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Introduction by Elizabeth Schmidt

**Louise Woodroffe. *Buried in the Sands of the Ogaden: The United States, the Horn of Africa, and the Demise of Détente.*** Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2013. ISBN: 978-1-60635-184-0 (cloth, \$55.00).

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Introduction by Elizabeth Schmidt, Loyola University Maryland

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Since the end of the Cold War, scholars have produced a growing literature on the subject of détente--the 1970s-era agreements on armaments, trade, and the division of Europe that were intended to diffuse tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. Some have noted that, even as a *modus vivendi* was established in Europe, competition for dominance in the Third World generated new strains in the superpower relationship. In a significant new contribution to the literature, Louise Woodroffe takes the Third World focus a step farther, arguing that the U.S.-Soviet dispute over the Horn of Africa in 1974-1978 was a major contributing factor to the failure of détente. At the root of the problem were incompatible understandings of the meaning and purpose of détente. Losing the battle for superiority in weapons and technology, Moscow viewed the détente accords as a way to minimize the impact of its weaknesses, while providing an opening for the advancement of its agenda in the Third World. Washington, on the other hand, saw the agreements as a way of incorporating the Soviet Union into an international system in which the United States held the advantage; it considered Soviet intervention in the Third World to be a betrayal of the underlying principles of détente.

The Cold War in the Horn is a story of shifting alliances. In 1974, the pro-Western monarchy in Ethiopia was overthrown by a military clique that later embraced Marxism-Leninism. In early 1977, Moscow abandoned its alliance with Somalia's socialist military regime for the more strategically located and politically promising Ethiopia. Washington simultaneously severed its military ties to Ethiopia. In July 1977, Somalia invaded neighboring Ethiopia in an attempt to conquer the Ogaden territory, which was inhabited primarily by ethnic Somalis. The Soviet Union responded with an outpouring of military support for the Ethiopian regime, which was involved in the brutal repression of its own population. In the United States, the Carter administration engaged in much internal debate before declining to support the war efforts of the equally abusive Somali regime--although Washington provided significant military and economic aid to Somalia after its 1978 withdrawal from the Ogaden.

Woodroffe argues that debate within the Carter administration over the appropriate response to the Ogaden War ultimately determined the course of its broader Cold War policy. The belief of key administration officials that the Soviet Union had betrayed the principles of détente was pivotal in the administration's shift from conciliation to confrontation in its dealings with Moscow. Determined to oust the Soviet Union from the Horn, the Carter White House reverted to the containment policies of earlier administrations, abandoning other foreign policy goals in the process. In the end, everyone lost. The Soviet Union backed a brutal and unpopular regime in Ethiopia--and embroiled itself in a war that deepened its financial crisis and led to its eventual collapse. Somalia's aggression against its neighbor, indirectly supported by the United States, marked the beginning of the Somalia's downward spiral, which culminated in the disintegration of the economy and the state. Eritrea, which had waged a war of independence from Ethiopia with some success, was faced with the might of the Soviet Union and Cuba, which prolonged its struggle for another decade. Focusing her investigation on American policies

and perceptions, rather than on the Soviet Union and regional actors, Woodroffe concludes that American actions in the Horn demonstrate that the United States persisted in viewing the world through a Cold War lens and was unable to comprehend the local and regional roots of Third World conflicts.

Four scholars with expertise in U.S.-African relations during the Cold War have contributed to this discussion of Woodroffe's work. Kate Burlingham, a historian whose work gives special emphasis to Angola, notes that Woodroffe provides "a well-argued and organized text" that offers opportunities to explore the ways in which superpower dynamics in the Horn relate to the broader story of American foreign relations in the Third World. However, Burlingham concludes, Woodroffe's study does not realize its potential and misses "a perfect opportunity to discuss an exceptionally relevant foreign policy quandary." Although Woodroffe discerned dissenting voices within the State Department concerning the Horn crisis, she overlooked a similar phenomenon during the Angolan civil war that began in 1975. In the end, the author's understanding of the Angolan war is hampered by "the very kind of Cold War tunnel vision that she is critiquing in her analysis of events on the Horn." Moreover, the predominance of U.S. government documents in her source base means that the voices of African actors are filtered through a U.S. government lens, resulting in a distorted understanding African views and intentions and "missed opportunities for deeper levels of analysis."

Lee Cassanelli, a historian of the Horn of Africa, notes that Woodroffe has produced a "well-documented and well-written book" that makes a forceful case about the impact of conflict in the Horn on the trajectory of U.S.-Soviet relations in the final decades of the Cold War. She demonstrates that Washington's determination to contain Soviet advances in the Third World precluded a more complex understanding of regional dynamics and any possibility of cooperation with the Soviet Union that might have resolved the conflict. However, Cassanelli argues, Woodroffe's account "only hints at some of the terrible costs that Cold War competition imposed on the peoples of the Horn," neglecting, in particular, the internal costs to Ethiopian and Somali societies. Cassanelli contends that "the choices made by the U.S. and Soviet Union in the course of the Ogaden War contributed to the survival of two authoritarian regimes which might well have collapsed far sooner than they did." The war brought to an abrupt end legal, educational, and agrarian reforms that might have contributed to a "more equitable distribution of goods and services" in both countries. While the superpower struggle over the Ogaden may have been the final factor in the derailing of détente, it was not, as Woodroffe suggests, the major contributing factor. Rather, echoing Burlingham, Cassanelli concludes that the struggle over the Horn was more akin to "the minor middle act of a confrontational drama between the superpowers which began in Angola and ended in Afghanistan."

Jeffrey Lefebvre, a political scientist whose specialty includes U.S. foreign policy in the Horn, observes that Woodroffe "has written a very engaging and thought provoking...case study that adds to our understanding of the principles underlying the debate within the Carter administration over how to view and react to Soviet activities in the Third World." After considering the globalist-regionalist divide among American policy makers during the Cold War, Woodroffe provides unique insight into the "regionalist versus regionalist"

conflict--specifically, the ways in which U.S. policy toward the Horn was influenced by the views and interests of American allies in the Middle East. However, Lefebvre rejects Woodrooffe's claim that the Horn had no strategic value to the United States after the Ogaden War. Rather, he argues, events in the Middle East that threatened American interests in the Persian Gulf might well have resulted in an American embrace of Somalia even without Soviet-Cuban intervention in the Ogaden War. Finally, Lefebvre uses Woodrooffe's framework to pose questions for the future. If, as Woodrooffe suggests, the Cold War conflict laid the groundwork for the ongoing crisis in the Horn, what lessons can be drawn from foreign intervention during that period? Lefebvre queries, "Will the 'global war on terrorism', the secularist-Islamist conflict in the Greater Middle East region, or some other conflict provide a new zero-sum context like the Cold War that will frame U.S. policy in the Horn of Africa?" Will outside powers once again choose between Ethiopia and Somalia, or might they "change and/or successfully navigate this dysfunctional zero-sum regional dynamic?"

Philip Muehlenbeck, a historian of U.S. foreign relations in Africa during the Cold War, concludes the discussion. He observes that "Woodrooffe has published the most thorough account of U.S. policymaking towards the 1970s Horn of Africa crisis to date," filling an important lacunae in Cold War historiography and serving as the "starting point for further investigation of this fascinating and understudied episode of the Cold War." However, like Burlingham and Cassanelli, he finds her central claim to be overdrawn. He argues that Woodrooffe "overemphasizes the role that the Ogaden War between Ethiopia and Somalia played in détente's demise," and he points to other events that had already severely weakened the process. Like Burlingham, he is concerned by Woodrooffe's overreliance on U.S. government sources, and especially by her failure to incorporate "Soviet, Ethiopian, Cuban, Arab and European sources," which would deepen her analysis of the conflict's dynamics.

