

# THE MINI-REPUBLIC OF DJIBOUTI: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Said Yusuf Abdi

This article first sets out to review the internal problems facing this young republic attempting to build a viable, independent nation. I review a broad spectrum of the country's ethnic political rivalries, economic difficulties and policies, defense concerns and needs. Secondly, I will analyze the linkages of domestic problems to external factors that have grave consequences for the capacity of the Republic to be viably independent. I will also discuss the external threats emanating from the Somali-Ethiopian rivalry, and of superpower as well as medium power competition for economic resources through ideological alliances, client relationships, strategic military instruments.<sup>1</sup>

## Internal Political, Economic Situation

The Republic of Djibouti, named for its port city, is a New Hampshire-sized nation (23,000 square kilometers) and has an estimated population of 220,000.<sup>2</sup> It is the smallest and youngest African state. After 115 years of French occupation, it became independent on June 27, 1977. This marked the end of three centuries of French colonial rule of the African continent, and resulted in this tiny state becoming the 49th member of the OAU and the 21st member of the Arab league.

## Ethnicity and Politics

The Republic is inhabited by two major ethnic groups: The Somalis (60%) and the Afar's (40%).<sup>3</sup> The fact that these groups have the same religion (Islam), a similar way of life (pastoralism), and a common ethnic descent, related language, and physical appearance have not prevented bitter clashes between them. Historically, shades of ethnic differences and competition for grazing have led to conflicts, often greatly exacerbated by French colonial policies. While in the past, disputes over grazing were the main reasons of conflict, more recently, clashes have been over political control.

Until 1956, the French treated the Afars and Somalis impartially; both groups were equally denied any significant role in the governing of the territory. But shifts in internal politics occurred in 1958 and 1967 when the French held two referenda offering the option of total independence or remaining in various new forms of a Franco-African community. Espousing independence, most of the Somali electorate was disenfranchised and did not actively participate in what they thought a futile exercise. Though the French knew that Somalis were the majority in the country, they systematically supported the Afars. From 1958 to 1977, the French persisted in their support of Afar political domination to consolidate their

own colonial rule and to counteract Somali nationalism, a growing force in the Territory, after neighboring former Italian and British Somalilands became independent and unified. The French condoned Afars' tactics in maintaining a limited electoral register which seemed to make the Afars the strongest party in the territory. French soldiers staffed a barbed-wire border around Djibouti to prevent Somali movement between the Territory and the wider Somali hinterland. The dominance of the Afar minority over the majority of the Somalis, and employment policies favoring Afars, created deep rifts between the two groups. The 1967 controversial name change of the territory from French Somaliland to the French Territory of the Afars and Issas underscored French colonial policies of trying to rule by emphasizing exploitation of ethnic divisions. The French chose the dominant Issa clan name to further try to fragment the Somalis, loosen Somali identity and exploit clan differences. But the Afars were mentioned as a unified group without any segmentation. The French made no mention of the traditional class and clan divisions of the Afars.<sup>4</sup>

Three series of meetings were held in Paris from May 1976 to June 4 by UNI (National Union for Independence), the LPAI (the African popular Independence League) of the parliamentary opposition; an agreement was reached on a declaration for independence. The call for real independence revealed Aref's growing political isolation. The UNI representative signed the declaration without Aref's consent causing a further split in the UNI and additional parliamentary losses. On July 17, 1976 Ali Aref resigned, after eight years as head of the government. The resignation of Mr. Ali Aref Bourhan, an Afar, as president of Djibouti, in July 1976 averted a serious political crisis that might well have intensified violence between the two main ethnic groups.<sup>5</sup> During the later part of his rule, Aref, a hardline Gaullist, had ignored the

1. For an analysis of the story and politics of the territory before independence, see Said Abdi, "Independence for the Afars and Issas: Complex Background; Uncertain Future" in *Africa Today*, Vol. 24, No. 1, Jan-March, 1977. Recently, there has been a deluge of short reports about the Republic, but Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff's *Djibouti and the Horn of Africa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968) remains the most useful text in English about the background, history, politics and economics of the area.

