

## **The Cold War and Regional Politics in East Africa**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Modern African history is largely a history of colonialism, characterized by the conquest of African people by European powers, the incorporation of the African economic systems into the world economy, and the infusion of Western values into African cultures. The achievement of political independence by these countries has not changed, as might be expected, the character of the relationship between the African ruling elites and the Europeans. The incorporation of the African economies into the world capitalist economy continues unabated. Links at all levels between the ruling elites in Africa and the European elites continue to grow. Ideological polarization that one sees at the global level in world politics is clearly discernible in many African countries and in many regions of the continent.

The aim of this paper is not to rehash the history of European involvement in East Africa. That history is well known. Rather, the paper will examine the rivalry of the United States and the Soviet Union in the East African region for the past eight years and particularly since the accession to power of new leaders in Kenya, following the death of President Jomo Kenyatta, and in Ethiopia after the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie by army officers. Furthermore, we shall evaluate the impact that this rivalry is having and is likely to continue to have on interstate political behaviour in the region.

The U.S.-Soviet rivalry has seemingly come to take the place of the historic European competition for Africa. The re-emergence of the Cold War has heightened the superpowers' quest for strategic access and influence, and the strategic significance of the East African littoral has made the area one of the most contested in recent years. Consequently, the politics of East African states has been affected.

We shall begin our discussion with an analysis of the historical and political factors in the East African region which have created the climate conducive to great power rivalry. This will be followed by some consideration of the involvement of the United States and the Soviet Union with each of the countries in East Africa under scrutiny, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Tanzania. The respective involvements of the major powers will be analysed against the backdrop of key events, both generated from within and without the region. For example, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is germane to the discussion in so far as it spawned the Olympic boycott orchestrated by the United States, which in turn prevailed upon American allies to demonstrate opposition to the Soviet action against a Third World country. Within the region,

Tanzania's overt assistance to Ugandan guerrillas in their successful overthrow of President Idi Amin was a most unusual action in that it was undertaken against a sovereign nation openly and justified on the basis of Idi Amin's genocidal activities against the Ugandan people. Despite the sacredness of the notion of sovereignty (often interpreted to mean non-interference in the internal affairs of another state), President Nyerere of Tanzania got hesitant support from the world community for his actions. But these actions left Kenyan leaders visibly shaken, leading to the strategic decisions that Kenya's President Arap Moi subsequently made. A third example can be found in the problems the United States encountered with the Iranian hostage-taking incident. This affected Eastern African regional politics in some telling ways. The loss of a one-time reliable ally, Iran, prompted the United States to prepare a regional strategic plan involving the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF). This, in turn, required that Kenya and Somalia become firmer and more reliable friends of the U.S.

## **BACKGROUND TO THE POLITICS OF EAST AFRICAN STATES**

### **Kenya**

It has been argued many times by a variety of scholars and observers that Kenya has consistently been in the Western bloc, preferring to maintain closer relations with, to borrow funds from, and to do business with Western nations or Western-controlled multilateral agencies. This consistency was not achieved without classic ideological, domestic confrontation which took the form of proxy battles between individuals supportive of the United States and those sympathetic to the Soviet Union and China. The intense political rivalry in Kenya between the former Vice-President Oginga Odinga and the late Economic Minister, Tom Mboya, is the best and most frequently cited example.<sup>1</sup> That the pro-Western forces prevailed is incontrovertible, and political authorities continue to be vigilant and to suppress anyone suspected of leftist, that is, communist tendencies.<sup>2</sup>

Kenya still retains a detention law which allows the President to detain anyone, indefinitely, without trial, perceived to be a threat, in a broad sense, to public order. In the past, this law has been used sparingly but very effectively against political dissenters. Even for individuals not in detention but under government suspicion, a new requirement has been instituted to keep them out of public office. It requires that all candidates intending to seek elective office have clearance either from the ruling party headquarters in Nairobi or from their home district branch. In recent years, the Kenyan authorities have become accustomed to blaming all domestic political agitation, especially at the country's only university (the University of Nairobi), on Marxist lecturers and other left-leaning political malcontents.<sup>3</sup> Surveillance and periodic harassment are also used to keep individuals in line.

### **Tanzania**

Tanzania is unique among African countries, setting out, as it did, to establish a new society based on socialist principles inherent in the

African cultural heritage and historical experience as they were perceived by the country's leaders. Other countries in Africa have proclaimed varying doctrines of socialism, yet at the same time left intact the colonial structures inherent at independence. For instance, while Kenya initially could be counted among those espousing African socialism as evidenced by a government document entitled *African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya*, Tanzania went further. The leaders, principally Julius Nyerere, the President, published one paper after another refining the ideology of *ujamaa*, a Swahili word meaning 'familyhood' which Nyerere chose to describe as a kind of "communal cooperation." A strict code for party and government leaders was adopted. Party structures were decentralized somewhat and set into motion to implement *ujamaa*, and various campaigns were inaugurated exhorting Tanzanians to work hard, to produce more food, to be self-reliant, and to be politically conscious, socialist men and women.