### Participants:

**Louise Woodrooffe** is a Historian in the Office of the Historian at the U.S. Department of State, where she compiles *Foreign Relations of the United States* volumes on Africa. She received her Ph.D. from the London School of Economics and Political Science and is the author of *"Buried in the Sands of the Ogaden": The United States, the Horn of Africa, and the Demise of Détente*, published by Kent State University Press in 2013.

**Elizabeth Schmidt** is a Professor of History at Loyola University Maryland. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her books include: *Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror* (Cambridge University Press, 2013); *Cold War and Decolonization in Guinea, 1946-1958* (Ohio University Press, 2007); *Mobilizing the Masses: Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Nationalist Movement in Guinea, 1939-1958* (Heinemann, 2005); *Peasants, Traders, and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939* (Heinemann; James Currey; Baobab, 1992); and *Decoding Corporate Camouflage: U.S. Business Support for Apartheid* (Institute for Policy Studies,

1980). Her next book, *From State Collapse to the War on Terror: Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War*, will be published by Ohio University Press.

**Kate Burlingham** is an Assistant Professor of History at California State University, Fullerton. Her research focuses on United States foreign relations with the non-Western world, especially Africa. She is currently completing a manuscript titled, "The Ties that Bind: Congregational missionaries in Angola and the foundations of United States foreign relations with Africa, 1879-1975."

**Lee Cassanelli** is a Professor of History and former Director of the Africa Center at the University of Pennsylvania, where he teaches African History and World History. He is General Editor of *Northeast Africa Studies*, published by Michigan State University Press, and serves as an Associate Editor for *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies*, published by the Institute for Global Citizenship at Macalester College. He is author of *The Shaping of Somali Society 1600-1900* (1982), *Victims and Vulnerable Groups in Southern Somalia* (1995), and co-editor of *The Struggle for Land in Southern Somalia* (1996, 2003). Recent articles include "Private Sector Peacemaking," in Mark Bradbury and Sally Healy, eds., *Whose Peace is it Anyway? Connecting Somali and International Peacemaking* (2010); and "The Opportunistic Economies of the Kenya-Somali Borderland," in M. Hoehne and D. Feyissa, eds., *Borders & Borderlands as Resources in the Horn of Africa* (2010). He is currently preparing a book of essays on the effects of the Somali civil war on historiography and historical amnesia in the Horn of Africa.

**Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, Ph.D.** is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Connecticut. He is the author of *Arms for the Horn: U.S. Security Policy in Ethiopia and Somalia, 1953-1991* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992); "Choosing Sides in the Horn of Africa: Wikileaks, the Ethiopia Imperative, and American Responses to Post-9/11 Regional Conflicts," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 23:4 (December 2012); "The United States, Ethiopia, and the 1963 Somali-Soviet Arms Deal: Containment and the Balance of Power Dilemma in the Horn of Africa," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 36:4 (1998); "Middle East Conflicts and Middle Level Power Intervention in the Horn of Africa," *Middle East Journal* 50:3 (Summer 1996); and "Iran in the Horn of Africa: Outflanking U.S. Allies," *Middle East Policy* 19:2 (Summer 2012). A revised version of "The Formation and Disintegration of Israel's Alliance of the Periphery" is under review at the *Middle East Journal*. He is also completing an article-length manuscript "Framing Washington's Post-9/11 Security Policy in the Horn of Africa" and has been working on a book manuscript *Creeping Hegemony: Strategic Disruption, the Balance of Risk, and the Transformation of U.S. Security Policy in the Persian Gulf*.

**Philip E. Muehlenbeck**, a Professorial Lecturer in history at George Washington University, is the author of *Betting on the Africans: John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalist Leaders* (Oxford University Press, 2012), and editor of *Religion and the Cold War: A Global Perspective* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2012) and *Race, Ethnicity, and the Cold War: A Global Perspective* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2012). His current research projects are on US-USSR-Czechoslovak-British competition for African civil aviation markets and on Czechoslovak policies toward Africa from 1955-1968.

On April 18, 1955, Indonesian President Sukarno ascended to the podium of the Asian-African Conference in Bandung. In the depths of the Cold War, Sukarno implored gathered leaders from across Asia and Africa to overcome their differences and “impress on the world that all men and all countries have their place under the sun—to impress on the world that it is possible to live together, meet together, speak to each other, without losing one’s individual identity....”<sup>1</sup> The principles that came out of the meeting, the so-called ‘Bandung Principles,’ would later be instrumental in the creation of the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM), a more formal organization of former colonial states that sought independence from the bipolarity of the Cold War. At the forefront of NAM’s stated goals was a “respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations” and a “refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country.”<sup>2</sup> Among the founding members of the NAM in 1961 were Somalia and Ethiopia. Less than two decades later, NAM and the principles it embodied would seem long forgotten on the Horn of Africa, as the region, aided by arms and funds from both sides of the Cold War, descended into chaos.

In her new text, *Buried in the Sands of Ogaden: The United States, the Horn of Africa, and the Demise of Détente*, Louise Woodroffe takes us to this troubled corner of northeastern Africa where in the 1970s the hopes of many for the end of war, both ‘cold’ and hot, died a violent death. Through the author’s careful reading of American diplomatic sources, we learn of the various ups and downs that characterized the United States’ involvement in the region. Woodroffe’s analysis demonstrates the link between America’s regional entanglements during the Carter administration and later developments in the devolution of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) negotiations and the escalation of Cold War hostilities. By 1980, what could have been heralded as the end of U.S.-Soviet aggression instead witnessed the escalation of Cold War tensions. The Horn of Africa was crucial to this development.

At the heart of Woodroffe’s analysis is a question central to the work of a number of historians: what happens to our understanding of the Cold War when we look beyond Europe for answers? In the case of the so-called ‘Horn Crisis,’ we learn how a seemingly remote outpost of the Cold War was, in fact, a central component in the failure of détente between the United States and the Soviet Union. Focusing almost exclusively on the Horn’s significance to that failure, Woodroffe makes several arguments. Aside from showing both how the Horn was a test of détente and “that the entire process was untenable,” Woodroffe

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<sup>1</sup> “Sukarno speaks at Bandung, 1951,” in *The Cold War: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts*, ed. Jussi M. Hanhimäki et al, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 351.

<sup>2</sup> “Final Communiqué of the Asian-African conference of Bandung (24 April 1955)” in *Asia-Africa speak from Bandung*, ed. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia. (Jakarta: 1955), accessed September 15, 2013, [http://www.ena.lu/final\\_communique\\_asian\\_african\\_conference\\_bandung\\_24\\_april\\_1955-2-1192](http://www.ena.lu/final_communique_asian_african_conference_bandung_24_april_1955-2-1192).

is interested in how the Crisis was key to the Carter administration's foreign policy collapse (11). Crucial to President Jimmy Carter's miscalculations regarding the Soviet Union and the nations of the Horn was his administration's inability to "move beyond a Cold War mind-set" (11). What does all this amount to? According to Woodroffe, yet another tale of the Cold War in the Third World in which "the whole conflict and its superpower involvement were utter disasters" (12). Indeed, what occurred on the Horn was only "one snag in the intricate web of international order that unraveled throughout the decade..." (13).

