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THE RED SEA REGION

by Roberto Aliboni

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAAID	Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development
ABEDIA	Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa
ACR	Africa Contemporary Record
AFESD	Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development
AIGC	Arab Investment and Guarantee Corporation
AMF	Arab Monetary Fund
ANM	Arab Nationalist Movement
ASLF	Abbo Somali Liberation Front
ASW	Anti-Submarine Warfare
CELU	Confederation of Ethiopian Labor Unions
CIA	(U.S.) Central Intelligence Agency
CMEA	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
COPWE	Commission for Organizing the Party of the Working People of Ethiopia
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DIA	(U.S.) Defense Intelligence Agency
ELF	Eritrean Liberation Front
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
EPRP	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party
ETA	Ethiopian Teachers Association
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IHT	International Herald Tribune
INF	Intermediate Nuclear Forces
ILO	International Labour Organization
ME'ISON	All-Ethiopian Socialist Party (Mela Ethiopia Socialist Nekenake)
MECS	Middle East Contemporary Survey
MEES	Middle East Economic Survey
MFO	Multinational Force and Observers
NALT	Naval Arms Limitation Talk
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NDF	National Democratic Front
NIC	Newly Industrialized Countries
NLF	National Liberation Front
OAU	Organization of African Unity
ODA	Official Development Aid
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFID	OPEC Fund for International Development
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PDRY	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen
PFLO	Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman
PFLOAG	Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PMAC	Provisional Military Administrative Council
POMOA	Provisional Office for Mass Organizational Affairs
PRC	People's Republic of China
RDJTF	Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force
SCP	Sudanese Communist Party
SLBM	Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile
SSBN	Ballistic-Missile Submarine, Nuclear
SSRP	Somali Socialist Revolutionary Party
SUMED	Suez-Mediterranean (pipeline)
ULCC	Ultra Large Crude Carrier
UNEF	United Nations Emergency Forces
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UPONF	Unified Political Organization - National Front
VLCC	Very Large Crude Carrier
WSLF	Wariya Somali Liberation Front
YAR	Yemen Arab Republic
YSP	Yemeni Socialist Party

FOREWORD

A mere glance at a map of the Middle East gives an indication of the paramount strategic importance of the Red Sea. Lying as it does between two continents, Africa and Asia, between the Middle East and the Far East, as well as between Europe and Asia, the Red Sea is at the heart of an area which has seen the birth of civilizations and religions, and which constitutes a link between two worlds and two civilizations. The geopolitical position of the Red Sea is of special importance: bordering the eastern coast of Africa and the western coast of the Arabian peninsula, it is a vital route for the transportation of oil through Bab el-Mandeb in the south to the Suez Canal in the north.

For Egypt, the strategic importance of the Red Sea is even greater. Since the Suez Canal was built in the last century as a link between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, this new sea route very quickly replaced the route round the Cape of Good Hope. The protection and security of the Red Sea as well as of the Canal itself has been one of the main preoccupations of Egypt as well as of world powers.

Its economic importance was heightened by the worsening of the world energy crisis and the increasing need for economic development as a result of the large oil reserves in the region.

Furthermore, the Red Sea area has become an arena for conflict and competition between world powers. And if the international strategic configurations affect the situation in the Red Sea region, the developments in that region have likewise their impact on world affairs. The issues of free navigation and nuclear disarmament in particular will remain of paramount concern to the States of the region, as well as the efforts of the

world community to contain international terrorism.

The Red Sea area faces a huge number of problems, namely demographic imbalance, social unrest, underdevelopment, foreign designs coveting its resources, while no littoral State enjoys enough military power by itself to ensure the security and protection of the area. This, in turn, tempts each of the superpowers and exacerbates their rivalry in pursuit of their interests and goals.

But in spite of these facts, for many years now scholars and specialized institutes have tended to neglect the Red Sea, focusing most of their attention on the Mediterranean instead.

In Egypt, the only State which has a significant coast on both the Red and Mediterranean seas, we have for some time felt the need to give special attention to the Red Sea and its problems. This induced me a few years ago, as President of the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, to discuss with my friends and colleagues of the Italian Institute of International Affairs the idea of undertaking a research project dedicated exclusively to the problems of the Red Sea. We reached the conclusion that these studies could best be handled by adopting a multidisciplinary approach and establishing co-operation among a number of different Institutes. An important link between the Institute of International Affairs of Rome, the German Oriental Institute of Hamburg and the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies of Cairo was thus established.

In managing and seeing this important project through, we benefited from the valuable contribution of Roberto Aliboni to whom this publication is due.

This important study on the Red Sea is the result of a pilot experience, a new aspect of a fruitful South-North co-operation between two European institutes and an Egyptian institute. And I do hope that this publication, which is the outcome of a number of meetings, seminars and discussions held jointly by the three Institutes, will contribute to a better understanding of the problems of that vital area and will help create a new awareness among the littoral States as well as among the other States of the importance of the Red Sea.

It is however my conviction that the main responsibility lies with the littoral States and that it is only through co-operation among them and a focusing of their attention on the Red Sea area that they will be able to overcome the problems and difficulties which are a source of instability and

friction. A solid nucleus, a strong regional and sub-regional system can be created in the area only if the littoral States overcome the weaknesses of the region by consolidating economic, political and strategic co-operation among themselves. Such co-operation could serve as a prelude to the establishment in the future of a functional organization that would serve the interests of the States involved as well as peace and stability in the Red Sea area. There is no doubt that the consolidation of co-operation among the States of the Red Sea will not only foster peace and stability in the area, thus minimizing conflicts and frictions, but will also increase the prosperity and welfare of the peoples of the area. The participation of these States in the Non-Aligned Movement and their adherence to its principles are positive factors conducive to creating the best possible circumstances for development, stability and world peace.

It is my earnest hope that one day soon a conference of all the littoral States of the Red Sea will be convened, giving new impetus to co-operation and solidarity among these States. Such solidarity could serve as a model for Afro-Asian as well as Afro-Arab co-operation. Egypt, the only Afro-Asian State and also the country which institutionalized Afro-Arab co-operation in March 1977, is bound to play an important role in fostering these new forms of co-operation and in contributing to the creation of a sub-regional system on the shores of the Red Sea. Solidarity is the only valid means available for transforming the Red Sea into a zone of peace, co-operation and friendship, a factor of peaceful coexistence among the peoples of the area rather than a zone of instability, tension and confrontation.

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The Director of the Al-Ahram Centre, El Sayed Yassin, and the Director of the German Oriental Institute, Udo Steinbach, were responsible for the work of the research teams set up in Cairo and Hamburg. This book gives me the welcome opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to them for their very competent and friendly co-operation. I would also like to express my thanks to the members of the research staff: Ahmed Yussuf Ahmed, El Sayed Elewa, Thomas Koszinowski, Giuseppe Pennisi and Nayla Sabra. I myself was responsible for the group of researchers in Rome and acted as the Director of the entire project. It was in this latter capacity that I was requested by the Scientific Committee, meeting in Rome in July 1980, to prepare this final report. The direction of the Italian Institute of International Affairs, which I had in the meantime taken over, made it difficult to concentrate on this task. It has in fact taken me a long time to complete the report.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the Scientific Committee: H.E. Jamal Mohamed Ahmed, H.E. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Prof. Khairi Issa, H.E. Bona Malwal, Dr. Stefano Silvestri, Prof. Paul Vatikiotis, and Gen. Wolf Graf von Baudissin. It was they who encouraged me to undertake research which

in retrospect has proved as fascinating as it was difficult. My especial thanks go to Prof.Boutros Boutros-Ghali who, as the President of the Al-Ahram Centre in 1977, promoted the idea of the research project in an imaginative and perceptive way.

The data, analysis and views in this book are, however, those of the author and should not be attributed to any of the above-mentioned institutes, persons and foundations.

Some parts of this book have already been published in the form of articles. In a slight modified version, I have reproduced here: "The Ethiopian Revolution-Stabilization", Armed Forces and Society, vol. 7, no. 3, Spring 1981 (Ch. 3, pp. 47-55). Pages 79-85 (Ch. 4) are based on the paper I presented to the International Seminar on Regional and Inter-regional Co-operation organized in Kuwait by the Arab Planning Institute and the UNITAR in January 1983. Pages 100-112 (Ch. 5) in turn are based on the paper I presented to the International Seminar on Afro-Arab Co-operation organized in Amman by the Jordan Centre for Studies and Information in September 1982.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION: THE RED SEA SETTING

The Red Sea is a long and narrow body of water which provides a line of communication from the Far East to the Mediterranean and hence to the North Atlantic. Even before the Suez Canal came into being, the sea had been of importance over the centuries as an international waterway which favoured long-distance trade. Owing to the exiguity of local revenue and resources, with the sole exceptions of coffee, Islamic sanctuaries and little else, the Red Sea served as a bridge between the richest areas of Europe and the Far East but never managed to attract to its shores any significant portion of the wealth which flowed through the waterway. More recently, a stream of oil began to flow through the Red Sea, but this did not help the basin to assume a less passive role than in the past. And between the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973, the advent of supertankers and the closure of the Suez Canal combined to suppress even this traffic.

The pattern of development impressed on the Hijaz economy by the Saudi planners is now beginning to transform the Red Sea's merely infrastructural function, making it not just a shipping lane but also a point of arrival and departure of trade. Nonetheless, the Red Sea's international integration is still immensely more significant than its regional, and at times even local, integration. This is true from both the economic and political point of view. Indeed, in the context of the major geopolitical units which make up the Middle East in the broadest sense, the Maghreb, the Fertile Crescent, the Arabian Peninsula and the Nile River Valley (Campbell 1960: 307), the Red Sea - like Libya - is assigned a border role. Over the years this position has been the source of both ties and

conflicts, but there is no doubt that the Arabian Peninsula and the Nile Valley remain primarily concerned with their own respective regional realities. To shed light on this scarce integration between the eastern and western shores of the Red Sea, even if in an impressionistic manner, one has to note that both the major regional and international lines of communication proceed in parallel without ever intersecting in the Red Sea. The Nile, a powerful link between Ethiopia, the Sudan and Egypt, flows parallel to the waterway that emblematically connects a north and a south extraneous to the region. The Hijaz railroad, which had been destroyed and is not being rebuilt and which is almost a natural communication route for the region, also runs parallel to the Red Sea.

In the following pages we will see to what extent and how this lack of regional integration is changing. We should keep in mind, however, that despite the new and important relations that are being developed in and around the Red Sea, disintegration, especially from the political point of view, is still a basic feature of the Sea which is unlikely to be totally reversed. What is happening to the Red Sea is similar to what is happening to the Mediterranean. The overlapping of and the clashes between the inter-Arab and the inter-African systems are, for instance, strikingly evident in the Red Sea. The desire or the need to devise conciliatory and integrating procedures is often deceptively perceived as an already existent form of integration. On the contrary, the problem to be resolved, and this is often not an easy task, is how to achieve some sort of integration, or at least a viable mode of coexistence.

We have already noted that while the Red Sea is only modestly integrated at the regional level, it is instead deeply integrated at the international level. But the importance of this integration appears uneven over time. Before the Second World War, by virtue of the political primacy of Europe and the colonial empires, the Red Sea's strategic as well as its economic importance was of the first order. The transformations of the post-war period have brought about a relative decline in this area's importance with respect to others like, for example, Southern Africa or the Indochinese Peninsula.

Though only for a while, the advent of supertankers to transport oil by circumnavigating Africa made it possible for the world economy to tolerate the closure of the Suez Canal from 1967 to

1975. At the political and military levels, a stronger and more constant interest on the part of the Soviets has been paralleled by a weaker and apparently declining interest on the part of the Western world.

The Italians' administration in trust of Somalia ended in 1960, and in 1967 the British left Aden. Immediately after the liberation of Ethiopia, the US showed a great deal of interest in the country for contingent reasons connected with the world conflict still under way, but also and primarily as a stopover base for air communications to India and the Far East and later because of the Kagnew base near Asmara. This base became increasingly important as part of the system of military telecommunications that extended from Australia and the Philippines to Africa. In the early 1970s the United States was still intensely concerned about guaranteeing the sea lanes that led to Massawa, Asmara's port. In 1977, when the treaty for use of the base expired, although formally it was the Ethiopian government that closed it, the Americans were the ones who abandoned it because the advent of communication satellites and the development of the Diego Garcia base had eliminated all use for it. In the same year, the Carter administration cut off arms supplies to the Ethiopian army, on the ground that the new revolutionary military government was violating human rights. The US government remained inert when, a few months after this decision, the Soviets became decisively involved in the Ogaden war.

The threat to the Persian Gulf, which began to emerge at the end of 1979 following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, provoked instead a very clear statement on the part of the Americans, that later became known as the "Carter doctrine":

> Let our position be absolutely clear: an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States. It will be repelled by use of any means necessary, including military force.

The difference in the reactions gives a precise idea of the relative priority the United States attributes to the two areas respectively. The Reagan administration, with its "strategic consensus" policy, is attempting to put into practice in the Persian Gulf the doctrine that Carter had merely enunciated.

French interest in the region appears instead to

have been more constant. In July 1977, when Djibouti became an independent republic, the French retained their military presence on land and use of the military port structures for their warships. But on the whole, it is clear that the Red Sea, though important, is not considered by the Western countries of such vital interest as the Persian Gulf or even Southern Africa.

Nonetheless, from 1969 to 1978 certain political and military events seemed to lend to the Red Sea area that regional dimension and international importance which, as we have seen, is usually considered lacking. This new situation can be attributed mainly to two factors: the Saudi political-diplomatic initiative aimed at giving the regional relations a more coherent orientation for the purpose of containing the Soviet presence and Soviet intervention in the Ogaden war.

It is in this period that the Saudis' long and laborious diplomatic efforts to create a coherent front of moderate orientation among the Arab countries of the region reaches its climax. This role was summed up in the slogan calling the Red Sea an "Arab lake", an expression that had been coined in the '50s by the Egyptians to define a programme substantially different from the Saudi one (Legum 1978: 60). In the Saudis' intention, the "Arab lake" policy's paramount aim was to create a political tie, based on Arab cultural identity, that would relegate to a minor role the ties of proletarian internationalism and any other type of solidarity between the Soviet Union and the Arab countries of the region.

It should be stressed that this call for pan-Arab solidarity was of an instrumental nature. Saudi Arabia asserts the Arab nature of the Red Sea (and of the Persian Gulf), but this does not carry with it any sort of irredentist or nationalistic programme. It may imply some religious concerns, but from the political standpoint the pan-Arab call is essentially an instrument through which to form a coalition of regional forces against communism and its penetration. The Saudi policy is a security rather than a nationalistic policy, even if ideologically it is expressed with an assertion of the Arab nature of the zones that surround the Kingdom. It is in this context that the Saudis' uneven, extremely cautious and selective support for the Eritrean and Somali causes should also be viewed. This support has been justified as Arab or Moslem solidarity, but Saudi Arabia has actually

intervened only when its aim was to contain or drive back the communist presence. Thus, for example, whenever the more openly Marxist-Leninist Eritrean factions seemed to prevail, Saudi support has been withdrawn or diminished.

It should also be stressed that the anti-Israeli emphasis that the Arab countries usually place on the "Arab lake" policy is of only secondary and marginal importance to the Saudis. It was the Arab radicals, first the Nasserites and then Libya, and not the Saudis who suggested that the Red Sea as an "Arab lake" could be closed off to Israeli shipping. The same can be said of the support for the creation of an independent Eritrean State in order to ensure that all the littoral States were members of the Arab League and resolutely to make the Red Sea an Arab sea, effectively closed to Israeli vessels. It is no coincidence that the Egyptians, more militarily aware than the others, have never paid much more attention than the Saudis to the Eritrean struggle. From the military viewpoint, access to the Eritrean coast adds nothing decisive to the resources and infrastructures that the existing Arab States of the region could put at the service of a block against Israel (Farer 1976: 126-7). From the juridic point of view, the Israeli coastline along the northern extremity of the Gulf of Eilat, even if only a few kilometres long, renders inapplicable to the Red Sea certain concepts put forward by the Arabs, such as those assuming it to be an "inland" or "regional" sea (Lapidoth 1975: 21-2, 56-8).

All these aspects, though stressed for propagandist purposes, are secondary in the Saudi initiative. The Saudi initiative, which reached a climax in the period between the establishment of diplomatic relations with the PDRY in March 1976 and the Tai'z conference on security and co-operation in the Red Sea in 1977, was therefore a regional security policy that suggested a pattern of regional cohesion.

While the Saudi initiative appeared directed at giving the Red Sea a regional dimension, the evolution of the situation in the Horn of Africa and the progressive strengthening of the Soviet presence around the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb seemed destined to give it a primary importance at the global level in the context of relations between the two superpowers.

The origins of this increased internationalization of the Red Sea are to be sought in the Saudi regional initiative itself. Ironically the Soviet

presence was ultimately strengthened as a consequence of an initiative devised specifically to contain it. This initiative produced an unusual instance of inter-Arab cohesion. In fact, progressive and conservative Arab countries alike, Iraq and Syria alongside Egypt and Saudi Arabia, co-operated in the effort to support Somalia. However, on this occasion too, the thin membrane of inter-Arab solidarity could not withstand the impact of the contradictions which it had covered, as usual, only temporarily. The limit to the instrumental inter-Arab policies of Saudi Arabia often lies in the Saudis' incapacity fully to dominate the factors it intends to use to achieve its various objectives. Thus, in the case we are examining, the Saudis' "Arab lake" policy was designed primarily to contain the Soviets. It intended to use nationalism only as an ideological mainspring. However, once Somali nationalism had been stirred up, it proceeded according to an inexorable logic of its own, invited the Soviets to install themselves in Ethiopia, and impeded any sort of Western support for a belligerent act patently untenable in the face of an inter-African policy which proclaimed the inviolability of the established borders.

The Ogaden war, the sudden change it produced in the Soviet Union's local alliances and in the importance of the Soviet presence in the region constitute a chain of events of extreme interest. It produced a great debate in the West and insistence that Somalia be aided in order to contain or drive out the Soviets. But the posture maintained toward Somalia was correct. The error had been - well before the Ethiopian revolution - that of downgrading the pre-eminent position Ethiopia used to enjoy within US policy. The situation created by the revolution with respect to human rights could not but confirm Carter in that policy, at a moment when second thoughts on the strategic role of Ethiopia would have been in order. Successively, having no reason to support Somali nationalism, the United States and the other Western countries, after a series of small blunders, opportunely refrained from implementing any meaningful support in favour of Mogadishu. Thus, the conflict did not spread and take on an East-West dimension.

A few months after the end of the Ogaden war, the physical elimination of the president of the PDRY, Salim Robea Ali, at the end of a rapid and dramatic sequence in which the president of the YAR

was also assassinated, brought the more unilaterally pro-Soviet faction of the UPONF to power in Aden. This event, though almost certainly not orchestrated by Moscow, ended up by consolidating, in mid-1978, the Soviets' political and military presence around Bab el-Mandeb. Thus, after all these occurrences, the Red Sea seemed to become an area of international importance in Western perception.

However, another perception was emerging and prevailing in the West, especially with the rise to power of a communist party in Kabul at the end of April 1978; that is, that the threat in the Red Sea region was merely a localized instance of a broader threat situation that was dubbed the "arc of crisis". The peace agreement between Egypt and Israel, the fall of the Shah and the invasion of Afghanistan helped push the Red Sea back to a secondary position and concentrated international attention on the Gulf. The importance assigned to the Gulf, especially in view of the current US administration, is overwhelmingly greater. Robert Tucker (1980-1: 256) writes:

> It is the Gulf that forms the indispensable key to the defense of the American global position, just as it forms the indispensable key without which the Soviet Union cannot seriously aspire to global predominance. Alongside the stake accruing from the control of the Gulf, the contest in other regions of the Third World can have but peripheral significance.

The following chapters of this book are concerned with ascertaining just how peripheral the Red Sea actually is in the present strategic context.

Chapter Two

SOVIET INTERESTS IN THE RED SEA

By the end of the 1970s Third World contingencies emerged as a new and crucial factor in international relations. The eruption of crises in the Third World is not new in itself. The novelty has been the Soviets' ability and willingness to intervene in these crises, from Angola to Ethopia and Afghanistan. They proved to be effective in manipulating a number of political crises in Southern Arabia, Black Africa and Central America. Furthermore, having successfully set up a war navy with growing capacities, they showed a remarkable ability in airlifting their military power to remote countries.

These events have revived the old question of the purposes of Soviet power and require a discussion on Soviet expansion, its determinants and its effectiveness. Beside this more general issue, however, there is the fact that Soviet pressure has been focused on specific regions. Therefore, a discussion of the reasons which have prompted Soviet intervention in those areas is also in order.

What follows is a discussion of the Soviet interests in the Red Sea, a region where the Soviets have achieved an important presence both in Ethiopia and South Yemen. A first section is devoted to the general determinants of the Soviet relationship with the Third World. An examination of the Soviet strategic interests in the region follows. To give an explanation of the Soviet regional presence, however, one can hardly refer to the Red Sea in isolation. The direct Soviet intervention in Afghanistan has prompted an enlargement of the geopolitical notion of the Persian Gulf area to what is defined as Southwestern Asia. Included in this broader geopolitical unit, albeit as a peripheral element, is the Red Sea region. For these reasons we

will refer to the determinants of the Soviet presence in Southwestern Asia first, and will then go on to analyse the Soviet presence in the Red Sea.

The purposes of Soviet power

What are the purposes of Soviet power, its nature and its limits? This discussion is logically related to the meaning of detente. It is a very controversial issue, related to an inevitably deceiving ideological background.

Let us start on non-ideological ground by analysing the material constraints on the purposes of the Soviet Union. As subject to shortcomings as it may be, an analysis of the evolution of the Soviet economy is nevertheless crucial to any definition of the purposes of Soviet power, its nature and its limits. In essence, there are two explanations for the relationship between the USSR's economy and recent Soviet expansionism in the Third World. Both of them contend that the relationship is strong, though for different reasons. The difference is by no means negligible.

Soviet industrialization has been planned according to three stages. The first was the creation of basic industries and capital goods-producing industries. The second was the spreading of industrialization by means of the producer goods made available by the industries set up during the first stage. In the sixties modernization of the whole industrial sector was to start. Modernization was bound to change the "extensive" character of the Soviet economy. Soviet growth had been based, from its beginnings until the fifties, on the ready availability of factors of production (manpower and raw materials) rather than on their efficient utilization and productivity. By the sixties these factors became scarce and regionally unbalanced. Population projections suggested that in the 1980s the rate of population growth would fall and that the highest growth would be in the relatively scarcely industrialized regions of Central Asia. Furthermore, demand for primary inputs - including energy - already tended to outstrip supply, for resources found in Western Russia were being exhausted. The mainstay of the Soviet mining industry would have to be shifted eastward for demand to be met, a shift made difficult by technological, economic and climatic factors. To this must be added that the high demand for energy and raw materials was determined not

only by the structure of Soviet industry but also by the role of primary goods exporter which the Soviet economy performed in the international division of labour. One must remember that up to the mid-1970s the terms of trade were not favourable to raw materials. Hence the need to give the economy an "intensive" character with labour and energy saving lines of production.

The Soviets planned to modernize their economy and change their role in the international economy by importing Western technologies to enhance productivity in the manufacturing industries and by increasing their exports of energy and raw materials in order to finance technology imports. Western, especially US, co-operation for the exploitation of Siberian mineral deposits was then assigned a key role in this plan. The USA-USSR Trade Agreement of 1972 was supposed to be the first step along this road. Later, the enactment of the 1974 US Trade Act, which stipulated that most-favoured-nation status could be granted only to countries in which freedom to emigrate was guaranteed, coupled with the new regulations prohibiting Eximbank from financing any form of exploitation of Soviet energy resources, made it impossible for the Soviets to continue to rely on the USA for their modernization project. Following the American steps, the USSR felt forced to go back even on the 1972 Agreement.

The drive to modernization and the failure to obtain the USA's co-operation is the background to both the explanations we are considering. The first one places emphasis on a growing structural imbalance between demand and supply of energy and stresses the USSR's need to acquire oil from abroad. According to this line of reasoning - apart from political pressures on demand such as supplies to CMEA countries - the modernization of the economy will require increased energy inputs. The sequence, as illustrated by Maddock (1980: 31-2), implies increased energy demand as a result of the mechanization and electrification of tasks previously carried out either by hand or using simple tools. Higher productivity means higher wages and thus increased demand for consumer durables (cars, household appliances). Higher wages also imply better food. The need for improved productivity in agriculture will inevitably lead to increased demand for energy and chemical inputs.

Is the Soviet oil industry capable of meeting this increased demand? Generally speaking, supply is thought to react only sluggishly to demand, this

being implicit in the nature of the Soviet planning system. The price system gives no efficient measure of relative scarcities. The prices established for the oil sector do not, in other words, reflect the "rent" element. What is more, the organizational structure of the sector is characterized by the separation (in both operational and accounting terms) of drilling and well exploitation. As a consequence those productive units engaged in exploitation find it easier to meet their production targets by resorting to new wells rather than by continuing to exploit old ones (which have a higher marginal cost). Underexploitation is worsened by Soviet backwardness in techniques of secondary and tertiary exploitation. As we have already pointed out, whereas the wells in the Volga-Urals region (where 80 per cent of Soviet energy is consumed) are underexploited and are nearing exhaustion, 80 per cent of oil reserves are in Siberia, where consumption is low, exploitation and transport difficult and investment expensive and necessarily long-term.

The inability of the Soviet oil industry to meet demand would thus explain the USSR's growing interest towards Third World oil producing countries, particularly those of Southwestern Asia. In relation to its modernization project - and to any other purposes - any form of control of these countries' oil would perform the same task American co-operation was supposed to in developing Siberian energy resources. Soviet energy prospects, however, have grown into a very controversial issue. An earlier CIA study (1977) concluded that by the beginning of the 1980s the USSR would have faced a decline in production with all its implications. This conclusion was challenged by a Swedish think-tank, Petro Studies Co. (1979), according to which at the beginning of the 1980s there would be nothing but a short-lived crisis. After recovering from it, thanks to a production reform under way, the USSR would supposedly once again have large oil supplies available to it. The CIA, moreover, has quite recently revised its 1977 forecast (IHT, 19 May, 1981; even more optimistic the DIA, IHT, 9 September, 1981). According to the new estimates the Soviets should achieve the slight rise in oil production foreseen by the 1980-5 plan. It is true that the debate over Soviet energy prospects seems inconclusive, as does the one concerning the relationship between those prospects and the Soviet drive in the direction of the Gulf. Their drive - if

anything - does not seem necessarily determined by poor energy prospects (as is assumed by Yodfat, Abir, 1977: Ch. I).

The second explanation of the relationship between the Soviet economy and USSR expansionism towards the Third World is more complex. The Soviets' failure to obtain American co-operation and the tremendous increase in oil and other raw material prices after the Arab-Israeli war of 1973 may have combined to convince the Soviets to pursue an overall policy of raw materials management. This is the way Carlo Boffito (1982: 37) has presented the Soviet strategy:

> In the course of the late seventies the role assigned to raw materials both in domestic and in foreign economic policy undergoes a radical change. The USSR no longer presents itself as a large, semi-developed economy aiming to complete its own economic development economy through economic integration with the more advanced economies of the West. Nor does it aim any longer at increasing exports of manufactured goods to the Western market. Rather the Soviet Union establishes itself primarily as a raw materials exporter or, better, as a country conducting an intricate commercial administration of primary products.

It is to implement this policy that the Soviet Union evolves a growing interest towards the Third World countries and does not hesitate to make aggressive moves. This new attitude was supposedly first reflected in the 1975 Angola intervention and then in the various Southwest Asian activities up to the Afghanistan invasion.

A more abstract way of looking at the same problems is that of discussing the nature and intentions of Soviet power from an ideological point of view, that is, from the perspective of that endless and ultimately inconclusive debate over whether the Soviets are pursuing a grand design or whether they are simply seizing the opportunities given by the course of events. To tackle very briefly the issue, let us consider the following points.