Even though Tanzania opted for socialism, existing data clearly show that the leadership successfully tried to maintain a non-aligned stance in its relationships with foreign countries.<sup>4</sup> Aid, as one example, was sought and accepted from both socialist countries and Western sources.<sup>5</sup> Internationally, the fierce independence maintained by Nyerere and his colleagues was not without cost.<sup>6</sup> Western nations were reluctant to offer assistance and investments were slow to come in as political investors feared that businesses might be taken over, socialized, and profits jeopardized.

The Kenyans have always looked askance at Nyerere's stand in Tanzania. The Kenyan elite feared the possible influence of the Tanzanian model of development and radical politics on Kenyan youth. Tanzania's unswerving support for the revolutionary struggle in Southern Africa has been to some extent unnerving to Kenya, which has been supportive of the African initiatives for independence and freedom but reluctant to allow exiled freedom fighters to engage in political activities within Kenya. The relationship between the two countries has, therefore, been an uneasy one. This will be discussed at some length below.

It is difficult to document how the ideological differences between the Kenyans and the Tanzanians have been exploited by external powers. What can be asserted with some degree of confidence is that the differences created a climate of mutual wariness. Every action taken by the two was interpreted ideologically by outside observers and gave the impression that Tanzania was being manipulated by the Chinese or the Soviets for ends not relevant to Tanzania.

### **Somalia**

Somalia has been a victim of its colonial legacy in a much more telling but somewhat different way perhaps than the other countries in the East Africa region. It is a living monument to the absurdity of colonial boundaries, which were drawn in such a way that the people of Somali origin found themselves colonized by the French, the Italians and the British, and scattered among four countries: Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti. This point is important only because the dream of

Somalia's leaders for the eventual unification of all people of Somali origin into a "Greater Somalia" has truly shaped the domestic priorities of these leaders ever since the country became independent. This dream has had a remarkable impact on Somalia's relationships with her neighbours, and has created an ideal situation for great power rivalry that has not diminished and is not likely to diminish in the future.

### **Ethiopia**

For many years, Ethiopia was ruled by a monarch who also doubled as the head of the country's church. Change came slowly, if at all. Illiteracy was extraordinarily high — over 90 percent — and the people lived in abject poverty and misery, except, of course, for the tiny ruling class. However, there was always peace and stability, except for the brief Italian occupation between 1936 and 1941, and the 1960 *coup* attempt that shattered the invincibility of the Emperor. After that attempt, domestic challenges emerged in varying forms and lingered on until they amassed a momentum of their own and led to the overthrow of the monarchy over a decade later.

Like most monarchs, Emperor Haile Selassie liked the 'old ways' and wanted to determine both the kind and the pace of change appropriate for his "empire." Under the 1953 Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement (MDAA), he invited the Americans into his country. Traditionally, in dealing with docile Third World countries, Americans have encouraged and enjoyed peace and stability almost at any price. The U.S. built and maintained a huge strategic communications base at Kagnew, near Asmara, in the northern part of the country. It trained and equipped Selassie's military establishment. When he was removed from the throne in a social revolution in 1974, things were bound to be different. An anachronistic feudal system, presided over by the Emperor, had been an ideal incubator of the kind of radicalism and explosive political energy that ensued when young military officers seized power.

There were bloody power struggles among the military officers in the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC), particularly between those who wanted gradual change and some continuing relationship with the United States and those who wanted more radical political and economic changes. The bloody purges took nearly three years, with power shifting noticeably to self-proclaimed revolutionaries. The Americans, who had been reducing their grant aid gradually over the three years, became alarmed at the human rights violations going on within Ethiopia. Consequently, when the PMAC pleaded for additional military aid in view of stepped-up Somali irredentism, the plea fell on deaf ears. Two reasons account for the American refusal to provide additional military assistance. First, there was the concern that the new Ethiopian leaders might use the weapons for invading Somalia after initial defensive encounters. Second, by withholding the aid, the U.S. expected to influence the PMAC to moderate its radicalism. However, the American decision backfired, leading instead to a successful Ethiopian quest for Soviet assistance and to an opportunity for Ethiopia to reconcile its domestic politics (socialism) with its international politics

(joining the socialist club). Thus, the PMAC unilaterally abrogated the MDAA, closed the American base and facilities and expelled American personnel. Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, in explaining the action, declared the U.S. refusal to help Ethiopia would not "make revolutionary Ethiopia kneel before imperialists" and that his action had ended "an era of 'slavery' imposed on Ethiopia by Washington." The emerging scene, needless to say, lent itself to considerable involvement by and competition between the superpowers.