Woodroffe's narrative proceeds chronologically. In the first chapter we learn that America's involvement in the region in fact began under Carter's predecessor, Gerald Ford. Woodroffe uses this earlier history to describe the conundrum facing U.S. policy makers in their relations with Africa in the post-Vietnam era. While still in the throes of the Cold War, Washington sought to counter the Soviets, but it would only do so through more peaceful methods. In the case of Ford, he was interested in "limit[ing]...Soviet and Cuban inroads in Africa" not through force but by "working closely with African leaders...in order to address the longer-term objective of achieving friendly relations with African governments" (17). When it came to the Horn, however, the U.S. failed to follow through on these policy goals. Aside from a number of common missteps in the United States' relations with the non-Western world, Washington's main misunderstanding was its idea that it could compartmentalize Cold War battlefields. There was a belief that the U.S. could intervene in the Horn by providing assistance to groups opposed to Soviet-funded parties, while continuing to negotiate with the Soviet Union over weapons treaties and other issues related to détente. Or, as Woodroffe phrases it, "Both the United States and the Soviet Union were determined not to let détente undermine their designs on the hearts and minds of the Third World" (24). Indeed, despite their best intellectual efforts to separate Africa's battles from the larger Cold War by making "a difference in Africa with economic support to moderate leaders," Washington could not get beyond the kind of "short-term solutions" that characterized much of the United States Cold War policy towards the Third World.

The remainder of Woodroffe's text is concerned with the administration of President Jimmy Carter. Under his eye, the Horn crisis developed into a full-fledged Cold War battle, ultimately undermining détente and contributing to the decline of his administration. At the heart of the new President's promise to the world was a commitment to a foreign policy that respected the notion of human rights and the need for true disarmament between Cold War foes. The Horn proved an ideal test for these ideals, ultimately demonstrating that "the moral and just path was frequently not clear" (40). As the administration worked to move "beyond Cold War tunnel vision" when dealing with the Crisis, it nevertheless "began to think in terms of superpower relations..." (53, 54). The inability to think outside the Cold War box was not, according to Woodroffe, entirely Washington's fault. The third party was, of course, those African leaders who used the anxieties created by the global conflict "to manipulate" the Cold War superpowers (58). African leaders on all sides used the Cold War to strengthen their own hand. In this sense, the Crisis took on overtones of a classic proxy war with all sides engaging in the entanglement of local battles with the global war.

However, Woodrooffe's primary concern is the United States and its relations with the Soviet Union. The Horn Crisis became the stage on which major debates about the "conduct of American foreign policy toward the Third World in the post-Vietnam era" took place (63). The significance of the Crisis, according to Woodrooffe, lies not in the Horn but rather in what it can show us regarding the Carter administration, détente, and the debate over "the future course of the United States' role in the world" (84). Among the strongest parts of Woodrooffe's analysis are her close tracking of internal debates within the Carter administration, far from the battlefields in Somalia and Ethiopia. Woodrooffe uses the policy differences between Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski as a way to map larger "debates as to how the United States should conduct itself abroad" (83). More importantly, the opposing views of Carter's main advisors mirror the President's foreign policy swing from human rights advocate to Cold War hawk. Succinctly put, Vance "advocated diplomacy and the inclusion of the international community to further the cause for peace" while Brzezinski "promoted confrontations with the hope of a long-term victory" (83). Through a variety of mishaps, including blatant lies told by Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko regarding the presence of Soviet and Cuban troops on the Horn, Carter became more convinced by Brzezinski and other Cold War hawks. According to this faction, the Soviets were not to be trusted and should be confronted when the Soviet Union intervened abroad (103). Only by constantly facing off against the Soviets could the United States hope "to speed up the process of victory and spread justice for the crimes...the Soviet Union had committed" (103).

These internal divisions had a significant effect on the administration's overall performance. Inconsistent foreign policy decisions led to domestic perceptions of a weak administration. The Horn Crisis was key to this change and, ultimately, the first step among many that led both to the decline of the Carter Administration and the ramping up of Cold War hostilities. Carter failed to understand how his "vague notions of bringing morality" back into the making of U.S. foreign relations would strain arms limitation talks with the Soviet Union (128). What was to be the President's crowning achievement, disarmament and the de-escalation of Cold War antagonisms, instead lay "buried in the sands of the Ogaden" (127).

While Woodrooffe presents a well-argued and organized text, it is what she leaves out, or glosses over, in an effort to contain her argument that repeatedly caught my attention. Beginning with the book's first page, we learn that many of these issues raised on the Horn were, in fact, strongly related to what occurred in Angola in the mid-1970s. Yet Woodrooffe never sufficiently delves into this very different conflict and early U.S. involvement there. Thus the reader is left wondering how exactly a conflict, so central to her analysis, actually unfolded. Further, Woodrooffe views the Angolan civil war with the very kind of Cold War tunnel vision that she is critiquing in her analysis of events on the Horn. To characterize the final demise of Portuguese colonialism as a take-over by the Soviet Union is to drastically oversimplify a situation that, in 1974-75, was extremely fluid and complex. Granted, Woodrooffe's concern is Washington's reaction to the fall of Portuguese colonialism and the capital's take-over by the Communist-leaning *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA). And yet, it is never clear what 'Washington' refers to. Just as there were voices in the State Department calling for a moderate approach during the Horn

Crisis, so too were there individuals advocating a cautious approach to dealing with the MPLA, which was seen by those who had knowledge of Angolan politics as a relatively moderate nationalist party.<sup>3</sup>

Other aspects of Woodrooffe's text represent missed opportunities for deeper levels of analysis. Some of these lacunae derive from the text's source base, which is primarily composed of United States government documents. Much of Woodrooffe's discussion of leaders in Ethiopia and Somalia is filtered through diplomatic papers and secondary texts. These are hardly inadequate sources, but it would have been interesting to know what new insights might have been garnered from interviews with key African players or newspapers from the region. Without African sources available to shed more light on western sources, scholars run the risk of misreading African leaders and organizations that were at least, if not more, complicated and conflicted than their western counterparts. Along the same lines, Woodrooffe misses an obvious opportunity to explore how Washington's preconceived notions of African leaders may have influenced its dealings with the Horn. Indeed, comments by National Security Advisor Paul Henze dismissing Somalis as "wily nomads" and Somali President Siad Barre as "and old Somali camel trader in mentality" beg for further analysis (59). Instead, Woodrooffe unsatisfactorily dismisses these comments as merely representing Henze's "mistrust" of the Somali dictator (59).

Finally, Woodrooffe opens up exceedingly interesting avenues of exploration regarding how her story might relate to the larger history of U.S. foreign relations in the Third World. However, her text falls short in following through on this potential. I was particularly intrigued by her relation of Carter's desire for a "'moral' foreign policy" with "a long list of debates on how the United States should intervene abroad" (83). This, indeed, is an extremely interesting discussion that has been broached by a number of excellent scholars. It is also one into which *Buried in the Sands of Ogaden* easily fits. And yet, Woodrooffe only touches the surface of the conversation. She might have been able to circle back to the topic in her conclusion. Instead, she leaves readers with an unsatisfying prescriptive ending. While many of us strive to write history that is relevant to current politics, Woodrooffe's approach seems disjointed. I would argue that in failing to fully address the proposition laid out above, she missed a perfect opportunity to discuss an exceptionally relevant foreign policy quandary.

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<sup>3</sup> See for example comments related to Consul General Thomas Killoran in Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 353 and "Interview with Robert W. Hultslander, former CIA Station Chief in Luanda, Angola," accessed September 18, 2013, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB67/transcript.html>.

As an historian of the Horn of Africa rather than of U.S. foreign policy, I tend to view the 1977-78 Ogaden War as an episode in the Horn's rather turbulent history over the past half century and prefer to assess its importance in terms of its impact on regional politics and societies. This is not to minimize the effects of the conflict on the trajectory of U.S.-Soviet relations in the last decades of the Cold War—a case the author makes quite forcefully—but rather to suggest that a lot more than SALT II got buried in the sands of the Ogaden. Any study of détente's fortunes necessarily has to focus on the perceptions and choices of key advisers and policymakers in Moscow and Washington. At the same time, Woodroffe's account of the internal debates in Washington over how to deal with the Ogaden situation only hints at some of the terrible costs that Cold War competition imposed on the peoples of the Horn.