The Soviets seem convinced that they have developed a power sufficient to deter any attack against them. On ideological grounds this posture means that war is no longer "inevitable", for capitalist imperialism is by now firmly contained by the development of the military and political power of the Socialist bloc.

The eventuality of a war, however, cannot be ruled out, because the contradiction between different social regimes is still very sharp. It seems that the Soviet leaders are of the opinion that the nuclear character of the warfare would not be sufficient to prevent war (Holloway 1980; Fondation pour les Etudes de Defence Nationale 1979: Chs. III, V), for the political and social factors which would make it break out still persist. Thus, while the military forces must be prepared to sustain any kind of conflict, the socialist countries work against this eventuality by supporting anti-imperialist and peaceloving forces everywhere in the world, with the aim of affecting and changing those political and social factors which may bring about a war with the capitalist countries despite its "non-inevitability". In this frame the Soviet Union, as a State, coexists peacefully with the capitalist States, whereas, as the leader and part of the international communist movement, it intervenes actively to assist and develop the anti-imperialist forces. In this sense detente is to be looked upon as a stage of limited and passive support to the Third World and anti-imperialist forces owing to a less favourable global balance of power. The stance became more aggressive and active when the central balance of power changed as soon as the Soviet Union attained nuclear parity (as the correlation of forces changed, to use the Soviet concept, which very aptly includes military as well as social and political factors). This view tends to play down the relationship between the USSR's economic performance and the Soviet attitude towards the Third World. Rather, economic co-operation with the Third World, navy and airlifting capacity appear as the updating of the long-term support the USSR is committed to giving to the anti-imperialist forces. In this respect one may recall Brezhnev's report to the 24th CPSU Congress, in which he declared that the development of economic co-operation with the Western countries did not imply that the Soviet Union would have renounced support of the liberation struggles of peoples oppressed by imperialism.

True, it is difficult to determine to what extent the Soviet leadership is committed to supporting Third World anti-imperialist forces from the evidence of the late 1970s. It is worth recalling the thesis (Hughes; 1980; 166-7) according to which the particularly aggressive Soviet attitude of that period would have been forced by a Cuban

policy of faits accomplis, as presumably their intervention in Angola. Whatever role the Cuban "factor" has played, while it is clear that the USSR considers the Eastern European countries as irreversibly belonging to their "Empire", it is less clear how firmly in the Soviet perception such countries as Afghanistan and the PDRY belong to the same "Empire". According to Hélène Carrère d'Encausse (1980: 367) the crucial factor is territorial contiguity: whereas an Afghan communist regime would be considered irreversible, the overthrowing of the South Yemeni leadership would be countered only to a low risk extent.

Though somewhat attenuated by the latter remarks, what would emerge from this analysis is the long-term, built-in aggressive and expansionist nature of the Soviet regime. The value of this conclusion is nevertheless very limited. The eschatological character of the Marxist-Leninist way of thinking makes its ideological analysis inescapably self-fulfilling: a grand design is inherent in the very system of thinking and its pursuit may be acknowledged at the seizing of every opportunity. On the other hand, no political entity is so senseless as to seize opportunities just for the sake of doing so. The search for any advantage is rooted in some long-term project. The ideological analysis helps to illuminate the rhetoric of the Soviet decision-making but cannot be a useful and credible instrument for anticipating the USSR's short- and long-term policies.

To give the discussion on the purposes and nature of Soviet power a less treacherous foundation, besides the remarks already developed on the role of the Soviet economy, one may refer to Vernon Aspaturian's (1980: 18) hypothesis on the possible evolution of the Soviet "Empire" towards a more flexible and decentralized model. On the basis of what a Soviet analyst - Kapchenko - maintains on changes in the international policies of the socialist countries as the correlation of forces changes, Aspaturian concludes:

> This notion of an international system restructured in accordance with Leninist norms should not be confused with the crude Soviet ideological approach of earlier years that sought to stimulate world revolution to achieve world communism. Revolution and communism will continue to be supported and promoted, but only in areas where they are supportable and promotable. As the paramount global power, the

> USSR would make appropriate adjustments to both the developed capitalist world and the underdeveloped Third World - and although the Kremlin would coordinate and manage all three worlds, it would pursue separate policies with respect to each.

Though this image of flexibility is being widely advertised by the Soviets, one cannot help remarking that events in Africa, Southwestern Asia and elsewhere in the Third World do not unequivocably confirm a Soviet evolution towards a more flexible model. Contrary to what Aspaturian seems to assume, Third World countries' "deviations" from communist orthodoxy are due to their growing nationalism and not to growing Soviet flexibility. The way the Polish crisis is being managed is not significant either, for it is the result of the weakness of the Polish communist party and the USSR's weakness rather than flexibility. So, we come to our point, namely to the limits of Soviet power, whatever its purposes may be.

Any Soviet expansionist drive is inescapably flawed by fundamental shortcomings. The Soviets' inability to provide Third World countries with effective economic co-operation is bound to undermine any political and military acquisition. Both past and recent experiences show how feeble and perishable is their influence on Third World countries and clients. A recent book edited by Robert H. Donaldson (1981) gives a detailed analysis of these limits in the various areas of the Third World. One of the contributors (Nogee 1981: 450) concludes thus:

> The evidence adduced in these studies is that Soviet influence in the Third World remains limited. Where a country heavily mortgages its military establishment to the Soviet Union as Cuba and Vietnam have done, the fact of Soviet influence is undeniable. But otherwise Moscow has rarely been able to compel a Third World government to adopt a policy that it was not inclined to pursue anyway.

Soviet limits have been unveiled quite recently by the 1982 Lebanese crisis. What one is led to suspect here is that behind Soviet passivity there is a cumulative set of economic and domestic difficulties combined with changing priorities (arms control talks and economic co-operation with Western Europe) in addition to a plain inability to support Syria and the PLO at a regional level. In this sense one is also led to look upon the late 1970s as the

flaring up of a crisis which is now ending with less far-reaching implications than predicted by Western public opinion.

Soviet interests in Southwestern Asia

By the end of the 1970s the Iranian revolution had added in the Northern Tier a new dimension to the persistent instability in the Middle East. As a consequence, the Arabian Peninsula security posture underwent a relevant change. The traditional threat perceptions posed by the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian issue, for one thing, and by the Soviet presence in the Red Sea region, for another, were compounded by the Iran-Iraq war and, most of all, by the direct intervention in Afghanistan. Given the strategic meaning of the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf to the Western countries, this change was to affect their security perception as well. The Northern Tier, the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, usually separated in the geopolitical map of this part of the world, have been unified from a strategic point of view in what is called Southwestern Asia (Digby 1981). The Soviets have supposedly installed themselves in Afghanistan and around Bab el-Mandeb with the aim of controlling the Persian Gulf and the sea lanes of the region. In what is an essentially reactive move, the Americans are trying to implement a "strategic consensus" among the Southwest Asian countries - from Pakistan to Egypt and Israel - to counter the USSR's presence and purposes. In most recent times, the scope of this "strategic consensus" was confined to the Gulf area, but the fundamental concept of this doctrine has survived.

Having considered the general problem of Soviet expansionism towards the Third World in the previous section, we are going to consider now the same problem in the specific area of Southwestern Asia. What are the interests which have led the USSR to make her presence felt in the region so widely and directly? We have to consider three hypotheses.

Oil

This aspect was already referred to when discussing the general purposes of Soviet power. Nevertheless some further relevant points must be added.

The most commonly mentioned motive behind the Soviet presence in the Middle East and in

Soviet Interests in the Red Sea

Southwestern Asia is the USSR's interest in being present in an area which provides the West with a crucial source of oil and which contains the largest known reserves of hydrocarbons in the world. What interests the Soviet Union most? The reserves or Western supplies? Maybe the answer is both. A definite option for one or the other would imply different lines of conduct and relatively distinct policy objectives.

Within the frame of an overall raw materials policy - such as the one we suggested earlier - Southwest Asian hydrocarbon resources could be definitely important. However, this seems insufficient on its own to explain such a direct Soviet involvement. A raw materials policy may require a high degree of diversification both by commodity and by area. In this sense Southern Africa may be much more important than Southwestern Asia. Altogether any raw materials policy can hardly fail to be a worldwide business, even though some regions may play a special role in it.

A more specific reason for the Soviets to pay special attention to Southwestern Asia is the possibility of importing hydrocarbons from that region in order to export Western Russia's hydrocarbons to the West European countries and the European CMEA countries. The cost of supplying energy inputs from Western Russia to Soviet Central Asia is supposed to be higher than that of importing it from Iran or Afghanistan. On the other hand, whereas imports from developing countries can be paid with some form of economic and/or technical co-operation, exports towards Western Europe are a source of hard currencies. On the whole, this was the meaning of the first gas pipeline built in the 1960s between Iran and the USSR. A second pipeline, planned during the Shah's regime, was to be even more advantageous. Before the new Iranian regime suspended its construction, this pipeline was supposed to supply gas to both the Soviet Union (against economic co-operation) and a number of West European countries (against a hard currency toll) (Irani 1981: 201).

In a certain sense, the gas relationship we have just mentioned can be considered an aspect of the Soviet energy issue as a whole. The Soviet need for gas and oil from the countries at her Southwestern borders may be due to both poor energy prospects and the necessity to manage regional and economic imbalances within the USSR's economy. As we said earlier, we do not have the necessary basis to draw

precise conclusions on this point. One balanced conclusion might be that Soviet energy prospects are not so poor as to make Southwest Asian hydrocarbons indispensable for the economic development of the USSR. Consequently, energy requirements do not force the USSR to envisage a direct control of that region's resources; however, she may well be eager to get easier and steadier access to them. Given the nature of oil and gas economies, it is no wonder that the Soviets look for an improved political background to their relations with the oil producing countries of the region.

Actually, the goal of a good political relationship with the region in order to get access to resources and/or to deny them to the OECD countries seems more likely than the goal of a direct, military control over oil because of its shortage within the national production. In this sense, in the eyes of the Soviets, access to Southwest Asian oil would be less a necessary energy input for their economy than an instrument of political leverage against the Western countries. To revert to the question we raised at the beginning of this section, the USSR is more interested in Southwestern Asia as a supplier of oil to the West than as a reserve of oil.

In a lecture given at Abdelaziz University a few months after the invasion of Afghanistan, Saudi Oil Minister Yamani (1980) stated that in the future the USSR will probably be self-sufficient but will have to halt exports. In particular she will have to stop exporting to CMEA countries. This is supposed to be a sufficient motive for her to keep her eyes on Southwest Asian oil. Is the USSR likely just to buy this oil or will she intervene militarily? In Yamani's opinion she would not attempt to occupy a Gulf country. Rather she will attempt to foment Baluchistan nationalism from Afghanistan. From Baluchistan she would then be able to exert a powerful "denial effect", strongly influencing Western Europe and Japan. Though Yamani's conclusions assume poor prospects for Soviet oil production, they refer, however, to the hypothesis that the Soviets' main concern is with oil supplies to the OECD countries, especially Japan and Western Europe.

The case for a Soviet strategic interest in the political control of the region has been very well stated by Albert Wohlstetter (1980), though this latter author is much more preoccupied with the Upper Gulf area and the Northern Tier than with

Baluchistan. According to Wohlstetter the Soviet interest in Southwestern Asia is political and strategic in nature and is included fully in the global dimension of international relations:

> Evidence abounds that the Soviets have directed their efforts for years to weakening or breaking up the American alliance system, whatever other ambitions may be driving them (139). The persistent and critical dependence of the Alliance on Persian Gulf oil and the potential divergence among our allies make clear that hostile political control over the flow of oil from the Gulf - the ability of an adversary either to deny or to offer an assured supply to Europe and Japan - is a lever capable of prying the Alliance apart (133).

Thus, the crucial threat to the Alliance would be neither the destruction of the Arabian wells, nor the disruption and the interruption of supplies, nor the military conquest of the Persian Gulf, but Soviet political control over the region and its oil. Hence, the Soviet Union's crucial interest in the region would derive not so much from its energy prospects but rather from the possibility of using oil as a weapon to disrupt the Alliance.

What is worth stressing in Wohlstetter's view is the flexibility he sees in this Soviet attempt at controlling the Persian Gulf politically. Besides the oil denial ability they may acquire by gaining political influence on the countries of the region, there is the offer of a guarantee on oil supplies to the Western countries in need of it. This is the correct interface of any denial policy a superpower may carry out - a typical carrot and stick policy. In fact, the Soviets' reaction to the statement of the "Carter doctrine" has been to point out that, while the US is too distant from the region to have a legitimate interest in it, the Soviets have a strong security interest there because of proximity. This would enable them to contribute to the overall security of the area. In this frame they called for an all-European conference on access to oil and the security of supplies (Yodfat 1983: 104) with the aim of troubling the Alliance and dividing the allies (Wohlstetter: 139).

To conclude on this point one has to remark that the political flexibility Wohlstetter sees in the Soviet policy towards the Persian Gulf may be interpreted as support to Aspaturian's general argument which we considered above (pp. 14-5). Here again, however, one has to point out that the

Soviets have failed to carry out their policies with any such degree of flexibility. As a matter of fact, tensions within the Alliance are much more related to the organization of the central strategic balance of power and the European INFs than to the security of the Persian Gulf. On the other hand, the Soviet offer of an all-European conference on Persian Gulf security has been plainly ignored by West European countries; Soviet troops are committed to an endless and dirty war in Afghanistan; and the political influence of the USSR in the region, despite its persistently intense instability and Western mistakes in Lebanon, is not increasing.

National security

The Soviet presence in Southwestern Asia can be related to the USSR's national security in three different ways: a) the necessity to cope with instability on her southern border; b) the protection of the sea route from the Black Sea to Vladivostok; c) the necessity to counter the threat of nuclear attacks launched from submarines operating in the Indian Ocean waters.

Southern border. The Soviets' decision to invade Afghanistan has been widely and variously explained. Concern over the effects on national security of instability along the Southwestern frontiers - a historical factor in Soviet foreign policy - has been a widespread explanation for that invasion. As Remnek puts it: "The Soviet Union cannot remain indifferent to the situation along its southern border" (1980: 7), namely the range of countries going from Turkey to Pakistan through Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan.

Allegedly the source of this instability would be the religious and ethnic overlapping across the border. Owing to this overlapping, it is feared that instability in the Northern rim of Southwestern Asia might spread throughout the Soviet Asian republics. Today about 16 percent of the Soviet population is Muslim, i.e. 43 million people out of a total population of 262 million. These 43 million people are related to 100 million people living in the Turco-Iranian world (Bennigsen 1980: 40; Remnek 1980). Important nationalities, such as the Azeris, the Turkmen, the Tajiks, the Kurds, are settled on both sides of the border.

But, in reality, the historical drive southward and instability along the southern border as a

threat to national security must be considered only as very secondary factors in the decision to invade Afghanistan. The determinant of that decision was the evolution of the domestic political crisis in Afghanistan. The April 1978 revolution had brought to power the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan - a coalition made up of two main movements, the Khalq and the Parcham. The Parchami wing of the party, less radical than the Khalq and closer to Moscow, was overthrown in July-August 1978. The Khalq initiated a set of profound reforms with the aim of transforming traditional Afghani society. The pace of this change was, however, too rapid and extreme. It triggered the wide rebellion which still continues today.

The Khalq's inability to manage the revolution according to the effective level of development of social forces was the result of both ideological extremism and sectarianism. Its sectarian attitude engaged the party in a strong internecine struggle for power and prevented it from creating that wider consensus which could have helped the implementation of the social reform advocated by the revolutionary government. In September 1979, when Taraki was overthrown and Amin took office, the regime appeared in the hands of a leadership so sectarian and extremist that it was unable to cope with the rebellion it had helped unleash. At the same time the Soviets had become increasingly involved in a situation which it was difficult for them to evade.

Nevertheless the situation in Afghanistan and the degree of Soviet involvement in it are not sufficient in themselves to explain the USSR's decision to invade the country in support of Karmal's coup of December 1979. There are two more significant, though not mutually exclusive, explanations for the invasion. On the one hand, the decision may be interpreted as evidence of a new, more active attitude on the part of the Soviet Union in supporting anti-imperialist forces and progressive regimes in the Third World. This point was raised on pp. 11-6. On the other hand, geopolitical factors and strategic considerations may be emphasized.

Contiguity - according to Carrère d'Encausse (1980) - may be the basic element underlying the first explanation. The kind of involvement experienced by the Soviets in Afghanistan would have led to the invasion just because of contiguity. Even a progressive regime, if contiguous, would be considered irreversible by the Soviet leadership.

Were the same difficulties and errors faced by the Khalq to endanger, say, the Ethiopian COPWE, the Soviets would not intervene. With such an interpretation the ethnic and religious intersection of the USSR's Southern border may well be seen as an important concomitant factor. National security and imperial drive would therefore have combined. On the contrary, what may be stressed is the increasing importance given by the USSR's leadership to the Third World's progressive regimes and forces. As Weinland (1980: 60) puts it:

> Soviet political influence in the Third World is based to a significant degree on their willingness and ability to support the 'forces of progressive change' and defend their 'achievements'. In other circumstances, where distance clearly would have limited their ability to defend 'progressive changes', Soviet failure to act would not have put their motives in question. In this case, however, where their ability to act was unquestioned (and unchallenged), inaction would have threatened (perhaps destroyed) their credibility.

Past and present experience, however, tells us that in the case of the Ogaden war distance did not prove a limitation to Soviet ability and willingness to support the "forces of progressive change", whereas in the 1982 Lebanon war the PLO was not given such support. On the whole, this seems to indicate that the question of active support to the Third World's progressive forces is permanently in evidence on the desk of the Soviet leadership. Though circumstances may dictate a more or less intense implementation of that support, they may even seriously and persistently prevent it. Nevertheless the trend is lively and has a predictive implication: whenever contingencies allow it, the trend will work and produce its results. Though Aspaturian (1980a: 47-8) overrates Soviet flexibility and ability in implementing such a policy, he is right in perceiving the growing importance the USSR assigns to the Third World in her own global and regional assertion as a superpower.

As we said, a second explanation pays more attention to geopolitical objectives and strategic considerations. According to one opinion the evolution of the Iranian crisis may well have convinced the Soviets to move "before a possible U.S. decision to use military force in Iran" (Valenta 1980: 212) with the aim of consolidating the shift in the regional balance of power caused by

the fall of the Iranian Shah. According to another opinion the invasion of Afghanistan is a step in the search for a strategic location to control oil and the Indian Ocean waters. Among others, Weinland suggests (1980: 61-5) that the Soviets have not acquired a significant military advantage with their presence in Afghanistan but will use that presence to consolidate their regional posture and foster the creation of a Baluchi State which would give them access to a port like Gwadar. While aspects connected with oil control and/or denial have been tackled on pp. 18-9, further Soviet strategic interests are discussed below.

Communications in the Indian Ocean. If Afghanistan's invasion is meant to be a step on the road to the assertion of wider Soviet strategic and geopolitical interests in Southwestern Asia, these interests deserve specific attention. A direct Soviet presence in the area might serve three main purposes: a) to help protect Soviet transportations and communications in the Indian Ocean; b) to counter the threat posed by US submarine ships carrying nuclear missiles; c) to allow for Soviet shipping in the Indian Ocean and the USSR's projection towards Third World countries, especially Africa. To all such purposes the role of the Soviet navy is crucial. In fact, the subject is usually considered from the general point of view of the Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean. In what follows we consider that presence, first as an aspect of the USSR's national security - as we did with the Southern border situation - and then as an instrument of the USSR's international projection.

As for the first point, one must consider that Southwestern Asia lies along the route which connects the Black Sea to Vladivostok. To the extent that this route is of strategic interest to the Soviet Union, Southwestern Asia might be part of this very interest. Given that the USSR already enjoys stable influence in Southeastern Asia - thanks to her alliance with Vietnam - and a good relationship with India, it might be argued that her present efforts are aimed at achieving an equally stable influence in Southwestern Asia. Thus, the occupation of Afghanistan might be envisaged as a southward drive to materialize this geopolitical necessity. The USSR's strong presence in the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb may well be seen in this framework as well (Novik, 1979).

Why might the Indian Ocean maritime route be

considered of strategic value? Besides what we said on oil in the previous sections the essential reason would be that the sea lanes through the Indian and the Pacific Oceans may be considered as an alternative to the Trans-Siberian railway. In a contingency such as a conflict with the People's Republic of China the Trans-Siberian railway might be either interrupted or insecure. In this case the route in question would be essential to maintain ties between the Far Eastern and the Western regions of the USSR (Remnek 1980: 8-9) and to support allied countries, such as India. It is no coincidence that the strongest Sino-Soviet competition to obtain influence and allies had been in countries lying along this route: the PDRY, Somalia and Indonesia.

One has to point out, however, that from the point of view of transportation, the sea lane between the USSR's European and Pacific ports is definitely less important and efficient than the Trans-Siberian railroad. Trade by railway continues to be by far the most crucial to the Soviets. The geographic pattern of trade, on the other hand, is fairly consistent with the importance of the railway, despite the fact that there is a conspicuous increase in the USSR's trade with the countries on the Indian Ocean, especially India. As overloaded and vulnerable as it may be, the Trans-Siberian railway has no real alternative. This basic fact is confirmed by the Soviet decision to build the new Baikal-Amur Main Line, which runs parallel to the old Trans-Siberian line several hundred miles further north of it. As Jukes underscores: "The Indian Ocean is by no means a vital link in Soviet internal communications" (1972: 3). This is not to say that, in case of an inland conflict, the option of transportation by sea is to be discarded. Protecting sea lanes for Soviet vessels in the Indian Ocean is certainly a reasonable contingency in Soviet defence planning. Nonetheless, in view of the modest value of the sea track as a surrogate for the inland transportation route, that contingency cannot be such a high-ranking one as to require a strong presence in Southwestern Asia, the occupation of Afghanistan and a significant naval posture in the Indian Ocean.

Submarine strategic threat. With regard to national security the last point to consider is the submarine threat from the Indian Ocean. As a matter of fact, for a long time it could be inferred from the kind of vessels sent to the Indian Ocean that the USSR's

prevailing combat mission would be anti-submarine warfare (ASW). Such a mission would be consistent with the aim of protecting trade and fishing in peace time and transportation in a conflict contingency with the PRC, though a Chinese naval and submarine threat seems largely hypothetical (Jukes 1981: 184; Remnek: 9). In fact, the Soviet ASW mission in the Indian Ocean was essentially due to the assumption that the USA would have deployed SSBNs in those waters as a consequence of the fact that the A3 version of the Polaris missile had been made available (Jukes 1981: 175). In Soviet eyes the setting up of the Diego Garcia base by the mid-1960s could only confirm that assumption. By contrast, no SSBN was ever established on Diego Garcia and no SSBN base was ever deployed in the Indian Ocean (Jones 1980: 270-7). More recently the introduction of the Poseidon and Trident systems capable of striking deeply into Soviet territory, even from launch locations close to US territory, has put the Soviet anti-submarine mission back to its very minor goal of protecting Soviet shipping from a possible Chinese threat.

Though the Soviets continue to claim that their naval presence in the Indian Ocean is due, among other things, to the strategic threat which a possible US SSBN deployment would pose to them - for, according to a Soviet official, "in this world you must deal with capabilities, not probabilities" (Kaufman, 1981) -, their threat perception seems very poor. Evidence of this can be found in the brief story of the NALT (Naval Arms Limitation Talk), which was undertaken in June 1977 and collapsed in February 1978. From the point of view of the USA, NALT was a constructive response to pressures from the Senate to limit American presence abroad in the aftermath of the Vietnam war. As for the Indian Ocean, these pressures had found their expression by the mid-70s in the active but unfortunate struggle to prevent the expansion of the Diego Garcia base (U.S. Congress, House 1974; U.S. Congress, Senate 1975). By means of the stabilization of the superpowers' naval presence in the area (Haass 1978: 53-7), Carter envisaged renouncing the basing of SSBNs in the Indian Ocean with the aim of preventing the establishment of Soviet bases and the expansion of their existing facilities in the area; undercutting the USSR's activism in Africa; and ruling out the impending need to create a Fifth Fleet in the Indian Ocean. Soviet interest, on the other hand, remained that of

preventing any SSBN deployment in the area (Shepherd 1981: 238-9). In more general terms, naval stabilization in the Indian Ocean could be a step towards making the overall US SSBN deployment over the world consistent with SSBN and SLBM limitations imposed by SALT since 1972.

The Soviet build-up in Ethiopia had the consequence of preventing NALT from being resumed. In any case, things were changing and so were the superpowers' goals. By the beginning of 1978 the deployment of Trident SLBMs might have appeared very close to the Soviets; growing nationalism in Southeastern Asia might have suggested to the Americans that Vietnam would have conceded to the Soviets no more than some port facilities instead of bases; and direct Soviet intervention in the Red Sea area made it definitely difficult for the Americans to work towards any military limitation in the region (Kapur: 145-6). The invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian crisis have accentuated this trend. In fact, the setting-up of a Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) - to become later the US Central Command - has begun and the establishment of a Fifth Fleet is once again being seriously contemplated. What is clear, however, is that the Soviets, faced with the dilemma between NALT prosecution and geopolitical activism, have opted for the latter. This means that the possible strategic threat posed by the US SSBN deployment in the Indian Ocean was perceived as a distant one.

Nevertheless, it is true that what is not an actual threat remains an impending eventuality. Though connected with an arms limitation aim, the military case for deploying SLCMs in the Arabian Sea has been made (Jones: 227). On the other hand, owing to the very events in Southwestern Asia which caused NALT to collapse, current opinion in the USA is strongly opposed to any idea of military limitation in the Indian Ocean also on grounds not necessarily linked with strategic purposes. Events have suggested that the Indian Ocean's geopolitical setting is fundamentally in favour of the Soviets. Even without taking into account the recent acquisitions in Afghanistan and on the Red Sea, the Soviets can easily project their force from inside their country, whereas Americans must rely on foreign bases and their own sea capacity to project force ashore (Wohlstetter: 159). In this situation the USA might well decide to strengthen its naval and submarine presence in the area. Consequently a sea threat to the Soviets might materialize.

Soviet Interests in the Red Sea

An American submarine strategic threat to the USSR in the Indian Ocean is possible but not likely. The Soviets do not seem to perceive it with significant urgency. Their naval deployment, though allegedly directed to counter this threat, is militarily insufficient to do so. The USSR's interests in Southwestern Asia may well be aimed at fostering an increased Soviet presence in order to counter the American strategic threat. The overall picture, however, seems to suggest that the Soviet presence in the area is less related to the goal of countering that threat than to that of supporting the USSR's projection towards Third World countries, especially African ones.

International projection

No action is aimed at reaching a single purpose. This seems true for the Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean as well. Nevertheless priorities must exist. So far, however, our discussion has not unveiled any such priority.

The Soviet navy in the Indian Ocean performs a number of roles, such as anti-submarine exercises, shadowing of American naval forces, support to local allies and "flag showing". In each case capacity limitation is the outstanding characteristic of the Soviet naval presence. This is reflected in its inability to play an offensive role against Western interests: "any evidence of the maintenance of a task force designed to interfere with mercantile traffic, tanker or other" is lacking (Jukes 1981: 178).

The same limitation also seems to characterize the political mission which Admiral Gorshkov's doctrine assigns to the Soviet fleet (McConnell 1979), namely "flag showing" and support to progressive forces and regimes. In fact, the Soviet navy has not played a significant role in the main Soviet interventions in the area, such as Angola and Ethiopia. Furthermore - as Jukes notes (1981:177) - the low rate of replacement of Soviet ships in the area seems to suggest that either the willingness or the capacity to take on in full the political mission advocated by Gorshkov is limited.

