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The Strategic Importance of the Bab el-Mandeb and the Horn of Africa

Richard B. Remnek

The strategic importance of the Bab el-Mandeb and the Horn of Africa lies in their geographic positions, the one connecting two major international waterways—the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean—and the other across that strait from the Arabian peninsula. In addition, most of the waters of the Nile originate in Ethiopia. The strategic importance of the region stems not from its own meager resources, but rather from its proximity to other areas of strategic significance, such as the Persian Gulf and the sea lanes emerging from it. After all, were it not for the protection that the Horn of Africa potentially provides to the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf, it is highly doubtful that the region would receive as much attention as it does in U.S. policy circles. It is worth recalling that even before the discovery and exploitation of oil on the Arabian peninsula, Western involvement in the Horn of Africa derived from interests in areas further east of Suez. The colonization of the region by the European powers in the late nineteenth century was stimulated mainly by the need to protect and support maritime traffic along the newly opened Suez Canal-Red Sea routes to Asia and Africa. As a result, major ports were developed by the British at Aden and the French at Djibouti. From a global perspective, any assessment of the strategic importance of the region must take into account these connections to interests in other areas—for the strategic significance of the former is largely a function of the importance assigned to the latter.

A global perspective of the region's strategic importance must also consider the discrete interests of the major external states involved, since these interests vary significantly. In my estimate, the major foreign countries are the Soviet Union, the United States, France, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. To be sure, other European, Middle Eastern and Asian states have interests in the region,

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but their interests tend to be of a lesser magnitude and often run parallel to those of the main extra-regional states.

Another selection criterion employed here relates to the nature of the strategic interests at stake and is restricted mainly to positive interests or acquisitive goals rather than negative or denial goals. For example, while China may have earlier had a strategic interest in denying Soviet access through the Bab el-Mandeb, and Libya may today have an interest in denying Israeli access to the Red Sea, neither of these states have appreciable positive interests in the region worth protecting. Some of these denial goals will be discussed briefly when reviewing the threats to the positive interests of the major states concerned. I have also included a discussion of potential Soviet threats to oil shipping and U.S. naval forces in this region (examples of denial goals), since they are threats that have long received prominent attention and have been the subject of often ill-informed speculation in the West.

The interests of external states in the region has not been static. In recent decades, important changes in the nature of these interests and the threats to them, both perceived and real, have been realized. As the implications of the basic improvement in East-West relations are drawn out, new assessments of the strategic significance of the region will emerge.

This article examines the positive interests of the main external states in the region, both separately and in depth. My purpose here is to identify what these interests are and are not; to evaluate the threats to those interests; to consider how the interests and threats have changed over time; and how they may do so again in a changing international environment. It is worth drawing attention to the important linkages that exist among the six nations and that largely stem from alliance considerations. To cite one example, the United States has agreed to support Israel's right to "free and unimpeded passage" through and over the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb, according to the terms of a 1975 memorandum of understanding between the two governments. Hence, alliance considerations factor into the way states calculate their own interests in the region. Once the interests of the individual states have been reviewed, I shall present some generalizations about the evolving strategic importance of the Bab el-Mandeb-Horn of Africa region.

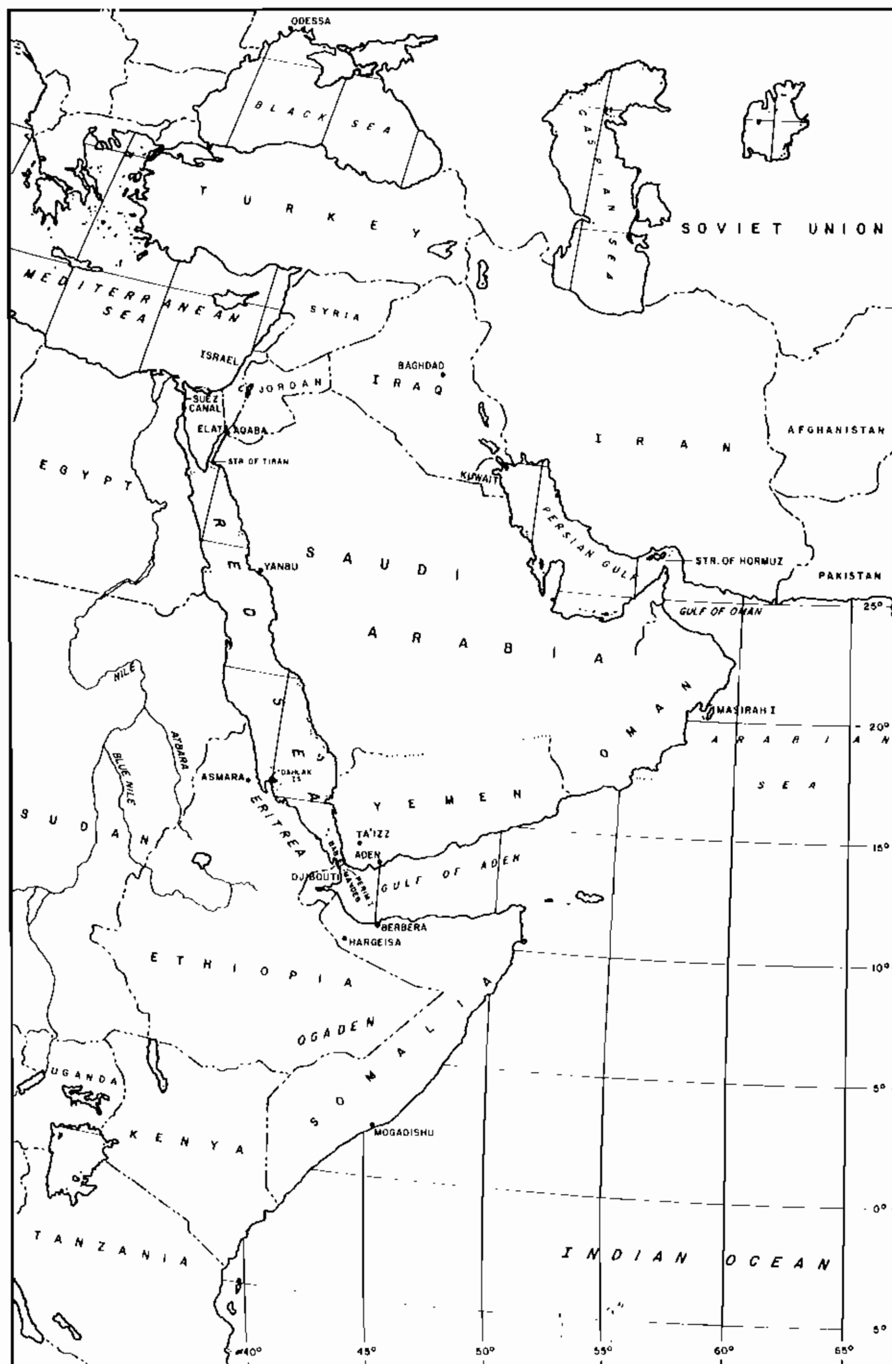
Soviet Interests

Of all the foreign powers, the Soviet Union arguably has the paramount interests in the region. These interests are multiple, and some of them are essential to Soviet national security. The region lies astride the U.S.S.R.'s southern sea route—the shortest sea lines of communication that are open year round between its European and Pacific ports. The next fastest route runs around the Cape of Good Hope, which takes approximately an additional 18 sailing days.[1] It has been estimated that well over 50 percent of the

U.S.S.R.'s transcontinental freight has been carried over this route.[2] The reliance on the southern sea route is not likely to be reduced appreciably by the introduction into service of the Baikal-Amur (BAM) railroad line, which should eventually open up Siberia's natural resources to commercial exploitation and foreign export. This would constrain the BAM line's limited ability to relieve some of the pressure of intercontinental commerce from the Trans-Siberian railroad. In fact, since the BAM line was opened in 1984, Soviet maritime traffic has gradually increased. Whereas 1,823 Soviet flag-vessels transited the Suez Canal in 1981, by 1987 the number had risen to 2,281, accounting for 6.8 percent of the net tonnage of ships using the Canal.[3] The Soviet Union ranked as the fourth highest user of the Suez Canal (after Liberia, Panama, and Greece). To be sure, a significant part of Soviet shipping through the Suez Canal is bound for India, Vietnam, and other Asian and African states with which the U.S.S.R. maintains trade and aid ties. And these economic ties have grown as well.

