

# THREE REGIONAL CONFLICTS AND SUPER POWER PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

*Thesis submitted to the University  
of Hyderabad for the Degree of  
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# DECLARATION


I, **Swaswati Choudhury** hereby declare that the thesis titled **Three Regional Conflicts and Super Power Presence in the Indian Ocean** is an original research work carried out under the supervision of Prof. **Rajen Harshe**, Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad. This thesis has not been submitted to any other University for the award of degree, diploma, fellowship or other similar title or recognition.

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## PREFACE

This particular thesis has been in the offing for past several years. Earlier I had completed a study on U.S. policy towards South Africa in the seventies. Subsequently the policy of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. in the Indian Ocean began to stimulate my intellectual curiosities. The present study is an outcome of the same. In order to understand the Indian Ocean region in a broader perspective three case studies were selected in three diverse regions of Afro-Asia which form the littoral and hinterland states of the Indian Ocean.

Handling regular college teaching and trying to meet the demands of academic excellence has perhaps given me a greater opportunity to think and analyse the problems related to this area. Interactions with several scholars at different phases of writing have broadened my perspective of the Indian Ocean. It has also helped me to acquire clarity in thought and writing.

However, this work would not have seen the light of the day but for the constant endeavour, guidance and inspiration of my supervisor, **Professor Rajen Harshe**. He is a scholar of international repute with numerous outstanding books and articles to his credit. Most importantly he is an acute researcher and a complete academician. I take this opportunity to express my deep sense of gratitude and reverence for **Professor Rajen Harshe**.

I am also grateful for the inspiration and confidence reposed in me by **Prof. Shantha Sinha**, presently Head, Department of Political Science. I am also grateful to the other members of the faculty, Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad for envincing keen interest in my work.

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This thesis had been the dream of my father (**Late**) **Sri.Nikhil Nath Choudhury** who was my major source of inspiration and encouragement. To-day even in his absence his blessings and words have impelled me to pursue my work despite several hurdles. For my mother **Smt. Aparna Choudhury**, sister **Swati** and brother-in-law **Parag**, I have no words to express my gratitude, for their support.

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I would like to express my thanks to all my friends who have stood by me at all times. My thanks are due to **Samuel, Krishna Reddy, Anuradha**, my colleagues **Mrs.Gayatri, Srilatha, Uma** and **Patricia**. I thank everyone who have envinced keen interest in my work and have helped me in different ways.

Finally I would like to state that I am alone responsible for whatever has been stated in this thesis.

## INTRODUCTION

The present study deals with conflict situations in the Indian Ocean region. The word conflict is open to several interpretations in international relations studies. In order to have a more comprehensive notion about conflict and its various stages it would be worthwhile to consider a few definitions of conflict. Any understanding of conflict would be complete only if an attempt is made to understand the term in its general as well as specific sense. To have a general acquaintance of the term, it would be useful to look at the definition given in the Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences.

"In the widest sense of the word, conflict is conscious competition and competitors become self conscious rivals, opponents or enemies." Explaining the concept further the Encyclopaedia states that; "conflict may involve the defense of what one already has or acquisition of what one has not; and acquisition may mean the taking away of that which pertains to another or the appropriation of that which another would like to have. The defensive, destructive and obstructive aspects of conflict become entangled with one another in every crisis."

Discussing the outcome of conflict the Encyclopaedia concludes that, "a particular conflict will produce a relatively abiding settlement is no foregone conclusion; it is often said that issues are never decided they are only superseded."

The term conflict is also used in the specific context of international relations studies. Hence it would be appropriate to present certain standard, well accepted and conventional definitions of conflict. The following definitions from the two well known studies in international relations have been identified for this purpose.

Glenn H. Snyder and Paul Diesing in their work 'Conflict Among Nations' state that : "Conflict is central to all politics, especially international politics, and crises are conflict episodes par excellence. Lying as they do between peace and war; crises reveal most clearly and intensely the distinguishing characteristic of international politics and the logical starting point for theorizing about it."

Charles O.Lerche Jr. and Abdul A. Said in their book titled 'Concept of International Politics' have tried to define 'conflict' more comprehensively. Their work outlines the possible causes or factors that lead to international conflicts which according to them are intermetent but 'inevitable', features of 'world politics.' According to the authors, "The absolute character of interests and objectives inherent in the national policies of states reinforces the tendency towards interstate conflicts". Lerche and Said consider absolute interests as enhancement of prestige, aggrandizement of power and promotion of ideology. The absolute interests or objectives attract opposition and conflict because according to them they 'lack rational content,' and clearly defined limits. Apart from this a constant urge to retain territorial integrity, political independence and sovereignty have often led to conflicts.



The above definitions from the two studies once again, reveal the specific nature of conflict in the context of International Relations. Having placed the definitions in the specific context of International Relations we shall proceed to discuss K.J.Holsti in his work entitled : "International politics : A Frame work for Analysis". Holsti has given one of the most complete and comprehensive connotation of the word conflict. According to Holsti "Conflict leading to organized violence emerges from a particular combination parties, incompatible position over an issue, hostile attitudes and certain types of diplomatic and military actions" Conflict comprises of 'parties' 'issue field,' 'tensions,' and finally 'actions.' Some of the key words in this definition such as parties, attitudes, actions etc.; warrant an explanation.

**Parties** to the conflict are generally the governments of different states. These parties aim at achieving certain objectives, such as territorial gains, access to market, natural resources, prestige alliances, world revolution, overthrow of unfriendly governments and so on. In the process of achieving or defending their objective the adversaries witness a clash of interest. At times incompatibility of interests among parties over controversial issues stimulate situations of conflict. Such issues keep varying according to time and circumstances.

**Attitudes** again refer to the disposition of one party towards another which may betray distrust or suspicion. While tension by itself cannot result in conflict it is a psychological dimension. However as an underlying

factor it can create sufficient antagonism which motivate parties to act either diplomatically or militarily.

Action finally conflict includes 'actions' such as diplomatic pressures, propaganda, economic, military or political sanctions which the contending parties launch towards each other. Eventually the incompatible objectives, and attitude of policy makers decide the nature of the conflict. Scholars like Kenneth E. Boulding and K.J. Holsti have classified conflicts into two broad categories which are based on the technique used in a conflict. For instance diplomatic or economic pressure or even pacific methods used for settling a dispute may be described as 'non-violent', 'covert' or latent conflict. When contending parties wage wars through military action such a conflict is called 'violent', or 'overt', conflict. We can conclude our discussion on conflict with the distinction brought out by Holsti between conflict and war. Holsti has used the idea of crisis to bring final distinctions between conflict and war. According to him : "a crisis is one stage of conflict; its distinguishing features include a sudden eruption of unexpected events caused by previous conflict". Therefore a conflict situation may exist prior to a 'crisis' and also continue to remain even in the aftermath of a crisis. In a crisis hostility by one party reaches such a proportion that the other party involved has to choose between two alternatives, i.e. declaring war or surrendering.

The above mentioned explanations and interpretations may not necessarily encapsulate all the major dimensions of conflict that have

occurred in International Relations. Nevertheless they can provide the necessary groundwork to launch our enquiries into the major situations of conflicts in the Indian Ocean region. The Indian Ocean region has housed diverse kinds of conflicts situations in the post second world war period. Such conflicts have led to tensions. And such tensions have led to wars between states.

The littoral and hinterland states of the Indian Ocean share diversities and similarities alike. The diversities include religious and cultural diversities, socio-economic and political diversities. The similarities shared by the states of the region are the colonial past, low levels of economic growth and technological development and military inequalities. This experience of the states of this oceanic region have led to the emergence and continuance of conflict situation in the Indian Ocean. Such a condition makes the region one of the most volatile and conflict prone zones in the world.

On the basis of our understanding of conflicts and keeping the present objectives in mind we now proceed to discuss a hypothesis related to each significant theme.

The present study has attempted to examine and analyse three different conflicts in three different regions of the Indian Ocean. These conflicts are : The Indo-Pakistan conflict 1971; the Ethiopia-Somalia Conflict 1977-78; and the Iran-Iraq conflict 1980-88. It also deals with the role of the super-powers in all the three conflicts.

## **Hypothesis :**

The study is based on the following hypothesis. The hypothesis in this study are being placed in five reasonable assumptions.

- i) The newly emergent states more often aspire to revise the frontiers inherited from the departing colonial powers. The conflictual situations between India and Pakistan and Ethiopia and Somalia can be partly understood in this light. In substance the aspirations to revise colonial frontiers can make states traditional rivals.
- ii) If the demands to revise the frontiers emerge within a state it can lead to the break up of the state and Bangladesh is one such case.
- iii) The belligerent states involved in conflictual situations at times fail to find solutions to their conflict through bilateral negotiations.
- iv) Failure to resolve ranges of disputes prompts the contending regional states to mobilise external powers and forces to resolve the conflict in their favour.
- v) Conflicts inherently local invariably have regional as well as global dimensions.

## **Significance:**

Indian Ocean region is the third largest ocean in the world. The politics of this region draws global actors like USA and U.S.S.R. All the three conflicts that occurred in the region give a clue to understand super-power rivalry and the politics of the cold war. Particularly the littoral state of the Indian Ocean region and their ties need a thorough re-examination in the context of the politics of the region as well as in the context of the cold war.

The cold war rivalry between the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union showed increasing intensity during the seventies and almost the whole of the eighties. The three conflicts selected for study span, belong to this period. Moreover the role of the superpowers in the conflicts also forms a part of the analysis. An examination of the conflicts reveals how the domestic realities as well as the foreign policies of Indian Ocean states generated conflict situations leading to armed confrontation between the states of the region. The study includes an analysis of the internal pressures originating from politics among the states of the Indian Ocean, external pressures originating from super-power competition in the region; that eventually propelled the Indian Ocean region into the vortex of the cold war.

## **Organization of chapters :**

The study has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter entitled : 'The Indian Ocean : A zone of conflict,' describes two aspects

of the Indian Ocean. Firstly, it presents a general geographical description of the Indian Ocean region along with its natural resources and its geo-political diversities and similarities. Secondly, it traces the growing interests and presence of the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union in the Indian Ocean.

The second chapter discusses the Indo-Pakistan conflict of 1971 leading to the liberation of Bangladesh. The chapter discusses the nature of state in Pakistan and analyses the differences between East and West Pakistan. India was involved in the liberation struggle of Bangladesh which eventually led to Indo-Pak Conflict in 1971. Both India and Pakistan mobilized the support of the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. respectively to decide the conflict in their favour.

The third chapter entitled 'The Ogaden Conflict in the Horn of Africa 1977-78,' discusses the second case study on conflict in the Indian Ocean region. This conflict occurred in the Horn of Africa between the two states namely, Ethiopia and Somalia. The central cause of the conflict in this region, between the two states was the territorial and ethnic claims of Somalia over Ogaden. Once again the contending parties mobilised the super-powers to resolve the conflict in their favour. This chapter also includes the significant role played by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in preventing hostilities and then in ending dispute.

The fourth chapter entitled : 'The Iran-Iraq conflict - 1980-88,' is the third case study of conflict in the Indian Ocean. It deals with the

eight years of armed conflict between Iran and Iraq from 1980-88. The chapter first describes the geo-political significance of Iran and Iraq. It discusses the relationship between the two states, while emphasising the religio-political difference between them. The chapter then brings out the major issue that resulted in the conflict. This protracted conflict has been discussed in phases to capture all its nuances. In the process the role of the super powers and international organisations in this conflict are scrutinised.

### **Methodology :**

The thesis presents a narrative chronological analysis of conflicts in the Indian Ocean with three selected case studies. It essentially offers a historical empirical analysis. This has been done in order to comprehend why the Indian Ocean region has often been termed as an area or zone of conflict. The thesis has also adopted the case study technique in studying the causes of the three cases of conflicts. By adopting the case study technique comparisons between the different cases can be drawn. This technique does not indicate mere collection of data in isolated case situations. The similarities and divergence that emerge as a result of applying this method allows classification and empirical analysis. The cases under study become examples of reasoning by which a researcher is able to build and support his/her argument.

This thesis has been written on the basis of primary and secondary sources. Primary data include government documents, U.N. resolutions,

proceedings of international conferences, and seminars, public papers of the heads of states etc. Secondary data comprises of Encyclopedias, numerous books, articles and newspapers. All these have been collected from the different libraries in New Delhi, Hyderabad and Victoria, Australia.

In the light of this introduction we can proceed to understand the nature and politics of the Indian Ocean.



## **CHAPTER I**

### **THE INDIAN OCEAN - A ZONE OF CONFLICT**

Indian Ocean became a hot bed of rivalry during the cold war between the East and West. On the one hand U.S.A. and its Western allies ventured to retain and consolidate their presence in diverse parts of the region. On the other hand the Soviet Union with its allies were attempted to liquidate the Western influence from the region. The Indian Ocean region provided a stage for U.S.A and U.S.S.R. to pursue their rivalries. To put it tersely the Indian Ocean became a zone of conflict. In order to understand the complexities and dimension of conflicts in the Indian Ocean region in a perspective this chapter will attempt to provide the necessary background.

The sequence of this chapter can be underlined as follows: The chapter will begin by describing the geography as well as the resources of this region. On the basis of this it will highlight the geo-political significance of the diverse parts of the region. Further it would take a detail tour of U.S. policy in the region especially since the withdrawal of the British Navy from the East of the Suez in 1971. To apprise the U.S. policy in a critical perspective it would also devote space towards the understanding of U.S.S.R's changing attitudes towards the Indian Ocean region primarily during the Brezhnev period (1964-1982).

## **The Indian Ocean Region - In a geo-political perspective :**

The Indian Ocean is geographically the third largest ocean in the world next to the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans respectively. This expanse of water covers an area of 75 million square kilometers on the surface of the globe. A continuous coastline provided by the countries of Africa, Asia and Australia makes the Indian Ocean a huge bay. The unbroken stretch of land from the east to the west with minor irregularities makes it an unified geographic zone. In its Southern stretch the Indian Ocean meets the Antarctic Ocean at latitude 60° '0' s beyond the Tropic of Capricorn.<sup>(1)</sup>

According to the UN Document A/AC 159/1, 1974, the Eastern stretch of the Indian Ocean extends upto 147°O' E and meet the Pacific Ocean. Stretching from the South Eastern Cape of Tasmania; the Western exit of the Bass Strait, from the median line between the North-West of Australia, the Malay strait upto Sumatra. The Western frontiers of the Indian Ocean begins at meridian 20° O'E at the Cape of Agulhas.<sup>(2)</sup>

The entry points to this vast stretch of water is possible through the various straits located at its western and eastern frontiers. The major openings are the Suez canal, Bab-el-Mandeb strait, the Cape of Good Hope in the west and the Malacca strait in the East and to a lesser extent the Sunda strait in the Indonesian archipelago. The straits handle one-third of the international maritime traffic. An annual estimate of 30,000 ships including 1,500 tankers operate on these sea-routes.

About one third of the international air-routes also lie across the Indian Ocean.<sup>(3)</sup>

The Indian Ocean region comprises of one-third of the states in the world and one-third of the world's population. It is one of the richest natural resource zones in terms of oil and mineral wealth. The Persian Gulf region for example produces 2.6 million barrels of oil daily. The Gulf region supplies about 70% of the oil to the western countries. Around 57% of the world oil trade passes through the Straits of Hormuz at the rate of one ship every 11 minutes. Dwindling oil reserves of the world and lack of a substantial alternative oil energy source makes this region one of great importance for all oil dependent states.<sup>(4)</sup>

The Indian Ocean Region is not only rich in oil but in other mineral resources and marine products as well. Some of the minerals that can be listed are tin includes 70% of the world reserve, 28% of manganese; 32% chromium; 25% iron ore; 12.5% of lead; 11.5% nickel; 67% of zinc; 30% antimony; 34% bauxite; 31% of diamonds; apart the world's largest known deposits of thorium and titanium. The unexplored sea-beds have large deposits of minerals such as manganese, nickel, copper, cobalt and molybdenum. The warm tropical waters are also a major preserve of marine life as well.<sup>(5)</sup>

One-twelfth of its population live with a per-capita annual income of about 1000 U.S. dollars.<sup>(6)</sup> With the help of these general salient features,

we shall proceed to locate different states of the region in the context of the main sub regions of the Indian Ocean region.

For analytical convenience as well as to build a better understanding, this study has been bifurcated into five major sub regions or zones. The sub-regional groupings are based on the geographical proximity of the member states in each group. The sub-regions beginning from the Western Indian Ocean region to the eastern region may be described as follows:

*South Eastern African Coast line and the islands of the Western Indian Ocean:* The states of Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Uganda belong to this sub-region. The islands of Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles are the major islands of the Western Indian Ocean. Moving north along the east African coastline the second sub region of the Indian Ocean comprises of the countries in *the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea Countries*. The main states in this sub-region are Egypt, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Israel, Jordan Somalia, Sudan, North Yemen and South Yemen. The third region comprises of the states of *South West Asia including the Persian Gulf and the Arabian peninsula*. The states included in this sub-regional group are Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). *The Fourth sub-region i.e. South Asian sub-region* includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The fifth zone that completes the Indian Ocean 'arc' is *South East Asia and Australia*.

It includes the states of Burma Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Australia<sup>(7)</sup>. Physiographically the Indian Ocean region appears like a complete, unbroken unit. The states in this region are divided by constant clash of interests. Moreover ethnic, religious and cultural diversities coupled with sub regional or regional power struggles have persistently posed fresh Security dilemmas in the political process of the region. What is more the power struggles within the region have invariably involved extra regional powers as well. To understand the complex political processes of the region it would be worthwhile to underscore the major diversities and similarities among these states. To begin with we can illustrate the diversities in various spheres in the following manner.

### **Religious and Cultural Diversity :**

The predominant religion and culture of the region has been Islamic. This one religious culture stretches from the entire north western part of the Indian Ocean region. This part includes the states of the Arabian Peninsula in North East Africa, Iran and Pakistan. Towards the east the same cultural influence continues in Malaysia, Indonesia and Bangladesh. Even within the same religion there are examples of schisms such as between the Shia and the Sunni in the Gulf. Ideological differences also exist between the so called Islamic fundamentalism and the forces of secularism and modernisation.

Another dominant religion in the region, particularly in India is Hinduism. Traces of this religion can be seen in Bali and other Indian Ocean diaspora. The people of Hindu origin are also found in Malaysia, Singapore, East and South Africa, Mauritius and Seychelles. The third ethno religious groups are the Buddhist found in countries like Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand as well as among the Chinese minorities in Malaysia, Indonesia, North Himalayan parts of India and areas in Bangladesh bordering Burma. Christianity is yet another religion that dominates the region. It is the major religion of Australia, Southern and South-Eastern Africa, Madagascar and Ethiopia.<sup>(8)</sup>

### **Socio-Economic Diversities :**

Disparities and divergences in the economic conditions in this region are perhaps not shared by any other region in the world on the same scale. In terms of modernization and economic performances, some countries have achieved concrete results. To state a few examples, the Republic of South Africa and Australia are industrialized even by western standards. Some of the South East Asian states belonging to Association of South East Asian (ASEAN) states have witnessed economic prosperity particularly during the eighties. Oil revenues have accounted for the economic progress of these states namely Malaysia and Indonesia. The better living standards of Persian Gulf states, was a result of oil trade to the different regions of the world since 1973.<sup>(9)</sup>

In contrast there are states like Bangladesh with the highest density of population and the lowest per-capita income in the region. While countries like India strike a midway path. Economic disparities of the region has been an important factor that has fragmented the geo-political structure of the Indian Ocean region.<sup>(10)</sup>

### **Political Diversities :**

Political diversity is another marked feature of the Indian Ocean region. Constitutional governments and democracies exist in marked contrast to monarchies and mass based Governments. States like Australia, South Africa, India and Sri Lanka are examples of the first type. While on the other hand there are conservative monarchies such as the Gulf Emirates or the Islamic Republic of Iran, after 1979. There are also states vacillating between military dictatorship and democratic systems like Pakistan and Bangladesh, in the recent years.<sup>(11)</sup>

Thus the Indian Ocean Region is a mosaic of diverse religions, cultures, ethnic groups which vary in their economic conditions and political institutions. Such diversities act against any unifying factor in this region. That is why it cannot be treated as a single geo-political or geo-strategic unit in a blanket form. The diversities in the region have also left sufficient room for conflicts within the region owing to the incompatibility of interests among the various states and groups. Even within the same religion two different sects may be in conflict. Such clashes are evident in the Shia and Sunni schisms in the Gulf or

between liberal and secular views and Islamic fundamentalism.<sup>(12)</sup> Despite such differences there is a running thread of common experiences that act as a link in unifying the Indian Ocean region into a unit. These commonalities may be summarised in the following manner.

### **Colonial Experience of the states in the Indian Ocean Region:**

Most states of the region around the Indian Ocean were colonies of one of the European colonial powers. A majority of these colonies however, were a part of the former British Empire. Moreover the Indian Ocean was regarded as the British sea because of the dominance of the British navy on its waters. This status continued till the British decision to withdraw began after the Suez crisis of 1956.<sup>(13)</sup>

Though the British rulers could not resist against the forces of nationalism which dominated the post-war period, Britain continued to retain its links with most of its former colonies as they became members of the British Commonwealth.<sup>(14)</sup>

### **Low levels of Economic Growth and Technological Development :**

Most of the post colonial states have been characterised by economic underdevelopment which, in its turn has been a binding factor among most of the states in the region. The lack of capital and



technological know how to tap natural resources forced these states to depend on technologically more developed countries outside the region. In addition the lack of intra-regional cooperation and communication further contributed to their dependent status. On the whole the lack of enterprueneural skills and infrastructural facilities have forced these states to import technology.<sup>(15)</sup>

### **Military Inequalities :**

Another common feature of most of the Indian Ocean states is their relatively weak military strength vis-a-vis the developed states of the west. The inequality in military prowess between advanced states of the west and the Indian Ocean states is quite glaring. Furthermore, as far as the armed forces and naval power is concerned none of the states from the region are self sufficient.<sup>(16)</sup>

Sea power and power on the land are inextricably interwoven in practically all situations and the Indian Ocean region is no exception. The dependence of the states from the region on stronger external powers and their military alliances with extra-regional powers is a very significant feature of the politics of Indian Ocean. In the past, the security of these states was the responsibility of the colonial powers. Today, though they are no longer colonies, most of the states within the region are not capable of influencing any major events on issues independently or even collectively.<sup>(17)</sup>

The twin experience of economic and military vulnerability in addition to the diversities between the states in the Region makes it one of the most complex zones in the world. Economic and military vulnerability has often strengthened the rationale behind the presence of extra regional powers. The overawing presence of the U.S. and the Soviet Union in the Indian Ocean can be understood in this context.

Having discussed the salient features of the Indian Ocean region, it might be worthwhile to discuss some of the important trends in the foreign policy orientation of the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. in the Indian Ocean. Such an exercise will allow us to take a brief overview of some of the major aspects of their foreign policies since the seventies. Our discussion broadly would revolve around the expanding role of the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. and their strategies of building bases in different parts of the region. Both these external powers were also involved in the large armament market that the states of the Indian Ocean had to offer. We can proceed to discuss the U.S. presence in the Indian Ocean.

### **U.S.A.'s Presence and Indian Ocean Politics :**

The U.S.A.'s mercantile shipping in the Indian Ocean dates back to the 18th century. The U.S. interest in this region began to increase when the American commercial firms participated in oil explorations in West Asia towards the end of the First World War. Afterwards the U.S. continued to maintain its presence in the Indian Ocean in order to secure its commercial interests in the inter-war period.<sup>(10)</sup>

In the post war period, U.S. presence was generally maintained in coordination with Britain. Britain continued its dominance in the Indian Ocean in the immediate aftermath of the war. The U.S. presence was maintained by its naval force known as the Middle-East Force (MID EAST FOR). The U.S.A. and Britain participated in certain joint ventures in this region. One such joint undertaking was the construction of the Strategic Air Command Base (SAC) in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia in 1951. With the expiry of the joint contract between Britain and USA the U.S. Military Airlift Command (MAC) took over the Base independently for its world wide transit operations.<sup>(19)</sup>

### **The British withdrawal : A Boost to U.S. involvement :**

The increasing U.S. presence in the Indian Ocean region coincided with the diminishing role of Britain in the east of the Suez. This event was directly related to the protection of Western interests in the region. Protection became an even more important motivating factor following the final decision of Britain to gradually withdraw its naval presence after the Suez crisis of 1956.<sup>(20)</sup> One of the initial moves towards protecting Western interests was the signing of the pacts. This diplomatic manoeuvre included the countries of the Region and the Western powers. The pacts were intended to serve a dual purpose of protection of interests of the signatories. They also served to secure the commercial and political positions of the Western powers.

In the Persian Gulf the pact was known as the Baghdad Pact which was signed in 1955. U.S.A. was however not a signatory to that pact. The signatories to the treaty were Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Great Britain and Iraq. In 1958 Iraq withdrew from the pact with fall of the monarchy and the establishment of Ba'ath Party rule. The U.S.A. which had remained outside the pact joined the pact which came to be known as the Central Treaty Organisation (or CENTO) in the same year. The second treaty consisted mainly of the South-East Indian Ocean states and some countries of the Pacific Region as well. This treaty was called the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) which was signed in 1954 in Manila. The signatories to this treaty were U.S.A., Britain, France, the Phillipines, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand and Pakistan.<sup>(21)</sup>

The CENTO, and the SEATO while protecting the economic interests of the Western powers in the region formed a buffer against communist expansionism in the context of the cold war. However, Britain continued to be a component of U.S. policy decisions in the Indian Ocean region. After the mid-sixties Britain's role further declined as a result of internal political pressures. The economic non feasibility of maintaining military bases in the region became a major issue in the politics of Britain in the sixties. This generated great political pressures in which both the major political parties of Britain, the Conservative party and the Labour party advocated the withdrawal of British presence from the Indian Ocean region.<sup>(22)</sup>

In February, 1966, the British Government issued a White Paper on Defence (Command Papers 2901 and 2902). The Paper was against any independent role for Britain in the Indian Ocean. In early 1968, British Prime Minister Harold Wilson announced the reduction of British presence east of the Suez. The deadline set for British withdrawal was by the end of 1971. In March, 1971 yet another white paper was issued. This was related to the British bases and colonies in the Indian Ocean. It ordered the closing down of its naval communication centre and air-strip in Mauritius and airfield in Gan in the Maldives. The British colony of Seychelles subsequently became independent in 1976.<sup>(23)</sup>

The British withdrawal from the Indian Ocean region ushered in a new dimension in the U.S. policy in the Indian Ocean region. The evolution of the politics of the Indian Ocean, over the span of fifteen years since the mid fifties, steadily led towards the growing U.S. involvement in the Indian Ocean since the beginning of the seventies. However Britain's withdrawal was initiated at a time when the U.S.A's pre-occupation in Vietnam (1971) prohibited the U.S.A. from increasing its commitments in the region.<sup>(24)</sup>

The U.S. foreign policy towards the Indian Ocean region was shaped according to the changing political circumstances in the region. Being a participant in the cold war the U.S.A. was ever present in the political context of the region. During the late sixties and early seventies. Nixon-Kissinger administration of the U.S.A., shaped its foreign policy in the region (1969-1976). The single dominant episode in this era was the

U.S. debacle in the Vietnam war (1964-1973). This issue had a long range repercussion in U.S. foreign policy. Which would be discussed at a later stage.

### **Reviewing Nixon Doctrine :**

When the U.S.A.'s Vietnam war was at its height, the Nixon administration was busy spelling out a few important guidelines for the U.S.A's Asian policy. Such guidelines were encapsulated in the Nixon doctrine. The Nixon doctrine was announced in 1969. It stood for minimizing direct American presence in the Indian Ocean.<sup>(25)</sup> In a report to the Congress on the 9th February, 1972 President Richard Nixon explained the new initiative thus - "The heart of our new conception of that role is a more balanced alliance with our friends - and a more creative connection with our adversaries."<sup>(26)</sup>

The same report outlined the future of U.S. policy which was directly related to the U.S.A's Indian Ocean policy. In the future U.S.A. decided to work towards decreasing bi-polarity in world politics. This was to be achieved by striking a strategic balance with the Soviet Union rather than aiming at strategic superiority. The report pronounced the U.S.A's willingness to work with all nations with particular reference to support for the U.S. allies in Asia, such as Iran. They were to receive special attention from the U.S. administration. The report stated that - "friendships are constant but the means by which they are mutually expressed must be adjusted as world conditions change. The continuity and vigour of

our alliance requires that our friends assume greater responsibilities for our common endeavours”.(27)

In line with its new policy the U.S.A. achieved a breakthrough with its former adversaries. It was able to unveil a new set of relationships with the Peoples' Republic of China and the U.S.S.R.(28) In fact befriending China was a master stroke of Kissinger's diplomacy. Sino-U.S. cooperation could have gone a long way in resolving the Vietnam crisis. In view of China's active support to the Vietnamese guerillas, be-friending China became a necessity for the U.S. Furthermore detente with the U.S.S.R. proved helpful in initiating the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT-I) - I and ensuring peaceful coexistence between the rival systems.(29) By trying to strike cordial relations with China and the U.S.S.R., the U.S.A. tried to protect its Asian allies such as Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The Nixon administration chalked out its Asian strategy with a conviction of maintaining and enhancing the role of U.S. allies to the mutual benefit of both parties. The full range of U.S. force options with regard to its allies in the region were drawn up as follows:

- ★ The **U.S.A.** would use its nuclear capabilities to protect its Asian allies from attack or coercion by another nuclear country.
- ★ Strong U.S. force deployment was considered to be essential in the region. Simultaneously both military and economic assistance

was to be provided to its allies. This was evident from the increased U.S. aid to Iran and Saudi Arabia to a lesser extent.

- ★ As a result of the U.S. aid to its allies the military capabilities of its allies were to increase simultaneously.
- ★ The increased support for its allies by the **U.S.A.** was justified by the administration. This policy was adopted to support local efforts against subversive and guerilla attacks.<sup>(30)</sup>

The **U.S.A.** pursued the twin objectives i.e. it strengthened the position of its allies, and continued land, sea, and air presence of the U.S. forces in Asia. The U.S. presence further reassured its Asian allies of U.S.A's determination to meet its commitments. Nixon - Kissinger administration also initiated diplomatic negotiations with Bahrain for retaining airbase facilities there for the **MIDEASTFOR**. Economically, the U.S.A's import of Gulf oil increased to 10% (of total oil imports) by 1973.<sup>(31)</sup>

Nevertheless the Nixon-Kissinger era (1969-76) of the U.S. Foreign Policy was dominated by the Vietnam crisis. This had far reaching consequences for the **U.S.A.** both nationally and internationally. The Vietnam factor influenced U.S. Foreign Policy in practically all parts of the globe. The U.S. President's report recorded the 'Vietnam Crisis' as the single "largest international challenge"<sup>32)</sup> to the administration. The U.S. allowed the responsibilities of ending the war on Hanoi. Simultaneously it outlined the conditions for negotiations as follows:



"We are ready to reach an agreement which allows the South Vietnamese to determine their own future without outside interference. This goal can be reached whenever Hanoi distinguishes between settlement and surrender".<sup>(33)</sup>

The Vietnamese debacle offered an evidence of U.S.A.'s incapability to influence an outcome of a regional conflict. Certain objectives of the U.S. Foreign policy such as balancing its relations with U.S.S.R. and ending bi-polarity met with a limited success. One significant event that reversed the U.S. policy intentions in the region was the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971. The U.S.A. failed to prevent the momentum of war or resolve the situation amicably. The issue eventually led to the separation of East Pakistan from West Pakistan and the emergence of Bangladesh.<sup>(34)</sup>

We have discussed the Indo-Pak war in the next chapter. However at this stage the intricacies of triangular politics between the U.S.A.-China and the Soviet Union need to be underlined. First as the U.S.A. got over the stalemate in its relationship with China the possibilities of resolving the Vietnam crisis became wide open. Second, the U.S.A. could not have maintained entirely cordial relations with China and the U.S.S.R. at the same time. For, international relations during the late sixties and the early seventies were characterised by Sino-Soviet schism. Therefore in the 1971 war the U.S. and China supported Pakistan while the Soviet Union rallied round India.<sup>(35)</sup> Such alliances at the regional level certainly affected the prospects of Russo-American detente at the global level. Finally the U.S.-U.S.S.R. rivalry as well as co-existence had become a reality of international politics. But Sino-U.S. detente

was certainly a significant event which shaped the politics of the Indian Ocean.

