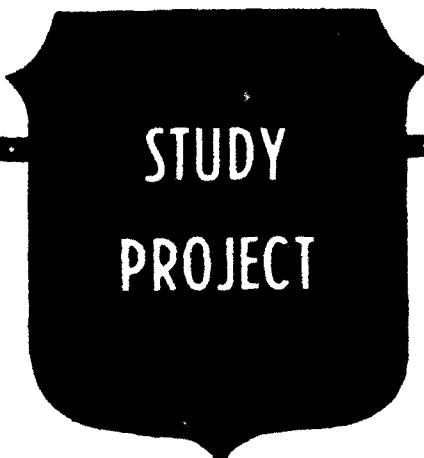


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**STRATEGY
FOR THE HORN OF AFRICA**

BY

**BRIGADIER JOSEPH KIMANI
Kenya Army**

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STRATEGY FOR THE HORN OF AFRICA

BY

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ABSTRACT

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Instability in the Horn of Africa has lasted for many years. The causes of the instability are colonization of Africa by European powers, the rivalry of the superpowers during the cold war due to the Horn's strategic location and finally the internal political crisis within the countries. The Horn was considered strategically important during the cold war as it provided the vital sealanes to the Middle East and South West Asia. The Horn provides the shortest east to west oil transportation routes. The countries that border the Horn of Africa are players in any strategic consideration of the Middle East. The Gulf War and the end of the cold war seem to have reduced the strategic importance of the Horn. Since the end of the cold war has not reduced the world's dependence on oil, the Horn of Africa will continue to play a part in Middle East affairs and its strategic importance will remain. The paper considers the causes of the instability in the region. It is assessed that a conflict in the Horn would significantly hurt the interests of the U.S. and her allies. The paper concludes by recommending a strategic formulation for the region.

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INTRODUCTION

Strategic interest in the Horn of Africa has waned with the end of the cold war. Irrespective of the current trends, the Horn of Africa's global geo-political value will remain. The countries that border the Red Sea are strategic as the Red Sea provides vital sea lanes to and from the Middle East and South West Asia. The Red Sea is the shortest waterway connecting East and West. The Persian Gulf and the Red Sea provide lines of communications for oil to the west. This is of vital interest to the United States. U.S. national interest in the Middle East remains, the Horn of Africa's location at the southern end of the Red Sea and the Arab-Israel conflict at the northern end of this strategic waterway has continually intruded upon the politics of the area. Seven of the nine states that line the Red Sea- Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Yemen, Djibouti, Sudan and Somalia - identify themselves with the Arab/Islamic world. The events that occur in the Horn of Africa are likely to affect the Middle East. "If presented with a blank map of the world from which to select geopolitical targets, American defense planners would automatically stick a pin in the Horn of Africa. The region provides a prime spot from which to project power and provide rear area support for military intervention in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf."¹ This was the cause of the super powers' involvement in Ethiopia and Somalia in the 1970s.

The Horn of Africa and the rest of Africa are in crisis. Wars, coups, famine and violence are common. The debt of the countries of the Horn is astronomical and economic development has almost ceased. Corruption is endemic and force seems the chief instrument of politics. Money has been found to maintain large armies while agriculture has been neglected, resulting in famine. Mismanagement, excessive bureaucracy, rising population, and over dependence on foreign aid have worsened the problems. Lack of vision and failure to learn from history has resulted in similar mistakes being repeated in respective countries.

The aim of this paper is to examine the causes of the instability in the region by analyzing the cases of individual countries, and various issues that lead to the breakdown of security in the region, and finally, to formulate strategy for the region.

SOMALIA

Somalia has ceased to exist as a national entity. Anarchy has reigned since the Somali leader of 21 years, the former President Muhammed Siad Barre was ousted in January 1991 by General Aideed and Ali Mahdi. Somalis are divided among many different clans and they lead a life in which aggressiveness and military power in clan rivalry have traditionally been rewarded.² An enormous quantity of weapons flowed into Somalia

during the cold war. It is these weapons that have fallen into the hands of the warring factions.