The Soviet interest in protecting its southern sea route is long-standing. Even in the last century, the Russian tsars took an interest in cultivating ties with Christian Ethiopia, undoubtedly in the hope of eventually planting a Russian flag along the shores of the Red Sea, then the object of British, French, and Italian colonial expansion. In modified form, this interest was carried over by the tsars' successors. At the end of World War II Stalin tried unsuccessfully to establish Soviet control over Italy's former colonies, including Eritrea. And, well before the Soviets established a regular naval presence in these waters at the close of the 1960s, they undertook aid projects apparently in preparation for this eventuality. In the 1950s they constructed the North Yemen port of Hodeida and built an airport nearby. In the early 1960s they dredged the Somali port of Berbera. Although these projects could be rationalized on purely economic grounds, their military utility became evident when the Soviets began to develop and use Berbera as the principal support base for the Soviet Indian Ocean Squadron in the 1970s.

The Soviet naval presence in the region can, in part, be regarded as a concrete expression of Soviet concern about the security of its southern sea route. This concern seems to have peaked around the time the Soviets established a routine naval presence in the area, in the late 1960s, following the British withdrawal east of Suez. Although the Soviets probably saw this withdrawal, coupled with the U.S. preoccupation in the Vietnam War, as an excellent opportunity for them to use their emerging military power to expand their political influence throughout the Indian Ocean area, they may also have been motivated by defensive considerations. Chinese influence on both sides of the Bab el-Mandeb was then on the rise, and with mounting tensions along the Sino-Soviet border the Soviets might have feared that Chinese influence among the littoral nations could be used against them, at a minimum to deny the U.S.S.R. access to local ports and airfields, and at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worst to obstruct Soviet maritime traffic. Sino-Soviet clashes along the Ussuri river in 1969 must have underlined the value of the shorter sea route through the Suez Canal (assuming it would be reopened) in the event of a Sino-Soviet War, especially in the period before the Soviets augmented their stocks of war materiel and strengthened their military and naval forces in the Far East. If the Trans-Siberian railroad were also to be cut in such a conflict, the southern sea route would become critically important. In addition, access to local port facilities would also have been valuable, should it have been needed by transiting ships.

Although the Soviets have never discussed openly the importance of water routes around Africa in the event of a Sino-Soviet War, they have used historical examples as surrogates to imply their current concerns. In his 1976 *Sea Power of the State*, for example, Admiral Sergei Gorshkov commented on the voyage around Africa of the Russian squadron, which the Japanese sank in 1905 at the Tsushima Strait, in these words: "The history of the Russian fleet and indeed of other fleets still did not know of such a distant and long movement of a huge fleet consisting of a variety of ships, some of which were not fully seaworthy, with no experience of combined long-distance oceanic travel. Over the entire route the squadron did not have a single base for resting the crew, for repair and supply. Most of the shores along which it passed belonged to hostile England."[4] Gorshkov's explanation here is historically inaccurate, for the French permitted the Russian Fleet to use their bases at Diego Suarez, Madagascar, and Cam Ranh Bay, French Indochina for crew rest, repairs and replenishment. This passage thus appears to be a thinly veiled rationalization for the Soviet Navy's need for exclusive access privileges around Africa. Indeed, the relevance of Africa to Soviet planning for a Sino-Soviet War was made all the more transparent by the publication, on the page opposite the excerpt cited above, of a map of the tsarist fleet's voyage around Africa.

In addition, a close reading of Soviet diplomatic initiatives in the Yemens and Somalia during the early 1970s reveals how sensitive the Soviets were to Chinese influence.[5] Indeed, Soviet moves, particularly in Somalia, seemed designed to preempt the Chinese from developing a military relationship with the Siad Barre government. Although Soviet sensitivity to Chinese influence in the region remained strong through the remainder of the decade,[6] it ebbed over time as the Soviet military buildup in the Far East reduced the need for rapid reinforcement of supplies along the African sea lanes, and as the dangers of a war with China subsided in the 1980s.

Nevertheless, the Soviets remain concerned about the security of their maritime commerce through the Bab el-Mandeb, and their anxieties in this regard seem to heighten whenever the Arabs raise the concept of turning the Red Sea into an "Arab Lake," as they did during the Ta'izz, North Yemen meeting of Arab leaders in March 1977. Qaddafi's recent call for a Sahel Arab

Union, which would establish Arab sovereignty and control from the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf,[7] may have aroused similar concerns among the Soviets, especially if they viewed his remarks in the context of the probable Libyan mining of the Red Sea in 1984. Although the immediate objective of such schemes is to deny Israel's access through the Red Sea, the Soviets also see them as a potential threat to their own freedom of navigation along this vital waterway. Indeed, one of the reasons the Soviets have remained steadfast in their support of Ethiopia's territorial integrity, even in the period of declining Soviet support for the Ethiopian war effort in the north, is the fear that an independent Eritrea would probably come under Arab influence and might eventually cooperate with Arab plans to limit international navigation through the Red Sea. In view of these potential threats, it is not surprising that Israel and the Soviet Union have found common cause in supporting Ethiopia's territorial integrity.

Whereas the U.S.S.R.'s strong stake in protecting its sea lines of communication through the Red Sea is usually ignored in Western commentaries, the potential threat of Soviet interdiction of Western tanker traffic through these waters in the event of a global war has received far greater attention. Certainly the Soviets have the capability to mine the Bab el-Mandeb and sink tankers, but this does not say much about their combat capabilities, since tankers can be sunk by RPGs fired from Arab Dhows, and mining can be accomplished by cargo vessels. Whether the Soviets would employ their naval capabilities for such missions would depend on what they assess as the most effective use of their naval and air forces in the area in the event of a major war.

The issue will always remain in doubt, for probably even the Soviets would not know beforehand whether their Indian Ocean Squadron could even remain in the area in the event of a major wartime crisis, much less know how they would prioritize their targets if the squadron did remain. Since the Soviet Indian Ocean Squadron consists of older, less combat-capable warships, presumably the Soviets would have less need for them in more demanding, higher priority missions closer to home waters, and hence, one might expect these ships to be assigned to combat missions in the area. Assuming that Western warships remained in the Indian Ocean and were not redeployed to European or Asian waters during a crisis leading to war, these ships would be a high-value target, along with Western base facilities such as Diego Garcia and Oman's Masirah Island, etc. If the Soviets believed that they could maneuver their combatants close enough to Western warships during a crisis leading to war (as they did in the Mediterranean during the October 1973 War), so as to be able to inflict significant damage once hostilities had erupted, they might then conclude that this mission would be worth the predictable destruction of their own combatants.

The Soviet Navy, in fact, continues to justify its out-of-area deployments, in part, as enhancing Soviet strategic warning against U.S. surprise attacks and as contributing to the "battle of the first salvo."[8] Indeed, when U.S. carrier battle groups deploy in the northern Arabian Sea within air combat range of Soviet territory, they are watched by Soviet warships and auxiliary vessels. In recent years, however, U.S. warships in the Indian Ocean have demonstrated their ability to "lose" Soviet tailing ships. This might eventually reduce Soviet confidence in their ability to close with Western warships during a crisis, and hence might force them to reconsider the suitability of their ships for this mission.

If the Soviets should decide that their warships could not seriously damage Western combatants (presumably they would still target them with their land-based bomber aircraft), the Soviet Indian Ocean Squadron could be used to strike Western military installations at Diego Garcia, Oman, Somalia, and possibly Djibouti. Here again the Soviets would have to calculate whether their warships would survive long enough to inflict enough damage against these installations and make the mission worth undertaking.

