
The United States and the Horn of Africa

An Analytical Study of Pattern and Process

Okbazghi Yohannes



WestviewPress

A Division of HarperCollinsPublishers

All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Copyright © 1997 by Westview Press, A Division of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

Published in 1997 in the United States of America by Westview Press, 5500 Central Avenue, Boulder, Colorado 80301-2877, and in the United Kingdom by Westview Press, 12 Hid's Copse Road, Cumnor Hill, Oxford OX2 9JJ

A CIP catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.
ISBN 0-8133-3361-X

The paper used in this publication meets the requirements of the American National Standard for Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials Z39.48-1984.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*In memory of the unknown foot soldiers
of democracy and progress in the African Horn*

Acknowledgments

Many people have, in different ways, contributed to the completion of this book. First and foremost, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Carolyn Garner for her unfailing research assistance over the years. She has been a wonderful and caring friend and ally. Without her tireless efforts, this book would not have come to fruition.

Special thanks go to my longtime friend, Yohannes Woldemariam, whose intellectual support, moral encouragement, and witticism have nurtured the process of writing this book. He stepped up to the plate with his invaluable insights and advice whenever I needed them.

I wish to thank my graduate research assistants who diligently offered their services. I am particularly grateful to Michelle Graas for her energetic and able assistance. Her ruthless taking of the axe to the convoluted sentences and fragments have certainly improved the work. Many thanks also to Jodi Heintz, Dave Ellis, and Tony Buchanan for their excellent services.

I am also grateful to my colleagues and friends who read all or part of the manuscript and offered invaluable suggestions. Last, and by no means least, I owe a mountain of debt to my wife, Tamara, who was part of this work from start to finish.

Okbazghi Yohannes

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
Introduction	1
PART ONE	
THE UNITED STATES AND ETHIOPIA	
1 The Quest for a New Paradigm of Diplomacy	13
Toward a New Paradigm of Relations, 16	
The Beginnings of Military Relations, 20	
The Beginnings of Economic Relations, 30	
Notes, 35	
2 The Uneasy Alliance: 1953–1976	39
Toward an Understanding of Ethiopian Politics, 44	
Attempts at Deepening Economic Relations, 52	
Deepening Military Relations, 58	
The Road to Denouement, 67	
Notes, 77	
3 The Struggle to Win Each Other Back: 1977–1996	83
The Reagan Administration and the Diplomacy of Famine, 89	
The Changing Political Landscape, 94	
Back to the Future, 98	
Notes, 104	

PART TWO

THE UNITED STATES AND ERITREA

- 4 At Odds with Self-Determination 111**
- Internationalizing the Problem, 114
A Look at the Political Landscape, 117
Forwarding the Issue to the U.N., 120
The Beginning of the End, 123
The End of the Beginning, 126
Notes, 130
- 5 The American Quandary over Eritrea: 1952–1976 133**
- Targeting the Nationalists, 138
Dismantling the Federal Structure, 142
Realization of Ethiopian Dreams, 148
The Road to “Damascus,” 154
Toward the Armed Struggle, 159
America in the Midst of the Quagmire, 163
Notes, 173
- 6 The Twin Strategies—Containment
 and Pro-Insurgency: 1977–1996 181**
- The Dark Clouds, 183
Breaking Up of the Clouds, 185
Toward Containment Again, 189
Defining Eritrea’s New Role, 191
Notes, 195

PART THREE

THE UNITED STATES AND SOMALIA

- 7 Domesticating Somalia 199**
- Competing Interests, 202

	Toward Political Domestication, 204	
	Attempts at Economic Rehabilitation, 212	
	The Problem of Irredentism, 215	
	Notes, 218	
8	Somalia Goes East: 1960–1976	221
	Toward Economic Statism, 224	
	Turning to the East, 228	
	The Fruits of Myopia, 232	
	Notes, 238	
9	The Somali Paradox— From Strategic Asset to Humanitarian Liability: 1977–1996	241
	Adopting the Foster Child, 244	
	Abandoning the Foster Child, 247	
	America and the Somali Quagmire, 252	
	Notes, 256	
PART FOUR		
THE UNITED STATES AND THE SUDAN		
10	Laying the Foundations	261
	Purpose Achieved, 273	
	Notes, 278	
11	The American Struggle over the “Bridge”: 1956–1976	281
	The Political Offensive, 289	
	Containing the Left, 292	
	The Economic Paradigm, 295	
	The Management of Volatility, 301	
	Notes, 306	