Because of its evident capacity limitation, none of the Soviet navy's roles appears so important as to define the strategic determinants of the Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean and its Northwestern ramifications. If the absence of characterization of the naval mission - as a result of both plurality or

roles and capacity limitation - prevents reasonable inferences about Soviet purposes in the region, the same is not true from the point of view of the overall Soviet presence there. Presence on land does not appear less important than at sea. It may be that Soviet naval presence analysis has been overemphasized. The navy is an instrument among others. It is in fact the whole effort in the area which must be taken into consideration: the presence in the Horn of Africa, in Southern Arabia and Afghanistan, the relations with Southern African countries and Madagascar, and the naval presence. Advances on land cannot be considered instrumental to the support of naval operations. Nor can a growing naval presence be conceived as instrumental to land advances. Both are mutually supportive instruments of Soviet purposes. As we saw in the previous sections, these purposes are not to a significant extent oil control or national security. On the contrary, it is international projection and political influence, from an overall point of view, that may well be seen as the main Soviet purpose in the Indian Ocean and Southwestern Asia.

Wohlstetter's argument on the asymmetry of the superpowers' military capabilities in the region is essential in order to grasp the issue at stake. Contingencies such as the Soviet military occupation of countries bordering the Gulf and/or the Red Sea or the destruction of fixed oil installations in the area have already been ruled out. To the extent that they might be possible, however, the implementation of these actions would not be based on the Soviet naval presence in the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea or the Persian Gulf. Force would be projected from the Soviet Union herself, namely from Transcaucasia. This implies that the Soviet presence in both the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean and in the PDRY, Ethiopia and Afghanistan may ease but not determine the achievement of political and military objectives within Southwestern Asia. This presence, therefore, must be aimed elsewhere. As we said at the beginning of this section, no action is aimed at reaching a single purpose: what we are looking for is the ranking of priorities. In this sense, international projection and political influence towards the Third World regions bordering the Indian Ocean seem more urgent to the Soviets than national security and oil control, though the latter are by no means excluded.

To substantiate this view in a concrete way a detailed examination of Soviet policy in Africa, especially in Southern Africa and Madagascar, would

be in order, but is beyond the scope of this book. The emphasis is usually placed on the Soviet aim to control and/or deny the Cape Route (Hanks 1981). To a large extent this is a variant of the more general argument of oil as a determinant of Soviet policy. Again, while this argument is not to be neglected, the most important goal behind the Soviets' growing interest in this area seems to be the assertion of their presence and projection.

By asserting international projection and political influence as the first Soviet priority in the Southwest Asian area we revert to the arguments we developed on pp. 12-4, where we talked about the general purposes of the USSR's drive towards the Third World. One conclusion there was that, though there is an expansionist bias in the Soviets' international posture due to ideological reasons, their policy is not guided by a coherent, long-term "grand design". As we pointed out, the dilemma between grand design and opportunities is false. With regard to political logic Aspaturian has admirably underlined that "The Soviet Union responds to targets of opportunity, it often creates its own opportunities and it behaves in the absence of opportunities" (1980:1). The relentless way in which the USSR pursues her assertion and expansion is often taken as evidence of the existence of a long-term grand design. On the historical ground, however, one cannot help emphasizing the asymmetry of the power dimension between the USA and the USSR (Zartman 1982: 77; Legvold 1979: 766). Though recently the Soviet Union has achieved a parity status in the nuclear field, in other fields disparity continues to be even startling. In the Third World, due to historical reasons, this disparity is also very important. Therefore, the presumably correct way to interpret Soviet aims is that they are trying to eliminate this asymmetry by taking advantage of any opportunity to expand the basis of their international support and political influence in the Third World.

Again with reference to our conclusions on pp. 12-4, the need for stronger relations with the Third World countries is also prompted by the fundamental options which in the 1970s began to guide the USSR's economic policy. The management of a complex raw materials policy requires an intense relationship with the Third World countries that are major producers and exporters.

In this framework, Southwestern Asia holds a very special position for at least two reasons.

First, it is located very conveniently in relation to the raw material-rich African countries and is itself the world's most important reservoir of hydrocarbons. Second, it gives the USSR the chance of gaining political influence over the Gulf oil-exporting countries, thereby acquiring some leverage on Western Europe and Japan and a more credible status of power in relation to the USA.

In conclusion, the USSR's presence in the Third World and in Southwestern Asia is dictated by the necessity to support the Soviet raw materials economic policy and to strengthen the international role of the USSR as a superpower. Her purpose, therefore, is that of enhancing Soviet national and economic interests, though from an ideological point of view it may appear as that of supporting progressive forces and countries against U.S. imperialism. Owing to the USSR's weaknesses and political inferiorities these interests cannot be pursued in the framework of a grand design but, more modestly, are implemented, as Aspaturian has pointed out, by responding to targets of opportunity, creating opportunities and behaving in the absence of opportunities. The analysis in Chapter 3 of Soviet presence in the Red Sea area will allow us to reach a better understanding of this conclusion.

Chapter Three

THE USSR AND THE RED SEA COUNTRIES

The events that culminated in the expulsion of the Soviets from Egypt in 1972 considerably modified the pattern of the USSR's presence in the Middle East. From the core of the Arab world the Soviets shifted to its periphery. Their chief allies were Iraq, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), and Somalia. Since then the cluster of friends and allies has changed but the trend is the same (Yodfat 1983: 32).

This tendency, however, concerns Soviet policy towards the Arab world but not that towards Southwestern Asia, or the Northeastern sector of the Indian Ocean. With respect to these two areas Soviet links with Ethiopia and the PDRY are of cardinal importance.

This serves to draw attention to the point that an assessment of the importance of the Soviet presence in the Red Sea area may be obtained from two points of view. In the geostrategical setting of inter-Arab relations and the Arab-Israeli conflict, Soviet presence is marginal and is, in many respects, a backward step in respect to the preceding situation. By contrast, in the geostrategical setting of Southwestern Asia or the Northeastern sector of the Indian Ocean, the Soviet position is central and represents a gain on the preceding situation. It should be added, as noted by Zelniker (1982: 19-20), that the Soviets see the strategical setting in a different light from the West. The USSR considers

> the entire western Indian Ocean region a single strategical arena. This view contrasts with the American tendency to divide the arena into several distinct sub-regions: e.g. the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea region, the core Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa. The confusion and

occasional internal contradictions which this differentiation has produced for American policy makers has been avoided by the Soviets who, since the late 1960s, have regarded East Africa as integrally linked to their efforts in the Persian Gulf and vice versa.

This difference of geostrategical outlook contributes moreover to highlight the paramount importance to the Soviets of their priority for international projection and political influence discussed on pp. 27-30.

In this examination of Soviet relations with the Red Sea countries we will concentrate on their strategic perception. Although the relations with Egypt and the Sudan have been intense, they will not be taken into consideration here as they have been widely examined in the literature. Attention instead will be concentrated on the two Yemen countries and on the Horn of Africa.

Southern Arabia

Southern Arabia includes at the present time three countries: the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR), the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), and the Oman Sultanate. The USSR has established a considerable political and military presence in the PDRY. This country, following a mainly independent path, has developed in the course of fifteen years of independence an authentically socialist system based on Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism. South-Yemen socialism grew out of a mainly nationalist revolution. The nationalist factor still counts in the PDRY policy. Nonetheless its political heritage differs little from that of Poland, Cuba or Vietnam, and to the USSR the PDRY is an equally reliable ally.

The USSR's economic and political-military relations with the YAR are not inconsiderable, but are liable to undergo marked changes over periods of time on account of the political balance between the superpowers the country is forced to strike. A more stable factor is the question of the reunification of the two Yemen, a question in which the USSR, as an ally of the PDRY, is involved.

The USSR, on the other hand, has no relations with the Sultanate of Oman, which is firmly allied with Saudi Arabia, the moderate Arabs and the West, and is the only Gulf country to have accepted a Western military presence, in particular the USA, on its own soil. At the end of the 1960s the Soviets

supported the PFLOAG (Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf) in competition with the PRC. Half-way through the 1970s the aims of PFLOAG, rebaptized PFLO (Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman), were being reduced. At the end of 1977 the Sultan announced the end of the guerrilla operations in which the British and the Iranians had played a decisive role. What is now left of the rebellion appears to be backed by the PDRY - as in the episode at the beginning of 1981 - but not by the USSR. Although Soviet support continues to be given at the propaganda level, material aid to such a weakened and defeated movement as the Dhofari would only carry the risk of making the relations of the Soviets with other States more difficult. For the Soviet Union, relations with the moderate States of the Gulf are instead an important priority (Yodfat 1983: 43) which, in the absence of sufficiently strong local revolutionary movements, may be realized only through an improvement in the relations from State to State.

In view of this situation attention will be given here to the YAR, the PDRY and their relations with the USSR, to the exclusion of Soviet dealings with Oman and the other countries of the Arab Peninsula. These countries will be taken into account only in so far as they are connected with the evolution of the two Yemen and their relations with the USSR.

The USSR and the Yemen Arab Republic

The relations of the USSR with North Yemen go back to the 1920s. The nationalist programme of the imam Yahya brought the Yemen into conflict with Saudi Arabia over the delimitation of the northern frontier (the territories of the cities of Jizan and Najran), and with Great Britain over the crown colony of Aden and the protectorate of Southwestern Arabia. The Treaty of Trade and Friendship of 1st November 1928, drawn up between the imam and the Soviets, was designed to strengthen the Yemen's international position especially in relation to the British.

After the first treaty had been renewed in 1939 for ten years, a second Treaty of Friendship in 1956 endowed the imamate with modest technical and economic aid, a limited amount of arms, and provided for the construction, in addition, of the port of Al Hudaydah, the airport near the city, and the link

road to Tai'z. The setting up of the Republic received prompt recognition, and aids in armaments and the supply of military experts rapidly increased, although throughout the period of their intervention the Soviets were obliged to channel materials under the control of the Egyptians (Yodfat, Abir 1977: 50-1).

In March 1964, on the occasion of the visit to Moscow of the president al-Sallal, a new Treaty of Friendship and economic and technical co-operation was signed. Later, on the withdrawal of the Egyptian expeditionary force, the Soviets continued to aid the republican government and supplied 24 fighter planes.

Nonetheless, while the Jeddah agreement of March 1970, by putting an end to the Yemen civil war, sealed the emergence of a moderate coalition under the patronage of Saudi Arabia, and ousted the Soviets, the success of the NLF (National Liberation Front) in South Yemen and the steady gains of socialist elements in the country, concentrated Soviet attention on the PDRY. As a result, in the clashes between the YAR and the PDRY in the summer of 1972, the USSR came out clearly on the latter's side and the Sanaa government broke what was left of its military links with the Soviets, in step - it might be added - with the much greater setback to the Soviets as a result of their expulsion by the Egyptians.

Links were renewed only in September 1979 with the supply of a considerable quantity of arms and instructors, as a result of the war with the PDRY, which broke out in February of the same year. On the occasion of this brief struggle (February-March) the USA, further pressured by the events which had occurred meanwhile in Iran, decided to send war material to the value of 400 million dollars. This material, requested and paid for by the Saudis, was channelled to the Sanaa authorities through Riyadh, and under Saudi control. The evident subordination implied by this American policy stung the YAR into turning to the Soviets for direct supplies. The rapprochement between the YAR and the USSR began at this point. The YAR has refrained from lining up with the Soviets' Arab allies in the Steadfastness Front, but its attitude resembles more that of a non-aligned anti-imperialist than of a moderate Arab country. It is also worth noting that president Ali Abdallah Salih, on the occasion of his visit to Moscow in October 1981, underwrote Soviet doctrine concerning the area: legitimate interest of the USSR

in the Gulf on account of its proximity, and the characterization of the Red Sea as a "peace zone", free from the influence of extraneous powers and the claim to be exclusively Arab in character.

Soviet influence in the YAR, apparently on the increase, is nonetheless very limited. At the root of Sanaa's relations with the USSR is the difficult situation of this country with regard to Saudi Arabia and the PDRY, both committed, on opposite sides, to blocking its national consolidation. Any account of the relations between the YAR and the USSR calls for an examination of the role of Saudi Arabia and the question of the reunification of the two Yemen.

Saudi Arabia and the Yemen Arab Republic

The predominant role of Saudi Arabia in the life of the YAR came about as a result of the Yemen civil war between 1962 and 1970. The aims of Saudi intervention in this war, owing to the pressure of events, became changed in the course of time. At the beginning it was triggered by the decision to prop up the Hamid-el-Din dynasty. Egyptian attacks on the frontier, and Nasser's threat to extend Egyptian intervention in the Yemen to Saudi Arabia, persuaded King Feysal to subordinate the original aim to the more pressing need of ending the Egyptian presence in the Arabian Peninsula. This need became still more urgent as the announcement of British withdrawal from Aden prompted the Egyptians to stay on in the Peninsula, to enlarge their presence in South Arabia. On the withdrawal of the Egyptians, due to their crushing defeat in the meantime at the hands of Israel, political developments in South Yemen, following the takeover of power by the NLF, followed a markedly radical pattern. Saudi policy, as a result, now changed to using their interference in the Yemen crisis for the purpose of stifling the radical movements on its southern frontiers, which were threatening to involve the whole of South Arabia, from Sanaa to Muscat.

To realize these successive aims, Saudi Arabia had to amplify and diversify its own interference in the Yemen. It began by increasing the subsidies to the Yemen tribes of the north and east, who had never been cowed into accepting the imam's centralism, using them as reinforcement for the weak and confused royalist forces and most of all as a shield against the Egyptian menace.

Later, when the NLF set up its headquarters in

Aden and the siege of the royalists against Sanaa failed, they used their own influence with the tribes to favour an understanding with the moderate republicans, thus eliminating from the Yemen political scene both royalists and leftists, at one and the same time. They were fully repaid for the birth of the Republic by the moderate character of its government, and by its opposition to South Yemen. With the creation of the YAR, the Saudi aim of blocking and containing the leftist movement taking root in Aden was now provided with a working tool.

At the end of this process, Saudi Arabia had acquired a double hold over the YAR: on the tribes, through the distribution of subsidies and arms, and on the Sanaa government, through the strengthening of its budget and other international aids. Though with lessening effect in the course of time, this double lever is still used by the Saudis

> to encourage conservative, if not reactionary, policies on the part of the Yemeni government: to thwart the efforts of moderates to forge a national consensus by accommodation with leftist elements; and to prevent the relaxation of YAR opposition to the radical regime in South Yemen. (Stookey 1978: 260)

The question of Yemeni reunification

A complete understanding of the conditioning to which the Sanaa government is subjected requires momentary consideration of the role of the North Yemen leftists, excluded from the country's political life, and of YAR relations with the PDRY. These points should be examined in relation to the problem of the reunification of the two Yemen.

Both Constitutions of the two countries emphasize the aim of reunification. Historically, it is rooted in the imam Yahya programme but, in practice, the idea springs from certain factors of more recent history that have contributed to the creation of forms of organized political interpenetration between North and South. Aden sheltered a large part of the political emigration caused by imam policies, and was the headquarters of the Free Yemenis throughout the civil war. While this war raged and the independence of the Federation of South Arabia was maturing, important transnational trends in thought and action were developing. The Yemeni Nasserites, viewing the scene in pan-Arab perspectives, planned for a victory of

the Republic in South Yemen as well (Stookey 1982: 61-3), while numerous political tendencies in the North and South converged in the desire to reject the control Egypt intended to impose on South Arabia. Another important factor was the wide share of North Yemeni political emigrants in the formation of the NLF, the movement which supplied the locomotive force in the progress towards independence and, later, for the development of the PDRY in a socialist direction. Abd al-Fattah Ismail, an eminent figure in the contemporary history of the NLF and the PDRY, who was originally from the North, together with many others of the "old guard" within the NLF, formed a group with a paramount interest in the reunification of North and South (Yodfat 1983: 58). These facts encouraged the notion that the political development of the YAR and that of the PDRY were twin processes, if not a single identical process, and did much to promote and maintain, especially in the Yemeni left, a transnational ideology.

During the 1970s, however, the progressive national consolidation of the two countries and the deepening of the divergence between the two systems gave another meaning to this interpretation. The problem of reunification began to be seen from different angles in the North and South. In the South it had now come to be viewed as virtually extraneous to the predominating national problems. Unity would be acceptable "only within the framework of a 'democratic Yemen' and would involve the extension of Southern Yemen political order to the North" (Koszinowski 1980: 301). More explicitly "the attainment of unity in Yemen should serve the interest of socialism" (Novik 1979: 8). In this framework, support for the North Yemeni exiled leftists, i.e. for NDF, no longer has the transnational significance it had when the destinies of the two countries seemed to be identical. As they have become irreversibly divergent, the significance of the PDRY's support for the NDF is unmistakably international: internationalist, or subversive, according to the point of view.

In the North the problem of reunification plays a more complex part. To appreciate this fully it should be noted that PDRY support for the NDF has the end effect of strengthening the Saudi hold on Sanaa policy; a kind of vicious circle. The encouragement by Saudi Arabia of conservative and reactionary policies, its direct influence on the Sanaa government, and its maintenance of the

political weight of the tribes in the power balance of the country have the effect of ruling out any agreement with the leftists, or even with the more moderate and nationalist elements. The impossibility of such an accord pushes the NDF into alliance with the PDRY. The perpetuation of this conflict, in any case, is the basic aim of Saudi Arabia, which relies on it for the YAR to keep up its role as a protective shield against the socialism being radiated from Aden. At the same time, the conflict makes Saudi Arabia's support and alliance still more essential. It is obvious, therefore, that reunification is the card that sooner or later every North Yemeni leader finds himself having to play whenever he is confronted with the problem of the emancipation of the central government from the tutelage of the tribes and Saudi Arabia, or at least of loosening their suffocating hold. From the YAR point of view, therefore, reunification is a policy which disguises the real aim: the strengthening of the central government and national integration rather than reunification.

From all this, it will be easier to appreciate the full significance of the statement made earlier that the Sanaa government is in an objectively difficult situation. Conditioned both by Saudi Arabia and the PDRY, it has no hope of playing one off against the other. If it should try for agreement with the PDRY, it would risk losing the Saudi economic aid, triggering the revolt of the tribes, with incalculable results, and in this further weakened condition becoming finally wrapped up by the PDRY. On the other hand, the agreement in force with Saudi Arabia robs it of control of the tribes and their territories, stokes the conflict with the PDRY, and has transformed the issue of the integration of the Left and the formation of a wider and better balanced national consensus into an unattainable goal that plays more and more into the hands of the PDRY and, consequently, of Saudi Arabia. In fact, it should not be forgotten that, with the passing of time, the NDF has strengthened its position up to the point of controlling parts of southern territory, while its dependence on the PDRY has also increased.

A great part of the North Yemeni story after the civil war is the story of the effort to break out of this trap. Among the notable presidents who have guided the YAR some, like Ibrahim al-Hamdi, assassinated the 11 November 1977, and the present Ali Abdallah Salih, have tried to carry through

policies with this end in view. The policies really boil down to two: a) the pursuance of direct relations with the great powers to the end of loosening the hold of Saudi Arabia and distancing the threat of the PDRY (both these countries seek, instead, to channel and control the YAR's relations with the respective superpower guardians); b) pursuance of negotiations with the PDRY on the subject of reunification, with the object of achieving the same ends (under the auspices of the Arab League, never bilaterally, so as to nullify South Yemeni activism and Saudi interference).

In this light, policies aimed at strengthening the central government and rescuing it from the desperately weak situation in which it finds itself become more comprehensible, and less liable to be hurriedly written off as opening towards the USSR and the socialist camp. The request for arms from the USSR in the autumn of 1979, and the later alignment with its regional doctrines, are the logical result of the gross error committed by the USA in having their arms supplies channelled through the Saudis. Again, such policies are a necessary factor in the YAR's general aim of exploiting USSR interests in diversified relations with the States of the Arabian Peninsula and Southwestern Asia to ease the pressure of the PDRY, its ally. In the same way the pursuance, however inconclusive, of reunification negotiations serve to lighten Saudi pressure and to try to attempt the recovery of relations with the NDF and its various components.

In this sense, it may be said that USSR influence on the YAR, though apparently increasing, is in fact limited by the motivations of the YAR itself. From the Western point of view, however, it would be wiser and more prudent to contribute to the strengthening and national integration of the YAR, freeing it from the cloying attention of its neighbours, rather than force it into the arms of Moscow to achieve the same result.

The USSR and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen

Since South Yemen became independent, the relations of the USSR and the PDRY have become increasingly close. In October 1979, the two countries signed a twenty-year Treaty of friendship and co-operation. Quite apart from this, the PDRY can now be considered by Moscow as no less sure an ally than Cuba or Vietnam. Although the PDRY

government has never formally conceded bases to the USSR, permission for the use of the facilities and equipment in Aden and the island of Socotra, amount to the de facto concession of such bases. Furthermore the PDRY upholds the international political principles of the USSR. It contributed to the Soviet-Cuban effort in the Ogaden war. It is a signatory to the Tripartite Pact with Libya and Ethiopia of 20 August 1981, to counterbalance American efforts to establish a presence in the area (Reagan's putting across of the so-called "Carter Doctrine"). It is a member of the Steadfastness Front together with other Arab allies of the USSR.

Nevertheless, the socialism of the PDRY evolved from a nationalist revolution. Again, though its growth was constantly fostered by the USSR and other socialist countries, South Yemeni socialism began autonomously as an offshoot of the ANM (Arab Nationalist Movement) (Stookey 1982: 60-1) and was developed in the course of domestic discussions, largely influenced, it is true, by Moscow, but also independent of it. The PDRY is a full member of the socialist camp, but it entered it of its own free will. This raises the question of whether there are limits to the alliance, however close it may appear, that has lasted for nearly fifteen years between the USSR and the PDRY. The pertinent questions to ask are two: a) what are the relations with other Arab countries, in particular with Saudi Arabia, in view of the assumption that pan-Arab solidarity is the most likely alternative to proletarian international solidarity; b) what is the nature of the political organization adopted by the PDRY as a socialist country, since this is a significant discriminant in the political experience of Third World socialism.

As regards the first point, the fact that the PDRY is a member of the Steadfastness Front is no proof of the importance of its Arab bonds. The PDRY is a member of the Front in so far as the latter forms part of the cluster of alliances related to the socialist camp, but for the PDRY the Tripartite Pact, mentioned earlier, with Libya and Ethiopia is certainly more meaningful. On the other hand, the problem of reunification, although the subject of negotiation within the Arab League, lacks pan-Arab significance. As pointed out in the preceding section, reunification is viewed by the PDRY as an extension of socialist rather than nationalist solidarity. It should be added that the reunification policy was also regarded with suspicion by leaders other than Abd al-Fattah Ismail

(Yodfat, Abir 1977: 112) and that later it played a no less instrumental role than it now does normally in the YAR. The Soviets stimulate this policy when it is in their interest to try for a rapprochement with the moderate countries of the Arabian Peninsula. The Aden government uses it as an instrument to break out of the economic and political straitjacket in which the country is constantly confined (economic assistance from the socialist countries reveals itself as largely insufficient).

More meaningful, instead, on the Arab level are its relations with Saudi Arabia. On account of its proximity and economic power, Saudi Arabia is a permanent factor in PDRY policy. Between 1975 and 1978, however, Saudi Arabia made a coherently insistent effort to create an Arab option (the "re-Arabization": Yodfat, Abir 1977: 114-15) as an alternative to the increasingly marked socialist development of the PDRY. An analysis of this attempt will give a clearer idea of the effectiveness and/or limits of the national and pan-Arab option compared with the socialist alternative.

In March 1972 the Fifth Congress of the NLF expressed a wish for contacts to be started with the Saudis (Halliday 1979: 14). In the preceding years the Saudis had offered asylum to a large part of the South Yemen political emigration, particularly after the introduction of the so-called "corrective movement", and alone (Stookey 1982: 101), or together with the North Yemenis (Stookey 1968: 258) had also favoured some form of armed pressure on the PDRY. Having begun with the mediation of Kuwait and the Arab League, the negotiations led to a progressive rapprochement. In 1975 the foreign ministers of the two countries met (Novik 1979: 12). In March 1976 Saudi Arabia made a gift of 100 million dollars to the PDRY (Stookey 1982: 101), and in May diplomatic relations were officially established.

These developments had continued support from the whole of the leadership. On other points, however, the debate was often extremely lively. This turned mainly on the party role, i.e. on the political organization of socialist society. After the elimination of the nationalist and pan-Arab wing, during the "corrective movement" between 1968 and 1972, the Fifth Congress had laid the foundation for a thorough reorganization of the NLF to make the qualitative leap from radical nationalism to scientific socialism. In this later phase many

questions arose, such as the definition of the social stage in which the PDRY had to operate, and the role of different classes in the economic and political development of the country, but the question of the party was paramount. The Fifth Congress had itself substituted the traditional structure of Arab progressive political parties at the top of the NLF (the "General Command") with a Political Office (Politbureau) and a Central Committee. In 1973 the party's ideological school had been founded in Aden, and the flanking organizations of women, youth and workers activated, as well as the local committees (people's defence committees, similar to those of Cuba, and the kebeles that were to be set up shortly afterwards in revolutionary Ethiopia).

The debate centred on the direction and significance of this reorganization of the party (Halliday 1979: 12-13) between the group headed by Abd el-Fattah Ismail, secretary of the party, and the followers of Salim Robea Ali, president of the PDRY. Ismail's approach was the classical line of the Leninist avant-garde party with the task of guiding and transforming society and the State to lead it towards the realization of communism. Salim Robea Ali's ideas were nearer to those of the Maoists,

> le Yemen du Sud n'avait nullement besoin d'un parti d'avant garde 'mais plutot d'un parti democratique' qui ne serait que l'un des rouages de l'Etat et non son moteur. (Gueyras 1979)

According to Robea Ali the masses had to find their own form of government by themselves, while an avant-garde party was nothing but the matrix for a new elite.

This difference of opinion, which gradually deepened, led the contenders, following the usual script, to seek support from foreign alignments. In this way, Abd al-Fattah Ismail and his group of the UPONF relied more and more heavily on the USSR for backing in the domestic struggle, and Salim Robea followed suit with his group by appealing to Saudi Arabia, the YAR, and the West. The struggle, which had begun in 1977, was exceptionally short and ended, in the first half of 1978, with the crushing of the brief revolt of Robea Ali, and his execution on 26th June of the same year. Novik, who analysed the signs of the increasing rapprochement of the two groups to their respective foreign mentors during that closing period (1979:16-17), sums up their meaning well: "Ismail had concluded that an

unqualified alliance with the Soviet Union would result in a Soviet commitment to the PDRY and to those loyal to Moscow". A similar line of thought must have been followed by Mengistu Haile Mariam in the Spring of the preceding year when he took the decision to ally himself with Moscow. The same is true of Salim Robea Ali and his attempt to ally himself with the moderate Arabs and the West.

The struggle for power within the PDRY between 1977 and 1978 should not be interpreted as proof of the existence of a more national and moderate current inside the UPONF, or as the victory of a communist group tied to Moscow, over a non-communist group. At the time this was the idea that prevailed in the USA (Zagoria 1979: "In June 1978 in South Yemen, the communist group in a ruling coalition of leftists carried out a successful armed coup against President Salim Robea Ali, leader of the non-communist leftists": 733). The struggle occurred within a wholly, and unusually compact, communist group and was over a principle that is a typically divisive one in the history of communism, especially that of the Third World. The comparative poverty of social structures and the evident backwardness of a country like the PDRY results immediately in this type of struggle being extended beyond the domestic borders, in a quest for more or less decisive support. External alliances condition the internal struggle for power but do not necessarily indicate the existence of a fundamental rift within the leadership about nationalist or orthodox socialist options. On the other hand, the process may have speeded up the transition to socialism and alliance with Moscow without being the determining factor. With the 1975 Congress (of the union with the two small communist and Baathist parties) the socialist transformation of the PDRY could, in fact, already have been considered irreversible.