A third possible target would be the interdiction of oil supplies. There are several ways the Soviets could accomplish this—mining of the straits of Hormuz and the Bab el-Mandeb, sabotage of the Suez Canal, targeting of oil tankers, terminals and pipelines, and even the assassination of key technical personnel. Most of the shore-based missions could be accomplished by *Spetsnaz* commando units without the support of the Soviet Navy. For example, Soviet commandos could be flown into the area, possibly as replacements for civilian crews aboard fishing trawlers and other civilian vessels, and later disembarked nearer to the oil terminals.[9] The Soviet Indian Squadron could be used to mine ports and chokepoints, though this task could also be accomplished perhaps just as easily by civilian vessels or aircraft.

However, mining of the Bab el-Mandeb, whose main channel is over 16 kilometers wide at its narrowest point and 311 meters deep,[10] does not appear to be easy to accomplish satisfactorily should the Bab el-Mandeb littoral remain under Western control. If the West had sufficient mine-clearing assets available for this purpose, the mine fields could be cleared within a few weeks. Moreover, mining does not appear to be as useful a means of interdicting oil supplies as destroying oil terminals. In fact, the development and expansion of oil pipelines to Yanbu' on Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coast,[11] and through Turkey and Syria, has reduced the significance of the Bab el-Mandeb and Strait of Hormuz chokepoints, at least with respect to the flow of oil to Western destinations. It has been estimated that by the mid-1990s, approximately 7mbd of oil produced on the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq could be exported via Red Sea terminals, bypassing the Bab el-Mandeb thereby. Destroying the oil terminal and storage facilities at Yanbu' would seem, therefore, to hold a higher priority than mining the Bab el-Mandeb.

Although targeting supertankers remains a final possible mission of Soviet warships, it too is doubtful. In a crisis leading to a war, tankers might well put into protected ports and would not return to sea without naval escort or until the Soviets had been swept from the seas. Moreover, tankers might be just as easily targeted by civilian vessels, or even commando or proxy forces using RPGs from Arab Dhows. Thus, even if the Soviets opt to interdict the flow of oil to the West from the Gulf, they are not likely to waste their naval forces in traditional antiship missions. The most efficient and potentially effective approach towards interdicting oil supplies would be through sabotage of terminals, pipelines and storage facilities carried out by *Spetsnaz* or specially trained proxy guerrilla forces.

Another mission that the Soviet warships in the Indian Ocean will probably not perform in the foreseeable future is hunting U.S. ballistic missile submarines. Although speculation about the presence of U.S. SSBNs in the Indian Ocean has been rife ever since Geoffrey Jukes pointed out in 1972 the potential advantages of Polaris and Poseidon-missile submarines using the northern Arabian Sea to fire at targets in the U.S.S.R. and western China,[12] the speculation has been unfounded. Jukes discounted the fact that the long transits between the home bases and the Indian Ocean would leave U.S. SSBNs out of range of their targets for long periods.[13] The Soviets have often played up a U.S. SSBN threat in the Indian Ocean as part of a larger propaganda campaign directed mainly at Third World audiences and designed to rationalize their own naval presence, while casting the U.S. military presence in a negative light.[14]

In fact, the Soviet Navy in the Indian Ocean does not perform, nor is it configured to perform, ASW missions. No deep-water ASW exercises have been carried out by the Soviet Navy in the Indian Ocean. And the ships that comprise the Indian Ocean Squadron are general purpose forces, not those used by the Soviets when they do engage in ASW exercises closer to home waters.[15] Although the Soviets have replaced the combatants comprising their Indian Ocean Squadron with more modern ships, possessing better ASW capabilities, they have yet to conduct open-ocean ASW operations in the Indian Ocean. Another indication that the Soviets do not practice deep-water ASW operations in the Indian Ocean is their employment of shorter range Il-38 May ASW planes for surveillance against Western "hunter-killer" submarines and general reconnaissance missions. If the Soviets were to practice open-ocean ASW surveillance, they would presumably replace these planes with their longer range Tu-142 Bear-F ASW planes. Thus, none of the peacetime activities of the Soviet Indian Ocean Squadron suggest that it has an ASW mission.

To sum up, all that can be said is that the Soviet Indian Ocean Squadron does not possess clearly defined anti-SLOC or anti-ASW missions, the roles which are often attributed to it. In fact, the squadron's wartime role remains

unclear. What is more certain is that the squadron is not a highly combat-capable force. Even with the active assistance of local client states,[16] it would be exposed and vulnerable to Western attack and would not likely be able to survive the outbreak of hostilities for very long.

If the Soviet Indian Ocean Squadron appears to be less of a threat than many have assumed, then it follows that the value of the shore-based facilities which have supported the squadron should be similarly discounted. This is not to deny the importance of the logistics and maintenance support these facilities provide in peacetime. The use of these facilities has enabled the Soviets to double the length of their combatant deployments in the Indian Ocean, permitting them to meet their force requirements with a smaller inventory of ships, thereby reducing operating costs as well as freeing units for other assignments. The availability of shore-based support has also allowed the Soviets to employ older, less-capable surface combatants, such as the Petya-class frigates, hence extending their useful service beyond the point at which they would normally be scrapped or exported.

The Soviets also operated a long-range high-frequency communications station at Berbera until 1977, and at Aden since then. The communications station has been used to relay messages between the U.S.S.R. and Soviet naval forces deployed forward.[17] It is also conceivable that the Soviets have used their land and sea-based assets to intercept military communications of Western military forces.

It is also significant that the Soviets have used airfields in the region to stage routine surveillance flights, mainly by Il-38 May ASW planes and, on rare occasion, by long-range Tu-95 Bear-D reconnaissance aircraft (e.g., from Somalia's Dafet airfield in 1976).[18]

The military importance of Soviet naval support facilities in the region, moreover, is not limited to their role in peacetime. We know that in developing an infrastructure at Berbera in the 1970s, Moscow built in certain capabilities designed to support Soviet air combat operations, even though no Soviet strike aircraft were ever deployed there. The so-called "missile-handling and storage" facility that they built at Berbera was capable of handling a wide range of air and sea-launched conventional tactical missiles as well as other ordnance far more sophisticated than those the Somalis had or were ever likely to receive.[19] The ordnance storage facility's proximity to both the large airfield then under construction and the port suggests its potential use for both naval combatants and bomber aircraft.

What contingencies the Soviets had in mind when they built into their support infrastructure at Berbera the capability to support strike aircraft remains a mystery. At the time, no conceivable regional scenario would have justified their use. Moreover, with the rudimentary air defense capabilities the Soviets had installed at Berbera (i.e., a few SA-2 and SA-3 missiles), any Soviet aircraft stationed there would have been vulnerable to attack. In a

previous paper, I have speculated that the Soviets might have been preparing for contingent use of Berbera to stage an attack with their older and less valuable Tu-16 Badger-G bombers against the Sixth Fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean.[20] But it is just as likely that they had no specific scenario in mind and simply replicated an existing storage facility in the U.S.S.R. without anticipating the negative publicity the facility's public exposure later garnered as a result of the U.S. Defense Department's disclosures in June 1975.

If the construction of the ordnance facility at Berbera was ill-considered, then the Soviets appear to have learned their lesson. Since their expulsion from Berbera, they have not built comparable ordnance storage facilities elsewhere in the region or, for that matter, in the Third World.

The military benefits the Soviets have derived from their facilities in the region appear to be rather modest. Their limited needs for naval access, nevertheless, appear to have impelled them to make military aid commitments that they might have preferred to avoid, hence distorting their policy in the region. In the early 1970s, when they decided to buy access to Somali facilities with modern weapons, they ignored the warnings of their specialists about the dangers of dealing with an irredentist regime.[21] They seem to have taken a calculated risk that a strong U.S.-backed Ethiopia would deter any Somali military adventures. The 1974 Ethiopian revolution, which eventually altered the military balance on the Horn, took them by surprise. Even in the mid-1970s, when the unstable situation in Ethiopia aroused Somali nationalism, the Soviets did not temper their military aid for Somalia. Rather, they increased it in exchange for additional access privileges, while securing Somalia's pledge, written into their 1974 friendship treaty, to use that aid for "defensive purposes" only. Without the need for naval access the Soviets would never have aligned themselves so closely with what the rest of Africa regarded as a "pariah" state. Had the Soviets not furnished Somalia with the wherewithal to fight a major war, at a minimum, the scale of the conflict would have been far smaller and, at best, the war might have been avoided altogether.