The history of independent Somalia started in 1960. Italian Somaliland and British Somaliland were reunified as an independent Somalia in 1960. In 1969, President Sharmarkee was assassinated and Major General Mohammed Siad Barre imposed himself as President. Under one-man rule, he installed Marxist doctrine. Siad Barre's main pursuit was a dream of a greater Somalia, uniting his country with Somalia's so-called occupied territories in Ethiopia (the Ogaden) and Kenya. In 1974 an Ogaden guerrilla campaign to drive out the Ethiopian army from the Ogaden led to full scale war between the two nations. Soviet support enabled Ethiopia to defeat Somali aggression and sent half a million refugees and guerrillas back across the Somalia border, many carrying modern weapons.³

The Ogaden defeat unleashed serious domestic discontent against Siad Barre, who turned to the United States for help. The U.S.A. supported him until 1990, when interest in the region waned after the end of cold war. Siad Barre's regime began to crumble, he massacred rival clans and politicians and depended on his own clan to stay in power. In September 1990, USC (United Somalia Congress), SPM (Somali Patriotic Movement) and SNM (Somali National Movement) coordinated their military power to overthrow Siad Barre. On January 1991 USC forces under the command of General Aideed defeated Siad Barre. The warring clans' organizations included the Hawiye clan, which controls the

United Somali Congress (USC), the Ogaden-based Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM) and the Issaq-based Somali National Movement (SNM). It remains to be seen whether political stability will be achieved in Somalia and whether Somalia will remain whole without secession by the former British Somaliland. Various clans are seeking advantage for themselves by attempting to dominate the political and economic structures in the regions that they control. Somalia remains in turmoil with different war lords controlling various sectors of the country. The biggest challenge to Somalia will be its ability to assume responsibility of its own future with an acceptable government to all clans. In my opinion the country's best hope for stability is to return to its past and rely on the collective experience of its elders. Elders are regarded as the only social element in Somalia with the authority to promote the search for peaceful dialogue.⁴

THE ERITREA PROBLEM

Eritrea was an Italian colony until 1941. The British invaded the country and occupied Eritrea until 1952. In 1947, elections were held under United Nations supervision. Eritreans expressed a desire for union with Ethiopia. In December 1950, The United Nations voted to federate Eritrea with Ethiopia. Eritrean

supporters of union with Ethiopia wanted autonomy for Eritrea in its domestic affairs. Throughout the period of federation, the Ethiopian government continued to deprive the Eritreans of their human rights in the view of Eritrean nationalists. On 14 November 1962, the Ethiopian government abrogated the Eritrean constitution and terminated the federal status of Eritrea.⁵ This is the root of the conflict that began a thirty (30) year war in Eritrea.

Ethiopia foreign and domestic policies have been derived from the desire to acquire access to the Red Sea. The EPLF (Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front), which represents the people of Eritrea has already seceded and is demanding self determination. A referendum will be held in Ethiopia in April 1993 for voters to make a decision on Eritrea's self determination.

ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia and Liberia are the only two African countries that were never colonized, except for Ethiopia's short occupation by the Italians. Ethiopia was ruled by monarchs for centuries until Haile Selassie was deposed by the military in 1974. The military takeover of the government was the starting point of modern instability. Internal disagreements regarding policy and power rivalry led to the killing of many senior military and government officers. In 1977, Lt Col Mengistu Haile Mariam took

the country's leadership. His leadership was dictatorial and he was not able to unite the Ethiopians. He turned the country to socialism with the help of the Soviet Union. Haile Mariam's rule collapsed when he was abandoned by the Soviet Union. Two main rebel armies, the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) defeated Mengistu's army in May 1991. Mengistu's biggest mistake was in trying to deal by purely military means with the Eritrean insurgency, a problem whose origins were political and required political solution. The EPLF established a provisional government in Eritrea in July 1992. The EPRDF is in control of Ethiopia and has formed a government, sharing power with the OMO Liberation Front (OMC). Democratic elections are expected in 1993.

Internally, Ethiopia is faced with ethnic differences that affect stability. Political power has resided almost exclusively in the hands of the Amhara people since the mid-nineteenth century. After the fall of the central government in 1991, the victory by the Tigrean-dominated EPRDF threatens Amhara dominance.

The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) is based in the Oromo-inhabited areas in the southern part of Ethiopia, they comprise approximately half of the country's population and participated in the removal of the Mengistu government. The question remains open whether in the aftermath of their victory against the Ethiopian central government in May 1991, these

ethnic-based movements will continue to cooperate or will go their own separate ways.