In dealing with the 1971 crisis, we have also treated our second question regarding the nature of the political organization of society. Subsequently the First Congress, founding the Yemen Socialist Party (YSP) at the end of 1978, sealed the process of radical transformation of the party along strictly socialist lines. The YSP is an avant-garde party, that is to say a party of professionals, with wide ramifications deeply rooted in the country, fully capable of guiding and controlling it. The Soviets dedicated special attention and care to the creation of this party. The existence in an allied country of a well-organized communist party is, in

fact, an instrument that enables a much firmer relationship and surer influence to be built up than is possible with groups engaged in a power struggle, and which involve outside governments mainly with the purpose of winning it. Zagoria justly comments that after the disappointments of the 1960s, especially in Egypt and the Sudan, "the new element in Soviet strategy is to help communist parties gain State power" (1979: 738).

This is true of Afghanistan but, limiting attention to the Red Sea area, the experience of the PDRY offers a strikingly positive example of the strategy. In contrast with all the other Arab countries, in which the progressive regimes are profoundly nationalist in spite of the socialist label, the PDRY - like Vietnam and Cuba (Halliday 1979: 13) - has undergone an authentic transformation of nationalism into socialism, and has created a genuine Leninist party. The striking autonomy which accompanied this transformation of the PDRY, although it may be a source of disagreement with the USSR, from another point of view offers a guarantee of the genuineness of the choices made by the country and hence, taken together with the existence of the party, of the stability of the alliance with the government of Aden. This is all the more noteworthy when compared with two other non-positive experiences of the zone in relation to this point. In 1976 Somalia created the Somalia Socialist Revolutionary Party (SSRP) (Decraene 1977: 167-71), but this occurred when Somalia was already irreversibly conditioned by the factors that had favoured the return of nationalism and would lead to the war in Ogaden (Laitin 1982: 63). At that time the sun of Somali scientific socialism had already set and the party had the typically nationalistic function of grouping and galvanizing the masses in order to aggrandize the country. Relations between the USSR and Ethiopia have been halted on the same point for many years. In December 1979 COPWE (Commission for Organizing the Party of the Working People of Ethiopia) came into being. Intended to select the members of the party and form the party itself, COPWE is firmly in the hands of Mengistu but up until now has failed to fulfil the USSR's expectations, and the Ethiopian party is beginning to take on the appearance of of Penelope's web (Aliboni 1981: 433-41).

These last points offer confirmation of the view that while the PDRY is a sure and stable ally of the USSR, by now exempt from nationalistic ills of every

kind and degree, Ethiopia after ten years of revolution is not exactly in the same bracket, in spite of allowing Moscow an increasing military presence. A more detailed examination of this point will now be made.

The Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa, like the Yemen, has long held the interested attention of the Soviets. Besides the uninterrupted commercial and diplomatic relations with Ethiopia and, after its independence, with Somalia, equally worthy of note is the fact that the USSR asked for the trusteeship, but did not obtain it, of the Italian colonies at the time their future was being decided following the Second World War (Rossi 1980: 95-104). Later, it was relations with Somalia that were to assume major political importance. In 1963, in fact, the Soviets decided to finance and assist in the formation of the Somali armed forces, acceding to the view of Mogadishu that they should have an offensive character. Relations between the USSR and Somalia, however, assumed another meaning with the rise to power of the military, headed by Mohammed Syad Barreh. The new Somali government in fact inaugurated the transition to "scientific" socialism within an organic framework of political relations with Moscow.

This switch from military assistance to a full political alliance occurred a few months after the expulsion in the PDRY of the nationalist group of the NLF, and the beginning of the "corrective movement", under the political umbrella of Moscow. It also took place while the USSR's relations with Egypt were still unbroken, despite signs that their relationship was beginning to deteriorate, and when the coup d'état at Khartoum in May 1969 had brought to power a coalition of Nasserites and communists. The changes in the situation in the years immediately following, with the expulsion of the communists, in Egypt in 1970 and in the Sudan in 1971, and of the Soviets from Egypt in 1972, had the effect of boosting the importance of the alliance with Somalia, and led to the development of the Soviet military base of Berbera. The strengthening of the bonds between the USSR and Somalia thus appears to be an element, partly deliberate and partly casual, in the shifting of the centre of Soviet interest towards Southwestern Asia and the Northeastern Indian Ocean, and further supports the statements made on page 31.

The 1974 revolution in Ethiopia, though it had aroused interest in Moscow and had received some support after the rise to supremacy of the Dergue (or PMAC, the Provisional Military Administrative Council) at the end of the same year, did not change the pattern of Soviet regional ties. Although the revolution had brought into the open numerous formations of a Marxist-Leninist stamp, in general it seemed to be oriented in a frankly nationalist direction: a basic characteristic that in spite of the most dramatic changes it has nonetheless conserved (Markakis 1979: Aliboni 1981). The Soviets continued to develop the far from negligible relations they had maintained with the Negus, in accordance with their constant policy of establishing, maintaining and fostering relations from State to State apart from any possible ideological convergence. In the year of the Ethiopian revolution, however, relations between the USSR and Somalia reached a peak with the signing of a Treaty of friendship and co-operation, the first of its kind to involve an African State.

The change in the regional equilibrium, brought about by the Ethiopian revolution, led however in the following years to a radical change in the pattern of USSR alliances in the Horn of Africa. In the course of the Ogaden war the USSR became Ethiopia's closest ally and, instead, had to break its old alliance with Somalia. Ethiopia allowed the USSR to develop a military presence at Massawa similar to that of a base (Zelniker 1982: 44-5). The advantages of an alliance with Ethiopia, in the setting of the Red Sea and the whole of Africa, seem superior to those to be had from the alliance with Somalia.

In questioning once again the limits and effectiveness of an alliance that today appears as close and as irrevocable as that with Somalia, one has to consider the evolution of the Ethiopian revolution. The role of domestic factors in prompting the alliance with the USSR and Addis Ababa's international proletarianism are of paramount importance in assessing the stability and efficacy of this very alliance. Events in the Horn of Africa, however, with the brusque and dramatic change of alliances they brought about, have a wider significance from the point of view of the reasons dictating the Soviet presence in the Red Sea region and elsewhere in the Third World. The Ogaden war sequence, with the involvement of a coalition of moderate Arab countries, its intrinsic weakness and

the Western neglect, is a good example - according to our conclusion on page 29 - of how the Soviets, short of any kind of a more or less grand design, are able to take advantage of the opportunities created by the situation. The consistency of the Soviet-Ethiopian alliance will be examined in the next section, while the Ogaden war, as a test of Soviet behaviour in the region, will be examined on pp. 61-73.

Nationalism and socialism in Ethiopia

To give an evaluation of the Ethiopian-Soviet relationship one has to consider - as we have just underlined - the political evolution of the revolution in Ethiopia. At the heart of this evolution lies a fundamental question. It is not by chance that it is regarded by the Soviets as the test and the condition of a credible and successful socialist development in Ethiopia. It is the question of the establishment of an Ethiopian proletarian party.

The most important statement of the regime's ideology, the Programme for the National Democratic Revolution of 21 April, 1976, calls for the establishment of a single party system. Its establishment presents more than an ideological problem, however. The various mass organizations which emerged during the revolution and the peasants, workers, and citizens involved, lack political leadership. The military government has eliminated a whole series of parties and groups which attempted to organize the country and the masses politically. Many Ethiopians are convinced that it is impossible to develop the new society which has emerged from the revolution without a party. The USSR in particular recommend the party as the best instrument for developing a socialist society out of the anti-feudal revolution. Nonetheless nine years after the revolution only limited and ambiguous progress has been made in ensuring the transition to a full civilian, albeit a one-party, regime.

The first step in this transition, in December 1979, was the Commission for Organizing the Party of the Working People of Ethiopia (COPWE). Mengistu was nominated chairman of the Commission. COPWE held its first Congress in June 1980. An executive committee (Politbureau) was formed consisting of seven members presided over by Mengistu. It is this organism which was given the task of building the party, a task it

has not yet accomplished. As it is widely claimed that the question of the party is of fundamental importance to the Ethiopian revolution and its prospects, it will be also useful to examine the social and political developments which led to the creation of COPWE and to the present situation in the country.

There have been three phases in the Ethiopian revolution (the third phase is still in progress). In the first phase, the petty bourgeoisie emerged victorious from the revolution without taking power, which remained in the hands of the military. In the second phase, the petty bourgeois intelligentsia, who were organized into Marxist-Leninist parties, used antagonistic strategies to win power and were destroyed in the process. The third phase has been marked by the attempt to organize the transition to civilian politics despite the impoverishment of the political-social environment during years of bloody struggle.

In February 1974, a series of chance developments led to a complete breakdown of the feudal and imperial institutions. At the time, there were few organized political forces in the country. The Confederation of Ethiopian Labor Unions (CELU) and the Ethiopian Teachers Association (ETA) were essentially corporative organizations. The students, the heirs of the radical opposition which had emerged in the 1960s, were often Marxists but lacked any real tie with the working and peasant masses. They conceived their own role as that of an elite (Ottaway 1976). Their petty bourgeois origins led them to adopt positions which were as radical as they were abstract. As well as these organized forces, it is important to recall the groups in exile, some of which consisted of more or less professional revolutionaries, such as Haile Fida's supporters. In the army, one found groups with corporative aims such as the "exiles" from the patriotic war against Italy (ACR VII 1975: B162). At the same time there were also a number of politicized groups; in particular, the radical air force officers who had close ties with the student movement and the intelligentsia.

The first phase of the revolution was marked by two parallel developments. On the one hand, the aristocracy negotiated with what little there was of an Ethiopian bourgeoisie to decide whether the new constitution should provide an attenuated form of absolute monarchy or a constitutional monarchy. On the other hand, there was the growth of the

Co-ordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, the Police and the Territorial Army, the body which had co-ordinated the mutinies and the initial union demands. In May-June of 1974, this committee took on a more permanent form, becoming the National Co-ordinating Committee. Each of the forty units of the Ethiopian army and police elected three representatives, one for the privates, one for the NCOs, and one for the junior officers. These formed a 120-member national committee known as the Dergue. During this period the Dergue was the only representative body in Ethiopia. The members represented the aspirations of all the forces present on the Ethiopian political scene. There were high-ranking officers close to the monarchy and the bourgeoisie and, most importantly, there were officers and soldiers representing the plans of the students and the intelligentsia for radical social change. The Dergue represented the effervescence of Ethiopian society; its activities were chaotic. Nonetheless, unlike the government and the commission charged with drawing up the new constitution, the Dergue was capable of putting its decisions into effect. By the time the new constitution was published (August, 1974) attesting to the victory of the bourgeoisie, the Dergue had already begun to arrest representatives of the regime. In reality, it had seized power. The political struggle shifted to within the Dergue itself. This struggle saw the defeat of the left-wing groups both inside and outside the Dergue, the elimination of the last remaining bourgeois-monarchical influence in the person of Aman Andom, the emergence of a petty bourgeois nationalist leadership grouped around Mengistu (Steinbach 1981: 285), nationalizations, and the slogan Ethiopia Tikdem (Ethiopia First).

The Left consisted of air force men, army engineers, representatives of the medical services, the tank and artillery corps, and the old imperial bodyguard. Among the military and its delegates in the Dergue, the left expressed the intelligentsia's key demand for the organization of a popular-based democratic civilian government. In the coming years, the demand was to be at the centre of a bloody political struggle. The first blow against the left was struck in March 1974, when paratroopers surrounded the Debre Zeit air base. About a week later, they arrested some twenty left-wing officers. In October, the fourth division attacked an engineers' corps barracks and arrested a group of

air officers. A few days later, the Dergue proceeded to make a further twenty-one arrests, including eminent Marxist intellectuals, and students and CELU leaders.

While the security situation in Eritrea, the Tigre, and among the Afars worsened and the famine continued, the Dergue began to discuss agrarian reform, the future of the Negus, and internal and external security problems. On October 18 a decision was taken which was meant to be a prelude to agrarian reform, namely to launch a students' campaign (Zemecha) among the peasants to promote education, hygiene, the principles of Ethiopia Tikdem and those of the agrarian reform. At the beginning of November, a debate was begun on the fate to be reserved for the members of the former regime. Half-way through November, three measures were submitted to Andom: a list of those to be executed; a reform of the penal code to simplify the procedure for arrest, judgement, and confiscation; and the dispatch of 5,000 soldiers in Eritrea. The moderates were very concerned by these measures, as well by the results of the debate over the kind of reform to be adopted. Reflecting these worries and encouraged by his independent temperament, Andom rejected the measures. In the hope of opening a debate and winning back the initiative, he offered his resignation to the army and police's forty units. On November 22 the Dergue ordered his arrest, and he was killed the next day while resisting the order.

On November 17 Addis Ababa radio named Major Mengistu, first vice-president of the Dergue, as one of the key leaders of the revolution. On November 18 Mengistu made his first public speech centred on the meaning of the revolution's slogan, Ethiopia Tikdem. According to Mengistu five conditions had to be met if the slogan was to be put into effect: 1) "get rid of our selfishness"; 2) maintain the unity of the country; 3) "diligence, co-operation, and love" must be substituted for "ill-will and laziness"; 4) "especially in the army, despising others and unfounded criticism" must be totally eliminated "in favour of respect for each other" and "for discipline which must be worshipped even more than religion"; 5) "the heroism and love for the country inherited from our forefathers must at this time be further renewed and increased" (ACR VII 1975: B188-9). Little time was to pass before the first economic policy measures showed the kind of political and social balance on which Mengistu's power was to rely.

December 20 saw the publication of a "Declaration of Socialism". This was a programme for the nationalization of the most important sectors of manufacturing and mining industries, transport, and the media. The real victors in this first phase of the revolution were undoubtedly the petty bourgeoisie, who believed that nationalization would give them the access to income and employment which the Emperor and his economic policy had denied them (Markakis 1979). Their typically nationalist ideology, expressed by Mengistu, was shown at the end of November 1974 by the departure for Eritrea of the 5,000 soldiers whom Andom had refused to send. Nonetheless, the problem of how to translate this victory into political terms remained. There was a gap between the fresh economic opportunities which had been opened for the petty bourgeoisie and their total isolation from political power. It was to be filled by a highly politicized intelligentsia which had developed its ideology during fifteen years of struggle, underground activity, and exile.

The second phase of the Ethiopian revolution centred on the question of the transition from a military to a civilian regime. It may be interpreted in terms of the struggle for power between two intellectual petty bourgeois Marxist parties: the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (the EPRP) and the Me'ison (Mela Ethiopia Socialist Nekenake, All-Ethiopian Socialist Party) (Markakis 1979: 11-2). Both believed that the revolution had to pass through a democratic transition period based on an alliance of workers, peasants, and the progressive petty bourgeoisie. The EPRP, however, demanded that this transition should be led by a popular-based democratic government regularly elected by the civilian population, whereas the Me'ison believed that given the masses' lack of political consciousness and the progressive forces' poor organization, elections would signify a return to power by conservative or even reactionary forces, with imperialist backing. Initially the Dergue, under Mengistu's leadership, used the Me'ison to eliminate the EPRP. Later, when the Me'ison also showed signs of calling for a civilian political solution, it was to suffer the same fate.

It is hard to find fault with the EPRP's criticism of the Dergue's repressive nature and its love for power, but there also could be no doubt about the ideological extremism of the EPRP's members in their evaluation of the Dergue's policies and objectives. Following a typically petty

bourgeois model, the party sought to impose solutions, such as the collectivization of agriculture, which did not correspond to the effective level of development of social forces. They criticized the administration's tendency to impose its decisions at the grass roots level, but failed to recognize their own tendency to behave in exactly the same way. The Me'ison, on the other hand, realized that urban and rural reform could lead to the emergence of a series of contradictions which, if guided in the right direction, could give rise to a further shift in the social balance in the country. During the second half of 1975, the groups led by Haile Fida, Fikre Merid, and Negede Gobeze began to swing towards Mengistu and other members of the Dergue. The idea was to make a tactical alliance with the Dergue and to use its power to further socialist objectives. This, it was believed, would necessarily be a long process, requiring close attention to the development of social forces and relations of production.

The publication of the Programme for the National Democratic Revolution on 21 April, 1976, gave the Dergue its first ideological document of any weight. The programme had been written by the Me'ison. Apart from other details, such as nationalities' right to self-determination (strongly supported by the EPRP and denied by the Me'ison), the fundamental point was the indefinite postponement of the creation of the People's Democratic Republic and the proposal for a one-party system. More important than the programme itself was the decision, taken at the same time, to set up a Provisional Office for Mass Organizational Affairs (the POMOA). In practice this was the Dergue's Politbureau. Haile Fida became the POMOA's first president; Fikre Merid took on the role of vice president. The other important development was the setting up of the Yekatit '66 school (the reference is to February 1974 when the revolution began). This was to train cadres from the regime's various mass organizations, from the kebeles (local territorial committees) to the union.

In the meantime, the EPRP had developed an underground organization to infiltrate the official mass organizations. In the first elections to the kebeles in 1975, many EPRP members were elected. The peasants' associations and the military were also successfully infiltrated (Markakis 1979: 12, 14). This success was more than merely a challenge to the Dergue; it represented direct competition with the

Me'ison and the POMOA which were cultivating the same ground. In September 1976 the Dergue proclaimed the EPRP to be the number one enemy of the revolution. On September 23 there was un unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Mengistu. This attempt started a long series of political murders. The EPRP had decided to begin the armed struggle (it is not known whether this decision was taken prior to or only following the Dergue's declaration). The Dergue did not respond to EPRP assassinations with ferocious repression alone. On 6 November, 1976 there were new elections to the kebeles under the direct supervision of the POMOA. Since June the POMOA had been making calls to arm the masses. The new kebeles, many of whose members belonged to the lumpenproletariat, were unselectively given arms. A period of severe bloodshed followed which only came to an end early in 1978. During this period, it was often hard to distinguish between violence against enemy groups and violence within particular factions.

At the end of 1976, it was announced that the Dergue was to be organized into a Congress (comprising all its members), a Central Committee (forty members), and a sixteen-member standing committee to be elected from Congress members. This reorganization improved Taferi Banti's position and weakened Mengistu's and Atnafu Abate's. The EPRP was still very much alive. In a speech in January 1977, Taferi failed to include the EPRP among the revolution's internal and external enemies. On February 3, Mengistu, other members of his faction, and supporters of the Me'ison confronted Taferi Banti and his group with weapons ready. Taferi Banti and the other key figures in the recent reorganization failed to survive the encounter. The hunt for EPRP supporters was reopened with the Me'ison and the grass roots organizations, especially the kebeles, supported by the POMOA and the Yekatit '66 school. The hunt reached its high point with the May 1st festivities massacre.

Thanks to the Me'ison's propaganda, willingness to give the people arms became a test of revolutionary fervour. On the whole, the military tended to oppose the idea. A popular militia had been set up, but from a military point of view it was useless. Immediately following the elimination of Taferi Banti, however, the POMOA had taken on responsibility for the political education of the militia, which became a larger, better-armed force than previously. Ironically, POMOA's success was

considered by Mengistu and Atnafu more of a threat to themselves and the Dergue's power than Taferi's had been. This development together with the improvement in Mengistu's relations with Moscow (which he visited in May), led to a crisis for the Me'ison. Not differently from the EPRP and the EPLF (Eritrean People's Liberation Front), Me'ison's militants saw Moscow as a "social-imperialist" power. Some of them told a known leftist French newspaper (Liberation, quoted by Moffa 1979: 84) that the Dergue was no longer following a scientific road to socialism. Probably Me'ison's leadership was aware that Ethiopia's alliance with Moscow was going to make its support to the Dergue and Mengistu purposeless. Expectations that the group's opportunism was about to pay off were dashed by the policies which Mengistu was pursuing. The creation of the proletarian party, promised in the Programme for the National Democratic Revolution for August 1977, was again postponed. Between May and July of 1977, the Me'ison's decline was very rapid. On July 14 the POMOA and the Yekatit '66 school were reorganized. The membership of the central office was reduced from fifteen to five. According to a pamphlet issued by the Dergue's Propaganda and Information Committee, the Me'ison "was displeased with restructuring of the POMOA" and withdrew from the organization. In August the group, with its cadres in the POMOA, its ministers and its militants, disbanded. According to the Dergue, it went underground. Like the EPRP, the Me'ison had sought a short cut to hegemony over the masses. Both parties had been profoundly petty-bourgeois. Neither had succeeded in their attempts to build an organic tie with the masses. The EPRP had hoped to attract them to positions more advanced than relations of production would allow. In the end, it had been forced to resort to terrorism. The Me'ison had hoped that the Dergue would present them the masses on a silver platter; now the party disappeared underground. The second phase of the revolution was over.

Ethiopia was now fighting both in the Ogaden and Eritrea, and there was a real risk that the country would disintegrate. Disintegration was avoided thanks to aid from its new Soviet ally. On 12 December, 1977, Atnafu Abate was executed. Like others before him (Taferi Banti's rapprochement to the EPRP, which caused his elimination, was also related to a positive orientation towards a political solution for Eritrea), he had arrived at

the conviction that Eritrean demands for self-determination had to be satisfied. The Soviets and the Cubans wanted a solution to the fighting based on the common socialist transformation undertaken by both the Ethiopians and the Eritreans. For this purpose, at the beginning of March 1977 Fidel Castro, after visiting Tripoli, Addis Ababa and Mogadishu had gathered the presidents of Somalia, Ethiopia, and the PDRY and had proposed a federation among their countries with ample autonomy for Eritrea and the Ogaden. The socialist countries and the most important communist parties - like the Italian one - were all sincerely convinced at the time that the strengthening of the Ethiopian socialist option was bound to be the factor that would allow the overcoming of the nationalist contradictions within the entire region. This analysis overlooked the fact that nationalism was without any doubt the factor commanding the regional political situation. In any case, it was the analysis of the powerful new ally, and therefore it is possible that Atnafu clashed not so much with Mengistu and the Dergue's well tried national attachment to Eritrea as with their fear that his support for a political settlement could increase his prestige with the USSR. Atnafu's death came in the middle of the so-called Red Terror during which the remaining opposition was bloodily crushed.

Once Mengistu had eliminated any threat to his regime and his power, the third phase of the revolution could begin. While this phase is still in progress, a proletarian party, on the Marxist-Leninist model, has not yet come into existence. Today the surviving members of the Dergue and the new Ethiopian leaders who have emerged in the aftermath of the revolution are all working in the complex local and central structure of the National Revolutionary Economic Development Campaign and Central Planning, the operative structure of COPWE. COPWE and its administrative structure in the end are the Ethiopian one-party. This party is certainly less the political guide towards socialism which was prompted by the USSR than the instrument of Mengistu's personal power and the surviving revolutionary establishment.

Analysis of the Ethiopian revolution gives a clear picture of its essentially petty bourgeois nature (Markakis, Ayele 1978), as well as of the corporate pressures it faces and the persistence of models of political culture and behaviour which seem to belong to the past (Harbeson 1978). Perhaps these

features have overshadowed the key role of nationalism in determining the positions taken by the regime and by the military group, which, under Mengistu's leadership, have guided the process leading to the present stabilization. The regime's simple basic ideology is nationalism, summed up in the straightforward slogan Ethiopia Tikdem.

Failure to establish a Marxist-Leninist party is due less to inability than to unwillingness. It is the sign of Mengistu's determination to keep a good margin of freedom in relation to the USSR. This posture combined with the nationalist nature of the Ethiopian regime marks a strong limit to the stability and efficacy of the USSR-Ethiopia relationship. Since Ethiopia is forced, as always, to live in an hostile environment, surrounded as it is by Muslim countries, it may be that it will need the Soviets more steadily than Somalia. The international balance in the region, however, might change and with it the present stability of the Ethiopian alliance with the Soviets.

Containing the Soviets: the moderate Arab-coalition

The USSR's change of alliance in the Horn of Africa, i.e. the shift from Somalia to Ethiopia, was the outcome of a complex process. An evaluation of this process is necessary to give an assessment of the USSR's presence in the region. Though such a process was neither directed nor promoted by the Soviets, they reacted to it boldly and quickly and were able to seize the opportunities it was creating (Remnek 1981). Worries triggered by the USSR's success in dealing with both the Horn crisis and the Ogaden war prevailed in shaping Western perception. This obscured to some extent the fact that Arab activism - a mix of assertiveness and dread - acted as a determinant factor in the event. It was this activism that was to create the opportunity for the Soviets to install themselves in Ethiopia and thus strengthen their position in the area.

To start with it may be useful to recall here the Arabs' role and motives in the developments which brought the Soviets into Ethiopia. As we have just mentioned, Arab activism in the Red Sea was the result of both the assertiveness which followed the fourth Arab-Israeli war and the fears triggered by the radical changes undergone by the region and the strengthening of the Soviet presence in it.

As for their fears, the security perceptions of the moderate Arab States surrounding the Red Sea, in

particular Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Sudan, were being affected by several factors, primarily by domestic developments in the PDRY and Somalia. In these two countries the Soviets were thought to support the setting up of true socialist regimes. Soviet pressures for Marxist-Leninist parties to be formed in the countries concerned - already successful in the PDRY - and the links being established between these parties and the CPSU were seen by the Arabs as a significant change in the Soviet presence. As close as it might have been, the relationship between the USSR and Egypt had never gone beyond the limits of a State to State alliance. Consequently it had not prevented Sadat from expelling the Soviets as soon as he wanted to. On the contrary a relationship based on a network of Marxist-Leninist parties seemed to make the countries concerned totally dependent on Moscow. On the other hand, this new Soviet policy was not surprising in the light of the setbacks previously suffered by the USSR in Egypt and the other Arab countries, where only traditional State to State relations had been established.

A second factor reinforcing the Arab perception of the communist threat was Libya's growing relations with Moscow combined with its presence in Africa, especially in Uganda. Libya's alliance with Moscow was the consequence of the change in the Arab strategy confirmed by the fourth Arab-Israeli war in 1973. With the war the coalition of belligerent Arab States had definitely set itself the goal of becoming an ally of the USA to attain sooner or later a satisfactory political settlement with Israel. Libya saw this strategy as a betrayal that would allow the USA to penetrate the Arab region and to seal off the establishment of the State of Israel. It was afraid for its national security as well. As a consequence a first visit of Jallud to Moscow in May 1974 and a visit of Kosigyn to Tripoli in May 1975 gave way to significant Soviet deliveries of armaments. In December 1976 Qadhafi paid a visit of State to Moscow, after the Libyan General People's Congress had affirmed in November the "strategic dimension of this friendship, serving interests common to the Soviet Union and the Arab Nation" (Gera 1978: 540-1). These developments were making Saudi Arabia and Egypt afraid that the USSR would penetrate Africa from Ethiopia up to Angola taking advantage of the Libyan presence in Uganda. For this reason Egypt did not hesitate to take part in the expeditionary force sent to Zaire in 1977 to

stop invaders from Angola. Since Cairo considers the Nile Valley and Sudan as its southern strategic depth (see pp. 111-12 below), it was particularly sensitive to this combined threat of a Soviet and Libyan encirclement from the South. From 1974 on, however, continuous tensions between Libya and Egypt combined with relentless Libyan attempts at subversion in Sudan.

A third factor was the revolution in Ethiopia. Though at the outset it was not clearly readable as a socialist, pro-Soviet development, the revolution was thought to include the seeds of such developments and was perceived especially by the Saudis as a catalyst to the many subversive factors already at work in the area, from Oman to Somalia and Libya.

Confronted by these threats the moderate Red Sea countries reacted by pursuing a policy of pan-Arab assertiveness with the aim of opposing Arab solidarity to the socialist international solidarity that was growing in the area.

Arab assertiveness was the result of the inter-Arab evolution after Nasserism had collapsed. The Arab world - it was thought - had acquired military efficiency, political cohesion and economic leverage. That had been witnessed and strengthened during the 1973 war. The Arab regimes were confident in their ability to become as important an ally to the USA as Israel. An assertive international role within the region and the East-West dimension was obviously an important ingredient of this policy. In the Red Sea it was Saudi Arabia that took the lead with the policy of the Red Sea as an "Arab lake".