*Buried in the Sands of the Ogaden* provides another example—if one were still needed—of the superpowers' preoccupation with trumping their rivals at every turn, usually at the expense of working toward mitigating local African conflicts through whatever leverage they had. The author's sources reveal that both the Carter administration and the Brezhnev regime expressed concern at various points in time about the excessive violence employed by their protégés to suppress domestic opposition in both Somalia and Ethiopia. At the same time, both Moscow and Washington continually overestimated their ability to influence their African allies and to shape the course of events in ways that would at the very least have won some hearts and minds across the region. U.S. intelligence on the region was shamefully lacking in almost everything but the military sector, with the result that both Mohamed Siad Barre and Mengistu Haile Mariam were left to deal with their opponents as they saw fit.

I was a Fulbright researcher living in Mogadishu in the summer of 1977, as the war in the Ogaden was escalating. In the Somali capital, the regime's support for the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) appeared to enjoy widespread popular support: mass demonstrations cheered the initial victories of the Somali forces; new maps depicting Greater Somalia as a *fait accompli* were available in local bookstores; and the government-sponsored press and radio service reported the daily advances of the 'freedom fighters' across the Ogaden. In retrospect, it is clear that I (and presumably most other Western observers) read Somali aggression the way Siad Barre's government wanted us to...as a popular war supporting oppressed Ogadeni Somalis against a ruthless Ethiopian regime which had executed many of its own early supporters and was openly soliciting Soviet and Cuban forces to help consolidate its power. The new Carter administration clearly had qualms about throwing its support to a Somali government which had ousted the Peace Corps in 1971, executed ten respected religious leaders for protesting the regime's socialist Family Law in 1975, and, by the summer of 1977, deployed regular units of the Somali army to support the WSLF insurgents in clear violation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Charter. But as Woodroffe demonstrates, hawkish advisers led by National Security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski convinced the President to make a strong anti-Soviet response, which included infusions of military aid to Somalia to counter Soviet assistance

to Ethiopia.

The documents reveal that some insiders in both the Ford and Carter administrations acknowledged the appeal of socialist development models to Third World leaders and urged the U.S. to decouple the Ogaden conflict from its larger pursuit of Cold War detente. But the U.S. commitment to the notion of ‘containing’ the Soviet Union everywhere in the developing world prevailed over a more nuanced assessment of the nationalisms at play in Ethiopia and Somalia, and prevented the U.S. from even contemplating the possibility of cooperating with Moscow to work out a solution to the Ogaden dispute.

Woodrooffe’s study also suggests—in line with the thinking of many Africa-centered analyses of the Cold War era—that Mengistu and Siad Barre managed to manipulate their superpower backers as often as they were manipulated by them. It is worth reminding ourselves that Soviet involvement in the Third World in the 1970s was not solely the outcome of Soviet ideology and strategy; it was also actively sought by Third World leaders as a counterweight to ex-colonial and U.S. influence (much as African leaders today reach out to China to finance their top-down development schemes while buttressing their own power without having to prove their democratic or ‘human rights’ credentials). Soviet activism in the Horn was matched by African leaders’ aggressive pursuit of Soviet patronage. In contrast to both Soviet and African initiatives in the Horn, U.S. policy toward Somalia and Ethiopia (including the Eritrean question) throughout the Ford and Carter years appeared remarkably passive, which reflected the difficulty of balancing American ideals (promotion of democracy and human rights) with the steadfast belief in the need to ‘contain’ the Soviets.

Once the Mengistu regime (with Eastern bloc assistance) had eliminated its domestic rivals and solidified its power, and Somalia had expelled the Russians and convinced the U.S. to become its next patron, the Cold War syndrome reasserted itself with a vengeance. Any possibility of superpower cooperation to resolve the Horn’s conflicts vanished. By 1984, Soviet military aid to Ethiopia had surpassed \$4 billion, while U.S. military and economic assistance to Somalia in the first half of the 1980s reached \$500 million.<sup>1</sup> Moscow’s aid to the Marxist Ethiopian regime strengthened Mengistu’s resolve to pursue a strictly military solution to the Eritrean problem for the remainder of his rule. U.S. economic and military assistance to Somalia—the latter ostensibly limited to ‘defensive’ weapons—enabled Siad Barre to suppress his growing domestic opposition for another decade.

The choices made by the U.S. and Soviet Union in the course of the Ogaden war contributed to the survival of two authoritarian regimes which might well have collapsed far sooner than they did...which, as it turned out, happened scarcely a year after the end of the Cold War. The 1977-78 war also cut short several discernible—and arguably promising—social

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<sup>1</sup> Robert G. Patman, ‘Soviet-Ethiopian Relations: The Horn of Dilemma,’ in Margot Light, ed., *Troubled Friendships: Moscow’s Third World Venture* (London: British Academic Press, 1993), 115; Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn: U.S. Security Policy in Ethiopia and Somalia, 1953-1991* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), 241.

and economic trends in both countries. Among these were the emergence of socialist-style educational, legal, and agrarian reforms with the potential for more equitable distribution of goods and services in both Ethiopia and Somalia; the tentative efforts to find a non-military solution to the Eritrean-Ethiopian conflict; the prospect of a less traumatic land reform process in Ethiopia; and the support of the oil-rich Arab world for the development agendas of both Somalia and Ethiopia. Each of these trends were noted by scholars of the Horn in the early 1970s, but appeared to figure very little in the calculations of policy makers in Moscow and Washington in the run-up to the Ogaden crisis. The derailing of these initiatives—however fitful their implementation and uncertain the potential outcomes--seems to me another major casualty of the Ogaden war.

As a non-specialist, I was struck by the concerns over the potential repercussions for U.S. Middle East policy which persistently surfaced as advisers deliberated on the Horn crisis: e.g., how ought the U.S. handle Arab fears of and Israel's tentative support for the emerging Mengistu regime, or how might an Eritrean victory in its liberation struggle threaten future Israeli commerce in the Red Sea. As Woodroffe succinctly puts it, American thinking on its global priorities put the Cold War first, the Middle East next, and Africa last.

Finally, given the author's acknowledgement that we do not have full access to the Soviet archives for this period, I was surprised that Woodroffe did not refer to Robert Patman's important work on Soviet-Ethiopian relations.<sup>2</sup> Among other things, Patman reminds us that Moscow—perhaps seriously, perhaps not—proposed in March 1977 that the Ethiopians and Somalis resolve their differences by joining a proposed four-nation Marxist-Leninist confederation; and in 1980 tried to pressure the Mengistu regime to launch secret meetings to search for a peaceful solution to the Eritrean-Ethiopian conflict (something which President George H.W. Bush attempted only much later, in 1990-91). However disingenuous these Soviet proposals may have been at the time, it seems clear from Woodroffe's analysis that the Soviets were more consistent in urging dialogue between enemies in the Horn; and equally clear that U.S. policymakers had no intention of allowing Moscow to broker solutions to regional conflicts if it meant acknowledging another Soviet 'success' in the Third World. While the contest over the Ogaden may indeed have been the proverbial straw which broke the back of détente, in hindsight the Ogaden episode appears more like the minor middle act of a confrontational drama between the superpowers which began in Angola and ended in Afghanistan. Sadly for the peoples of the Horn, it was a tragic drama with no discernible winners...as Woodroffe aptly, and unsurprisingly, concludes in this well-documented and well-written book.