There are other factors that cause instability in Ethiopia. If the secession of Eritrea holds, Ethiopia becomes a land locked country. It is not known whether Ethiopia will recognize the independence of Eritrea. Another potential source of instability will be the outcome of the Eritrea secession. This is likely to encourage Somalis living in the Ogaden province of Ethiopia to seek self-determination for themselves.

Externally, Ethiopia relations with Egypt may be affected by the issue of control of the waters of the Nile. As drought continues in many parts of Africa and given the dependence on agriculture, more water from the Nile may be diverted away from Egypt.

Ethiopia controls the Blue Nile from which 80% of the waters reach Egypt. The Ethiopian government claims that it is entitled to divert up to 40% of the Nile's water for domestic consumption.

SUDAN

Sudan is inhabited by two groups of people. The north of Sudan with approximately 75% of the population speaks Arabic and considers itself to be part of the Muslim world. The South is Christians and animists who form 25% of the population and have ties with black Africa. The instability arises through southern

fears of northern intentions to dominate the South and Islamicize it. This war has systematically drained the country's economy. The conflict has brought death to millions of southern Sudanese from war and famine. Thousands have fled to neighboring countries as refugees.

Sudan has become a center of fundamentalist Islam, governed in accordance with sharia law. During the 1991 Gulf war, Sudan sided with Iraq. Sudanese territory could have been used for basing missiles to attack Egypt and Saudi Arabia. There have been reports of Iran supplying arms to Sudan and Iranian arms and advisers fighting against Sudan's People Liberation Army (SPLA) forces in the South. If this proved to be true, it would raise the level of conflict and would indicate that the Sudanese government has opted for a military solution rather than a negotiated settlement. In March 1992, the Sudanese government launched a major offensive in the South. Further military operations are anticipated against the southerners and the situation remains bleak. There is no significant interference by outsiders.

In the past years Sudan has been isolated internationally for its stand in closer relationship with radical states and especially Muslim fundamentalists in North Africa and Middle East. Its alliances are perceived to be a threat to the countries in the region. Fundamentalism has proved a powerful mobilizing force for nationalism. Terrorism is the newest strategy of the enemies of freedom and is very effective.

Egypt's tourism trade has been the target of terrorism which has succeeded in scaring tourists away, thereby denying Egypt the foreign trade.

Continuing political instability in Sudan reflects lack of a national consensus. Sudan has followed the same cycle of failure for many years. There is no commitment by the Sudanese leadership to the stability of Sudan. Sadly, this largest country in Africa, with a lot of potential, remains politically and economically bankrupt.

DJIBOUTI

Djibouti is strategically located on the Gulf of Aden and the Bab-al Mandeb entrance to the Red Sea. The country's most valuable resource is its strategic location. It serves as a stop over for flights to the Indian Ocean and the rear base for vessels operating in the Persian Gulf. It served this purpose when used by the U.S. forces during the 1991 Gulf war.

Djibouti is a very vulnerable country and its stability is largely due to the French forces located there. It is susceptible to internal ethnic rivalry. The two tribes of this country's population of about half a million are the Somali-Issa and the Afar. The guerrilla group threatening the country largely consists of Afars. In January 1991 there was an attempted coup. The Issa tribe is formerly from Somalia and the

Afar are from Ethiopia. This puts a lot of pressure on Djibouti, and whatever happens in either Somalia or Ethiopia affects them. Somalia and Ethiopia have laid claim to Djibouti, and each has threatened military intervention should the other make a move.

Djibouti is economically weak. Most of the country is desert and has no exportable minerals. Djibouti relies on foreign trade through the port. The railway line that connects Djibouti and Ethiopia carries about 65% of Ethiopia's imports. Since Ethiopia is now landlocked, with the potential of secession by Eritrea, this railway line is going to be of increasingly significant economic importance.

Djibouti's national security is currently threatened by ethnic tensions. More democratic reforms are required that will enhance a dialogue with the opposition, otherwise Djibouti will fall into the same state of instability as all its neighbors.

THE ECONOMIES

Economic factors play a big part in the overall question of national security. State political stability cannot be assured without a sound economy.

