

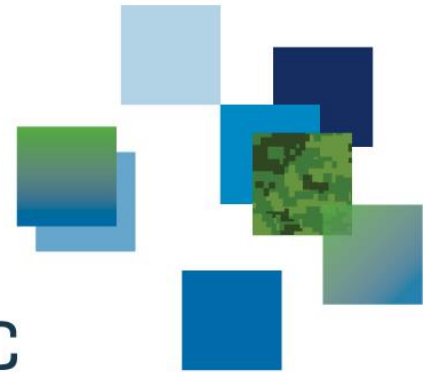


Adversarial decision making: The Ogaden war and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan

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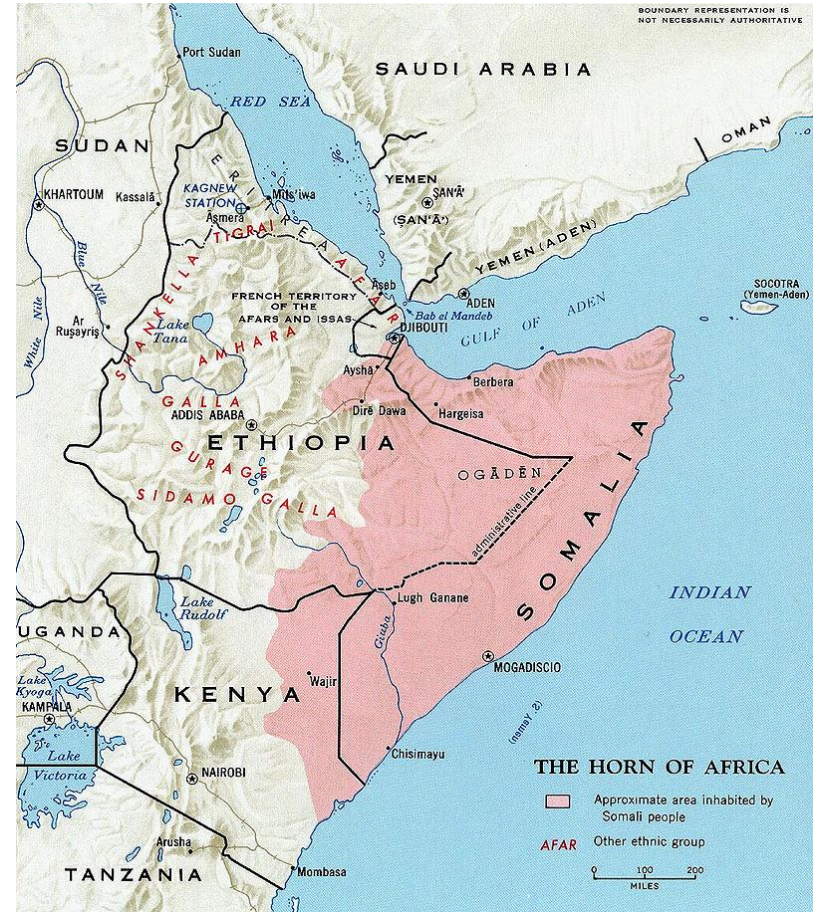
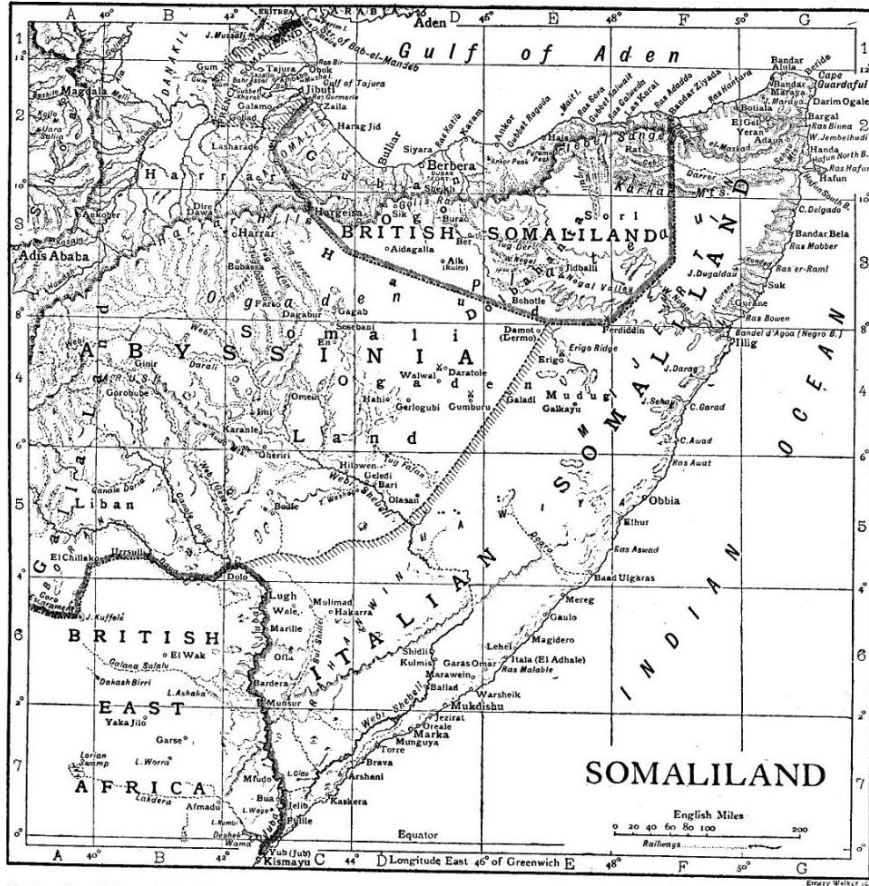
Outline