The impact of Sino-U.S. relations and Henry Kissinger's secret visit to China in July, 1971 were acknowledged and defended in the Presidential report on China.<sup>(36)</sup> The U.S. President Nixon consequently blamed the Soviet Union for escalation of the South Asian crisis by vetoing the U.N. resolution for ceasefire at the Security Council on December, 1971. The U.S. viewed the Soviet action as an attempt against super-power detente and an opportunity for the strategic expansion of the Soviet influence.<sup>(37)</sup>

In addition to the political problems in South Asia, South East Asia and the Far-East the Nixon administration also had to contend with political issues in West Asia. The U.S. administration was particularly concerned with the strained relationship between the Arabs and Israel. The U.S.A. failed to bring about peace and friendly relations between the Arab states and Israel. This failure was noted by the U.S. administration in its report on U.S. policy towards Asia.<sup>(38)</sup> Infact the Arab - Israel tension blew into a full scale war in October 1973. The Arab States reacted by applying an oil embargo against the Western powers and the U.S.A. from December, 1973 till March 1974.<sup>(39)</sup>

The Western allies of the U.S. were against the U.S. policy during the October 1973 Crisis between the Arabs and Israel. U.S.A.'s partners in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) refused over-flights for

the U.S. air-crafts carrying supplies to Israel. In such a situation, the U.S. administration had to reconsider its policy in West Asia. The U.S. administration deployed a Task Force in the Arabian Sea and maintained it till March 1974. By deploying a Task force the U.S. opted to protect the interests of its allies.<sup>(40)</sup> On the whole the Nixon era proved to be quite eventful in U.S. policy towards the states of the Indian Ocean region.

### **U.S. Policy under the Carter Administration :**

The Carter administration (1977-1980) which followed the Nixon administration witnessed a few major events within the politics of the Indian Ocean region. It moulded the U.S. perceptions not only in the region but also in the international arena. Chronologically speaking the Carter era had to encounter a few important problems such as the war in the Horn of Africa (1977-78), the Vietnamese intervention in Cambodia (1978), the fall of the Shah's regime in Iran (1979), the U.S. hostage crisis in Iran (1979) and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan (1979).

To start with, we underline the significance of the war in the Horn of Africa to the relationship between U.S.A. and the Soviet Union. To put it simply the war between Ethiopia and Somalia (1977-78) almost thwarted the process of detente that was initiated by the Nixon administration. Particularly when the Cuban and the Soviet forces began to intervene in the Horn of Africa the U.S.-U.S.S.R. ties witnessed a

marked deterioration. This was formally confirmed by Cyrus Vance, the U.S. Secretary of State on the 10th February, 1978.<sup>(41)</sup>

President Carter also expressed a grave concern in the developments in the Horn of Africa. At a news conference on the 2nd March, 1978, he defined the U.S. policy in the crisis. The U.S. President advised the two belligerents Ethiopia and Somalia to cease hostilities and end the war. President Carter's rhetorics were also aimed at the Soviet Union. The U.S. wanted the withdrawal of Somali forces from the Ogaden, the withdrawal of Soviet and Cuban forces from Ethiopia; and lessening of tension by each concerned party by honouring their respective international boundaries.<sup>(42)</sup> Apart from the Horn of Africa, the South-East Asian region continued to create tensions in U.S. - U.S.S.R. relations. Tensions began to build up with the Vietnamese intervention in Cambodia in December, 1978. This crisis affected U.S. - Soviet relations as the Vietnamese were supported by the Soviets. The U.S.A. matched this move with increased aid to its allies in the region. Thailand was one such ally which received special attention because of its geographical proximity to the scene of conflict.<sup>(43)</sup>

Finally, as the Carter administration was completing its term of office, the developments in the domestic politics of Iran disturbed the U.S. policy in the Persian Gulf. To begin with the Shah of Iran was overthrown with the Islamic Revolution in Iran during 1979. The U.S.A. had built Shah's Iran as a bastion to uphold the Western interests in the Persian Gulf. After the Arab - Israel war of 1973 the U.S. had literally

nurtured Iran into a formidable U.S. ally. Iran in its turn had refrained from imposing an oil embargo against the western powers.<sup>(44)</sup>

In 1979, the fall of the Shah of Iran embroiled the U.S.A. into a even more difficult situation with that state. The new Islamic regime under Ayatollah Khomeini held 50 Americans as hostages in Iran.<sup>(45)</sup> This issue became an embarrassment for the Carter administration. In addition to hostage issue, the fall of the Shah's rule in Iran was a major loss for the U.S.A. in the Indian Ocean region. The U.S.A. now required to enhance its naval presence to protect its security interests in the region. However U.S. calculations regarding its policy in the Indian Ocean region received another set-back when the Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan in December, 1979.<sup>(46)</sup>

The U.S.A. perceived the Afghan issue to be a potential threat to the region and to the securities of the states surrounding Afghanistan. The U.S. administration also considered the presence of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan as a major threat to the world's oil supply zone of the Persian Gulf. In the aftermath of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan U.S. - U.S.S.R. ties touched a new low. Apart from reviewing its policy towards the Soviet Union, the U.S. also reviewed its policy in the Indian Ocean region. The U.S.A. recalled its ambassador from Moscow and halted the ongoing negotiations on the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty - II (SALT-II). Bilateral relations between the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union were also adversely affected. U.S.A.'s policy in the Indian Ocean also acquired a new shape.<sup>47</sup> The concepts of the seventies which had

stressed on power sharing and balancing U.S. relations with the U.S.S.R. were sidelined. The U.S.A. was on the threshold of playing a more constructive and influential role in the region.

### **U.S. Policy under President Ronald Reagan (1981-1988) :**

On the 1st January, 1981 the President elect, Ronald Reagan a Republican candidate assumed the powers of Presidency in the U.S.A. The new administration continued the policy of its predecessor as far as the states of the Indian Ocean region was concerned. The U.S. hostage issue with Iran was resolved with Reagan as the President of the U.S.A. Similarly the new administration completed the sale of U.S. made Air-borne Warning and Control System (AWACS) air crafts to Saudi Arabia as committed by the Carter administration.<sup>(48)</sup>

As far as its policy in the Indian Ocean was concerned the Reagan administration did not give priority to the on going Iran-Iraq War (1980-88) at the initial stages. It was more occupied in counteracting Soviet presence in Afghanistan. Pakistan received the attention of the U.S. policy makers because of its close proximity to Afghanistan. As a traditional ally of the USA it received moral and material support from the U.S. administration to meet the crisis that emanated from the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.<sup>49</sup>

Pakistan received immediate assistance in military equipment, food and other aid upto 3.2 billion dollars in 1981.<sup>50</sup> The Reagan'

administration's effort to counteract Soviet position in Afghanistan increased its interest in Pakistan. Pakistan is located on the southern flank of Afghanistan. As an ally Pakistan could play a constructive role for the U.S.A. in countering Soviet influence in Afghanistan. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the U.S.A. could have direct access to the Afghan rebels through Pakistan. These rebel groups fighting against the Soviet backed government in Kabul, were assisted by the U.S.A. which supplied arms to them.<sup>(51)</sup>

The Reagan period during 1981-88 witnessed a measurement of rigidity in foreign policy, particularly towards the Soviet Union. The U.S. foreign policy could be called as Soviet-centric. The administration was not only inclined to arrest Soviet 'expansionism', but was willing to adopt a confrontationist attitude to stop Soviet advancement. The rigid trend in U.S. foreign policy was also a result of the views of its policy framers. President Reagan's team of foreign policy advisers comprised Richard Allen, Robert Mac Farlane, John Poindexter, all of whom were former National Security Advisers. Later on, William Casey the CIA director. All of them shared the common view on Soviet centric policy as well.<sup>(52)</sup>

The Reagan administration along with its eminent personalities tried to carve out the policy based on restoring U.S. prestige in world affairs. The Reagan administration was motivated by a conviction that the U.S. reversals in the different parts of the Third World, such as Vietnam,

Angola, Persian Gulf, South-East Asia had led to the loss of U.S. prestige.<sup>(53)</sup>

As far as the Indian Ocean region was concerned the U.S.A. decided to hold on and consolidate its presence by wooing diverse set of allies in the region. To understand the magnitude of U.S. involvement as well as the decisive role the U.S. played in the region it would be necessary to undertake a broad survey of the states and areas that were linked with U.S.A's strategy.

### **U.S. Allies in the Region :**

Among the important states which became important U.S. allies in the Indian Ocean region were Bahrain Islands, Oman, Kenya, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Phillipines (a Pacific Ocean state). We shall discuss the significance of these states in the U.S. policy.

### **Bahrain Islands :**

Initially the base was jointly managed by Britain and the U.S.A. in the period between the Second World War and 1971. After the British withdrawal, the U.S. assumed sole charge of the base and the military facilities there in. U.S.A. and Bahrain entered into a formal agreement on 23rd December, 1971 to facilitate the American take over. It became a base for the MIDEASTFOR of the U.S.A. In the October 1973 Arab-Israel dispute, Bahrain base was put to extensive use by the U.S.



forces for supplies to Israel. A new agreement followed on the 28th June, 1977 by which U.S.A.'s basing facility was further extended. Facilities at Bahrain's El Manama port including military airfields, satellite relay and communication facilities were controlled by the U.S.A.<sup>(54)</sup>

## **OMAN :**

U.S. base of Oman was acquired much later than that of Bahrain. This base was acquired following an agreement between the U.S.A. and the Sultanate of Oman on 4th April, 1980. Following this agreement the U.S.A. was believed to have traded military business worth 25 million U.S. dollars with Oman.<sup>(55)</sup>

Oman and the U.S.A. entered into a second agreement on the 4th June, 1980. By this U.S.A.'s access to base facilities was further extended. The facilities at Masirah was updated and new bases at Juft in the Gulf of Oman at Al Qasab on the extreme end of Oman on the Strait of Hormuz were acquired. An amphibious Marine Task Force, numbering 1800 and the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM), a command ship were based around the facilities at Oman.<sup>(56)</sup>

In the Western Indian Ocean the U.S.A. acquired considerable facilities amongst certain East African countries. They are enlisted below:

## **KENYA :**

In an agreement signed with the Government of Kenya on the 26th June, 1980, the U.S.A. agreed to provide economic and food assistance upto 50 million U.S. dollars. Military equipment worth 27 million U.S. dollars was provided on credit sales extending over a period of 1981-1982. In turn, the U.S.A. increased its presence and facilities in that country. The U.S. also benefited by acquiring basing facilities at Mombasa which has one of the largest harbour in East Africa. The U.S. airforce was allowed to use Nanyuki air-base close to the Kenyan capital Nairobi.<sup>(57)</sup>

## **SOMALIA :**

The U.S. signed an agreement with the Government of Somalia on 22nd August, 1980. By this agreement the U.S. naval forces were permitted porting facilities at Berbera. The U.S. airforce received access to refuelling and reconnaissance facilities at the Mogadishu air-base. Air-base facilities here allowed the U.S. to patrol and observe the entire region around the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.<sup>(58)</sup>

Apart from the air-base facilities that were available to the U.S.A. in East Africa, the U.S. had good relations with some other countries in the region. In times of need these countries could provide necessary aid to the U.S.A. Two such countries were Sudan and Egypt. The three military bases which could be utilised by the U.S. were. Suakin on the

Red Sea; El-Fasher on the Sudan - Libya - Chad border and Dongola located to the north of Khartoum.<sup>(59)</sup>

The three bases available in Egypt were Cairo West; adjacent to the Cairo airport, Qena air-base 50 kms south of Cairo, and the Ras Banas air base on the Red Sea. Both Sudan and Egypt have extensive relations with U.S.A.<sup>(60)</sup>

In the Western Indian the U.S.A. could make use of the modernised basing facilities in South Africa. The U.S. had the right of access to almost all military and naval bases in South Africa. Some of the important naval base was Richards Bay, located opposite Madagascar Island in the Indian Ocean. There were technical support facilities at the advanced military bases at Simonstown and Durban.<sup>(61)</sup>

In West Asia, U.S.A.'s key partner was Israel. Infact most of U.S.A.'s foreign policy options in the Indian Ocean revolved around the Israel factor. The U.S. military had access to all Israeli bases depending on the collaboration between Washington D.C. and Tel.Aviv.<sup>(62)</sup>

#### **SAUDI ARABIA :**

Saudi Arabia was another strategic state in South West Asia which could extend its facilities to U.S. forces located at the Persian Gulf. Riyadh and Dhahran air bases could be utilised extensively in times of need.<sup>63</sup>

## **TURKEY :**

Though this state was not a part of the Indian Ocean region it was a major partner of the U.S.A. in the west. It was a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). Because of its strategic location Turkey could play a major supportive role for U.S. operations in the Indian Ocean region. There were seven major NATO bases in Turkey. One very strategically located base was 'Incrilik' near the town of Adana. This base could be utilised for military operation in West Asia and the Persian Gulf area.<sup>(64)</sup>

In South Asia Pakistan could offer operation and basing facilities for the U.S. task force if any need arose. As mentioned earlier, Pakistan's importance in U.S. defense designs was enhanced as a result of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 and the Iran - Iraq war 1980-88. U.S. warships also utilised naval facilities in the Sri Lankan ports like Trincomalee.<sup>(65)</sup>

In South-East Asia, U.S. Warships regularly called at the different ports in Thailand while on transit from the Indian Ocean waters to the Pacific Ocean. Following an agreement signed between the governments of Thailand and the U.S.A., the U.S. military aircrafts could use the facilities available at Bangkok. The U.S. military was also allowed the use of the Takhli air-base during military exercises in the region. Apart from Thailand, Singapore's Tenga military air-base provided basing facilities

of U.S. military aircrafts on reconnaissance flights in the Indian Ocean. U.S. warships regularly called at the Singapore port.<sup>(66)</sup>

In the eastern Indian Ocean the most prominent U.S. military bases were located in Australia. It had the most advanced ports, repair and communication facilities available. The Exmouth communication centre at the North West Cape was most crucial to U.S. defense plans in the entire Indian Ocean Region. Its strategic location allowed coordination and communications with all other bases such as the Hawaii Islands, Guam, Phillipines and Diego Garcia. Apart from that the Nurrungar early warning satellite station can detect any missile attack. The military space research centre at 'Pine Gap' in Australia was one of the foremost U.S. strategic installation there.<sup>(67)</sup>

Moreover the U.S. navy along with its Australian counterpart could carry out joint operations from the numerous Australian naval bases at Cockburn Sound, Fremantel and Stirling. All these ports have repair and docking facilities and were some of the most advanced bases in the region. The U.S. air-force (USAF) air crafts stationed around the region often used the Dawin air base for regular exercises.<sup>(68)</sup>

The U.S. bases located near the South China Sea, particularly in the Phillipines had boosted the U.S. naval presence and operations in the Indian Ocean region. The Subic Bay was a major American naval base in the Phillipines. It had a technologically advanced port that would play an intermediary role to U.S. naval deployments in the Indian

Ocean. The Clarke air-base in the Phillipines was another major operational base for the U.S.A.<sup>(69)</sup>

The U.S. bases in the Indian Ocean region and around that region have provided extensive support to U.S.A's role as a super power. However, the basing facilities have been utilised on partnership with the local states where these facilities were located. Though the U.S. presence among the regional states enhanced its stature within the Indian Ocean region there was always a possibility of a reversal in the situation. Past experiences in Ethiopia (in 1974) and Iran (1979) may be cited as instances to support this view.

Therefore the establishment of base facilities at Diego Garcia in the central Indian Ocean may be seen as a measure to counter act the factor of non-permanency. This base was built up in a phased manner, as the U.S. become more involved in the affairs of the Indian Ocean region. The base at Diego Garcia contributed substantially in consolidating U.S. presence in the region. We now examine the U.S. base at Diego Garcia.

### **Diego Garcia an act of Consolidation :**

Diego Garcia is an atoll of the Chagos Archipelago, a former British Indian Ocean territory (BIOT). The White Papers and the command papers that had announced the withdrawal of Britain from the Indian

Ocean region had excluded this island territory from its list of overseas possessions.<sup>(70)</sup>

On the 30th December, 1966, following an exchange of notes between Britain and the U.S.A., the latter gained the rights to use the island for its defence purposes. The formal take over was completed in 1968, which was followed by the establishment of a communication facility on the island. At the initial stage Diego Garcia was envisaged as an important communication link point for the U.S. between South Central and North Eastern parts of the Indian Ocean. U.S. plans included the reconstruction of a small logistical base, petroleum storage facility, and an 8,000 feet runway which could handle heavy transport aircrafts like C-130 and C-140 and a basin to handle naval deployments in the waters of the atoll.<sup>(71)</sup>

The plans for the financial year 1971, were implemented within two years. On 23rd March 1973 the communication station became operational. This was the beginning of an increasing U.S. involvement in the region as Diego Garcia was assimilated into the U.S. world wide military command. Till the mid 1970s, however Diego Garcia was a low key area in the priority of considerations for development into base facility. The U.S. involvement in Vietnam kept the island out of the focus of the U.S. planners.

The 1973 Arab-Israeli war, followed by the oil embargo led to a major expansion plan for the island estimated at an expenditure of 29

million dollars. This expanded facility was to meet the requirements during peace and war times. In March 1975 President Ford announced the Diego Garcia and its facilities were essential for the U.S. presence in the Indian Ocean. Thus an expansion plan was drawn up by the Department of Defence.<sup>(72)</sup>

According to the plans Diego Garcia was to be transformed from a communication station to a support facility site. The lagoon of the atoll was dredged to handle repair and replenishments to augment U.S. naval deployments in the Indian Ocean. Petroleum storage facility was increased to 480,000 barrels, capable of supporting a task force up to 60 days. The airfield was expanded from 8,000 feet to 12,000 feet to handle heavy cargo aircrafts and the basing of P-3 maritime patrol aircrafts.<sup>(73)</sup>

Facilities at Diego Garcia were further enhanced and it was transformed into an island station, capable of supporting major military and strategic activities of the U.S. CENTCOM in the Indian Ocean area. The runway was capable of handling any aircraft in the world. The U.S. strategic bomber B-52 flew regular missions from Diego Garcia. This was confirmed by the U.S. administration in 1979. Diego Garcia became a transit point for long range reconnaissance aircrafts namely, the P-3 and SR 71 aircrafts, flying between the Philippines and Kenya.<sup>(74)</sup> The harbour facilities at Diego Garcia were capable of handling a carrier task force consisting an aircraft carrier and support ships. Fuel storage capacity was increased to 320,000 barrels of fuel oil.<sup>75</sup>



The British administration was informed on January, 1980 of the proposed plans for expansion of the facilities at Diego Garcia. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan contributed to a great extent the decision of the administration to enhance the facilities in the island. The U.S. plans converted the atoll into one of the foremost support bases for the U.S.A. in the Indian Ocean region.<sup>(76)</sup> The Reagan administration continued with plans and programmes initiated by the earlier administration.

In the earlier discussion relating to U.S. Policy in the Indian Ocean it was analysed how changing circumstances had influenced U.S. policy decisions in the region and Diego Garcia was no exception. The take over of the British Indian Ocean territory (BIOT) in the sixties transformed the U.S.A from a transitional naval power into one with an independent foothold in the Indian Ocean. The establishment of the of the base allowed the USA to play an increasingly influential role in the Indian Ocean. The tools or instrument used by the U.S administration to maintain its hegemony in the region were the USCENCOM and the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) against any Soviet advance in the Indian Ocean.

### **The Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) and U.S. CENTCOM - Instruments of consolidation:**

The U.S. Presidential order in 1977 resulted in the origin of the RDJTF, and it was created to protect U.S. and Western interests in the Persian Gulf and the surrounding region. U.S. and Western dependence

on Gulf oil and other strategic minerals and U.S. economic investment made the Persian Gulf a focal point in the Indian Ocean. The volatile nature of the states of this region added to the apprehension of the U.S. administration. All these factors justified the formation of the RDJTF as a preventive force against any eventuality. This Rapid Deployment force was to be created to operate outside the NATO command areas.<sup>(77)</sup>

In October 1979, President Carter announced the formation of the RDJTF along with the specification of its services and the establishment of a command structure. The force came into formal existence on the 1st, March 1980 as a Readiness Command. It was located at the Mac Dill Air Force Base in U.S.A.<sup>(78)</sup> It became a separate unified command, on the 1st January 1983, under the Reagan administration.<sup>(79)</sup>

Transformed under a new independent command the task force was renamed the United States Central Command or USCENTCOM. Its territorial jurisdiction included areas around the Persian Gulf. It also included countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan Kuwait, North Yemen, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Yemen and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In the Red Sea region it included states such as Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan under its jurisdiction.<sup>80</sup>

The task force presence supplemented the role of the bases in the different parts of the Indian Ocean. However this region was also one of the major areas of U.S arms transfer.

## **U.S. Arms transfer in the Indian Ocean region :**

Transfer and trading of arms by the USA was yet another major instrument in its Indian Ocean policy. Arms trade particularly its demands for it in the third world had increased out of proportions. Both the U.S.A and the Soviet Union were major suppliers of arms to the region. Within the Indian Ocean West Asia had emerged as the highest purchaser of arms particularly from the seventies.

Between 1979-1983 the two priority zones for U.S. Arms transfer in the Indian Ocean were East Asia which accounted for 20%, West Asia and North Africa accounted for 37% of the arms supplied. South Asia accounted for 17% of the arms transferred.<sup>(81)</sup> In dollar terms the entire region beginning from Morocco to South Asia including the Persian Gulf in 1977-1984 accounted for three-fourths of the value of all U.S. arms sales agreements in the Third World. Apart from arms sales most of the U.S military assistance financing was also made in this region. The largest recipients were Israel and Egypt which received over half of the military assistance funding for the financial year 1986.<sup>(82)</sup>

The Gulf States were the heaviest buyer of arms in the region because of its security interests. The zone was one of the most volatile and conflict prone and the security concern of the states could not be ignored. The region was also the buyer of the most sophisticated arms delivered in the Indian Ocean region. However most of the states with the exception of Israel and Egypt lacked the infrastructural facilities to

absorb high technologies. Thus along with the supply of the arms, large scale imports of technology and infrastructure construction was also required in the Persian Gulf region.

Often the degree of arms trade was influenced by certain events. These events affected both the buyer and the supplier's policies alike. For instance the isolation of Israel following the 1973 war led to massive air-lift of arms by the U.S.A to Tel Aviv, on emergency supply missions. The fall of Pahlavi dynasty in Iran in 1979, followed by the hostage crisis and finally the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in 1979 made the U.S. reconsider its policy in the region. Saudi Arabia because of its close proximity to events expressed its vulnerability. This eventually resulted in the supply of sophisticated arms transfer to Saudi Arabia by the U.S.A.<sup>(83)</sup>

Base building, development and deployment of special task force and arms transfer combined as major factors in U.S.A.'s foreign policy in the Indian Ocean Region. The U.S. policy in the Indian Ocean region was formulated in the light of the above mentioned dimensions and it aimed to achieve the following objectives -

- ★ Securing the U.S.A.'s economic interests in the region,
- ★ Preventing and reducing of Soviet influence in the region,
- ★ Maintaining U.S. diplomatic status quo amongst the states of the region,

- ★ Securing free and unhindered passages to shipping and air crafts in the Ocean, and
- ★ Ensuring a better bargaining capacity and enhancing its capabilities to play a decisive role in the affairs of the regional states both at peace times and during conflicts.

Having analysed the broad parameters of U.S. presence in the Indian Ocean region, we now discuss the Soviet policy in the region.

### **U.S.S.R.'s Presence and Policies of the Indian Ocean Region:**

Unlike the U.S. the Soviet involvement in the Indian Ocean in the post-cold war period was neither pervasive nor intense. Because of its alliance with Great Britain as well as to safeguard its' interests in the region the U.S.A. was constrained and compelled to play an overarching role in the Indian Ocean. However, the Soviet Union during the post-second world war years was in the process of cultivating allies among the states in the region to offset the design of the U.S.A. and its allies.

Before discussing certain Soviet policies in the Indian Ocean it might be worth making certain preliminary observation on the Soviet policy.

- i) The Soviet Union found a space to play an important role in the region, primarily after the withdrawal of the British Navy from the

East of the Suez. The British withdrawal also meant increased U.S. role in the region. Evidently, being anti-thetical to U.S. presence in the region the Soviet Union accentuated its involvement in the Indian Ocean region.

- ii) As a corollary the Soviet role in the Indian Ocean from the standpoint of this thesis basically covers the Brezhnev years and the earlier phase of Gorbachev. i.e. (1964-1989)
- iii) We have already described the trajectories of U.S. - Soviet rivalry in South Asia, the Horn of Africa, Persian Gulf and so on. Having introduced the Soviet position in these regions vis-a-vis the U.S.A. it would be futile to repeat Soviet attitudes in these regions. Nevertheless it would be important to highlight broad ideological considerations that guided the Soviet foreign policy in the region in the Brezhnev years.

In order to simplify our perspectives of the Soviet role in the Indian Ocean region we shall touch upon the two aspects of Soviet foreign policy. To begin with, the Soviet policy can be understood on the basis of its ideological foundations. Later, concrete empirical evidences can be provided to ascertain the nature of Soviet military bases, arms transfer and modes of cultivating friendship with the states of the region.

There are three strands to Soviet ideological position vis-a-vis colonial and post colonial states of the region. First ideologically the

Soviet Union identified capitalism with imperialism.<sup>(84)</sup> Hence the Soviet Union supported an alliance between national liberation struggles and the proletarian movements in the advanced capitalist countries to defeat imperialism since Lenin.<sup>(85)</sup> Ever since its inception the Soviet Union supported anti-colonial anti-imperialist and anti racist struggles. For instance the Soviet Union backed the anti-colonial movements in Zimbabwe and Mozambique. It also supported the anti-racist movement led by the African National Congress (ANC) against apartheid rule in South Africa.

Second, the Soviet Union always tried to support progressive anti-imperialist states which were non-aligned. In the fifties India, Indonesia and Egypt came under this category. By acknowledging the anti-imperialist credentials of Nehru, Nasser and Sukharno the Soviet Union was weaning them away from becoming camp followers of the West. What is more, the Soviet Union also promoted the development projects of these states by offering them material assistance. The major recipients of Soviet economic and technical assistance between 1954 and 1977 were Afghanistan which received 1263 million U.S.Dollars; India received 2283 million U.S.dollars, Iran 805 million U.S.dollars, Iraq 704 million U.S.dollars and Pakistan 652 million U.S.dollars.<sup>(86)</sup>

Third in the late sixties the Soviet Union evolved a category of states with socialist orientation. These states were Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Yemen. After the civil war in Yemen the Marxist oriented regime of

South Yemen received extensive Soviet military aid.<sup>(67)</sup> Some of the characteristics of these states were as follows:

- i) They allowed some private capital investment (foreign as well as domestic) to remain;
- ii) Apart from supporting Marxism - Leninism in varying degrees they emphasized the role of nationalism and religion in their ideologies.<sup>(68)</sup>
- iii) They considered a multi-class (as opposed to simply proletarian) party to be the leading revolutionary force. We can cite South Yemen as an example.<sup>(69)</sup>
- iv) The China factor which was another determinant of the Soviet policy towards the Third World in general comprising a majority of the Indian Ocean states. China by the sixties had turned a permanent rival of the Soviet Union after the Sino-Soviet split since 1957.<sup>(90)</sup>

Apart from ideological considerations, the Indian Ocean was of considerable geo-political importance to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union had close geographical proximity to the Indian Ocean. Most of its territory was within the striking range of the Indian Ocean. Therefore from the mid-fifties Moscow began a careful assessment of the situation and initiated a process of building up relations among the different states



of the Indian Ocean region. One major feature of this region that the Soviet Union had to consider was the existence of West-supported alliances such as the Baghdad Pact and to a lesser extent the SEATO. Certain states that comprised the Baghdad pact like Iran, Pakistan and Iraq formed the Southern periphery of the Soviet Union.<sup>(91)</sup>

As a land based state in Asia the Soviet Union was concerned about the U.S.A.'s policy of creating a ring of allies around it, to contain the Soviet influence. The Soviet Union acted in order to counter-act the threat of Western domination. The emerging non-aligned states after the Bandung Conference of Afro-Asian states 1955, provided U.S.S.R. the stage to oppose Western influence in the Region. The chances of Soviet Union's success remained high as long as the non-aligned states were opposed to 'Western imperialism'. The Soviet Union, therefore expressed its appreciation of these states of Asia and Africa and Khrushchev called them as a new 'zone of peace'. The Soviet leadership hoped for a future of friendly cooperation with these states in Asia and the Arab world.<sup>(92)</sup>

From the mid-fifties the Soviet Union established an independent network of bilateral relations with countries like Egypt, India, Indonesia, Afghanistan and Burma. Moscow, thereafter entered into an arms deal with Egypt in 1955. The Indian Prime Minister Nehru visited Moscow and the visit was reciprocated when Soviet leaders Khrushchev and Bulganin visited India, Burma and Afghanistan in 1956.<sup>93</sup> The Soviet Union developed closer ties with another Indian Ocean littoral state of

Yemen. The first treaty between U.S.S.R. and Yemen was signed on the 31st October, 1956. Accordingly the Soviet Union provided economic and technical assistance and a limited quantity of arms to Yemen. Increasing Soviet involvement amongst its newly acquired allies was visibly evident as well. The Soviet Union pledged commitment to the Aswan Dam Project in Egypt in 1958. Similarly in India it undertook to build the Bhilai Steel Plant; and the construction of the port of Hodeida in Yemen. It also offered technical and military assistance to Afghanistan.<sup>(94)</sup>

Beginning from the mid-fifties to the mid-sixties the Soviet Union was able to extend its influence and interests into new frontiers of the Indian Ocean region. Khrushchev was successful in extending Soviet role into certain strategically important areas like Egypt, India, Yemen. The mid-sixties marked the end of the Khrushchev era and the beginning of the Brezhnev era as there was a change in the Soviet leadership.