National politics have been overtaken to a large degree by the global economy. National policies are being increasingly circumscribed by internal economic factors. Leaders in the

region have no vision to contend with economic trends in the world but continue to indulge in national politics while claiming national sovereignty.

This state of affairs has led to the stagnation of national economies and plunged countries into poverty, huge foreign debts and the depletion of foreign exchange. The other factor affecting the economies of countries is the change in weather patterns. Global weather has changed and the world is warming up. This may be due in part to poor management of the environment by the world community. Since the Horn has no irrigation systems and depends on rain for agriculture production, when the rains fail the countries in the region depend on foreign food assistance or starve.

Ethiopia was assisted by the world in 1984 during the drought, Sudan has been assisted continuously and at the present moment, world attention in food assistance is on Somalia. The above factors affect the security of the region. Unemployed, hungry people become difficult to contain and the dissatisfaction leads to revolutions in which governments are removed from power. This has happened in Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia. The major industrialized countries are increasingly preoccupied with their own problems and are reluctant to invest in weak economies. Unless leaders in the region wake up and face reality, stability for countries in the region will remain a dream.

Export and import trade is an area which is beyond the control of the leaders in the region of the Horn and Africa in

general. Africa has no say in the price of her exports or imports. Africans maintain that trade relationship is to the disadvantage of Africa and that Africa borrows money which cannot be paid back due to undervalued exports while interest continues accumulating.

Three decades after independence, most African countries continue to suffer appalling economic conditions. Sixteen of the world's poorest nations are in Africa. Somalia is amongst the poorest countries. Despite Africa's abundant natural resources, the continent has been marginalised economically in international affairs. "Some 25 to 30 years after independence, more than half of the African population still has no ready access to health services, almost two thirds lack supplies of safe water and unknown numbers continue to suffer from preventable diseases."⁶ The Horn of Africa with the rest of Africa requires to be brought back into the mainstream of the international system. Bad politics led to bad economics and also led to bad social situations and an undesirable climate for investment.

The world community is becoming fed up with a continent wrecked by corruption, civil war and economic mismanagement. This growing impatience in world attitudes comes at a time when there is a shift in international focus to the struggling democracies in Eastern Europe. The post-cold war era has brought new demands and challenges for the super powers and their interest in Africa is waning. International funders and donors are now talking of trade relations rather than aid. There can be assistance from

outside, but only Africa can save itself. Only Africans can save Africa.

On the other hand, need for external assistance still prevails. There is a need for the donors, World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to restructure their lending policies towards Africa. Africa cannot compete with the developed world. Current lending policies make African countries poorer as the money lent to them is paid back at very high interest rates that continue being paid for a life time. Africa has no say in the price of her commodities while imports to Africa come with a price tag.

New Africa Magazine states that, "Africans do not make real money from growing coffee or cocoa. The production of these crops contribute absolutely nothing to the economic development of the continent. The coffee trade is dominated by western dealers. It has been calculated that for every pound of coffee the peasant receives 8 % of the money, the government gets 17%, while the rest 75% goes to western dealers."¹ It is essential that a new economic order similar to the Marshall Plan that was introduced to save Europe be established for Africa if we are interested at all in a new World Order in which all people have an opportunity for survival and the possibility of meeting basic needs, as opposed to the present abject poverty.

SAUDI ARABIA'S INTEREST IN THE HORN

Saudi Arabia has an interest in the activities of the Horn. One is its obligation to Islam. Saudi Arabia's interest can be explained in terms of an Islamic perception of foreign policy interests in the region. As keepers of Islam's two holiest sites, Mecca and Medina, the Saudis feel a special responsibility as protectors of the Muslim way of life. It is a responsibility that intensifies as one draws nearer to the Arabian Peninsula. The Southern Red Sea and Horn of Africa are on Saudi Arabia's back door step. In addition, all countries in the Horn with the exception of Ethiopia are members of the Arab League. The Saudis consider the Sudanese problem between North and South Sudan as a conflict between believers and non-believers, and much of the traditional Saudi financial support to the country has gone to Islamic institution and organizations.

In the emerging nation of Eritrea, the Saudis are likely to play a key role towards a Muslim oriented government. Saudi Arabia has in the past financed governments in the region. This may continue as other potential sources shift their interests elsewhere.