- Background
- The Ogaden War
- Reconstructing Soviet decision-making
- Soviet invasion of Afghanistan
- Comparison with Somalia
- Lessons learned and implications for current events

Background

- Soviet and Eastern German sources on the Ogaden war
 - ~ 50 Soviet and Eastern German documents at Wilson Center's Digital Archives
 - Period covered February 1977- July 1978
 - Information reports (briefs)
 - Ambassadors' meetings
 - Delegations discussions
 - Meeting transcripts of CC CPSU
- Similar documents available on the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan, 1978-79
- An opportunity for comparison and a new angle on the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan

Ethiopia-Somalia Territorial Dispute



Soviet relations with Ethiopia and Somalia

■ Somalia

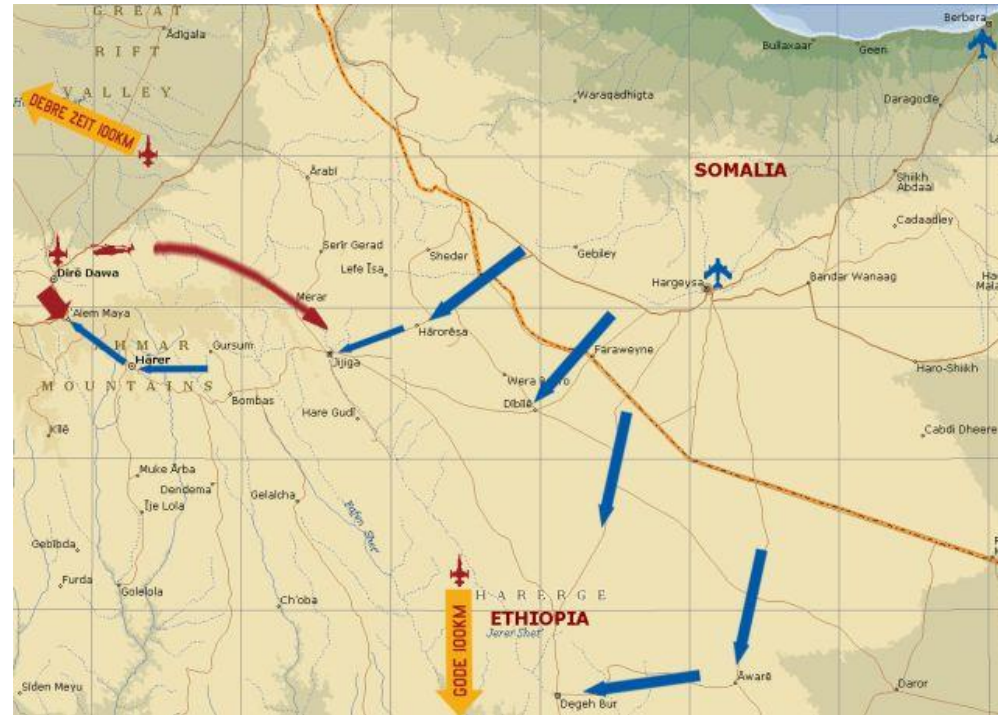
- Close relations since mid-60s
- Treaty of Friendship 1974
- 300 M in arms sales
- 4,000 military advisors
- Military bases (Barbera)
- ... but Barre repeatedly seen as unreliable ally
- Relations broken Nov. 1977 during the war