Among the countries concerned Saudi Arabia could not help being particularly sensitive to the USSR's presence in the Red Sea and to the spread of radicalism and socialism in the area. At the end of the 1960s the Red Sea picture could appear definitely alarming. We can sketch Saudi perception by summarizing a number of events already mentioned in previous sections. The military coup in Somalia had brought to power a socialist team, while in Aden the socialist wing of the NLF had overthrown the nationalists. As a result both countries were strengthening their links with Moscow and the rebellion in Dhofar, already supported by the Soviets, was to receive further help from the new South Yemeni leadership. In Sudan the communist party was a member of the government, while in Egypt the USSR's influence was still strong. In the following few years the decline of the communist

presence in Sudan and Egypt, culminating in 1972 in the expulsion of the Soviets from Egypt, was offset by its consolidation in the Arabian peninsula itself, in the PDRY, the Dhofar (with the unpleasant consequence of the Iranian intervention) and in Somalia with the granting of Berbera. In July 1972 Riyadh supported the emergence of some forms of Arab cohesion in the Red Sea at the First Conference of the Red Sea Countries held in Jeddah. According to Colin Legum (1978: 60) it was only after Somalia had granted Berbera's facilities that the Saudis included the "Arab lake" in their foreign policy, at the very moment the Ethiopian revolution was starting and the Somali Socialist Revolutionary Party was being set up. The Saudi decision ripened, however, as a consequence of an uninterrupted chain of radical and Soviet threats just as the Red Sea balance of power seemed to be undergoing a change because of both the Egyptian switch in 1972 and the evolution under way in inter-Arab relations and strategies after 1973. This helps to explain the special role played by the Saudis in the Red Sea and the consistency of their initiative. Although Sadat was definitely convinced of the dangers which the USSR's presence in the Red Sea implied, unlike the Saudis he didn't see it as a threat to Egypt's national security. Egypt, and to a lesser extent Sudan, placed the Red Sea issue in a framework wider than the region itself, which embraced the Arab-American relationship as well as the Afro-Arab relations.

Having illustrated the emergence of the Saudi leadership, let us now clarify the character of the Arab assertiveness brought about by the "Arab lake" policy. Saudi pan-Arabism in the Red Sea is not to be misunderstood. The fact that pan-Arab goals in the Red Sea were largely instrumental to Soviet containment must be stressed from the beginning. In the event, the aim of Saudi policy was security, not nationalism. As a general rule, pan-Arab nationalism and unionism are fought rather than sponsored by Saudi inter-Arab policies. The latter are based on the constant search for an Arab consensus and balance of power, with Saudi Arabia leading the game. It is thanks to this policy that the Saudis have been able to obtain both security and power in the Arab world. Saudi "Arab lake" policy resumed the name of Nasser's policy in the Red Sea from the 1950s to the 1967 defeat (Yemeni intervention; threats to Saudi monarchy; attempts at controlling the infant PDRY; confrontation with Israel); but not

at all the substance of it. Nasser aimed first at making the Red Sea an "Egyptian lake" and then at closing it to Israeli shipping (Abir 1974). Occasionally revived by radical Arab States, such as South Yemen and Libya, the "Arab lake" doctrine as an anti-Israeli policy was not a Saudi one. On the other hand, Christian Ethiopia, though a preoccupation to the Saudis because of the Muslim segments of its population, was not a true goal of the "Arab lake" policy either. Saudi support to Eritrean independence has always been limited and uneven, particularly after the Marxist-Leninist EPLF developed beside the pan-Arab Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). Within the "Arab lake" policy well selected support to the Eritrean Fronts was - here again - largely instrumental to Soviet containment. In conclusion, pan-Arab goals included in Saudi "Arab lake" policy were only secondary and definitely instrumental in relation to the primary goal of containing and possibly expelling the Soviets and their proxies from the Red Sea region.

It must be noted, however, that as instrumental as it might be from the Saudi point of view, the "Arab lake" policy was not less pan-Arab from the point of view of the African countries more or less concerned by it, from Ethiopia to the OAU countries in general. Deeply involved for the reasons we have just mentioned above in the policy designed to contain the Soviets and their local allies, Egypt and Sudan were both more aware than Saudi Arabia of the political dangers inherent in a policy based on pan-Arabism. Africa perceives pan-Arab policies as putting at risk the continental doctrine of the inviolability of boundaries. In the event, that could weaken the Arab policy against a Soviet presence in the Red Sea even if this latter policy were shared by African countries. As a consequence Egypt and Sudan left the leadership of the "Arab lake" policy to Saudi Arabia and acted with more flexibility and care than Riyadh. During the first two years of the Ethiopian turmoil, Nimeyri, immediately affected by the Afro-Arab issue, sought desperately to keep a neutral stance with the aim of maintaining a peaceful relationship with Ethiopia and a fair balance in Sudan's domestic affairs (see pp. 105-8 below). After the 1976 attempt by Libya and Ethiopia to overthrow him, however, Nimeyri was forced to the forefront of the Arab Red Sea coalition. Egypt, with a long established and successful African diplomacy, managed to preserve contacts and initiative towards the African

countries. It decided, however, to follow the Saudi design, despite the risks it involved in relation to its African affairs, for it was thoughtful of the Arab strategy towards the USA. If Arabs were to succeed in containing the Soviets in the Red Sea, they would acquire more easily the status they were looking for in the eyes of Washington. The Egyptian contribution to the Ogadeni war was an aspect of a wider Egyptian activism at the time (Ogaden, Zaire, Cyprus, Libya). This activism was in turn an aspect of Egypt's American policy. Like Sudan, however, Egypt never went so far as to take over Saudi initiative in the region.

From what we have just discussed, it should be clear that nobody was truly pursuing pan-Arab goals in the Red Sea. Rather everybody was concerned about the Soviet presence, though in contexts which differed from country to country. Nevertheless pan-Arabism was picked up as the only available solidarity frame. Because it misled African countries and the West, this would have a negative impact on Arab Red Sea policy. We must now turn to this policy.

The war in Ogaden: opportunities vs. grand design

At the beginning of the 1970s, in order to counter the growing penetration of radical and Soviet forces into the Red Sea region Saudi Arabia pursued specific initiatives rather than an overall policy. It joined other Gulf countries in giving diplomatic and financial aid to the Sultan of Oman (who was also taking advantage of the co-operation of a Jordanian military contingent). It supported Somalia's religious groups, though in contrast to its Gulf allies it did not extend any economic aid to the Somali government. In line with the policy examined on pp. 35-6 it regularly interfered with the YAR's domestic policy as a means of gaining an indirect hold over the PDRY. On the other hand, King Feysal refused to establish diplomatic relations with the latter country, despite Aden's positive leanings and a Kuwaiti mediation aimed at bringing about a *rapprochement* with PDRY and putting an end to its political isolation in the region.

In 1974 two new factors came into play. The Ethiopian revolution eliminated both the Negus and the aristocracy. This event was not the result of specific action on the part of Marxist-Leninist groups or of the USSR. In fact, as previously noted, in the beginning the Ethiopian revolt seemed

destined to evolve in the direction of a fairly moderate bourgeois and national "revolution". All the same, the radicalization to which it led, and the frankly Jacobin atmosphere in which it took place, could hardly fail to alarm the Saudis. The second event was the accession of Somalia, an Islamic but not an Arab country, to the Arab League. The Somali decision though not related to any factor in particular, reflected the development of a trend as complex as the one that was to develop over the next few years.

Somalia's rapprochement to the Arab world no doubt reflected a perception of threat from Ethiopia, but was also, to an even greater extent, the result of a growing realization of the Ethiopian multinational empire's weakness at the moment of the collapse of the political-military force that had created and held it together. This glimpse of fragmentation - already visible before the events of 1974 - in Ethiopia's political evolution was seen by Mogadishu as an opportunity to push forward its irredentist programme in Ogaden, if not in Djibouti, too. Alliance with the Arabs, in addition to whatever economic aid it might bring, was a plank in this political programme. At the same time, in the new horizons that seemed to be opening, spurring the rapid resurgence of Somali nationalism, Saudi Arabia saw the most effective way of withdrawing the country from Soviet influence. Further, the priority given internationally to its irredentism could hardly fail to affect the ideological options and internal policy of Mogadishu. By encouraging Somali irredentism, Saudi Arabia was trying to introduce contradictions, not only in the Mogadishu-Moscow set-up, but in the social-political development of the country, as well.

Emphasis needs to be laid, however, on the fact that Saudi Arabia merely encouraged a nationalist option that was already evolving in its own way within the Somali leadership. The resurgence of Somali nationalism with its consequences did not follow a straight line. The arrest and detainment, for almost nine months, of the Minister for Planning, Mohammed Y. Weyrah, and of Mohammed Aden, considered two of the top ideologists of the regime, marked the repression of the protest of the more progressive sectors of the country against the policy of closer ties with the Arabs, and in particular with Saudi Arabia (Decraene 1977: 155), in the aftermath of Somalia's accession to the Arab League. On the other hand the regime's secular

commitment did not fail to manifest itself. Though it privileged Islam by selecting it as the people's religion, it proceeded at the same time to the secularization of society. It eliminated polygamy in January 1975, and at the beginning of 1976 it conceded equal inheritance rights to both men and women. As a consequence ten religious agitators, connected to a Saudi Arabia based Islamic foundation, who made propaganda in the mosques against the secularization policy, were tried and condemned to death. Coming up in 1976, the episode was little more than a backlash that could not disprove the prevalence of nationalism over socialism, nor the increasingly close ties with Saudi Arabia and the other more moderate countries.

At the end of 1974, the Dergue put to death without trial 60 leading personalities, including General Aman Andom, head of the provisional military government. The terror let loose in Addis Ababa projected a shadow of horror and menace all over the country and outside it. From the Saudi viewpoint the Dergue's Jacobinism appeared as a very special threat. The fall and persecution of a monarchy is always deeply felt by its peers. Among the condemned, twenty-nine were personalities that had held key posts in the imperial regime. Soon after, two further episodes were bound to jolt Saudi sensibilities. In May and June 1975, the Dergue sent an expedition against the Afars, who were protesting against the nationalization of land ordered by Addis Ababa. After bloody clashes, Sultan Ali Mirreh and his son sought exile in Riyadh and Mogadishu respectively. In August 1975, the Negus died in prison in circumstances never clarified by the Dergue, while the surviving members of the royal family continued to suffer inhuman conditions of imprisonment.

Though all this served to sharpen Saudi perception of the ever-present threat represented by Ethiopia, the political and military consequences of Andom's death were what really led to the stepping up of tension in the region. As noted in the preceding section, Andom was liquidated because in his capacity as the head of the provisional government he had refused the Dergue's request for an expeditionary force to be sent to crush the revolt of the Eritrean nationalist movement. One of the first acts of Andom's successor, Brig. Gen. Taferi Banti was to dispatch such a corps. A brutal war followed in which Sudan was involved, further spurring Saudi Arabia to get busy in the perfecting

of its Red Sea policy of the "Arab lake".

The outbreak of the revolution in Ethiopia had led many to the conviction, especially among leftist circles, that commitment to the political and social transformation of the country would help to resolve national contradictions. However, in 1974 the military intervention in Eritrea intensified instead of easing off, and in October of the same year the Ethiopian Left was the victim of the severe crackdown referred to on page 49. Clearly, the revolution was going in the direction of national-Jacobin radicalism. This eliminated the hopes that had been raised of an agreement on the Eritrean question. The decision to send an expeditionary force into Eritrea led to an agreement between the two wings of the Eritrean movement that had been at each other's throats ever since 1972: the founder movement, the ELF, politically and ideologically nearer to pan-Arabism, and the EPLF, mainly Marxist-Leninist. The agreement enabled a series of military operations under the name of the "battle of Asmara" to be launched, which inflicted numerous defeats on the Ethiopians all the way through 1975. Politically, however, its evolution gradually turned out to be negative. Osman Saleh Sabbe's group, allied with the EPLF since 1972, which had always looked after external relations, especially those with the Arabs (and therefore called itself "Foreign Mission") became a go-between for the Arab countries, led by Saudi Arabia and Sudan. These countries now used the group to step up pressure on the EPLF and the ELF to transform the existing military agreement between them into political terms.

In the political integration of the Eritrean movements Sudan saw the essential element that would enable the Eritrean crisis to be settled along lines not unlike those that ended the long civil war in Sudan by granting a type of federal independence to South Sudan. In the course of 1974 Nimeyri sought a negotiated solution with Andom and sent Foreign Minister Jamal Ahmed to plead for Haile Selassie's life. After the assassination of Andom, he again tried to mediate during the first part of 1975, with the help of other African States, but without effect. The war forced ten of thousands of Eritreans to seek refuge in Sudan. If the refugees were a heavy burden for Khartoum, much more harassing were the political consequences of the continuing Eritrean crisis on the internal political equilibrium of Sudan. This equilibrium had been

achieved by insisting on an Afro-Arab approach instead of a pan-Arab approach (see pp. 105-6). The recrudescence of the Eritrean question had the effect of exalting pan-Arabism inside and outside the country, and of channelling it to Sudan through its long borders with Eritrea. For this reason Nimeyri tried for a negotiated solution with all the means at his disposal and was equally active in seeking the unification of the Eritrean parties. In this framework the Foreign Mission played a very active role. The changes of leadership made in the course of the second ELF Congress in May 1975 led first of all to a meeting in Baghdad between the ELF and Saleh Sabbe, and later to the Khartoum agreement of the following September. The agreement, drawn up by the Foreign Mission on behalf of the EPLF, laid down the conditions for a merger between the latter and the ELF. But in the Khartoum agreement Saleh Sabbe was interpreting the aims of Arab diplomacy rather than the will of the EPLF, which was aiming at a unified umbrella-type structure, politically less committing than one resulting from outright merger. The EPLF, therefore, did not recognize the Khartoum agreement, and on 23 March, 1976 finally broke with Saleh Sabbe - after years of living together that had been in any case very difficult. It paid a high price for the break, which cost it political isolation in the Arab world, and the sudden stoppage of military and monetary means, collected and held by the Foreign Mission (Sherman 1980: 48).

Saudi diplomacy, through its go-between the Foreign Mission, was not extraneous to this move, which privileged and mobilized the most pan-Arab and pro-Arab members of the Eritrean movement. Unlike Sudan, which urged the unity of the Eritreans to facilitate an agreement with Addis Ababa within a united Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia saw in Eritrean unity a pan-Arab shield against the increasingly radical extremism of the Ethiopians, and at the same time a means of controlling the Marxist-Leninist element of the Eritrean movement, i.e. the EPLF. The Saudi approach to Eritrea was not basically different from that already used towards the YAR (see pp. 35-6).

In practice, the swift development of events in 1975 led to greater consistency in Saudi regional policy, further influenced by Feysal's death, which gave King Khalid and Prince Fahd the opportunity to try out a more deliberately active foreign policy. And so it was that in the first half of that year, while the Eritrean crisis was drawing increasing

attention, a meeting was held - as already recorded - between the Foreign Ministers of Saudi Arabia, Saud el-Feysal, and of the PDRY, Mohammed Saleh Muti (Novik 1979: 9). At the end of 1975 there was talk of restrictions on PFLO activities by Aden. Thus began a run of favourable relations between Saudi Arabia and the PDRY, which was duly reflected in the decline of the Dhofari rebellion. Although declarations of support for the PFLO by the PDRY leadership were not lacking, they could be put down to the rhetoric of the regime, the internal jockeying for power, or the rhetoric of relations with Moscow.

The Aden leadership was united in considering opportune a normalization of relations with Riyadh, and in May 1976 diplomatic relations between the two countries, announced in the preceding March were finally established. This development was accompanied by financial concessions and various economic co-operation projects (Stookey 1982: 101). It also led to an improvement in the relations between the PDRY and the YAR. The presidents of the two countries met at the end of 1976 and again in February 1977 at Qataba where they agreed on some measures of co-operation, among them the institution of a joint committee for the management of economic development. Following the setting up of this committee immediately after the Qataba meeting, two ministers of the countries concerned made a tour of the Persian Gulf with encouraging results (MECS 1978: 661). The Saudi proposal was that oil-exporting countries of the region should set up a fund to finance the prospective unification of the YAR and the PDRY (Novik 1979: 11-2). In practice, for the reasons already set out on pp. 36-9, unification had by this time become unrealizable, and the two Yemens were perfectly well aware of it. There is also some doubt wether this was still Saudi Arabia's real objective. A growth in economic co-operation, in any case, was quite sufficient for the Saudis to achieve what they were after, namely the "re-Arabization" of the PDRY. However, the two countries were willing to play along, within severe and obvious limits, for whatever they could get out of the game.

A swifter, more solid success was scored over the Dhofar. The weakening of military and logistic support for the guerrillas was matched by a significant change in political rhetoric. This came about on the occasion of the shooting down of an Iranian Phantom by the PDRY anti-aircraft defence at

the end of 1976, when the Arab press highlighted the Phantom's mission as an intrusion and as an obstacle to relations between Oman and the PDRY. The PDRY Minister of Information associated himself with these comments, adding that the presence of Iran in Oman was a threat not only to the PDRY but to all the Arab countries of the Gulf. Pan-Arab rhetoric thus served to play down, if not to obliterate, the revolutionary social-political aims which instead still linked the NLF and the PFLO, both offshoots of the ANM. As proof of the influence acquired by Saudi Arabia, the episode was concluded with the success of Riyadh mediation for the restitution to Iran of the plane and its pilot (MECS 1978: 557).

The success of Saudi diplomacy in South Arabia went hand in hand with a development of the military balance which clearly favoured the promotion of pan-Arabism and its interests. The political struggle within Ethiopia made it difficult for the government of this country to have an effective military presence wherever national integrity was threatened. At the same time, the groups opposed to a political solution of the Eritrean question, so crucial for Ethiopia, kept on gaining more and more power. In April 1976 the Dergue published two documents that confirmed its determination not to negotiate with the Eritrean movement: the Programme for the National Democratic Revolution and the Nine Point Programme for Eritrea. Both documents refused to recognize the existence of an Eritrean national problem. The result of this situation was that Ethiopian military weakness coupled with its refusal to negotiate helped the various Eritrean organizations win an unbroken chain of victories. In June 1976 a desperate Ethiopian attempt at invading Eritrea broke down. This consisted in recruiting Ethiopian peasants tens of thousands at a time and dispatching them to Eritrea to crush the rebels by the "human waves" method. In September the EPLF laid siege to Nakfa, a city of considerable size.

Unable to win, almost the entire Ethiopian army was nonetheless deployed in Eritrea. Ogaden was defenceless. Somalia could not fail to see in this state of affairs the right moment for carrying through its irredentist programme. Somali superiority in the area was evident - thanks to Soviet training and arms - and served for the increasing reinforcement of the Ogaden liberation movement. This organization, markedly nationalist, for the most part independent of the power and ideology of Mogadishu, directly aided by the Saudis,

held its Congress on 15 January, 1976 and reorganised itself into two branches: the Wariya Somali Liberation Front (WSLF), and the Abbo Somali Liberation Front (ASLF) covering the provinces of Bale, Arussi and Sidamo, with the result that national Somali claims were expanded to what are substantially Oromo territories. The following month, Ethiopia sent neighbouring governments a memorandum with the title "War Clouds in the Horn of Africa". This highlighted a conviction that Somalia, supporting the WSLF and taking advantage of its military superiority, was fomenting the war (ACR 1976: B206).

Although the military balance was evolving in a way that seemed favourable to Riyadh's interests, there were some events that could not fail to worry the Saudis, and strengthen their conviction of the need to persevere with the "Arab lake" policy, as a means to check communist penetration in the region. First of all, there was a worsening in the balance of the great powers in the area. In 1975 the USA "de facto" abandoned the base of Kagnew. The event was not altogether a surprise. In regional perception, however, it marked the maturation of a strategic disinterest for the area. Towards the end of Ford's presidential term, the USA was already bannering a "low profile" that Carter confirmed as soon as he could. By contrast, the USSR multiplied its gestures of interest and aid for Ethiopia. At the end of 1975 a TASS interview with Banti went into details of the Eritrean question, and ironically highlighted the Ethiopian view that the USSR's Somali ally represented a security threat. The broadcasts in Amhara expressed appreciation for the work of the Dergue (ACR 1976: B205). At the end of 1976, following its explicit support for the April declaration on Eritrea, the USSR started secret talks with the Dergue for the supply of arms (Albright 1979: 161). Somalia now found itself in an ambiguous situation: on the one hand political-military developments were favourable to it and spurred it to action; on the other, its Soviet ally was supplying its enemy with outright moral support on the question of Ethiopian national integrity, and even seemed disposed to supply it with arms as well. Saudi Arabia, although the behaviour of the USSR fitted in with its plan to estrange Mogadishu from the Soviets, could not fail to be alarmed by a move which the USSR was clearly making in the void left by the Americans.

The USSR and the Red Sea Countries

The Soviet tendency towards further expansion in the region was confirmed by a coup d'état against Nimeyri in July 1976, in which Libya seemed to be in league with Ethiopia (see pp. 106-7). As noted in the preceding section, after the 1973 war Libya was politically isolated in the Arab world, and drew gradually closer to the USSR. For Saudi Arabia the Libyan intrusion into the Red Sea only accentuated a trend. For Egypt, the Libyan move aroused fears of encirclement. For both, and for the moderate countries in general, particularly Sudan, a design of the USSR African strategy that extended - as previously noted - from the Red Sea to Angola began to take shape. The chief results of the abortive coup d'état were two: Egypt was engaged in the Red Sea area, and Sudan, which had consistently tried to avoid the "war clouds" piling up over the Horn of Africa, had no choice but to take up a decisively pan-Arab position towards Ethiopia and the Eritrean question. On the whole, the entrance into the field of Sudan and especially of Egypt gave greater credibility to the possible military options than that offered by Somalia alone, and enabled Saudi Arabia to arrange its "Arab lake" policy better and more organically. In fact, this no longer appeared as a sub-regional scheme, part of its foreign policy, but as an Arab policy, part of the "great" inter-Arab politics.

The new chain of diplomacy was forged the day after the attempted coup d'état (Dishon 1978: 147-50, 172-5). Egypt and Sudan, already tied by a political co-operation accord dating back to 1974, signed a twenty-five-year defence pact. Between the 17th and the 19th of July, Sadat and Nimeyri together flew to Jeddah to inform King Khalid of the agreement, and to discuss the Red Sea situation, the Libya-USSR alliance, and the role of the Soviets in the Red Sea region. From the 16th to the 18th of the following October a summit was held in Riyadh with Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Kuwait and the PLO. This summit, a real triumph of Saudi diplomacy, restored that unity of purpose between Egypt and Syria that had brought them through the war of 1973, and placed the Saudi Arabia-Egypt-Syria triangle at the base of a sufficiently vast, cohesive and stable constellation of Arab countries. At the Riyadh summit, whose decisions were ratified by the Arab summit in Cairo on the 26th of the following October, no mention was made of the Red Sea, but the cohesion produced by it conferred on the question, as part of vital Saudi and Egyptian interests, the

inter-Arab dimension it lacked. Within that dimension it made of the Red Sea a top priority problem. A sign of this, even if in practice it came to nothing, was the inclusion of Sudan, during the meeting at the end of February 1977 between Nimeyri, Sadat and Assad at Khartoum, in the Unified Political Command set up by Egypt and Syria in the Cairo bilateral meeting of December 1976. Meanwhile the fabric of relations among the Red Sea countries was becoming more and more closely woven. There was an intense development of bilateral relations within the pact between Egypt and Sudan. Sudan in its turn, financially backed by Saudi Arabia with special benevolence, developed relations with Somalia, supported the Eritreans and at the Tai'z meeting with the YAR, the PDRY and Somalia triggered an attempt at wider collaboration among Arab countries nearest to the Soviet presence within the region.

At the beginning of 1977, both Saudis and Soviets found themselves in a situation that is difficult to construe. Through their policy of the Red Sea as an "Arab lake" the Saudis had succeeded in their aim of stimulating a wider understanding among Arab countries. The general development of inter-Arab politics had favoured their policy. The convergence of Libyan activism and Soviet infiltration had also led to the adhesion of Egypt and Sudan to this policy, now that they saw the Red Sea as a source of danger to their national security. (For this reason, at the beginning of that year, the Egyptians carried out a military intervention on the border between Sudan and Ethiopia under the new defence pact.). Nimeyri was supporting the Eritrean movement without further hesitation. Although the latter was still politically split it kept on piling up victories. The Dhofari rebellion was practically under control, both because of the vanishing PDRY support and of the efficiency of Iran's intervention. The PDRY was developing its Arab relations, especially with the YAR and Saudi Arabia. Finally, Somalia although socialist and an ally of Moscow, was steeped in the pan-Arab and anti-Soviet policies of the Arab coalition, was giving absolute priority to nationalist aims, and was firmly supporting the Ogaden movements. However, the development of the political struggle in Ethiopia, the growing support that the USSR was finding in Ethiopia and Libya, American "neglect", and above all the rapprochement between the USSR and Ethiopia which was daily becoming clearer, suggested that the trend of events

was not towards a spontaneous and painless expulsion of the Soviets from Somalia and the Red Sea.

Again, however, at the beginning of 1977, the rapprochement of the USSR and Ethiopia could not yet be seen as a deliberate strategic aim on either's part. The intensification of the political struggle within Ethiopia after the liquidation of Taferi Banti, and the need to escape from the pincer movement tightening on Addis Ababa from Ogaden and Eritrea, forced Mengistu to step up the acquisition of arms and aid. In February 1977, Carter's decision, based on the protection of human rights policy, to eliminate what was left of American military supplies forced the Ethiopian leadership to turn to the USSR for aid. This could not fail to trigger a change of alliances in the Horn of Africa. Right at that moment, however, a change did not seem to be uppermost in the minds of the Soviets. They were more interested in developing good State to State relations with all the countries of the region than new close political and ideological ties. The Ethiopian crisis was seen by the Soviets as a good occasion for widening their network of relations while leaving its links with Somalia and the PDRY unchanged.

Fidel Castro's mission between the end of February and the beginning of March 1977 (see preceding section) to propose a federation between Somalia, Ethiopia, and perhaps the PDRY, should be seen in this perspective. The idea of the federation was based on the conviction that shared ideological and social purposes could lead to the bypassing of national ambitions. It is difficult to say whether the Soviets and their allies, faced with the exceptionally clamorous outbreak of nationalism all over the region, suffered less from myopia than eighteenth-century rationalism. In any case, the policy chosen revealed the will of the USSR to evade the exclusivism that old and new friends tended to impose.

The choice eluded by the Soviets would be made by the Somalis. Half-way through the year, Arab excitement reached a peak from which it began gradually to subside. On the 26th of July, Carter came out with a declaration that the Administration would be "ready to join other governments in providing military assistance for Somalia to reduce its long-standing reliance on the Soviet Union". This declaration was immediately followed by similar offers by the French and British. On the Arab front, the PDRY president made a visit to Riyadh,

immediately after a trip of the Saudi Foreign Minister to Aden and Mogadishu. There was also a meeting between Nimeyri and Syad Barreh, and the latter paid a visit to Riyadh. Ogaden, for the most part, was in the hands of the Somalis and the liberation fronts. The Ethiopian garrisons were under siege in the Ogadeni cities and the war was by now in full course. But after all the diplomatic thunder the military reinforcements and the arms that at that point were so urgently needed by the Somalis, failed to arrive. In September the USA, France and Great Britain made their promise of arms conditional on the withdrawal of the Somalis from Ogaden (Novik 1979: 36-8), while the flux of arms from the Arab countries was proving insignificant. Meanwhile, the foundation on which Saudi Arabia had constructed its "Arab lake" policy began to give way. As in Ethiopia, in the PDRY too the internal political struggle was compelling the search for outside supporters. The Abdel Fattah Ismail faction decided to come closer to the USSR with the aim of being supported by it. In August the USSR sealed its rapprochement with Ethiopia in an agreement of the former to supply military aid to the latter. In October, the assassination of YAR President El Hamdi was put down by North Yemeni nationalist circles to Saudi Arabia. As a result these circles were polarized towards the PDRY and as chain reaction this worsened the good relations with Saudi Arabia which had prevailed between the two countries in the past few years. In November, Saudi Arabia was forced to suspend diplomatic relations with the PDRY on account of the increasingly open support given by the latter country to Ethiopia and the USSR. But it was President Sadat's trip to Jerusalem that produced the crucial cracks in the Arab line-up. This visit dealt a new hand for the whole of Arab politics, eliminating from the "Arab lake" policy its essential inter-Arab bulwark. Further, with Egypt off the stage, political and military credibility in whatever initiative was going to be taken by the Arabs of the area would have been lacking. In this setting Somalia, by now isolated and abandoned, itself took the step of breaking with the Soviets. On 13 November, 1977 it denounced the Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation with the USSR. It is very likely that this decision was nothing but a last ditch attempt to get both Arab and Western aid that up to that moment had failed to materialize (Remnek 1981: 139). But again the aid didn't come, and with great presence of mind the Soviets crossed

over to the side of Ethiopia, enabling it to score a swift victory by the end of December.