The three most significant developments in the Soviet policy in the Indian Ocean during the Brezhnev era were-

- i) Soviet aid and economic relations with the states in the Indian Ocean region were reviewed. Soviet assistance was to be concentrated only in certain selected states or areas. These areas were to be selected based on their strategic advantage to the Soviet Union. Strategic considerations were based primarily on three factors. The degree of Chinese interest, the extent of Western

influence and the Soviet Security. Availability of support facilities such as airfields, harbours, communication sites for military purposes were also assessed.<sup>(96)</sup>

- ii) Independent Soviet naval presence received high priority under the new leadership. The Indian Ocean like the Mediterranean sea was considered to be an important sea-lane of communication. Therefore the Soviet Union was to initiate the process of independent and increased naval deployment in the Indian Ocean.<sup>(97)</sup>
- iii) An important feature of the Soviet foreign policy was the Brezhnev plan for collective security in Asia. This idea was formally launched in June 1969 at the International Meeting of Communist and workers parties in Moscow. The Brezhnev plan aimed to form an association of the Asian states for creating a zone of peaceful coexistence and mutual cooperation. Such an association of states was to collectively work towards peace, freedom and security of the people of the region.<sup>(98)</sup>

Accordingly from 1968, the Soviet Union began to have a permanent naval presence in the Indian Ocean. The first appearance of the Soviet navy was on a familiarisation mission. In March, 1968 the Soviet navy paid a goodwill visit to India led by the Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Pacific Fleet Admiral Amelko. The fleet comprised of four Soviet warships, a guided missile destroyer (that returned to Vladivostok), a cruiser, a destroyer and a supportship continued its visit to Pakistan,

Aden and Somalia.<sup>(99)</sup> The Soviet navy did not play any combatant role but its deployment increased over the years. During the seventies an average of twenty to twenty two ships were present in the Indian Ocean annually. In times of crisis the number reached thirty as well.<sup>(100)</sup>

The Soviet navy's visit to the different ports in the Indian Ocean increased over the years. During the period 1968-1971 there were 162 ships visiting various Indian Ocean ports. In 1971 alone the Soviet Union paid 33 visits to seven states in the Indian Ocean.<sup>(101)</sup> According to a U.S. data Soviet ships logged a total of 6,712 ship days in the Indian Ocean.<sup>(102)</sup> At an average eight Soviet ships (combat type) were present daily in the Indian Ocean. The initial deployment of the Soviet Navy as well its progress was to counter act a perceived threat of the U.S. aircraft carriers or the U.S. strategic missile submarines present in the Indian Ocean.

Later having developed submarines and naval vessels with tactical cruise missile capacity, the Soviet naval presence could be a result of bureaucratic decision - making or a routine show of strength.<sup>(103)</sup> The writings of the Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Navy Admiral Sergei Gorshkov bears testimony to the fact that Soviet naval presence was towards enhancing the achievements and domination of the Soviet Union in the region. Admiral Gorshkov played a constructive role in building up the Soviet navy's presence in the Indian Ocean.<sup>104</sup>

The Soviet Navy played a twin role once it established itself in the Indian Ocean. It was able to safeguard its economic interests and investments among the Indian Ocean littorals. At the same time it played the role of a deterrent against U.S. domination in the region and also China to a certain extent. The Soviet Union with the help of its navy has been able to maintain its political and economic influence among the Indian Ocean States. In the certain cases the U.S.S.R. further consolidated its relationship with those states which it considered to be of strategic importance. These relationship were further cemented by the signing of treaties. For instance the Soviet Union signed a Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation with India (1971); with Iraq (1972).<sup>(106)</sup> and so on. Apart from peace time operations the Soviet navy also had the capacity to act swiftly in case of a crisis. This was amply demonstrated during the Bangladesh Crisis 1971.<sup>(106)</sup> Iraq-Kuwait conflict 1973 and Iraq-Iran War 1980-88 etc. Soviet naval actions at such times have been either aimed at protecting its clients' interest, as in the Bangladesh crisis, or its own interest as in the Iraq-Iraq War 1980-88.

Another means by which the Soviet Union was able to further consolidate its position in the Indian Ocean was by gaining several anchorage facilities. The Soviet Union was successful in obtaining base facilities whenever opportunities arose. It must be noted here that bases of the Soviet Union did not always coincide with all the states with which it had friendly relations, for instance India. We will now proceed

to outline the different basing facilities of the Soviet Union in and around the Indian Ocean.

## **Soviet Bases in the Indian Ocean :**

### **South Yemen :**

South Yemen was one of the earliest Soviet allies in the Indian Ocean. Over the years Soviet presence in South Yemen became substantial.<sup>(107)</sup> The importance of South Yemen increased with termination of Soviet Union's relationship with Somalia in 1977. Aden was not only a major port of call but had docking and repair facilities as well. This port was utilised for a major Soviet naval demonstration in May, 1979. The port at Aden had the capacity to handle Soviet air craft carriers such as Minsk and an amphibious assaultship "Ivan Rogor".<sup>(108)</sup>

The airfields at Aden international and Al-Anad were utilised by the Soviet Union for military purposes. The Soviet Union further extended the basing facilities in Aden.<sup>(109)</sup>

### **Iraq :**

The U.S.S.R. had signed a Treaty of Friendship and cooperation with Iraq in 1972. In exchange for the military support it received from the Soviet Union, Iraq offered the rights to use its airfields and docking facilities in the Persian Gulf island of Umm Qasr. The facilities that

were available at Umm Qasr were reportedly more sophisticated than that at Dahlak, Ethiopia. However the base was closed following the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88).<sup>(110)</sup>

#### **Ethiopia :**

The Soviet Union was able to receive landing rights at Dahlak islands after it cooperated with Ethiopia during the Ogaden War (1977-78). The facilities at Dahlak islands consisted of storage buildings, a floating drydock floating piers and navigational facilities. In addition to Dahlak the Soviet Union were permitted to use the Asmara air base for re-connaissance flights.<sup>(111)</sup>

#### **Mozambique :**

The Soviet Union had a permanent base at Mozambique. The Soviet warships utilised the three harbours of Maputo, Beira and Nacala. However the infra-structure facilities in these bases were limited.<sup>(112)</sup>

#### **Vietnam :**

In South and South-East Asia the permanent base facility of the Soviet Union was restricted to Vietnam only. Though Vietnam was not located on the Indian Ocean waters it was within easy reach of the Malacca strait. The geo-strategic location of Vietnam provided the Soviet

Union with surveillance facilities over the Pacific as well as the Indian Ocean.<sup>(113)</sup>

The Soviet Union's presence in Vietnam increased significantly after the Sino-Vietnamese conflict in 1975. Vietnam offered two bases for Soviet military purposes. They were Cam Ranh Bay and Da Nang. According to U.S. Defence sources Soviet Union had major offensive capability at the Cam Ranh base in Vietnam. This base had a floating dry dock facility and repair facilities for warships.<sup>(114)</sup>

In addition to the permanent basing facilities, the Soviet Navy had a few other anchorage and berthing facilities. Since December, 1979, the Soviet Union were able to gain a major strategic stronghold in Afghanistan following its intervention there. Afghanistan was located in the periphery of the Persian Gulf and also shared its southern borders with India and Pakistan. This geo-strategic position could allow the U.S.S.R. to play an influential role not only in the Persian Gulf region but also in South Asia. Even after gaining an important base in Afghanistan the Soviet Union unlike the U.S.A. lacked any independent military base like Diego Garcia. The U.S.A. continued to maintain superiority in terms of military bases as well in the deployment of fire power in the Indian Ocean Region.

### **Soviet Arms Transfer in the Indian Ocean region :**

However the Soviet Union like the U.S.A. had a sizable arms market among the Indian Ocean states. The arms trade between the Soviet



Union and the states of the Indian Ocean increased appreciably from the seventies. In 1979 the U.S.S.R. had supplied arms and ammunitions worth 15,561 million U.S. dollars which was 45.6% of the total arms exported.<sup>(115)</sup> In 1984, Russian arms supply to the Indian Ocean States was 8.6 billion U.S. dollars.<sup>(116)</sup> The Persian Gulf and the Middle East regions emerged as the most intense areas of arms transfer. It was an important market for arms export for both the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union. This area received half the value of Soviet military export and one third of U.S. arms transfers in the eighties.<sup>(117)</sup>

The Soviet Union was not completely successful in gaining total political or ideological influence over its allies in the region despite extensive military aid. The Soviet policy had to face some set-backs as well. One major plan that failed to materialise was the Brezhnev plan for "collective security in Asia". Some of the major actors grafted for the scheme were Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and India. Pakistan defied every effort made by the Soviet Union to develop closer relations with it. Instead Pakistan preferred China's friendship. Sino Pakistan relationship intensified further particularly after the Bangladesh crisis.<sup>(118)</sup>

The Soviet Union failed to win over Islamabad even after the latter had withdrawn from the CENTO in 1977.<sup>119</sup> Further in 1975 the hopes for "collectivity" receded further as Mujibur Rehman's government was overthrown following a coup in Bangladesh. Even India chose to define the limits of its relationship with the Soviet Union. This was despite Brezhnev's personal request during a visit to New Delhi in 1973.<sup>120</sup>

The Soviet foreign policy in the Indian Ocean region was a combination of ideology and power politics. There were very few contradiction in policy goals as well. The Soviet Union was able to evolve clear and time-bound policies whether long-term or short-term. These policies often resulted in its favour.<sup>(120)</sup>

The Soviet Union entered into bilateral agreements, supported the "peoples struggles" against Western imperialism, supplied arms and ammunitions to its allies in the Indian Ocean region. By the seventies it had a locus-standi in the major sub-regions of the Indian Ocean. From the Khrushchev era the Soviet Union began a sustained effort towards counter-acting the U.S. presence in the region. The Soviet policy received further impetus and direction under the long leadership of President Brezhnev. The Soviet Union was able to consolidate its position with an independent naval presence vis-a-vis the deployment of the U.S. navy in the Indian Ocean region.

Nevertheless it may be stated that with the increasing presence of both the Soviet Union the U.S.A. both super powers were increasingly involved in the politics of the regional states. This created further tensions in the Indian Ocean region. As a result regional conflicts amongst the littoral states were often globalised. Such conflicts became a part of the bi-polar rivalry as a result of Soviet and U.S. involvement.

On the basis of this background to the politics of the Indian Ocean region we can proceed to analyze the Indo-Pak conflict of 1971.

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## **CHAPTER - II**

### **INDO-PAKISTAN CONFLICT (1971) AND LIBERATION OF BANGLADESH**

The India-Pakistan conflict of 1971 was one of the most notable conflicts in South-Asia in the seventies. It was the third war between the two traditional rivals India and Pakistan. The two states have fought against one another earlier once in 1947 and 1965. However what made this conflict note worthy was the secession of East Pakistan from West Pakistan. The conflict concluded with the emergence of Bangladesh, as an independent state in South-Asia in December 1971<sup>(1)</sup>. The liberation of Bangladesh was the major issue in the South Asian crisis of 1971. Nevertheless continuing differences and disputes in India-Pakistan relations were embroiled in this war. This issue was internationalised with the involvement of the super powers, the United States of America (USA) and the Soviet Union. It also drew the attention of the western states as well as the Arab world and also China amongst others.

This chapter is an attempt to understand and explain the Indo-Pak conflict of 1971 focusing on three major dimensions. First, the chapter spells out the variations or differences between East and West Pakistan which eventually resulted in the separation of East Pakistan; Second it discusses the Indian role which helped East Pakistan to liberate itself from West Pakistan. To build a more comprehensive understanding of the Indo-Pak bilateral ties and place the Bangladesh liberation in a



perspective, the study has dealt with the main areas of differences between India and Pakistan with emphasis on the Kashmir question. Finally, the chapter analyses how this regional conflict became a part of the rivalry between the super powers. In the process it underlines the implications of the U.S.S.R.'s support to India and the U.S.A.'s support to Pakistan.

Before discussing the conflict, it would be important to note the major factors leading to the Civil War in East Pakistan and its demand for separation. A study of the geo-politics, social, economic and cultural nature of East and West Pakistan can provide a clear insight into the causes leading to the dismemberment of East Pakistan.

### **Pakistan - a bifurcated state :**

The Muslim State of Pakistan was carved out in 1947 out of the British Indian colony. The independent state of Pakistan was created out of the Muslim dominated areas of the Indian subcontinent. This division was on the basis of population. India was left with the Hindu dominated regions. The major part of the sub-continent was left with India. This arrangement resulted in the origin of two independent states namely India and Pakistan.<sup>(2)</sup> In reality the the sub-continent was divided into three units, India, East Pakistan and West Pakistan.

The geographical distribution of the three units affected the geo-political integrity of Pakistan. The state was comprised of two parts

located at the Eastern and Western frontiers of India. The two wings differed in size and density of population. West Pakistan was six times the size of East Pakistan territorially. According to the 1961 census the population of East Pakistan was 50.8 million as against 42.9 million in West Pakistan.<sup>(3)</sup>

West Pakistan, covering an area of 307, 374 square meters was located to the west of the Indo-Gangetic plain. It shared borders with Iran in the west, the Soviet Union and Afghanistan to the north, and China in the north-east. It shared its borders with India in the east and south-east. The Arabian Sea was its southern limit. The physiographical dimension of West Pakistan made it more a part of the semi-desert and mountain region of Central Asia and the Western sea board. The Indus plain was the only relief. It was the most prosperous agricultural region in West Pakistan covering an area of 200,000 sq. miles in the east. Seismic activity was common in most part of the country. The climate was continental with extreme variations in temperature.<sup>(4)</sup>

The continental and natural vegetation, tough grasses, bushes and scrubs made West Pakistan more an extension of the semi desert region of the sub-continent. Except for the mountainous forests and some riverine forests along the lower Indus River, the landscape was generally harsh.<sup>(5)</sup> Comparatively East Pakistan was climatically and ecologically much more a part of the monsoon lands of South-East Asia. The Eastern wing was located in the Ganges and Brahmaputra delta in the northeastern part of the Indian sub-continent. It was bounded

by the Indian states of West Bengal to the west and the north, Assam in the north east and Tripura and Mizoram in the east. It shared its south-east border with Burma and the Bay of Bengal washed its southern shores.<sup>(6)</sup>

Both the wings were separated by approximately 1,100 miles of Indian territory.<sup>(7)</sup> The shortest air-route between Dacca and Karachi or Islamabad was over India. The sea route too skirted the Indian Peninsula or Indian territorial waters. Very often land connections as well as air and sea routes between East and West Pakistan were adversely affected because of the hostile or even suspicious relations between India and Pakistan since 1947. The geographical divide between East and West Pakistan added to the ethnic and cultural gap between the two parts. The gap disallowed any assimilation of a single Pakistani culture. The only commonality they shared was their relative bond of Islamic religion or faith.

East and West Pakistan differed in almost all respects right from its inception. There was a pronounced difference in the ethnicity, culture, language and economic life-style of the people. The racial difference between the people of the East and West wings exposed the differences in their temperaments as well. Pathans, Punjabis and Sindhis were the major ethnic groups of West Pakistan. They were more ruddy and aggressive both in their physique and nature<sup>(8)</sup>. East Pakistan on the other hand was inhabited mostly by Bengalis except for a few tribal belts along the south-eastern hill tracts. Bengalis were both an ethnic

as well as linguistic group. They were a heterogeneous racial group originally, who could be discerned by their different head shapes and skin colour. However all the differences of race was submerged into one Bengali culture which became their identity. The people of East Pakistan were more inclined towards arts, literature, politics and philosophical rhetorics.<sup>(9)</sup>

One very important distinction between East and West Pakistan was the difference in their language. Bengali was the most popular language in the East, while Urdu was the common language of the people of West Pakistan. The people of East Pakistan were unwilling to accept Urdu as the national language as was expressed since 1948. This was expressed clearly when Mohammed Ali Jinnah visited East Pakistan's capital city Dacca.<sup>(10)</sup> The linguistic and ethnic disparities were reinforced with the geographical division and steadily divided Muslim Bengal as a part of Pakistan.

The fissiparous tendencies began to emerge right from the formative years between 1947 and 1956, which were the years of constitutional debate in Pakistan. Pakistan's first political constitution was formulated in 1956.<sup>(11)</sup> The constitution allowed the President of Pakistan far reaching power, and authority. He could suspend the federal and provincial legislatures. The first constitution lasted hardly for two years and was abrogated in 1958 and a military rule had taken over.<sup>(12)</sup>

The military take-over in 1958 further widened the relationship between the two wings. The military administration of West Pakistan deprived the people of East Pakistan of their rightful share in the country's economy as well as their political right of participation. The economic policy of Pakistan was generally in the hands of decision makers in West Pakistan. Most often the policies tilted in favour of West Pakistan. For instance Pakistan earned 50% of its foreign exchange by the export of jute from East Pakistan. However a major part of the investments and its development funds were meant for West Pakistan, since 1947. Major factories, public work projects, foreign aids, imports and defense facilities were mostly concentrated in West Pakistan. This non-uniformity in dealings continued between East and West Pakistan.<sup>(13)</sup>

An estimated study of the regional distribution of the per capita income and Gross National Product (GNP) in 1950-55 in East Pakistan showed a per capita of Rs. 297.7 which increased to Rs.330.7 in 1965-68. At the same time the per capita income in West Pakistan was Rs.318.6 which increased to Rs. 377.3 in 1965-68. In 1950-55 the GNP of East Pakistan was Rs.1352.4 crores which increased to Rs. 2131.1 crores in 1965-68. Over the same period the GNP of West Pakistan was lesser than East Pakistan at Rs. 13051.1 crores<sup>(14)</sup>. However by 1965-68 it had overtaken East Pakistan by 222.2% and stood at Rs.4464.2 crores. There was an imbalance in the regional distribution of plan development expenditure in 1965-66 and 1966-68. The expenditure for East Pakistan was fixed at Rs. 2941.9 million and

for West Pakistan was Rs.5817.2 million out of a gross total of Rs. 8759.1 million.<sup>(15)</sup>

There was a marked difference in the private sector investment as well. It mostly weighed in favour of West Pakistan. In 1965-'66 and '67 - '68 period private investments was to the tune of Rs. 837.5 million in East Pakistan. It was Rs. 2957.4 million in West Pakistan in the same period. Industrial infrastructural facilities and atmosphere that prevailed in West Pakistan did not exist in the East. For instance in 1958 industrial capital in the whole of East Pakistan was Rs.148 crores. Whereas Karachi city alone had an industrial capital of Rs.114.6 crores and West Pakistan totally accounted for Rs.308 crores.<sup>(16)</sup>

Economic condition in East Pakistan deteriorated as a result of the one-sided economic policy pursued by the leaders in West Pakistan. Minimal industrial investments both in the public and private sector, lack of growth and an increasing density in the land, population ratio created a near famine like situation in East Pakistan. The population density was 800 persons per square mile in 1958 which increased to 1,200 persons in 1970.<sup>(17)</sup> It was an endless fight for economic survival for the people of East Pakistan. The policy makers in West Pakistan did nothing to bring relief to their eastern counterparts.

The economic and political destiny of East Pakistan rested with the political leadership in West Pakistan. Although more Pakistani's lived in the East they were under the political and administrative

domination of West Pakistan. The political leadership in West Pakistan was increasingly influenced by the bureaucracy. Within a short period of Pakistan's formation Mohammed Ali Jinnah's failing health conditions forced him to rely on the bureaucracy. The bureaucratic officials were mostly West Pakistani officials and staff. According to a 1955 statistics the civil services comprised of 51 officials from East Pakistan and none of them were in the rank of secretary. There were 690 West Pakistanis occupying key positions in the bureaucratic set-up. Therefore all administrative and policy naturally tilted in favour of the Western wing.<sup>(18)</sup>

The domination of the bureaucracy was furthered by the lack of strong political leadership within the newly emerged state of Pakistan. The Muslim League which was the most important political party did not have the required mass base in Pakistan. This shortcoming affected the nature of political leadership in a Parliamentary Democracy. Lack of political leadership and excessive dependency on the bureaucracy denied any mass base political state or a party system from emerging in Pakistan. This characteristic was more common in West Pakistan.<sup>(19)</sup> However, East Pakistan could hardly contribute or participate as its lifeline was controlled by the rulers of West Pakistan.

West Pakistan was not willing to allow the emergence or spread of mass base politics or democratisation of East Pakistan. For instances in 1954, elections were held to the Constituent Assembly in East Pakistan. The Muslim League which was Pakistan's dominant party was routed. A combination of Awami League and the Krishak Samaj Party, known as

the United Front won 224 out of 227 seats. The results were not accepted by West Pakistan and the government that was formed was dismissed. The political leaders of East Pakistan were arrested. Karachi assumed direct administrative control over East Pakistan. Iskander Mirza was appointed the Governor of East Pakistan in 1954 to take charge of the administration there. During his tenure he systematically suppressed all attempts to establish democracy in East Pakistan. He was assisted by Pakistan's ground and naval forces.<sup>(20)</sup>

The Constituent Assembly in West Pakistan however remained. In October 1954 the assembly in West Pakistan demanded certain amendments in the constitution which would reduce the powers of the Governor General. It also demanded more legislative authority. The Governor General declared a state of emergency in Pakistan following this demand. The constituent Assembly in West Pakistan was also dissolved and the Governor assumed full charge of the political machinery.<sup>(21)</sup>

The year 1954 was an important year in the political history of Pakistan. Hopes of democratic civilian and political institutions in Pakistan steadily receded hereafter. The state's administration was conducted by the combined efforts of the bureaucracy and the military. Three personalities who ruled Pakistan were Governor General Ghulam Mohammed, Iskander Mirza and General Ayub Khan the commander-in-chief of Pakistan's army. In 1956 Iskander Mirza replaced Ghulam



Mohammed. The post of Governor General was abolished and Mirza became the first President of Pakistan<sup>(22)</sup>.

In October 1958 a political coup was engineered by Ayub Khan and Iskander Mirza in Pakistan. The coup did not have any elements of violence, or seizure of power by violence. It did not result in any political upsurge as well. As a consequence of the coup military control of domination over the administration increased further. This was evident as General Ayub Khan became the second President on the 24th October 1958 replacing Mirza. Ayub Khan's government comprised mostly of civilians even though the government was controlled by the army. Both the Governors of East Pakistan namely G. Faruque and later Zakir Hussain were bureaucrats. Akhtar Hussain the Governor of West Pakistan was also a Civil Servant. A new constitution was also framed by the new regime in 1962<sup>(25)</sup>.

The guiding principle of the 1962 constitution was 'Basic Democracy' that assured the creation of Civilian institutions. Under the new scheme there was to be a National Assembly located in Karachi and provincial assemblies in the different provinces. President and the members of the National Assembly and the provincial assemblies were to be elected indirectly. They were to be elected by the members of the local council in towns and villages. These local councils in Pakistan were dominated and controlled by the landowners, power brokers, and the local bureaucrats.<sup>(24)</sup>

The 'Basic Democracy' programme of the 1962 constitution allowed extensive power in the hands of the local councils. The local councils were dominated by the landowners who often exploited the people. Protests and revolts marked the implementation of the democratic process. In East Pakistan the administration was still under the combined control of the army and bureaucracy. There were no institutions of democracy. The situation in entire Pakistan went beyond the control of Ayub Khan's administration by 1968-69. There was a mass demand for structural changes in Pakistan's politics. They demanded more people's participation. The political upheaval resulted in the fall of Ayub Khan's government in 1969.<sup>(25)</sup> The military regime however, proclaimed a Second Martial Law in 1969 to gain control over the Law and Order situation. A nominee of Ayub Khan, General Yahya Khan was made the Chief Martial Law Administrator of Pakistan.<sup>(26)</sup>

Yahya Khan tried to placate both the people of East and West Pakistan. He promised to restore civilian government in Pakistan by constitutional means. Accordingly Yahya Khan relaxed the Martial Law regulations on the 1st January 1970. A five point Legal Framework was announced on 31 March 1970 following the relaxation. According to the 5-point framework the power of final arbitration rested with the military and the bureaucracy. For instance the Legal Framework laid down that a constitution should be framed within 120 days of the election results. However the constitution was to be submitted to the President for his approval. Here after the electoral process in Pakistan began in earnest following the Martial Law relaxation in January 1970.<sup>27)</sup>

With increasing political activity the differences between East and West Pakistan came to the forefront. In the East, the Awami League was the most popular political party. Its leader was Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The election manifesto of the Awami League was based on a six point programme framed in March 1966. The Party Programme outlined certain political guidelines for the political future of East & West, Pakistan. Pakistan was to be a Federation with a Parliamentary executive. It demanded full regional autonomy for both East & West Pakistan. The election manifesto was a reflection of the disparity experienced by East Pakistan since 1947. The indifferent attitude of West Pakistan towards East Pakistan was once again reconfirmed in November 1970.<sup>(28)</sup>

In November 1970, a devastating cyclone and flood caused extensive damage to people and property in East Pakistan. About 3000 sq. miles of the Ganges - Brahmaputra Delta region was devastated and more than 2,00,000 people were affected by the floods.<sup>(29)</sup> The Administration in West Pakistan once again showed a lack of apathy or concern for the people of East Pakistan. The administration failed to provide the necessary relief to its people. The inefficiency and incompetence of West Pakistan's official renewed the Awami League's demand for full autonomy to East Pakistan. This demand finally was emerging in the form of a Bengali nationalism. Elections were conducted amidst the increasing feeling of Bengali oneness, resulting in a landslide victory to the Awami League. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Awami

League won 160 out of 161 seats to which elections were held in East Pakistan<sup>(30)</sup>.

In the 313 member National Assembly of Pakistan. Sheikh Mujibur Rehman emerged as the leader of the party with an absolute majority. In West Pakistan Zulfikur Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) won a clear majority of 83 seats. The election results instead of stabilising the political scene in Pakistan lead to further complications. Mujibur Rehman requested Yahya Khan to accordingly convene the National Assembly. Zulfikur Ali Bhutto who had emerged as the most popular leader in West Pakistan refused to occupy the opposition benches. Sheikh Mujibur Rehman could do little inspite of having won a absolute majority in East Pakistan as well as in the National Assembly. President Yahya Khan in the meanwhile continued to postpone the convening of the Assembly leading to a political stalemate.<sup>(31)</sup>

Z.A. Bhutto threatened to boycott the Assembly in case M.Rahman was nominated the Prime Minister of Pakistan. The convening of the Assembly was thus postponed by the President. Z.A. Bhutto seemed to be in a better bargaining power than Rehman. Bhutto thus proposed a formula to end the stalemate and also allow him to share power with Mujibur Rehman. Both the majority parties and the military rulers were to reach a consensus on the basic framework of the constitution before an Assembly session could be called. President Yaha Khan visited Dacca on the 13th and 14th January 1971 in order to negotiate an agreement with Sheikh Mujib. On his return to West Pakistan Yahya

Khan did not make any announcement about his meeting with Mujibur Rehman. Z.A. Bhutto followed Yahya Khan and visited Dacca on the 27th to the 30th January 1971.

Sheikh Mujibur Rehman refused to compromise on any thing less than convening the National Assembly. A series of negotiations followed between Z.A. Bhutto and Pakistan's President after his return from Dacca. The President announced the date for convening the Assembly to the 3rd March 1971.<sup>(32)</sup> The PPP refused to attend before any consensus was reached on the constitution. Z.A.Bhutto called for a general strike in West Pakistan and President Yahya Khan dismissed his civilian cabinet replacing it with military Governors.<sup>(33)</sup>

On the 1st March 1971 the President postponed the meeting of the Assembly sine die. The Governor of East Pakistan was replaced by a new governor and Martial Law Administrator. People and political parties organised civil disobedience rallies and political demonstration in different parts of East Pakistan. Demonstrators and protesters were put down sternly by the new administration. On 3rd March 1971 Sheikh Mujib announced a series of hartals in East Pakistan. The President had called for a Round Table conference which Sheikh Mujibur Rehman refused to attend. The public opinion in East Pakistan expected Mujibur Rehman to announce the independence of Bangladesh from West Pakistan. However Yahya Khan announced that the National Assembly would be convened on the 25th March 1971.<sup>(34)</sup>

Yahya Khan also made another visit to Dacca on the 15th March 1971 for a preliminary meeting before the Assembly session. On the eve of the President's visit, Z.A. Bhutto had put forward certain proposals to resolve the deadlock. It was proposed that political power should be transferred simultaneously to the majority parties in their respective region. The Awami League accepted the proposal on the 22 March 1971 and it suggested that the National Assembly was to meet as two different constitutional committees for East and West Pakistan. The government in Pakistan rejected the proposal and decided that the committees would be constituted only after the Assembly was convened. It also decided that the members from both the wings would constitute the committees. The Awami League's proposal was considered to be a constitutional formula for secession by the Pakistani authorities.<sup>(36)</sup>

East Pakistan rejected the government's white paper and there was widespread demonstration against it. Pakistan Day was celebrated on the 23 March 1971 was announced as the Independence Day of East Pakistan in 1971.<sup>(36)</sup> Flags of the independent state of Bangladesh were hoisted in all the buildings. Protesters and people demonstrated on the streets of East Pakistan. Even as political unrest continued unabated, the Awami League and President Yahya Khan were discussing the draft proclamation in Dacca on the 24th March 1971. On the 25 March 1971 all negotiation ended and Yahya Khan returned to West Pakistan. Rioters put up barricades in Dacca.<sup>(37)</sup> On the 26 March 1971 Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was arrested. He was charged with treason against the state of Pakistan.<sup>(38)</sup> Simultaneously the army raided the offices of the

newspapers, residences of the Awami League supporters and the University of Dacca. It removed the barricades in Dacca and let loose a reign of terror throughout East Pakistan killing thousand of civilians. In the genocide that continued the ire of the Pakistan army was directed against the Bengali majority rather than the Urdu speaking minorities comprising of West Pakistanis and Biharis.<sup>(39)</sup>

Amidst the confusion the surviving Bengali military and para-military personnel responded in different ways to the situation. On many occasions they fought and resisted before they withdrew towards the Indian border. In this way a core group of the future Bangladesh army was able to cross the borders into India. They combined with the Indian Army to launch their final operation later in that year. India, particularly the border states also became a shelter for the civilians fleeing their homes in East Pakistan.<sup>(40)</sup> The members of the Awami League and others political leaders aspiring for the complete liberation of Bangladesh were also exiled in India. India was therefore turned into a base for the liberation of Bangladesh.<sup>(41)</sup> India's involvement eventually erupted into a full-scale war against West Pakistan on the 3rd December 1971. It was the third direct conflict between India and Pakistan since the two states came into existence. However before we discuss India's role in the war for the liberation of Bangladesh, it would be worthwhile to dwell on the basic parameters of Indo-Pak relations since 1947.

## **Indian and Pakistan - a relationship of conflict :**

The strained relationship between India and Pakistan can be traced to the very basis of partition that created the states of India and Pakistan. The Muslim League in pre-independent India had advocated a two nation theory under the leadership of Mohammed Ali Jinnah. The Muslim League wanted British India to be partitioned on religious lines. While the Indian National Congress (INC) which was a secular organization never welcomed the partition of India on religious lines.<sup>(42)</sup>

Eventually the Indian sub-continent was partitioned in 1947 under traumatic conditions. The state of Pakistan had two wings, separated by more than 1,100 miles of Indian territory. Thus the state of Pakistan emerged on the basis of religion with no geographical continuity. Unlike Pakistan India emerged as a secular state. It incorporated within itself all the religious groups in which the Muslims were the largest minority. In line with its secular Credentials Government of India treated the Muslim minority as an integrated part of the Indian population. However Pakista had evolved on the basis of Islamic course and unity and the Islamic factor dominated its relations with India most often.