12	From Strategic Partnership to Open Confrontation: 1977–1996	311
	Militarizing Relations, 314	
	Deepening Economic Relations, 318	
	The Beginning of the End, 324	
	Collapse of the Architecture, 327	
	Notes, 331	
	Epilogue	335
	<i>References</i>	343
	<i>About the Book and Author</i>	349
	<i>Index</i>	351

Introduction

The Cold War had unleashed powerful ethno-national and economic forces in the African Horn that proved to be uncontrollable. In the past these forces were contained by the combined actions of external and regional actors, and American participation in the containment of these forces was no doubt crucial. America's role in regional politics has obviously continued into the current era, as demonstrated by its involvement in Somali affairs. Whether such action is a reflection of the residue of past obligations or suggests a redefinition of its role in world politics must be thoroughly examined. Dispassionate analyses and reinterpretations of American regional interests, priorities, options, and consequences should enrich the pedagogical coherence of our understanding of the structural relationship between American foreign policy and the politics of the African Horn. This work intends to fill that gap, but first a broad description of the paradigmatic imperative and scope of the work is in order.

Academic tradition suggests that American foreign policy may best be understood in terms of two contradictory orientations: isolationism and internationalism. Both are purportedly rooted in the belief that American values, institutions, experiences, and missions are unique and exceptional.¹ According to this dominant perspective, the crucial difference between the two tendencies is one of means rather than ends. *Isolationism* contends that the unique character of American virtues, ideals, and institutions would be best preserved by abandoning worldly concerns and leading other states by example. George Washington's now-famous admonition that the United States should stay clear of foreign alliances is believed by isolationists to be the only reliable measure of guidance in the conduct of foreign policy, and this belief has held sway over the American government at various times over the years.²

On the other hand, the dominance of *internationalism* at any particular moment of the nation's history has pulled policy-makers in the opposite direction, as many have opined that the U.S. has a moral obligation to transform the international system through its active participation. This purportedly explains the outward thrust of American foreign policy in the past.³ Simply stated, whenever the U.S. intervened abroad, its actions were rationalized in terms of the welfare of those affected. At the root of this version of American foreign policy lay

moral and humanitarian considerations, rather than strategic and economic interests.

However, both descriptions offer less to our understanding of the intricacies of U.S. foreign policy and therefore do not contribute to an analytical or a historical understanding of this branch of study. In order to demystify American foreign policy, we must first compare this dominant paradigm with other interpretations in order to gain a fuller comprehension. A leading alternative paradigm posits that the nature and level of American capitalist development has been responsible for both inward and outward shifts in the nation's foreign policy—more simply, that U.S. foreign policy is structurally determined. An early articulator of an instrumentalist variant of this position, Charles Beard, pointed to the profound linkage between American foreign policy and the nature of the political economy of the nation. For him, the point of departure in American foreign policy involved the actual framing of the constitution itself. The original framers of the constitution were mostly property owners interested in commerce and manufacturing; accordingly, the constitution reflected their fundamental interests, which the government protected.⁴

Thus the state, as the creation of the commercial class, not only declared the sanctity of private property but also defined the parameters of contractual obligations so as to ensure orderly transactions among competing special-interest groups within the commercial class. The strength of these interest groups was relational, i.e., the special-interest group that happened to dominate the economic and political scene of the nation at a particular moment had the capacity to influence, if not determine, state policy and action. It logically follows that, at the international level, the interests of this particular group coincided with the national interest and therefore came to shape American foreign policy.⁵

Additional evidence for this interpretation of American foreign policy is supplied by David Gibbs in his comprehensive work on the political economy of U.S. intervention abroad. Gibbs powerfully argues and extensively documents claims that the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations made differential responses to the Katanga problem as a function of their contradictory connections with competing corporate interests. For example, because the Eisenhower administration was largely staffed with individuals with strong ties to certain corporations, which in turn were linked financially to Franco-Belgian extractive firms in Katanga, the administration adopted an overt pro-Katanga policy. By contrast, Kennedy's administrative appointees were tied to a different set of corporations, which were attempting to penetrate the Congo from a different direction. Consequently, the Kennedy Administration adopted a decidedly anti-Katanga policy, since the secessionist efforts in Katanga were deemed contrary to the aims of the new special-interest group.⁶

Both the Hamiltonian conception of the national interest and the concrete policies pursued by the state throughout the nineteenth century provide sufficient empirical evidence for the instrumentalist argument. Alexander Hamilton

equated the national interest with the interests of the commercial and manufacturing sectors, for he viewed national security and national independence as functions of national wealth. The natural source of national wealth was the manufacturing sector, because a strong industrial base increases state revenues, enhancing its capacity to acquire power. Moreover, a prosperous manufacturing economy attracts both foreign capital and skilled labor from abroad. By contrast, an agricultural economy diminishes the autonomy of the state and therefore its capacity for self-defense.⁷

