal local actors, both seeking mutual but conflicting objectives. One country, Somalia, is bent on regaining its lost territory, and the other, Ethiopia, is committed to preserving its territorial integrity. Note that the first assumption of balance-of-power theory, as stated by Waltz (1979, p. 118), is that states often seek to preserve their existence, or at a maximum, drive for universal domination.

Having been unsuccessful in its earlier attempts to recover the Somali-occupied areas of Ethiopia, Somalia, in 1970, embarked on a very ambitious program designed primarily to achieve its territorial objective. From this time and lasting till 1975, Somali leaders tried to achieve this objective by increasing their country's socio-economic and military power and by strengthening its alliance with the Soviet Union. Note that the second assumption of balance-of-power theory is that "states or those who act for them try in more or less sensible ways to use the means available in order to achieve the ends in view" (Waltz, 1979, p. 118).

During the same period, Ethiopia found itself in domestic turmoil and beset by secessionist claims and was considerably weakened by these events. The loss of U.S. military support also meant that no powerful backer existed for Ethiopia, a situation which eventually tipped the scale of power balance in favor of Somalia. Note the appearance

here of the condition mentioned by Waltz (1979, p. 118) as necessary for the operation of balance-of-power theory; namely, that two or more states coexist in a self-help system in which either there is no superior power to come to the aid of states that may be weakening, or states are granted all the available means to achieve their purpose.

In trying to deal with a neighbor whose actions have upset the balance of power in the area, Ethiopia's first move was to turn to the Soviet Union, its opponent's traditional ally, for military assistance. If by alligning their country with Moscow, Ethiopian leaders had hoped to weaken Soviet support for Somalia, their strategy surely was successful. By the beginning of the summer of 1977, Soviet-Somali relations were already undergoing severe strains. By contrast, Soviet support for Ethiopia, while still unsteady, was fast becoming a reality.

The Somali decision to invade Ogaden was based, in part, upon its perception that the short-term balance of forces was still in its favor. Action produces a reaction (a notion implicit in balance-of-power theory). Ethiopia, faced with the reality of Somali aggression and the possibility of losing one-fifth of its territory, was forced to declare war on its neighbor. The result was the 1977-1978 Ogaden War between Ethiopia and Somalia. Note again that in Waltz's analysis, balance-of-power theory cannot

account for the Somali attack on Ethiopia or the latter's decision to go to war to protect part of its territory.

These are decisions taken at the national level; balance-of-power theory, on the other hand, is a theory of system-level or environmental constraints that made the war possible.

From the theory, one predicts that the war will lead to the formation of a balance of power between the two countries.

It is now time to consider the question raised earlier in the last section of Chapter III, which is whether or not the aftermath of the 1977-1978 Ethiopian-Somali War has now resulted in a balance of power between Ethiopia and Somalia.

CHAPTER V

THE AFTERMATH OF THE OGADEN WAR AND CONCLUSIONS

If one posits that conflicts which end with the defeat of one of the opposing sides are more likely to result in a shift of balance of power toward the victorious side, then it is quite obvious that the outcome of the Ethiopian-Somali conflict is completely at variance with the outcome predicted by balance-of-power theory. There are indeed strong arguments in support of this position. From some reports of the conflict and from some of its observers, there usually come three points.

The first is that the introduction of Cuban troops and massive quantities of Soviet equipment during the Ogaden War had decisively altered the balance of power in the Horn of Africa. The second is that over 6,000 Cuban troops remain inside Ethiopia, ready to be deployed in the event of another war with Somalia. The third point is that Somalia, since the end of the war, has been finding it difficult to replenish its heavy war losses in arms and equipment. The Somali expectation that the United States would become its major supplier so far has not materialized. The United States, like other Western nations, has been unwilling to supply its new client any major offensive weapons for fear

of triggering another round of war between Ethiopia and Somalia.

While conceding that these are valid points, one can also identify some other countervailing developments in Ethiopian-Somali relations since 1978. The first of these developments occurred near the end of the war. The Ethiopian forces, having recaptured most of the Ogaden territory from Somali forces, appeared ready to advance inside Somali territory. This led the United States and other Western countries to call for a negotiated settlement and for the withdrawal of the remaining Somali units from the Ogaden in return for the Soviet promise not to allow Ethiopian forces to cross the Somali border (Soviet Union Promises Ethiopia Won't Invade Somalia, 1978, p. 23). Partly as a result, the Ethiopian victory was limited only to the recovery of its Ogaden region, and perhaps, to the psychological satisfaction which derives from having defeated its old enemy one more time.

