

Horn of Africa: the British set-up and the Kissinger switch

by Linda de Hoyos

Throughout the postwar period, the countries of the Horn of Africa—Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Egypt, and Djibouti, and now Eritrea—have been victims of the British balance of power geopolitics practiced by Henry Kissinger and his mentors at the Royal Institute of International Affairs. The balance of power stratagem for the region involves two phases. In the immediate postwar period, the British colonialists acquiesced to exit from the region as colonial administrators, but as in every other region under British imperial rule, they left behind a carefully designed mechanism to ensure perpetual war among the former colonial countries. In the 1960s and 1970s, these regional conflicts—apparently between the countries in the Horn of Africa themselves—were used as entry points for superpower sponsorship and proxy war. In the case of the Horn of Africa, Kissinger et al. held no particular loyalty to any one grouping, but switched proxy partners at will to ensure the maximum instability.

The result has been the political fracturing and economic decimation of the countries of the region. The primary target of Kissinger's mid-1970s Horn of Africa "switch" of sponsorship from the Ethiopia of Emperor Haile Selassie to the Somalia of President Siad Barre was Ethiopia. A nation of 30 million people, Ethiopia was a prime objective of Kissinger's National Security Memorandum 200 for forced population reduction. Perhaps even more dangerous to the British oligarchs and their partners, was that Ethiopia had produced an intellectual elite that was among the most competent in all of Africa. After years of war and famine under a violently anti-intellectual Marxist regime, Ethiopia—now minus its former coastal territory Eritrea—is struggling to revive itself, with little aid from foreign donors. Reflecting the degree to which the elites of the country have relinquished even the concept of their nation, the new constitution of Ethiopia, voted up May 7, grants the right of any one region to secede at will and was heralded by London's *Financial Times* under the headline "Ethiopia Buries the African Nation State."

FIGURE 1
Horn of Africa, 1995



Newly independent Eritrea has quickly slipped into the status of a British puppet-state, targeting Sudan along with Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, the marcherlord in East Africa under the direct sponsorship of Lady Lynda Chalker, British Minister of Overseas Development (see article, page 53).

In Somalia, the nation-state is in an advanced stage of disintegration, as the region in the north—formerly British Somaliland—has carved itself out as a separate state, and the remainder of Somalia's postwar territory is now ripped with clan warfare, in the wake of the 1990 Anglo-American overthrow of President Siad Barre.

In this regional context, the next target of Kissinger's geopolitical game is Sudan, which despite the British set-ups for continual war in the south, has maintained its political and economic sovereignty.

The British set-up

1946: The mechanism for the Horn of Africa wars (1964 and 1977-78) began (in modern history at least) in 1946 with the so-called Bevin Plan. The plan was named after its architect and staunch advocate, then-British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin. The idea was to create "Greater Somalia." According to the plan, the former Italian Somaliland, British Somaliland, the Ogaden, and the Northern Frontier District,



Cuba's Fidel Castro (left) and British agent of influence Henry Kissinger (right). Kissinger and company held no particular loyalty to any one grouping in the Horn of Africa, switching alliance partners in order to create maximum instability.



all of which were at that time under British military administration, were to be brought together in a single unit as a United Nations trusteeship under British administration. The Bevin plan implied the unity of all Somali territories, except the part controlled by France. The Bevin plan was enthusiastically adopted by the Somali Youth League, the first political party in Italian Somaliland, with the slogan: "Unity of all Somali Territories." Somalis are a homogeneous people, with the same language (Somali) and religion (Islam). However, as in so many other cases, the British manipulation was to build up an "identity" for a particular language or ethnic group of people—in this case, the Somalis; attach that "identity" to a geopolitical goal—in this case, the retrieval of the Ogaden and Northwest Frontier into a single Somalia; and then deny the goal.

1948: Britain ceded the Ogaden region, which is mostly Somali-inhabited, to Ethiopia.

1949: The Somali Youth League opted for U.N. trusteeship for the south, but with Italian administration.

1955: Britain ceded to Ethiopia the Haud and Reserved Area, a pastureland primarily used by Somalis.