Infact the problem of religious minorities affected the domestic politics of the two states even after independence. This resulted in a great number of people migrating from one state to another even in the 1950's. Hindu population from East and West Pakistan crossed over into India and the viceversa. However this problem was resolved by an agreement



between the Indian Prime Minister Nehru and his Pakistan counterpart Liaquat Ali Khan on the 8th April 1950. Thereafter the flow of forced migrants were considerably reduced, but did not cease completely.<sup>(43)</sup>

Apart from the Muslim factor dominating Pakistan's relationship with India there were other points of divergence between the two states. One such dispute was over the stoppage in the flow of the Indus waters into the irrigation canals of Pakistan. This problem was resolved between India and Pakistan under the auspices of the World Bank. The World Bank Plan, 1954 decided that the waters of the western tributaries of the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab were for the exclusive utilisation of Pakistan. The eastern tributaries namely the rivers Beas, Ravi and Sutlej were meant for Indian use. The draft Treaty accepting the clauses of the World Bank Plan was signed between the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Ayub Khan of Pakistan on the 19 September 1960.<sup>(44)</sup>

The relationships between India and Pakistan was affected often by the territorial claims along the Indo-Pak border in the East and West. Claims and counter claims along the disputed territories was most common. The British Colonial Administration had appointed two commissions to demarcate the Indo - Pak border along East and West Pakistan border in 1947. The actual task of demarcation was taken up only after 1956. East Pakistan's border dispute with the Indian states of West Bengal and Assam was resolved first following a summit agreement between India and Pakistan in 1958.<sup>(45)</sup>

However in the Western sector the boundary question could not be easily resolved. One such important border conflict was the dispute over the Rann of Kutch (a marsh land in western India-Pakistan border) along the Gujrat state of India and the West Pakistan border. Pakistan laid claim to more areas in the Rann. In 1956 some of its troops crossed into the Indian territory in the northern end of the Rann and attacked the Indian patrol posted there. In 1960 representatives from India and Pakistan tried to resolve the crises over the Rann, but it remained inconclusive. In 1965 open hostilities broke out over the Rann of Kutch leading to a full scale war between Indian and Pakistan troops.<sup>(46)</sup>

The Rann issue threatened to become a lasting bone of contention between India and Pakistan. British attempt to bring about an agreement between India and Pakistan failed. And the matter was referred to an Arbitration Tribunal. The chairman of this Tribunal was appointed by the United Nation Secretary General and comprised of a nominee from India and Pakistan. The majority decision of the Tribunal was submitted in 1968. The Tribunal conceded 380 square miles of the Indian territory to Pakistan. This decision was accepted by India and Pakistan thus the conflict which threatened to become another Kashmir issue in Indo-Pak relations was resolved.<sup>(47)</sup>

The Kashmir issue which dogged Indo-Pak relations issue since 1947 continues to dominate and influence all aspects of relationship between the two states. Observers of Pakistan's foreign policy such as Keith Callard had stated that Pakistan's external policies reflected a

major obsession about India.<sup>(46)</sup> Pakistan has always held the view that Kashmir has never been a part of India. It would not be wrong to state that the failure and success of Pakistan's foreign policy was measured by the extent it was able to convince the world of India's wrongful hold over Kashmir. One such incident could be traced to 1949 when Liaquat Ali's government failed to get any help from the Commonwealth in the Kashmir dispute. The Kashmir question was once again a part of 1971 Indo-Pak Conflict which led to the separation of East Pakistan.<sup>(49)</sup>

### **The Kashmir Question :**

The territorial dispute over the Jammu and Kashmir region at the northern most part of India, has involved India and Pakistan in three major wars. Bilateral exchanges, summit talks, agreements, international mediations have all been a part of the effort in resolving the Kashmir affair. This tension had its origin in 1947. Kashmir was one of the princely states which had refrained from signing the Instrument of Accession with India. It had also opted not to join Pakistan. In this situation tribal intruders operating from the north-western provinces of Pakistan tried to capture Kashmir and moved towards Srinagar its capital in 1947. The ruler or Maharaja of Kashmir was caught in a dilemma. He was incapable of saving the state independently and required military immediate assistance.<sup>(50)</sup>

The Indian government offered its assistance only after the ruler of Kashmir opted to sign the Instrument of Accession. It acceded to the

Indian Union on the 26 October 1947<sup>(51)</sup>. The ruler had signed the Instrument in consultation with the leader of the largest political party in Kashmir namely Sheikh Abdullah. However it was clear that the Instrument was not popularly accepted in Kashmir. The British Government endorsed the accession of Kashmir conditionally. The condition was that once law and order was restored in the state a plebiscite would be conducted to ascertain the will of the people.<sup>(52)</sup>

India accepted the condition laid down by Britain. Meanwhile as Kashmir signed the Instrument, the Government of India rushed in military assistance. The Indian troops stopped Kashmir's occupation by the armed intruders, across the border. However several square kilometers of Kashmir's territory remained under the occupation of the intruders. The India government requested Pakistan not to offer any kind of support to the armed intruders. Pakistan instead launched a full scale operation for the liberation of Kashmir in 1948. By the 1 January 1948, India had already approached the UN Security Council on the issue under Article 35 of UN Charter.<sup>(53)</sup>

Pakistan responded by stating that both sides were to withdraw from Kashmir. In 1949, the UN had begun its mediation efforts. Discussions at the UN concentrated on whether Jammu & Kashmir should accede to India or Pakistan. A special mission called the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) was established. It was to amicably end the conflict and ensure a favourable atmosphere for conducting a plebiscite in Kashmir. 4

The UNCIP visited India and Pakistan and discussed the issue with the representatives of both the states. It proposed an agreement between the two governments. The agreements comprised of two resolutions which were divided into three parts. The first proposed a cease fire; the second called for a truce between the two parties; and the third part included the holding of plebiscite. The first proposal became operational from the 1st January 1949. The last two proposals could not be realised as differences arose between India and Pakistan regarding the interpretation of the proposal.<sup>(55)</sup>

The stalemate situation in Kashmir made the relation between India and Pakistan an explosive one. In 1951 the U.N. appointed a new representative to study and present its recommendations to the Security Council. The report was presented to the Security Council in 1953. The U.N. representative Dr. Frank Graham recommended, direct negotiations between India and Pakistan in order to resolve the Kashmir issue. This proposal was accepted by India and Pakistan. Talks between the two parties began in Karachi in 1953, on stabilizing the cease-fire line in Kashmir.<sup>(56)</sup>

The talks to resolve the issue ended in New Delhi in August 1953. There was a general agreement between India and Pakistan to set a date for the plebiscite and for the appointment of a plebiscite administrator. However no further progress was made thereafter. Between 1952 and 1957 the Kashmir issue was raised in the U.N. Security Council Agenda. In 1957 deliberations on the Kashmir dispute was initiated at the behest

of Pakistan. Pakistan blamed India for failing to honour its international commitment of holding a plebiscite in Kashmir.<sup>(57)</sup>

Pakistan was successful in moving the U.N. Security Council to introduce a draft resolution on Kashmir in 1957. The resolution proposed the withdrawal of both Indian and Pakistan's forces from Kashmir. They were to be replaced by the U.N. forces. The resolution was however not acceptable to India. The Soviet Union acting on India's behalf vetoed the U.N. resolution. It was decided that the President of the U.N. Security Council G.Jarring would investigate and present his proposal to settle the Kashmir dispute by April, 1957.<sup>(58)</sup>

The U.N. representative visited both India and Pakistan and held deliberations with their respective governments. The Jarring Report that was submitted failed to resolve the Kashmir crisis.<sup>(59)</sup> India considered Kashmir as an integral part of itself. Pakistan pledged support for its liberation from India. Both states continued to hold on to their respective positions. In August 1965 when hostilities broke out between India and Pakistan the Kashmir region formed an important part of the war zone. Pakistan's intention to capture Kashmir was clear from the very beginning. It tried to isolate Kashmir by trying to cut off its link to the Indian mainland during the 1965 conflict. It failed in its mission and the twenty-two war days ended after a cease-fire resolution was passed at the U.N. Security Council on the 20th September, 1965. <sup>60</sup>

India and Pakistan accepted the UN Resolution on the 22 September 1965 and the cease-fire became effective from the 23 September 1965. Both states held considerable amount of each others territory. While Pakistan occupied 210 square miles of Indian territory approximately, India controlled 740 square miles of Pakistan's territory. India and Pakistan withdrew from the respective territories after signing the Tashkent (USSR) declaration on the 10 th January 1966. The Tashkent meeting was held at the behest of the Soviet Union which had offered its good offices to resolve the differences between India and Pakistan<sup>(61)</sup>.

The Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri and Pakistan's President Ayub Khan signed the declaration agreeing to undertake measures to establish better relations in the future. These measure which were to be implemented immediately were as follows: (i) Withdrawal of armed forces to be completed by 25th February 1966; (ii) exchange of high commissions and restoration of normal diplomatic mission and (iii) repatriation of prisoners of wars of both the states. Both would work towards lasting peace and stability in the sub-continent and in South Asia.<sup>(62)</sup>

The Tashkent declaration (1966) only had a momentary impact. The rivalry over Kashmir remained and India continued to 'preoccupy' Pakistan's foreign policy. Therefore when civil war and political disturbances began in East Pakistan in 1971, India was considered to have a role in it. However such a view had no evidential proof.<sup>63</sup> In India, General Elections to the Lok Sabha had just been completed. The Congress

Party led by Mrs. Indira Gandhi had won a landslide victory. All attention was focused on the nature of the cabinet and ministry that was at its formative stage.<sup>(64)</sup> The Government of India's reaction to the Pakistan army action in March 1971 was cautious but supportive of the Bengali cause. Anti-Pakistan sentiments in the country were high following the hijacking of an Indian aircraft by Pakistan on the 30th January 1971<sup>(65)</sup>. India did not opt for a military option immediately. However India could not remain indifferent for long and was soon involved in Bangladesh's fight for liberation from West Pakistan.

### **India-Pakistan and the Liberation of Bangladesh :**

India could not deny humanitarian assistance to the masses of people crossing into India along its borders with East Pakistan. It was compelled to assist the people despite several inconveniences that it faced. The four states of India namely Assam, Manipur, Tripura and West Bengal faced a major threat of social imbalance in its population. These states had earlier faced a similar situation arising out the partitioning of the sub-continent in 1947. In addition to the imbalance in its population pattern India faced an additional economic strain as well.<sup>66</sup>

The economic burden on the government of India was an estimated 700 million annually.<sup>(67)</sup> Externally India was faced with the problem of the disintegration of Pakistan as its own borders were threatened. Humanitarian concern for the people fleeing East Pakistan prevented India from sealing its borders in order to stop the influx. Most importantly



military experts in India advised against any military action at that time. As both the terrain and the climate was detrimental to troop movements in view of the approaching monsoons in East Pakistan.<sup>(68)</sup>

Therefore the Government of India resorted to diplomatic means to draw international attention to its own situation and the situation in East Pakistan. India however did not accord any international recognition to the exiled government of Bangladesh stationed in India.<sup>(69)</sup> India's diplomatic pressure on the international community to intervene in East Pakistan was mainly based on human rights considerations. Moreover India stressed further that Pakistan's action was responsible for endangering the peace and security of the Indian sub continent. Pakistan matched India's statements by calling it India's interference in the internal affairs of Pakistan. East Pakistan was an integral part of Pakistan and within Pakistan's administrative jurisdiction. Therefore the first phase of the South Asian crisis 1971 was marked by the exchange of diplomatic rhetorics between India and Pakistan.

Pakistan's stand regarding East Pakistan was internationally vindicated. For instance most states including Britain, France, the Arab and non-Arab Muslim states accepted Pakistan's stand on East Pakistan. <sup>o</sup> They however hoped that the issue would be resolved at the earliest. The only Arab state not to extend complete support to Pakistan was Egypt which was sympathetic to the India's stand on East Pakistan. One of the major diplomatic support for Pakistan came was from China. <sup>1</sup> Amongst the super powers the U.S.S.R was the first to react and was

sharp in its pronouncements against West Pakistan Government initially. However the Soviet Union's criticism of the Pakistan's action was mellowed to a great extent later .It offered proposals for economic investments in Pakistan towards the later stages.<sup>(72)</sup>

The American reaction was delayed and also aimed in a different direction. The U.S.A voiced its concern for the sufferings faced by the people in East Pakistan. To that extent it tried to persuade the Pakistan administration to accept international humanitarian aid. The aid was to be rendered to the people under the supervision of the UN and its specialised agencies. Pakistan initially refused the U.S request for help stating that the situation was well within its control. Beyond such appeals the U.S administration refrained from taking any political stand.<sup>(73)</sup> The U.S was against the situation in East Pakistan from causing a hurdle to its growing relations with China. Pakistan which played a prominent role in building Sino-U.S relations could not be antagonised at this stage. U.S.A's policy has been dealt in detail later.<sup>(74)</sup>

Therefore Pakistan's viewpoint that East Pakistan was an internal part of Pakistan and it could be controlled by its own administration recieved major support in the international community. However India relentlessly pursued its own stand point against Pakistan's action in the East. To that extent the Indian Foreign Minister Swaran Singh and also the Prime minister Indira Gandhi made official visits to different countrnes in Europe and Soviet Union to put across their stand personally. The result of one such visit was the signing of the Twenty Years of Friendship

and Cooperation between India and the Soviet Union on the 9th August 1971.<sup>(75)</sup> Suffice it to mention here that the Indian position was internationally strengthened considerably following the agreement. The details leading to the signing of the Treaty have been dealt in detail later in this chapter.

The last round of international diplomatic campaign was conducted by the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi from 22nd Oct 1971. Apart from some major European capitals USA too was included in the itinerary.<sup>(76)</sup> Simultaneously Zulfikar Ali Bhutto the elected P.P.P leader led a high level Pakistani military delegation to China. It was to augment China's support in the event of a war in the sub-continent.<sup>(77)</sup> While the Governments of India and Pakistan were trying to gather international opinion against one another the situation along the Eastern borders deteriorated. Border clashes were on the rise. The Bangladesh's liberation force, (Mukti Bahini) were involved in a number of skirmishes with the Pakistan troops stationed there. The Mukti Bahini operated from its bases within the Indian territory. They had been gathering strength and training in India covertly and later openly since May 1971<sup>(78)</sup>. Therefore during the war they were actively supported by the Indian troops as they tried to liberate the territory of East Pakistan from West Pakistani forces.

### **The Indo-Pak war 1971:**

The Government of Pakistan declared a state of emergency on the 25th November 1971. Simultaneously clashes between the Indian and

Pakistan troops increased in the Eastern sector. On the 3rd December 1971 the war between India and Pakistan was announced formally following the air-raids by the Pakistan Air force (PAF) on Indian territory.<sup>(79)</sup> The PAF carried out simultaneous attacks on Indian bases in north west India. Its ground forces also opened the battlefront along the Indo-Pakistan borders in the north west. India retaliated with its airforce (IAF) striking at major air-bases within Pakistan including Peshawar and Karachi.<sup>(80)</sup> The battle line in the western sector was drawn from Jammu and Kashmir to the Rann of Kutch, South of Rajasthan. The Indian and Pakistan's military were involved in some major combats in the western sector.<sup>(81)</sup>

The Indo-Pak war 1971 was fought along the eastern borders as well. The domination of the Indian troops along this sector was evident from the very beginning of the war. The military preparedness of the Pakistan troops in this sector was comparatively inferior to its western counterpart. In this sector it was reduced to a defensive position while facing the multi pronged Indian attack. Eventually the Pakistani resistance in East fell apart as it was routed by the 16th December 1971.<sup>82</sup> The Pakistani forces stationed in East appealed for a cease fire which was initially not accepted by India. On the 17th December 1971 the Pakistan troops surrendered unconditionally to the Indians. The Indian government accepted the cease fire. Thereafter Pakistan's President Yahya Khan also ordered a cease fire of the Pakistan forces both in the Western and Eastern sectors.<sup>83)</sup>

Pakistan's friendly relations with both the U.S.A on one hand and China on the other was favourable in preparing the ground work for a new Sino-U.S relation. For services rendered Pakistan received an armament package from the Nixon Kissinger administration. It comprised of 20 aircraft's and 300 armoured carriers which was valued at \$ 40-50 million in 1970.<sup>(85)</sup> Pakistan's role in establishing the Sino-U.S relations considerably influenced U.S.A's policy during the 1971 crisis. From the beginning U.S.A was clear about not jeopardizing its relations with Pakistan.

As mentioned earlier the U.S administration reacted much later to the West Pakistan's military action in the East in March 1971. The U.S.A reacted later than the Western States and also the Soviet Union. On the 2nd April 1971 it expressed its concern for the loss of life, hardship and suffering of the people of Pakistan. On the 7th April 1971 a State Department spokesman further emphasised that Pakistan should try to end the strife peacefully.<sup>(86)</sup> The U.S administration also tried to bring pressure on the Pakistan government to accept humanitarian aid through the U.N.O.. Pakistan's President however refused any international aid.<sup>(87)</sup>

There after the U.S administration worked in close cooperation with the British government in order to revert Pakistan's rejection of material help. The Western and U.S pressure coupled with the deteriorating economic situation changed the hardlined approach of Pakistan. Pakistan

accepted the humanitarian aid to East Pakistan on May 1971, conditionally. Pakistan's condition was that the disbursement of aid was to be coordinated by its officials only. The U.S and British administration was successful in changing Pakistan's attitude because of its worsening foreign debt payment. The latter was in need of economic assistance in order to come out of its indebted situation.<sup>(88)</sup>

Apart from the UN aid for East Pakistan the U.S administration continued its economic assistance programme to Pakistan. Britain also continued to invest in the developmental projects in Pakistan.<sup>(90)</sup> Though U.S. military assistance to Pakistan was to expire after 25th March 1971 the licences for export of arms continued for some more months. As a result arms flow from the U.S.A to Pakistan continued till November 1971. The ammunition supply continued despite the Senate sub-Committee's note for suspension of U.S arms sale to Pakistan.<sup>(90)</sup>

The arms sale from the U.S.A continued through June 1971 despite Congressional criticism of the administration's policy decision. Western aid to Pakistan was also forthcoming following the meeting of the Aid-Pakistan Consortium in June 1971. The U.S.A supported the Consortium's decision. The World Bank aid to Pakistan was suspended on 21st June 1971 following a critical report by the World Bank team. Peter Cargill heading a ten member World Bank study team for East and West Pakistan presented an adverse report based on its findings.<sup>(91)</sup> The World Bank report resulted in a set back to most bilateral economic programmes of the Western powers and Pakistan. On the 15th July 1971, the U.S.

House of Representatives' Foreign Affairs Committee voted against continued U.S. military and economic assistance to Pakistan.<sup>(92)</sup>

The gap between the peoples' representatives and the U.S. administration's policy widened further. There was a difference in the administration's policy rhetorics and actions as well with regard to Pakistan. For instance on the 14th July 1971, Nixon administration announced a halt to economic and technical assistance to Pakistan in view of the situation in East Pakistan. However the official declaration stated that the previous American commitment of 188 million dollars of economic assistance to Pakistan would be appropriated.<sup>(93)</sup> Simultaneously humanitarian assistance and restoration of communication networks in East Pakistan by the U.S. was be enhanced.

Pakistan's bargaining power within the U.S. administration further increased following the visit of Dr. Henry Kissinger, the U.S. Secretary of State to the sub-continent in July 1971.<sup>(94)</sup> After his visit a new chapter in Sino-U.S. rapprochement opened-up. The U.S. President's visit to China was announced following Kissinger's tour of Delhi and Islamabad<sup>\*</sup>. Sino-U.S. rapprochement was a major diplomatic achievement for Pakistan which had played a principle role of an mediator between China and USA. Pakistan was in a position to request or bargain for more U.S. support through its relationship with China. What is more Pakistan could aspire for more support in the UNO if China was to gain entry as a permanent member of the Security Council.

Sino-U.S. relations resulted in increasing opportunities for Pakistan presumably in gaining international support. U.S.A. and China in turn were increasingly getting involved in Pakistan's affairs. The support of both the states provided Pakistan an opportunity to bring pressure on India from interfering in East Pakistan. After the 3rd December 1971 when the war formally broke out, the U.S.A. introduced a resolution against India at the U.N. Security Council. The U.S. ambassador to the UNO George Bush called for an immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of all armed personnel to their own side of the border.<sup>(95)</sup>

The resolution also proposed the positioning of UN observers along the India-Pakistan border.<sup>(96)</sup> The resolution was vetoed by the Soviet Union while France and Britain abstained from voting.<sup>(97)</sup> The same resolution was once again introduced in the UN General Assembly by the USA on the 7th December 1971. At the General Assembly it was passed with 104 votes for it.<sup>(98)</sup> The U.S.A. also demonstrated its support for Pakistan logistically. On 12th December, 1971, it ordered its 7th Fleet of the navy comprising of an aircraft carrier U.S.S. Enterprise to take position in the Bay of Bengal.<sup>(99)</sup>

The war however concluded on the 17th December 1971, when Pakistan's troops surrendered in the eastern sector. The U.S. naval presence could not deter the Indian military victory over Pakistan in Bangladesh. The U.S. administration had to incur global and internal embarrassment for its role in the 1971 crisis. This happened due to the leakage of some confidential policy papers of the U.S. administration.



The papers contained the working procedures and policies of the National Security Council (NSC) and the Washington Special Action Group (WSAG). Jack Anderson, a columnist was the person responsible for making these papers public. These papers were popularly known as the "Anderson papers." It revealed the nature of Nixon-Kissinger domination at the meetings and in the policy making process relating to the 1971 crisis in South Asia.<sup>(100)</sup>

Nixon and Kissinger often framed policies that were against the reports and suggestions of their diplomats posted in the sub-continent. The U.S. policy which began with a 'limited objective' in South Asia eventually ended by supporting Pakistan. The U.S. support however could not prevent the disintegration of Pakistan. The Soviet Union like the U.S.A. had also restricted its involvement in the South Asian crisis. It had reacted sharply first when the West Pakistan military carried out its action in East Pakistan. Apart from this initial reaction it had tried to appease Pakistan's leadership later. It tried to promote economic and diplomatic relations with Pakistan. With the progress of events in the sub-continent and growing relations between U.S.A and China, Pakistan preferred Chinese and American support rather than that of the Soviet Union. Soviet Union's efforts of building closer ties with Pakistan was sidelined by the latter in preference to China and the U.S.A. This could have considerably undermined the Soviet Union's position in South Asia. As India and Pakistan headed towards an inevitable show down, the Soviet Union eventually supported India. An analysis of the Soviet

policy during the Indo-Pak conflict 1971, provides an insight into the nature of Soviet policy in the regional crisis .

### **The Soviet Union and the 1971 Crisis :**

Soviet policy was an outcome of many regional and global issues which could have challenged the Soviet position in South Asia. Soviet support for India during the conflict was aimed more at maintaining a status quo. Soviet policy was therefore not offset by its willingness to settle the Bangladesh crisis against Pakistan's wishes. As the crisis blew over, many issues became embroiled in it .These issues influenced Soviet Union's stand in the crisis.

Initially, the Soviet Union did not want to abandon the idea of drawing India and Pakistan closer in order to form the 'Asian Security Zone'. This had been the major motivating factor of Soviet Union's policy in the Indian sub-continent. The idea of the Security Zone became more important particularly after the Sino-Soviet split in 1957. The establishment of the Zone could act as a buffer against the spread of Chinese influence in the region. The other regional states that were included in the Soviet plan were Afghanistan and Iran. The effort towards fulfillment of this plan increased particularly after the Indo-Pak war, 1965. At the end of this conflict the Soviet Union had played the role of a mediator between India and Pakistan at Tashkent.

An Asian security zone would have been instrumental in keeping out the influence of the major external powers from spreading in South Asia. The external powers were of course China and U.S.A. However Soviet Union's policy goal did not take shape as Pakistan acted as a deterrent factor from the very beginning. Pakistan's lack of response was there even when the Soviet Union tried to intensify its relationship with it with a weapon supply package in 1969<sup>(100)</sup>. Pakistan instead drew closer to China. Air Marshal Nur Khan of Pakistan visited Peking the same year to solicit China's support against India's position in Kashmir.<sup>(102)</sup>

When West Pakistan carried out military action in East Pakistan the Soviet Union at first reacted sharply against the act. However it refrained from endorsing the liberation of East Pakistan in its statement. Instead the Soviet Union wanted West Pakistan to restore normalcy in the region and prevent a break up of Pakistan. The final break up of Pakistan could have involved Pakistan's traditional rival India. Any confrontation between India and Pakistan would end Soviet Union's plan for an Asian security zone. Moreover a confrontation between India and Pakistan would result in Pakistan soliciting increased Chinese support. Increase in China's influence in the region could have further jeopardised the Soviet interests in South Asia.

However the Asian security zone plan of the Soviet Union did not manage to take off. The breakthrough in Sino U.S. relations with Pakistan's mediation challenged the Soviet position even more than ever before. The Soviet Union also failed to stop India and Pakistan from yet another

confrontation. The changed scenario changed the Soviet Union's position from neutrality to committed involvement when the crisis in East Pakistan precipitated into a full scale war between India and Pakistan. The result of the change in Soviet Policy was the Indo Soviet Treaty of Friendship 1971. It was signed in August 1971 between Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister and Swaran Singh the minister for External Affairs for India.<sup>(103)</sup>

The treaty was beneficial to both India and the Soviet Union. For India the treaty, assured it of Soviet support in the sub-continent. For the Soviet Union the Treaty strengthened its position in South Asia vis-a-vis, Pakistan-China and U.S combination. India was also able to secure Soviet Union's support at UNO when the U.S.A introduced a resolution against its interference in Pakistan's affairs.<sup>(104)</sup>

The Indo-Soviet Treaty crystallised the political scene in the Indian sub-continent before the out break of the war. India and Soviet Union formed one group while Pakistan supported by the U.S.A and China formed the rival group. Each group comprised of the regional state and its extra-regional allies. However, despite the Treaty of Friendship the Soviet Union refrained from recognising Bangladesh as an independent state. It was also able to impress upon India to follow suit. This difference in the position between the Indian and Soviet leadership persisted for a while.

Numerous visits were exchanged between the leadership of both India and the Soviet Union over the issue of recognising Bangladesh. Soviet Union's support for India's position in the crisis was achieved only in November 1971. By this time the political condition in the sub-continent was fast heading towards a show down between India and Pakistan. At this period of time the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Firyubin visited New Delhi in November 1971<sup>(106)</sup>. Following Firyubin's visit the Soviet Commander-in Chief of its Air Force, Air Marshall P.Kutakhov also visited India. The Indo-Pak War 1971 broke out on the 3rd December 1971. Moscow blamed Islamabad, for leading the sub-continent into a crisis. It simultaneously warned all outside powers not to intervene in the conflict. At the international level, particularly in the U.N forum, the Soviet veto defeated three attempts made by the USA to introduce resolutions against India on the 5th, 6th and 13th December 1971.<sup>(106)</sup> Soviet naval vessels were also present in the Bay of Bengal waters.<sup>(107)</sup>

As the war ended, following the cease fire on the 17th December 1971 by India and Pakistan the Soviet Union's role received widespread public appreciation in India and Bangladesh. However the Soviet hopes of an Asian security zone including Pakistan receded with this conflict. Nevertheless Soviet Union's position vis-a-vis the U.S.A was an envious one. The Soviet policy was hailed both within and in the international arena while the U.S administration had to face embarrassment both at home and globally.

The respective positions for the Soviet Union and the U.S.A at the conclusion of the 1971 conflict may have ended differently. At the initial stages both powers were only reacting rhetorically to the situation in the sub-continent. As the conflict became a reality the U.S and the Soviet Union faced each other in rival camps.

Regional conflicts in the Indian Ocean region have often drawn the U.S.A and the Soviet Union into antagonistic warring camps. Sometimes such crisis and their involvement have proved to be an embarrassment for the two powers. It has also threatened the possibilities of summit talks between the two super powers. The conflicts also adversely affected the bilateral relations between the U.S.A and the Soviet Union which influenced global politics. One such conflict was the Ogaden Conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia in 1977-78 in the Horn of Africa. We can now proceed to discuss this conflict in the next chapter.

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The Ogaden war between Ethiopia and Somalia (1977-78) occurred over a 25,000 sq.mile of territory mainly occupied by the Somali tribes. Ogaden territory was a British trusteeship which was ceded to Ethiopia in 1948.<sup>(2)</sup> After the integration and independence of Somalia in 1960, Somalia laid claim to the land of Ogaden. Since Ethiopia had accepted the majority Somali inhabitation in the Ogaden it rejected the claims of Somalia. Ethiopia stated that like many other states in Africa it was a multi-national state endorsing the boundaries at the time of independence.<sup>(3)</sup>

Eventually Ogaden emerged as a bone of contention between the two most important states of the Horn of Africa. As a result, for Ethiopia the Ogaden conflict was a secessionist movement while for Somalia it was an expression of its 'nationalism', which aimed to integrate the people of Somali origin from Ethiopia and Kenya. Therefore to analyse the heart of the problem i.e. the Ogaden, it is necessary to understand the political dynamics of Ethiopia and Somalia, the two parties in the fray.

### **Geo-Political realities of Multi-ethnic Ethiopia :**

The Central Ethiopian 'table land' dominates the landscape of the state. The vast highlands which are 6,000 to 8,000 feet above sea level are thickly populated. In the north-west the plateau gives way to undulating grasslands which stretches into neighbouring Sudan. On the east facing the northern part of Somali Democratic Republic the topography forms the Great Rift Valley before rising to form the Somali

Plateau. In the north, the Rift Valley extends to meet the Red Sea. It comprises of a desert waste land known as the Danakil Depression where the temperature reaches 140 degree F. To the South - South east of the highlands is a bush country which continues into Kenya and Southern Somalia and towards the south west of the table-land are the rich tropical forests.<sup>(4)</sup>

The geographical topography of the country influenced the political, economic and social landscape of the Ethiopian society. The 'political heartland' of Ethiopia was centred around the highlands. The political rulers always remained distanced from the other ethnic groups inhabiting the other areas on the periphery of the state. During the Imperial rule of Haile Selassie (1930-1974) an extremely rigid and centralized monarchy ruled over all the ethnic groups of Ethiopia. The monarchy was based on the traditions of the ancient national church. The ruler was assisted in his administration by nobles, an obedient bureaucracy and a huge military. Modernization was acceptable as long as it enhanced the power and prestige of the monarchy. Therefore progress and development was very limited in the 20th century Imperial Ethiopia.<sup>(5)</sup>

Economically Ethiopia was one of the poorest countries in the world with a GNP that was ninety dollars in the seventies. It was rated among the twenty most impoverished nations of the world with a daily average calorie intake of less than 1,600. It had a literacy rate of less than 5%.<sup>(6)</sup> In Ethiopia the transport and communication network were one of the worst in the world. The country had no roads connecting

the rural areas. People walked more than eight to ten hours to reach a pliable road. The geographical distance combined with political distancing of the people resulted in large starvation deaths while the administration imported grains from outside.<sup>(7)</sup>

The economic division coincided with the social divisions as well. In the multi-ethnic Ethiopian society the three major ethnic groups were the Amharas, the Tigres and the Gallas or Oromos. These ethnic groups dominated the political institution of the state. The Amhara and the Tigres were of Semitic origin. Both the groups speaking the same language occupied the northern and central highlands. Majority of these groups followed the Coptic Christian faith.