### **U.S./U.S.S.R. RIVALRY IN EAST AFRICA**

Superpower interest in East Africa began when the post-World War II American policy of containment became globalized and corrupted, roughly by 1950. The policy had been predominantly a European-oriented one. However, the Korean War and the emergence of the general perception of the Soviet Union as "an aggressive and expansionist power" led the U.S. to modify and expand its definition of 'containment' to encompass areas outside its "defense perimeters" yet conceived to be of strategic importance. Hence, the U.S. move to promote and sponsor regional collective security and military alliances like CENTO and SEATO. Some strategic points like the Suez Canal and the Persian Gulf also became significant in the overall American strategy *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union in the Cold War era.

Ethiopia's advantageous location for the installation of communications facilities led to the U.S. agreement with that country in 1953 to exchange military assistance for access. Ethiopia's strategic importance is shared by Somalia. The two countries combine with tiny Djibouti to constitute what has become popularly known as the Horn of Africa. The Horn flanks the oil-rich states of Arabia; it controls the Bab el Mandeb Straits and dominates a part of the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean through which tankers are constantly moving. It also overlooks the passages where the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean converge. The rise in importance of submarine warfare and the need, on the part of the powers, for pre-positioning of military logistics and listening posts, soon catapulted the Indian Ocean and its littoral states into strategic prominence. It is against this backdrop that the U.S.-Soviet rivalry in East Africa in recent years must be viewed.

Of the four countries under discussion, America-Soviet rivalry has been keenest in Somalia and Ethiopia, and less so in Kenya and Tanzania. The explanation for this is two-fold. First, Somalia and Ethiopia are the more strategically located in terms of the interests of the major powers, which include the right of access into the Red Sea, the ability to spy on each other in the Gulf and the Near East area and the desire to keep open the vital shipping lanes from the oil sources in the Gulf area. Second, the unique domestic politics and external policy desires expressed in both Somalia and Ethiopia have dictated that their political leaderships capitalize on the countries' strategic importance to gain the support (mainly manifested in weapons) of the superpowers. In Somalia, various leaderships have been so committed to achieving the dream of the eventual unification of the Somali people that it has led them to pit one major

power against the other. Thus, Somalia 'maximizes the benefits,' allowing the country to press claims against the Ogaden area in Ethiopia and the North Eastern province of Kenya. Ethiopia, on the other hand, needs external support to develop and modernize its military in order to resist the Somali challenge and to contain the separatist movements in Eritrea, the Bale province and elsewhere. Thus, under both the Emperor and the PMAC, Ethiopia has had the need for foreign military support.

In terms of activities, the great power rivalry has been nearly non-existent in Kenya, as there really have been no domestic forces that interested the Soviets or were receptive to Soviet overtures. Kenya has been a very safe ally of the United States and other Western countries almost to the point of being taken for granted by Western countries. Kenyan leaders seem to have felt the need to maintain vigilance at all times against any possible external, that is, communist or Marxist, interference. Repeated references by top leaders to 'alien' ideologies demonstrate the perception of the ever-present danger of communist infiltration or subversion.<sup>8</sup> Hence, when the U.S. approached Kenya for access to port and air facilities at Mombasa, in relation to the Rapid Development Force, agreement was reached quickly. In return, Kenya received \$50 million in U.S. assistance.<sup>9</sup>

The Tanzanians have managed to minimize great power rivalry in their country because the leadership has managed over the years to articulate, quite forcefully, their national ideology. Designed to govern the domestic political processes, it also guides their stands on important international issues. It is reasonable to assume that Tanzania's foreign policy initiatives were taken to assert a more even-handed, non-aligned, African-oriented policy after colonial tutelage under the British.

Soviet relations with Somalia grew considerably stronger after the 1969 *coup* that brought Mohamed Syad Barre to power. Before the *coup* there had been occasional visits to the Soviet Union by Somali leaders and there had been some trade between the two countries. In 1963, the Soviet Union offered Somalia significant military aid, beginning with a loan of \$35 million, at a time, incidentally, when Somalia's defense budget only totalled \$3.9 million.<sup>10</sup> They also trained a sizeable number of the officer corps. By 1972, Soviet military aid to Somalia had grown to about \$50 million and practically all of Somali military hardware was of Soviet manufacture. In addition, the Soviets built advanced communications and naval facilities at Berbera to service their naval fleets, both in the Indian Ocean and in the Red Sea.<sup>11</sup>