ECONOMIC CONFIDENCE

There is an idiom that says "Charity begins at home." Some corrupt leaders and others have no confidence in their own countries. They prefer to transfer money from their own countries to banks in developed foreign countries where they will flee in case of instability in their countries. I consider this to be treason to the mother country. Such citizens cannot be expected to run their countries fairly since their interests are not there. It is rumored that overseas accounts from these countries is adequate to finance the countries' budgets for a number of years and provide local investment locally that would generate employment and income. It is anticipated that with the introduction of democracy all this will change. There will be more interaction in the society, political accountability and the divorce of the judiciary from the executive that will enhance justice, producing a free society that will create confidence locally and for foreign investors.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Politics is about power and unless it is morally justified it cannot be legitimate. If the legitimacy of power diminishes, it carries less moral authority. The two commonly accepted

reference points of political morality are the constitution of a country and the judiciary. Looking at conditions and observing the degree to which judiciary is structurally independent from the executive are part of the assessment of the context of political morality. There has in fact, been a compromise of the two and there is no way that justice can be seen to be done. Authoritarian rule has had no check and balances. Governments rule through executive decree. Parliament is usually a toothless dog that passes whatever the government desires. The Members' aim is usually not to serve the electorate, parliament is usually access to money and power. Electoral expenses are usually heavy, and those who succeed in gaining a seat in the National Assembly are naturally anxious to recover their outlay at the earliest possible opportunity. The same applies to law which is changed as the political situation demands, to suit the executive. Good government depends largely on the effective management of the economy. It is economic management which determines most directly the well-being of the majority of the population. Political accountability also contributes to good governance. The rulers and the ruled are both required to obey the law and the constitution. Unfortunately, the compromise between the executive and judiciary has destroyed the judiciary and the freedom of the individual through lack of justice. Many innocent people have been jailed while others have died in prison. Accountability of the administration has been lost as there is no division between administration and politics.

Finally, the system is over-strained and breaks down.

CONCLUSION

Civil wars, drought, famine and inter-state conflicts have created the climate of insecurity in the Horn of Africa. The problems affecting the Horn are the same ones affecting African countries in general.

With the end of the cold war the Horn has proved to be of limited significance. The superpowers came to the Horn to pursue their national interests. The Horn was attractive due to its proximity to Middle East oil fields. Nations in the region will now be expected to solve their own problems. An example is Somalia where the civil war continued unchecked by the super powers until intervention by the U.S. on humanitarian grounds in December 1992.

Provision of arms by the super powers helped to increase the regional conflicts and thereby threatened stability. The invasion of Ethiopia by Somalia in 1977 was a result of arms provided by the Soviet Union. In 1970's the U.S. provided Ethiopia with military assistance to fight against the Eritrean insurgency.

The rise of Islam fundamentalism in Sudan is a cause of concern. President Bashir's government has consolidated its power with support from Islamic fundamentalists. Muslim

fundamentalists in North Africa and the Middle East may eventually engulf the region. Iraq has cordial relations with Sudan and the two countries have trade relations. Iran has been known to supply arms to Sudan. There have been claims that Bashir is just a convenient figure head and that the National Islamic Front runs the government and the military. Muslim moderates in the civil service have been replaced by fundamentalists.

There is disturbing evidence that the threat of Muslim fundamentalism is growing and is now approaching a stage at which it can cripple a target country economically and politically. Egypt's tourism has been the latest target of the fundamentalists. The fundamentalists' aim is to cripple Egypt economically. The governments in the region have realized the gravity of the threat and had a security meeting on the issue.

Another area that requires attention in the region is the question of large standing armies and police that are unaffordable. Their existence is at the expense of other economic projects. There is no denial that the security of the state must be guaranteed, but with the collapse of the cold war, the perceived threat has reduced.

The economic North is increasingly turning a deaf ear to third world economic woes and pleas for assistance. One reason for northern displeasure is the growing evidence of huge fortunes amassed by third world government officials and capital flight

from the world's poorest nations that are in desperate need of development funds.