The Gallas were the third major ethnic group. Originally this Hamitic group lived along the Somali coast, but moved into the highlands in the 16th and 17th centuries.<sup>(8)</sup> They were soon assimilated into the above mentioned social fold and a substantial number of them converted to Christianity and also married into Amhara households. The Gallas joined the military, bureaucracy and the feudal order. The emperor and the ruling elites belonged to Shoa, the central highland province of Ethiopia. They were the Amharic speaking Shoans. The above mentioned ethnic groups of the Ethiopian society formed the upper strata and mainly occupied the highland region.<sup>(9)</sup>

The lower strata of the Ethiopian society comprised mainly of the Somalis and the Eritreans on the northern and eastern frontiers of

Ethiopia amongst other non-Amharic groups. The Somalis lived in the greater part of the Ogaden region in Eastern Ethiopia sharing their affinity with Somalia. The Eritreans were another important ethnic group. They shared the quest for a common independent homeland based on common ethnicity, past colonial experience under Italy.<sup>(10)</sup> These ethnic groups did not participate in any of the institutions of central administration or the state and existed as separate groups in the periphery of Ethiopia. Thus the higher strata of the society not only were the most favoured groups occupying the central highlands, but also were the over who enjoyed the best in the state. The masses in the meanwhile lived in the lower lands and participated in the 'miseries' of the state.<sup>(11)</sup>

The peasants as a social group lived under great pressure from the hostile climate poor economic conditions in Ethiopia. Their suffering was further enhanced by the adamant attitude of Haile Selassie who was opposed to any change or development. Nothing penetrated the aura the Emperor had created around himself. Infact all the strata of the Ethiopian society gradually felt the impact of his mis-rule by the mid-sixties of this century. The country's impoverished economy took another step towards the nadir with rise in oil prices which affected the cities, the industrial workers, civil servants and soldiers. Even the agricultural parts of the highlands were consumed by droughts.<sup>(12)</sup>

Between 1970 and 1972, because of negligible rainfall, men and animals suffered alike as they moved about in search of livelihood and died of starvation. All information on this critical situation of drought and famine was systematically obliterated by the Imperial Ethiopian

Government. By March 1974, 100,000 peasants had already perished.<sup>(13)</sup> The ruler refused to acknowledge the crisis and dismissed it as a part of the cycle of survival. Even though Haile Selassie relented to allow international aid he refused to publicise the crisis.<sup>(14)</sup>

The then existing situation added on to the rule of deliberate indifference and neglect of the past. There were no roads by which food could be brought to the interiors. Even attempts at famine relief were not bereft of corruption. The increasing hardship and travail penetrated deeper into the Ethiopian society till it affected the student community and the armed forces. The armed forces were no longer satisfied with the scarcity of food and meagre income. Dissatisfaction was more pronounced among the military forces that had to continuously face Eritrean and Somalia separatists forces. Moreover the composition of the military did not follow the aristocratic pattern as in the other institutions of the state. With the exception of the top brass of the military its personnel were drawn from all parts of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian armed forces were considered to be the most organised institution of the state.<sup>(15)</sup>

There was also a growing realisation within the military that its high rating of the past could hardly remain after the rapid modernisation of the Somali army by 1974. Earlier the overthrow of the Somali government by a military junta in 1969 and the beginnings of a social revolution had an impact on the members of the army in Ethiopia.<sup>16</sup>

For instance the Somalia revolution was commanded by the armed forces and their leader, was Major General Said Barre. The twenty five member group that seized power in Somalia comprised of only officers who represented the major clans and were above the rank of captain. The revolution in Ethiopia in 1974 was also led by the military but the group ranged from soldiers to majors. Non-commissioned officers formed the largest group. This was a markedly different composition from the Sudanese and Somalia juntas.<sup>(17)</sup>

The first signs of revolution in Ethiopia were thus witnessed in February 1974 when the military division in Asmara led the mutiny. The mutiny could become a complete revolution and engulf the entire armed forces only in September, 1974. That day all traces of monarchy or any chances of civilian rule were wiped out by the Revolutionary Command when Haile Selassie was deposed. The Revolutionary Command was called the Dergue, an Amhara term.<sup>(18)</sup>

The new political regime was forced to first overcome the diverse challenges such as bringing about unity between the urban and rural areas of the state and institutionalizing a new political order. In substance the Dergue had to face the teething troubles of consolidating its own rule. Simultaneously it had to contain the separatist movements that had erupted in the north in Eritrea, and in the east in the Ogaden.<sup>(19)</sup> The Ogaden crisis worsened by July, 1977 when the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) backed by the regular army of Somalia from across the border occupied key positions in the Ogaden territory.<sup>(20)</sup> The

to understand the political situation in Somalia, particularly the Somalian quest for nationhood.

### **The Republic of Somalia and its quest for nationhood :**

Somalia is an East African littoral state of the Indian Ocean. On its northern coastline is the Gulf of Aden and its eastern and southern coastline is the Indian Ocean. Somalia stretches from the borders of Djibouti in the north to Cape Guardafui in the south. The East African Rift which is a plateau that stretches almost all along its western borders. The total land mass of the Democratic Republic of Somalia is 240,000 sq.miles. The Somali territory is a vast expanse of dry grassland of coarse grass and some thorny bushes or trees. Only the land between the southern rivers such as Juba and Shebelle are cultivable. Some parts in the north west region of the rift along the Ethiopian border are also agriculturally productive. Huge ant hills and thick baobas mark the harsh contours of this land mass.<sup>(22)</sup>

Somalia had a population of 3.5 million to 5 million people in the seventies and most of its people were nomads. The nomads who were pastoralists raised sheep, goats and cattle sometimes. The possession of camel was held in high esteem in the Somali society.<sup>(22)</sup>

The most outstanding feature of Somalia was its cultural homogeneity that was diametrically opposite to the heterogenous cultural composition of Ethiopia. The Somalis were distinguished for their common

language, common culture, and common religion which was Islam. Though the cultural, social and linguistic oneness of the people did not reflect in the political behaviour of the Somalis. The people of Somalia in thought and expression lacked political unity. The Somalis were divided into clan-families which were sub divided into clans and clansmen divided into patrilineal-kinship-groups. Individually every Somali was attached to the smaller groups. The spirit of nationalism, nevertheless cut across all clans and sub clan divisions. Culturally uniform the Somalis occupied the entire land mass from Djibouti in the North to the Tana River in Kenya, a total area of 370,000 square miles extending well beyond the political frontiers of Somalia. Somalia's quest for nationhood stemmed from this common experience.<sup>(24)</sup>

Amongst the important states of the Horn like Sudan or Ethiopia state nationalism was determined by the ruling elite or the economically and politically dominant social groups. For instance Ethiopian nationalism was determined by the socially dominant Amhara group of the Coptic Christian faith. Somali nationalism was not the desire of any one single dominant group because of its cultural homogeneity.<sup>(25)</sup> Nationalism was expressed in terms of consolidation of the Somali areas in other states and the realisation of Greater Somalia. Somalia's quest for nationhood resulted in rivalry with its Coptic Christian neighbour Ethiopia. The aggressive pursuit of national goal received further impetus when the political boundaries of the state remained unchanged from the Berlin conference of 1885 with slight alterations during British and Italian colonisation of Somalia.<sup>(26)</sup>



On the 26th June, 1960, Somalia became an independent state when British Somaliland and the Italian Trust Territory merged to form the Somalia Democratic Republic. For the average Somali this was only one step towards achieving full independence. The newly independent state immediately launched its programme of achieving full nationhood.<sup>(27)</sup> After 1960, Radio Mogadishu often gave the call to arm for the liberation of the Ogaden and other unredeemed Somaliland. In 1963 when the liberation groups, namely the Nasser Allah launched their rebellion against Ethiopia, the new government of Somalia extended its support to it. The rebellion could not gain any momentum despite support from Somalia because of the superiority of the Ethiopian military. The rebellion was therefore restricted to isolated clashes in the Ogaden territory. According to John Markakis the 1963 rebellion was restricted to the pastoralists and was unable to create self sustaining political base for a protracted struggle. The nationalist movement in the Ogaden remained entirely dependent on the Somali state, though it was not an adjunct of the Somali government at this stage.<sup>(28)</sup> Nevertheless in the words of Somalia's first President Adam Abdullah Osman, "No politician in Somalia can suspend his preoccupation with the problem of unification."<sup>(29)</sup>

The new government of Somalia adopted the goal of national unity without conceiving or implementing a minimum policy of growth and development for the state. Economically the past colonial pattern continued even after independence. The economic pattern could not meet the basic needs of the country's population. The Government revenues were dependent on the export of bananas and cattle which

was also reduced later.<sup>(30)</sup> The country was naturally poor. It was starved of natural resources, lacked minimum education, health, nutrition, technology, plant or equipment. Therefore independent Somalia emerged as a state dependent on foreign aid for its survival.

Among the foremost donors to the new Government since independence were Britain and Italy with an amount of 1.5 million pounds sterling and 3 million pounds sterling respectively. The donated amount included monetary support, technical knowledge and also projects. Apart from Britain and Italy there were other donors such as the U.S.A., West Germany, the U.S.S.R., Czechoslovakia, China, the UAE, the UNDP and other U.N. agencies. In addition to aid Somalia also received development proposals from these sources.<sup>(31)</sup>

However, the new government which lacked any kind of planning or a proper administrative set up was hardly in a position to take the best advantage of the foreign aid that was offered. For instance, the bureaucracy was small in number. It was trained partly by the British (in the north) and partly by the Italians (in the south). They operated at different levels of efficiency, though Italian influence dominated. Mogadishu the capital city was located in Southern Somalia and it was under Italian control before independence. A languid administration in addition to the existing poverty had 80% of Somalia's population struggling for survival.<sup>(32)</sup>

The government that assumed power in Somalia continued to administer the state almost, like the pre-colonial times. There was no governmental participation or involvement in the country's clan dominated society at the rural or urban levels. This was because the survival of the government was dependent more on balancing representation of a clan influenced Somali society. It explained the lack of coerciveness of the government authority or its determination to implement any policies of social transformation. To the political observers Somalia presented an image of a real democratic society in comparison to the other African states. There was total freedom of speech and expression at all levels, from the National Assembly to the roadside coffee houses.<sup>(33)</sup> In reality this democracy was peculiar to Somalia alone.

As mentioned earlier, if nationalism bound the Somalis into one, in internal politics, kinship and clan loyalty fragmented the state and society. In the pre-colonial times the expression of clan loyalty remained limited in scope. In the post-independence era elections, employment, new projects and development witnessed the role of the clan families at its highest involvement. At higher levels of political position like ministerial or cabinet ranks, there were enough vacancies to give representations to the major clans and clan families.<sup>(34)</sup>

This made the nature of politics more ethnic and made the state an unstable one. Ethnic pressure disallowed the representative of the people to govern the state with a will of its own or with an aim to fulfil the promises and programmes of the elections. Traditional beliefs of

the different clans continued to dominate the politics in Somalia even after independence. Political power was shared between the more powerful clans of society.

Potentially capable candidates were thwarted in their attempts to work for the progress and development of the state. The candidates personal qualities held no significance faced with the upper hand of the elders of the clans and clan families. Therefore Somalia did not have a government which could stabilise the internal politics of the state and work towards modernization. Democratic institutions in Somalia were affected by clan divisions. This prevented any social transformation or similar changes in Somalia. It nevertheless created an environment of stability as long as major groups received their share of goods. As time passed lack of development, industry and commerce, affected Somalia. Employment opportunities for the new educated Somalis did not exist while the government jobs which were considered to be prestigious were few.<sup>(36)</sup>

Political tensions now added up in a state which had remained in a backward condition close to a decade after independence. The new graduates who had joined the civil services, the military and police, and the students felt a growing sense of frustration. The poverty stricken state was further impoverished and Somalia had barely taken a step towards progress. It had fallen further backward compared to its counterparts in Africa. As the domestic condition worsened, democracy in Somalia ended even before it could complete a decade of independence.

In the early hours of 21st October, 1969, parliamentary democracy ended in Somalia very suddenly. An army coup led by Major General Mohammed Siad Barre, the commander of the Somali army occupied the police headquarters and the radio station in Mogadishu.<sup>(36)</sup> At the time of the coup the elected civilian government was headed by Abdar-Rashid Ali Shermarke, as President and Mohammed Haji Ibrahim Egal as Prime Minister. On the 15th October 1969, Shermarke was assassinated while on a tour of some drought stricken areas in the north. Egal returned cutting short his visit to the U.S.A. On the 20th October 1969 Haji Mussa Boghor was made President and on the 21st October 1969 the coup established Siad Barre as the President of 'socialist' Somalia.<sup>(37)</sup>

Siad Barre was assisted by a Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) comprising of twenty one army and police officers. All policy decisions evolved from this council and an educated bureaucracy was responsible for its implementation. The daily administration of evolving a socialist order of society like mobilization of the people for public work for the removal of illiteracy, promoting agricultural cooperatives, or nationalization of the commercial sector was the responsibility of the bureaucracy. A special group was created known as the National Security Service that comprised of men from the police and the army which was mainly responsible for the socialisation process. It reported directly to the SRC.<sup>(38)</sup>

'Barre's regime was successful in achieving certain tangible goals by consistent efforts and monitoring by the new government.

Development and progress were reported in the fields of public health and education. Education expanded in the fields of secondary and university levels, and students were mobilized to initiate universal national literacy. The government was to achieve self-sufficiency in foodgrains in a span of 3 years. Agriculturally, cotton was to be cultivated for export purposes.<sup>(39)</sup> All these changes were designed to penetrate to the nomadic section as well. The country's administration was firmly in the grasp of the S.R.C. - headed new government.

Somalia's military government turned its attention towards national unification of Somalia territories. The SRC however stressed on the necessity of resolving the issue through peaceful means at national and international forums. The SRC continued to express similar views till it resorted to aggressive means when its troops crossed Ethiopia's border into the Ogaden territory in 1977. The Government of Ethiopia did not respond to the SRC's quest for a negotiated settlement on the Ogaden issue. In the meanwhile the Revolutionary Government of Somalia initiated a major effort of developing its army and paramilitary with the aid of the Soviet Union, Iraq, Cuba and North Korea.<sup>(40)</sup>

The most outstanding achievement was witnessed in the growth of the Somali army under the new government. Prior to the assumption of the socialist regime at Mogadishu attempts were made to revitalise the armed forces. The U.S.A. and its Western allies declined to offer any military training or extend any substantial military support to Somali. The Western denial was viewed as a rejection and disapproval of

Somalia's nationalistic ambitions. The U.S.A. and its allies also expressed its displeasure of Somalia's support to the Western Somali liberation Front (WSLF) the secessionist group operating in the Ogaden.<sup>(41)</sup>

In comparison the Soviet Union had offered an estimated 32 million dollars aid package to the democratic civilian government of Somalia in 1963. The aid package included training and modernization of 10,000 military personnel and a small air-wing capable of handling jet aircrafts.<sup>(42)</sup> Most of the Soviet offer was made in the form of grants to the Somali government. The pay-back to be made by Somalia was relaxed to be paid within a period of twenty years. Almost all the Soviet supported projects had been completed by 1969. The change in political leadership further expanded the Soviet military support programme to Somalia. The following five years (1970-75) witnessed rapid expansion in the Somali military with Soviet assistance.<sup>(43)</sup> The Somali military increased from 10,000 to 20,000 men and its weapons grade improved manifolds. By 1975 Somalia's military was one of the best in the Horn of Africa. In 1976 the size of the Somalia army was between thirty to forty thousand.<sup>(44)</sup> Somalia had finally worked itself into a superior position on the eve of the Ogaden War.

The SRC having strengthened its army, began to organise the refugees from the different regions of the Ogaden and other areas within Ethiopia uninhabited by Somalis. This exercise began from 1970. All the refugee groups were organised into one organisation namely the United Front or Jebha in Somali language. Some 50 men were also sent to

North Korea for guerrilla training in 1973 and another group a year later. A large training camp was set up 130 kilometers from Mogadishu where the regular Somali army instructors and Cubans trained the militia men. Similar camps were held at other places in Somalia. The SRC was in charge of conducting the training camps. Both training and guerrilla action were strictly supervised by the Somalia Government. The Somali regime dissuaded the militia from commencing any kind of guerrilla activities in Ethiopia when Haile Selassie was overthrown following the coup. Certain sections of the militia which defied the SRC's orders were arrested.<sup>(45)</sup>

As the political situation in Ethiopia worsened and the government in Addis Ababa began to alienate the U.S.A. the Somali regime was hard pressed by the forces of nationalism to take action. The government in Mogadishu first released all those imprisoned and organised three camps in 1975 for those willing to fight for the national unification of Somalia. By the end of November 1975 the trained groups were taken to the Ethiopia - Somalia border and were given arms and ammunition. The trained guerrilla groups were split into groups as they crossed the border. As the guerrilla's marched towards their home bases in the Ogaden they often clashed with the Ethiopian troops resulting in small skirmishes. Thus the second round of conflict in the Ogaden was well underway.<sup>(46)</sup>

The SRC government then decided to create a separate political organisation to represent the nationalist forces operating from different



regions within the Ogaden. This led to the formation of Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) The WSLF came into existence in January 1976 at a meeting in Mogadishu conducted by President Said Barre and a committee was constituted by him. The SALF was formed in mid June 1976 at a meeting held at a place called Koreoli. However, there was a contradiction between the two groups over their territorial claims in the Ogaden. The WSLF began operations in the Ogaden from January 1976. Their units kept radio contact with the Defence Ministry in Mogadishu. No form of direct contact was however maintained with their political representatives in Somalia.<sup>(47)</sup>

The guerrilla activities intensified in the second half of 1976 throughout the Ogaden, Bale and southern Sidamo province. Their number multiplied into thousands within months. By January 1977, the WSLF trainees located around Hargeissa were led by a junior officer from the Somali army. The region around which the SALF operated came under the direct control of Somalia's Southern command. However, the Somali army did not exercise direct control over the region. Training camps continued to operate all along the Somali border. The camps also functioned as supply and communication base for the WSLF and SALF guerrillas reaction to the early Somali guerrilla activities was not forceful. By April 1977 the guerrilla's in the Ogaden had captured Segeg and opened a road to Hargessa in central Ogaden territory. The SALF was also successful in its attack in Negheli, Moyale, Yabelo though no major town or province came under its control.<sup>(48)</sup> By the summer of 1977 the Somali regime decided to commit its own forces. Thereafter the regular

armies of Somalia and Ethiopia, were involved in a direct battle for the control of the Ogaden.

### **The Ogaden War - 1977-1978 :**

In June 1977 the Somali army units disguised as guerrilla's crossed into the Ogaden and headed for the besieged centres which were to be attacked simultaneously on the 9th July 1977. The Somali troops faced defeat at Dire Dawa air base in the hands of the Ethiopia garrison positioned there. Following this incident the Somali Government launched a full scale invasion in Ethiopia and also publicly announced the involvement of the Somali military in July 1977.

President Barre ordered full participation of the Somali army units in the Ogaden war in July 1977. By this time the WSLF controlled approximately 60% of the Ogaden territory. Alongwith the Somali troops the WSLF moved towards a major city of Jijiga. Jijiga was a large Ethiopian tank base and its surrender demoralized the Ethiopian troops. The Somalis continued their pursuit without a pause and moved westward through the mountains towards important towns like Harar, a trading city and Diredawa the rail and industrial center of Ethiopia by September, 1977.<sup>(49)</sup>

The Dergue Government in Ethiopia was desperate to stop the Somali onslaught. It recalled its retired military personnel below the age of sixty and regrouped its peasant militia men and ordered them to

take the responsibility of breaking Somalia's march forward. On the diplomatic front Mengistu turned to the U.S. mission at Addis Ababa to bail it out of this critical situation. President Mengistu was pressurised to turn to the U.S.A. for aid. By April 1977 the Dergue had ordered the closure of the U.S.A's activities in Ethiopia. Only the U.S.diplomatic mission and its embassy remained. The U.S. had also suspended the \$ 10 million military sales credit and the delivery of items in the military pipeline to Ethiopia.<sup>(50)</sup>

After his failure to receive any aid or sympathy from the U.S.A., Mengistu paid a five day visit to Moscow in May 1977 to acquire Soviet support in case of escalated Somali offensive against Ethiopia.<sup>(51)</sup> Initially Soviet Union's assistance was limited and slow. Cuba also joined the Soviet assistance programme to Ethiopia. Fidel Castro, the Cuban President, meanwhile began to have parleys with the Dergue government in Ethiopia and President Siad Barre in an effort to stop the war. However President Castro's efforts at pacification ended in a failure by November, 1977.<sup>(52)</sup>

Almost simultaneously the Somali momentum within Ethiopia decelerated. This happened because of three important reasons. Firstly, the supply of war equipments to the WSLF and Somali troops located in Ethiopia slowed down because of the distance to be covered. Secondly, there was reported infighting and tensions between the guerrillas and the Somali army in the war front. Tension also arose between the WSLF and the Somali regime in Mogadishu. The WSLF and SRC

government in Somalia clashed over the control of the territories captured in the Ogaden.<sup>(53)</sup> Thirdly, Soviet arms in the pipe-line had dried up. The Soviet Union in a complete turn-around in foreign policy had stopped supply of arms to Somalia by August 1977.<sup>(54)</sup> Somalia reacted sharply to the Soviet policy and ordered the suspension of all Soviet operations and also ended its diplomatic relations with Cuba. By the end of the year 1977 Somali offensive against Ethiopia virtually halted.<sup>(55)</sup> President Siad Barre began his search for new sources of arms supply.

It had been stated in some quarters that President Barre's offensive against Ethiopia was based on the presumption that the Soviets and the Cubans could be easily replaced by the USA and its Western allies.<sup>(56)</sup> However no such commitment was offered by the U.S. diplomats in Mogadishu. In August 1977, the U.S.A. went to the extent of stating that it would not transfer any arms to Somalia as long as Somali troops were stationed in Ethiopia. The U.S. also refused third party transfer of U.S. arms to Somalia.<sup>(57)</sup>

In the meanwhile by November, 1977, Soviet arms transfer (by air and sea) to Ethiopia began in earnest. The Soviet aid to Ethiopia for a period of five months (i.e. November 1977 & March 1978) was estimated at a value of \$ 1 to \$ 1.5 billion almost four or five times the U.S. military aid to Ethiopia between 1953 and 1977.<sup>(58)</sup> This has been discussed at a later stage.

Somalia faced a critical situation as the Ethiopian troops equipped with Soviet ammunition moved to face the WSLF and Somali army. The Ethiopians were also accompanied by the Cuban troops in their counter offensive. The Ethiopian air force comprising Soviet MIG-21 aircrafts and flown by Cuban pilots were able to effectively control the skies.<sup>(59)</sup> The onset of winter brought even greater hardships for the Somali troops to maintain their positions in Ethiopia. They were now restricted to areas around the province of Harar only. The Somali troops became a victim of Ethiopian air-strike quite often.

Somalia's chances of victory catapulted and it faced inevitable defeat at the hands of the Ethiopians. President Siad Barre now resorted to diplomatic missions to all friendly countries in Africa and outside. President Barre was successful in gaining the sympathies of Iran and Egypt which extended their support to Somalia in case of Ethiopian invasion.<sup>(60)</sup>

Ethiopia's major offensive against Somalia eventually began in February 1978. The withdrawing Somali forces were routed by the beginning of March 1978, after a major battle between Somali and Ethiopian forces at Jijiga. Four days later i.e. 9th March, 1978, after a bitter battle in Jijiga the Ogaden war ended when the Somali government announced the withdrawal of all Somali units from Ethiopia.<sup>(61)</sup>

The Ogaden war, thwarted Somalia's quest for national unification and resulted in a victory for Ethiopia. The war had its own fall-out not

only in the Horn of Africa but Africa in general. This could be assessed by the number of meetings, consultations and resolutions passed by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in order to find a permanent solution to the Somalia-Ethiopian dispute. The Ethiopian government had much earlier expressed its acceptance of the OAU Charter and its provisions regarding the political boundaries.<sup>(62)</sup> The Somali leadership did not accept the existing political boundaries and hoped for support for nationalistic goal beyond its existing borders. It received very little support from the OAU or any other African states.

Nevertheless, the OAU was involved in the Ogaden Conflict right from its inception. It had made all efforts to prevent the dispute from becoming a major war. We now examine the role played by the OAU in the Ogaden crisis.

### **The Role of the OAU :**

The Ogaden dispute was a major concern for the OAU since 1964. Following a confrontation between Ethiopia and Somalia in January, 1964, the both parties requested the OAU Council of Ministers to resolve the issue. Sudan intervened and both parties agreed to a cease-fire and demilitarization of the Ogaden-territory. The OAU also advised both the belligerents to negotiate directly in accordance with Article III (3) of the OAU Charter. This clause in the Charter stated that all member states to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all other states.<sup>(63)</sup>

Somalia continued to make its territorial claims over Ogaden but refrained from any major act of aggression till 1977. Somalia's chances of receiving African support was minimised by its irredentist policy with Ethiopia and Kenya. In 1977, the OAU was also passing through a critical juncture. The member states were divided over certain fundamental issues. One such issue was over the validity the OAU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in light of the change and disorder existing there.<sup>(64)</sup>

The members questioned the location as the Dergue rule was not able to control the different secessionist movements as well as the general law and order in Ethiopia. Somalia pressed its claim for greater Somalian nation in the OAU at this opportune moment and almost foisted war on Ethiopia. Ethiopians failed to gain the support of the two thirds majority required to convene an emergency meeting of OAU Council of Ministers to declare Somalia as an agressor state in the Ogaden war. The OAU formed a eight nation Mediation Committee that met at Libreville from 5th to 9th August 1977 to resolve the crisis.<sup>(65)</sup> Somalia failed to convince the Committee about the legitimacy of its claims over the Ogaden. The premise of Somalia's claim was that Ethiopia had participated along with the other European powers in drawing the political map of Africa in the 19th century. As a result it was able to annexe the Ogaden. Therefore it was a deliberate territorial annexation by the Imperial rulers of Ethiopia.

Following its unsuccessful attempts Somalia withdrew from the Libreville meet of the OAU. Ethiopia had withdrawn from the meet

earlier, in August 1977. After the withdrawal of the two parties in dispute the mediation committee passed a resolution reconfirming its faith in Article III(3) of the OAU charter. The OAU reiterated that the existing borders of the African states could not be re-drawn or violated. Simultaneously it condemned any kind of political sedition carried out by any state. As such the OAU continued to pursue a negotiated settlement on the Ogaden without much gain.<sup>(66)</sup> The OAU's effort did not have the right impact on Somalia.

Without much support from its African counterparts in the OAU, Somalia sought material and diplomatic backing internationally, particularly from the Arab-Islamic group. The Arab League, however, did not accept Somalia's diplomatic manouveres completely. President Barre shifted his attention on individual members of the Arab League such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Egypt. These states were also close to the U.S.A and they could be used as indirect or third party approach lines to Washington D.C.

Towards early 1978, Somalia complained to the international community about Ethiopian air-raids on Harghessa and the port city of Berbera. Iran followed by Egypt announced that Somalia would not be alone if Ethiopia violated Somalia's territory.<sup>(67)</sup> Iran and Egyptian solidarity with Somalia followed the visit of U.S President Jimmy Carter to Tehran on the 1st January 1978. Farer and Ottaway were of the opinion that Iran and Egypt had extended their support only with the approval of the U.S.A.<sup>(68)</sup>



The U.S.A had just faced a major reversal in its policy in the region. It had to withdraw from Ethiopia where it had established a secure base for itself since 1953.<sup>(69)</sup> It was hardly in a position to make a quick policy decision on the region. Somalia did not receive any U.S support before February 1978 and the Ogaden conflict ended by 9<sup>th</sup> March 1978. President Barre announced an end to the hostilities and withdrawal of the Somali troops from Ethiopia. The U.S President made a similar proclamation almost simultaneously.<sup>(70)</sup>

Whatever may have been the future of U.S.A 's policies in the Horn, its policies in the past and during the Ogaden conflict would help us to analyse the role of the superpowers in the regional conflicts of the Indian Ocean. Superpower involvement had far reaching implications in global politics and geo-politics of the Indian Ocean region. Between the two super-powers the U.S.A and the USSR, the Americans made their presence first in the Horn of Africa. It became a major partner of the Imperial rulers of Ethiopia since 1953.

### **U.S.A's Policy In the Horn of Africa :**

The U.S.A replaced Britain as a major western adviser in the Ethiopian administration and particularly the Ethiopia military. The official relationship between the U.S.A and Ethiopia was confirmed by the Mutual Defence Agreement signed by them in 1953. From 1953 to 1974 over a hundred million dollars worth of economic assistance and military equipment worth 200 million was given by the U.S.A to Ethiopia.<sup>71</sup>

Fiscal value of Washington's military sales and aid to Addis Ababa was \$ 24 million in 1974. This was enhanced to \$40 million in 1975. In 1975, the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) based in Ethiopia was half of the total number of U.S advisers in the entire sub Saharan Africa. In 1976 the U.S administration confirmed a package of credit sales for a period of twenty seven months to Ethiopia ending in September 1977.<sup>(72)</sup>

U.S State Administration continued its military assistance policy to Ethiopia, despite change in the political regime there. The U.S policy objectives towards the Horn of Africa were emphasised by its Deputy Assistant Secretary of State. Two reasons were outlined for continued U.S support to Ethiopia. First it was felt that the long standing relationship with Ethiopia would not be affected by a change in regime. And secondly, it was felt that U.S.A's continued support to the Dergue rule could avoid Ethiopia's tilt toward the Soviet Union. The U.S.A in other words wanted to play the role of a balancer in the region in view of the increased Soviet involvement in Somalia.<sup>(73)</sup>

However in 1977, the U.S Presidency changed with the election of Jimmy Carter. The U.S policy in Africa was recast with a clear emphasis on the state of Human Rights violation in respective African states. This directly affected the continued U.S assistance to Ethiopia. The new incumbents of the U.S State Department expressed displeasure with suppression of the different political groups or the indigenous secessionist movements by the Dergue rule in Ethiopia. The U.S.A

considered the suppression and political killings to be a gross violation of Human Rights by the Dergue regime. The new administration in U.S.A was against the use of U.S weapons located in Ethiopia for silencing the voices of the revolts in the Ogaden and Djibouti.<sup>(75)</sup> On this final pretext the U.S.A's Military Assistance Programme (MAP) to the tune of \$100 million was cancelled in 1977. The Carter administration also blocked a \$200 million World Bank aid to Ethiopia. However it retained its Economic Assistance Programme of \$10 million till 1978.<sup>(75)</sup> Ethiopia reacted to the U.S policy by closing the Kagnaw military base facilities located near Asmara in the Eritrean plateau. It also expelled 117 U.S personnel from Ethiopia by 1977.<sup>(76)</sup> We now proceed to analyse the U.S. policy towards Ethiopia in the conflict of the Horn of Africa 1977-78.

### **The U.S.A's Policy During The Ogaden War :**

The U.S.A did not offer any assistance to the Dergue regime in Ethiopia. Ethiopia faced the combined attack of the WSLF and the Somalian forces in the Ogaden war (1977) on its own. In spite of 25 years of relationship, the U.S.A remained a mere witness as the Soviet trained Somalian forces defeated Ethiopia. The Soviet Union however shifted its support to Ethiopia mid-way through the Ogaden conflict and the U.S.A reacted strongly to the Soviet move towards Ethiopia.

The U.S Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance expressed the U.S.A's concern over the increasing conflict in the Ogaden at a News Conference

on the 10th Feb 1978.<sup>(77)</sup> The U.S.A asked the two parties to end hostilities and bring about a negotiated settlement. The conflict had to be contained, according to the U.S, as it could lead to a nuclear arms race in the area. Cyrus Vance called for a cease fire, and the withdrawal of the Soviet and Cuban forces from Ethiopia.<sup>(78)</sup>

The President of the U.S.A at two consecutive news conferences on the 16th February 1978 and 2nd March 1978 called for Somalia's withdrawal from the Ogaden area and Ethiopian territory. He simultaneously asked the marching Ethiopian troops not to cross the Somalia border. The U.S. President also asked for a greater involvement of the OAU in working out an African solution to the issue.<sup>(79)</sup>

Regarding the Soviet Union's growing influence and support for Ethiopia the U.S President expressed the U.S.A's concern in a global perspective. Though not conclusively, President Jimmy Carter stated that increasing Soviet involvement in the Horn of Africa could adversely affect the Strategic Arms limitations Talks (SALT-II).<sup>(80)</sup> The SALT-II was to be announced shortly between the U.S.A and the U.S.S.R. Apart from rhetorical commitments, the U.S.A chose to remain neutral in the Ogaden Crisis.

In fact U.S.A's policy in the Horn of Africa was more concerned about observing Soviet operations in the region and its status-quo. The U.S.S.R made its first entry by the Treaty of Friendship with Somalia in 1963.<sup>(81)</sup> With the U.S.A supporting Ethiopia and the Soviets playing an

increasing role in Somalia, Cold war politics became a part of this region as well.