This relationship was jolted by two important events. In 1974, the Emperor of Ethiopia was overthrown. The fall of the Emperor provided an excellent opportunity for the Soviets to offer assistance to Ethiopia. Here was a textbook case of a peasant society, suppressed long and ruthlessly in a feudal system, clashing with a group of army officers dedicated to modifying that society rather drastically. The Soviets had been quite ill at ease with the irredentist claims of the Somali and had not encouraged a confrontation with either Kenya or Ethiopia and had felt, in fact, that their best hope was to maintain a presence in both Ethiopia and Somalia. This situation, which destabilized and debilitated Ethiopia,

gave Somalia's leaders an excuse to press their irredentist claims by military means. Soviet refusal to back the Somalis in this move and subsequent shift to support Ethiopia provided Somalia the opportunity to disengage itself from the Soviets. Having done so, the country then sought a *rapprochement* with the United States which was smarting from the rapid changes in Ethiopia which had imperilled the American presence and American communication facilities. The U.S. was eager to find another ally on the Horn particularly because of heightened American perception of the Soviet threat following the Afghanistan invasion of late 1979. By mid-1980 an agreement was reached between the U.S. and Somalia permitting American access to the Soviet-built air and naval facilities in Berbera. In exchange, Somalia was to receive \$40 million in American military credits and \$5 million in economic assistance.<sup>12</sup>

Some reference has already been made to the close relationship that existed between the United States and Ethiopia. With the overthrow of Haile Selassie in 1974, it was fairly clear that fundamental changes would be forthcoming. The young military officers who took over the reins of power were divided, not only on the question of how to deal with the United States, but also regarding the handling of the secessionist conflict taking place in the northern province of Eritrea and in Ogaden province where the so-called Western Somalia Liberation Front had been pressing the fight to take the region. As already explained, the U.S. equivocated when the PMAC requested aid. By late 1977, the Soviet Union was ready to step in to fill the vacuum with approximately \$385 million in arms deliveries. Cuban advisors also arrived to train the newly mobilized peasants in the use of the new equipment in staving off the onslaught of the Eritreans in the north and the Somalis in the southeast. It became impractical for the Soviet Union to maintain a presence in Somalia at the same time.<sup>13</sup>

In Tanzania, the limited external rivalry was not between East and West but between the socialist giants themselves, namely, the Soviet Union and the Peoples' Republic of China. The Tanzam railroad, linking Tanzania and Zambia, remains the most expensive and most ambitious development project ever undertaken by the Chinese in Africa.<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, the Chinese were approached to help with the project after pleas to Western nations fell on deaf ears. The West simply did not appreciate that Tanzania and Zambia, unalterably committed to assisting guerrillas in Southern Africa, had to lessen their dependence on South Africa's (and, at the time, Rhodesia's) transportation system.

With considerable skill, the Tanzanian leadership managed to maintain active and rigorous contacts with the Soviet Union. Visits by government delegations were frequent, cultural and educational exchanges occurred, and the Soviets financed many agricultural projects.<sup>15</sup> During this period, Tanzania remained relatively open and accessible to Westerners who were fascinated by the bold national experiment represented by the construction of a society based on *ujamaa* and, in no less measure, by the personal appeal, integrity and charisma of Julius Nyerere.

As mentioned earlier, the involvement of the Soviet Union in Kenya probably reached its zenith in the mid-1960s when Oginga Odinga was Vice-President. Contacts between the Soviets and the more radical elements within the Kenya African National Union, still the ruling party of Kenya, had been made in the period immediately preceding the granting of independence to Kenya by Britain. Travel exchanges occurred. The Soviet Union even helped to establish a sort of ideological school for the party cadres — the Lumumba Institute — which turned out to be short-lived.<sup>16</sup> Relations between Kenya and the Soviet Union (or even with China, for that matter) were never smooth. A hospital in the western town of Kisumu in Odinga's home region remains the only major Soviet project completed in Kenya. Relations between the two countries soured when Odinga, who, in 1966, had formed an explicitly socialist-oriented opposition party, the Kenya People's Union, was arrested and detained without trial following the violent disturbances subsequent to Tom Mboya's assassination in July 1969.