2. *Africa South of the Sahara*, 1976 estimate.

3. *Djibouti: At the Edge of the Whirlpool*, in *Africa Confidential*, April 28, 1978, vol. 19, No. 9, P. 6.

4. Afar class divisions ran along Asaimara and Adoimra lines. Then there are clan divisions within these class groupings. Among Asaimara alone, we can name the Dahoheita (largest group); the Alito and Herto; the Filla Enda; The Nassal and Hafara, the Burkeli, the Data Hassan, Asa Ali, and Assaho; the Modaito; the Airolassa; the Adali, the Sohafo; the Gumar and Ablissa of Lake Alol; the Olotoak-Modaito; the Oloto and Douraba; the Wandala, and Galaela and Adkalto. Among the Adoimara, the Dahimela clan alone is the divided into three main sections: The Dahimela Yaidi Baddirera, The Dahimela Yaidi Endo Cadri, and the Dahimela Bavculi. See I. M. Lewis, *Peoples of the Horn of Africa* (London: Low and Brydone Ltd., 1969) pp. 155-160.

5. During the 9th and 10th of July, 16 people died and 64 were injured.

Said Yusuf Abdi, a former Professor at Atlanta University and the University of Denver, is now an independent researcher based in Denver and a contributing editor of HORN OF AFRICA.

growing demand for independence, particularly by the opposition Somali-dominated LPAI.

Observers early in 1977 reported the word "unite" next to the letters LPAI and UNI painted on many Djibouti buildings, an indication that the new idea of unity had gained considerable support. This culminated in the Tadjoura Meeting which was an attempt to bridge the political and ethnic divisions between the Somalis and Afars. At the meeting some 500 leaders of both ethnic groups gathered as Tadjoura, a traditional Afar stronghold, and discussed the formation of a unionist party. A unionist party would have developed a separate national feeling and belonging, despite the participants' close ethnic and cultural ties with neighboring states. It was a widely felt desire to find firm and lasting solutions to the ethnic divisions. Both Aref and Gouled were strongly in favor of the formation of a unionist party.

The roundtable meeting held in Paris on February 28, 1977 and the subsequent OAU sponsored meeting at Accra at the end of March 1977, revealed, however, that the Spirit of Tadjoura had not asserted itself as a political force. In the Paris conference, a decision was reached to hold an independence referendum on May 8, 1977 to coincide with a general election for an enlarged 65-member constituent assembly. But the UNI (excepting a dissident group), the MPL (Afar Peoples Liberation Movement) and MLD (the Movement for the Liberation of Djibouti) all boycotted the conference, expressing concern over the effect of Somali-dominated government on their existence, ethnic identity and territory. The large Afar absenteeism resulted in the exclusion of some prominent Afar politicians from the single electoral list of 65 candidates which was accepted by the Paris meeting and voted on in Djibouti on May 8, 1977.

The 1976 formation of an LPAI parliamentary opposition coalition had a moderating and weakening effect on the formerly externally based FLCS (Front for the Liberation of Somali Coast). The Somali government advocated Somali union and thus accepted LPAI as adequately serving the interests of the Somalis. Once UN, OAU and Arab League observers were allowed to watch what had to be an impartial referendum, Somalia approved the program towards independence which is being made by LPAI-led coalition, and thus encouraged FLCS participation in the electoral process rather than an armed struggle. But FLCS hardliners refused to cooperate with LPAI. The FLCS President, Vice President, and the Ministers of Information, Defense and External Affairs were accused of trying to assassinate LPAI leaders and of infiltrating armed gangs into the Territory. All this contravened an apparent accommodation between FLCS and LPAI. Somalia police arrested the FLCS hardliners who refused to cooperate with LPAI.<sup>6</sup>