The Soviets have learned from their Somali experience about the impermanence of Third World friendships. They have, therefore, built "down" their naval support infrastructure in Ethiopia's Dahlak islands, which replaced Berbera as the Soviet Navy's principal Indian Ocean logistic and maintenance base. The Dahlak complex contains easily movable equipment, such as the same 8,500-ton floating drydock they had previously stationed at Berbera, floating piers, water and fuel storage tanks.[22] In addition, once the Soviets deploy the TAG-D, the new large sea plane they are developing as a replacement for the Il-38 May ASW planes, they will no longer need to use local airfields to stage maritime reconnaissance flights.[23]

In the current situation, with Eritrean rebels on the verge of victory over the remaining Ethiopian forces in Eritrea, now beseiged in Asmara, the

Soviets may be thinking about abandoning the Dahlaks altogether. If the Soviets relinquish their access privileges in Ethiopia, they would have to rely exclusively on the naval and air facilities in Yemen to support their Indian Ocean Squadron.[24]

Some indication about the future direction of Soviet policy regarding their own naval access may be gleaned from a recent Soviet article, published in the journal of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which the author expressed interest in reducing the needs for shore-based facilities as much as possible through technological developments (e.g. replacing long-range communications stations with satellites) and seeking to satisfy remaining needs for shore-based support on a commercial basis.[25] Should the Soviets succeed in establishing such a commercial relationship with Yemen, it would virtually eliminate their need for the Dahlak installation. A commercial arrangement should also be far less troublesome than one based on the barter of access privileges for military aid, such as the "arms for access" relationship with Somalia, which distorted Soviet policy in the region in the 1970s.

Until the recent crisis in the Gulf, it appeared that the Soviets were reducing their naval presence in the area and their needs for local shore-based support as well. This was consistent with the general tenets of Gorbachev's policy, which has discounted the role of military power in foreign policy and sought to curtail foreign military presence overseas. In fact, the low profile maintained by the Soviet Indian Ocean Squadron following an Eritrean attack on a Soviet tanker in Ethiopian territorial waters in early May suggests that "gunboat diplomacy" is clearly out of favor in Moscow.

Rather than rely on its own military power to protect its interests in the region, the Soviets appear to prefer international guarantees for freedom of navigation. Indeed, a Soviet commentator, writing in the journal of the influential Institute of World Economy and International Relations, recently called for a demilitarization of the region, including the curtailment of arms deliveries from all sources, the withdrawal of foreign military personnel, and the liquidation of foreign military bases, as well as the elaboration of a system of international security which would protect peaceful navigation.[26]

The current crisis in the Gulf has obviously dealt a blow to this desired Soviet scenario. Instead of anticipated reductions of the U.S. and Soviet military presence in the area, Iraqi aggression has precipitated a massive deployment of U.S. military power. Depending on how the current crisis is resolved, the U.S. Navy is likely to maintain a carrier group in the northern Arabian Sea for a long time to come. U.S. naval power will probably be considered to be an indispensable component of any future plan for collective security in the Gulf region once the Iraqis leave or are expelled from Kuwait, and the immediate crisis is resolved. A strong U.S. military presence this close to the Soviet homeland has been and will likely continue to be a cause for Soviet concern.

Although the Soviets thus far have declined to participate in the international military buildup in the region, there is mounting internal and external pressure for them to do so under a U.N. flag.[27] Should the Soviets participate, it would serve a dual purpose of their standing with the world community against a blatant act of aggression, perpetrated with their own military aid, while at the same time keeping U.S. military forces in the region under surveillance. An enlarged Soviet naval presence would also underline the continued Soviet need for local support facilities. In this event, the Soviets might have to depend on the Dahlak facilities, since their military access to facilities in Yemen may be doubtful due to Yemen's sympathy for Iraq in the current crisis.

But even if the Soviets decide not to participate militarily in the current crisis, Iraq's unexpected aggression undoubtedly has drawn their attention to the dangers in the area which threaten vital global interests. This, in turn, may lead to a more positive Soviet reassessment of the potential contribution that their military power may make towards safeguarding international security.

U.S. Interests

U.S. strategic interests in the region basically center on two objectives: 1) the use of facilities ashore to support U.S. military operations in the Southwest Asia-Indian Ocean area in peacetime and in wartime contingencies; and 2) freedom of international navigation through the Red Sea/Bab el-Mandeb. Of the two, the military role of the Horn of Africa has received far greater attention and is of greater salience.

Historically, military objectives have always been a major factor in U.S. involvement in the region. For over two decades the United States operated the Kagnew military communications station at Asmara. Although it once played an important role in the worldwide U.S. military communications system, by the early 1970s it had been rendered technologically obsolete by satellite communications as well as the development of what was then an "austere" naval communications station at Diego Garcia. Shortly before the Ogaden War, the United States closed Kagnew station, hence removing an important underpinning of the U.S. presence in the region. With the cessation of the 25-year-old U.S. military assistance program in Ethiopia in 1977, U.S. dealings with the new Mengistu government rapidly unravelled, and they have since remained minimal.

With the abrogation of the Soviet-Somali friendship treaty in November 1977 and the withdrawal of Somali regular forces from the Ogaden in February-March 1978, a new phase in U.S. policy in the region, centered on Somalia, began. Although discussions about military aid to Somalia began in 1978, it was the collapse of the Shah of Iran's authority and the Soviet

intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 which gave impetus to the development of a military relationship, codified in the 1980 U.S.-Somalia security assistance agreement. It provided for $65 million worth of U.S. military credits and grants to be used in defense of Somalia's territorial integrity.[28] The agreement also provided for the development and use by U.S. armed forces of naval and air facilities at Berbera and Mogadishu. As of 1985, the U.S. government had appropriated $54 million for improvements of the airfields and port facilities at these locations, as well as the addition of POL storage and distribution facilities at Berbera.[29]

This amount was five times less than what the United States spent on developing facilities in Oman, a ratio that reflects the far greater importance of that country in U.S. military preparations for Southwest Asian contingencies.[30] Until the Iraq-Kuwait crisis, Somalia played a limited role, primarily in support of reconnaissance and logistic flights. Some of the flights staging from Berbera entailed surveillance of Soviet naval units in the area. On occasion, the United States used Djibouti's airfield for such purposes. U.S. aircraft were also permitted to use open Somali territory to practice low-level bombing runs. The value of port facilities for crew rest was extremely limited, given the poverty of the country, the lack of attractions and amenities, and the spread of disease. Even before U.S.-Somali relations became strained over the genocidal fighting in northern Somalia, it was often difficult to schedule liberty visits, due, in part, to the reluctance of sailors to go ashore.

Before the current Gulf crisis, Berbera's potential role in supporting wartime contingencies was considered to be far more important than its peacetime utility. Somalia agreed to permit the United States to store war materiel at Berbera, which in the event of a wartime crisis could have been used as a major staging area to join deployed U.S. combat forces with their supplies. Berbera was not the first choice for this role, since it is located relatively far away from the expected locations of disembarkation in the upper Persian Gulf. However, the reluctance of other countries, such as Egypt and the Sudan, to permit the storage of U.S. materiel on satisfactory terms meant that the United States found itself with no practical alternative to Berbera. Largely by default, therefore, the storage, airfield and port facilities at Berbera were deemed to be important.

The willingness of the Arab Gulf states to support the massive buildup of U.S. forces in the region during the current Gulf crisis has obviated the need for the Somali facilities. Indeed, there is no indication that the United States has made extensive use of the Somali facilities during this crisis, even in support of naval embargo operations in the Red Sea-Gulf of Aden area.

Even if the U.S. government had some current operational need to use the Somali facilities, it might well decline to employ them because of the civil war and incipient political chaos in Somalia. The Issa-based Somali National Movement has recently targeted Berbera, which has served as a staging area

for the Somali government's military campaigns in the north. This has placed U.S. employment of the facilities at Berbera at risk. It is worth noting that in the past it has been very difficult to disassociate routine U.S. military support activities in Somalia from the Siad Barre regime's genocidal punitive campaigns against the Issa tribe in northern Somalia. For example, the repair of U.S.-used military communications links from Mogadishu to the northern administrative center of Hargeisa in mid-1988 was regarded, rightly or wrongly, as assisting the Somali army's military campaign raging in northern Somalia at the time.