At the present time, relations between the two countries remain proper but certainly not friendly.<sup>17</sup> Surveillance is maintained on the Russian and Chinese embassies and movements in and out of their premises are closely watched. Kenyans entering these grounds are almost certain to be questioned by authorities. Odinga has never quite managed to overcome the handicap imposed by his earlier association with the Soviet Union. He was detained for less than three years, but, since his release, obstacles of one sort or another, some certainly occasioned by his own errors in judgement and timing, have been placed in his path as he sought to return to full public life.<sup>18</sup>

That Kenya is pro-Western is a common and undeniably true perception of the country's relations with Western countries. All trade, aid and investment transactions are with the United States, Britain, West Germany and, increasingly, Japan. After Kenyatta's death, however, President Moi went on record as asserting Kenya's needs by strengthening her relations with her traditional friends. A series of military agreements has been signed with the United States giving the U.S. access to naval facilities at Mombasa and regarding the building of several air force bases in the interior of the country.<sup>19</sup> This is a significant development because it has put Kenya squarely in the Western camp, stripping it of any pretence of being non-aligned. This, in turn, caused Kenya's neighbours to fear that the country may become a centre for Western interference in those countries deemed unsupportive of Western interests.

## **COLD WAR AND INTERSTATE RELATIONS**

Two questions become particularly relevant at this juncture: In what ways have the relations described between four East African countries and the major powers affected relations among themselves? What other factors have mediated those interstate relations in the region?

It should be noted firstly that even though the current regime in Ethiopia espouses Marxism, an ideology that is strongly resented in Kenya, Kenya has sought to continue the security agreement that Kenyatta signed with Ethiopia aimed at checking Somalia's claims against both



countries. As a matter of fact, when President Moi assumed the presidency upon the death of Kenyatta, one of his first major foreign policy initiatives was to constitute a joint ministerial committee to strengthen the military cooperation between the two countries. Reciprocal visits have been paid by the heads of state of both countries.<sup>20</sup> When war broke out between Somalia and Ethiopia in 1977, Kenya very cleverly stayed out of the conflict. Nonetheless, Kenyan sympathies certainly lay with Ethiopia and there were hopes that the war might be so debilitating to Somalia that it would take a great many years for the Somalis to recover sufficiently to want to initiate another shooting war. Things could change if Somalia were to denounce its territorial claims. For the moment, Ethiopia's strongman, Mengistu Haile Mariam, sees no need to offend Kenya, which, at least in this case, seems prepared to put the need to preserve Kenya's territorial integrity far ahead of ideology.

On the other hand, things have not been going so well between Tanzania and Kenya. Mutual suspicion has always characterized relations that go back to the time both countries gained independence from Britain. It is now a matter of historical record that President Nyerere was so committed to some sort of a federal structure among the East African countries that he offered to delay the date for Tanzania's independence if he could be assured that Kenya, on gaining independence, would join the federation.<sup>21</sup> The East African Community that Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania forged to succeed the East African Common Services Organization, with the idea of pooling resources for development, functioned only fitfully. Development strategies of Kenya and Tanzania were ideologically and concretely different. Kenya was characterized by free enterprise, dedicated to attracting multinational firms through considerable economic concessions. Tanzania was socialist, establishing state enterprises with the express purpose of assuming control over the economy of the country. Kenya encouraged tourism to the point where it was exceeded only by coffee exports as a principal source of foreign exchange. Tanzania was not quite sure that the development of tourism was a wise approach to employ, considering the negative consequences experienced by other African states promoting tourism and the perceived embarrassment of creating a massive service structure which could not be utilized by the Tanzanians themselves.<sup>23</sup> To complicate matters, the three East African countries were at different levels of economic development (in the degree of industrialization, the size of the service sector, and the communication and transportation infrastructure), a situation that was bound to lead to charges and countercharges as to who was benefitting the most from the economic community. Moreover, supreme authority of the East African Community was vested in the three heads of state, thereby assuring that if and when snags occurred in the working of the economic community, conflict resulted at the highest levels of government. This made it virtually impossible to resolve problems without the mediation or intervention of outside heads of government or similarly located dignitaries.

Largely because of domestic reasons, the conflict and misunderstandings between Kenya and Tanzania escalated. The Kenyans, to bolster

internal support for their system, grew fond of ridiculing Nyerere and his ideology of *ujamaa*,<sup>24</sup> going so far as to claim that Kenya was feeding Tanzania and that, without the Kenyans, Tanzanians would be starving. All of Tanzania's problems were being blamed on *ujamaa*. In the excitement of this war of words, Kenya forgot that Tanzania, though poor, was a respectable trading partner and that Tanzania's roads were available for Kenyans to haul goods to Malawi and Zambia for sale. Moreover, Tanzania's well kept game reserves were the principal attraction for many foreign tourists who came to Kenya and, having spent the bulk of their foreign currency in that country, then rented vans to go to Tanzania.<sup>25</sup> Complicating matters were charges by Tanzania of irregularities in the running of Community corporations and of Kenya's failure to adhere to the terms of the treaty.<sup>26</sup> Tanzania sealed its border with Kenya in February 1977, and kept it closed until 1983, severely damaging Kenya's extremely lucrative tourist industry and virtually crippling her trade with countries to the south (Zambia and Malawi) and to the west (Rwanda and Burundi) which could be reached by road only by traversing Tanzanian territory. Even air and rail traffic between the two countries come to a virtual standstill.<sup>27</sup> Meetings between the two countries were held at summit and ministerial levels without success.<sup>28</sup> In addition, a Swedish economist, appointed to determine the assets of the defunct Community with a view to concluding a fair and equitable settlement, was stymied in his efforts to obtain the requisite data from the partner states. The closure of the border, which was thought to be temporary and which initially may have been done to express anger at Kenya's frequent insults directed at Tanzania and to demonstrate Kenya's sizeable need for Tanzania's business, became an ideological battle, perhaps not unlike the Berlin Wall.