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<sup>2</sup> Robert G. Patman, *The Soviet Union and the Horn of Africa. The Diplomacy of Intervention and Disengagement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Dr. Louise Woodrooffe has written a very engaging and thought provoking book describing how U.S.-Soviet détente gradually eroded during the second half of the 1970s owing to Washington's belief that under the cover of détente Moscow was engaged in destabilizing military 'adventures' in the Third World that undermined U.S. national security interests. With a specific focus on the 1977-78 Ogaden War fought between Ethiopia and Somalia and its impact on the decline of détente, *Buried in the Sands of the Ogaden* provides an excellent stand-alone analysis of events, but might also be evaluated and compared with the work of Donna R. Jackson.<sup>1</sup> Both authors discuss the debate which erupted within the Carter administration over whether Soviet actions in the Third World should be linked to progress in U.S.-Soviet relations. According to Woodrooffe the Soviet-Cuban military intervention on the side of Ethiopia against Somalia during the 1977-78 Ogaden War led to the bureaucratic ascendance of the globalist view espoused by President Jimmy Carter's National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski. Believing détente was based upon the principal of 'reciprocity', Brzezinski felt the Soviet Union had violated implied 'rules of the (détente) game' in which the two superpowers would show restraint and avoid inflaming Third World conflicts (129-137). During and after the end of the Ogaden War Brzezinski pressed President Carter to respond assertively and link Soviet (mis)behavior in the Third World to issues such as U.S.-Soviet arms control negotiations.

In opposition to Brzezinski stood Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, leading a faction of top-ranking advisers including Vice President Walter Mondale and UN Ambassador Andrew Young, who opposed linkage and emphasized the regional 'realities' that had offered opportunities for the Soviet Union to intervene in Angola (1975-76) and again in the Horn of Africa. Brzezinski ultimately prevailed in this globalist-regionalist bureaucratic struggle to influence U.S. foreign policy. According to Woodrooffe, the turning point in this debate occurred following a "highly combative" four-hour meeting on 27 May 1978 between President Carter and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko in which Gromyko lied to the President and derided the U.S. claim that a Soviet general remained in Ethiopia (contrary to U.S. intelligence reports) insisting "there was no Soviet Napoleon in Africa" (108-110). Jackson, on the other, hand, feels Carter finally only embraced the globalist view following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of December 1979. Nonetheless, both agree that the Ogaden War provided part of the backdrop for Brzezinski to proclaim that "SALT lies buried in the sands of the Ogaden." Woodrooffe further contends that the Soviet military intervention in the Ogaden War allowed Brzezinski "to place the blame squarely on Moscow's shoulders" for the failure of SALT II even though Washington, not Moscow, had created and magnified the linkage between regional conflicts and U.S.-Soviet relations (127).

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<sup>1</sup> See Donna R. Jackson, *Jimmy Carter and the Horn of Africa: Cold War Policy in Ethiopia and Somalia* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007); Jackson, "The Carter Administration and Somalia," *Diplomatic History*, 31:4 (September 2007), 703-721; and Jackson, "The Carter Administration and the Demise of Detente," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 622:1 (November 2010), 26-40.

Woodrooffe draws on primary documents, in particular the National Security Affairs Staff documents on the Horn of Africa housed at the Carter Library to examine the bureaucratic struggle within the Carter administration over how to respond to Moscow's decision in the autumn of 1977 to drop Somalia as an arms client—a relationship dating back to 1963—and intervene militarily via massive arms transfers and 'importing' more than 10,000 Cuban military forces into Ethiopia that turned the tide of the Ogaden War in Addis Ababa's favor. *Buried in the Sands of the Ogaden* provides an excellent case study that adds to our understanding of the principles underlying the debate within the Carter administration over how to view and react to Soviet activities in the Third World. The differences between Carter's two principal foreign policy advisers "centered on relations with the Soviet Union and the role of morality in foreign policy" with Brzezinski seeking to improve Washington's "strategic position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union" while Vance favored de-emphasizing "the relationship as the central pillar of American foreign policy" (44). Both Brzezinski and Vance believed in containment and "reasserting a moral component into American conduct abroad," in contrast to the realpolitik of the Nixon-Kissinger-Ford years, but differed over "what was moral"—international peace (Vance) or international justice (Brzezinski)—a debate that resurfaced, as Woodrooffe notes, in the lead up to the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq (134).

Woodrooffe's analysis of the debate within the Carter administration over how to react to the Soviet military intervention in the Horn of Africa also touches on the globalist-regionalist rift that plagued/influenced the formulation of U.S. foreign policy toward the Third World during the Cold War.<sup>2</sup> Globalists tended to view every region of the world and country as zero-sum political-strategic dominos in the East-West conflict. Consequently, weak and vulnerable Third World arms recipients such as Ethiopia and Somalia could seek to manipulate the superpower competition to their advantage. Regionalists set country priorities and policy choices within the context of regions (i.e., Africa, the Middle East) which often reflected the views of important states and accounted for regional political sensitivities—reflected, for example, in the 1963 Organization for African Unity (OAU) Charter calling for states to respect Africa's colonial-drawn borders—which acted as a brake on the seemingly knee-jerk (over)reaction of the globalists.<sup>3</sup> Brzezinski felt the U.S. must respond in some assertive manner to offset the perceived Soviet advantage in the Horn of Africa following Moscow's switch of arms clients in the Horn and intervention in the Ogaden War.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, Vance pushed the regionalist line—"to help resolve the

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<sup>2</sup> This globalist-regionalist rift underlying the Brzezinski-Vance bureaucratic struggle with respect to the Horn of Africa and the Ogaden War was discussed by Elizabeth Drew in "Brzezinski," *The New Yorker* (May 1978), 110-115.

<sup>3</sup> See Helen Kitchen, editor, "Options for U.S. Policy toward Africa," *AEI Foreign Policy and Defense Review*, 1 (1979), 2-79; and Charles Kupchan, "American Globalism in the Middle East: The Roots of Regional Security Policy," *Political Science Quarterly*, 103 (Winter 1988/89), 585-611.

<sup>4</sup> See Steven David, "Realignment in the Horn of Africa: The Soviet Advantage," *International Security*, 4, 2 (Fall 1979), 69-90.

problems which create opportunities for external intervention” (64). The State Department saw the Horn as a textbook case of Soviet exploitation of a local conflict” (70). Mogadishu had initiated the war by invading Ethiopia in the summer of 1977 in order to change the Horn’s colonial borders drawn by Great Britain, France, Italy, and Ethiopia. Nonetheless, as Woodroffe contends, the policy-making advantage soon fell to Brzezinski and the globalists following “Gromyko’s lie” (108-110).

Woodroffe also weaves into her analysis (which I found generally absent in Jackson’s work) what might be called the ‘regionalist versus regionalist’ conflict that has also shaped U.S. policy toward the Horn of Africa. The Horn’s geographic location astride the Red Sea across from the Arabian Peninsula and control over the headwaters of the Blue Nile have drawn (for centuries) the attention and, not surprisingly, the resultant intervention of Middle Eastern powers.<sup>5</sup> Viewing the Horn of Africa through the lens of the ‘Greater Middle East’ meant that U.S. policy toward the region has been influenced by the views of U.S. allies in the Middle East. Consequently, back in Washington, Brzezinski found bureaucratic allies for his globalist views and policy recommendations among Middle East specialists. During the Ogaden War the governments of Egypt, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and the Shah of Iran all pressed Washington to intervene and support Somalia militarily. At the State Department these conflicting perspectives pitted the Bureau for Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) against the Africa Bureau (AF). Woodroffe notes that the Carter administration “viewed the (Ogaden) conflict as a Middle Eastern problem more than as an African problem (which) was evident in the strategies they employed to put pressure on the Soviets to withdraw their military from the region” (74). Interesting, Israel, whose “alliance of the periphery” strategy in which Tel Aviv forged political-strategic ties with non-Arab countries in the Greater Middle East region (Iran, Turkey, and Ethiopia)—a policy dating back to the late 1950s—continued to provide military assistance to Addis Ababa even after Ethiopia had realigned with Moscow. Some U.S. officials hoped this might serve as a bridge to bring Ethiopia back into the U.S. fold.<sup>6</sup>

The ‘regionalist versus regionalist’ conflict suggests an interesting angle Dr. Woodroffe might have pursued in her archival research at the Carter Library. Brzezinski had appointed Paul Henze to act as the NSC point man for Africa and William Quandt and Gary Sick as two of his top Middle East experts. Henze’s views and recommendations to Brzezinski about the situation in the Horn are found throughout *Buried in the Sands of the Ogaden*. Most notably, in mid-January 1978 while the Ethiopians and Cubans were driving the Somali army out of the Ogaden, Henze recommended to Brzezinski that while the United States should not arm the Somalis (which was in synch with the Africa Bureau), Washington should “make [the Russians] stay as costly as possible and the source of fundamental strain for them” and “continually remind Africa and the world that the Soviets

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<sup>5</sup> See Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, “Middle East Conflicts and Middle Level Power Intervention in the Horn of Africa,” *Middle East Journal*, 50, 3 (Summer 1996), 387-404.