In the last analysis, the Soviets never planned the change of alliance between Somalia and Ethiopia. It was provoked solely by the extreme nationalism of the Somalis and the adventurism of Saudi Arabia. The latter by fomenting the nationalism of Mogadishu hoped to make use of it to get the Soviets out of the Red Sea area and Somalia itself. The USSR had no grand design, perhaps no design at all; it exploited the opportunities offered by the situation as well as it could, ironically transforming a policy intended to weaken it and eliminate it from the region, into the reinforcement of its presence in the area. The USSR also exploited the uncertainties of the West and the USA who, without giving it a thought, steadily renounced the options they held in the area. At the crucial moment, therefore, they were left with a situation in which, had they been willing and able to intervene, they could only support Somalia and the Arabs. A mistaken cause, which in fact they did not take up.

Chapter Four

THE RED SEA AND WESTERN INTERESTS

Because of the colonial legacy and the poor endowment in hydrocarbons of Western Europe and Japan, Western interests in the Red Sea area - not unlike those in the wider region of which it is a part - are much more vested and discernible than those of the USSR. In particular, two main interests emerge. First, the Red Sea is becoming increasingly crucial for the security of the OECD's energy supplies, especially for Western Europe's. Second, the Red Sea is a significant factor in the process of economic development and integration which is taking place in the Arab world. This in turn is due to the Saudi and Egyptian roles in that process. Since this is considered to be of crucial importance for the Western economy as a whole, its success is of definite interest to the Arabs as well to the West.

The existence of such a Western interest in the area cannot go without military consequences. Although the current focus on the Gulf is definitely justified, changes under way in the pattern of hydrocarbon supplies to Western Europe - which involve both the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea - are bound to affect that focus. On the other hand, although the strengthening of the USSR's presence in the Red Sea would not by itself entail a significant change in the present Western military posture in the region, the necessity to protect the regional countries' stability and development may do so. Both trends combine to suggest the need for a revisitation of the overall Southwest Asian strategic setting and the role of the Red Sea area in it.

The security of energy supplies, and regional development and integration are the two main points we are going to consider in the next sections. To

conclude, we will also point out some of the implications of the above points for the Western military posture South-east of NATO.

Redirecting oil shipments

The security of energy supplies is affected by several factors (Deese, Nye: 1981). On pages 18-20 we discussed Soviet influence on Western access to Gulf oil. Here we want to consider a related aspect, i.e. hydrocarbon transportation to consumer markets and its security. From the point of view of the OECD countries this second aspect is no less important than the former.

Geographic conditions do not permit easy transportation of oil from the fields around the Gulf to their most important outlets in Western Europe and Japan. The latter is far away and the sea lanes to it are choked by a good number of politically sensitive passages, such as the Strait of Hormuz, that of Malacca, and that of Taiwan. As for Western Europe a large landmass separates it from the Upper Gulf - including Northern Iraq. At the same time its sea approaches therefrom imply either the circumnavigation of the Arabian Peninsula and passage through Hormuz, Bab el-Mandeb and the Suez Canal, or the circumnavigation of Africa through the Canal of Mozambique and, again, the Strait of Hormuz. The first solution given to the problem was also the most sensible from the economic point of view, i.e. the construction of pipelines running from the fields in Northern Iraq and Eastern Saudi Arabia to the Mediterranean Sea, respectively the IPC pipeline and the Tapline.

With the creation of the State of Israel, however, and the deterioration of the general political situation in the area, as economically viable as that solution might have been, it was no longer safe. Sea transportation then developed sharply and, when the Suez Canal was closed as a result of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, oil was carried to consumer terminals thanks to the development of the supertankers - the VLCCs and the ULCCs - which circumnavigate Africa. The closure of the pipelines and the closure of the Suez Canal had the effect of concentrating the ever-growing tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz and around the Cape of Good Hope. This made Southern Africa and the Persian Gulf extremely sensitive in the eyes of the OECD countries. It is the Strait of Hormuz, however, which must be considered as the most sensitive. The

complex balance of power prevailing in the region and the widespread belief that it can be easily sealed off to navigation have triggered a perception of particular vulnerability. Although the menace of sealing off the Strait is not that effective and no regional power is presently able to arrange for a naval blockade, other means of harassing navigation, sharply reducing the stream of oil and hurting Western as well as local economies, are more or less available.

It is political instability, however, which presents the most immediate threat to oil shipment through the Strait. The threat has materialized not because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, but because of the Iran-Iraq war.

The concentration on Hormuz has been calling for a dispersion of risks by means of diversification. An earlier project to bypass that Strait emerged at the time of the Saudi Arabia-PDRY rapprochement (see see p. 41 above). The aim of the project was to build a pipeline from the Saudi and the other Gulf Arab countries' wells to the PDRY's southern coast on the Arabian Sea (Stookey 1982: 101). Because of the failure of "re-Arabizing" the PDRY, the project was dropped. By contrast, in the search for an alternative outlet, the Red Sea proved more successful than the Arabian Sea. Three factors made this possible, even though independently from one another. First, the construction of the 48-inch Petroline, operative from 1981, running 1,300 km. from Abqaiq on the Saudi Eastern coast to Yanbu on the Red Sea coast. Second, the working of the 42-inch SUMED (Suez-Mediterranean) pipeline from the Gulf of Suez to the Mediterranean coast near Alexandria. Third, the re-opening of the Suez Canal and, most of all, the decision to widen the Canal to enable it to accommodate laden tankers of 150,000 tonnes. The widening of the Canal was completed in 1981.

Why is it sensible for the OECD countries to ship oil from the Red Sea as an alternative to the Persian Gulf? In essence it is to Western Europe that alternative makes sense, though it may not be indifferent to other OECD countries either. Gerald Blake has pointed out (1984: 87) that in 1981 the SUMED pipeline and the Suez Canal combined to allow the carrying of over 114 million tonnes of Gulf oil through the Petroline and then the Red Sea. In this way more than 30 per cent of the Gulf oil destined for the USA and Western Europe used the Red Sea route. Provided that the Suez Canal and the SUMED

pipeline are used for carrying both the crude oil loaded at Yanbu and that coming from the Gulf on small- to medium-sized tankers, different situations can be envisaged. If navigation through the Strait of Hormuz were interdicted, with its present capacity the Petroline could carry 1.85 million b/d to the Red Sea, there would be no constraint on transportation. There would be, however, a severe shortage of crude available to OECD countries, if the crisis were protracted. This means that right now the Red Sea is not a surrogate for the Gulf, except in the short run - an advantage not unimportant indeed. There are, however, plans to enlarge present capacity to a significant extent. The possibility of raising Petroline's capacity to 2.45 and then to 3.7-4 million b/d has been taken into consideration, as has the creation of a massive underground reserve of 1.5 billion barrels near Yanbu. As Giacomo Luciani points out (1984: 19), this "would certainly provide substantial flexibility", but would require the widening of the Suez Canal.

On the other hand, whereas the interdiction of both Bab el-Mandeb and Hormuz would not trigger a situation significantly different from that whereby Hormuz alone is closed, the interdiction of Bab el-Mandeb alone would leave open the possibility of circumnavigating Africa with what is left of the supertankers fleet. In this case the Red Sea would prove very helpful. In the short term, as in the previous case, it would prevent discontinuation of the oil flow and combine with the Western strategic reserves to give flexibility to supplies and avoid disruptions. In the medium term - if the crisis were protracted - it would warrant the recovery of an adequate supertanker fleet. Finally, the interdiction of the SUMED/Suez Canal system would put the West back in the situation following the 1967 war and fully restore the importance of the Cape route.

Leaving aside these war or on-the-brink-of-war scenarios, it is appropriate to stress the point that the flexibility given to oil supplies by the Red Sea outlet serves to make crisis management possible, as well as to work as an element for preventing crises by spreading risks, i.e. by taking out an insurance policy. In other words, it would work not differently from syndicated loans on the euromarkets. In this perspective it is very likely that the Red Sea will take on an important role. In addition to the prospects for raising Petroline's

capacity, it must be mentioned that there are projects for a further widening of the Suez Canal. This would allow the Canal to accommodate tankers up to 260,000 tonnes. As that widening may turn out to be uneconomic, because there are relatively few units between 150,000 and 260,000 tonnes and the average size of tanker is expected to decrease (Luciani 1984), the alternative could materialize of raising the SUMED pipeline's capacity to 1.9 and even to 2.3 million b/d. To complete the picture, it must be recorded that Iraq is considering the building of a pipeline across Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to a point slightly north of Yanbu. Its capacity would be between 1 an 1.6 million b/d.

These Red Sea developments are not isolated. They must be appreciated against the background of other pipelines which are stretching out from sites as different as the Gulf, the Western Sahara and Siberia to carry oil as well as gas. The tendency to carry oil through pipes, stopped in 1967 for political reasons, is clearly re-emerging as a wider trend of which Red Sea developments are a part. Beyond definitely important economic reasons, one can speculate about the political changes which may have brought about this reversion to pipelines in hydrocarbon transportation. Egypt-Israel peace is certainly the most important factor. The seemingly irrevocable moderate political option of Egypt in inter-Arab politics is a further significant factor, for it makes Saudi Arabia reasonably secure in relation to a country which Riyadh has very often perceived as a threat (see pp. 96-7). A sign of the working of both these two factors may be the fact that Iraq is considering - alternative to or together with the already mentioned pipeline across Saudi Arabia - a pipeline running as near to Israel as Aqaba in Jordan (MEES, 6 February,1984). If one thinks of what the Tiran Strait - where Iraqi oil would necessarily pass through - meant because of Israel's presence there, one must admit that perceptions have gone a long way.

Does that mean that pipelines are going to become more important than tankers, with all that would imply for oil and Red Sea security? The answer is clearly no. The principle of lowering risks by diversification, hinted at above, requires the attainment of an appropriate balance among different systems of transportation. In this sense, pipelines and tankers must be normally held as complementary (Silvestri 1983:91). The resumption of pipelines

must be considered as a tendency to recover that balance thanks to the normalization seemingly going on in regional politics. The limits to the resumption of a fair balance, however, are also the limits of this political normalization. In fact, while the Saudi pipeline is a consequence of the stabilization taking place in Egypt's inter-Arab politics and in Egypt-Israel relations, Iraqi projects are heavily conditioned by a situation of on going instability, i.e. the war with Iran and the long-standing conflict/rivalry with Syria. Because of this, the Iraqi projects are very likely to be changed, dropped or stopped. This would affect present trends in the redirection of oil logistics and its political consequences.

Despite all the limits we have just underlined, the trend towards a more balanced mix of different means of transporting hydrocarbons and the growing importance of the Red Sea it is bringing about is very lively. It suggests that in order to preserve Western access to oil, the present Western political and military effort to stabilize the Gulf and protect it should combine with adequate attention to the Red Sea. In relation to the Gulf "frontier", the Red Sea is bound to give an essential strategic and logistical depth to Southwestern Asia. We will revert to this point on pages 87-92.

Development and integration: the Arab world and the Red Sea

The state and prospects of Arab economic integration as well as its effects on the economic development of the countries concerned are assessed very diversely by Arab scholars and leaders. While the conviction that integration would be beneficial to development is widely shared, there is much pessimism on its actual feasibility and on progress so far made. Regional integration is definitely seen as an essential factor for triggering national economies' integration and diversification. At the same time, international integration - widely regarded as the result of colonialism, industrial weaknesses and crude oil - is deemed by many people as antagonistic to regional and national integration as well as almost insurmountable.

The historical memory of the Western European integration, successfully based on liberalization and trade growth, goes a long way in explaining why this evaluation prevails. At a seminar organized in

February 1984 by the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF) in Abu Dhabi on the current and prospective developments in the Arab world's capital markets (MEES, 20 February, 1984) a sharp division emerged between the supporters of the need to develop inter-Arab trade as a prerequisite for developing a working inter-Arab capital market and those favouring a more active and ingenious role for the existing all-Arab lending institutions with the goal of giving way to integration, development and trade in the wider Arab world. To give an evaluation of the current state of that issue, a brief record of tendencies in the Arab capital markets is in order.

The present expansion of Arab banking must be considered the fourth echelon of national banks entering the international markets after the American banks in the 1950s and 1960s, the European banks in the 1970s, and the Japanese banks quite recently. The factor pushing forward the first three echelons must be identified in the necessity for nationally based banks to help the international projection of their clients or to win them in co-operation or competition with the parallel tremendous growth of xenocurrency markets. As for the Arab banks, their international development is predicated on the plain necessity to invest financial surpluses coming from oil. In other words, while the OECD's banks would have pegged their international financial integration to the real development of the national entities they are based in, the Arab banks would be experiencing a purely international financial integration with no or few links with the national economies they are an expression of.

The picture given by facts and figures may appear in line with this interpretation. Arab commercial banks have tried to play a role in the promotion of foreign trade by providing short-term credit facilities. The outcome of these activities is proving very limited. No serious creation of trade, however, can be expected from the operation of short-term credit facilities. Rather, it is from medium- and long-term credit that integrative dynamic effects are to be expected. On this ground, we have to look at the Arab and at the international markets. Within Arab based markets, we have to record both domestic and inter-Arab results. According to figures given by Mr. Hikmat al-Nashashibi at the Abu Dhabi seminar, domestically by the end of 1980 the specialized national financial institutions dealing with housing, real

estate, agriculture, industry, etc. in individual Arab countries showed a balance of some $90 billion and loans and investment amounting to approximately $78 billion. As for inter-Arab relations, national and regional development funds devoted to supporting balance of payments deficits and infrastructural projects with soft credit facilities provided at the end of 1982 some $16.5 billion, $8.5 being destined to Arab countries. In addition to these funds, during the period 1974-81 bilateral government assistance in the form of ODA (Official Development Aid, according to the OECD Development Aid Committee's definition) has amounted to $45 billion, some 25 billion of which was extended to Arab countries. Within the international based markets, on the other hand, Arab financial institutions, both private and public, have shown a remarkable activism recently. Between 1977 and mid-1983 - again according to Mr. al-Nashashibi's figures - they have lead-managed some $32.3 billion worth of loans with Arabs borrowing 44 per cent of the total. During the first half of 1983 this proportion rose to 55.4 per cent.

If put in a wider perspective, this picture, though interesting, would show how reduced the dimension of Arab and inter-Arab flows of capital is in relation to Arab capital which takes the form of international investment. It is also evident that the institutional pattern is not well balanced and that inter-Arab financial relations rely almost exclusively on public financial institutions. Growing Arab participation into euromarket borrowing and lending, unless it develops in harmony with an internal Arab capital market, may even be harmful to the consolidation of the latter. Developments on the euromarkets are significant, however, because they stress political risk as a crucial determinant of the sluggish growth in inter-Arab capital flows. Conventional risk coverage - as highlighted by the establishment of the Arab Investment Guarantee Corporation (AIGC) - would prove essential in promoting medium- to long-term capital flows.

It should be pointed out that the network of inter-Arab financial institutions - the AMF, the ABEDIA, the AIGC, the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development (AAAID) - is moving precisely in this direction after their joint meeting in Algiers on 19 April, 1983 (MEES, 25 April, 1983). The Finance Ministers Committee, established in Algiers to follow up on their decision to strengthen Arab financial co-operation,

met in January 1984 in Kuwait and decided that the inter-Arab institutions will give priority in the coming period to export guarantees and credit facilities as a way to promote inter-Arab trade (MEES, 16 January, 1984). This development is consistent not only with the necessity of downgrading risk perception in inter-Arab relations but also with the role performed by the State in Arab economies. As elsewhere around the Mediterranean, the important role played by the State in the management of the national economies has the consequence of moving capital less in the form of traditional direct or portfolio investment than in the form of "a variety of contractual arrangements ranging from turn-key plant sales to joint ventures" (Luciani 1980: 20). In this context the development of medium- to long-term export financing, with the ensuing export guarantee, would be exceptionally important for inter-Arab commerce to be increased.

However promising, inter-Arab capital markets and trade development continue to be disappointing in the eyes of most of the people concerned. In the eyes of this author, however, two points are missed by the majority of the Arab integration onlookers. First, while it is the direction of change which is crucial to the future of inter-Arab relations, emphasis is being constantly put on the pace of change. Secondly, sluggish progress in the institutional integration sphere is obscuring both integrative dynamic effects set in motion within the individual Arab economies by capital differentials and their developmental consequences.

As for the first point, what one should keep in mind is that, unlike other groupings among developing countries, thanks to capital Arab countries do have an active integrative factor to operate upon. The argument that an Arab capital market cannot develop because it has no trade to finance is an idle argument. Of greater importance is the argument that widely available capital must be set in motion to foster trade relations and divert them from other destinations. This calls for an effort to improve the financial institutions' capabilities so as to enable them to make trade increase. Whereas that can be done, waiting first for trade is a non-starter. What was said on this point by an Arab economist (Makdisi 1979: 94-5) is still very appropriate:

> The regional and national financial institutions which have been established have acted as a

> channel for the multinational transfer of Arab funds among the Arab countries, in addition to direct bilateral transfers which have taken place for economic and non-economic reasons. This is an important form of co-operation because the flow of capital has been induced generally in accordance with certain criteria designed for this purpose. In the absence of such institutions these flows may have not occurred, at least their level and geographic and investment pattern would have been different, being then governed by autonomous decisions based on a calculus of private costs and benefits.

To conclude on this point it may be worth recording the recent evolution of the Arab banking structure. To this end we will refer here to two ratios, i.e. total financial activities to GDP and domestic financial activities to GDP.

According to the most recent figures available (late 1970s), Arab countries can be divided into three categories: a) countries with a high ratio of total financial activities to GDP, i.e. Lebanon (172%), Jordan (122%), Egypt (98%), Algeria (182%), Syria (67%), Tunisia (66%), Morocco (62%); b) countries with a low ratio, i.e. Iraq (34%), Sudan (43%), YAR (56%); c) oil-exporting countries, i.e. Bahrein (119%), Kuwait (75%), Libya (49%), Saudi Arabia (122%). While the second category would require a case by case explanation, the first and third categories reflect the different absorptive capacities of the respective economies and the different roles of their financial institutions. This is more evident when considering the second ratio we mentioned just above, namely that of domestic financial activities to GDP. For the countries of the third category domestic activities are about one-third of total activities, whereas for the countries of the other two categories it is about two-thirds. The first group of countries is clearly developing a financial market to serve their development by recycling resources from abroad. The other two groups are more integrated in the international financial market, in forms and with roles as different as those of Saudi Arabia (plainly investing abroad) and Bahrein (an off-shore centre). The overall Arab picture is therefore that of an incipient organic financial system with all its specializations and functions to cater for different requirements and demands. Although it may have a long way to go, in an historical perspective one may

maintain that this ability to specialize while growing is the mark of the birth of a unitary, integrated system. On the same historical ground, one has to say that, as international as the Arab capital markets projection may be today, their national base will not remain without effect tomorrow.

The second point we indicated is related to the dynamic effects on development and integration set in motion by the sheer existence of capital differentials. To start with, let us mention the implementation of national development plans, particularly in the less populated oil-exporting countries. Altogether they are successful. As a result these countries have begun to recycle domestically a much larger proportion of their financial surpluses than was thought possible. A crucial aspect of this domestic recycling - hinted at by Mr. al-Nashashibi's figures above - is the large transfer to individuals, families and firms which has been effected in the form of public expenditure, such as housing allowances, low or interest-free loans, and subsidies designed for diverse purposes. Although a large part of these resources, once recycled domestically, are then recycled back to the international markets in the form of demand for imported goods and services, the dynamic effects inside the Arab world are far from negligible. These effects have emerged less as inter-Arab trade than as inter-Arab migration. The latter is in fact creating flows of new investment and trade, though they may not be immediately visible.

Inter-Arab migration grew tremendously in the 1970s (Birks, Sinclair 1980). Though to different extents, it has involved all Arab countries. It must be said, however, that within the wider Arab circle the Red Sea region is keeping a distinctive role in migration because of the presence in it of the most important Arab labour-exporting countries, i.e. Egypt, Jordan, the two Yemens, on the one hand, and Saudi Arabia, the largest Arab importer of Arab labour, on the other. All the more so if we include in the notion of the Red Sea for the purpose of studying migration, the Gulf Arab States, such as Kuwait, Qatar, etc., and Libya - as Pennisi (1981: Ch. 2) has done in his book on the subject. According to Pennisi, in the late 1970s total migrant workers by source in the Red Sea region were 2,120,000. Among them 900,000 came from Egypt, 350,000 from Jordan, 200,000 from the PDRY and

460,000 from the YAR. When considering the same figures by destination, total migrant workers amounted to 2,530,000, with 1,340,000 flowing into Saudi Arabia. This highlights the fact that the main migration source thanks to Egypt is the Red Sea, and that the main outlet thanks to Saudi Arabia is in the Red Sea as well. For this reason, we concentrate on Egypt as the most meaningful example of the dynamic integrative and developmental effects of migration movements set off by inter-Arab capital differentials.

Economically active Egyptians abroad in 1982 have been estimated at some 2 million (Aliboni et al. 1984: 175-6). According to Farrag (1976) they were 100,000 in 1973, whereas Birks' and Sinclair's (1980) estimate of the mid-70s is 400,000. In 1980 the Egyptian migrants are deemed to have sent home, as financial and real remittances, some $3 billion, which corresponds to some 70 per cent of Egyptian exports in that year (Aliboni et al. 1984: 104). This figure underestimates the real amount at stake because it includes neither the foreign exchange the Egyptians are permitted to hold in the form of special deposits by authorized banks, nor undeclared goods introduced into Egypt by returning migrants.

Hansen and Radwan (1982: 240) have given an estimate of the nature of the goods imported by migrant workers in Egypt. Although they stress that more than half these imports are consumer goods, they fail to realize that in any case more than 30 per cent of the latter clearly corresponds to productive goods (Aliboni et al. 1984: 105). If we put together this tendency and the fact that Egyptian emigration is temporary in character (because so is the policy of the destination countries and because life in those countries is definitely less comfortable than in Egypt) we can imagine that a considerable part of what will be remitted in the near future will take more and more the form of real and financial investment. In the Egyptian countryside this tendency is already emerging as a construction boom, because rural families begin to receive their trickle of money from abroad. As people return, this tendency will consolidate itself both in the rural and urban environment. In fact, it is to be expected that Egyptian return migrants will invest in small self-run enterprises and in agricultural production goods (Aliboni et al. 1984: 108).

From this picture two conclusions are to be drawn. First, migration is working as a process

favouring a "primitive accumulation" which will enable existing entrepreneurial spirits to materialize. Second, migration has definitely become one of the most significant factors in recycling oil surpluses, although what it recycles is not necessarily passing through official channels, like customs and banks. This marks a potential for economic integration and development which is wider than currently estimated by Arab leaders and which is just waiting for appropriate policies and initiatives.

The fact that Egypt and Saudi Arabia have an important role in this development makes the Red Sea crucial to Arab economic integration and development processes. Co-operation between the two countries across the Red Sea, anyway indispensable for the functioning of inter-Arab politics, emerges as a focus of inter-Arab economics.

In the Red Sea area a number of co-operative undertakings are successfully on the march: the Egypto-Sudanese agreement for the economic integration of the two countries, the Saudi-Sudanese Red Sea Commission, established in 1975 for the joint exploration and exploitation of the Red Sea's natural resources (Mustafa 1984), and the AAAID (Salacuse 1978) which is designed to develop the agricultural potential of Sudan especially in order to supply food to the regional countries of the Arabian Peninsula. By contrast, between Egypt and Saudi Arabia there are no such institutionalized relations and one is led to think that, for historical and political reasons, they will never be established. With the two most important regional countries aside, it is also unlikely that an institutionalized process of integration will take place in the Red Sea area. Despite what we have just said, it remains true that the Saudi-Egyptian relationship across the Red Sea, though it may not assume an institutional form, is a factor of crucial importance for the wider Arab circle's integration and development - not to speak of political co-operation.

If, in conclusion, it is assumed that Arab prospects for economic integration and development are important for the future of the Western economy - after the integration between the two worlds which ensued from the increase in the price of oil - and if it is assumed that the Saudi-Egyptian relationship is crucial to Arab development and integration prospects, the consequence is that Western countries have a special interest in

mantaining along the Red Sea political and military conditions which would allow good relations between Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the containment of Soviet presence and regional stability for all the countries concerned.

South-east of NATO

The factors we have just highlighted in the preceding sections are acting within a trend which encompasses not only the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea but also the Mediterranean Sea. The kind of logistic links which are stretching out between the Gulf and the Red Sea are also about to connect the Gulf with the Mediterranean. Economic development and integration within the Arab world is also strongly related to integration with the West European countries across the Mediterranean.

The redirection of oil transportation which is taking place between the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea is accompanied by a similar development northward, between Iraq and the Mediterranean. Iraq has connected its Northern and Southern fields with a pipeline capable of operating in both directions. Apart from the old IPC pipeline running across Syria - unreliable for political reasons - the Northern fields are connected to the Mediterranean by the new pipeline running across Turkey to the Mediterranean port of Ceyhan. The capacity of the Iraq-Turkey pipeline is certain to be increased in the near future. One consequence of all these developments is that the proportion of oil being shipped from the Gulf fields to the consumer markets, especially Western Europe's, across the Middle Eastern landmass, the Red Sea and the Mediterranean is definitely becoming quite considerable. Under a number of assumptions, Luciani's estimate is some 10 million b/d, that means some 50 per cent of projected US and West European imports in 1985 (Luciani 1984: 23). Another consequence is that the integrated system which the redirection of Gulf oil is pursuing also integrates the Gulf, the Red Sea, the Middle Eastern landmass and the Mediterranean in a single geopolitical entity.

This development is reinforced by the current and prospective developments in the field of gas transportation. Technical developments in relation to submarine pipes, which have already materialized with the pipeline connecting Algeria and Italy across the Channel of Sicily, will presumably allow for the construction of similar pipelines from Egypt

and Libya to the Southern European shores. This would open the way to the exportation of the Middle Eastern gas that is now wasted. By linking a number of Arab countries on its way west to Europe, it would also offer the Arab countries concerned an opportunity for economic co-operation and integration. Were this development to prove unfeasible, Middle Eastern gas could be transported to the Mediterranean across the Middle Eastern continental mass and Turkey. In this perspective it is interesting to record here the Iranian project to divert their gas transportation network (IGAT-2) from the USSR to Turkey with the aim of reaching the West European markets.

It is impossible to predict to what extent these tendencies will continue to proceed. In any case, what has materialized so far is already important. The point to emphasize in this discussion, however, is that these developments have been triggered by the regional and inter-regional dimensions that have emerged in the aftermath of the "oil crisis" in Western Europe, in the Arab world and between the two, across the Mediterranean and the regions surrounding this ancient basin. This is reflected in the second aspect we considered in the preceding section, when trying to highlight Western interests in the Red Sea, i.e. economic integration and development. If it is true that the Arab world's development - so crucial to the future of the whole Western economy - is tied to the movement of capital and labour within the wider Arab circle, and especially between Egypt and Saudi Arabia across the Red Sea, it is also true that this historical development is linked to the growth of developmental and integrative relations between Arabs and Western Europeans across the Mediterranean.