The Horn of Africa was otherwise important only for its geographical location on the Red Sea and the Western Indian Ocean.<sup>(82)</sup> It was turned into a major factor in global politics after the mid-seventies. Having analysed U.S.A's policies, an assessment of the Soviet Union's presence and influences would complete the study of superpower involvement in yet another regional conflict in the Indian Ocean.

### **The Soviet Union and the Horn of Africa :**

In accordance with the initial agreement signed in 1963, the Soviet Union fulfilled its promises with Somalia of training 20,000 soldiers approximately. By 1975, Somalia's military power was quite close to Ethiopia's fire power at least on paper according to a study conducted by the International Institute of Strategic Studies in 1975. Somalia's military comprised 23,000 men, 250 tanks, 300 armoured personnel carrier and a small workable air force.<sup>(83)</sup>

Somalia did not fail to recognise the services of the Soviet Union. It signed a Treaty of Friendship & Cooperation with the Soviet Union in 1974.<sup>(84)</sup> The Russians were allowed to develop and utilise the port of Berbera, though not with all the basing rights. The Soviet supersonic facility was at an instant striking distance from the Bab-el-Mandeb. By 1975 the Soviet Union had a 12,000 ft runway, an advanced Naval

support network and a major communication centre in Berbera. All the facilities were protected by the Surface-to-air Missile System (SAM) installed at the base. An air base commissioned by the Soviet Union at Harghessa in 1972 became operational by the mid-seventies.<sup>(65)</sup> Prior to the Ogaden war in 1976 Somalia had 50 MIG fighters, 7 Ilyushin bombers. This was supported by T-54 tanks one of most advanced war equipment on ground.

Apart from strategic considerations the Soviet-Somali relations also had been shaped Soviet Union's ideological disposition after 1969. The new Revolutionary government of Siad Barre which assumed power in 1969 announced its commitment to the socialist cause in 1970.<sup>(66)</sup> This was followed by a substantial increase in the Soviet aid to Somalia. From \$ 35 million the aid was increased \$50 million in 1971. The Soviet Union offered generous support to President Barre's administration in meeting the severe drought conditions in 1975. The Soviet Union helped the Somalian administration to resettle around 100,000 nomads into prepared agricultural settlements in the country's southern region and some 20,000 people along the coast. In fact the Soviet Union became a major partner in Somalia's socialisation process and in its nationalistic goals.

The Soviet training allowed a confident WSLF and Somalia's regular forces to fulfil their quest for unification for the first time in July 1977. Somalia was able to make substantial territorial gains. However later in the year (1977), there was a sudden shift in Soviet policy from Somalia

to the new revolutionary Dergue regime in Ethiopia. The Soviet Union's tilt towards the Dergue came at a time when the Dergue regime was faced with grave external threats as well as internal dissensions. The road linking Addis Ababa to the Ethiopia's coastline was threatened by the Eritreans and the Somalia forces.

The Soviet Union arrived in Ethiopia to rescue the latter from a virtual collapse. It was denied of any support from the U.S.A which had virtually closed down its operations there. Soviet-Ethiopian friendship had officially taken off in May 1977. Following Mengistu's five day visit to Moscow. The relationship was consolidated with a twenty -year Treaty of Friendship signed in 1977.<sup>(67)</sup> By September, 1977, the Soviet Union had airlifted approximately \$385 million in arms to Ethiopia. These armaments included 48 MIG jet fighters, 200, T-54 and T-55 tanks and a number of SAM. 3 and SAM. 7 anti-aircraft missiles. Cuban military personnel were air-lifted to Ethiopia to train and strengthen the Ethiopian forces<sup>(68)</sup> to fight the irrendentist not only in the Ogaden but also in Eritrea. The Ethiopians were able to avenge their defeat in the hands of Somalia with Soviet and Cuban forces in March 1978. The Ethiopian counter attack which was very swift threatened Somalia's territorial frontiers itself.

The swing in Soviet support from Somalia to its rival Ethiopia in the midst of a conflict was rarely witnessed in contemporary global politics. The Soviet move became a debatable issue. Scholars<sup>(69)</sup> viewed it as a calculated move in fulfilling the goal of socialist internationalism

or as a 'collective security' programme as envisaged in Asia. Others questioned the Soviet capability of a massive airlift of arms at that time. The Soviets also ran a probable risk in carrying out this sudden shift in policy towards Ethiopia. There was always a chance of the Dergue collapsing under pressure from internal and external sources.<sup>(90)</sup>

President Said Barre's reaction to the Soviet policy was one to be expected. Somalia felt betrayed by the Soviet Union. The state had come closest to realising its dream of a Greater Somali nation. However it was defeated in the Ogaden war when Ethiopia supported by the Soviet Union and Cuba launched its counter offensive attack against Somalia. The shift in the Soviet policy was a major factor responsible for the defeat of Somalia at the hands of Ethiopia. Following the change in the Soviet policy, President Barre withdrew all military and base facilities extended to the Soviet Union in Somalia.

The Soviet Union lost the utilisation of the strategically located Berbera naval base in the Indian Ocean. It also lost the aircraft landing facility at Harghessa. Somalia ordered the expulsion of Soviet officials from the country. Soviet Union may have redeemed Ethiopia's prestige, but lost credibility as an ally. Finally, Somalia abrogated the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation it had signed with the Soviet Union in 1974.<sup>(91)</sup>

Having examined the regional and extra-regional dimensions of the Ogaden conflict in the Horn of Africa in this chapter, the following chapter proceeds to discuss the causes and out come of the eight year



conflict between Iran and Iraq (1980-88). The chapter investigates the third case study of inter-state conflict in the Indian Ocean region and the involvement of the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R.

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## **CHAPTER - IV**

### **THE IRAN - IRAQ CONFLICT - 1980-1988**

The 1980-88 war in the Persian Gulf between Iran and Iraq was one of the major conflicts in the Indian Ocean arc. The war engulfed the other states in the Persian Gulf region.<sup>1</sup> Also the Gulf conflict turned into a major concert of global politics as it stretched out for a period of eight years. It was one of the longest drawn conflicts in the Indian Ocean region in contemporary political history. The United Nations Organisation (UNO) played a decisive and influential role during the conflict. It was eventually responsible for drawing up the terms based on which the war ended. The 1980-88 Gulf war also became a major arena of U.S -Soviet rivalry.

This chapter is an attempt to analyze the Gulf war, between Iran and Iraq in its varied but related dimensions. It discusses the geographical and ethnic distribution as well as the religious and political divergence in the nature of the two states. These factors and differences were directly or indirectly related to the rivalry between Iran and Iraq. The chapter also dwells on the involvement of third parties in the conflict. In the process it studies the UNO's reconciliatory efforts and the involvement of the USA and the Soviet Union in the Iran-iraq war.

The out break of the war which was started by Iraq, involved multi-dimensional issues in Iran-Iraq relations. Some of the issues

were historical and others were based on the existing and emerging political relations between the two major states in the Persian Gulf. Their rivalry and the long drawn conflict affected the political environment of the states in the region which shared their borders, religion and oil resources with one or both the belligerents. Apart from affecting the entire Persian Gulf, the conflict had larger global ramifications as well.

Globalisation of the conflict in the Persian Gulf was almost inevitable as the region was a major supplier of crude oil to the different parts of the world. In the East, states like Japan and China and on the West major West European states like Germany and the U.S.A were dependent on crude oil supplied from this region. The Soviet Union which was not dependent on oil supply was interested in the region owing to geo-strategic or geo-political consideration rather than any geo-economic reasons.<sup>(2)</sup> Keeping in view their respective interests the U.S.A and the USSR were actively involved in this conflict.

The Gulf conflict (1980-88) exposed the ideological and political differences between Iran and Iraq. Iraq was responsible for opening the attack on the 22nd Sept 1980.<sup>(3)</sup> Thereafter both the major states of the Persian Gulf battled it out to establish their hegemony in the region. Internal politics of Iraq prior to the war was well under the control of the Ba'ath Party government headed by Saddam Hussain. Regionally the state had no animosity with its immediate neighbours, like Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Syria and Jordan. Iraq's relationship with the Shah of Iran (1942-1979) could be described as congruent since the Algiers

agreement of 1975.<sup>(4)</sup> Both the states shared certain common interests as members of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). They also opted to avoid differences leading to tensions in the Gulf region.

Iraq was one of the first states to recognise the new Islamic Revolutionary regime of Iran (1979). The new regime headed by Ruhollah Khomeini a Shi'ite Ayatollah was in place after the Islamic Movement deposed the Shah of Iran in February, 1979.<sup>(5)</sup> However Iraq's acknowledgment of the new Islamic Republic did not receive similar reciprocation from the Ayatollah and his regime. The Islamic regime in Iran was not only trying to change the existing order of the Iranian society but was aiming to alter the existing ideas of Pan-Arabism in the Persian Gulf. Similarly it was not willing to accept the status quo in Iran- Iraq relationship.<sup>(6)</sup> Differences between the two states eventually resulted in a major confrontation which lasted eight years.

However before discussing the war at its different stages it would be necessary to understand the geographic, the ethnic, religious and social distribution of both Iran and Iraq. This analysis will give an insight into the traditional and existing causes of rivalry between the two states.

### **The Islamic Republic of Iran :**

Topographically Iran is at an elevation of more than 1,500 ft. (450 mts) above sea level. The heartland of the state is generally a high

plateau which is surrounded by mountains on almost all sides rising upto a height of about 6,500ft. above sea level. The lowlands of Iran are along the Karun river along its borders with Iraq. It has a narrow coastline along the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman in the south. The land that meets the sea is also at an average elevation of 1,000 ft. above sea-level at most places.<sup>(7)</sup>

Iran is a mountainous state. Some of its major mountain ranges are the Elburz (Albroz) mountains in the north, the Khorasan mountain chain in the east and the Baluchistan ranges in the South which extends to form the eastern plateau of Iran. The Zagros mountain is the longest mountain range of Iran. It originates from the north-west of Iran and the border of the former Soviet Union. It extends to meet the Makaran mountain ranges in the south-east of Iran. This mountainous state has vast stretches of barren plateau which are mostly salty deserts. The only relief to this harsh landscape is provided by the river Karun, which is also a navigable river. The capital of Iran is Tehran.<sup>(8)</sup>

As a result of its geographical attributes most of Iran is a wasteland and an uninhabited place because of its salty deserts. Only 10% of the country is cultivable while another 27% is fit for grazing. The agricultural land is located between the mountains and the deserts and only 40% of it is irrigated. The forest area of Iran is along its border with Caspian sea. The country's major wealth is its petroleum reserves. In the early 1980's the reserves were an estimated 7,734,000,000 metric tonnes.

This accounts for more than 8% of the world's reserves. Natural gas reserves of Iran was only second to that of the erstwhile Soviet Union, and made up 1/6 th of the world's reserves. The country also had substantial reserves of coal copper and iron ore. <sup>(9)</sup>

The total land area of Iran measures 1,648,000 sq. kms. The state shares its international borders in the north with the Soviet Union and the Caspian sea; on the east are the states of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Located on its western borders are Turkey and Iraq. The Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman wash its southern coastline.<sup>(10)</sup> The estimated population of Iran in 1984 was approximately 43,820,000. Iranians or Persians are the majority and they inhabit different parts of the state. The other major ethnic groups are the Kurdish and Lurs or aboriginal Persians. They speak the same language as the Bakhtiyaris another tribe who live in the Zagros mountains.<sup>(11)</sup>

A majority of the Iranians follow the Shi'ite faith of Islam. Infact Shi-i-Islam is the official state religion. The Kurdish and the Turkmens are Sunni Muslim. The political business of the state is conducted in accordance with the Islamic Constitution adopted in 1979.<sup>(12)</sup> The supreme political power is vested in the 'Faqih', the leader of the Shi-i-te sect of Iran. On the death of the Faqih, an elected council is empowered to select a religious leader or a council of religious leaders who are to assume the power of the 'Faqih' <sup>13</sup>

The Faqih of Iran commands the military forces, approves the Presidential candidate and chooses the highest judicial authorities. He



also appoints six clerical members of the 11 members council of guardians. The council reviews all the bills passed by the unicameral legislature (National Assembly) known as the Majilis. This is done to ensure constitutional validity and conformity to the Shi-its faith.<sup>(14)</sup>

The Majilis comprises 270 members elected for a period of 4 years by popular vote. The highest executive office of Iran is the President who is elected for a term of 4 years. The President nominates the Prime Minister with the approval of the Majilis. The ruling Islamic Republican Party had continued to play a dominant role in Iran's politics, while other parties also participated in the political process. The highest judicial organisation comprises the religious jurists. They form the Supreme court and High Council of the judiciary.<sup>(15)</sup>

The social life of Iran since 1979 was completely dictated by the Islamic Constitution and the dictates of the Faqih. Even in the early 80's illiteracy was as high as 50%, though primary education was compulsory. There was no freedom of the press. Instead a special law was enacted in 1979 prohibiting newspapers from writing against or questioning the political and religious leadership. Planned economic development initiated in 1949 was ended by the revolution in 1979. The Islamic Republic of Iran had a military strength of 2,00,000 and a para military force of 75,000 men.<sup>(16)</sup>

With the administrative, political and social controls of the Iranian society dominated by the clergy the foreign policy expectedly moved

along similar lines. The new regime was unwilling to accept any kind of flexibility in international relations as well. The Ayatollah's regime began to assert itself as champion of Islam and the Arabs. The regime pledged to work against the non-Islamic and 'Western imperialistic' influences in the Muslim world. Iraq was cited as one such anti-Islamic state inspite of Iraq's policy of Arab nationalism. Iran's attitude towards Iraq resulted in the direct confrontation between the two states leading to the Gulf war. However, before discussing the war scenario it is important to analyse Iraq's geo-political characteristics.

### **Iraq : A Socialist Arab State :**

Iraq is located in the north western end of the Persian Gulf and covers an area of 437,522 sq. kilometers. It is bordered on the north by Turkey; on the east by Iran ;and on the south-east by the Persian Gulf;on the west by Syria and Jordan and on the south by Kuwait and Saudi-Arabia. The population in Iraq was around 15,000,000 in 1984.The capital of Iraq is Baghdad.<sup>(17)</sup>

In comparison to Iran, Iraq is primarily made up of lowlands which seldom exceeds 1,000 ft. in height. Less than 15% of the country is above 1,500 ft. .The country can be divided into three major physiographic regions i.e. the south western deserts' the Tigris-Euphrates Basin and the North-Eastern highland that rises to a height 5000 ft. above sea level. Rawanduz the highest peak of Iraq rises to a height of 12,001 ft. above sea-level ,where the borders of the three-states namely Iran, Iraq and Turkey converge.<sup>(18)</sup>

The south-western deserts of Iraq covers 40% of the state. Starting from an elevation from the volcanic plateau of Syria and Jordan it gradually descends to reach the sea-level at the head of the North-Western Persian Gulf. The river basin of the two rivers Tigris and Euphrates separates the highlands from the South-western deserts. The river basin accounts for 5 % of the land area of Iraq. It extends from the north west to the south -east and forms well marked upper and lower basins separated by a mountainous projection near Baghdad. The lower basin forms extensive marshlands because of its low gradient.<sup>(19)</sup>

The rivers Tigris and Euphrates converge at a point known as Al-Qurnah near the marshlands .The Shatt-al Arab,the major water way of the Persian Gulf emerges from this point. The Shatt-at Arab is 204 Kms long and 548 meters wide. The final 102 kms before it meets the Persian Gulf forms the Iraq-Iran border below the city of Basra. This water way is navigable. The river Karun flowing through Iran also converges in the Shatt-al-Arab. As a result this water way which is used for navigation by both Iran and Iraq has been a major topic of dispute between the two states.<sup>(20)</sup>

Most of the arable land in Iraq comprises of the Tigris and Euphrates valley which is around 13% of the total land area. One third of this land is irrigated. Petroleum and natural gas are Iraq's richest mineral resources and the mainstay of its economy. Apart from agriculture and petroleum, manufacturing industries also contributed to the state controlled Iraq's economy. Its major industrial centers have been Basra, Baghdad Mosul and Kirkuk.

Iraq's population mainly consists of Arabs who are concentrated around central and southern Iraq. They make up for more than three fourths of the total population. There is also a settlement of Persian migrants from Iran in the east of Iraq. They form a distinct ethnic group. However from the 1970's they had to face deportations by the Ba'ath regime whenever relations between Iran and Iraq worsened

Another distinct and articulate ethnic minority are the Kurdish or Kurds. They occupy the north eastern highlands and share a commonalty with the Kurdish population in Iran. The Turks or Turkmens another ethnic group of Iraq has merged with local Arab population to become a part of it. 95% of the population are followers of Islam; 52% of the Muslims are Shi-i-tes while 43% are of the Sunni sect. A few Trukmens and a majority of the Arabs are Shi'ites while the followers of the Sunni sect include the Arabs, Turks, Turkmens and Kurds. Christains comprise 4% of the population.<sup>(22)</sup> Therefore most of Iraq's population belong to the Arabic race.

The Arabic factor has been playing a dominant role in the social and political life of Iraq. Theology, religion or sect divisions has had a minimal or a subtle influence unlike in Iran. Iraq has been a single party state governed by the Arab dominated Ba'ath socialist party, which is a pan-Arab organisation.<sup>(23)</sup> Political power in Iraq has been in the control of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) comprising nine members. They are the Ba'ith party's regional commanders as well

Legislations or the laws of the state are enacted by decrees made by the RCC.

The President of the RCC is the head of the Iraq state and the supreme commander of its armed forces. In the 1980's defense forces comprised a military force of 255,000 men and a volunteer popular army of 250,000 men. The R.C.C appoints a council of ministers or the cabinet which is responsible for the daily administration of the state. Iraq also has a legislative body called the National Assembly which is bi-cameral. Its members numbering 250 in all, are elected for a period of five years. Iraq's provisional constitution which was adopted in 1970, vested the highest judicial authority to the Court of Cassation.<sup>(24)</sup>

The state of Iraq has been divided into eighteen province for the sake of administrative convenience. Three of these provinces, i.e. Dahluk, Irbil and as Sulmaniyah make up the Kurdish Autonomous Region which has limited self-government controlled by Baghdad. The Ba'ath government had however outlawed the organized political parties or groups in the Kurdish region. The Kurdish people have been demanding complete independent status as a sovereign state for quite sometime.<sup>(25)</sup>

The Ba'ath party rule has been opposed to this Kurdish demands. As a result it has often become targets of attacks by pro-Kurdish members. It has also been the target of resistance from Muslim Shiite groups from within Iraq and outside. This is because the government of Iraq is dominated by the followers of the Sunni Sect though the Shi'ites

have a slender majority. As a result the Shi-i-te majority has often created obstacles for the Baath Party Government in Iraq. The government while putting down these resistance often deported the Shi'ite population, mainly to Iran.<sup>(26)</sup>

The Government of Iraq had earned the dislike of the Khomeini regime in Iran as a result of Sunni domination in the former state. Apart from the inter-sect rivalry Ayatollah Khomeini also nurtured a personal hatred for Saddam Hussain. Hussain had ordered the expulsion of the Ayatollah from Iraq where he had stayed in exile for 14 years seeking refuge fearing the wrath of the Shah of Iran. He was expelled as relations between Iran and Iraq improved following the Algiers agreement signed in 1975.<sup>(27)</sup>

The new Iranian regime began a systematic policy of rallying other Arab states against the Ba'athist regime of Iraq. From this point of time the relationship between the two states worsened. Khomeini considered the pan - Arabism of Iraq as racist, fascist and anti-Islamic.<sup>(28)</sup> Iraq considered Khomeini's statement against it as medieval fanatic thinking. Iran's action against Iraq was considered not only as an act against Iraq but also as a threat to the other countries of the region.<sup>(29)</sup> As Iran became more vociferous against the Ba'ath regime in Iraq several anti-government activities followed in Iraq. Iran increased its support to the Kurdish groups who were seeking independence and secession from Iraq in the North West. The Shi-i-al Dawa party consisting of Shi'ites was backed by the Khomeini regime to work against the Sunni dominated

Ba'ath rule. Several attempts were made on the ministers in the government. One such attempt was made on the life of Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz who escaped. However this incident resulted in the death of two students of the Mustan-Sirriyah University.<sup>(30)</sup> In a retaliatory move Iraq began attacking Iranians residing in Iraq and ordered their mass expulsion. The Ba'ath government was also considering a military action against Iran. Stable economic condition allowed Iraq to strengthen its defence system and contemplate a military attack on Iran. Iran however did not lessen its tirade against Iraq. A possible military action against Iran provided Saddam Hussain a good opportunity to set the power balance in the Persian Gulf in Iraq's favour. At the same time Iraq's military action could also contain the spread of Iran's Islamic fundamentalism. Iran however refused to take cognizance of a possible military threat from Iraq.

President Saddam Hussain directed his ire against Iran by first abrogating the Algiers Agreement 1975, on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 1980. Iraq complained of Iran's constant interference in its internal affairs while ending this accord with Iran.<sup>(31)</sup> Iran in retaliation blocked the Shatt-at Arab waterway and attacked Iraq's ships plying on it. Eventually on the 22nd September, 1980 Iraq launched a multi-pronged attack on Iran.

### **The Eight Years War:1980-1988 :**

Iraq launched its attack both on ground and in air. Iraq's air force carried out simultaneous air attacks on ten Iranian air-fields while its

ground forces moved forward along the Shatt-al-Arab border with Iran. Even though it was a multi-pronged attack, Iraq's onslaught lacked quick execution. Infact it did not commit all its military strength in the war at once. Territorially also Iraq's offensive was limited to the border regions of Iran near the Shatt-al-Arab. Initially, Iran also limited the attacks to Iraq's military and strategic targets.<sup>(33)</sup> Because of a limited attack by Iraq, Iran was able to successfully defend the targeted areas. Thus Iraq's aggression and the war at its initial stages has been described as a limited war by writer Efraim Karsh. According to Karsh 'A limited war may be defined as one which does not demand the utmost military effort of which the belligerents are capable, leaving each sides civilian life and armed forces largely intact. More specifically, limited war involves a small portion of the local armies, our conducted within confined theatre boundaries, are directed against counter-force rather than counter-value targets'.<sup>(34)</sup>

However even a limited war was capable of bringing pressure on the adversary. Iraq's attack on Iran lacked the elements of shock and surprise. It did not have the required pressure that could create a devastation or crisis in the enemy ranks. Instead Iran had sufficient scope to recover from being a defensive force to an offensive one within a short period of two months. By November 1980, Iran's military was able to launch a counter-offensive against Iraq.<sup>35</sup> Thus began a war that lasted eight years without any decisive conclusion. Both states returned back to their pre-war conditions.



For the sake of convenience the eight years of war-fare between Iraq and Iran (Sept 1980-July1988) has been analysed in four phases.<sup>(36)</sup>

### **The Initial Years (September 1980 - July 1982) :**

Iran's counter offensive earned a measure of success during 1981. Iran was able to liberate most of the territory occupied by Iraq's army.<sup>(37)</sup> Simultaneously, Tehran made efforts to bring diplomatic pressure on Baghdad for the withdrawal of its troops from the remaining Iranian territory. Iran also welcomed third party mediations like the Islamic conference, the Non-aligned Movement and the UNO. However the efforts of the international organisations failed to stop the war.<sup>(38)</sup>

Algeria offered its good offices and made considerable efforts in order to reconcile the two warring sides and end hostilities. It tried to resolve the issue on the basis of Algiers Agreement of 1975. Accordingly Algeria insisted on Iraq's payment of compensation for targeting non-military areas or population. The Algerian efforts seemed to pay dividends by April May 1982. However the chances of ending the conflict fell through as the aircraft carrying the Algerian delegates from Baghdad to Tehran crashed enroute on 4 th May 1982.<sup>(39)</sup>

Iran blamed Iraq for the plane crash and announced an open invasion of Iraq and the end of the Ba'ath party government there. By May 1982 Iran had gained in confidence and military strength. This was indicated by Iran's approach to the conflict as well as its denouncement of Iraq.

for the accident. By June July 1982 Iran was no longer on the defensive, it was more an offensive partner in the war. From then on Iran had gained a clear initiative in the war.<sup>(40)</sup>

### **The Second Phase (July 1982 - Winter 1983-84) :**

In this phase Iran's military forces were able to push back Iraq's army across the border and also occupied certain sectors along the border in Iraq's territory. Apart from these initiatives Iran did not register any significant victory over Iraq. Nevertheless Iran's attitude towards Iraq became even more hostile during this period of one and half years. Tehran rejected any diplomatic efforts at ending the war. President Ali Khamenhi and other prominent leaders of Iran called for the ouster of Saddam Hussin.<sup>(41)</sup> This stance further worsened relations between the two state and made reconciliation efforts more difficult. Iran even rejected U.N's second cease-fire resolution in 1983 even as casualties mounted on both sides as a result of the 'Holy war'.<sup>(42)</sup> By the end of 1983 and the beginning of 1984 injuries and war-deaths increased alarmingly. This managed to lower the zeal of the common man towards this war.<sup>(43)</sup>

Apart from the common man, both states in general began showing signs of war weariness. However the conflict continued without any major changes. While Iran became more aggressive it could do little to stop Iraq's onslaught. Thus attacks and counter-attacks balanced the advantages and disadvantages for both parties. In the meantime the war had entered the fourth year which marked the beginning of the third phase.

### **The Third Phase (January 1984 to July 1987) :**

As the conflict dragged on each party became increasingly aware of the destructions caused by the military option. This phase was also the longest one. Both parties tried to end the war by using non-military options. Iran and Iraq, each wanted the result of the conflict to end in its own favour. Also, during this phase the Iran-Iraq conflict affected other states of the Persian Gulf. Both Iran and Iraq tried to gain the support of other Arab states which had earlier declared neutrality in this war. Iran made efforts towards regional cooperation and friendship. As a result, from mid-1985 there were a number of exchanges and mutual visits between Iran and Saudi Arabia (from May 1985). This was also followed by visits and exchanges with United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman.<sup>(45)</sup>

Efforts towards a negotiated settlement were more forthcoming from Iran than Iraq. Tehran drew the attention of the UNO to resolve the crisis. The Secretary General J.Perez De'Cuellar responded to Iran's invitation and visited the state in April, 1985. The Secretary General put forth proposals to end hostilities and cease-fire. However both the parties had no agreement about the line of cease-fire. Moreover Iraq refused to be blamed as aggressor.<sup>(46)</sup> Thus the UN proposal once again failed to reconcile both the warring states. Iran still continued to make attempts to stop more bloodshed.

Iran's action was spearheaded by its Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati. He aimed to end the conflict with or without any territorial

gains for Iran. There were some radical factions within Iran which were still in support of a military solution to the Iran-Iraq rivalry. This radical group was encouraged by Iran's success in capturing certain key areas of Iraq such as the Fao Islands in 1986.<sup>(47)</sup> However there was a growing resentment among the people towards the war, which was resulting in mass casualties due to the use of chemical weapons by Iraq.<sup>(48)</sup> The youth in Iran deliberately tried to avoid recruitment into the armed forces. Such incidents prompted the government to reconsider the peace proposals of the UN. It began to invoke the UN 9 step peace Resolution to achieve cease-fire.<sup>(49)</sup>

The draft document was at its final stages, when sudden development on the war-front blocked the chances of ending the Iran-Iraq conflict. An U.S. destroyer ship U.S.S. Stark, in the Persian Gulf was attacked by Iraq's war-planes on the 17th May, 1987. This attack killed 37 U.S. Marines on board the ship. Iraq apologised to the USA stating that it had mistaken the US ship for an Iranian vessel. The U.S. administration accepted Iraq's explanation but blamed Tehran for creating and escalating tensions in the Persian Gulf. This incident was a manifestation of this tension according to the U.S. administration.<sup>50</sup>

The Reagan administration reacted diplomatically to the incident and introduced a Resolution (No.598) in the Security Council.<sup>51</sup> The Resolution ordered both states to cease-fire and hold negotiations to end the seven year-old war. Iran refused to accept the U.S. sponsored resolution terming it as biased and against Iran's interest. Therefore

negotiations once again ended abruptly and the war was extended by a further period of one more year.

### **The Final Phase (1987-1988) :**

This phase was marked by U.S.A's dominating presence and role in the conflict. The U.S. involvement (as discussed later) in the Gulf increased since 1987. U.S.A's presence frustrated Iran which was incapable of militarily countering the U.S. forces. In the meanwhile U.S. administration justified its naval presence for protecting the oil-traffic routes of the Gulf. Its umbrella not only served its own interest but that of its Western allies like U.K. and Germany and its allies in the Gulf like Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E. <sup>(52)</sup>

While the U.S. military presence posed a powerful challenge to Iran, U.S.A's ire in the war was directed against Iran rather than Iraq. U.S.A's military build-up increased tremendously during this phase. Iran considered such a presence as a threat to its territorial sovereignty and integrity. On the 3rd July, 1988 the U.S. aircraft carrier U.S.S Vincennes shot down an Iran-Air passenger jet-liner, flying over the Gulf. All its 290 occupants lost their lives in this attack.<sup>(53)</sup> The shooting down of the jet-liner was a major set-back for Iran. The Iranian leadership had to seriously reconsider its decision on continuing the war with Iraq. Therefore the Ayatollah was prevailed upon to accept the UN Security Council Resolution 598.<sup>(54)</sup> It agreed to cease-fire the pre-war conditions of both the rivals, were restored. The conflict ended under UN

supervision. The world body had played a central role in the Iran-Iraq war. The UNO was untiring in its efforts in ending the war despite set back in the early stages. The role of the UN had begun from the initial stages of the war when Iran appealed against Iraq's attack on its territory.

### **The U.N.O. and the Iran-Iraq Conflict :**

As the war progressed from the fourth year to the fifth year the UN's mediatory role grew in significance. Iran in particular appealed time and again to the international organisation to bring an end to the conflict. Iran's interest and the interest of the international community prompted the Secretary General to visit Tehran in 1985 with the proposals to end the war. However these proposals failed to end the dispute. Towards the close of 1986, Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati tried to revive negotiations in a bid to end the war.<sup>155</sup> The U.N. once again responded with a nine point peace proposal. Even these proposals were unsuccessful. Iran expressed its insecurity as the U.S. presence in the Persian Gulf increased. The continued strife between Iran and Iraq resulted in mounting human casualties particularly with the use of chemical weapons by Iraq. Third party and neutral shipping was also adversely affected as it became targets in the conflict. Thus international demand to end hostilities increased in the UNO.

The 20th July, 1987, UN Security Council voted unanimously in favour of a Resolution which was introduced in 1986. It demanded that Iran and Iraq observe an immediate cease-fire so that negotiations to end the war could begin. While passing the UN Resolution 598 the

Security Council disapproved the bombing on civilian centers, attack on neutral shipping and aircraft and the use of chemical weapons. The resolution also included an important clause. The clause stated that the UN Security Council would urge a worldwide arms embargo against the state that would refuse to accept the terms of the UN Resolution 598.<sup>(56)</sup>

In September, 1987, the UN Secretary General, Perez De'Cuellar visited Iran and Iraq. However he was unable to move Iran to accept the resolution. Iran considered the Resolution to be against its interest. After the downing of Iran's passenger air-liner by the U.S.A, Iran accepted the same proposals unconditionally. Thus the international organisation was able to prevail upon both side to end hostilities on the 8th July, 1988, by accepting the cease-fire and withdrawal of troops from each other's territories.<sup>(57)</sup>

The Iran-Iraq war was internationalised in more ways than one. As mentioned earlier in the chapter the Persian Gulf was virtually threatened not only by the two belligerents but also by the major U.S. presence. The U.S.A. had placed atleast two of its aircraft carriers in the Gulf waters and alerted its forces and facilities available at Diego Garcia. The cause and the nature of U.S.A.'s presence and its role in the conflict requires a separate treatment.