<sup>6</sup> See Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 186-217.

were the guilty party in the Horn” (80). Moreover, the administration “was receiving enough pressure internally and from the Middle East that it felt compelled to act” (74). However, Woodroffe leaves the voices of Quandt and Sick out of this internal debate (74). Did Brzezinski’s NSC staff split along Africanist (Henze) versus Middle Eastern (Quandt and Sick) lines in terms of their views and recommendations to the National Security Advisor? What were Quandt and/or Sick saying, if anything, to Brzezinski about the situation in the Horn of Africa?

Woodroffe’s contention that “Gromyko’s lie” marked the turning point in how President Carter viewed Soviet activities in the Horn of Africa may well be true. But, I would argue, “Gromyko’s lie” did not significantly affect Washington’s overall policy toward the Ethiopian-Somali conflict in the near term. Whatever Carter may have thought about the Soviet Union, the recommendations of the Africa Bureau continued to carry the day in setting U.S. policy toward the Horn at least until early December 1979. Even after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of December the Africa Bureau fought a rear-guard action by insisting that strict conditions be placed on U.S. military assistance to Somalia. Viewing the situation in the Horn of Africa through the lens of the ‘Organization Process Model’ may have led Woodroffe to conclude that although “Gromyko’s lie” changed Jimmy Carter’s attitude toward the Soviet Union, U.S. policy toward the Horn continued to be shaped by the Africa Bureau.<sup>7</sup>

In August 1958 the Eisenhower administration established the Africa Bureau and moved Ethiopia from the Office for African Affairs in the Bureau for Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) to AF. For a variety of political, strategic, economic, and cultural reasons, by the early 1960s Ethiopia came to be viewed by AF as the most important country in the Horn of Africa. AF’s ‘pro-Ethiopia bias’ was reinforced by the 1963 OAU Charter that explicitly recognized the inviolability of Africa’s colonial-drawn borders “that provided Addis Ababa political cover to suppress militarily Ethiopia’s various internal nationalities challenges, so that, [I]n the eyes of Africa and the Africa Bureau, pursuing Somali irredentism militarily made Somalia an ‘outlaw’ state and the Eritrea struggle for independence was deemed illegitimate.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, Woodroffe (as well as Jackson) seems to overlook the influence of the Africa Bureau, led by Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Richard Moose, in helping Vance present the Africanist regional case against arming Somalia. The pro-Ethiopia bias of AF was complimented by a generally negative perception of Somalia and distrust of Somalia’s President Siad Barre. Finally, at a December 4 National Security Council meeting—responding to the fall of the Shah of Iran’s regime in January 1979, which resulted in the collapse of Washington’s ‘Twin Pillars’ security policy in the Persian Gulf, and a month after the onset of the Iran hostage crisis, President Carter decided to seek access to military

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<sup>7</sup> See Graham Allison, *The Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), 67-96; and Harold Seidman, *Politics, Position, and Power*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), 121-160.

<sup>8</sup> See Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, “Choosing Sides in the Horn of Africa: Wikileaks, the Ethiopia Imperative, and American Post-9/11 Responses to Regional Conflicts,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 23, 4 (December 2012), 704-727.

facilities in Kenya, Oman, and Somalia by concluding arms-for-access agreements.<sup>9</sup> Although the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan placed AF completely on the defensive, AF nonetheless insisted that U.S. arms transfers to Somalia be defensive in nature and not be sent until the CIA certified that no Somali soldiers remained in the Ogaden.<sup>10</sup> The U.S.-Somalia arms-for-access agreement was signed 22 August 1980, but the CIA did not provide certification until January 1981.

I would also take issue with Woodrooffe's strategic assessment of the Horn of Africa after the Ogaden War—'[I]t had no strategic value...' (137) and how that factored into U.S. security calculations in the Greater Middle East region. Woodrooffe writes: "The [Carter] administration would have had nothing to do with the Somali dictator if he had not sold himself as a barrier to Soviet domination of the Red Sea" (129). American defense analysts would certainly have taken note of Somalia's location lying just outside the Bab al Mandab—the southern entrance (chokepoint) into the Red Sea. But, the major Red Sea states Egypt, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, and (to a lesser extent) North Yemen, not to mention the peripheral Red Sea states (Israel and Jordan) were firmly in the Western camp, whereas Ethiopia could barely control its 600-mile long Eritrean coastline owing to the Eritrean rebellion that had been gaining in momentum. Somalia's perceived heightened strategic value at the end of 1979 stemmed largely from the unwillingness of key pro-Western Persian Gulf states (with the exception of Oman) to cooperate openly with the United States in establishing a new U.S. security regime to protect the Persian Gulf (oil). Consequently, in order to project U.S. military power into the Persian Gulf and put teeth into the Carter Doctrine with the formation of the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) as well as maintain a permanent U.S. Naval presence in the Indian Ocean the administration was forced to create an "over-the-horizon" strategic infrastructure in the northwest quadrant of the Indian Ocean region that included Somalia, along with Kenya, Oman and the island of Diego Garcia.<sup>11</sup> Thus, regional events in the Greater Middle East that seemed to threaten U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf and led to President Carter's January 1980 proclamation of the Carter Doctrine may also have driven Washington to embrace Somalia even without the Soviet-Cuban military intervention in the 1977-78 Ogaden War.

Throughout *Buried in the Sands of the Ogaden* Woodrooffe highlights how Ethiopia and Somalia were "easily able to manipulate the superpowers by playing them against each other" (137). More generally, during and after the Cold War small, weak states sought to manipulate and exert reverse leverage *vis-à-vis* their great power patrons. I would add the caveat that sometimes they succeeded, but in many instances they failed. Dependency theory and literature on imperialism offer an opposing view that depicts small, weak states

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<sup>9</sup> See Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn: U.S. Security Policy in Ethiopia and Somalia, 1953-1990* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), 197-219.

<sup>10</sup> In an interview with Richard Moose at his home in Alexandria, VA on 8 June 1982 Moose claimed that he (only half-factiously) argued that the U.S. should give the Somalis a floating dry-dock (as the Soviets had done) because "at least we wouldn't have to worry about them dragging that into the Ogaden".