The Ethiopian success in crushing the Somali attack of 1977-78 has certainly calmed the war storm over the Horn, but it has not permanently negated the Somali territorial claim. The two countries maintain an uneasy truce that could be broken by any miscalculation or false move by either side. For now, Somalia seems to be retraining its troops and replenishing its arsenals with American support, but it would take a long time for Somalia to achieve the ability to engage Ethiopia militarily again. Ethiopia's own armed forces have been astronomically expanded and equipped with Soviet assistance. It is estimated that by 1980 the Ethiopians had 250,000 men under arms, and the Soviets had provided over \$2 billion worth of arms and other supplies and had placed, in residence, about 1,300 military advisors supplemented by 250 East Germans and 12,000 Cuban troops.<sup>29</sup> For all practical purposes, the Soviets have shown that they are more determined to concern themselves with Ethiopia in a much more serious and penetrative way than the Americans have done for over two decades.

The massive Soviet presence in Ethiopia has affected, directly or indirectly, the country's domestic politics and has the potential to affect its international relations significantly. For one thing, it has blunted the Somali challenge and has elevated Ethiopia to the level of a regional power to be reckoned with. The recent Ethiopian decision to join the

East European countries in boycotting the Los Angeles Olympic Games (Ethiopia was the only African nation to do so) also illustrates the extent to which the Soviet presence has influenced and will probably continue to influence the country's foreign policy. While the Mengistu regime surely draws its strength and support from a domestic base, it is becoming increasingly clear that the Soviets are indeed the main prop of Mengistu's hold on power.

To appreciate the volatile situation in East Africa during the period 1976-78, one needs to look at the data pertaining to the military establishment in terms of soldiers under arms, the military expenditures, and the value of arms transferred to the region. Tables 1 through 4 show that, beginning in 1974, military expenditures increased substantially for all the countries under discussion except Somalia. Arms imports also showed a dramatic increase, particularly for Ethiopia where the value of arms transfers jumped from \$52 million to over \$1 billion. This undoubtedly reflects the massive Soviet arms buildup beginning in late 1977 through 1978. Tanzania's armed forces more than doubled (152 percent), and her military expenditures rose 37 percent, between 1976 and 1978, most probably in preparation to deploy considerable resources in support of Ugandan guerrillas wishing to overthrow Idi Amin. Tanzania is reported to have sent between 40,000 and 50,000 troops into Uganda in the course of the operation, which lasted from October 1978 to April 1979, at a cost of nearly \$500 million.<sup>30</sup>

Armament in East Africa continued to grow after the tense and volatile period of 1976-78, and came to constitute an important factor in the dynamic progression of Africa from a low military profile in the early 1970s to the position of second largest arms-importing area in the Third World. The Soviets were not alone in offering military aid. The Americans, too, were involved in the process and, as Henry Jackson has stressed, the "necessity of access to African military bases by the Rapid Deployment Force accelerated the process of African militarization."<sup>31</sup>

### **THE COLD WAR: ITS POLITICAL COST TO AFRICAN STATES**

This paper set out to show in a limited way the effects of great power rivalry in East Africa in the recent period. The time frame was dictated by related factors. First, there were profound changes in leaderships in the area, with the passing of the Ethiopian Emperor and the first president of Kenya. Second, Somali leaders seized the opportunity brought on by the uncertain transition in Ethiopia to make a bid for the contested southeastern province of Ethiopia, the Ogaden, openly supporting the Western Somalia Liberation Front. Third, the tension between Uganda and Tanzania escalated to the point where Tanzania decided to offer open support to Ugandan guerrillas in an effort to end the Ugandan threat once and for all. Finally, this action, though local in origin, crystallized Kenya's suspicion and fear, prompting it to declare its affiliation with the United States in a manner which the previous regime had never found necessary.<sup>32</sup>

As fate would have it, events happening outside East Africa accentuated the emerging ideological cleavages. The Iranian crisis resulted in