The revalorization and the national re-appropriation of oil has set in motion a process of growing international interdependence and integration by triggering new patterns of trade and financial flows all over the world and new processes of industrialization in both the oil-exporting countries and the so-called newly industrialized countries (NICs). The financial and real aspects of this evolution are somewhat decoupled, however. Whereas the financial flows have tended to increase worldwide ties, interdependence and integration related to the real aspects of trade, industrial development, etc. have largely grown across the Mediterranean, between Arab and West European countries.

The Red Sea and Western Interests

While a country like Algeria has always been aware of the pre-eminent importance of the Mediterranean regional dimension (Aliboni 1976), other Arab countries, like Saudi Arabia, are only gradually reverting from global to regional development strategies. Saudi plans to develop industrially by integrating oil production downstream have been based on policies designed to guarantee an outlet for its refined and petrochemical products. These policies require the formation of joint ventures with Western companies wherein allocations of "incentive crude" are traded against managerial and technological support to Saudi downstream industries and marketing support for their products. The difficulties encountered by Saudi Arabia in convincing Western companies to join these ventures are due to the fact that refining and petrochemicals are plagued by excess capacity throughout the world, though the overall situation may be improving. As global as this strategy may appear, Luciani (1980: 21) has very aptly observed that it has a "de facto" regional Mediterranean dimension:

> companies entering into (Saudi) joint ventures will find it extremely difficult to market refined oil products or petrochemicals on the North American market. Competition will also be very intense on Far Eastern markets because of similar investment being undertaken by other oil-producing countries and the NICs in Southeastern Asia. Since Europe is the one region most interested in stable crude supplies, and the companies undertaking joint ventures in Saudi Arabia are well entrenched in European markets, it is in Western Europe that the largest part of Saudi downstream products will be marketed. The Mediterranean dimension will therefore turn out to be crucial, even if at present it is not perceived as such.

Without going so far as to predict integration between Arab and West European countries, inter-regional and regional interdependencies are today in any case impressive. What is remarkable is that this development is taking place across a very "classic" communication medium, the area encompassing the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the landmass between the Mediterranean and the Gulf, thus bringing an important sector of international politics back from the wider contemporary frame to a more traditional and historical one. This area is largely coincidental with that increasingly

important area which is out of NATO's jurisdiction. The developments we have underlined so far are not extraneous to this new NATO preoccupation. Besides Western interests in fostering economic development in that area, there is the problem of giving it security.

Western attention and preoccupations have focused on Southwestern Asia and the Upper Gulf. After the invasion of Afghanistan and the rise of the Islamic Republic of Iran, there is no doubt that the regional "frontier", within the East-West dimension, is set over the Gulf. For it is in the Gulf that Western vulnerability is strongest. The redirection of oil logistics is bound to diminish the intensive vulnerability of the Gulf by spreading it over a wider area. On the other hand, oil transportation is but an aspect of the process of economic integration and development that oil has triggered. This process involves all the different "centres" behind the Gulf "frontier": the Red Sea as well as the Mediterranean, the Arab world as well as Western Europe. In other words, the economic integration which is emerging from the Gulf to Western Europe, and which is so crucial to Western interests, deserves an integrated response on the security (Kemp 1981: 32) as well as on the economic level.

This conclusion must be all the more emphasized because Western policies are not smoothly converging in that direction. The West European countries are expected to contribute to meeting the threat emerging "out of the area", that is on the enlarged Southern flank of NATO we are talking about. Since US conventional forces are overstretched, the eruption of a crisis in the Gulf, the Red Sea, or the Mediterranean might entail the redeployment of the US forces currently assigned to Western Europe. In order to maintain security on the central front, such contingencies would require either a West European effort to increase conventional European capabilities with the aim of "releasing" American forces, or the building up of a Western European capability to guarantee the security of NATO's Southern flank, or both.

The informal co-operation among a number of Western warships in the Arabian Sea at the height of the Iranian-American crisis in October-November 1979; the peace-keeping mission which is being accomplished by the Sinai MFO (Multinational Force and Observers); and finally the intervention of the Multinational Force in Beirut, are examples of

successful West European contributions to a variety of efforts undertaken by the USA in the area for the sake of common Western interests.

It would be futile, however, to play down the less successful aspects. As time elapsed, it became only too clear that in Lebanon there was no political co-ordination (and therefore no military integration) among the Western contingents. Rather, some elements of competition emerged. The most important problem, however, remains the security perception of the West European countries in relation to the recent change in the global balance of power between the USA and the USSR. From 1979 on, after NATO's double track decision on the INF (Intermediate Nuclear Forces), the Western Europeans were led to minimize Soviet "geopolitical" activism in Southwestern Asia with the hope of maintaining detente conditions in Europe and thus negotiating successfully for the withdrawal of European and Soviet INF from the European theatre. This prevented an appropriate West European contribution and hindered the NATO countries' cohesion in relation to developments "out of the area". With the collapse of negotiations at the end of 1983 and the deployment of the INF in Western Europe, NATO's INF trial can be considered successfully overcome. It is evident, however, that this success will not allow West European perception of insecurity to disappear. The profound factors that during the 1970s put in question the global balance of power, the rationale of the US-Western Europe security relationship and the West European perception of security are still at work. As a consequence, the pressure exercised by this situation in preventing Western Europe from contributing to the security "out of the area" may well continue to operate. For this reason, the European presence in this theatre will be determined by the difficult choices Western Europe is expected to make in order to reorganize its defence within NATO.

If this is a first problem for the security the West should guarantee South-east of NATO in order to assert its own interests, a second problem arises from the vagaries of the Western allies' policy in the region. This is well reflected in the different postures held by the latter in the war which opposes Iran and Iraq. While France very overtly supports Iraq, the USA has adopted an attitude of staunch neutrality. What is more, however, is that American neutrality seems to be less the consequence of a political choice than that of a lack of strategic

clarity. The present Administration, following Carter's doctrine, started by emphasizing the East-West dimension over the regional conflicts and, as a consequence, the Gulf over the Middle East. It stressed the strategic unity of Southwestern Asia and designed its military posture, the new network of local military facilities and the RDJTF (later US Central Command) looking fundamentally at the Gulf and the contingency of a Soviet military attack there. Having established this, quite ironically the American diplomatic and military presence has since then been almost entirely absorbed by the Middle East and its most classical expression, i.e. the Arab-Israeli conflict, thanks to the so-called Reagan Plan for the settling of the Palestinian issue and the intervention in Lebanon of the Multinational Force. By contrast, in the Gulf US political presence is hardly perceptible, while its military presence is restrained by the local allies and logistically weak. This policy is neither consistent with the fact that Iran and the Gulf continue to be the "frontier", that is the most decisive sector of the entire area, nor with the integrated strategic conception of the area South-east of NATO which is deemed necessary to cope with internal instability and external threats. In this context, the USSR's presence is not a danger per se but because Western lack of cohesion and clarity may well offer it opportunities. And Red Sea experience tells us very clearly that the USSR is in a position to take advantage of them.

Chapter Five

REGIONAL STABILITY IN THE RED SEA

The preceding part of this book has shown that the USSR has a major role in the Red Sea region and a strong strategic interest in it. At the same time Western and especially American interests are no less important. For both the Red Sea is neither a zone of direct confrontation, like the Persian Gulf and the Northern Tier, nor a stake of intrinsic strategic relevance, like the whole of Africa and Southern Africa in particular. Nevertheless the Red Sea is an area in the midst, working like a pivot for those who want to have access to the Persian Gulf, Africa and the Mediterranean.

In these circumstances the region's stability or instability are significant factors. If we start from the premise that there is an asymmetry between the two superpowers' status in the region, instability will be appreciated less by the USA than by the USSR. For, whereas instability may offer the USSR fresh opportunities for changing the regional balance, stability is bound to preserve it. The cohesiveness and stability of the Red Sea region is therefore relevant for everybody and especially for the USA and the Western countries.

To evaluate stability in the Red Sea two main factors have to be taken into consideration. For one thing, there is the contemporary presence, and very often the overlapping, of the African and Arab dimensions. Although this situation has led to some forms of co-operation, both from a political and an economic point of view, inter-Arab and inter-African politics normally interfere with each other's development and lead to serious conflicts. For another, the ethnic and political fragmentation prevailing in the Horn of Africa and in Southern Arabia have given rise to a perennial and sophisticated game of mutual threats among regimes

which involves both international and domestic factors (Clapham 1972). In the case of Somalia it has issued in the plain working of nationalism in its classical, intoxicating expression. This vulnerability to threats from neighbouring countries coalesces with Afro-Arab cleavages to give the region a peculiar degree of inherent instability. In the following sections we will examine the two main factors of the region, namely inter-Arab relations and Afro-Arab relations. Though it is not intended to be a systemic analysis, it will help us to gain some insights into the regional stability issue.

Inter-Arab relations

Inter-Arab politics is normally focused on the Fertile Crescent, to which inter-Arab relations in the Red Sea area are peripheral. This means that they are generally affected by the "great" inter-Arab politics, whereas the opposite is only occasionally true. The Yemen and Ogaden wars, as influential as they might have been, did not prove decisive to inter-Arab politics. As a matter of fact, the latter continued to be shaped by the rivalries between Syria and Egypt (and the changing constellations of Arab States around them) in relation to Palestine and Israel. It is not by chance that on both occasions that Egypt withdrew from the Red Sea it was because of developments in the Arab-Israeli setting, i.e. the 1967 defeat and Sadat's trip to Jerusalem in 1977.

More or less connected to the "great" inter-Arab politics, inter-Arab relations in the Red Sea are in any case relevant as a factor in regional politics and stability. It is in this sense that they are considered here.

In the inter-Arab relations as related to the Red Sea area, three main trends are discernible. First, the Red Sea becomes more or less peripherally involved in the events springing from the traditional centres of inter-Arab politics. Red Sea involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict (Abir, 1972, 1974, 1974a; Al-Sultan, 1980: 200-32) is a case in point. Egypt's intervention in Yemen, as part of Nasser's inter-Arab and pan-Arab policies, is also a case in point. We will dwell on these two points in the next section and thus show the germs of the second trend mentioned here. The "Arab lake" policy - a good example of this second trend - was an attempt to create a self-contained inter-Arab

focus in the Red Sea. For the time being this attempt has been thwarted by the Arab failure in the Ogaden war. It may be revived, however, if Saudi Arabia becomes interested in shifting an area as sensitive to it as the Red Sea to the centre of inter-Arab politics. The third trend is pan-Arab assertiveness as a regular output as soon as inter-Arab policies become somewhat active and significant. The practical consequence of this assertiveness is a claim to excluding and/or controlling non-Arab factors from the area, the Christians as well as the Soviets, the Africans as well as the Western countries. This leads to very conflictive situations, as in the case of the "Arab lake" doctrine, which in terms of freedom of navigation was just as disturbing to the USA as to the USSR.

While the second trend we have just mentioned was widely discussed above on pages 56-73, the third one is considered later on pages 105-11, devoted to Afro-Arab relations. The next section elaborates on the first trend, namely the Red Sea inter-Arab relations as peripheral to "great" inter-Arab political developments.

An "Egyptian lake"

In the period between the Second World War and the third Arab-Israeli war, the Red Sea held a special interest for Egypt. This was especially true, when the country, under the leadership of Nasser, was pursuing a policy of ideological and political expansionism in the Arab world. This policy led Egypt to take part in the Yemen civil war, threaten Saudi Arabia and support an important sector of the Aden nationalist movement. A second reason for Egyptian interest in the Red Sea was its conflict with Israel. Although this area was the theatre of only marginal operations in the various Arab-Israeli wars, both contenders continued to attribute considerable strategic importance to it. The Red Sea, in fact, is the only outlet to East Africa and Asia that Israel can use as an alternative to circumnavigating the African continent. For long, too, Israel's oil supplies came through the Red Sea. After the birth of the Israeli State Egypt immediately set up a blockade of the sea approaches from the south, as part of a wider plan for the economic strangulation of the country. This blockade policy, with some fairly important modifications, was kept up until the war of 1973,

during which a small Egyptian fleet closed the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. However, after its military defeat in 1967 Egypt ceased to be the prime mover in this blockade policy and the protagonist of inter-Arab relations in the Red Sea area. In this (as was seen on pages 56-73) its place was to be taken by Saudi Arabia.

Although in both cases the facts have now passed into history, these geopolitical visions of Egypt are worth brief recalling. Like all geopolitical doctrines, in fact, those of Egypt about the Red Sea have a recurrence which might be called cyclical. They come up anew whenever certain conditions in the balance of power are reproduced. Egyptian interest for Hijaz, for example, still earlier than the Nasser period, manifested itself at the time of Mohammed Ali. As is known, the latter's son, Ibrahim, conquered Hijaz taking it for a while from the Al-Saud family which, in turn, had not long captured it. The result of this recurrent Egyptian expansionism on the opposite shore of the Red Sea has been a persistent Saudi distrust of Egypt. In inter-Arab politics, as in regional Red Sea politics, this Saudi perception of the threat represented by Egypt is still a live factor, though it may be sleeping for the time being.

As regards the Yemen, a first point worth recalling is the decision of King Saud to back the cause of the Imam's Mutawakkilite dynasty on the outbreak of the civil war. The first significant result of this was the defection to the Egyptian camp of several Saudi pilots with their planes (Stookey 1978: 246). On the other hand, the Egyptians very soon declared their intention of extending their intervention in favour of the Yemen Republic to Saudi Arabia, with the aim of setting up a republic in that country, too. As the Saudi armed forces were unable to defend their country from the Egyptian expeditionary force, largely because they were powerless to counter air attacks, the intervention in aid of the Yemen royalists soon became the problem of how to dislodge the Egyptians from the Arabian Peninsula and remove the threat it represented to Saudi security, even more than to the Hamid al-Din monarchy.

From that moment on, Saudi diplomacy, urged by King Feysal, was committed to the preparation of a compromise between Yemen republicans and royalists, designed to safeguard Saudi expectations regarding the country's social and political equilibrium, but

mainly to put an end to the Egyptian intervention. In September 1964, at the Arab Summit conference in Alexandria, Nasser and Feysal came to an initial understanding for the ending of their respective interventions under an agreement between republicans and royalists. In the following November, a conference between the two Yemen parties, called together for the purpose, broke down in Erkowit. In August 1965 Nasser and Feysal again outlined a compromise in Jeddah, but once again their respective allies, meeting in Harad in November, failed to reach the hoped for accord. This was also due to the fact that they were never consulted by their more powerful backers, whom they regarded with deep distrust and dislike.

In February 1966 Great Britain announced that it would soon withdraw from South Arabia. This announcement spurred Nasser to get into the Yemen to support the Nasserite part of the Aden national movement. In the eyes of the Saudis, the decision of the British risked extending and reinforcing radical influences and the Egyptian presence in the south of the country, while their diplomacy was dragging on in what had by the time become a futile attempt at mediation between republicans and royalists. They therefore abandoned the cause of the Yemen royal family and changed policy. Instead of a compromise between republicans and royalists under their control, they set out to influence the republicans in a conservative direction, and by exercising a strict political and financial hold on them rapidly succeeded in this aim. A conservative Yemen State, closely tied to Saudi Arabia, would serve just as well to check the emerging radical nationalism in Aden, Nasser's influence, and - hopefully - to dislodge the Egyptian expeditionary corps which was detested as much by Yemen republicans as by the progressive party in Aden.

The Egyptian military defeat in June 1967 resolved the Saudi problem. At the Khartoum conference that followed, Nasser agreed to withdraw his troops from the Yemen. Even before the withdrawal was completed, in November, Nasser's man in Sanaa, Sallal, had already had to hand over power to the new republican leadership. The new leaders were those who had opposed to differing degrees the Egyptian protectorate, but they came onto the stage with the weight of the Saudi mortgage on their shoulders.

The defeat of 1967 not only ended Egyptian expansionism in the Arabian Peninsula, but also

eclipsed the role of this country in the Arab-Israeli conflict, as instigator of the blockade of the Red Sea approaches to Israel. This role was to be taken over by other Arab countries, while Egypt retired to the back of the stage.

Immediately after the 1948 hostilities in Palestine, the Tiran Strait was blockaded against Israeli ships by Egyptian artillery mounted at Sharm el-Sheikh. At the same time Israeli vessels were refused transit through the Suez Canal. The blockade was later extended to ships chartered by Israel. These measures were part of the general Arab-Israeli conflict, but also had the particular Egyptian aim of persuading Israel to abandon Eilat and the Southern Negev, to enable Egypt to reconstruct its territorial continuity with the Arab East and Asia (Abir 1974: 12). It is not easy to say exactly what was the aim of such continuity. It could have been a mini-version of the commercial expansion in the Arab East started by Egypt under guidance of the Misr Bank group soon after the war. This had not been possible before the withdrawal of the colonial powers, who had always steadily frustrated all such initiatives. The setting up of the Jewish State in Palestine, and the interruption of the railroad had again blocked the project (Kazziha 1979: 3-4). The possession of the Southern Negev, which links Sinai to Jordan, would enable it to be re-launched.

If this was the real aim, the stationing of the UNEF (U.N. Emergency Force) at Sharm el-Sheikh, following the 1956 war, and the re-opening of the Tiran Strait, made it difficult to realize. According to Abir the aim however was never given up. Nasser in 1961 declared that the failure of the United Arab Republic could be put down to the lack of territorial continuity. It thus appears that among the aims of the 1967 war Egypt may have been nursing the ambition to conquer at least the Southern Negev, to establish the much desired territorial continuity with the Arab East.

At the end of the fifties Heykal, the influential Egyptian journalist, had suggested - as previously noted - turning the Red Sea into an "Arab lake" as part of a wider policy for the economic strangulation of Israel (Legum 1978: 60). Those Arab States that in the period considered here had looked with an open mind at events in the Red Sea region, and at the role played by Egypt there, might well have come to the conclusion that the real result of the Heykal doctrine, beyond pan-Arab nationalism, was that of turning the Red Sea into an Egyptian

rather than an Arab lake. After the 1967 defeat, while Egypt was prostrate and Nasser was on the way out, an initiative emerged from other Arab countries apparently designed to involve a few littoral Arab countries in a greater collective effort than in the past. The new phase was opened by the PDRY in the first days of its existence. In December 1967, as soon as the British had left Aden, a group of the NLF occupied the Island of Perim which lies in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. Abdel Fattah Ismail, the NLF secretary explained that the occupation of the island was for the purpose of blockading Israeli ships.

This blockade was never effective, because the artillery and the fortifications, constructed on the island later, were completely inadequate (Farer 1976: 127) and above all because the PDRY had practically no navy. Only Egypt could make the blockade effective, but clearly deemed it inopportune to do so at the time. Egypt effected a blockade during the 1973 war which in principle was a complete success but in no way affected the war's outcome and was never tested. A blockade, in practice, has sense only if it can make repeated strikes at the Israeli economy over a long period, as was the original idea. A military blockade, in the event of wars like the Arab-Israeli ones, that lasted at most a couple of weeks, is devoid of all sense.

The Aden initiative, in fact, had no importance for practical efficiency - which was non-existent, but for the fact that it was an element of a conception that was more authentically "Arabizing" in relation to the Red Sea than Egypt's. The PDRY's initiative of the blockade should be considered in relation to the growing pressure that certain Arab countries outside the Red Sea, such as Syria, Iraq and Libya were exerting in favour of the national Eritrean movement. The most important factor, however, was the revival of an acute Saudi interest for the condition of a region that the Riyadh government increasingly was led to see as no less essential than the Persian Gulf for its economic and political security. At the conclusion of one cycle of inter-Arab relations in the region, Saudi Arabia took Egypt's place and deprived it of the leadership. Here begins the other cycle of more complex international and regional relations going under the heading of the "Arab lake". This was already examined, however, in Chapter 3 (on pp. 56-73).

Afro-Arab relations in the Red Sea: different approaches

Afro-Arab relations date back to the end of the 1950s, when the first African groupings - the Monrovia and Casablanca groups - were approaching decolonization and independence problems on an African-wide scale. Owing to their active participation in the pan-African movement and their involvement, to varying degrees, in the rise of Arab nationalism, the North-African countries developed a sort of double identity. To the extent that both pan-Arabism and pan-Africanism were understood as components of the wider movement for decolonization and non-alignment, that double identity raised no questions. This compatibility between the two movements emerged very clearly from the Addis Ababa inaugural Organization of African Unity (OAU) meeting of May 1963. The continental particularism which was part of the pan-African ideology led some Black African delegates to call for the withdrawal of the North African countries from the League of the Arab States. The Arab delegates, particularly Egypt's, in their capacity as representatives of non-aligned countries, pointed out successfully that Arabism was a form of micro-Afro-Asianism, i.e. a component of the wider decolonization movement of the non-aligned countries (Boutros-Ghali 1976). As time has elapsed, both pan-Africanism and pan-Arabism have lost momentum. As a consequence, the common cause which was supposed to unite the two movements, though it has not disappeared, has grown weaker. Pan-Arabism has definitely proved more assertive.

In its effort to assert itself, pan-Arabism has called into question two cardinal rules of the pan-African game: the inviolability of boundaries and non-interference. Indeed, one cannot help noting how pan-Arab assertiveness has been eased by a widespread breaking of OAU principles by African countries. Tanzania's intervention in Uganda has been widely resented in Africa as a breaking of the non-interference rule. The recognition of the Sahrawi Republic has likewise been a heavy blow to the OAU. It should be noted that adherence to OAU principles has at the same time been made difficult by certain African regimes' disregard for domestic autonomy and elementary human and civil rights requirements.

Though the Black African countries are not without blame, it remains true that Arab policies have shown an attitude in favour of exploiting

African countries in the context of inter-Arab, bilateral and anti-Zionist issues. True, the case for anti-Zionist involvement may be different. By the beginning of the 1970s the Arab OAU members began a new policy in an attempt to convince the other African countries to support the Palestinian cause. This is the way Nabeya Asfahani (1977) has reported this policy:

> 1) The identification of Jewish colonies in occupied Arab territory with white colonies in Rhodesia and South Africa. 2) The exposure of the common interests linking Israel to South Africa, the aim of the former being to perpetuate racist domination in the Arab world, that of the latter to do the same in Africa. 3) The building of a common Arab-African anti-imperialist front.

As is made clear by its third point, the policy was connected to the original non-aligned posture of Afro-Arab relations. Nevertheless, the reason one is led to speak of exploitation is due to the substantial Arab failure to offset the African support of the Palestinian cause with adequate Arab support of Southern African Black regimes and liberation movements. The expected support has been uneven and weak, because many Arab countries feel that the Southern African Blacks are too close to the international communist movement and worry about any communist influence in such a strategically sensitive area. In any case the Africa perception has turned out negative and the Arab diplomatic effort has in the end proved insufficient. As a consequence the policy has not evolved as a non-aligned, anticolonialist movement of wider significance, but has kept the character of one-sided, Arab anti-Zionist policy.

In the 1970s, oil wealth added a new dimension to Afro-Arab relations. Aid made suddenly possible by that wealth has been regarded as another Arab tool to exploit the African card in the Arab-Israeli conflict, reversing the Israeli influence. Although this is definitely a factor, Arab-African aid relations seem more complex. Reviving Islam, strengthening moderate regimes, boosting progressive governments, enlarging future Arab outlets and consolidating the non-aligned - some would say anti-imperialist - movements in general, are all motives behind the Arab aid policies. While these motives continue to be at the basis of bilateral Arab aid policies, one should not fail to stress that thanks to the setting up of international

bodies, such as the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (ABEDIA), the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), the OPEC Fund for International Develoment (OFID), etc., Arabs have succeeded in implementing a set of true co-operative moves substantially devoid of any narrow political purpose. The Afro-Arab multilateral co-operation, despite many problems, can be considered as the latest offshoot of the early non-aligned posture.

To sum up, I would suggest dividing the Afro-Arab relations into two large categories: macro- and micro-Afro-Arab relations. Macro-relations would indicate those relations which converge in non-aligned policies of global character, such as multilateral aid, OAU's support, balanced decolonization postures, and any bilateral relation designed to strengthen the non-aligned movement and its unity. Micro-relations would in turn indicate all Afro-Arab relations where the partner gets an instrument towards an end outside the strictly Afro-Arab context, such as aid designed to strengthen Islam or specific regimes, policies directed either to assert Arab predominance or destabilize rival Arab regimes, or to hurt Israel.

In the following sections we will examine micro-Afro-Arab relations in the Red Sea - with the exception of aid policies - as dictated by the following heteronomous factors: 1) Arab-Israeli conflict; 2) containment of communism; 3) pan-Arab assertiveness; 4) inter-Arab rivalries; 5) Nile Valley security.

Micro-Afro-Arab relations in the Red Sea

Arab-Israeli conflict. In the Arab-Israeli conflict both Arabs and Israelis have the aim of securing African support. In dealing with this problem Israel has emphasized its bilateral relations with the African countries, working out what we may call a micro-Afro-Israeli approach. Egypt, and then Algeria, have in turn relied on the commonalities offered by the Third World countries' multilateral organization. Egypt has insisted in particular on the necessity of setting up specific Afro-Arab institutions connected to the wider non-aligned countries' network. It sticks to a macro-Afro-Arab approach. Libya, like Israel, has privileged a bilateral (micro-Afro-Arab) approach in order to push forward its own political priorities.

Regional Stability in the Red Sea

In the Red Sea, with the exception of Egypt and Sudan who have taken the alternative approach, micro-Afro-Arab relations have by far prevailed through the working of bilateral policies. In looking at this area therefore we can assess how the bilateral approach is working in securing African support for either Israel or the Arab countries and how it affects the viability of Afro-Arab relations. We will then be able to compare bilateral and multilateral, micro- and macro-Afro-Arab approaches. Let us look at the sequence of events there.

Ethiopia, as the sole African country bordering the Red Sea basin, holds a special position. To Israel it was important for two reasons. The longstanding alliance with Ethiopia was aimed both at preventing the Arab attempts to preclude the Israelis from using the Red Sea and at securing the way inland to the various countries they kept in touch with (from six in 1960 to 32 in 1972) for political as well as for commercial reasons. After 1967 Israeli penetration in Africa acquired new strategic significance taking on also the purpose of supporting the Anyanya revolt in Southern Sudan in order to discredit the Arabs in the eyes of the Africans.

It was the situation along the Ethiopian-Sudanese border that warranted Israeli interference. Formerly, the Ethiopians had supported the Southern Sudanese revolt, just as Sudan had supported the first Eritrean insurgence in 1965-6. In 1966 they agreed to eliminate this mutual threat. However, because of Sudan's confirmed inability to settle its civil strife, the conflictual premises that were to be exploited by Israel were kept alive.

In 1971 the Emperor had to cope with an even stronger Eritrean insurgence, which Sudan again supported. To make Sudan withdraw, the Ethiopians were forced to stop Israel's support to the Anyanya revolt. Nevertheless, the overthrow of Milton Obote in January 1971 made the Israelis believe they were going to get a fresh opportunity to interfere in Southern Sudan from Uganda. In fact, the Israelis had been there since the first years of independence and Amin, the new Ugandan leader, was among their trainees. After the intense border tension of July-October 1970, Obote had sealed off the frontier and had even prevented the Southern Sudanese from using Uganda as a shelter. Amin, by contrast, having relatives in Southern Sudan, was expected to support them and then to allow Israeli interference. One year later the Israelis would be expelled from

Uganda. It is interesting, from our point of view, to seek to understand the reasons.

It is to Libyan diplomacy that the most accepted interpretation (Gitelson 1977: 374-6) ascribes the break between Amin and Israel. Seeking arms and loans, Amin visited Tripoli on 13 February, 1972. By the end of February a Libyan delegation was in Kampala. The break between Amin and Israel occurred in March. A second interpretation involves Sudan. Mazrui (1975: 734-5) reports that Amin was determined to expel the Israelis right from the beginning, but

> could not get rid of them as long as the Sudanese civil war was still being fought, for he had relatives and allies among the Southern Sudanese Anyanya who the Israelis were aiding in their fight against the government in Khartoum.