1956: Somalia was given self-rule, with Abdullahi Isa Mohamud, leader of the SYL, prime minister.

1959: On Aug. 25, during a visit to the Ogaden, Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie said: "We remind you, finally, that all of you are by race, color, blood and custom, members of the great Ethiopian family. . . . As to the rumors of a Greater Somalia, we consider that all the Somali peoples are economically linked with Ethiopia, and therefore, we do not believe that such a state can be viable standing alone,

separated from Ethiopia." Haile Selassie had already annexed Eritrea.

1960: Somalia was granted full independence. The new Somalia had pro-West leanings, but was not permitted to join any "clubs" such as the British Commonwealth or francophone organizations. Somalia also had close relations with Nasser's Egypt.

1963: Britain announced it was transferring the whole of the Somali-inhabited Northwest Frontier District to Kenya, which itself was scheduled to attain independence in December 1963.

1963: On March 14, Somalia severed diplomatic relations with Britain. Later that year, the Somalia government rejected an offer of more than \$10 million in military assistance, extended by the United States, West Germany, and Italy, because it was considered inadequate, and because of the political conditions attached to it. Instead, the government decided to accept a larger Soviet military aid offer, estimated at \$30 million. Somalia also received aid from Egypt.

1964: War erupted between Somalia and Ethiopia over the Ogaden; Ethiopia retains Ogaden.

1965: Sources of external military assistance to Horn of Africa countries in the region were as follows: Ethiopia received military assistance from the United States, Sweden, Norway, India, Israel, and Britain; Somalia from Italy, the Soviet Union, the United Arab Republic, and Britain.

1967: In June, the Six Days War broke out between Egypt and Israel; Egypt was defeated.

In December, the Yemen People's Democratic Republic (South Yemen) was formed from a partition of Yemen after

FIGURE 2

Horn of Africa, 1960s

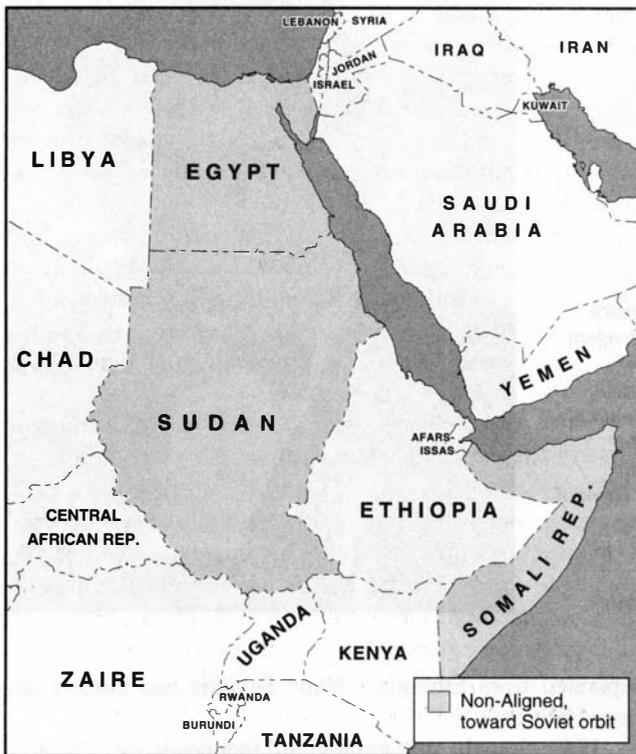


FIGURE 3

Horn of Africa, post-Kissinger switch (1974-80)



a long civil war in Yemen against the British and Saudis.

1969: In January, the Revolutionary Command Council, led by the 27-year-old colonel Muammar Qaddafi, came to power in Libya in a coup against King Mohammad Idris.

That May, Col. Gaafar Mohamed Nimeiri came to power in Sudan with a military coup, with a leftist coalition.

1969: On Oct. 15, Somali President Abdiraship Ali Shwermake was assassinated by his security guard, while Prime Minister Egal was in the United States.