U.S. attempts to offset the loss of a close ally and to counteract possible expansion of Soviet activities, not only in the Gulf area but also in the general strategic area comprising the Horn of Africa. Kenya was ready and willing to be included in the Rapid Deployment Force strategy.<sup>33</sup> She not only signed agreements granting the United States access to naval facilities at Mombasa, but also accepted American assistance with the construction of air force facilities in the interior of the country. As a new ally, Kenya did not need any convincing when it came to responding to American exhortations to boycott the Moscow Olympic Games in 1980 in protest against Soviet activities in Afghanistan.<sup>34</sup> To Tanzania, Kenya's eagerness to do America's bidding was an ominous sign of a new stage in Kenya-U.S. relations in which Kenya might become an unwitting cohort in U.S. interference in regional politics in the area.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the Americans may find themselves in the uncomfortable and possibly untenable position of trying to maintain reasonable presence in both Kenya and Somalia, countries with deep-seated mutual suspicions, which Somalia has not allayed at all with a categorical denunciation of her territorial claims. It is a delicate situation which could easily be upset by single-minded American concern with Soviet activities without some regard for the interests of the countries concerned.

The discussion in this paper appears to reinforce other studies which have determined that the period after 1976 marks a time of great intensity in U.S.-Soviet involvement in African conflicts.<sup>36</sup> The Soviet Union has also shown a penchant for becoming embroiled more actively in serious conflicts, as illustrated by its aggressive, massive airlifts of arms to the Ethiopians and continued involvement in the secessionist movement in the province of Eritrea. The Americans carefully avoided being drawn into combat support, but rather sought to establish formal links that would allow them perhaps to influence events in the long run.<sup>37</sup>

When all is said and done, it is undeniable that the degree to which both the United States and the Soviet Union have chosen to become involved in the East African region will polarize the region ideologically, intensify suspicions, contribute to the diversion of limited resources from economic needs to the maintenance of expensive military establishments, and subject the region to proxy ideological battles and conflicts. It is also a situation in which the countries of East Africa perhaps should not have allowed themselves to become entangled.

TABLE 1  
Military Data on Ethiopia

| YEAR | ARMFOR <sup>a</sup> | MILEX <sup>b</sup> | ARMIMP <sup>c</sup> |
|------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1970 | 45                  | 62                 | 15                  |
| 1972 | 50                  | 75                 | 14                  |
| 1974 | 45                  | 58                 | 12                  |
| 1976 | 65                  | 155                | 52                  |
| 1978 | 233                 | 94                 | 1,024               |

**TABLE 2**  
**Military Data on Kenya**

| <b>YEAR</b> | <b>ARMFOR<sup>a</sup></b> | <b>MILEX<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>ARMIMP<sup>c</sup></b> |
|-------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1970        | 7                         | 30                       | 0                         |
| 1972        | 7                         | 44                       | 14                        |
| 1974        | 9                         | 54                       | 36                        |
| 1976        | 9                         | 59                       | 0                         |
| 1978        | 13                        | 72                       | 46                        |

**TABLE 3**  
**Military Data on Somalia**

| <b>YEAR</b> | <b>ARMFOR<sup>a</sup></b> | <b>MILEX<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>ARMIMP<sup>c</sup></b> |
|-------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1970        | 20                        | 23                       | 15                        |
| 1972        | 25                        | 27                       | 28                        |
| 1974        | 30                        | 32                       | 109                       |
| 1976        | 31                        | 28                       | 105                       |
| 1978        | 54                        | 60                       | 158                       |

**TABLE 4**  
**Military Data on Tanzania**

| <b>YEAR</b> | <b>ARMFOR<sup>a</sup></b> | <b>MILEX<sup>b</sup></b> | <b>ARMIMP<sup>c</sup></b> |
|-------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1970        | 20                        | 33                       | 7                         |
| 1972        | 25                        | 61                       | 14                        |
| 1974        | 20                        | 88                       | 6                         |
| 1976        | 25                        | 108                      | 52                        |
| 1978        | 63                        | 148                      | 55                        |

- Notes: a: armed forces in thousands  
 b: military expenditures in millions of dollars (in 1977 dollars)  
 c: arms imports or weapons transfers in millions of dollars

Source: U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1969-1978* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printer, 1980).