From Hamilton's views emerged the prescription that the primary responsibilities of the state were to provide subsidies and protection for domestic enterprises and to promote foreign trade. Consequently the state accorded American manufacturers generous subsidies and adequate protection against their European competitors. In fact, the U.S. became the first and most successful promoter of industrial capitalism through the judicious application of an import-substituting industrialization strategy.⁸

In the context of the preceding discussion, it can be logically argued that only the logic and limits of American foreign policy in the nineteenth century caused its introverted nature. The nature and scope of American participation in the international system was determined by its commercial interests. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, all had changed. By this time, the industrial transformation of the U.S. was so profound that external markets and investment outlets had become indispensable. Recognizing the imperative of an internationalized foreign policy, Republican elites representing the commercial class became viscerally determined to recapture the presidency. In the 1896 presidential election between Democrat William Jennings Bryan and Republican William McKinley, the latter managed to collect \$10 million from business interests for his campaign, an amount unmatched until after World War I. Standard Oil and J.P. Morgan contributed \$250,000 each, while the meat packing industry gave \$400,000. Many banks also agreed to contribute one-quarter of 1 percent of their capital holdings to the effort. By contrast, the Democratic candidate was able to muster only \$250,000.⁹ The Republican presidential victory in the popular arena was therefore effectively determined by financial resources rather than by ability or policy proposals on the part of either candidate. Business interests were rewarded by McKinley's vigorous prosecution of the Spanish-American War, a prelude to American outward expansion.¹⁰

The internationalization of American commercial interests was enormously facilitated by the rise in mergers after 1897, which gradually led to the birth of the modern corporation. This movement enabled American firms to achieve economies of scale unparalleled by their European rivals, making them the world's most efficient producers with the ability to undersell foreign rivals in any market.¹¹ The applications of scientific methods to production and the rise of the vertically integrated corporation rapidly transformed the U.S. into an economic hegemon with respect to electricity, chemicals, energy, and vehicles, and the state came to cham-

pion this second industrial revolution. Indeed, the capital concentration process had undergone such a profound transformation that one-third of the nation's capital assets was directly controlled by 318 corporations whose pervasive dominance home and abroad was unmistakable.¹²

One result of the concentration of production and the emergent economic supremacy of the United States was that an ideological change among American political leaders began to take shape. Beginning in 1897, the Republican administration argued in favor of tariff reduction as a requisite condition for international economic growth, claiming that the interests of internationalism in general and of the United States in particular would be best served by producing for a global market rather than for fragmented national markets.¹³ The result of this paradigmatic shift was the 1899 articulation of the new "Open Door" policy. The promotion of economic interdependence and peaceful competition were now treated as necessary conditions of American prosperity, and even the possession of colonies by European powers was now treated by the U.S. as an example of retrogressive foreign policy. Consequently, the U.S. publicly called for the decolonization of all territories and the implementation of its new policy, which was rationalized in terms of the danger of international competition for colonies. In economic terms, too, it was argued that colonies would insulate monopolies from the pressure of competition to innovate and upgrade technologies and methods of production.¹⁴

The above analysis suggests that there has traditionally been a direct link between the requirements of American business and U.S. foreign policy. For example, the Open Door policy was a response to the erection of trade barriers by European powers in their colonies or semi-colonies, which effectively shut American firms out of those markets.¹⁵ Such a policy meant both that peripheral states had to retain *de jure* independence and that European colonies had to be liberated. This was the rationale for the American anti-colonial posture and advocacy of self-determination. However, in situations where the U.S. had equal access to markets, its behavior was analogous to that of its European rivals. While strongly opposing the territorial partition of China, for example, the U.S. accepted the need to create spheres of influence in that country and in turn received certain privileges as a result of the unequal treaties with China. Moreover, American corporations joined in the banking consortia that were created to regulate Western competition in China.¹⁶

During the second industrial revolution, the qualitative significance of the periphery as the supplier of primary commodities began to command the attention of the major capitalist powers. The vertical integration of productive activities impelled corporations to ensure the control of sources of raw materials.¹⁷ In the context of the growing importance of raw materials, the demise of the colonial system became even more urgent, for by the 1920s the U.S. had already become a net importer of raw materials. It was importing, for example, 5 percent of its consumption of metals, excluding iron and gold, a figure that reached 48

percent in the 1950s.¹⁸ It was in this context that the U.S. began to intensify its pressures on European powers to accept the substitution of the formal imperial network for an informal one in which all capitalist powers would have equal rights to trade and investment in the periphery.¹⁹