But in 1978, Ethiopia still had superior military forces and could have successfully invaded Somalia if it had wanted to (Ethiopia's Finest hour: The War and the Military Balance in the Region, 1978, pp. 17-20). Thus we must look for other factors, apart from the United States' call for a negotiated settlement, which prevented it from doing so.⁵

It is an open secret that Somalia, since the end of the Ogaden War with Ethiopia has been shopping abroad for arms,

trying to replenish its war losses. During the war the United States and most Western European countries took the position that no military items would be sold to Somalia either directly or through third parties until Mogadishu withdrew its forces from the Ogaden. Siad Barre's 1978 announcement of Somali troop withdrawal was followed by numerous written assurances in the hope of concluding an arms deal with Western nations (Nelson, 1982, p. 261). Agreements between the United States and Somalia led to the United States-Somali treaty of August 1980 which provided the United States with the use of the naval installations at Berbera and the adjacent field in return for the United States guarantee to Somalia of \$53 million in economic aid and \$40 million in military credits for the purchase of an air defense system (Ottaway, 1982, p. 127).

Since 1979, Italy has provided more military assistance to Somalia than has any other Western country. This aid included several large shipments of Fiat trucks for military transportation and generous export credits for Italian companies to supply aircraft and training for Somali flight and ground crews beginning in 1978. Plans were already on the way to sell light tanks and armored cars to Somalia. Total Italian exports to Somalia amounted to the equivalent of 124 million United States dollars in 1980 (Nelson, 1982, p. 261).

China's close economic relations with Somalia which dated back to 1963 have now been extended to include military association following the deliveries of its F-6 jets to Somalia. But China's own economic and military weaknesses would appear to preclude its supplying military equipment to Somalia on the scale of the Soviet Union (Ottaway, 1982, p. 127).

While on the external front Somalia continued to look for arms, the country, on the internal front, remained undaunted in its goal of uniting all Somalis under a single flag. It has continued to provide logistic and financial support for ethnic Somali insurgents in the Ogaden region, a situation which has invited retaliatory strikes from the Ethiopian forces (Somalia Continues to Eye Ogaden, 1978, p. 1). But unlike before the war, Somalia itself is no longer a paragon of unity. Some of the military officers who fled in the wake of the attempted coup against Siyad Barre immediately after the war now reside in neighboring countries and constitute a potential source of opposition to the Barre regime (Ottaway, 1982, p. 128). All of which now makes the situation very unfavorable for either of the two countries to contemplate launching an attack on the other.⁶

When considered in their totality, these developments tend to provide strong indication of a new balance of power between Ethiopia and Somalia and to support the claim of

balance-of-power theory. Still, a major problem is that of confirmation of the theory. Balance-of-power theory, as indicated by Waltz (1979, p. 124), predicts only a loosely defined and inconstant condition of balance. As a result, it is difficult to say that any given distribution of power falsifies or confirms the theory as the case may be. In the absence of any empirical tests of theoretical refinements that fix expectation with some certainty in some detail, how can one confirm the theory?

The way to overcome this problem, says Waltz (1979, p. 125) is by using one of the six rules he has devised for testing a theory. This is the rule that urges the importance of making tests ever more difficult. Balance-of-power theory, according to him, will begin to command belief if subjected to more difficult tests and "if we observe outcomes that the theory leads us to expect even though strong forces work against them."

To confirm the theory one should not look mainly to the eighteenth century heyday of the balance of power when great powers in convenient numbers interacted and were presumably able to adjust to a shifting distribution of power by changing partners with grace made possible by the absence of ideological and other cleavages. Instead one should look through observation of difficult cases. One should, for example, look for instances of states allying in accordance with the expectations the theory gives rise to, even though they have strong reasons not to cooperate with each other (Waltz, 1979, p. 125).

The postwar United States-Somali alliance and the continuing presence of Cuban soldiers in Ethiopia long after

the war has officially ended provide two such instances in the case of the Ethiopian-Somali conflict. The United States-Somali alliance grew out of Somalia's desperate need for the backing of a superpower after its defeat in the Ogaden War. Having lost the Soviet Union, its traditional ally, to Ethiopia, Somalia sought frantically to recoup its losses by allying itself with the United States.

The improvement in the United States-Somali relations after the war could not have come as a surprise to most observers of political events in the area. Given the outcome of the war and Ethiopia's alliance with the Soviet Union, Somalia had no other superpower to which to turn for support except the United States. But an alliance treaty between Somalia and the United States was more than anyone could have imagined. An alliance treaty between the two countries seemed inconceivable for two reasons. First, the socialist orientations of Somali military leadership run counter to the capitalist ideology of the United States. Remember that this is one of the reasons that led to the severance of United States relationship with Ethiopia. Second, the United States had made it known before and even after the war that it would be unwilling to supply Somalia anything other than defensive weapons (U.S. Arms Supplies, 1977, p. 4519B). Somalia, therefore, has little to gain by allying itself with the United States. However, not only did Somalia seek alliance with the United States, it went

further than that. In 1980, it signed a treaty which could hardly be considered to be in its favor.⁷

These actions on the part of Somalia are not entirely different from those of Ethiopia after the war, especially with regard to the stationing of Cuban combat troops inside Ethiopia. The Ethiopian government has shown no inclination whatsoever of sending home all the Cuban troops that helped Ethiopia in its war with Somalia, even though the condition which necessitated their presence has abated. As recently as 1983, there were some 14,000 Cuban military as well as 2,000 plus Soviet advisers, kept there by the Ethiopian government perhaps in anticipation of another possible war with its rival neighbor (Superpower Involvement, 1983, pp. 7021C, 7022A).