For the time being, U.S.-Somalia military cooperation has been suspended. In response to the Somali government's repugnant policies, the U.S. government has stopped supplying military aid and apparently suspended military support activities at Berbera as well. Given the current political situation in the country, the U.S. Congress would probably find it most difficult to renew the U.S.-Somali security assistance agreement. However, the treaty may remain in force beyond its expiration date even if neither side formally requests its renewal. Given the present strains in U.S.-Somali relations, inaction on renewing the treaty may be the only way it will survive.

The United States is also committed to safeguarding freedom of navigation through international straits, such as the Bab el-Mandeb. It participated in multinational mine-clearing operations in the Gulf of Suez in 1974 and in the Red Sea a decade later, following the apparent mining of the area by a Libyan cargo vessel.[31] Moreover, the United States has made a formal commitment to the protection of Israeli passage through and over the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb. The 1975 memorandum of agreement between the governments of Israel and the United States stipulates: "In accordance with the principle of freedom of navigation on the high seas and free and unimpeded passage through and over straits connecting international waters, the United States Government regards the Straits of the Bab el-Mandeb and the Strait of Gibraltar as international waterways. It will support Israel's right to free and unimpeded passage through such straits and will support diplomatically the exercise of that right."[32] This agreement was signed in the course of the disengagement negotiations following the October 1973 War in which Egyptian warships prevented Israeli shipping from passing through the Bab el-Mandeb. According to one legal scholar, this formulation insuring Israel's free passage through and over the Bab el-Mandeb is broader than the concept of "transit passage" stipulated in the Draft Convention of the Third U.N. Law of the Sea Conference.[33] It hence raises the prospect that the United States could find itself one day internationally isolated in supporting future Israeli military actions in and over the Bab el-Mandeb. This is an exceedingly remote possibility, however, as the following discussion of Israeli interests in the region should make clear.

Israeli Interests

Israel's strategic interests in the region focus on freedom of navigation through the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb. Although 90 percent of Israel's maritime trade is handled by its Mediterranean ports, the Red Sea route is important nonetheless. At one time most of Israel's oil imports arrived from Iran via this waterway. But after the fall of the Shah, the Islamic government in Teheran cut off regular oil supplies. Thereafter, Israel decided to diversify its sources of oil so that no more than one-quarter of its imports would come from any single source. (Egypt supplies approximately one quarter of Israel's oil imports.)[34] Israel also decided to rely more heavily on coal imports from South Africa and Australia to satisfy its energy requirements. These coal deliveries as well as other raw material imports reach Israel via the Bab el-Mandeb.

Israeli shipping through the Bab el-Mandeb has faced several threats in the past. In 1971 a 30,000-ton Liberian tanker, the *Coral Sea*, chartered by Israel and carrying oil for Eilat, was fired upon, but not sunk, by a group of terrorists from a launch operating from South Yemen's Perim island. (The PFLP took credit for the attack.) This incident may have been intended to demonstrate that Israeli access to the Red Sea and Indian Ocean depended on more than their control of Sharm el-Sheikh and the Strait of Tiran, which was then a disputed issue. During the October 1973 War the Arabs once again tried to take advantage of Israel's vulnerability by conducting an Egyptian naval blockade at the Bab el-Mandeb. The blockade was lifted by December 1973 without Israel ever trying to challenge it.[35] However, this blockade proved to be effective, for by the end of the war Israel's oil stocks were badly depleted. Israel's pressing need for oil was indicated by Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir's insistence on lifting the blockade as a primary condition for any relief of Israeli pressure on the encircled Egyptian Third Army.[36]

Partly to reduce her vulnerability to another Arab blockade, Israel decided to develop air tankers to extend the range of its fighters. The introduction of the long-range *Reshef*-class missile boats means that the Bab el-Mandeb is now within reach of Israeli sea and air power. No further challenge specifically to Israeli shipping through the Bab el-Mandeb has been mounted,[37] which is probably due as much to the changed diplomatic situation in the Middle East following the October 1973 War as to the emergence of Israel's long-range military capabilities and the 1975 U.S. guarantee of Israel's freedom of navigation through the Bab el-Mandeb.

It may be added that even Israel's adversary in the region, the PDRY, modified its position on international navigation through the Bab el-Mandeb in a way that could be objectively interpreted as being more accommodating to Israeli interests, although this was probably not the PDRY's intention. The initially restrictive PDRY position was articulated at the 1974 Law of the

Sea Conference. The PDRY representative stated that the PDRY's territorial sea extended to the Bab el-Mandeb and that the right of innocent passage through the Bab el-Mandeb applied only to civilian commercial vessels, not to foreign warships, which should require prior authorization by the PDRY.[38] The air space over the Bab el-Mandeb was also regarded as part of the PDRY's territorial sea and under its exclusive jurisdiction. In 1978, however, the PDRY enunciated a more liberal policy on this issue: "Being well aware of the great importance of the Strait of the Bab el-Mandeb to all peoples and States of the world as an international waterway which has long been used for international navigation, and of its important strategic location as a link between the international traffic lines, and believing in the importance of keeping international navigation through this vital strait free for the benefit of the peoples and States of the area in particular and the international community in general, the Government of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen confirms its respect for the freedom of navigation of maritime and air traffic of ships and aircraft of all coastal and non-coastal States, without prejudice to the sovereignty, integrity, security and independence of the Republic."[39] Although it seems probable that this policy shift was designed mainly to accommodate Soviet airlifts and shipments of supplies and Cuban military personnel to Ethiopia during the Ogaden War, its wording applies to all states, presumably including Israel as well. Hence, it removed a potential source of friction between Israel and the PDRY, even before the latter's recent merger with the more moderate Yemen Arab Republic. So far, the unification of the Yemens has not threatened the security of Israel's navigation through the Bab el-Mandeb.

On balance, then, it would appear that the threats to Israeli shipping through the Bab el-Mandeb were not serious in the past, and even less so today. Nor, for that matter, is this waterway as important to Israel as it once was when it relied heavily on imports of oil from Iran.

French Interests

Like other West European states, France has a strong interest in freedom of navigation along the sea routes surrounding the Horn of Africa. According to some estimates, roughly 70 percent of the Persian Gulf oil that is earmarked for Western Europe is shipped along these waterways through the Bab el-Mandeb and around the Cape of Good Hope.[40]

In the past, moreover, France had been heavily dependent on the imports of oil from the Persian Gulf. By 1978, France's imports of Persian Gulf oil accounted for 44 percent of its total energy consumption, and 70 percent of its oil imports.[41] This meant that France relied on Persian Gulf oil to meet its energy requirements more than any other West European country. However, this energy dependence declined markedly as a result of France's

nuclear energy program expansion and its diversification of the sources of crude oil supplies in the 1980s. Imports from the Gulf region averaged only one-third of France's total imports of crude oil for the years 1986 through 1988.[42] Furthermore, by 1986 oil imports accounted for only 42.6 percent of France's energy requirements.[43] This meant that by the late 1980s Persian Gulf oil met roughly 16 percent of France's total energy requirements. In addition, as increasing use has been made of the oil pipelines from the Gulf region to terminals along Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coast and the Mediterranean coasts of Turkey and Syria, the proportion of Gulf oil reaching France and other West European countries via the sea lanes adjacent the Horn of Africa has declined commensurately.

Despite the declining importance of the Bab el-Mandeb as a conduit for France's oil supplies, this strait remains important, since it lies astride the fastest route to French territories in the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific.

Threats to French shipping through the Bab el-Mandeb have remained minimal. In one incident in 1972, a French destroyer en route goodwill visits to Arab ports in the region was shelled from Perim island.[44] No other incidents have been reported.

Through its military presence at Djibouti, France has the ability to respond more rapidly to threats in the Bab el-Mandeb than any other state. The French Indian Ocean Squadron is normally based in Reunion, but often visits Djibouti. It usually includes 12 combatants and an aircraft carrier.[45] In addition, the French garrison at Djibouti numbers 4,500 troops, supported by a squadron of 12 fighters. This concentration of French military power near the Bab el-Mandeb is probably more than enough to counter any likely threats to the latter's security.

