

BOOK REVIEWS

Lefebvre, Jeffrey A. *Arms for the Horn: U.S. Security Policy in Ethiopia and Somalia 1953-1991*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991.

Arms for the Horn is a well-researched case study of military assistance relations between a superpower patron and two weak and antagonistic Third World recipients. Despite President George Washington's warning against "entangling alliances" and the poor human rights records of both these African countries, why did various US administrations overcome their reluctance to enter into such arms relationships with the authoritarian regimes of Haile Selassie in Ethiopia and Siad Barré in Somalia? And why, on occasion, was the US patron prepared to disengage, refusing at times of intense internal and external conflicts to supply these regimes with desperately needed military equipment? In attempting to answer these questions, Lefebvre gives the reader a solid insight into the manipulation of the weak by the strong, and vice versa. His account seems a bit hyperfactual and repetitious at times; yet it gives the reader a balanced and sobering understanding of the twists and turns in US-Ethiopian/Somali arms supply relationships and the extent of the leverage that strong and weak powers can use in their contacts with one another.

Although United States' interests in the Horn were always decidedly limited in nature, its immersion in Cold War rivalries is used to explain a willingness to become entangled in Ethiopian and Somalian affairs. "[T]he American decision to cross the sophisticated arms export threshold in Ethiopia and end its game of delay," according to Lefebvre, "exposed the fact that the United States had no option but to deal with Addis Ababa because of Kagnew." (p. 130) The US military, looking upon the communications and tracking facility at Kagnew (Eritrea) as an important intelligence asset, was prepared in the 1950s and 1960s to support Haile Selassie politically and give him low levels of military assistance in order to gain access. Later, following Mengistu Haile Mariam's assumption of power in Ethiopia in 1977 and that country's human rights violations as well as its sharp turn toward the Soviets, the US moved cautiously to switch partners. Although its military aid to the Barré regime was limited and hedged by conditionalities (particularly regarding its use for offensive purposes), the administration in 1980 agreed to provide \$40 million in military equipment of a defensive nature over two years in exchange for access to the port and airfield facilities at Berbera and Mogadishu. Cold War and Middle Eastern strategic imperatives thus overrode the American inclination to remain disentangled, and at some potential cost over time.

Lefebvre's main analytical contribution to this subject is to show how a weak, Third World country can manipulate a superpower's perception of global threat to its advantage. Recognizing the urgency of the US military planners to gain access to communications or military facilities in order to cope with perceived

superpower and other threats in the general area, the Haile Selassie regime and, to a considerably lesser extent, the Barré regime were able to extract arms assistance out of proportion to what might have been anticipated in terms of their military importance. But such a manipulation of a patron was only possible so long as the great power felt strategically vulnerable. As the Ethiopians shifted their backers and the Kagnew facility became obsolete, the US was prepared to forego its access to Kagnew and Ethiopia's leverage quickly disappeared. Similarly, in the case of the Berbera facilities, as Barré revealed himself to be a brutal and unreliable ally and as the base access agreements with neighboring countries proved sufficient for the Pentagon's purposes, the Somali government lost its ability to manipulate US policy makers regarding the provision of military assistance. As Lefebvre observes, "a client's threats of defection carry little weight if global competition is muted or one's assets are deemed expendable or at high risk." (p. 274)

Thus *Arms for the Horn* can be described as a useful case study of the forces at work on the Horn during the Cold War. Such an environment explains the decision of the superpowers to become involved in the military affairs of the Horn and the way they could be manipulated by local actors once they had secured access to military facilities. One wishes for more attention to the long-term impact of these diplomatic manoeuvres — for example, the consequences of military assistance to authoritarian governments, particularly in such areas as long-term US relations with minority ethnic and nationality groups and movements. Even so, in terms of its objectives on US strategic relation, this study can be said to accomplish its purposes well.

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Clough, Michael. *Free at Last? U.S. Policy Toward Africa and the End of the Cold War*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1992.

The collapse of the Soviet Union has necessarily led to fundamental reassessments of national interests, foreign policy objectives, and perhaps even the basic conceptual frameworks of international relations. In *Free At Last?* Michael Clough, Senior Fellow for Africa at the Council on Foreign Relations, contends that the post-Cold War era offers US an unprecedented opportunity to develop and implement a new and more sophisticated policy toward Africa. The natural tendency to ignore Africa simply cannot be sustained, he argues, nor can the US "save" Africa with a Marshall Plan approach which injects American ideas and resources into the continent.