None understood better than the European powers the economic considerations behind American policy. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the Europeans vigorously resisted American pressure to relinquish their holdings and to permit the integration of the former colonies into a unitary world capitalist system. But the consequences of World War II decided the issue in favor of the United States, enabling the latter to impose its vision of a new order on the international system. By 1941, the U.S. had already declared that the natural resources of the earth were henceforth to be available to all nations without discrimination and that barriers to entry of capital into any nation to promote the development and exploitation of those resources would not be tolerated.²⁰

Alexander Hamilton was correct in asserting that national power was a function of national wealth. At no time was the validity of this thesis more apparent than in the years immediately following World War II. The economic transformation and national wealth—and consequently national power—of the United States assumed startling dimensions. At the conclusion of the war, the country owned approximately two-thirds of the world's \$33 billion gold reserves. Moreover, the U.S. produced half of the world's total industrial output, and the world received one-third of its imports from the U.S.²¹

With economic supremacy achieved and military might established, the U.S. now turned to the question of implementing the Open Door policy it had long advocated. World War II was now blamed on economic nationalism, a rising belief in an organic association between peace and economic internationalism soon led American leaders to articulate a vision for a unitary world capitalist order. As McCormick states, the cardinal components of this vision were the provision of physical security to the world capitalist system and the promotion of global prosperity.²² Physical security was to be provided within the dual framework of collective security and regional alliance systems, as well as by the application of American military might.

The promotion of global prosperity was to rest on the concept of productionism, an international equivalent of Say's Law. The law of productionism asserted that if all nations specialized in what they could do best—i.e., exploited its comparative advantage—a single global market would arise to which each nation would have unimpeded access and from which each would derive equal benefits.²³

What is relevant for our purpose is the American definition of the role of the periphery in the new international division of labor. According to this new vision, the capitalist core and the periphery would be integrated into a unitary system in a complimentary way, with each part assigned to produce specialized goods for a single market. The periphery would give up all attempts at rapid industrialization and would instead concentrate on the accelerated modernization and mechaniza-

tion of agriculture and the production of large volumes of raw materials.²⁴ Herein lies the economic rationale of American foreign policy toward the Third World.

Having become a *status quo* power, the U.S. abandoned all pretensions about the urgency of decolonization. Rapid decolonization was now viewed by American leaders as threatening to the reindustrialization of Europe, since this process might generate regional instability among the former colonies and render them vulnerable to Communist infiltration. As decolonization and European recovery were mutually incompatible, colonial independence was delayed or even compromised, as in the case with continued U.S. support for Portugal in her African colonies.²⁵ Instead, the United States encouraged a gradual, orderly transition within the colonies; while these new states were no longer formally controlled by others, they became increasingly controlled informally through the application of economic domination.

In the past half-century, the overarching purpose of American foreign policy toward the periphery has remained unchanged. The peripheral nations were to be developed as permanent sources of raw materials or as support for the maintenance of the world capitalist system, in terms of giving the U.S. unhampered access to their airfields and port facilities for military purposes—just as the states of the African Horn have done. In fact, as America's mass production assumed unprecedented dimensions in the 1950s, the place of the periphery in the international division of labor became a matter of strategic concern for Washington. By this time the U.S. was consuming two-thirds of the world's oil and silk, half of its rubber and copper, and a quarter of its coal.²⁶ Moreover, since the 1950s the U.S. has been importing its entire manganese, tin, and nickel supplies and between 80 percent and 90 percent of its bauxite from abroad, mostly from the periphery.²⁷ The uninterrupted supply of these minerals has been of strategic necessity for American industrial and military power.

To clarify this concern, U.S. President Harry Truman appointed a blue-ribbon commission in 1952 to assess the implications of mineral use for national security and economic prosperity. The commission soon learned that three-quarters of the minerals regarded as strategic came from the periphery.²⁸ A further revelation was that while the U.S. had once extracted 15 percent more raw materials domestically than its factories could use, by the beginning of the 1950s the nation was running an annual deficit of 10 percent.²⁹

The preceding discussion illustrates a cardinal point. American foreign policy toward the Third World was shaped by the necessity to control and protect the extraction and supply of raw materials. Therefore, the maintenance of a strong relationship between periphery and core became a matter of urgency and strategic necessity.