The Paris Conference revealed the existence of a new alliance in Djibouti politics; the LPAI and the so-called parliamentary group that toppled the Ali Aref joined the

originally militant political movement (FLCS) which after ousting top hardliners jointly and vigorously campaigned for an independent Djibouti. The Afar Parties, on the other hand, instructed their followers to vote "yes" on independence, but to return blank papers in the general election. Ali Aref was an exception in urging all peoples of Djibouti and the Afar in particular to vote for the electoral list headed by Hassan Gouled Aptidon and his program for national unity. The program involved the 65 elected national union candidates forming a constituent assembly; the formation of a national congress which would be empowered to enact major laws after grass-root consultations and would be composed of elected representatives of the people, and municipalities, and worker-committees; and finally, a legislative council accountable to the Congress, would be entitled to vote on minor laws. The President of the Republic after being elected directly by the people would nominate a prime minister to assist him.

The May 8 referendum and election was supervised by an 18-man electoral commission from France, and observers of the UN, OAU, and the Arab League. In addition, the 6500 French troops who were permanently stationed in Djibouti were placed on full alert. The LPAI, FLCS and the parliamentary majority entered the elections grouped together as the RPI (Popular Independence Rally). At least 96% of the voters in Djibouti took part in the election, and the blank votes called for by the Afar leadership amounted to only 10%. Hassan Gouled Aptidon, a 62 year old Somali, was elected President on June 24, 1977, by the Chamber of Deputies, the country's one-house parliament. According to the UN Mission observing the referendum and elections,<sup>7</sup> the majority of registered people (98.7%) voted overwhelming in favor of independence and in support (92.4%) of the single list of candidates presented by the RPI.

The UN Mission, composed of members from Norway, Sri Lanka and Venezuela, reported that the referendum and elections were carried with due observance of governing legislation and without intervention by the French authorities, the local government or the political parties. The OAU Deputy chairman, Peter Onu, also admitted that the voting took place without interference from authorities, parties or troops, that the preparations safeguarded democratic procedures, and that there was a popular vote. The Arab League representative, Mohd Al Farrar, was greatly impressed by the efficient handling of the elections.

#### Developments Since Independence

The change in the ethnic composition favoring the numerically stronger Somalis and the French decision

6. See *Africa News*, Dec. 13, 1976. Vol. VII, No. 23.

7. *French Somaliland Attains Independence as Republic of Djibouti*, a report issued by the United Nations Mission to observe the Referendum and Elections in French Somaliland (Djibouti) in: *Objective: Justice*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Summer 1977, pp. 38-48.

(under both external and internal pressures) to grant the freer referendum and elections no doubt have democratized the political situation. This certainty has had a calming effect, significantly, in the overcrowded slum areas near Djibouti where political unrest was a major problem. The only groups to voice dissatisfaction at the results were of course, the Afar parties, who felt they lost the contest to Gouled.

But a grenade tossed into a popular restaurant in Djibouti on December 15, 1977 has almost shattered the political unity of the Republic of Djibouti, after less than six months of independence.<sup>8</sup> The attack resulted in six deaths and 30 injuries and led to police searches for suspects and weapons and the arrest of 600 people. Sweeping arrests of young militants of the Marxist MPL (Popular Liberation Movement) and severe control in Afar districts created increased fears. Although the government stressed that the searches were not confined to Afar neighborhoods, Afar leaders in the government charged repression aimed at their group, a minority in the city of Djibouti. Prime minister Ahmed Dini and four other ministers resigned on December 18, 1977, leaving only two Afars in the cabinet. President Hassan Gouled, banned the Popular Liberation Movement and accused Ethiopia of trying to destabilize his government.<sup>10</sup>

"According to U.S. Intelligence sources, Cuban troops are helping the Ethiopian army into guerilla units that, on a signal from Ethiopia, could move to overthrow Djibouti Government."<sup>11</sup>

In late December, 1977 Djibouti foreign minister Kamil visited Addis Ababa, and a delegation from the Ethiopian foreign ministry reciprocated. The results of the visits were not disclosed, nor have the 12 suspects still under arrest for involvement in the bombing been identified.