The French military presence in Djibouti, moreover, appears to be secure, for without it, Djibouti would probably cease to exist as an independent state. Indeed, when Djibouti gained independence in 1977, it was widely assumed that without the retention of a French military garrison, Djibouti would become engulfed in a war between Somalia and Ethiopia, which have conflicting interests in that country.[46] Also, with a population of only 400,000, Djibouti is heavily dependent on French budgetary and technical assistance. In fact, over 60 percent of Djibouti's teachers are French citizens. There are over 10,000 French citizens, including 6,300 military personnel and their dependents, residing in Djibouti.[47] Djibouti and its sizeable French presence could indeed be considered a separate French interest in itself.

Egyptian Interests

As the proprietor of the Suez Canal, Egypt obviously has a major stake, no less significant than the major users of these waterways, in the freedom of international navigation through the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb. In

addition, Egypt has a unique interest in the Horn of Africa, since over 80 percent of the waters of its Nile river lifeblood originate in the Ethiopian highlands.

Historically, the Egyptians and their British rulers before them took an active interest in ensuring that the headwaters of the Blue Nile would not be diverted, although many have interpreted this interest as a pretext for interference in the internal affairs of Ethiopia. Protocols regarding the free flow of these waters were signed between Britain and the Ethiopian Emperor Menelik II in 1902, and again in 1925 between Britain and Italy, as part of an agreement delineating their respective spheres of economic influence in independent Ethiopia.[48] The Egyptians have also expressed concern about Marxist Ethiopia's policies in this regard. In May 1978, soon after the Soviets and Cubans had helped Ethiopia's newly installed Marxist military regime, led by Lieutenant Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, to rout the Somali armed forces in the Ogaden, Sadat warned: ". . . we depend upon the Nile 100 percent in our life, so if anyone, at any moment thinks to deprive us of our life we shall never hesitate [to go to war] because it is a matter of life or death."[49] Fears about a potential Ethiopian threat to the Nile may have induced Egyptian leaders to support Somalia and the Eritrean insurgency.

In reality, neither the Mengistu government nor its predecessors have undertaken any projects which would have diverted the waters of the Blue Nile. There have been surveys of the tributaries of the Blue Nile conducted with U.S. assistance between 1957 and 1964, which recommended water storage, hydroelectric power generation and irrigation projects, but apparently none of these projects were ever implemented.[50] In the 1970s Ethiopian irrigation experts assumed that their agricultural water needs from the Blue Nile and the Atbara river (which flows into the Nile in the Sudan) would reach 4 billion cubic meters per year. And how the droughts of the 1980 may have altered these estimates is difficult to ascerrain. Although the possibility of a unilateral Ethiopian initiative in this area cannot be ruled out,[51] it is more probable that any project to develop the water resources of the Upper Nile basin would be worked out in consultation and coordination with the riparian states involved.

Even without the initiation of any major Ethiopian water projects, the flow of Nile water to Egypt has undoubtedly diminished as a result of the droughts in Ethiopia and the Sudan in recent years, a natural calamity which Egypt can do virtually nothing about. Through its own conservation efforts Egypt can do far more to control the adequacy of its water supply.

Saudi Arabian Interests

As a major oil exporter and importer of goods from Western Europe and the United States, Saudi Arabia obviously has a stake in freedom of navigation

through the Bab el-Mandeb. As noted above, the development and expansion of the oil pipeline to Yanbu' has reduced the importance of this waterway. By the mid-1990s over half of Saudi Arabia's crude oil production could be exported via the Red Sea, thus bypassing the Bab el-Mandeb entirely. Although Saudi Arabia's economic stake in this strait may be waning, its political interest in the Horn of Africa has so far remained strong.

For two decades Saudi Arabia has sought to eliminate the Soviet presence on both sides of the Bab el-Mandeb. The Saudis considered both the Soviets and their Marxist-oriented client states in the region as a threat to Islam as well as to their own and other conservative Arab monarchies in the Gulf. They also feared that the unification of the Yemens under a radical leftist regime would pose a direct threat to the Saudi political and social systems.

In the Horn of Africa the Saudis encouraged Somalia to expel the Soviets in the 1970s, and later supported the Eritrean rebels (despite the fact that the EPLF, the main fighting force, is Marxist-oriented), mainly because it weakened Ethiopia's Marxist regime. Although the Saudi position regarding Eritrean independence remains ambiguous, they had earlier supported the scheme of turning the Red Sea into an Arab Lake, which envisions an independent, Arab-oriented Eritrea.

While the Saudis continue to regard the Mengistu regime with hostility, they have reconciled themselves with the Soviet Union as a result of *perestroika* and recent Soviet cooperation in the Gulf crisis. The normalization of Soviet-Saudi relations should facilitate coordination of their respective policies in the region, which might help to remove elements of confrontation and hostility that have so far plagued the countries on both sides of Bab el-Mandeb. The summary table identifies the discrete strategic interests of the external states reviewed, and I have attempted to assign values that these states might currently place on these interests as well as to estimate how those values may have changed over time. In addition, I have tried to evaluate the significance of the vulnerability of these interests to threats, and how the importance of these threats may have changed.

As the table indicates, freedom of navigation through the Bab el-Mandeb remains important to all the states reviewed, although the reasons for its importance vary (e.g., the viability of the southern sea route for the U.S.S.R., oil shipping for France, etc.) In addition, the United States and Saudi Arabia have less directly at stake in this issue than the other states. Nevertheless, as a superpower adhering to the principle of freedom of navigation through international straits and having pledged to support Israel's exercise of this right in the Bab el-Mandeb, the U.S. commitment to freedom of navigation through the Bab el-Mandeb remains strong. What has changed is the economic importance of this waterway, which has declined mainly because of the development and expansion of oil pipelines and terminals bypassing the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab el-Mandeb.

Strategic Importance of the Bab el-Mandeb and Horn of Africa to External States

Country	Strategic Interest		Current Value	Apparent Change	Current Threat/ Vulnerability	Apparent Change
U.S.S.R.	Freedom of Navigation		High	None	Low	Decline
	Naval Support Facilities	1. Peace	High	Decline	Moderate	Increase
		2. War	Low	Decline	High	Increase
U.S.	Freedom of Navigation		Moderate	None	Low	Decrease
	Military Support Facilities	1. Peace	Low	None	Moderate	Increase
		2. War	Low	Decline	Moderate	Increase
Israel	Freedom of Navigation		High	Decline	Low	Decline
France	Freedom of Navigation		High	Decline	Low	Decline
Egypt	Freedom of Navigation		High	None	Low	None
	Flow of Nile Tributaries		High	None	Moderate	Increase
Saudi Arabia	Freedom of Navigation		Moderate	Decline	Low	Decrease
	Marxist-Free Region		High	Decline	Low	Decrease

On balance, the strategic importance of the Bab el-Mandeb and the Horn of Africa seems to be declining and the threats to these interests may be less serious than many observers earlier assumed. The economic importance of the Bab el-Mandeb as an oil shipping lane has declined with the development and expansion of oil pipelines along the Red Sea coast which bypass this strait.

So far, the threats to maritime traffic through these waters do not appear to have been very impressive. The worst incident was the 1984 mining of the Red Sea, which involved 190 mines, evidently recent Soviet export versions.[52] Although these mines damaged, but did not sink, 19 ships of 15 different nations, the mines were soon cleared by 26 ships from six different states. After dropping to a low of 42 ships per day in early August, maritime traffic returned to normal (about 60 ships per day) within one month of the mining. The voyage of only one ship was cancelled as a result of the mining. Given the limited amount of damage, especially in comparison with the simultaneous destruction of tankers during the "tanker war" in the Gulf, Lloyd's of London never bothered to raise its insurance rates for ships transiting the Red Sea. At worst, the mining incident was a nuisance, not a crippling blow to international navigation.