### **The U.S.A. and the Persian Gulf Conflict (1980-88) :**

In writing the history of the Iran-Iraq conflict the U.S. involvement forms an important component. Even before the war broke-out n

September, 1980, U.S. - Iran relations were already on a collision course. The U.S.A. had very close ties with the former regime of Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi of Iran (Shah of Iran). This regime was overthrown by the Islamic Revolution led by Ruhollah Khomeini in 1979. The Ayatollah's government followed certain anti-U.S. acts soon after the assumption of power. In one such act in November 1979, 66 U.S. citizens were taken as hostage in Tehran by the Islamic regime. Most of them were granted early release by Iran except for 14 U.S. diplomats who continued to be in Iran's captivity for more than a year.<sup>(58)</sup>

When the war began the U.S. administration was occupied in exploring the possible means for the release of its hostages being held by Iran. The hostages were eventually freed in January 1981 which coincided with the change of Presidents in the U.S.A. Ronald Reagan assumed the office of the President, taking over from the former President Jimmy Carter. However the release of the hostages was a result of the efforts by the Carter Administration.<sup>(59)</sup> The release of the hostages was achieved only after the U.S.A. exchanged armaments with Iran for the release of its diplomats, in October, 1980. The whole process of exchange was a clandestine act committed with the help of Israel. This was later confirmed by the U.S.A's National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski.<sup>(60)</sup>

Even after the release of the hostages the anti-Iranian mood prevailed in the U.S.A. For all practical purposes Iran was the most despised state in the U.S.A. The Reagan administration adopted a stand of neutrality as far as the events in the Persian Gulf region was concerned



However it was not totally indifferent to the political conditions in the Gulf, particularly that of its allies such as Saudi Arabia. This was evident through supply of Air-borne Warning and Control Systems (AWACS) to Saudi Arabia. In this way the U.S. administration continued to fulfill such commitments of its allies. Therefore in the period between 1981-1982 the U.S.A. kept away from the crisis between Iran and Iraq.<sup>(62)</sup>

However in 1983 U.S.A. expressed its increasing concern for the other neutral states of the Persian Gulf particularly Kuwait and Saudi Arabia because of their close proximity to the theatre of war.<sup>(63)</sup> The war could affect their security interests adversely as a result of this closeness. The U.S.A.'s major concern, however was the protection of the oil-traffic and oil-routes of the Persian Gulf. Geo-strategic considerations such as the close proximity of the Soviet Union sharing its land borders with Iran and Iraq was another cause for concern in the U.S. Thus support for its allies, the maintenance of open-sea lanes for oil traffic and Soviet containment, were the major factors in U.S.A's policy towards the Persian Gulf since 1983.<sup>(64)</sup> The Reagan administration, while expressing concern towards its Arab allies in the region opted to revive its relations with Iran. In this the U.S.A. did not make any secret of its intention of containing Soviet influence in the region and in Iran in particular. The U.S. President, Ronald Reagan, in a statement on the 13th November, 1986 clarified the U.S. as follows :

"America's long standing goals in the region have been to help preserve Iran's independence from Soviet domination; to bring

an honorable end to the bloody Iran-Iraq war; to halt the export of subversion and terrorism in the region. A major impediment to those goals have been an absence of dialogue and cut-off in communication between us. Its because of Iran's strategic importance and its influence in the Islamic world we chose to probe for a better relationship between our countries".<sup>(65)</sup>

However Washington's effort in rebuilding its relations with Tehran had already begun in 1985, when contacts were established on the shy between the two states. The contact was followed by the visit of U.S.A's National Security Adviser Robert Mac Farlane in May, 1986 to Iran.<sup>(66)</sup> Renewal of contact between Iran and U.S.A. resulted in the supply of armaments and spare-parts from U.S.A. to Iran after 1986. The arms-sale was also a clandestine operation.

The revelations of these secret deals with Iran turned into a major embarrassment for the U.S. administration internally as well as internationally. The issue came to be known as the 'Iran Gate scandal' or the 'Iran-Contra issue' in political circles. The findings of the report revealed that the revenue earned from the sales of arms to Iran was diverted to aid the Contra-rebels in Nicaragua, against the Sandinista Government there.<sup>(67)</sup> Following this disclosure the U.S. attitude to the Gulf-conflict changed considerably within a year. The U.S.A. conducted its foreign policy with a clear support for the Arab cause, against Iran's

fundamentalist Government. This was evident by the sharp increase in the U.S.A.'s naval and military presence in the Gulf since 1987.<sup>(68)</sup>

The U.S.A. became more involved in the Gulf War as it intensified its role of a protector of neutral shipping in the Gulf waters. Iran retaliated to the increased U.S. presence by threatening to block the Strait of Hormuz. Iran's forces often attacked third party oil vessels.<sup>(69)</sup> Kuwait was one such state to earn the wrath of Iran for extending its port facilities to Iraq. The Kuwaiti leadership sought American protection against Iran. The U.S.A. readily offered help to Kuwait. Thereafter Kuwait's ships often plied by flying the American flag. This was justified by the U.S.A.'s Foreign Secretary Caspar Weinberger in an interview<sup>(70)</sup>. He stated,

"We have had a naval presence in the Gulf for almost forty years. Our presence has been and is to ensure the flow of oil through the Strait of Hornuz to show our concern for the rights of neutral shipping in international waters and to ensure the security of friendly regional states....."

Between 1987-1988 (till the end of the war). The U.S.A. and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation NATO naval vessels in the Persian Gulf numbered 102 ships approximately.<sup>(71)</sup> The U.S.A. not only made its military presence in the Gulf but also used non-military options acted diplomatically to bring pressure on Iran. It initiated a move in the U.N. Security Council (Resolution 598) to bring pressure on Iran, though the

resolution was intended for Iraq and Iran. The anti-Iran tirade of the U.S.A. eventually resulted in the shooting down of the Iran Air jet-liner on the 3rd July, 1988, by the U.S. marines aboard U.S.S. Vincennes. This incident hastened the end of the eight year old war.

The Iran-Iraq war drew to an end in which the U.S.A. moved from a position of professed neutrality to emerge as a third external actor, in the rivalry between Iran and Iraq. In contrast the Soviet Union played a more subtle role. The Soviet presence was natural as it was a neighbouring state to both Iran and Iraq.

### **The Soviet Union and the Gulf War 1980-88 :**

The Soviet Union like the U.S.A. maintained a state of neutrality as the war between Iran and Iraq engulfed the Persian Gulf in 1980. However according to western estimates the Soviet Union in comparison to the U.S.A. had the initial advantages. It was believed in the Western circles that the fact that U.S.S.R's border was only 700 miles from the Arabian Sea and Gulf of Oman granted the Soviet Union a significant littoral advantage. In addition to this the U.S.S.R. also had its presence in Afghanistan since 1979. Afghanistan was only 235 miles from the Persian Gulf which gave the Soviet Union an upper hand vis-a-vis the regional conflict.<sup>(72)</sup>

The advantageous position of the Soviet Union according to the Western viewpoint could allow the Soviet Union to maintain its neutral

stance. At the same time the Soviet Union could conduct an easy surveillance of all activities in the region, including the U.S. naval operations from its bases in Afghanistan.<sup>(73)</sup> Also from the same bases the Russians were in a position to conduct combat operations if required. In all this the Soviet Union was seen to have gained the advantage as the revolution of Iran had ended the U.S.A's influence there.

The revolution in Iran could possibly act to the advantage of the U.S.S.R. because of the presence of the Tudeh party which had supported the new Ayatollah regime.<sup>(74)</sup> The Tudeh party was the socialist party in Iran which was supported by Moscow. Therefore by supporting the new regime the Tudeh party had the chances of playing an important role in the domestic politics of Iran.<sup>(75)</sup> The presence of the Tudeh Party in Iran allowed the Soviet Union to gain a better position than the U.S.A. Moreover the Soviet Union had already signed a Treaty of Friendship and cooperation with Iraq in 1972 which was honoured even during the war. The military dimension of the Treaty of Friendship was well established. According to Article 9 of the Treaty, the parties would "continue to develop cooperation in strengthening of their defense capabilities."<sup>(76)</sup> Accordingly Soviet arms deliveries to Iraq since 1974 comprised few hundreds of T-62 tanks, Scud SS missiles, 4 squadrons of MIG-23 fighters with an order for the large Soviet IL-76 transport aircrafts and some small to medium sized naval craft.<sup>(77)</sup> Even at the periphery of the region the Soviet Union had built close ties under Gorbachev with the government of North Yemen. Oman, the U.A.E.,

Bahrain, Jordan and Egypt. Thus the Western view point assessed Soviet Union's edge in Gulf war while justifying the U.S.A's role.

Whatever position the U.S.S.R. might have taken, Moscow's approach to the war was more cautious, and remained the same for most part of the conflict. When the war began the Soviet Union did not announce its support for Iraq or against Iran. Though the Soviet Union did not take sides during the conflict it reportedly supplied arms to both Iran and Iraq in the initial stages of the war.<sup>(78)</sup> However this supply was made indirectly through its allies in Eastern Europe namely Rumania and in West Asia namely South Yemen, Syria etc.<sup>(79)</sup>

The Soviet Union's arms supply to its allies gained momentum after the initial years of the conflict. Infact by 1983 Iraq received Soviet arms worth \$ 7.2 billion which comprised 41% of the total imports from the Soviet Union. The highest recipient of Soviet arms was yet another Arab state, that was Syria. It received \$ 9.2 billion worth of arms which was about 67% of its imports.<sup>(80)</sup> Apart from the arms supply the Soviet Union was believed to have a continuous naval presence of 27 ships, comprising 10 combatant and 17 support vessels in the vicinity of the Gulf.<sup>(81)</sup>

However the Soviet Union did not participate or get directly involved in the conflict. This could be explained by the U.S.S.R.'s lack of economic or oil dependence in the region. By 1986, the war began to spill-over into the open seas affecting neutral shipping. Soviet ships

also became targets of Iran's attack. Since then Soviet ships carrying war material to Iraq were accompanied by the Soviet Union's naval vessels in the Persian Gulf. In 1987 Soviet naval ships plying as escorts in the Persian Gulf comprised 6 Soviet frigates, 3 mine sweepers and an Intelligence gathering ship, according to official reports. Apart from escorting its own ships the Soviet navy did not participate in any combat in the Persian Gulf war.<sup>(82)</sup>

In the diplomatic sphere the Soviet Union voted for the U.N. Resolution 598 of July 1987 at the Security Council. However, it opposed the idea of an arms embargo against Iran which was one of the clauses of the Resolution initiated by the U.S.A. Vsevolod Oleandrov, the head of the Soviet Ministry's UN desk clearly stated - "There is no case in history of an arms embargo ending a war".<sup>(83)</sup>

Despite maintaining international neutrality the Soviet Union also had to bear certain consequences of the Gulf War. For instance the resumption of arms supply to Iraq, resulted in the banning of the Moscow backed Tudeh party by the Ayatollah regime. Soviet ships were also not spared from attacks by Iran. Another major Soviet casualty was the storming and the bombing of the Soviet Embassy in Tehran in early 1988.<sup>(84)</sup>

The U.S.S.R.'s involvement in the Gulf war had very little official commitment unlike that of the U.S.A. As was the nature with Soviet policy, official statements or explanation rarely supported its action. Soviet

official statement did not explain its low key relationship with Iraq or lack of support for Iraq during the initial stages of the war. The Soviet Union had a long standing Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation with Baghdad. Finally, unlike its American counter-part the Soviet Union's role in the Iran-Iraq War 1980-88 was less decisive. However it endorsed the UN Resolution 598 which was the basis of cease-fire between the two rivals after Iran accepted it unconditionally in July, 1988.

The results of the war did not favour any party and therefore remained undecisive. Differences between Iran and Iraq continued to exist even though both states signed the U.N.Resolution 598. Having discussed the last case study of the conflicts in the Indian Ocean, we now proceed to draw up the final analysis of the causes of the regional conflicts in the Indian Ocean region.



## CHAPTER - IV - FOOT NOTES

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3. Sreedhar, op.cit. p.133.
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5. Sreedhar op.cit. p.131.
6. Abdulghani, J.M. op.cit. p.181.
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8. Ibid pp 374-376.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
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12. Abdulghani J.M. op.cit. pp.179-180.
13. Ibid
14. *The New Encyclopaedia* op.cit p.376
15. Abdulghani, J.M. op.cit. p.180.
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18. Ibid op.cit p.376
19. Ibid.
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22. Ibid
23. According to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. "Our party is not neutral between belief and unbelief; it is on the side of belief always. But our party is not a religious party and it should not

be so". Again he stated, "We do not believe in dealing with life through religion because it would not serve the Arab nation. It would only serve to divide the nation into different religions and numerous sects and schools of thought." Source : Abdulghani J.M. op.cit.p.181.

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43. In February 1984 Iraq began the 'Tanker War' on Iranian oil tankers/civilian shipping on Gulf waters. On the 26 February 1984 Iraq carried out missile attacks on Kharg islands thus obstructing Iran's oil exports. This phase of the war ushered in the 'Tanker War' when rival oil tankers as well of the other neutral states were attacked by both Iraq and Iran. Sources: Sreedhar op.cit. p.138.
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47. From February 1984. The First War of Cities began. The two sides were interlocked in exchanges against each others' civilian population. This tactic developed into a more ferocious scale with the use of chemical weapons by Iraq against Iranian civilian population. This continued till the end of the war in 1988. Source : *Frontline* April 16-29, 1988.
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58. *Public Papers of the Presidents: Jimmy Carter 1980-81* pp.21-24.
59. *American Foreign Policy Basic Documents*, Department of State, Washington D.C. 1977-1980. Document No. 408, p.810.

60. Developments in the Middle East, January, 1986. Hearings Before the Sub-Committee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. House of Representatives, 99th Congress Second Session, Washington 1986. pp.8-9.
61. Hooglund, Eric. 'Reagan's Iran : Factions Behind U.S. Policy in the Gulf.' *Middle East Report*. March-April 1988. No.151 Vol.18 No.2 p.31.
62. *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* November 17, 1986. Department of State, Washington D.C. 1986. PP. 1559-1561.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. Hooglund, Eric. 'Reagan's Iran' : *MERIP* March-April 1988. op.cit. p.30.
66. The Foreign Policy Implications of Arms Sales to Iran and the Contra Connection Department of State Washington D.C. 1986. pp.94-101.
67. The Foreign Policy Implications of Arms Sales to Iran and the Contra Connection. Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs. House of Representatives 99th Congress, Second Session, Washington D.C. 1986. pp.57-63 and pp 65-68.

68. Ibid.
69. Fadil, Magda Abu. 'Interview with Casper Weinberger' *Middle East Report (MERIP)* July, 1987 Issue No.153 p.11.
70. Sick, Gary. op.cit. p.39.
71. Mc Gwire, Michael. 'The Middle East and Soviet Military Strategy' *MERIP* March - April 1988 p.13.
72. Also see Moisi, Dominique. 'European Perspective', in *Great Power Interests*, op.cit.pp 69-70.
73. Yodfat, Aryeh Y. *The Soviet Union and Revolutionary Iran*. London, Croom Helm Press, 1984, p.54. (Refer for President Brezhnev's official statement, dated: 2nd March, 1979, on Soviet Union and Revolutionary Iran). Also see Pravda 6th April, 1979., Comment by P.Demchenko - "the Pentagon's military bases have been abolished the country has withdrawn from CENTO.... this widens the aspect of coincidence in the USSR's and Iran's political position on the international arena." Moisi Dominique 'A *European Perspective in Great Power Interests in the Persian Gulf/Arabian Sea*. pp. 69-70. Moisi defines the Soviet position vis-a-vis the Persian Gulf in two perspective: first, its geographic proximity and a long standing involvement in the region (if not in the Gulf) allow it to legitimize its ambitions in historical terms. The Soviet



Union, thanks to a common border with Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan, can claim the same regional interest in the Middle East as the U.S. in Central America. Second a long term ideological vision gives Moscow the possibility of presenting itself alternatively as a status quo or as a revolutionary power bent on modifying the existing Middle Eastern Order.'

74. Yodfat, Aryeh Y. op.cit. pp. 54-55.
75. Clark, Ian. 'Soviet Arms Suppliers and Indian Ocean Diplomacy,' in Bowman, Larry W. and Clark, Ian. (ed). *The Indian Ocean in Global Politics* Boulder, Colorado. 1981. op.cit. pp. 157.
76. Ibid.
77. Yodfat, Aryeh Y. op.cit. p.82. It was widely believed that the Soviet policy during Iraq-Iran War was linked to its presence in Afghanistan. As border clashes increased between Iran and Iraq, U.S.S.R. preferred not to get involved or express opinions. Also see. Moisi, Dominique. 'A European Perspective' in Great Power Interests in the Persian Gulf op.cit. pp. 69-70. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism, especially after the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, appears increasingly to be a major concern for the Soviets. With a Muslim majority constituting 20% of the Soviet population, the Soviet Union can only be worried about the growing hostility of atheistic communism and

the heightened self-confidence of the Islamic minorities within the Soviet landmass.

78. Sreedhar. op.cit. pp. 131 The Soviet Union supplied arms to Iraq as a result of the Treaty signed between the two parties on 27th July, 1979. Iraq and Soviet Union had signed a 10 year military pact under which the Soviet Union undertook to meet all the Iraqi Armed Forces requirements in respect of equipment and armaments.
79. Lugar, Richard G. "U.S. Arms Sales and the Middle East." *Journal of International Affairs* vol.40 No.1 Summer 1986. pp.25-26.
80. Awati, M.P. op.cit. p.98.
81. Ibid.
82. Frontline. April 16-29,1988. op.cit.p.43.
83. Ibid.
84. Yodfat, Aryeh Y. *The Soviet Union And Revolutionary Iran*, London Croom Helm Press. 1984. pp.44-45 and pp.54-55.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the preceeding pages we have discussed the politics of the Indian Ocean region with reference to three conflicts that has entailed the continued pressure of the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. The Indian Ocean region on the whole, has been a complex geo-political entity. A few important themes can be discerned pertaining to the politics of the Indian Ocean region, while presenting the concluding part of the study in the following manner.

Being the third largest ocean, the Indian Ocean region comprises a wide variety of states functioning under its main sub-regions. By and large the states from the region appear similar due to their colonial past, economic and technological backwardness and constant struggle to build stable political regimes. What is more, developmental objectives continued to be of paramount importance among these states. Notwithstanding such obvious similarities it would be inappropriate to be unmindful of dissimilarities that have characterised the Indian Ocean region. Such dissimilarities manifest themselves in diversity of religion, culture, racial and ethnic groups on the one hand and resource endowments of the states on the other hand. To put it tersely, the Indian Ocean has housed religions like Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and ethnic groups mainly belonging to the black and brown races. Also the region has states like India which are endowed with vast resources. It also has small island states like Sri Lanka. Due to the

diversity and conflicting interest among states it is inconcievable to expect harmony of ties among states in the region.

Furthermore, the Indian Ocean has enormous geo-strategic significance. First, the Indian Ocean region has been a major sea lane of communciation for the U.S.A. as well as the western powers.

Second, it has major deposits of world's richest minerals such as petroleum, uranium, ironore molybedinum and so on.

Third, the mineral wealth of the ocean has arrested the attention of major western powers which are keen to extract such resources; and.

Finally all the major powers have also been involved either in building the naval bases at strategic points or cultivating strategically important littoral states to gain access to the waters of the Indian Ocean.

Among the major powers the presence of the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. can hardly be under estimated. The U.S.A. actually executed two of its military pacts by cultivating its allies in West Asia and South East Asia in the fifties and the sixties. After the seventies, the operation of the Diego Garcia and Subic Bay bases, indeed gave an overt manifestation of the U.S. military might in the region. Compared to the U.S.A. the U.S.S.R. was a late entrant to the politics of the

region. In the seventies the U.S.S.R. literally announced its presence in the ocean with naval build up and cultivating allies such as Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, Ethiopia Mozambique and so on. In substance the U.S.A. and its Western allies continued to hold on and consolidate their presence in the region. Whereas the Soviet Union and its allies began to emerge as opponents of the U.S. led states.

The trajectory of ever-increasing competition among the super-powers to control the region was also shaped by diverse inter-state conflicts within the region. It would be difficult to offer a single causal explanation for such conflicts. However one of the similarities in the three cases of conflict that have been studied was that some of these states were unwilling to accept the territorial frontiers inherited after decolonisation. The frontiers drawn by the colonial powers were generally unacceptable because there was no correspondence between national or ethnic frontier and state frontiers. Evidently, Pakistan could not build a notion of nationhood without treating Kashmir as an indivisible part of Pakistan. Somalia could not accept a notion of Somalian nation without bringing together the people of Somali origin in North Eastern Africa. Thus it was the undeviating urge to revise the status quo that prompted Pakistan to seek external assistance particularly that of China and U.S.A. to resolve its problems. Similarly Somalia went as far as to attack Ethiopia to integrate Ogaden within its boundary.

Geo-strategic location as well as abundance of petroleum reserves induced the states of Iraq and Iran to wage war with each other. In crude terms the major Gulf states were contesting for the over lordship of the Persian Gulf region through the control of waterways, straits and oil reserves. In addition the differences between the Shia and Sunni population of Iran and Iraq respectively as well as their political regimes added fuel to the fire. Iran and Iraq offered an example of protracted conflict essentially aimed at mastering the strategic space of the Persian Gulf.

It is always difficult to compare conflicts which occur under different spatio-temporal conditions. However we are providing a few major dimensions of the three conflicts. First the conflict between India and Pakistan was the conflict between two uneven powers. India took full advantage of internal or the domestic troubles in Pakistan and accelerated the pace of liberation of Bangladesh. It was evident when the Pakistan state faced a challenge from within it broke down and the emergence of Bangladesh offered a glorious evidence of this proposition.

In the case of Somalia even though it tried to integrate Ogaden under the project of Greater Somalia, the constitution of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) which upheld the inviolability of frontiers proved too strong for it to achieve its aim. Moreover, in military terms Somalia was not equal to Ethiopia. Finally in the case of Iraq's conflict with Iran it could be stated that the two powers were more or less equal

in their strength and in their determination to resolve the war in their favour. This led to protracted conflict.

Among all the three conflicts it appears evident that the Indo-Pak conflict was decisive in establishing India's supremacy in the sub-continent owing to the disintegration of Pakistan. The Ethiopia-Somalia conflict in the end was resolved in favour of Ethiopia because Somalia failed to achieve its objective through military means. However unlike the above two conflicts, the Iran-Iraq conflict led to a prolonged war which virtually drained out the resources of both the states without any concrete results.

Finally, the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. continued to be significant forces in all the case studies of conflict under review. Infact they were responsible in globalising the conflicts which emanated within the context of the sub-regions of the Indian Ocean. In the Indo-Pakistan conflict the U.S. stepped out to protect the territorial integrity of Pakistan. It was indifferent to human right abuses and genocides committed by the Yahya Khan regime in East Pakistan or Bangladesh. The Soviet Union by signing the twenty year treaty with India almost ensured the non-interference of major powers like the U.S.A. and China in the sub-continent. India was emboldened to back the Mukti Bahini in its bid to liberate Bangladesh because of its treaty with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union in its turn supported India at the U.N.O. by vetoing three resolutions initiated by the U.S.A. against it.

In the Ethiopia-Somalia conflict the policies of the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. were guided primarily by geo-political rather than ideological considerations. This was evident from the fact that they were willing to change their allies in the region. Thus the support to the socialist state of Siad Barre was withdrawn in favour of Ethiopia's revolutionary regime by the Soviet Union. In contrast the human rights abuses in Ethiopia prompted the Carter administration to support Somalia's "Socialist" rule. In brief, both the super-powers were desperately in need of a naval base in the Horn of Africa. In order to serve the expedient reasons they were willing to change their ideological orientations. It must be also noted that this conflict acquired global dimension when U.S.A threatened to stall its ongoing Strategic Arms Limitations Talk (II) with the U.S.S.R.

Finally, during the Iraq-Iran war the U.S.A. was placed in a slightly disadvantageous position in comparison to the U.S.S.R. This can be explained by the fact that the Shah's regime in Iran an ally of the U.S.A. had collapsed in 1979. The Islamic revolutionary regime in Iran was ill-disposed towards the U.S. presence in Iran and the Gulf. This prompted the Iranian regime to hold U.S. diplomats as hostages till 1981. Furthermore the U.S.A. did not have cordial relations with the Iraqi regime because the U.S.S.R. had signed Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Iraq 1972. In view of these circumstances the U.S. became overtly involved in the Iran-Iraq crisis only after 1983. Thereafter it was actively involved in the conflict often participating in the on going war. Furthermore the U.S.A was responsible for introducing the resolution 598 at the U.N. calling for an end to hostilities in the Persian Gulf.



The U.S.S.R.'s involvement in the region was shaped by multiple factors including the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan, the presence of the Tudeh party in Iran and shared common land borders with Iran. The Tudeh party was however eclipsed with rise of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. The U.S.S.R. was therefore interested in maintaining stability in the region because of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan and more so because Iran's hostilities were more pronounced towards the U.S.A than the Soviet Union. Hence in the case of the Persian Gulf the U.S.A. was trying to undermine the Soviet presence by reinstalling its power. The U.S.A. aided Saudi Arabia and its allies to bolster its presence in the region.

The U.N.O. also provided a forum for rivalry between the two super-powers when the U.N. resolution 598 was being drawn at the Security Council regarding secession of the war between Iran and Iraq while the resolution was being drafted the U.S.A. was keen to impose an arms embargo against Iran which the U.S.S.R. opposed. The final resolution without any embargo against any party was accepted and supported by the Soviet Union. This reflected the conciliatory approach in the attitude between the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union in the phase of detente.

In general, the U.S. - U.S.S.R. relationship has been characterised by two contradictory realities such as rivalry as well as co-existence, ever since the cold war began. Because of their urge to rival as well as coexist no conflict under review has reached a stage of

unmanageable proportions. In the light of India's growing strength the U.S.A. did not put its entire weight behind Pakistan and chose to withdraw its Seventh fleet from the Bay of Bengal. In the case of the Horn of Africa both the powers were satisfied as long as they secured a strategic foothold in the region. Finally in the case of Iran-Iraq war even though the U.S.A. tried to rival the U.S.S.R. the two super powers eventually promoted the project of peace. Indeed peace in the Persian Gulf was essential for the U.S.A. and its allies to ensure trade flow and energy security through oil. Similarly the Soviet Union under Gorbachev after the mid eighties refrained from confronting the western powers outside its frontiers to avoid the cost of such encounters. Thus the three conflicts that erupted in the region were partly resolved by the policies of the contending parties themselves and partly by the nature of super-power relations.

## **APPENDICES**

### **1. The Awami League's Six points Extract from Awami League Manifesto**

Pakistan shall be a Federation granting full autonomy on the basis of the six-points formula to each of the federating units:

#### **Point No 1 :**

The character of the government shall be federal and parliamentary, in which the election to the federal legislature and to the legislatures of the federations units shall be direct and on the basis of universal adult franchise. The representation in the federal legislator shall be on the basis of population.

#### **Point No. 2 :**

The federal government shall be responsible only for defense and foreign affairs and subject to the conditions provided in (3) below, currency.

#### **Point No. 3 :**

There shall be two separate currencies mutually or freely convertible in each wing for each region, or in the alternative a single currency.

subject to the establishment of federal reserve system in which there will be regional federal reserve banks which shall devise measures to prevent the transfer of resources and flight of capital from one region to another.

**Point No. 4 :**

Fiscal policy shall be the responsibility of the federating units. The federal government shall be provided with requisite resources for meeting the requirements of defense and foreign affairs, which revenue resources would be automatically appropriable by the federal government in the manner provided and on the basis of the ratio to be determined by the procedure laid down in the constitution. Such constitutional provisions would ensure that federal government's revenue requirements are met consistently with the objective of ensuring control over the fiscal policy by the government of the federating units.

**Point No. 5 :**

Constitutional provisions shall be made to enable separate accounts to be maintained of the foreign exchange earnings of each of the federating units, under the control of the respective governments of the federating units. The foreign exchange requirement of the federal government shall be met by the governments of the federating units on the basis of a ratio to be determined in accordance with the procedure laid down in the constitution. The regional governments shall have power

under the constitution to negative foreign trade and aid within the framework of the foreign policy of the country, which shall be the responsibility of the federal government.

**Point No.6 :**

The government of the federating units shall be empowered to maintain a militia or para-military force in order to contribute effectively towards national security.

**Source :** The Government of Pakistan White Paper. The full of the Awami League's 1970 Election Manifesto can be found in the collections of Bangla Desh Documents, pp. 66-82. On pp. 23-33 can be found a detailed exposition of Six Points, made by Sheikh Mujibur Rehman in March 1966.

## **2. The Indo-Soviet Treaty of *Peace, Friendship and Co-operation*, 9 August 1971**

Desirous of expanding consolidating the existing relations of sincere friendship between them,

Believing that the further development of friendship and co-operation meets the basic national interests of lasting peace in Asia and the world,

Determined to promote the consolidation of universal peace and security and make steadfast efforts for relaxation of international tensions and the final eliminations of the remnants of colonialism,

Upholding their firm faith in the principals of peaceful co-existence and co-operation between States with different political and social systems,

Convinced that in the world today international problems can only be solved by co-operation and not by conflict,

Reaffirming their determination to abide by the purpose and principles of the United Nations Charter,

The Republic of India on the one side, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the other side,

Have decided to conclude the present treaty, for which purposes the following plenipotentiaries have been appointed :

On behalf of the Republic of India: Sardar Swaran Singh, Minister of External Affairs.

On behalf of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics: Mr. A.A. Gromyko, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Who having each presented their credentials, which are found to be in proper form and due order, have agreed as follows:

#### **(ARTICLE I)**

The High Contracting Parties solemnly declare that enduring peace and friendship shall prevail between the two countries and their peoples. Each party shall respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the other party and refrain from interfering in the other's internal affairs. The High contracting Parties shall continue to develop and consolidate the relations of sincere friendship, good neighbourliness and comprehensive co-operation existing between them on the basis of the aforesaid principles as well as those of equality and mutual benefit.

### **(ARTICLE II)**

Guided by the desire to contribute in every possible way to ensure enduring peace and security of their people, the High Contracting Parties declare their determination to continue their efforts to preserve and to strengthen peace in Asia and throughout the world, to halt the arms race and to achieve general and complete disarmament, including both nuclear and conventional, under effective international control.

### **(ARTICLE III)**

Guided by their to the lofty ideal of equality of all peoples and nations, irrespective of race or creed, the High Contracting Parties condemn colonialism and racialism in all forms and manifestations, and reaffirm their determination to strive for their final and complete elimination.

The High Contracting Parties shall cooperate with other States to achieve these aims and to support the just aspirations of the peoples in their struggle against colonialism and racial domination.

### **(ARTICLE IV)**

The Republic of India respects the peace-loving policy of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics aimed at strengthening friendship and co-operation with all nations.

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics respects India's policy of non-alignment and reaffirms that this policy constitutes an important factor in the maintenance of universal peace and international security and in the lessening of tensions in the world.



#### **(ARTICLE V)**

Deeply interested in ensuring universal peace and security, attaching great importance to their mutual co-operation in the international field for achieving these aims, the High Contracting Parties will maintain regular contacts with each other the States by means of meetings, and exchanges of views between their leading statesmen, visits by official delegations and special envoys of the two governments, and through diplomatic channels.