President Gouled, moving to prevent ethnic polarization, appointed a special commission of Afars (headed by Foreign Minister Abdullah Kamil and prominent political leaders including Barkat Gourat) to present grievances. President Gouled agreed to release a number of imprisoned Afars, draw more Afars into the Civil Service and give them a larger role in the armed forces. A new government was created on February 5<sup>12</sup> with Afar Abdullah Mohammed Kamil as a Prime Minister. In an attempt to maintain an ethnic balance, his fourteen-member cabinet comprised of six Afars, seven Somalis, and one Arab.

The nomination of Afar Abdullah Kamil as the new Prime Minister obviously has brought a new calm and a rededication to ethnic alliance and co-operation. But the problems of how to right past wrongs by establishing affirmative action policies to redress previous ethnic political and economic imbalances, and affirming democratic majority rule and minority rights raise thorny problems.

Broadly, it may be argued that the country's economic policies will certainly be a crucial factor that will determine the future shape of ethnic political co-operation.

### Economic Realities and Their Political effects

The country's economic viability depends upon the port and the railway; the port is largely dependent upon the railway, which it served until the railway was disrupted in May 1977 by the Western Somali Liberation Front. The Railway Staff of 2300 is mainly employed in the three centers: Djibouti, Diredawa and Addis Abbaba, with Djibouti housing the supplies section, Dire Dawa the workshop, and a railway hospital. It is important to note that Djibouti is situated in the Somali territory and is predominantly Somali speaking. But since 1967 when Aref became president, he transferred 20,000 Afars to Djibouti, making the Harbor their work domain.

It was the policy of the former premier, Aref, to ensure that most of the port jobs went to the Afars, and in a country with 40% unemployment, no one will willingly give up a job once he has managed to secure it.<sup>13</sup>

Just after independence, it has been reported that by reverse discrimination, Somalis were being favored in employment opportunities in the port and railway facilities, in key posts in the army and security forces.<sup>14</sup> Somali friends of mine told me that even non-Issa Somalis were being discriminated against in jobs. But President Gouled has retreated from the initial sectarianism that was motivated by fears of anarchist and marxist or Mengistu-supported extreme Afar groups. He, therefore, abandoned the drastic policies that were meant to redress previous discrimination against the Issa Somalis. Backtracking, President Gouled has addressed himself to economic and political policies that may further intensify tensions between the two major ethnic groups. The appointment of the Afar Abdallah Mohammed Kamil as Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Minister of Defense will certainly assuage the fears of Afars in terms of job opportunities, protection from intimidation and of government foreign policy that may steer to a pro-Somalia politics. Kamil married a Somali woman, has political integrity, and is regarded as a suitable person to bring about ethnic recon-

8. See "Bomb Shatters Fragile Political Unity in Djibouti" in: *Africa News*, January 9, 1978; Vol. X, No. 1, P. 10.

9. These were Defense Minister Ahmed Hassan; and Public Health and Social Affairs Minister Ahmed Youssef Houmed; Industry Minister Ali Mohammed Hamoud; and Youth and Sports Minister Hamid Hassan Hamad.

10. Look at *Keesings Contemporary Archives*, Feb. 3, 1978, p. 28812.

11. *Newsweek*, May 1, 1978, p. 19.

12. See *Facts on File*, Vol. 38, No. 1945, Feb. 17, 1978.

13. "Djibouti: Will it Stay Independent" in: *New African*, August, 1977, P. 772.

14. *Africa Confidential*, April 28, 1978, Vol. 19, No. 9, P. 7.

ciliation. Kamil is also considered an uncontroversial figure, who also has a good record as an able and well-liked administrator.