Finally, security, political and economic problems facing the region are hard to predict. The diminishing of the world's perception of Horn's strategic importance, even though that perception may change, draws the west with its financing away. Infrastructure and the political climate are not conducive to investment in the Horn. The future will also see more demand for self determination. An example is Somalia, where Northern Somalia has, in effect, declared independence. In Sudan, the future may see the demand by Sudanese People Liberation Army (SPLA) for full self-determination. Djibouti faced an Afar rebellion in 1991. The Front Pour La Restoration de l'Unite et la Democratic (FRUD) is demanding more participation in the government in Djibouti. Elections are due in 1993 and that will decide the fate of the country considering the reforms that are being demanded by the opposition. Ethiopia has Eritrea which has seceded; various other ethnic groups in Ethiopia may follow the trend. This points to the future, where secession and self determination will be the trend. The wind of change blowing in Europe and the former Soviet Union brings similarity in the current events in the region.

STRATEGIC PROSPECTS

The Horn of Africa's global geo political value will remain, regardless of the end of the cold war. Already, there are local and regional actors influencing activities in the region. Trade cooperation among various countries, such as the North America Free Trade Agreement and other such accords in Asia, are encouraging regional cooperation for economic reasons. Several Middle East countries, such as Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Yemen are establishing their influence in the Horn. Horn of Africa countries except Ethiopia belong to the Arab League and their fate cannot be separated from Middle East problems. Likewise the West cannot be divorced from the Middle East because of the national interests. Temporary non-involvement in the Horn is caused in part by the recent Gulf War and Arab-Israel peace talks which have diverted attention from the region.

Military means cannot solve the problems in the Horn. Western aid in food and the military intervention in Somalia keeps people alive but does not alleviate the economic and political deterioration of the region. The only hope for stability and better life for the people is the adoption of national economic policies that may attract foreign aid and investment. Countries cannot revive their economies without the assistance of the West. Assistance can only come from Western

governments or private investors. Investors will require free markets and a liberalization of the economic systems as required by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The countries in the region have no option but to follow this prescription, however bitter it is. Delay in solving economic problems will delay the achievement of political stability.

All countries in the Horn should be honest in dealing with the border issues which are a source of recurring problem. They should accept the existing borders and cease supporting movements aimed at seceding from neighboring countries.

Leaders in the region should reason constructively about the form of governance that is best suited to their social and cultural customs, the kind of constitutional mechanism that can best contribute to the management of ethnic differences.

The spread of Muslim fundamentalism in North Africa needs to be addressed. It has political and strategic importance. Its influence, if unchecked, might ultimately spread to other countries. The present scenario is the alliance of Sudan, Libya, Iran, and Iraq. Egypt fundamentalists could become a big threat in future and affect the Red Sea, Mediterranean and Middle East.

The Eritrean case for independence has some logic in it in that it corresponds to United Nation's Resolutions on recognition of a nation state. United Nations General Assembly Resolution No. 1514 of 1969 deals with the granting of independence to colonial countries and guarantees of self-determination to people inhabiting a territory which is geographically separate and

ethnically or culturally distinct from the country that administers it. Further, UN General Assembly Resolution No. 2625 affirms the legitimacy of the struggle of people under colonial and alien domination seeking to be entitled to the right of self-determination. Termination of this conflict can be achieved by the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and the world community recognizing the independence of Eritrea. The independence of Eritrea might set a precedent that will be difficult to reverse. Other regions in the countries of the Horn will emulate this example and seek self-determination.

The United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, and other world powers should anticipate this destabilization that might affect the whole of Africa and seek a solution that will prevent further disintegration. Recognition should not be given to aspiring factions seeking to secede. Countries affected by secession movements should be assisted economically, politically and militarily; that will result in creating the required state and causing the termination of the conflict to be accepted by all sides.

Trust should be created among the Horn of Africa states. The objective should be to create circumstances that cause states to become positively dependent on each other out of a mutual dependence that motivates each state to seek the other's good will. Interdependence may be created through trade, sharing of common services, labor employment in respective countries, and the adoption of a common language. (One possibility is Swahili,

used in East Africa now which may in the future be adopted as one of official languages of Africa.) Such regional cooperation could be the start of United States of Africa.

The armed forces of the region should be reduced. They should be structured to provide internal security and defence from external aggression. Donors should give priority to agriculture and other economic activities that will eventually lead to self-reliance.

FOOTNOTES

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