Whether the Soviets or their allies would mine these waters in wartime, much less how effective the mining would be, remains highly speculative. As indicated above, if the Soviets would opt to expend their combat forces in the region, they probably have higher priority objectives to target, such as Western combat forces, military facilities, oil pipelines and terminals. And even if they did mine the straits, it would probably not be very effective. Gulf oil can now reach the West through far more diverse routes than in the past. Moreover, during the initial phase of a global war, the West would probably depend on more secure sources of oil (e.g., in the United States, Canada, Alaska, Latin America and Nigeria) located closer to refineries in the United States and Europe. (This scenario assumes, of course, that the Soviets are still capable of fighting a protracted general war, an assumption which appears to be increasingly unwarranted in light of the momentous changes that have taken place recently in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.)

The military support facilities used by the Soviet Union in Ethiopia, and the United States in Somalia, represent another strategic interest, but their importance to the superpowers seems to be declining. A comparison of the rudimentary and movable installations the Soviets built in the Dahlaks with the far more elaborate ones they abandoned at Berbera points to the declining operational and political significance of naval support facilities in the region for the U.S.S.R. In addition, the rebel victories in Eritrea have jeopardized Soviet use of the Dahlak facilities. Local insurgency in northern Somalia has also complicated U.S. military support operations at Berbera.

Thus far, the Iraq-Kuwait crisis has not increased the value of these support facilities for either superpower. Support from the Arab states of the Gulf has apparently obviated the United States' need for the Somalia facilities. So far, the Soviets have not agreed to participate in the international military embargo of Iraq, and hence have not needed additional local support.

However, if the Soviets eventually decide to contribute their naval forces for this purpose, they might have to rely on support from the Dahlak island installation, since access to facilities elsewhere (e.g. Yemen) would be doubtful. Indeed, it is possible that the current Soviet difficulties in retaining access privileges in Ethiopia and Yemen might be restraining Moscow from making such a military commitment.

It should be noted that other states have found military support facilities in the Horn of Africa useful during the current crisis. The French aircraft carrier *Clemenceau* stopped over at Djibouti on its way to the Gulf.[53]

Given the uncertainties inherent in the current crisis, it would be imprudent to speculate about how the Horn of Africa and the Bab el-Mandeb might factor into the protagonists' near and longer term military plans. It is simply too early to tell whether the Iraq-Kuwait crisis has given the region a new strategic importance. Nevertheless, it is worth bearing in mind that the region's strategic significance has long been viewed in connection to its proximity to the Persian Gulf. It would not be surprising, therefore, if the current Gulf crisis eventually brought about a renewed external interest in the Horn of Africa.

Notes

1. From Odessa to Vladivostok it is 11,000 nautical miles by sea through the Suez Canal-Red Sea and 17,000 miles around the Cape route. At an average speed of 14 knots, it takes 32 days by the shorter route through the Suez Canal and 50 days by the longer route to make this voyage. The time saved in using the Suez Canal is greater for the Soviet Union than for any other European state.

2. See James T. Westwood "Soviet Maritime Strategy and Transportation," *Naval War College Review*, November-December 1985, p. 47.

3. Compare Suez Canal Authority *Suez Canal Reports* for 1981 and 1987.

4. See Admiral Sergei Gorshkov *Morskaia moshch' gosudarstva* [Sea Power of the State] (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1976), p. 152.

5. For further detail, see Lt. Cmdr. Charles T. Creekman, Jr. USN, "Sino-Soviet Competition in the Yemens," *Naval War College Review*, July-August 1979, pp. 79-83, and the author's "The Soviet-Somali 'Arms for Access' Relationship," *Soviet Union*, vol. X, part 1, 1983, pp. 59-81.

6. It is worth noting that the 1979 Soviet treaty with the PDRY is the only treaty the Soviets have signed with a Third World state which contains a thinly veiled anti-Chinese reference. Article seven calls "for the elimination from the practice of international relations of any manifestation of the policy of hegemonism and expansionism." See *Pravda*, 26 October 1989. Salem Rubayyi Ali, the PDRY President deposed and executed in a July 1978 coup, was widely regarded as being pro-Chinese.

7. See Tripoli JANA in Arabic, 17 February 1989; translated in Foreign Broadcast Information Service *Africa Report*, 21 February 1989, p. 4.

8. See the interview with the Soviet Navy Commander-in-Chief Admiral Chernavin in "Flot—rodom iz Oktiabria," [The Navy: Born of October] *Voennyi vestnik*, February 1988, p. 19. In a similar vein, an authoritative Soviet book on the navy favors forward deployments of warships so that they could be ready "to use their weapons quickly when war starts." See Rear Admiral Nikolai P. V'iunenko, Captain First Rank Boris N. Makeev and Captain First Rank Valentin D. Skugarev, *Voenno-morskoi flot: rol', perspektivy,*

razvitiia, ispol'zovanie [The Navy: Its role, Prospects, Developments, and Uses] (Moscow: Voennoe izdatel'stvo, 1988), p. 237; as cited in Norman Cigar "The Navy's Battle of the Budget: Soviet Style, *Naval War College Review*," Spring 1990, pp. 6-30.

9. For further discussion of this contingency, see the author's "Soviet Strategic Military Interests in Africa in the 1980s," *Final Report* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa: U.S. Army College Strategic Studies Institute, 1986), pp. 6ff.

10. See Ruth Lapidoth-Eschelbacher *The Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), p. 132.

11. The 48-inch pipeline to Yanbu' was completed in 1981. In the late 1980s its throughput capacity was expanded from 1.85 million barrels per day to 3.2 mbd. There are plans to raise its capacity even further to 4.8 mbd and to create an underground reserve of 1.5 billion barrels near Yanbu'. See Roberto Aliboni, *The Red Sea Region* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1985), p. 77. Iraq is also developing a 1.65 mbd pipeline to a terminal 30 miles south of Yanbu'. See Paul McDonald "Red Sea: The Middle East's Next Troublespot?" *World Today*, May 1988, pp. 76-77. To accommodate the Red Sea oil flow, Egypt has decided to expand its Sumed pipeline, which carries oil from the Gulf of Suez to the Mediterranean, from 1.9 mbd to 2.3 mbd of throughput, as well as to widen the Suez Canal to handle supertankers up to 270,000 dwt.

12. See Geoffrey Jukes, *The Indian Ocean in Soviet Naval Policy*, Adelphi Paper No. 87 (London: International Institute of Strategic Studies, 1972).

13. The point was made in James M. McConnell "The Soviet Navy in the Indian Ocean," in *Soviet Naval Developments: Capability and Context*, ed. Michael MccGwire (New York: Praeger 1973), pp. 389-406.

14. See, for example, I. Lebedev "Indiiskii okean-zona mira ili konfrontatsii?" [The Indian Ocean—Zone of Peace or Confrontation?], *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia*, No. 8, 1985, p. 91. Interestingly, an article on the Indian Ocean published in the professional journal of the Soviet Navy, *Morskoi sbornik*, does not refer to a U.S. SSBN threat, but rather to USAF B-52s operating out of Diego Garcia as a strategic threat to the U.S.S.R. from a southern azimuth. See Captain (First Rank) M. Ovanesov, "K voprosu o voenuo-politicheskoi obstanovka v Indiiskom okeane," [On the Question of the Military-Political Situation in the Indian Ocean], *Morskoi sbornik*, No. 1, 1985, p. 25.

15. For further detail, see the author's "The Soviet Naval Presence in the Indian Ocean and Western Security," in *US Strategic Interests in the Gulf Region*, ed. W.J. Olson (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1987), pp. 83-105.

16. South Yemen's air defense capabilities include SA-2, 3, 6, 7, and 9 missiles, and Mig-21 and Su-20 fighter aircraft. Ethiopia's air defenses feature SA-2 and SA-3 missile batteries and Mig-21 fighters. Ethiopia's naval capabilities are more impressive than those of the PDRY. They include several Osa-II missile boats, two Turya-class hydrofoils, and two Petya-class frigates. See the data contained in *The Military Balance 1989-90* (London: International Institute of Strategic Studies, 1989).

17. See U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Armed Services, *Disapprove Construction Projects on the Island of Diego Garcia*, Hearings, 94th Congress, 1st Session, 10 June 1975; and U.S. Dept. of Defense, *Soviet Military Power*, 4th ed. (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1985), p. 128.