On Oct. 21, Siad Barre came to power in Somalia in a bloodless coup. The symbol of the new regime was a gun and a hand and in the background the Koran. Within a year, the Koran had disappeared, and Somalia headed into the socialist camp. In the ensuing period, Barre picked up the idea of *juche* (self-reliance) from North Korea, and built "education camps" for the civil service. A National Security Service was also created, with Soviet trainers. Many Soviet experts also worked in the Ministry of Defense, since Somalia got most of its military equipment from the U.S.S.R.

1970: On Oct. 15, President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt died, to be succeeded by President Anwar Sadat.

1971: In February, Idi Amin came to power in Uganda, with British and Israeli sponsorship.

In July, an attempted coup against President Nimeiri in Sudan by communists, with the backing of the Soviet Union

and the German Democratic Republic, was aborted.

1972: Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie helped to mediate the end to the civil war in southern Sudan.

That February, Libya assumed sponsorship of the Idi Amin regime in Uganda.

The Kissinger switch

1974: Drought and famine hit Ethiopia. The British and U.S. press orchestrated a campaign against Haile Selassie, charging that aid was not reaching the people, because of the corruption. The United States withdrew from its military base in Asmara.

On Sept. 12, Haile Selassie was overthrown in a pro-American military coup with approval of Henry Kissinger. The grouping that came to power was largely pro-American, but pro-Soviet forces gradually grew stronger, as the United States shifted toward Somalia.

The Soviet Union organized a summit in Aden with Somalia, Ethiopia, and Yemen, with Cuba's Fidel Castro attending.

1975: Henry Kissinger launched the era of "shuttle diplomacy" between Israel and Egypt and other Arab countries.

1976: Egypt abrogated its Treaty of Friendship with the U.S.S.R. in March.

In December, East German Foreign Minister Oskar

Fischer visited Ethiopia.

1977: In February, Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam overthrew the Ethiopian government with a military coup. The Mengistu regime was comprised of young officers, numbers of whom were graduates of the University of Chicago. Mengistu was himself the son of a slave-mother of one of the ruling princely families of Ethiopia. The first meeting Mengistu had, after wiping out Ethiopia's top military leadership, was with the Cuban ambassador.

In early March, 1,000 officers and soldiers of the East German defense forces reorganized Ethiopia's Defense Ministry and command structure.

In July, Somalia, now largely in the U.S. camp, overran the Ogaden as the second Ethiopian-Somali war broke out.

In the fall of 1977, Ethiopia asked for direct military assistance from the Soviet Union.

On Nov. 18, Somalia declared its Treaty of Friendship with the Soviet Union "invalid." Somalia demanded that all Soviet military experts and civilian technical staff leave the country. Somalia severed relations with Cuba.

In November, Egyptian President Sadat addressed the Israeli Knesset.

In December, more than 1,000 opponents of the Soviet takeover of Ethiopia were executed by the Mengistu regime. The Mengistu regime then instituted a Pol Pot-type of reign of terror to murder Ethiopia's intelligentsia.

Late 1977-early 1978: The Soviet Union airlifted into Ethiopia more than 10,000 Cuban troops from Angola via Tanzania; more than 15,000 Cuban troops from Cuba; more than 10,000 Soviet, East German, Czech, and Hungarian military advisers and technicians; and hundreds of security police advisers from Russian and East German contingents in South Yemen. The Russians also airlifted in \$1 billion worth of military equipment, including T-54 tanks. Five top Soviet generals were brought in to command the counterassault against Somalia.

1978: Somali forces were expelled from Ethiopia early in the year. Then Russian forces in Ethiopia turned on Eritrean secessionists in Ethiopia, and against the Tigre rebels on the border with Sudan.

In September, the Camp David accords were signed among Egypt, Israel, and the United States.

1981: Moscow set up the Treaty of Aden, a tripartite military alliance among South Yemen, Libya, and Ethiopia, that autumn.

1982: Mengistu, working closely with Libya, gave support to various groups fighting against the Somali central government in Mogadishu and the Sudanese central government in Khartoum. Libya was reported to be supporting certain opposition groups in Sudan, and up to 30,000 dissidents received training and instruction in Tripoli.

1983: Civil war broke out again in southern Sudan.

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