■ Ethiopia

- 1974 revolution – favourable view
 - But many factions
- US (Carter) refuses military aid
- Appeal to the USSR for military aid
 - Granted 1976
- Mengisto Haile Mariam emerges as leader Feb. 1977
- May 1977 – full support
- “one of the greatest pieces of political opportunism in post-war history.”

The Ogaden War

- Insurgency (WSLF) since 1976
- Somali offensive Jul– Nov 1977
 - Capture 90% of Ogaden
 - But significant losses
- Counter offensive: Jan–Mar 1978
- Soviet aid
 - 400 tanks, 400 artillery pieces, 85 MiGs via air bridge
 - 1,500 Soviet advisors, 12,000 Cuban troops, 2,000 South Yemeni troops
 - By end of March 1978 Somali army retreats back home



■ The aftermath

- Somali army never recovers from the war
- USSR loses important bases in Somalia

Soviet pre-war decision-making

- January 77 – personal message from Brezhnev to Barre
- March 1977- Barre declares he may turn for help to western countries
- Anticipation of war as early as 1977
- Haile Mariam visit to Moscow, May 77
 - “The Ethiopian Leadership, in our opinion, should be granted the support of the Socialist Commonwealth”. CC CPSU report May 13, 77
- Soviet mediation for peaceful resolution July 77
 - Barre seen by the Soviets as uncompromising, nationalist, not socialist
- July 29 – second personal appeal from Brezhnev to Barre
- August 4 and 11, meetings of CC of CPSU – will help Ethiopia

Post-war decision making

- Feb. 13, 1978 East German memo – Cubans will not transgress on Somali borders as per Soviet directions
- March 13, 1978 memo - expectations that Somalia will be brought back in the Socialist camp and abandon its anti-Soviet stance
- April 3, 1978 memo – the situation in Somalia is deteriorating, acknowledgment that Barre is using repression to suppress dissatisfaction
 - But rejects the notion of ousting him
- June 1978 – East German memo about increasing US influence in Somalia, but hopes that “progressive” forces will prevail
- Soviets abstain from further intervention in the region

Soviet Invasion in Afghanistan

- April 1978 – Saur Revolution, PDPA comes to power
- Introduces unpopular socio-economic reforms
 - Uprisings in the countryside, repressions
- Internal factionalism
- Extensive reporting and discussions in the CC CPSU about what to do in Afghanistan
- Requests from Taraki for military assistance is refused
- Sep. 1979 – Taraki is killed by Hafizullah Amin
 - Country is descending into chaos
 - increase in anti-Soviet rhetoric
- Dec. 12, 1979 – CC CPSU approves resolution for a regime change

Comparison with Somalia 1978

■ Similarities

- Concern about losing a client state
- Facing a unreliable partner (Amin)
- Country in turmoil against repressive and harsh policies
- Afghan army is in disarray
- Fears that Afghanistan will turn to the US
 - In the context of US forces in the Gulf, following the Iranian revolution

■ Differences

- No illusions about the strength of the “progressive” forces
- Decision to invade

The Decision-making Circle

- Resolution of CC CPSU, August 11, 1977

“Leonid Ilych Brezhnev requested that the Ethiopian appeal be considered as soon as possible.... He entrusted comrades Gromyko, Ustinov and Andropov to prepare proposals. The Comrades have fulfilled the assignment”

- Resolution of CC CPSU, December 12, 1979

“Ratify evaluations and measures set forth by Andropov, Ustinov and Gromyko... The execution of all measures should be entrusted to Comrades Andropov, Ustinov and Gromyko.”

Conclusion

- Fallout with Somalia was on the minds of Soviet leadership in 1979
 - Objective of intervention was a regime change, not a prolonged occupation
- General lessons learned
 - Similar circumstances will not always lead to similar outcomes
 - Adaptivity is to be expected
 - Key – knowledge of decision making circle
- Implications for present day
 - Decision-making circle around Putin is very small
 - Syria – adapting lessons learned from Libya

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