<sup>11</sup> See Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn*, 203-207 and 230-233.

being used as the pawns of the Western powers.<sup>12</sup> Far from being a static relationship, however, the “relative influence or dependence of each partner (in a great power-small power arms relationship) is fluid and may shift over time.”<sup>13</sup> This was demonstrated in the Horn of Africa during the Cold War by Washington’s willingness and capacity to dampen down, delay, and refuse arms requests from Ethiopia and Somalia, and in both cases ultimately terminating U.S. security assistance.<sup>14</sup>

What lessons might we draw from *Buried in the Sands of the Ogaden* for the future of U.S. policy in the Horn of Africa? Woodrooffe’s notes in her conclusion that the Ethiopia-Somalia conflict had come full circle when, with U.S. political-military backing, Ethiopia invaded Somalia to oust the Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) government in December 2006 in order to allow the UN-backed Transitional Federal Government to seize power in Mogadishu (131). Will the ‘global war on terrorism’, the secularist-Islamist conflict in the Greater Middle East region, or some other conflict provide a new zero-sum context like the Cold War that will frame U.S. policy in the Horn of Africa? Will the one lesson certainly learned by both superpowers during the 1977-78 Ogaden War still apply in the post-Cold War and Post-9/11 world, that is, that outside powers must be prepared to choose sides between Ethiopia and Somalia in the Horn of Africa, or is there a way to change and/or successfully navigate this dysfunctional zero-sum regional dynamic?

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<sup>12</sup> See for example Johan Galtung, “A Structural Theory of Imperialism,” *Journal of Peace Research* 8,2 (1971), 81-117; Robert Gilpin, *U.S. Power and the Multinational Corporation* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 25-33; and T. Dos Santos, “The Structure of Dependence,” *American Economic Review*, 60 (May 1974), 231-236.

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of how great power arms suppliers and small power arms recipients may use the ‘Manipulation of Weakness’ or the ‘Threat of Defection’ to enhance their respective negotiating positions *vis-à-vis* each other see Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn*, 3-10

<sup>14</sup> For ten case studies—six involving Ethiopia (1953-1977) and four involving Somalia (1977-1990) see Lefebvre, *Arms for the Horn*.

When discussing the Ogaden War with my students I always point out how well it illustrates the senselessness of the Cold War. How was it that an impoverished drought-stricken and resource-scarce region of the world came to be seen as so strategically important by the superpowers? How could Washington and Moscow so easily flip-flop their regional allies so that American-backed Somalia could fight a war using Soviet weapons while Soviet-supported Ethiopia used American weapons? I have been waiting a long time for someone to publish the first book-length manuscript about the Ogaden War in order to answer these, and other, questions. Finally, Louise Woodroffe has answered the call to fill an important gap in Cold War historiography.

Woodroffe is uniformly critical of the Carter administration's response to the Ogaden War. She blames the poor judgment of U.S. policymakers for turning what in reality was a localized border war into a Cold War proxy war with global ramifications. Largely as a result of the disunity within the Carter administration (as a result of the differing advice given by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski), Washington was unable to see the conflict through anything other than a Cold War lens and as a result it missed opportunities to broker a peace deal—instead preferring to use the war as an opportunity to challenge Moscow in the wake of Soviet military successes in Vietnam and Angola. *Buried in the Sands of the Ogaden* is convincing in its portrayal of the way the Carter administration botched its handling of the crisis in the Horn of Africa. Yet, Woodroffe's book leaves its readers with more questions than answers.

I was frustrated by the fact that Woodroffe often teases her readers with brief mentions of incidents without revealing how they were resolved. For example, in Chapter One we learn that on two separate incidents fourteen people (four of which were U.S. citizens) were kidnapped by Eritrean insurgents from Kagnew Station, the American military base in Asmara. Woodroffe discusses the Ford administration's deliberations over how to react to these events, but the reader is never told of the ultimate outcome. What happened to those who were kidnapped? Given the hostage situation faced by the Carter administration in Iran a few years later, it would have been interesting to learn how the Ford administration dealt with this somewhat comparable incident in Eritrea.

Another interesting tidbit of information which Woodroffe mentions in passing but does not elaborate upon is the "volume of U.S. satellite photography" given by President Jimmy Carter to Somali Ambassador Addou as a gift for Somali President Mohammed Siad Barre (59-60). Woodroffe gives no further details on these satellite images, but if they were of Ethiopian military positions in the Ogaden, then the Somalis would have had good reason to think that the Americans were giving them a 'green light' to invade Ethiopia. Disappointingly, Woodroffe does not explain the significance of this gift which seems essential to determining whether or not the Carter administration gave Somalia its tacit blessing to invade Ethiopia.

In a similar vein, after discussing the opinions of critics of Jimmy Carter's handling of the Horn of Africa and relations with the Soviet Union, the author concludes that by 1978 "Americans were once again in the mood to assert U.S. power in the world" (107). I question the assertion that most Americans in 1978, so soon after the failures in Vietnam and Angola, were eager to see the United States challenge the Soviet Union militarily, but this provocative statement makes me wish that Woodrooffe would have included discussion of public opinion polls in her study. How did Americans judge Carter's handling of the Horn crisis? Did the average American even know or care about this crisis? More broadly, what was the American public's view of détente, relations with the Soviet Union, and Carter's overall foreign policy throughout the period of time covered in this book? Did the Carter administration's handling of the Ogaden War impact public views on these larger issues? Since the author repeatedly implies (as did President Carter himself) that Soviet actions in the Horn impacted the American public's perception of détente, I would like to have seen some evidence to illustrate this claim.

I am skeptical of Woodrooffe's claim that the Soviet Union sent "over U.S. \$1 billion worth of arms" to Ethiopia (70). While Woodrooffe is not the first to cite this figure it seems unbelievably high to me and she cites only two secondary sources (without page numbers) in support of this figure. As far as I can determine, the claim of \$1 billion in Soviet military aid to Ethiopia from March 1977 to May 1978 originates from a book published in 1984 and is not backed by any Soviet archival corroboration.<sup>1</sup> According to USAID Greenbook data, the United States 'only' sent \$2.34 billion in military assistance to the entire world in FY1978.<sup>2</sup> From 1954-1975 the United States sent a total of \$264 million in military aid to Ethiopia.<sup>3</sup> Did Moscow really send Ethiopia roughly half the amount of military aid that the U.S. sent to the entire world in 1978 and almost four times more military aid than the United States had sent Ethiopia in the previous two decades combined? This seems unlikely since according to data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Ethiopia only ranked twenty-fourth in the world in arms imports between the years 1976-1979 (ranking below Peru).<sup>4</sup> While there is no disputing that Moscow sent an enormous amount of military aid to Ethiopia at this time, the figure of \$1 billion is highly dubious.

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<sup>1</sup> See Bruce D. Porter, *The USSR in Third World Conflicts: Soviet Arms and Diplomacy in Local Wars, 1945-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> See U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants [Greenbook] Database [Online]. Rev. July 18, 2013. Available: <http://gbk.eads.usaidallnet.gov/>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> SIPRI Arms Transfer Database [Online], rev. July 18, 2013. Available: <http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>. While it is true that the data in the SIPRI database only tracks the transfer of major conventional weapons (such as aircraft, armored vehicles, tanks, missiles, etc.) and does not include the transfer of small arms, it seems that had the Soviets really sent over \$1 billion in arms to Ethiopia that it would have ranked higher than nineteenth in the world in imports and certainly would have been higher than Peru.

Other exaggerations are littered throughout the book. U.S. arms supplies to the regime of Haile Selassie are labeled “massive” (21) but the average of \$12 million per year in military assistance that the United States sent to Ethiopia from 1954-1975 looks meager in comparison to the aforementioned alleged \$1 billion that the Soviets sent from 1976 onwards.<sup>5</sup> Woodroffe also writes, “The 1970s saw the Cold War shift from Europe to the Third World”—but this had happened at least twenty years prior to the crisis in the Horn (36). The author’s contention that the “Cyrus Vance-Zbigniew Brzezinski argument about Soviet intervention in the Horn of Africa in the 1970s was one of those debates, the ramifications of which affected the outcome of the Cold War” (83) is greatly exaggerated. I fail to see how the outcome of the Cold War would have changed had Carter’s two main foreign policy advisers been in agreement or had Brzezinski’s arguments won out on this issue. Finally, the title of the book itself is hyperbolic. Brzezinski’s memorable quote aside (“SALT lies buried in the sands of the Ogaden”) the author overemphasizes the role that the Ogaden War between Ethiopia and Somalia played in détente’s demise. The 1976 U.S. presidential election and the earlier proxy war in Angola had already demonstrated that the policy was already dead in all but name even before Somalia invaded Ethiopia.