Reports also indicated that the Ethiopian government might seek Western, particularly United States assistance in its efforts to revamp the country's drought-stricken economy (Superpower Involvement, 1983, p. 7022BC). But with the continued presence of Cuban troops in Ethiopia, the government surely must be aware of how slim its chances are especially under the present Reagan administration.⁸ Still, there are no signs that the remaining Cuban troops in Ethiopia will be asked to leave now or in the immediate future.

Going by Waltz's explanations, Ethiopia's actions as well as those of Somalia, are quite in accordance with the

expectation of balance-of-power theory. The theory, says Waltz (1979, p. 125), leads us to expect states to behave in ways that result in balances forming whether or not they wish to. The two countries have behaved exactly in this manner since the end of the war: Ethiopia, by keeping the Cuban troops on its soil even though the condition which necessitated their presence has diminished; Somalia, by signing an alliance treaty with the United States even though the provisions of the treaty offered her little material gains. These two examples from the Ethiopian-Somali conflict tend to confirm the theory and to support the thesis of this study.

Conclusion

Sometime in 1976, Siyad Barre, the Somali President, warned that there were "war clouds" over the Horn of Africa. A year later, the world witnessed one of the most violent armed conflicts in Africa in a decade between Ethiopia and Somalia. Today, that conflict appears to have receded into an obscure background with only a few people still able to remember the conflict or the reasons for it. But if current reports are correct, the Ethiopian-Somali conflict continues to simmer under the surface and may one day erupt into a large-scale war. One way to prevent this from happening is to seek to understand what went wrong in 1977 and the period leading to it. This is one reason for this study.

Another major reason is the urge to test the empirical validity of balance-of-power theory to see if the theory remains a valuable tool for the analysis of contemporary international political systems or sub-systems. Balance of power theory helps us to understand the dynamics of the conflict and to predict its outcome. From a balance-of-power theory perspective, the eruption of Ethiopian-Somali conflict into a large-scale armed confrontation will most likely occur if and when the present balance of forces is overwhelmingly tilted in favor of one of the two countries. Thus so long as there are no serious quantitative and qualitative changes in the balance of forces, the possibility is very remote that either country will want to wage war on the other for whatever reason. The task for the superpowers, therefore, is to make it impossible for either of the two countries to upset the present equilibrium either by overarming itself or by being seriously weakened by internal and external threats. This short-term solution is balance-of-power theory's contribution to the search for a lasting peace in the area. A more permanent solution is for the two countries to peacefully resolve the fundamental issue of their conflict, that is, their territorial dispute, otherwise, the Ogaden campaign of 1977 to 1978 may turn out to be another in a series of battles in a long, drawn-out war.

NOTES

1. For a criticism of the reductionist approach, see Kenneth Waltz (1979, pp. 17.33).
2. Ethiopia's position, one which is widely subscribed to by many African leaders and scholars, is that given the presence of many similar or ethnic-related groups in different African countries, international boundaries in Africa are at best artificial divisions, and Somali claims based on ethnicity are nothing more than a dubious proposition in the African context.
3. The immediate cause of the 1964 war is very obscure. There have been constant border clashes and cross-allegations on both sides prior to this incident. The war may have been the result of these events (Farer, 1979, p. 100).
4. The realization of the threat posed by an independent Somali nation led to the signing of a defense agreement in 1967 between Ethiopia's Haile Selassie and Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta (Farer, 1979, p. 97).
5. Suffice it to say that an Ethiopian invasion would not only have been costly in terms of external opposition to it but would have yielded a hostile Somali population.

6. According to Ottaway, Siad Barre after 1978 no longer had a united army to back him, nor could he easily rebuild that unity by rousing its support through another military build-up.
7. From the Treaty, Washington got what it had always desired--a naval base for its Mediterranean fleet and a strategic communication post in the area. In return, Somalia received a paltry sum of \$53 million in economic aid and \$43 million for the purchase of an air defense system. The United States' offer was hardly a generous one when compared with what Somalia received under its 1974 treaty with the Soviet Union. For comparison, see Crozier, 1975, p. 4.
8. The Reagan administration has repeatedly made it clear that it is very "concerned" about the continued presence of Cuban troops in Angola and Ethiopia.

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