#### **(ARTICLE VI)**

Attaching great importance to economic, scientific and technological co-operation between them, the High Contracting Parties will continue to consolidate and expand mutually advantageous and comprehensive cooperation in these fields as well as expand trade, transport and communications between them on the basis of the principles of equality, mutual benefit and most favoured nation treatment, subject to the existing agreements and the special arrangements with contiguous countries as specified in the Indo-Soviet trade agreement of 26 December 1970.

#### **(ARTICLE VII)**

The High Contracting Parties shall promote further development of ties and contacts between them in the fields of science, art, literature education, public health, press, radio, television, cinema, tourism and sports.

### **(ARTICLE VIII)**

In accordance with the traditional friendship established between the two countries, each of the High Contracting parties solemnly declares that it shall not enter into or participate in any military alliance directed against the other Party.

Each High Contracting Party undertakes to abstain any aggression against the other Party and to prevent the use of its territory for the commission of any act which might inflict military damage on the other High Contracting Party.

### **(ARTICLE IX)**

Each High contracting Party undertakes to abstain from providing any assistance to any third country that engages in armed conflict with the other Party. In the event of their being subjected to an attack or a threat thereof, the High Contracting Parties shall immediately enter into mutual consultations in order to remove such threat and to take appropriate effective measures to ensure peace and the security of their countries.

### **(ARTICLE X)**

Each High Contracting Party solemnly declares that it shall not enter into any obligation, secret or public, with one or more States, which is incompatible with this Treaty. Each High Contracting Party further declares that no obligation be entered into, between itself and any other State or States, which might cause military damage to the other Party

### **(ARTICLE XI)**

This Treaty is concluded for the duration of twenty years and will be automatically extended for each successive period of five years unless either High Contracting Party declares its desire to terminate it by giving notice to the other High contracting Party twelve months prior to the expiration of the Treaty. The Treaty will be subject to ratification and will come into force on the date of the exchange of Instruments of Ratification which will take place in Moscow within one month of the signing of this Treaty.

### **(ARTICLE XII)**

Any difference of interpretation of any Article of this Treaty which may arise between the High Contracting Parties will be settled bilateral by peaceful means in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding.

The said Plenipotentiaries have signed the present Treaty Russian and English, all text being equally authentic and have affixed there to their seals. Done in New Delhi on the Ninth day of August in the year One Thousand Nine Hundred and Seventy One.

ON BEHALF of the UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS.

(sd.) A.A. Gromyko,  
Minister of External Affairs,

ON BEHALF of the REPUBLIC OF INDIA,

(sd.) Swaran Singh,  
Minister of External Affairs.

Source: Survival, XIII, October 1971, pp. 351-3.

### **3. Article by Mr. Jack Anderson, 10 January 1972**

The secret White House papers reveal some ominous similarities between the Bay of Bengal and the Gulf of Tonkin. The Gulf of Tonkin incident 4 August 1964, led to America's deep involvement in the Vietnam war.

The American public was told that North Vietnamese torpedo boats had staged an unprovoked attack upon a United States destroyer, although later evidence indicated that the attack was actually provoked.

The risk of a similar naval incident in the Bay of Bengal caused grave apprehensions inside the State Department as a United States task force steamed toward a Soviet task force at the height of the Indian-Pakistan fighting.

On 7 December a top secret warning was flashed to Washington that 'three Soviet naval ships, a seagoing minesweeper and a tanker have begun to move northeastward into the Bay of Bengal.

'The units entered the Indian Ocean from the Malacca Strait on 5 December and were located approximately 500 nautical miles east of Ceylon on 7 December'.

Urgent huddles in the White House led to a decision on 10 December to assemble in Malacca Strait a United States task force, spearheaded by the aircraft carrier Enterprise, the Navy's most powerful ship.

The primary purpose was to make a 'show of force' and to divert Indian planes and ships from Pakistan.

As the task force moved into position, Adml John McCain, our Pacific commander, inquired on 11 December about 'the feasibility of ... aerial surveillance of Soviet task group located approximately 180 NM (nautical miles) south-west of Ceylon.

Authorization was flashed back the same day 'in the event task force 74 is directed to transmit [to go through] the Strait of Malacca. At that time appropriate .... screening-surveillance flights are authorized.

As the American warship moved through the Strait and headed into the Bay of Bengal, even more ominous reports reached Washington from the defence intelligence agency.

'Recent indicators have been received which suggest the People's Republic of China may be planning actions regarding the Indo-Pakistan conflict.'

A top secret message reported tersely: 'According to a reliable clandestine source, (Pakistan's) President Yahya Khan claimed ... today that the Chinese Ambassador in Islamabad has assured him that within 72 hours the Chinese army will move towards the border.

'President Yahya's claim cannot be confirmed. However, recent Peking propaganda statements have become more critical of India's involvement in East Pakistan'.

From Kathmandu in the Himalayas, meanwhile, came word that both the Soviet and Indian Military attaches had asked Col. Melvin Holst, the American attache, what he knew about Chinese troop movements and United States fleet movements.

'USSR attache Loginov' said the secret dispatch, called upon the Chinese military attache Chao Kuang Chih in Kathmandu advising Chao that China 'should not get too serious about intervention, because USSR react, had many missiles, etc.'

Holst concluded, the dispatch added that 'both the USSR and Indian embassies have a growing concern that China might intervene'.

Simultaneously, the Central Intelligence Agency rushed out a top secret report that 'the Chinese have been passing weather data for locations in Tibet and along the Sino-Indian border since 8 December

The continued passing of weather data for these locations is considered unusual and may indicate some form of alert posture.'

And from New Delhi, the CIA reported: 'According to a reliable clandestine source, Prime Minister Gandhi told a leader of her Congress party that she had some indications that the Chinese intend to intervene along India's northern border ... Mrs. Gandhi said that the Chinese action might be in the Ladakh area'.

Russia's Ambassador to India, Nikolai M. Pegov, however, promised on 13 December that the Soviets 'would open a diversionary action' against the Chinese and 'will not allow the Seventh fleet to intervene'.

Here are the highlights of this ominous Soviet pledge, which the CIA claimed to have picked up from a reliable source'.

'Pegov stated that Pakistan is trying to draw both the United States and China into the present conflict. The Soviet Union, however, does not believe that either country will intervene.

'According to Pegov, the movement of the Seventh Fleet is an effort by the U.S. to bully India, to discourage it from striking against West Pakistan, and at the same time to boost the morale of the Pakistani forces.

'Pegov noted that a Soviet fleet is now in the Indian Ocean and that the Soviet Union will not allow the Seventh Fleet to intervene.

'If China should decide to intervene in Ladakh, said Pegov, the Soviet Union would open a diversionary action in Sinkiang.

'Pegov also commented that after Dacca is liberated and the Bangladesh Government is installed both the United States and China will be unable to act and will change their current attitude toward the crisis'.

This is how the big powers danced precariously on the edge of the brink just before Christmas as people sang about peace on earth and good will toward men.

**Source:** Daily Telegraph (London), 10 January 1972.



#### **4. Decision and Recommendation of the Organization of African unity meeting held at Libreville (Gabon), 5-8 August 1977**

**\*The Ethiopia-Somalia Good Offices Committee Meeting in Libreville, Gabon, from 5th to 8th August 1977 :**

Having heard the statements made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Somalia Democratic Republic and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia;

Recalling the various O A U resolutions on Intra-African disputes and in particular Resolution AHG/RES. 16 (1) which among other things solemnly declares that all member states pledge themselves to respect the borders existing on their achievement of national independence;

Recalling futher O A U resolution AHG/RES. 27 (II) which among other things solemnly commits OAU member states not to tolerate in conformity with Article 3 paragraph 5 of the Charter, any subversion originating in their countries against another member state of the OAU;

Taking into consideration the statements by the delegations, and in the light of the very serious situation obtaining between Ethiopia an Somalia;

1. Reaffirms resolution AHG/RES. 16(I) and the resolution AHG/RES. 27 (II) which bind member states in accordance with the Charter of the OAU to respect the borders existing at independence as well as adherence to the cardinal principles of holding inviolable sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states.
2. Appeals to the parties to the conflict, Ethiopia and Somalia in conformity with the provisions of the Charter and the relevant decisions of the OAU, to cease all acts of hostility.
3. Reaffirms the opposition of the OAU to the interference of all foreign powers and in particular that of extra African powers in the internal affairs of OAU member states and urges all OAU member states to repudiate such unwarranted interference in accordance with the decision of the 14th Assembly of heads of state and government.
4. Appeals to all states to refrain from taking any action that could be detrimental to the achievement of understanding between the parties to the conflict or exaggerate the tension and conflict or threatening peace and security and territorial integrity of the two neighbouring states.
5. Recommends, in view of the gravity of the situation, that the current chairman of the OAU Good Offices Committee undertakes contacts with the heads of states of Ethiopia and Somalia with a view to effecting a cessation of hostilities and creating the atmosphere conducive to the peaceful solution of the problem.

The OAU Meeting at the Gabonese capital by its decisions and recommendation as contained in the Operative Paragraph of the above resolutions has emphatically rejected attempts to re-draw the map of Africa on ethnic lines to suit the whims or expansionist ambitions of certain aggressive regimes like that in power in Somalia.

The OAU meeting which was established to mediate and conciliate between Ethiopia and Somalia, has reiterated its strong and unshakable stand and reaffirmed OAU's earlier solution concerning border questions and interference in the internal affairs of other states.

a) The OAU has already come out with a solution to the border question. The OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government at its meeting in July 1964 passed a resolution to this effect.

The operative part of the resolution says" the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU solemnly declares that all member of states pledge themselves to respect the border existing on their achievement of national independence. Resolution No: AHG/16/1 of July 1964.

b) The OAU present Resolution also referred to the OAU's earlier resolution no:27 (II) which binds member states to the adherence of the principles of holding sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states

c) The Libreville resolution of the OAU rejected the Somali claim that the present fighting on Ogaden region is between Ethiopia and the so-called "Western Liberation Front" in Ogaden. The OAU makes clear its strong belief that the fighting is between Ethiopia and Somalian armed forces. This also means in effect forces. This also means in effect that the OAU has held the present fighting in Ogaden as a result of naked Somilian aggression.

**Source :** Ethiopian Embassy, New Delhi

**5. Extracts from the Statement by  
LT. Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam,  
Chairman, Provisional Military Government of Ethiopia  
to the 14 OAU Summit in Libreville, 4th July, 1977**

The Ethio-Somali boundary dispute has been previously raised at various international forums. It has also been a subject of bilateral discussions between the countries. So far nothing positive has emerged, mainly because Somalia refuses to disabuse itself of the notion that it can impose its will and dictate its own conception of law upon us, and force on us conditions that are incompatible with our sovereignty.

The whole World knows about the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle of the Ethiopian people and their vigorous defence of Ethiopia's territorial integrity, including that of Eastern Ethiopia. My country had to pay an enormous price in blood and tears for five agonizing years repulsing the aggression imposed on us by Fascist Italy. After the Congress of Berlin and during the Scramble for Africa, Ethiopia stood alone against the imperialist Powers and her victory at Adwa in 1896 is a glorious chapter in our history.

Even if the Somali claim to more than 1/5 of Ethiopia is nothing but political and historical fiction, such a claim cannot be viewed in isolation from the challenges it poses in Africa and elsewhere. As a matter of fact, it was only with the merging of the former British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland that the Somali Republic attained

statehood and independence in July 1960. Before that date, there was no Somali State or Somalia nation in recorded history. I challenge the Somali authorities to trace the historically defined and internationally recognized boundaries to their state, if as they claim, any such state had existed prior to 1960.

The fact of the matter is that to this day more than 70% of the population in Somalia is nomadic, for whom there is only one boundary and one frontier-that is, the furthest to available pastures. Indeed, as has been recorded by some authorities, nomadic agriculture in the Horn of Africa requires some 18 sq. miles of land annually per cow. Accordingly, if the cattle population in Somalia is over three million, the entire East African region will have to {sic} Somali territory. And so, land wherever a Somali cow grazes, has to be part and parcel of the Government in our times subscribe to this sort of reasoning... The expansionist ambitions of the Somali leaders are not confined to Ethiopia alone. While speaking loudly about their support for the national independence of all territories under colonial rule and their territorial integrity, in the last 17 years, Somali authorities have consistently sought to annex Djibouti, the Northern Frontier District of Kenya and, of course, Ethiopia.

Kenya is quite capable of speaking for herself. But the fact of the matter is that it was only in 1924 that the Kenyan province of Jubaland was handed over to Italian Somaliland by the U.K. When it should have been Kenya, the victim of British colonialism, that should have complained

for this stark injustice, that fact that Somalia {sic} irredentism and expansionist ambitions is but to add insult to injury. The Somali aggression on Kenya five days ago, on the eve of this historic Summit, is yet another testimony of Somali expansionism.

The frontiers between Ethiopia and Somalia are regulated by a series of International treaties. If Somalia refuses to recognize these treaties, then Somalia itself, which owes its very existence to a set of international agreements and decisions to which it was not a party must cease to exist.

As regards the quaint attachment of the Somali leaders to the merits of tribalism, let us consider the following instances.

First, the Baluchis are divided between Iran and Pakistan. Out of 12 million Kurds, there are 2 million in Iraq, more than 5 million in Turkey, 200,000 in the U.S.S.R., 4 million in Iran and 300,000 in Syria. Similarly, the Armenians are divided between Turkey and the U.S.S.R.

The Bakongo people of Africa are to be found in Zaire, Congo and Angola. The Ewe are divided between Ghana and Togo, the Yoruba between Nigeria and Benin, and the Ben Amir nomadic tribe is to be found in both Ethiopia and the Sudan. And the list could be indefinitely continued.

We cannot re-draw the map of the World on ethnic lines to satisfy the whims of the Somali Government. Africa has already come out with a solution to this fundamental question. Res. AHG/16/1 of July 1964 of the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government solemnly declares "that all Members States pledge themselves to respect the borders existing on their achievement of national independence."

Moreover, the second Conference of the Heads of State of the Non-Aligned countries in its Cairo Summit of October 1964 declared that "The countries participating in the conference-pledge themselves to respect frontiers as they existed when the States gained independence..."

The Somali authorities have refused to reconcile themselves to the reality which has been recognized by the international community as reflected in the decisions of the OAU and the Non-Aligned countries. Indeed, in the hope of annexing 1/5 of Ethiopia, they are employing every conceivable tactic and strategem that they consider would help advance their sinister designs, including the infiltration of terrorists recruited, trained and financed by the Government of Mogadishu for sabotage and subversion in Eastern Ethiopia. In the face of all this, Ethiopia has no choice but to defend itself with all the means at her disposal .....

The deterioration of relations between Ethiopia and Somalia, on the other hand, has its genesis in the flagrant violation of those same charter principles of respect for territorial integrity and non-interference in



the internal affairs of other states by the Government of Somalia and the complete disregard by the same Government of the decision of the OAU and Non-aligned States regarding the boundaries of states.

**Source :** Ethiopian Embassy, New Delhi

## **6. Extracts from the Statement by Jalle Dr. Hussein A.Kassim**

**Somali Minister for Mineral and Water Resources to the 14 OAU  
Summit in Libreville, 4th July, 1977**

It shall be recalled that at the time of the scramble for Africa Abyssinia embraced an obnoxious policy of expansionism through which she acquired a substantial portion not only of Somali territory but also other African territories. It shall also be recalled that such Kingdom was confined to her traditional frontiers having Shoa at its Southernmost province.

Historians agree that while the fluctuating power of the Shoan outpost of Ethiopia made it impossible for a clear line to be drawn upon a map, it was true up to 1880 to regard the country for about a hundred miles around the present Capital as the Southernmost and that on East and West as well as South there were people who lay outside the Government of the Kingdom.

At the time the land of the Somalia known as the "Land of Punt" was composed of independent Sultanates one of which was the Sultanate of Harar which has in the march of time been forced to engage itself time and again in defensive armed struggle against the expansionist aggression of Abyssinia and which did not fall until the close of the century. After its fall Harar was soon used by Abyssinia as a springboard

for yet further occupation of other Somali territories and indeed for the first time Abyssinia occupied that Sultanate entirely inhabited by Somalis to the present date. In this regard it is commonly accepted by historians that the North, East and South of Harar was inhabited, as is still the case, by Somalis... indeed he would do justice to intellectual honesty had he attempted to place facts in their perspective. In addition and with regard to later works I would recall "The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea" (40 A.D) the chronicles of 6th and 7th Centuries. The works of Medieval scholars such as Al-Masudi (933), Al-Istakhri (960), Ibn-Hawqal (977), Al-Barruni, (1030), Al-I-drissi (1154), Yaqut (1229), Ib-Said (1344), Ibna Battuta(1331), Al-Harrani (1344) and many others. All of these works give the description of the Somali nation, its customs, trade relations, social and religious organization, its habitation, language, social values and independent culture....

Following, however, Ethiopian participation in the scramble in East Africa, King Menelik succeeded in concluding a Treaty with Britain in 1897 thus acquiring a substantial part of Somali territory. A further glaring example of alliance of these colonial powers namely Abyssinia on the one hand and the European powers namely Britain, France and Italy on the other hand is best illustrated by the 1906 Agreement between the above four colonialists....

Menelik has long died but he and his contribution to the expansion of the Ethiopian Empire is eulogized by the so-called socialist Government of Ethiopia.....

We should recognize that the armed struggle against colonial rule in Ethiopia is tearing the empire apart. It is no different from those struggle which in this century have brought about the end of the British, French and Portuguese Empires. The demands for self-determination and independence being voiced in different parts of the Ethiopian Empire is in essence no different than those being voiced in Namibia and Zimbabwe....

The OAU's commitment to free our continent and to eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa and our absolute dedication to the total emancipation of the African territories which are still dependent constitutes one of the most fundamental and cardinal principles of our organization. It is indeed our commitment to liquidate all forms of colonialism\_no matter by whom from African soil..

We have ever since our independence and particularly since the advent of our Revolution in 1969 undertaken initiative of dialogue with successive governments in Addis Ababa and had hoped that with the change in government in Ethiopia and with the new ideology which that Government claimed to have embraced, these problems would be dealt with in a just and democratic manner.....

We continued such contacts with the Ethiopian Government, twice in 1971, 3 times in 1972, 1973 and 1975....

Ethiopia's reaction has been to embark upon a policy of brutal repression against the liberation movements and of the civilian population in the area concerned.

In recent months thousands of people have been forced to seek refuge in the Somali Democratic Republic because of atrocities committed against them by Ethiopian troops.

**Source :** Embassy of the Somali Democratic Republic ,New Delhi.

**CONVINCED** that a comprehensive, just, honorable and durable settlement should be achieved between Iran and Iraq.

**RECALLING** the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular the obligation of all member states to settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered,

**DETERMINING** that there exists a breach of the peace as regards the conflict between Iran and Iraq,

**ACTING** under Articles 39 and 40 of the Charter of the United Nations,

1. **DEMANDS** that, as a first step towards a negotiated settlement, Iran and Iraq observe an immediate cease-fire, discontinue all military actions on land, at sea and in the air, and withdraw all forces to the internationally recognized boundaries without delay;
2. **REQUESTS** the Secretary General to dispatch a team of United Nations observers to verify, confirm and supervise the cease-fire and withdrawal and further requests the Secretary General to make the necessary arrangements in consultation with the parties and to submit a report thereon to the Security Council;
3. **URGES** that prisoners of war be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities in accordance with the Third Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949;

4. CALLS UPON Iran and Iraq to cooperate with the Secretary General in implementing this resolution and in mediation efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and honorable settlement, acceptable to both sides, of all outstanding issues, in accordance with the principles contained in the Charter of the United Nations;
5. CALLS UPON all other states to exercise the utmost restraint and to refrain from any act which may lead to further escalation and widening of the conflict, and thus to facilitate the implementation of the present resolution;
6. REQUESTS the Secretary General to explore, in consultation with Iran and Iraq, the question of entrusting an impartial body with inquiring into responsibility for the conflict and to report to the Security Council as soon as possible;
7. RECOGNIZES the magnitude of the damage inflicted during the conflict and the need for reconstruction efforts, with appropriate international assistance, once the conflict is ended and in this regard, requests the Secretary General to assign a team of experts to study the question of reconstruction and to report to the Security Council;
8. FURTHER REQUESTS the Secretary General to examine in consultation with Iran and Iraq and with other states of the region, measures to enhance the security and stability of the region.

9. REQUESTS the Secretary General to keep the Security Council informed on the implementation of this resolution;
10. DECIDES to meet again as necessary to consider further steps to ensure compliance with this resolution.



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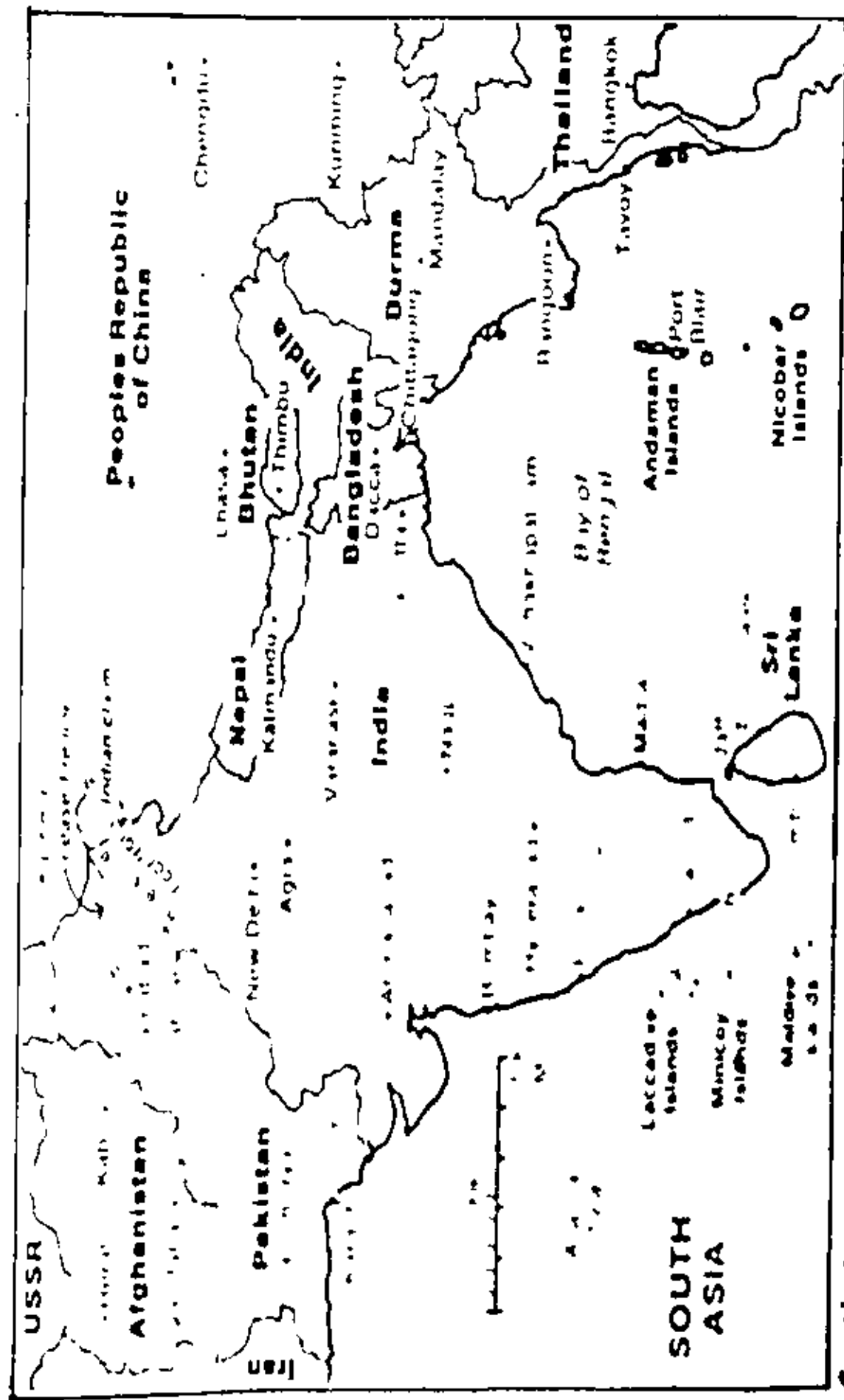
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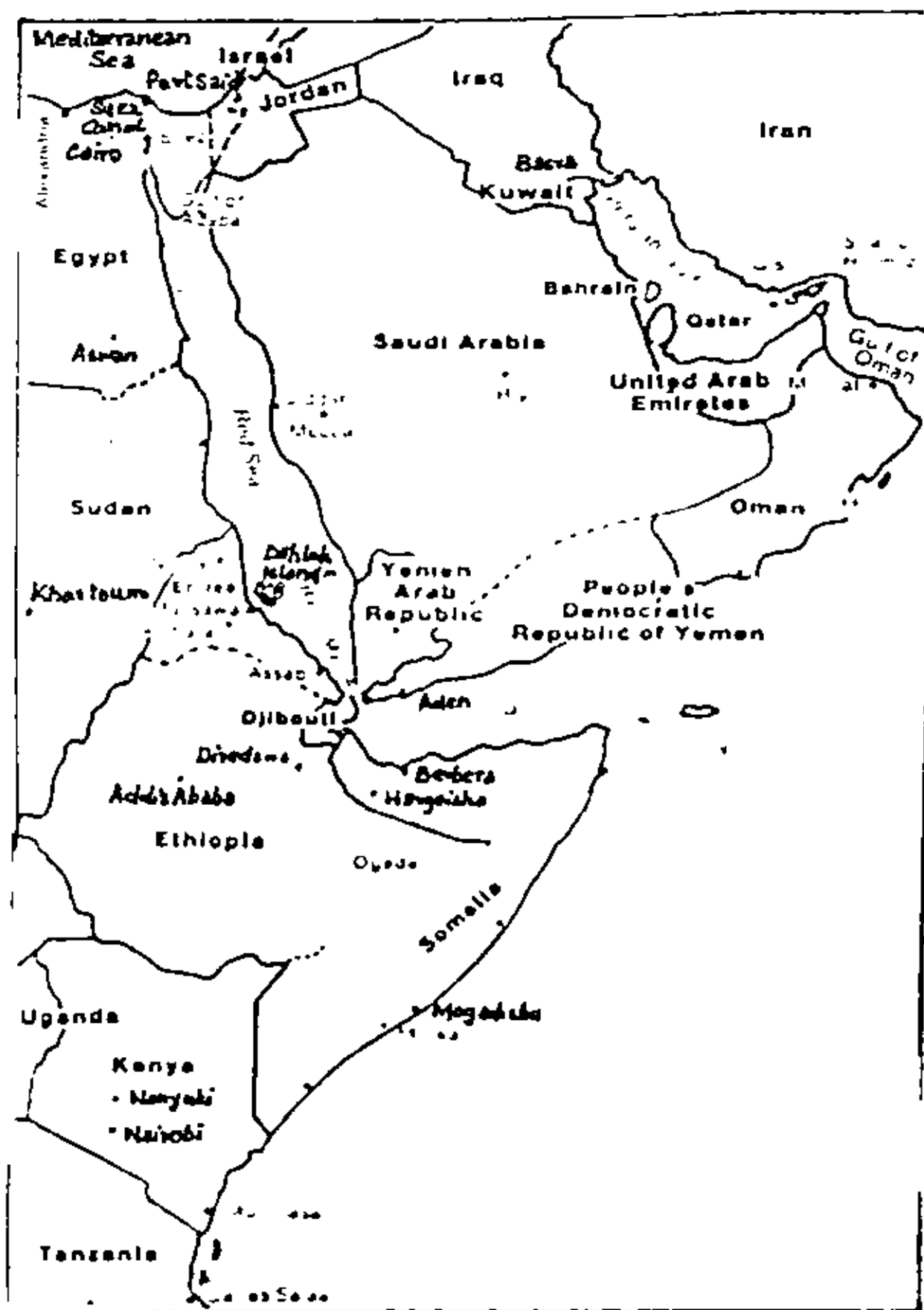
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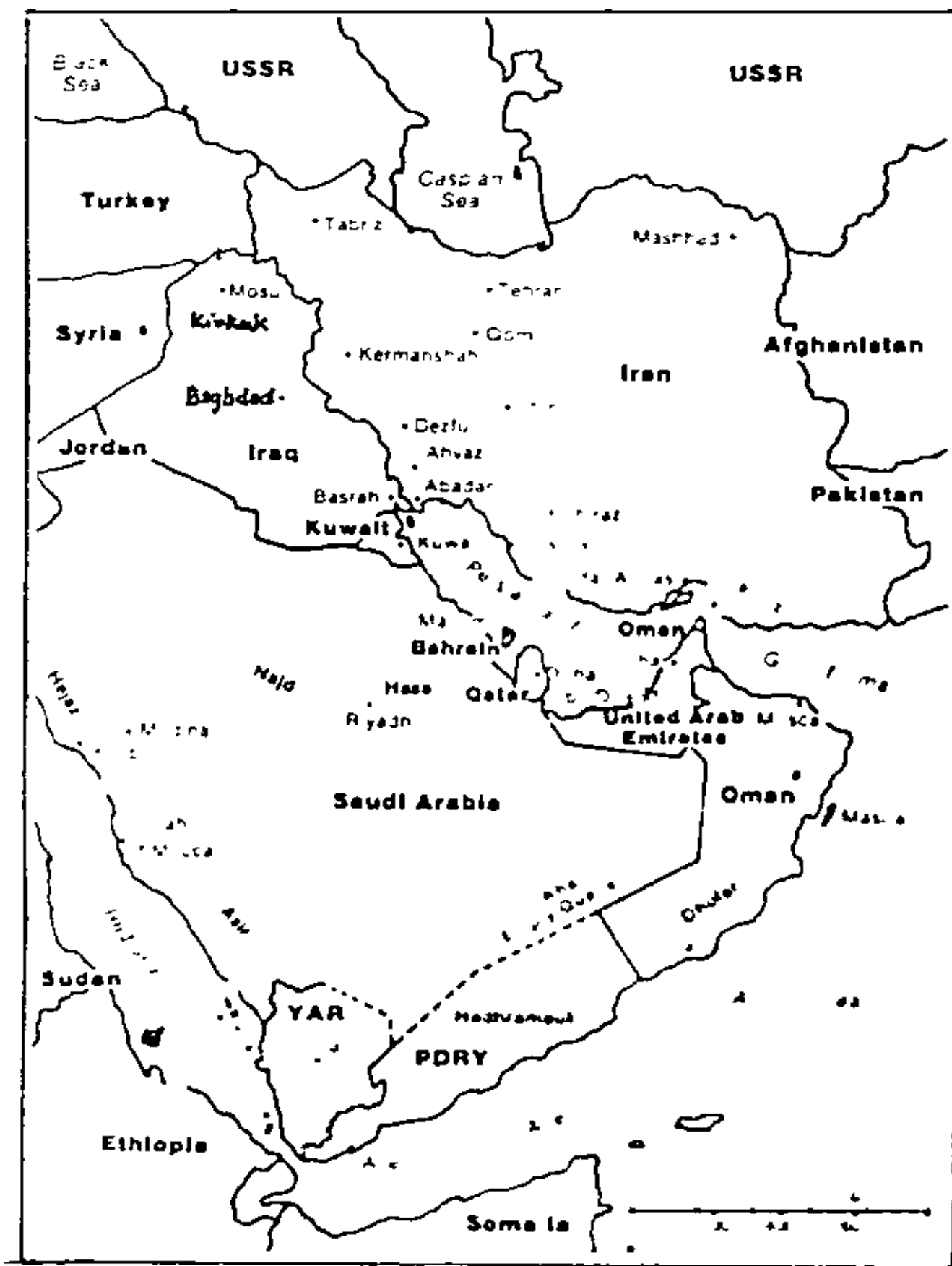
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