Two crucial points stand out in this regard. First, the periphery must adhere to the principles of the new international division of labor in performing its specific function of providing primary commodities. Second, the periphery must not embark on any autonomous path of development which might disrupt this new

international division of labor. Those nations which voluntarily accepted their position would receive both economic largesse and military protection against internal subversion and external aggression. On the other hand, those states refusing to defer to the imperatives of global capitalism would be subjected to a mixture of pressures, manipulations, subversions and interventions. Neither option appears desirable.

Given the preceding discussion, one cannot resist the conclusion that American foreign policy has historically been driven by economic and/or strategic determinants rather than by humanitarian or other more benign considerations. It is within this general framework that the present study of U.S. foreign policy toward the African Horn has been undertaken. Certainly the geostrategic location of the region has been far more important than its raw material potential in the minds of U.S. policy makers, for the proximity of the African Horn to the oil-producing states of the Middle East, coupled with its location on the western shores of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, has endowed the region with a commanding position to control naval communication between the Mediterranean world and the Indian Ocean. During the Cold War, the Horn could have been used as a launching pad for a rapid deployment force, either to control or deny access to Middle Eastern oil reserves, and it was this consideration that made the Horn the focal point for East-West contention for nearly fifty years.

It is simple to infer from the foregoing that future American policy toward the region is likely to be characterized by continuity rather than reduced involvement. In light of the increasing importance of hydrocarbon energy, the strategic value of the Horn for the maintenance and control of the oil-producing Middle East, as well as control of the sea communication lanes essential for the uninterrupted supply of energy, will likely continue to shape American policy toward the region. Accordingly, this study provides not only an analysis of past American policy in the Horn, but also a thorough examination of future American involvement with the region.

Finally, it is worth noting that Djibouti is covered in this study since it remains under French control and is therefore tangential to American foreign policy.

Although sufficient material is included in the chapters on each country to provide a general background, a few comments on the region as a whole are in order. There are several unique characteristics to the African Horn. Its component parts collectively form the periphery of the Middle East and serve as a gateway to sub-Saharan Africa; its enviable geographic position has facilitated an influx of cultural influences and ethnic transfusions from all areas. Consequently, the region has developed its own cultural and political character. However, its very uniqueness is marked by a profound crisis of identity. On the political level, the region expresses solidarity with both the Middle Eastern world and black Africa. But beneath the surface lies a deep yearning for autonomy, since the region is neither purely Middle Eastern nor entirely African. One visible outcome of this reality is the emergence of contradictory tendencies within each country;

those elements who seek to strengthen their southern orientation and emphasize their solidarity with sub-Saharan African seem at most constantly at odds with those forces who look eastward for both religious inspiration and political connection. The resultant tensions have had profound implications on the policy making process in each country.

In the past, these tensions have affected the entire region, and this tendency will probably continue in the future. In the past, this has created situations in which territorial and national questions, ethnicity, and religion have interacted with the imperatives of Cold War politics. The North/South split in the Sudan, the Ethiopian-Eritrean war, the Ethio-Somali dispute, and the ethnic fermentation in Ethiopia itself have all been issues bringing internal, regional, and international actors into conflict.³⁰ The complex configurations of internal and interstate conflicts profoundly shaped the policies of the regional system members toward each other, generating frequent shifts in alliances and hostilities. This in turn produced an international realignment of forces, as external patrons and supporters had to make adjustments reflecting the regional distribution of power. Another striking feature of the Horn is that both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. have sought at various times to anchor their regional policies in Ethiopia. In fact, of the \$12 billion worth of arms the two superpowers transferred to Ethiopia and Somalia during the past fifty years, over 90 percent went to Ethiopia.³¹ The size of its territory and population, its market and raw material potential, and its international prestige have influenced these attempts to gain Ethiopian alliance, but there is one more important element as well, one which is frequently overlooked today: Ethiopia's own goals and pro-Western orientation and its self-definition as a Judeo-Christian state. A thorough examination of American interest in the region, the nature of U.S.-Soviet competition, and these states' symmetrical perceptions regarding regional actors will contribute to our understanding of the pattern and process of American foreign policy in general and the imperatives of U.S. policy toward the African Horn in particular.

Notes

1. Glenn P. Hastedt, *American Foreign Policy: Past, Present, Future*. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997), p. 25.
2. Felix Gilbert, *To the Farewell Address Ideals of Early American Foreign Policy*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 144-145.
3. Hastedt, p. 25.
4. Charles A. Beard, *The Idea of the National Interest: An Analytical Study in American Foreign Policy*, (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1962), see chapter 2.
5. Ibid.
6. David N. Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention: Mines, Money and U.S. Policy in the Congo Crisis*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
7. Robert B. Reich, *The Work Of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for the 21st Century Capitalism*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), p. 20.