But because of the scarcity of resources, and the entrenched patterns of economic inequality, the creation of a viable economy and a mixed work force will not be easy and will remain one of the main challenges of the government. The economic prospects seem dim, but the potential of Djibouti as the free port of the Horn, the economic benefits from close associations with Saudi Arabia and other oil-rich small Gulf States, and the revenues from the railway to Ethiopia could, if realized, be a basis for development. With its limited agricultural potential, its lack of minerals, oil or major industries, Djibouti may mainly depend on the railway and extensive infusion of foreign aid. But since the re-opening of the Suez, Djibouti has not regained much of the lost trade because some of the ships that had once used the canal and Red Sea go around the Cape; also, Aden and Jeddah pose stiff competition. The Railway is also not a reliable source of revenue because of its susceptibility to sabotage by the Somali Western Liberation Front. Sea salt, hides and skins, date growing, livestock in rural areas, a few small industries, railway and harbor traffic revenues, and Saudi Arabian and French subsidies are now keeping this mini-state economically afloat. Added to inherent weaknesses of the economy is the burden of a massive influx of Somali refugees who fled the Ogaden, fearing reprisal from Ethiopian forces, and who are now crowded into camps near Ali-Sabieh and Dekhil.<sup>15</sup>

#### **Ideology's Effect on Internal Politics**

Despite the ethnic divisions between the Afars and Somalis, ideology could create a cross-cutting polarization. Controversies over what policies and paths of development—socialist or capitalist—the new Republic should adopt are unavoidable and strongly influence both internal and external politics. The ruling leadership is mostly conservative bent with a close attachment to France. President Hassan Gouled has openly stated that he would foster a free enterprise society. Concerning domestic policy, Gouled said Djibouti would be non-socialist.<sup>16</sup> The orientation of the present governing elites and parties, the external military and financial support and dependency on France, and badly needed stabilizing financial aid from Saudi Arabia would all augment a trend towards capitalist development. The pursuit of such policies and the joining of the western-controlled IMF may pay off in procuring advanced loans and grants, encouraging multi-national investment in the country.

But the Socialist-orientation of the ethnically purely Afar MPL (now outlawed), the impact of the neighboring socialist societies of Ethiopia and Somalia, and Soviet covert and overt Ethiopian-based intervention in the Horn

could generate pressures for an ideological swing to the left.

#### **Possible Scenarios for Djibouti's Political Evolution**

First, Djibouti may remain an independent, unified nation. The Afars and Somalis may on their own develop the capacity to negotiate their problems, more toward accommodation and gain greater control over their destinies. Both President Gouled and Prime Minister Kamil are regarded as Djiboutian nationalists and a high degree of statesmanship will be required to steer the Republic in the formative years. Much depends on the wisdom of President Gouled's leadership in the delicate period of consolidation, as he cannot afford to overlook the narrow plurality between the two main ethnic groups and the necessity of shared power. The two groups could live together politically and resolve differences if the government looked after the interest of all the population. The ideal of national, political union is strong among the majority of both groups (as the elections showed) and needs only to be actualized concretely.

The ethnic balance of the present government could serve as an example for a close co-operation in the future. But serious, meaningful, and lasting linkages must be created. Equal economic opportunity for all citizens, economic interdependence and interlocking interests, and mechanisms for creating common identifiable national identity must all be worked out.

Secondly, if the Afars and Somalis continue to be uncompromising in their competition for political power and economic resources, and in the event of continuous out-breaking of violence and internal chaos and anarchy, partition may not be far fetched. Cognizant of the entrenched international bias against any border changes and specially OAU's reactionary stand of preserving colonial borders, partition could be a better solution than an incessant civil war, which would bring in regional and global involvements. If the maintenance of peace proves impossible and Afars want to go their way, then Somalis would most likely want to go their own way, too. Both groups have shown desires to unite with their co-nationals in neighboring Afar part of Ethiopia and Eritrea (in the case of the Afars) and Somalia, Ogaden and Northeastern district of Kenya (in the case of the Somalis in Djibouti). At present, most Somalis in Djibouti (except the ousted radical leadership of the FLCS) would rather attempt to forge a common national identity with Afars as long as it can be based on a democratic framework. But the Afars are more divided, both in ideology and in their identification either with Djibouti or a possible separate "Afar State". The majority of Afar residents in Djibouti support the moder-

15. The refuge problem is creating some hardships for Somalia where the bulk of the refugees went.

16. *Facts on File*, Vol. 37, No. 1912, July 2, p. 506.

ate faction of UNI (National Union for Independence), which wants to forge a new democratic Djibouti Nation.