Additionally, after reading about the author’s research trip to Ethiopia in her acknowledgements I was disappointed to not find a single Ethiopian archival source, newspaper, or oral history interview in the bibliography. I found this bizarre, all the more so because the exact same thing occurred in another recent book on Ethiopia.<sup>6</sup>

These relatively minor quibbles aside, I hope that Kent State University Press opts to publish this book in paperback format in order to lower its price point enough to make it viable for classroom use. This book would be ideal for assignment in diplomatic history courses because it is short and succinct and does a good job of introducing the reader to a number of important larger themes in U.S. foreign relations during the 1970s such as the demise of détente, the effects of the Vietnam War and Watergate on U.S. foreign policy, Carter’s emphasis on human rights, Carter’s naivety about foreign policy, and the inconsistencies and rivalries within the Carter administration. More importantly, it touches upon all of these broader topics within the context of an interesting episode of the Cold War which typically gets short shrift in textbooks on twentieth-century U.S. foreign relations and which instructors can tie to the contemporary issue of instability in the Horn of Africa.

Woodroffe has published the most thorough account of U.S. policymaking towards the 1970s Horn of Africa crisis to date which will cause me to make some revisions to my lectures on this topic. There is room for future historians to expand upon or challenge her

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<sup>5</sup> See U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants [Greenbook] Database [Online]. Rev. July 18, 2013. Available: <http://gbk.eads.usaidallnet.gov/>.

<sup>6</sup> Like Woodroffe, Amanda McVety also mentions a research trip to Ethiopia in her acknowledgements but then likewise fails to cite a single source from Ethiopia in her book. See Amanda McVety, *Enlightened Aid: U.S. Development as Foreign Policy in Ethiopia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

analysis—particularly through the incorporation of Soviet, Ethiopian, Cuban, Arab and European sources. Nonetheless, it is a testament to her scholarly achievement that future researchers will use *Buried in the Sands of the Ogaden* as their starting point for further investigation of this fascinating and understudied episode of the Cold War.

Author's Response by Louise Woodroffe, Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State<sup>1</sup>

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I would like to thank Kate Burlingham, Lee Cassanelli, Jeffrey Lefebvre, and Philip Muehlenbeck for their helpful and insightful comments on *"Buried in the Sands of the Ogaden": the United States, the Horn of Africa, and the Demise of Détente* and to Thomas Maddux and H-Diplo for hosting this roundtable.

This book traces the responses of the Ford and Carter administrations to events in the Horn of Africa and their ultimate effect on Soviet-American bilateral relations. My particular focus diverges from previous authors in its emphasis on the Horn of Africa conflict being the catalyst that exposed the failure of détente and a decisive element in President Jimmy Carter's transition from favoring conciliation to choosing confrontation with the Soviet Union.

The book stresses several arguments. First, the conflict in the Horn of Africa was the American test case for the feasibility of détente. This had not been emphasized enough in discussions on 1970s superpower relations as the United States and Soviet Union had more urgent issues over which they disagreed. However, the documents of discussions between the major players illustrate the importance the United States put on Soviet involvement in Africa, and American willingness to raise such an unpopular issue, knowing it might undermine progress in other areas. Another subject may possibly have served this role as well, but the U.S. National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and more importantly President Carter, chose this one.

Second, the Horn crisis served as an early formative experience for President Carter's foreign policy education and, unfortunately for détente, what he learned was that the Soviets could not be trusted. Therefore, the Horn helped sway Carter's attitude toward the Soviet Union to a much harder line. Though there were many steps in this evolution, the arguments between Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Brzezinski over the American response to the Soviet involvement in the Horn represented a much larger debate on the overriding strategy behind American foreign policy, which ultimately magnified the importance of the Horn.

Third, the Horn convinced the United States that the Soviet Union was not living up to the American understanding of détente and that the entire process was untenable. From the American perspective, if the Soviets could still do what they wanted in the Third World despite loud complaints, then the only benefit the United States would get out of détente was another SALT agreement, which the Soviets needed more than the Americans did. This was a difficult sell to an already skeptical Congress, a detail that Brzezinski emphasized rather vocally.

Fourth, the American response to the conflict demonstrated that the United States simply could not move beyond a Cold War mindset. The impact of détente and the failure in Vietnam

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<sup>1</sup> The views presented here are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of State or the United States Government.

were not sufficient to enable American policy makers to reframe their world vision. Despite a few dissenting voices, the foreign policy establishment still viewed the whole world through the prism of competition with the Soviet Union and would do so until the disintegration of their rival.

Finally, hindsight has demonstrated that the whole conflict in the Horn and the superpower involvement were utter disasters for all involved and many of the region's current difficulties trace their historic antecedents to this period. There were no winners. Everybody lost.

The reviewers recommend several avenues of discussion that the book does not sufficiently address, some of which would have strengthened the book's arguments and others that suggest where the scholarship should lead in the future. Kate Burlingham advocates for more discussion on how the conflict on the Horn fit into Carter's desire for a "moral" foreign policy and larger debates on foreign intervention. There is certainly room to explore this in the conclusion and I wish that I had. Lee Cassanelli reminds us of Robert Patman's assertion that Moscow did more to try to solve the conflict, at least initially, than did Washington and that the book would have benefited from exploring this idea. I kept the focus on the American perspective because it seemed more honest, given my source limitations, but hopefully a future scholar, with access to more Soviet documentation, can write a more balanced assessment of the Horn's role in the Cold War. Likewise, writing from the Ethiopian perspective would make an exciting contribution to the scholarship of the role of regional players in manipulating the superpowers. As Phil Muehlenbeck points out, I spent three months in Ethiopia attempting to access the Foreign Ministry archives, but ultimately failed. Hopefully, someone with better Amharic, better contacts, or a better understanding of Ethiopian culture will find more success there. Finally, Jeffrey Lefebvre notes that I neglected the point of view of the Africa Bureau, led by Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Richard Moose, and its role in supporting Vance and advocating against arming Somalia. These records were not available when I conducted my research, but once they are released, they should help flesh out the discussion of bureaucratic in-fighting.

Last, I would like to address the contention that I overplayed the role of the conflict in the Horn in the failure of détente. This is always a potential risk when writing a book that discusses the effect of a peripheral issue on a larger conflict. I did not argue that the conflict was *the* cause, only that it played an important role in a chain of events. In the end, we know that it had a big effect on the failure of détente because it mattered intensely to Carter and Brzezinski and they let it affect détente. I will conclude with Carter's response to a contentious meeting on the Horn with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko on May 27, 1978.

He said my figures were ten times too great; my figures are very accurate. He claimed there were no Soviet generals in Ethiopia. We monitored communications about General [V.I.] Petrov in Ethiopia once he got ill and they had to delay a military operation. The East Germans have helped train the Katangans, but he claimed he never heard of East Germans being in Africa, and so forth. I believe he left here knowing the seriousness of our concern.

*As we sat across the table from each other, Gromyko continuously made false statements. I knew he was lying and he knew that I knew he was lying. For him, the “truth” seemed to be whatever the Kremlin policy was at that time.*

This was my worst week since I’ve been in the White House, although most things turned out all right.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Jimmy Carter, *White House Diary* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010), 196-197. Italics in the original.