As ambiguous as this posture may appear, it was true that objective Ugandan involvement had triggered some Sudanese countermeasure (Howell 1978): first, a force of Obote's fighters was deployed in Equatoria near the border; second, Obote was the guest of Nimeyri in Khartoum and kept in touch with his force. As a consequence between Sudan and Uganda a situation of mutual threat emerged, like that which had prevailed earlier between Sudan and Ethiopia. In both cases, however, the root of border conflicts was Southern civil strife. The signing of the Addis Ababa Agreement (28 February 1972, then ratified by Sudan on March 27) therefore removed the source of the Ugandan-Sudanese tensions. A few days after the Addis Ababa Agreement, the Israelis were expelled from Uganda, and Obote's force was redeployed far away from the border and in June was dispatched by sea to Tanzania.

Because of Amin's personality, it would be difficult to ascertain whether he expelled the Israelis following the bilateral initiative of Libya or the fundamental Afro-Arab option taken by Sudan in granting the Southerners a substantial autonomy, as foreseen in the Addis Ababa Agreement. Irrespective of the short-term results involved in this question, it is plain that the macro-Afro-Arab approach followed by Nimeyri continues to represent a milestone in Afro-Arab relations and the springboard for any enlarged Afro-Arab co-operative scheme. Though this major achievement is also among its major domestic difficulties, Sudan is a lively and inescapable blueprint for Afro-Arab relations. By contrast, Amin's era and its fall have associated Libya and its micro-Afro-Arab approach - ironically

not differently from Israel's (Gitelson 1974) - to an experience of crossing external interferences, not to mention misrule and human eclipse, which by any OAU standard is bound to be considered at least with suspicion by every African country. To conclude, were the Africans ever to extend a long-term, reliable solidarity to the Arabs within the Arab-Israeli conflict, this solidarity would definitely be based on Sudanese rather than on Libyan-like policies.

Inter-Arab rivalries and pan-Arab assertiveness. The clear Afro-Arab commitment of Sudan is anyway an acid test for the other Arab countries' commitment to the same purpose. For in dealing with Sudan, Arab countries are expected to shape and contain their pan-Arab and inter-Arab goals in order to respect and support the Sudanese Afro-Arab option. Libya has consistently failed to stick to this posture. Quite to the contrary, it has constantly interfered with Sudanese domestic politics to assert pan-Arabism over Southern Sudan autonomy. Furthermore, it has exploited its African connections and alliances against Sudan to acquire advantages in relation to its inter-Arab disputes. Here again, therefore, we discover micro-Afro-Arab policies with Libya as their main actor.

In order to clarify the point we must revert to Sudan's political evolution. Few months separated Libya's Nasserite revolution of September 1969 from Sudan's. Among the first moves of revolutionary Libya there was Jallud's visit to Nimeyri to start unification of both Libya and Sudan with Egypt. The new leadership in Tripoli, furthermore deemed Sudan essential to assert and project pan-Arabism towards Africa, i.e. to reject - as we saw - Israeli penetration, to support Islamic communities and pan-Arab movements, like the ELF, etc. Nimeyri's decision to participate in the preparation of the Federation of Arab Republics seemed bound to materialize Libya's expectations.

Within Sudan's leadership, however, there was dissent on the broad international goals to be pursued by the country. While the pan-Arab Nasserite officials looked to Sudan's integration into the Arab world, the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) looked to Africa and planned to terminate the southern civil war in order to integrate the different Sudanese nations in one State by means of a social revolution meant to transform the entire country (Howell 1978; Bechtold 1973). Along with

other factors, these opposite visions brought about the SCP attempt of July 1971 to overthrow Nimeyri. Thanks also to Libya's decisive military intervention - along with Egypt - the attempt failed. In a typical Nimeyrian move, however, this success resulted not in the strengthening of pan-Arab policies, but in a radical change in the overall international posture of Sudan. Power was handed over to the Nationalists (Wai 1979). They implemented social and economic policies definitely different from those the SCP would have. Nevertheless, their priority was also to integrate the country according to its Afro-Arab nature. Consequently with the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972 they put an end to the civil war. Thus the crisis ended up being resolved by removing the communists from Sudanese politics but, at the same time, by taking over one of their main policies, namely the shift from the pan-Arab to the Afro-Arab dimension.

As we have already noted, the birth of an Arab policy towards Africa as opposed to pan-Arab assertiveness was of great significance for Afro-Arab relations, for it gave the macro-Afro-Arab approach long-term momentum. This is not to say that it was to be accepted by every Arab country. Nimeyri's Afro-Arab move and his subsequent inter-Arab policy of joining Egypt and the moderate Arab group could not leave Libya's leadership indifferent. By hosting many opponents of Nimeyri and fostering tensions between Sudan and its African neighbours whenever possible, Libya embarked on a policy of constant subversion against Sudan with the twofold aim of forcing a return by Sudan to pan-Arab policies and a break with its Afro-Arab line, for one thing, and of fighting through Sudan the inter-Arab moderate coalition, for the other, giving in particular a thrust to Egypt's security.

In this sense, Libya's Chadian connection was largely instrumental to its micro-Afro-Arab policies (and to its aim of threatening the Nile Valley security on the inter-Arab side of the coin). As for the Red Sea area, however, it was Ethiopia which acted as a leverage for both Libya's pan-Arab and inter-Arab assertiveness. Formerly committed to support the ELF on the ground of its pan-Arab posture, after 1974 Libya gradually moved nearer to the new military Ethiopian leadership as the inter-Arab environment was being changed by the moderate Egyptian-Saudi leadership. In the very serious coup d'état attempted in July 1976 by the National Front of Sadiq al Mahdi and Sharif el Hindi

(i.e. the pan-Arab and sectarian wing of the Sudanese political spectrum) Libya and Ethiopia (see on p. 69) turned out to be heavily involved. Never dismantled, Ansar camps settled in Ethiopia since 1970 had kept on training Mahdi's fighters. The coup attempt was manned by them and armed by the Libyans.

To understand Ethiopian involvement one has to recall that, while the rise to power of the radical Dergue military did anyway worry the moderate Arabs, its failure to settle with the Eritreans - particularly after Lt. General Andom, willing to try, was killed (see on pp. 50 and 63) - revived Eritrean strife and consequently pan-Arab assertiveness. Neighbouring Eritrea, Sudan could not help channelling Arab pressures. To get rid of them and keep its Afro-Arab line, Nimeyri tried desperately to favour an understanding between the Eritreans and the Dergue. As we know, he did not succeed in this and was forced to become the spearhead of Arab interference in the Eritrean conflict. As a result the Dergue could not help considering Sudan as an important member of the hostile front set up by the Arab countries against Ethiopia. For this reason they did not hesitate to join the Libyan subversion against Nimeyri. What the Ethiopians expected from the coup was a Sudanese government subservient to Libya, then opposed to the moderate Arab countries and unwilling to lend itself to their subversion over Eritrea.

On the whole at the time of the coup attempt, Sudan was bewildered by contrasting and ambiguous pressures. If it yielded to the pan-Arab pressures (and anti-communist feelings and fears) of the moderate Arab countries it would be obliged to side with Eritrea and thus deviate from its Afro-Arab stance. On the other hand, alignment with Libya would allow Sudan to withstand the moderate countries' pan-Arab pressure and then to save its Afro-Arab policy by withdrawing support to Eritrea. At the same time, however, though the alliance with Libya might have countered pan-Arab assertiveness towards Ethiopia, it might invite that assertiveness within the Sudanese political scene. After the coup attempt failed, Nimeyri mastered the situation as usual by taking over his adversaries' policy. The authors of the coup attempt were allowed to re-enter Sudanese politics thanks to the National Reconciliation policy. Excellent from a tactical point of view, this second sharp adaptation of the Sudanese balance of power was not to deliver the

country the same stability that the first one had.

Also because of the uncertain evolution of the National Reconciliation policy, today one cannot say that Nimeyri has played down his inter-Arab and Afro-Arab postures as a consequence of that policy. He continues to stick to them, but, since at the same time he cannot escape either domestic pan-Arab and sectarian demands or Libyan pressures, Sudanese politics has grown more and more ineffective, unmanageable and weak. Beyond the agonizing effect on economic development, one tends to believe that Libya's micro-Afro-Arab policies, though unable to displace the great macro-Afro Arab approach Sudan worked out with the Addis Ababa Agreement, may have nevertheless undermined its immediacy and effectiveness. Restoring Sudan's strength and freedom against Libya's influence should be, along with other goals, an important aim of overall Arab policy towards the African countries.

Pan-Arab assertiveness and containment of communism. We have already pointed out that the Horn of Africa is a true ethnic and religious mosaic (Clapham 1972). To this mosaic two forces, namely the Ethiopian Empire and colonialism, have imposed varying degrees of political unity either cutting across or putting together different peoples and traditions. After the Second World War, as soon as Ethiopian sovereignty was restored and the other countries of the region acquired independence within the borders left by colonialism, the pattern which emerged was one of the most delicate in Africa. The most sensitive issues were Eritrea, where a mostly Muslim nationalism grew, and the three "points" of the Somali flag's star which correspond to areas considered by Mogadishu as irredented, namely Ogaden, Djibouti and the Northern District of Kenya (Farer 1976; Sherman 1980: ch.1). In this situation pan-Arab assertiveness in Eritrea and Arab sponsorship of the sweeping Somali irredentism were bound to act as factors of serious disruption and continued disturbance to the OAU's principles of inviolability of boundaries and non-interference. While Kenya's Northern District dispute has a mainly local character, Eritrea and Ogaden are involved in international conflicts. Djibouti, seated on a volatile balance, may follow. Leaving aside the minor cases of the Kenyan Northern District and Djibouti, let us consider Eritrea and Ogaden.

In the aftermath of the Second World War the case for Eritrean independence was first sponsored,

particularly by Pakistan, on the basis of the mostly Muslim character of the country. The prevalently Muslim liberation movement born at the beginning of the 1960s was an offshoot of pan-Arab nationalism, permeated by both Nasserite and Baathi influences. The support initially extended by Egypt was soon withdrawn because of the wider pan-African understanding between Nasser and Haile Selassie (Spencer 1977: 31). Furthermore, Egypt has a fundamental interest in Ethiopia keeping its integrity, within its overall vision of the Nile Valley security and stability. The bulk of support came then from both Iraq and Syria, with more or less uneven contributions from the PDRY, Libya and Saudi Arabia. As a matter of fact, pan-Arab support has been at all times affected by inter-Arab and East-West alignments. Support to different factions within the Eritrean movement happens often to be an aspect of inter-Baathi struggle between Iraq and Syria. More enterprising in its inter-Arab manoeuvring, Libya gave up its support to the Eritreans as soon as it decided to ally with Ethiopia and the PDRY to oppose the moderate Arab countries. On the other hand, its growing alignment with the USSR and Ethiopia also led Aden to drop the Eritreans (not to the point of sending combat troops against them at the end of 1977, which they did to help the Dergue withstand Somalia in Ogaden (Henze 1983: 44)). By contrast support was extended by Saudi Arabia just to counteract the growing communist presence in the Red Sea area. Limited and uneven because of the fundamentally radical nature of Eritrean nationalism, Saudi support sought to strengthen the pan-Arab Eritrean wing (the ELF and especially Osman Saleh Sabbe's groups) and not the Marxist EPLF.

Besides the already noted posture of Egypt, the other Arab country conducting a non-pan-Arab Eritrean policy is Sudan. As we pointed out in the previous section, Sudan's basic posture towards the Eritrean question, following the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement, is that the way to solve it would be to give Eritrea a federal-like autonomy within a united Ethiopia as was done with Southern Sudan. Pan-Arab and inter-Arab pressures force ups and downs in Sudan's posture. Nevertheless its attitude has not been fundamentally altered so far. The Egypto-Sudanese posture represents here macro-Afro-Arab policies as opposed to the micro policies set in motion by other Arab countries. Despite the efforts made by the Arabs in extending aid and in

supporting forms of political understanding within the Afro-Arab multilateral network, the African perception is inevitably affected by the grave and constant upsetting of OAU principles as a result of pan-Arab assertiveness in the Horn. Though sometimes afraid of Ethiopia's Soviet and Cuban links, most of the African countries have very firmly backed Addis Ababa's claims over Eritrea. On the other hand, enfeebled by the interference of inter-Arab disputes and by the unevenness and unreliability of Arab support, in recent years the pan-Arab wing of the Eritrean movement has seriously dwindled to the advantage of the Marxist EPLF.

Along with pan-Arabism, East-West preoccupations and alignments have been a further factor leading to micro-Afro-Arab policies in the Red Sea area. As a matter of fact, East-West factors' interference into Third World politics is not to be blamed on either the Red Sea region or the Arab countries alone, for it is a basic feature of the contemporary international system. Sticking to our point, however, one must recall that Arab policies designed to counter the Soviet presence in the Horn by exploiting pan-Arab assertiveness in Eritrea and Somalia have here again turned out to be as many blows to the African doctrine of continental stability. Consequently they have added to the negative effects perpetrated by other micro-Afro-Arab approaches. To stress the point a brief reference to the Ogaden war may be once again in order.

The Ogaden war broke out following a complex combination of international and domestic factors. Misperceptions by the Somali and Arab leaderships of the East-West relevance attributed by Washington to the conflict coupled with American leadership vagaries and the wrong signals it sent to Mogadishu are all definitely responsible for the final decision to wage the war (see on pp. 61-73). Nevertheless there is no doubt about the role played by constant Saudi policies designed to dispel Marxist influence and the Soviet presence from the Red Sea. The scientific socialism adopted by the revolutionary Somali leadership of Syad Barreh was bound to commit the country to its own social and economic development - an urgent necessity indeed - and to de-emphasize its irredentism. Saudi Arabia consistently supported nationalist and irredentist forces within Somalia and its leadership to avert Somalis from their brand of socialism and the

Soviets. The changing balance between Somali socialism and nationalism was at the root of the Soviet shift of alliances in the Horn and then of the war. On the other hand, the war can be considered as the last event of a long diplomatic chain orchestrated by the Saudis for the sake of their own security and supported by Sadat with the aim of leading a NATO-like, pro-Western Arab coalition which would show the West that the Arabs were capable of policing the area against the Soviets.

As a consequence of this conflict, we have already noted the decline of the pan-Arab Eritrean wing, defeated by the Ethiopians after the end of the Ogaden war thanks to the backing of the Soviet-Cuban forces. There is no need to recall, on the other hand, how ruinous the conflict turned out for Somalia. It is worth pointing out just how ruinous the consequences of this twofold threat to Ethiopia's integrity have been to Afro-Arab relations as well. After the war Somalia kept its alliance with the West and the moderate Arab countries. American support is deliberately only defensive, in order to prevent any new adventure. Egypt and Sudan which along with the West still support Somalia with the aim of containing the Soviets should be careful to avoid any temptation to exploit Somali irredentism to that purpose. Quite to the contrary they should try to reassure Ethiopia and mediate the Eritrean issue on the basis of macro-Afro-Arab policies. Given the Afro-Arab record of both countries, the prospects may be good.

Nile Valley security. Nile Valley security is an old Egyptian geopolitical doctrine. Admittedly, it is an important aspect of both Egypt's and Sudan's overall security perceptions.

The Nile Valley is a natural two-way road between Egypt and the African inland. The Nile has a basic, almost symbolic meaning in Egyptian social and economic life. The significance of the Nile, especially to Egypt, requires that all severances along the Valley be prevented and eliminated. For this reason any threat to Sudan is considered an indirect threat to Egypt. Libya, as we pointed out in the previous sections, has consciously threatened Egyptian security by trying to destabilize Sudan.

On the other hand, there is an Afro-Arab dimension to this Egyptian security posture because of the fact that the Nile sources are located in Uganda and Ethiopia, even though some important

tributaries spring from Sudan's Southwestern hills. As we hinted at when speaking of Egypto-Ethiopian relations, Egypt has a long-term interest in Ethiopia's and Uganda's stability and in keeping peaceful relations with both countries. At the same time - as after the tensions at the end of 1977 - any management of Blue Nile waters by the Ethiopians would not leave Cairo indifferent. Libya is certainly aware that in the eyes of the Egyptians its Ethiopian alliance also includes that threat, among others. The Nile Valley security is all the more delicate an issue as it is assumed that the river will become a factor of dispute among the Nile countries because of environmental reasons as well (Waterbury 1979).

The 1976 Egyptian-Sudanese pact of defence, following a 1974 agreement, is geared to meet, whenever needed, Nile Valley security requirements. As is evident, however, peaceful and stable Afro-Arab relations are also essential to that security policy. It is for this reason that, with few exceptions - in particular that of the anti-Ethiopian Arab coalition of 1977-8 - Egypt and Sudan keep on supporting macro-Afro-Arab policies. For the same reason any Arab attempt - in particular by Libya - to endanger Nile Valley security is, conversely, to be considered as a basically micro-Afro-Arab approach.

Chapter Six

CONCLUSIONS: THE REGIONAL OUTLOOK AND ITS STRATEGIC RELEVANCE

Several times this book has put into question the relevance of such current geopolitical notions as the Persian Gulf or the Red Sea. It has emphasized the unity of the area that goes from Afghanistan to Somalia and Morocco instead of the discrete zones that combine to form the so called "arc of crisis". Technology - as in the case of oil logistics - and strategic-political objectives - such as the security of energy supplies and the fair management of inter-Arab and Afro-Arab relations - suggest a geopolitical frame that goes beyond the single entities that are normally taken into consideration. This is not to say that the latter are not important or to deny the Persian Gulf priority in its role as the regional "frontier" within the East-West dimension. It is rather to emphasize that geopolitical and strategic analyses should move in that wider context we have just indicated.

The Red Sea, because of its growing importance for the Arab and Western economies and for the security of energy supplies to the OECD countries, is giving the Persian Gulf a new depth. At the same time - as the analysis of the Soviet purposes in the region has indicated - it may be important for supporting any military move from Transcaucasia towards Southwestern Asia, especially the Gulf, and as a springboard towards Africa. Finally, from another point of view, its connection with the Mediterranean also seems important. As we have noted in the report, for both the USSR and the Western countries the Red Sea is neither a zone of direct confrontation, like the Persian Gulf and the Northern Tier, nor a stake of intrinsic strategic relevance, like Africa, and South Africa in particular. Nevertheless the Red Sea is an area in

the midst, working like a pivot for those who want to have access to the Persian Gulf, Africa and the Mediterranean or to control them. To a certain extent, this strategic unity of the different regions lying South-east of Western Europe marks the return to a "classical" situation.

If in that wider frame we look at the Red Sea in particular, which are the threats and the problems to tackle?

As we have noted, the USSR's main aims in Southwestern Asia are to support its raw material policy and to strengthen its international role as a superpower. In this frame, its presence is essential for its international projection and political influence over the Third World regions bordering the Indian Ocean, especially Africa. At the same time, it must be stressed that, though it has a very general interest in being in Southwestern Asia, the USSR never planned the successive stages of this policy. It seized opportunities whenever available. As uneven as its policy may have been, it is now very conveniently placed. Both politically and militarily, its presence and the facilities available in the PDRY and Ethiopia - midway between Transcaucasia and Africa - are definitely a helpful strategic asset. Besides serving the general purposes we have mentioned, this position allows the Soviets to work for gaining influence over the Gulf oil-exporting countries and having a say in any crisis which may arise in the Gulf as well as in East Africa, the Mediterranean and, of course, the Red Sea. Even though its attempts to assert influence over Western Europe by anticipating its upper hand over the region have failed so far, the leverage the USSR would like to acquire on the OECD countries and especially on NATO in this way should by no means be neglected.

Having said that, this report has made evident the limits to Soviet influence in the Red Sea region as well as the opportunities offered to the USSR by the action of the local factors.

As elsewhere in the Third World, the USSR is conducting a double-track policy in the Red Sea. State to State relations are separated from the relations that the USSR keeps as the leader of the international communist movement: relations with the other communist and socialist parties and any other progressive organization fighting against imperialism. Several times in this report we have noted that in its Red Sea policy the national interest of the USSR as a State tends to prevail

over its duties as an internationalist leader. Its tendency is to subordinate revolutionary and proletarian developments, if this is deemed helpful for the improvement of State to State relations or to their enlargement. The USSR's relations with the PDRY and the PFLO have suffered from time to time when the Soviets gave priority to seeking to establish State to State relations with Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf Arab countries. Another significant example is the federation Fidel Castro proposed to the PDRY, Ethiopia and Somalia at the beginning of 1977. For two countries wholly committed to fight for national purposes - the Somalis in Ogaden and the Ethiopians in Eritrea - the proposal of a federation for the sake of socialism was at best untimely. It is clear that the proposal was the result of the Soviet wish to manage the crisis politically, with the aim of extending its links to Ethiopia while maintaining those with Somalia. Here again, therefore, the Soviet national interest prevailed. In the event this national interest failed to materialize for the federation was rebuffed by Somalia and the Soviets were forced to make a choice. In shifting to Ethiopia, the Soviets made in any case a good deal. Moreover they managed to present it as the result of a "principled policy" in support of socialism (and the OAU) against nationalism and chauvinism. The failure in managing the crisis politically, however, shows the fundamental flaw in the USSR's ability in rooting itself in the Red Sea region - as well as elsewhere in the Third World. The fact that its national interest tends to prevail over its internationalist duties makes the USSR unable to cut across the ever-lasting contradictions between nationalism and socialism in the Third World.

Very strong nationalism in the Red Sea, especially in the Horn of Africa, is thus a long-term limit to Soviet influence. Nationalism may be a factor even in the PDRY, despite the genuine Marxist-Leninist nature of the regime in Aden. Definitely all the more so in Ethiopia. The Soviets, according to the strategy they have adopted in the recent years, are trying to stabilize their influence with the establishment of well organized proletarian parties. The only effective party of this kind, however, is the YSP. Ethiopia is clearly refusing to follow in its tracks. While confirming the nationalist nature of the government which ultimately emerged from the Ethiopian revolution, this is also evidence of the limits that the USSR

encounters in the region in addition to those arising from its own nationalism.

The existence of these limits means that the USSR's entrenchment in the region is not that stable. Regional political conditions may well change or may well be changed, causing either a rapid deterioration in the Soviets' position or further advances. The report has indicated a number of factors of instability within the regional setting and, at the same time, the fact that the Soviets seem to have a better and quicker understanding of regional politics than either the West or the Arabs. From another point of view, the demonstration effect on Third World countries, especially African ones, of its seemingly "principled policy" is not to play down either. On the whole, it may be pointed out that, poorly entrenched politically, the USSR's presence in the region is not a danger in itself but because Western lack of vision and regional factors of instability and conflict may well offer the Soviets good opportunities to seize. And Red Sea experience shows clearly that regional politics has presented the Soviets with opportunities which they proved fully able to exploit. While we will revert to Western policy, now what about regional factors?

The book has indicated three main trends. First, Saudi Arabia's regional policies aimed at enhancing internal and external security have proved destabilizing and in a way even adventurous. This was evident in its "Arab lake" policy and continues to be so in its policy towards Southern Arabia. By fomenting Somali nationalism, Saudi Arabia hoped to make use of it to push the Soviets out of the Red Sea and Somalia itself. The war which ensued - a mistaken cause that the West could not take up - plainly offered the USSR an opportunity. This ironically transformed a policy intended to weaken and eliminate the Soviets from the region, into the reinforcement of their presence. Though in the event Saudi Arabia resorted to pan-Arabism only as a pretext for uniting the moderate Arabs against the USSR's penetration into the area, pan-Arabism was anyway resented by Africans and put in danger the delicate political equilibrium inside Sudan. This in turn made this country more vulnerable to subversion from Ethiopia and most of all from Libya.

The same preoccupation for its security leads Saudi Arabia regularly and grossly to interfere in the YAR's domestic affairs. Saudi Arabia interference is bound to play off the YAR against

the PDRY and, to make this possible, to play off the Northern tribes of the YAR against the central government in Sanaa. This prevents Sanaa's government from forging a national consensus with the Left and relaxing its opposition to Aden. In other words, Saudi Arabia prevents the YAR from becoming the strong national democratic entity it could become in the absence of Saudi conditioning. The YAR is a great country, very sophisticated politically, and endowed with remarkable human resources. A weak, incoherent YAR, because of its subjection to Riyadh, is not in the West's or the Arab's interest. While supporting YAR's independence would definitely add to regional stability by giving the Western world a new democracy, present Saudi policy is exposing Sanaa to the USSR's influence and maintaining a factor of instability in the region. An eventual alliance of the YAR with the USSR, though extremely unlikely, would be much more worrying to the Western democracies than the present alliance between the USSR and the PDRY.

The second trend regards Afro-Arab relations. The Red Sea, because of the overlapping of African and Arab factors, is an acid test for these relations. As the report has noted, pan-Arabism in itself and pan-Arabism as an instrument for containing communism lead in any case to what we have called micro-Afro-Arab policies. These policies, carried out first of all by Libya and Saudi Arabia, bring about conflicts and destabilization in the region. Here again, they may present the Soviets with the possibility of applying "principled policies" and espousing the right causes in the eyes of the Africans, thus giving the USSR another opportunity to penetrate the region. These policies, moreover, hurt Egypt's long-standing and successful African diplomacy and the Afro-Arab blueprint created by Sudan with the 1972 Agreement of Addis Ababa. Finally, they prevent Ethiopia from solving the Eritrean problem by keeping its national integrity, definitely one of the most destabilizing issues of the region.

The third trend regards inter-Arab relations. Following the evolution of central inter-Arab politics, the Red Sea has been peripherally involved by the Libyan intrusion against Egypt's and Sudan's security, by Nasser's expansionism and by the Arab-Israeli conflict. The non-peripheral aspect of the inter-Arab politics the Red Sea is involved in is related to relations between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. For a number of historical and cultural

reasons, there is a certain distrust between the two countries. While Saudi Arabia perceives Egypt at times as a military and political threat, that populous, educated, millenarian country that is Egypt cannot bear the power of unpopulated, unjustly rich Saudi Arabia. This trend, though not presently that lively, is a profound obstacle to Red Sea and inter-Arab stabilization. The necessity of checking it comes from the fact that political co-operation and economic integration between the two countries across the Red Sea is a crucial factor not only for the stability of the latter but, what is more, for that of the wider Arab region and for the future of Western international economy.

In this uneasy regional context the Western countries are practically absent. The French presence in Djibouti, though very important for the stability of the Horn, is intended to sustain the wider African posture of France. The USA, after having left Kagnew, has practised a substantial neglect. Episodes like that of the hasty shipment of arms to the YAR through the Saudis in the aftermath of the 1979 Iran crisis, may even show that they have gone as far as ignoring the real political conditions in the region (see on p. 39). The other Western countries, though very often they could take advantage of the successful economic co-operation they carry out in the region, as in the case of Italy, seem unwilling, however, to commit themselves to draw some political benefit from it. This is an aspect of the lack of cohesion among the Western countries the report has dwelled upon, as well as a consequence of the West European countries' reluctance to be active South-east of the NATO area because of their insecurity perception on the central European front. In conclusion, while Western absence appears remarkable, in view of the crucial importance the Red Sea region is supposed to have in the wider frame of the area South-east of NATO, this absence can hardly be explained today and could hardly be excused tomorrow.

On the other hand, a direct Western presence in the region may be neither necessary nor politically wise. The West has powerful and prestigious allies, like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, in the Red Sea. If these allies were to discard the destabilizing policies they have carried out in the past and promote instead policies of co-operation both on the inter-Arab and Afro-Arab levels, the Western countries' preoccupations with the area would lessen remarkably. In the end this would be the most

correct path to the stabilization and security of the region, and in this sense the most important conclusion of this book may be that it is up to the regional countries to manage stability around the basin by promoting co-operation among all the regional actors.

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