18. Bear-Ds are also capable of providing targeting data for sea-launched cruise missiles—a valuable asset in peacetime naval exercises as well as in wartime, should, of course, the Bear-Ds survive long enough to be able to transmit the data.

19. See *Disapprove Construction Projects on the Island of Diego Garcia, op. cit.* p. 7; and U.S. Congress *Soviet Military Capability in Berbera, Somalia.* Report of Senator Bartlett to the Committee on Armed Services (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1975).

20. See the author's "Soviet Strategic Military Interests in Africa in the 1980s," *op. cit.*, p. 8.

21. See Ia. Ia. Etinger, *Mezhdugosudarstvennye otnosheniia v Afrike* [Interstate Relations in Africa] (Moscow: Nauka, 1972), pp. 71-84.

22. See U.S. Dept. of Defense, *Soviet Military Power*, 4th ed. (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1985), p. 123. Dahlak services about 70 Soviet naval ships per year. Since April 1983, ships from the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron have also called at Dahlak for repairs and maintenance. See U.S. Dept. of the Navy, *Understanding Soviet Naval Developments*, 5th ed. (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1985), p. 10.

23. See *Statement of Rear Admiral Thomas A. Brooks, U.S. Navy Director of Naval Intelligence*, before the Seapower, Strategic, and Critical Materials Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee on Intelligence Issues, 22 February 1989, p. 25. The Soviets appear to have shifted all of their naval reconnaissance flights to Aden since two Il-38 May ASW planes were destroyed by EPLF guerrillas at Asmara airfield in 1984. See U.S. Dept. of Defense, *Soviet Military Power*, 4th ed. (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1985), p. 123.

24. The Soviets use port facilities at Aden on a regular basis for logistic and maintenance support and airfields nearby for intermittent staging of maritime surveillance flights. At Aden they also employ a

long-range communications station, which is the same one they had used earlier at Berbera. In addition, the Soviet Indian Ocean Squadron routinely anchors off of Yemen's Socotra island, which provides protection against the monsoons and some relief from the very hot temperatures in the Red Sea-Gulf of Aden area. See U.S. Dept. of Defense, *Soviet Military Power: Prospects for Change* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1989), p. 121.

25. See Andrei Kolosov "Reappraisal of USSR Third World Policy," *International Affairs*, May 1990, p. 40.

26. See Vladimir Petrovich Mikhailov (pseud.), "Afrikanskii rog: problemy i perspektivy," [The African Horn: Problems and Prospects] *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia*, no. 6, 1990, pp. 98-99.

27. The Soviet military has advocated Soviet participation in a multinational U.N. military force. See *Krasnaya zvezda*, 14 August 1990, p. 3; in Foreign Broadcast Information Service *Soviet Union Report*, 20 August 1990, pp. 4-5; and *Krasnaya zvezda*, 2 September 1990, p. 3; Foreign Broadcast Information Service *Soviet Union Report*, 4 September 1990, p. 34.

28. See David A. Korn, *Ethiopia, the United States and the Soviet Union* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1986), p. 75. The amount of military assistance was later increased. As of 1987 the United States had delivered $80 million worth of arms to Somalia, with most of the deliveries made during the mid-1980s. See U.S. ACDA, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1978-82* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1984), p. 95; and U.S. ACDA, *World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers 1988* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1989), p. 111.

29. See Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger's *Annual Report to the Congress on the FY 1986 Budget*, (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1985), pp. 233-234.

30. In fact, the U.S. government has spent slightly less on military construction of facilities in Somalia than on those in Kenya (e.g., dredging Mombasa's harbor and upgrading its airfield with improved navigation aids and maintenance facilities.) By 1985 the costs of military construction in Kenya amounted to $57.9 million. See Defense Secretary Weinberger's *Annual Report to the Congress on the FY 1986 Budget*, p. 233. The Kenyan facilities were developed almost exclusively for peacetime use, primarily for crew rest and liberty and secondarily for logistic support and maintenance. Until the rampant spread of AIDS in the late 1980s, Mombasa was one of the very few attractive liberty ports available to U.S. military forces in the Western Indian Ocean basin.

31. For an excellent description of this mining incident, see Scott C. Truver "Mines of August: An International Whodunit," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, May 1985, pp. 95-117.

32. *International Legal Materials*, vol. 14, 1975, p. 1468; cited in Ruth Lapidoth-Eschelbacher, p. 147.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

34. See Noah Lucas "Israeli Policy in the Red Sea," in *The Red Sea: Prospects for Stability*, ed. Abdel Majid Farid (New York: St. Martin's, 1984), p. 151.

35. See Mordechai Abir, *Oil, Power and Politics* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1974), pp. 138ff. The only shots fired were by an Egyptian destroyer against a U.S. merchant vessel, the Lasalle.

36. See Edgar O'Ballance, *No Victor, No Vanquished: The Yom Kippur War* (San Rafael, Calif.: Presidio, 1978), p. 326.

37. The 1984 mining of the Red Sea was not directed specifically against Israel. Although circumstantial evidence points to the Libyan cargo vessel, the *Ghat*, as the perpetrator, Libya never claimed responsibility for the operation, whose objectives remain obscure. However, if the Libyans were responsible, this action would seem to be consistent with Qaddafi's goal of establishing Arab control from the Atlantic to the Gulf.

38. See Lapidoth-Eschelbacher, pp. 148-149.

39. See United Nations communication NV/78/63, 12 July 1978; quoted in Lapidoth-Eschelbacher, p. 149.

40. See Centre des Hautes Etudes sur L'Afrique et L'Asie Modernes (hereafter CHEAM), *France: Ocean Indien, Mer Rouge* (Paris: F.E.D.N., 1986), p. 324.

41. See David A. Deese and Louis B. Miller "Western Europe," in *Energy and Security*, eds. David A. Deese and Joseph S. Nye (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1981), p. 187.

42. Calculated from data in International Energy Agency, *Quarterly Oil Statistics and Energy Balances*. First Quarter 1989 (Paris: OECD, 1989), p. 226.

43. Computed from data in British Petroleum, *Statistic Review of World Energy* (London: BP, June 1987).

44. See Abir, p. 23.

45. Cordesman, p. 96.

46. Over half of Djibouti's population are Issas, a Somali tribe. This ethnic kinship formed the basis of Somalia's irredentist claims to the former French territory of the Afars and Issas. Since Djibouti's independence, Somalia has renounced this territorial claim. As the terminus of the Franco-Ethiopian railway, Djibouti protects Ethiopia's only rail line to the sea, the safety of which is regarded as essential to Ethiopia's security.

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47. See CHEAM, p. 322.

48. For further detail, see John Waterbury, *Hydropolitics of the Nile Valley* (Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 74-75. In 1957 Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie rejected these protocols in notes to the Egyptian and Sudanese governments, and affirmed Ethiopia's natural rights to Nile waters originating on its territory, *ibid.*, p. 78.

49. Quoted in Waterbury, p. 78.

50. See *ibid.*, p. 238.

51. The Ethiopian delegate to a U.N. Water Conference, held at Mar del Plata in 1977, emphasized the sovereign right of any riparian state in the absence of an international agreement to proceed unilaterally with the development of water resources within its territory, but urged that such international agreements to establish co-riparian benefits and responsibilities should be pursued as a matter of general principle. Cited in Waterbury, p. 238.

52. See Truver, pp. 95-117.

53. See the *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 1 September 1990, p. 1.

This article is a revised version of a paper prepared for presentation at a conference on the Horn of Africa, sponsored by the Middle East Institute and the Defense Intelligence College, and held at the U.S. Central Command, Mac Dill Air Force Base, Florida, 16-17 January 1990. It has been updated to 26 September 1990. The opinions expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of the U.S. government.

. . . a nation which wishes to assure a share of control on any theater of maritime importance cannot afford to be without a footing on some of the strategic points to be found there. Such points, suitably chosen for their relative positions, form a base; secondary as regards the home country, primary as regards the immediate theater.

Naval Strategy
A. T. Mahan (1911)
Little, Brown (1918), p. 200

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