The idea of a state encompassing all Somalis divided by colonial partition is better known and won't be described. But I would like to briefly mention the idea of an Afar State that has been put forward unofficially by varying Afar groups from different perspectives. The Afar leader, Sultan Ali Mireh, who, after the savage attack by the Mengistu regime, on the Afar Center of Assata, in June 1975, waged a bitter guerrilla war against the military government until he fled to Saudi Arabia, has always been held in high esteem by most traditional Afars. Mireh's ALF (Afar Liberation Front) had contacts with conservative Ali Aref about the idea of an autonomous Afar state. (The ALF has from time to time proposed formation of a separate Afar State based on Afar-inhabited Ethiopia, and extending to Djibouti.) Again the MLNA (Afar National Liberation Movement), a Marxist oriented, Ethiopian-based group, has tried to convince the Dergue of the wisdom of eventually creating a semi-autonomous region in Ethiopia inhabited by the majority of Afars, and which would also encompass part of southern Eritrea. The more radical members of UNI are also in contact with the extreme leftist, outlawed, exclusively Afar Peoples Liberation (MPL), but their program is unclear.

### International Relations

As much as the future of Djibouti will be shaped by internal factors, it will also be determined by the impact of external variables. The Republic of Djibouti is strategically located in the Horn. This tiny city-state perches on the Babel—Mandeb strait, the southern entrance to the mideast sea oil route, and is separated from the Arabian peninsula by only 40 miles of sea. Thus to superpowers, it holds a position of immense strategic value. Secondly, the future of Djibouti could be determined to a large extent by her two neighbors, bitter antagonists with populations akin to those in Djibouti.

### Regional External Threats: Somalia and Ethiopia

Ethiopia's long standing interest in the Republic is economic. Sixty percent of Ethiopia's imports and 40% of her exports<sup>17</sup> used to pass through the port, and if access to the alternative ports of Assab and Massawa is cut by successful Eritrean Liberation, Ethiopians would see it as their only passage to the Sea. There has been a distinctive hardening of Ethiopia's attitude towards Djibouti after Somalis gained its control. Aid to pro-Afar movements has been stepped up, and Ethiopia seems to be aiding political and underground movements to sabotage the independence of Djibouti. As mentioned earlier, both President Gouled and the intelligence report quoted by Newsweek indicate Ethiopian attempts to incite the Afars against the Somalis. It is certain that the MPL is heavily supported by

Mengistu's government. The Soviet orientation of the MPL could well suit Mengistu and his Cuban and Russian cohorts, if they decide to intervene in a civil strife. Addis Ababa is certain to play on Afar fears of total Somali takeover. It is doubtful that Mengistu would support a partition of Djibouti, which in one form may take an Afar demand for a state of their own which would include parts of Eritrea and Ethiopia inhabited by Afars. This would be rejected by the Fascist, imperialist Mengistu regime because it would mean losing the free use of Djibouti (a Somali City) and parts of what is now under Ethiopian control, occupied by Afars, i.e., mainly the Wollo and Tigre provinces. But Ethiopia would not be adverse to putting a puppet government in Djibouti and suppressing any idea of an autonomous Afar state. Somalia's interest in the Republic of Djibouti is mainly political. Any Somali governments, whatever her economic and political ideology may be, would seek safeguards that their co-national Somali majority (60%) have equal rights and that they do not again become subordinated to minority Afar rule and denied equal political participation and economic opportunity. The Somali Republic has always stressed the right of self-determination for Somalis in Djibouti, and it has accepted the verdict of the referendum and elections for independence as an expression of the people to remain sovereign and independent. But in the event of a civil war between the two major groups (whether due to internal problems or external instigation) and in the absence of peaceful co-existence, negotiated partition may not be anathema. The desire of dispersed Somalis for unification may come closer and could herald the end of a perpetual, costly and dangerous conflict between Somalis and Afars. But Somalia at present blesses the majority of Afars and Somalis who are trying to have a go at shaping their own identities and destinies.