Footnotes

1. See Cherry Gertzel, *The Politics of Independent Kenya* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1972).
2. See, for example, "Kenya: A Rough Time for Dissidents," *Africa News*, February 15, 1982, pp. 7-9.
3. *Africa Contemporary Record, 1979-1980* (New York: Africana Publishing Co., 1980), p. B242.
4. See the figures on foreign aid and donors for Tanzania in John J. Okumu, "Foreign Relations: Dilemmas of Independence and Development," in Joel D. Barkan and J.J. Okumu, eds., *Politics and Public Policy in Kenya and Tanzania* (New York: Praeger, 1979), p. 246.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 245.
6. Tanzania's problems, particularly in her relations with Western countries not quite used to dealing with an assertive but economically poor Third World country, are documented in Okwudiba Nnoli, *Self-Reliance and Foreign Policy in Tanzania* (New York: NOK Publishers, 1978), pp. 97-136.
7. See *Africa Contemporary Record, 1977/78* (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1978), p. B247. See also Peter Schwab, "Cold War on the Horn of Africa," *African Affairs*, vol. 77, no. 306 (January 1978), pp. 6-20.
8. See *The Weekly Review* (Nairobi), no. 358 (February 5, 1982), pp. 4-5; and, no. 359 (February 12, 1982), pp. 6-7.
9. *Washington Post*, February 3, 1981.
10. Charles B. McLane, *Soviet-Africa Relations* (London: Central Asian Research Centre, 1974), p. 125.
11. This massive Soviet involvement in Somalia has been attributed to the Chinese aid activities in Tanzania which they sought to offset. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
12. *Washington Post*, May 24, 1980.
13. Schwab, "Cold War on the Horn of Africa," p. 17.
14. A detailed case study of this Chinese project can be found in Kasuka S. Mutukwa, *Politics of the Tanzania-Zambia Rail Project: A Study of Tanzania-China-Zambia Relations* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1977).
15. McLane, *Soviet-African Relations*, p. 151.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
17. *Africa Contemporary Record, 1979-1980*, P. B242.
18. For the latest government display of anger over Odinga's statements, see "Odinga Under Fire From President Moi," *The Weekly Review* (Nairobi) no. 363 (March 12, 1982), p. 3.
19. "Moi's First Two Years as President," *The Weekly Review* (Nairobi), no. 294 (October 10, 1980), p. 17.
20. "Active Foreign Policy Under Moi," *The Weekly Review* (Nairobi), no. 343 (October 9, 1981), p. 10.
21. See Donald Rothchild, ed., *Politics of Integration: An East African Documentary* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1968).
22. John J. Okumu, "Foreign Relations: Dilemmas of Independence and Development," in Joel D. Barkan and J.J. Okumu, eds., *Politics and Public Policy in Kenya and Tanzania*, p. 240.
23. "Kenya-Tanzania: Who Will Win the Battle for Tourists?" *The Weekly Review* (Nairobi), no. 106 (February 21, 1977), pp. 18-21.
24. Hilary Ng'weno, "For Goodness Sake, Call It Quits," *The Weekly Review* (Nairobi), no. 105 (February 14, 1977), p. 4.
25. *The Weekly Review* (Nairobi), no. 106 (February 21, 1977), pp. 18-21.
26. "Kenya-Tanzania Relations Poisoned by EAA Collapse," *The Weekly Review* (Nairobi), no. 105 (February 14, 1977), pp. 5-8.
27. *Ibid.*

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28. *Africa News*, January 7, 1980, p. 12.
29. Ruth L. Sivand, *World Military and Social Expenditures, 1983* (Washington, D.C.: World Priorities, 1983), pp. 9 and 11.
30. Olajide Aluko, "African Response to External Intervention in Africa Since Angola," *African Affairs*, vol. 80, no. 319 (April 1981), p. 161.
31. Henry F. Jackson, *From the Congo to Soweto: U.S. Policy Toward Africa Since 1960* (New York: Quill, 1984), p. 240.
32. Kenyatta used to say that Kenya and the United States were close traditional allies who never needed a treaty. Indeed, during his presidential tenure, American ships frequented Mombasa, and jets from the U.S. Navy even used to perform at Kenya's national holiday celebrations. See *Africa News*, January 28, 1979, p. 4.
33. "Moi's Stand," *The Weekly Review* (Nairobi), no. 260 (February 8, 1980), p. 15.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Africa News*, January 28, 1979, p. 4.
36. Paul J. Rossa and Gerald W. Hoppie, "Patterns Underlying Superpower Involvement in African Conflict, 1966-1978," paper prepared for delivery at the 1979 Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, Illinois, April 20, 1979, p. ii (Executive Summary).
37. "U.S./Africa: Military Expansion Fraught with Political Hazards," *Africa News*, January 28, 1979, pp. 3-4.
38. Despite the fact that relations between Kenya and Tanzania showed marked improvement after the fall of Charles Njonjo, a former close confidant of the Kenyan president, and led to the reopening of the border, Tanzania still hesitated to join a free trade agreement linking the East African states and Mozambique.