The present Djibouti government says it expects to maintain good relations with both of its neighbors, and the new prime minister has visited both Addis and Magadishu to clarify his government's position, and to find whether the internal affairs of the new state will be respected by its neighbors. At present, Ethiopia is the worrisome question.

### Great Powers

It stands to reason that the great powers, already involved in the tough confrontation in the Horn area, are closely watchful of events in and around Djibouti. Considering Djibouti's strategic location, the powers will likely try to secure advantageous positions, footholds of their own in the Horn.

The Soviet Union has become a force in the Horn and her interest in Babael-Mandeb is real and Ethiopian, Rus-

17. The major Ethiopian commodities exported in Djibouti is coffee and hides and the occasional consignment of sugar while petroleum, fertilizer, salt, corn, machinery and steel products are the main imports.

sian, Cuban offensive against the Eritreans has already begun. There has been a two-pronged attack involving 40,000 troops, tanks and heavy air, naval and ground bombardment of Asmara.<sup>18</sup> Michael Simmons<sup>19</sup> has argued that Brezhnev has taken the Soviet Union back to a conservatism that Stalin would not have found acceptable. Retrenchment at home and purity of ideology have combined with roughly the sort of imperialism, though on a bigger scale, that was practiced in Eastern Europe after the war. The Kremlin grand strategy for Africa can be discerned by examining the pattern of their actions in the Horn which are systematically hawkish and strategically and economically motivated. The Russians are insensitive to the problems and wishes of the inhabitants of the Horn, and using Ethiopia, as a rear base, are willing to expand to Eritrea, destabilize the Djibouti and Somali governments and from there infiltrate into the Sudan, Egypt, and from Yemen reach for oil rich Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States.

To some, it appears that France has become the West's policeman in Africa to counter Cuban and Soviet policing. The motives of the French are despicably (see Western Sahara) economically motivated and are no more or no less concerned with the genuine rights of oppressed and exploited African people. But Ethiopian instigated and Soviet-backed interference with the internal politics of Djibouti is already real, and as long as there is a strong lobby in Djibouti to retain sovereignty of their state, they will favor some form of French military assistance and presence.

### Conclusion

President Hassan Gouled's foreign and domestic policies have yet to stand the test of neutralizing ethnic hostilities, developing safeguards from interference by neighboring states, and outlining a viable program for development. An emphasis on democratic egalitarian

internal policies and self-centered, non-aligned foreign relations may be the best way of dealing with what seems formidable problems. The political pendulum has finally swung back in favor of the Somali majority. But Somali rule can persist and a spirit of reconciliation prevail only if minority rights are fully protected. It is difficult to predict what will happen in the Horn, but if Afars and Somalis in Djibouti can agree on domestic course independent from the Ethiopian and Somali governments' dictates, they may overcome some major hurdles.

Externally, any escalation of internal tension to the level of civil strife and warfare in Djibouti will encourage the transformation of localized troubles into major external active involvement. Clandestine Russian and Cuban arms channeled through Ethiopians for support of Afar groups most likely will be unpalatable to France, Saudi Arabia and Somalia.

In the long run, a positive and ultimately successful policy may be one which would lead to a resolution of the outstanding problems of the whole Horn. This may involve creation of national political autonomies for all major nationalities within their economically functional, culturally homogeneous, and administratively effective entities, within larger regional, economic, political and cultural groupings; the form of which could be negotiated through grassroot movements. Age old hostilities siphon off most resources into military armaments and make the peoples pawns in conflicts among powers that do not consider the interests of the people in the Horn. Higher levels of cooperation are needed to resolve the Horn's problems and place its peoples economic and political destinies in their own hands.

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18. "Ethiopians Starting Eritrean Offensive", in: *Denver Post*, Tues., May 16, 1978, P. 4.

19. Michael Simmons, "The Rehabilitation for Stalin" in: *Guardian*, April 16, 1978.