

ANN 969044
By: ST/NSW Date: 6/23/98



RESEARCH STUDY

BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

December 20, 1972

14

SOMALIA: THE SOVIET PRESENCE

This paper assesses the USSR's position in Somalia, Soviet interests and objectives in the Horn of Africa, and prospects for Somali-Soviet relations.

ABSTRACT

The Soviet Union has greatly expanded its presence in Somalia, particularly since the Somali army's takeover of the government in 1969. Territorial disputes between Somalia and its neighbors and Western reluctance to furnish arms to Mogadiscio provided an opportunity for the Soviets, beginning in 1963, to become virtually the sole source of military aid to Somalia. This in turn has proved an effective instrument for the diffusion of Soviet influence. By providing such assistance, the USSR also became, by implication at least, a supporter of Somali national aspirations and irredentism.

The USSR has strategic interests in Somalia associated with, but peripheral to, its larger interests in the Middle East and the Indian Ocean. Lesser or supporting interests appear to be to secure a foothold in East Africa and to pre-empt Western and Chinese positions in the Horn. How the USSR hopes to exploit its currently favorable position in Somalia depends on presently uncertain factors, such as the Middle East situation.

~~SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM~~

2

This report was produced by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Aside from normal substantive exchange with other agencies at the working level, it has not been coordinated elsewhere.

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
April 21, 2005

EXEMPT FROM GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
EXEMPTION CATEGORY: 5B (2)

WARNING NOTICE
SENSITIVE INTELLIGENCE SOURCES

RAAS-36

Pol SOMALIA-USSR
XR DEF 19.6 USSR-SOMALI

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

NNID 969044
By BT/USU Date 6/23/84

~~SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM~~

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVE

For the time being, the USSR seems satisfied with access to Somali air and port facilities while retaining an influential presence from which to exploit future opportunities. The Soviets currently appear to be working to maintain and possibly cautiously expand their influence with a minimum of additional commitments. They seem to be increasingly concerned about Chinese competition as a result of the large Chinese aid agreement with Somalia in 1971 and indications (of which the Soviets are presumably aware) that the Somalis may have approached the PRC as an alternative source of arms aid.

The Somali leadership shows no inclination at present to follow the Sudanese and Egyptian examples in ousting the Soviets, although the military regime often feels an affinity with the governments of Sudan and, to a lesser extent, Egypt. The Somalis count on the military assistance they get from the Soviets to reinforce their unsettled, irredentist claims against Ethiopia and Kenya. Furthermore, President Mohammad Siad Barre, who is trying to consolidate his position in the ruling Somali Revolutionary Council (SRC), may not feel powerful enough to risk Soviet displeasure by tampering with the Somali-Soviet relationship. He seems to have found the increased Soviet involvement in the Somali security service useful in his efforts to strengthen his position. There is no evidence that the current rivalries in the SRC center on the Somali-Soviet relationship. But the potential for Soviet involvement in Somali politics, intentional or otherwise, is high as a result of the dominant Soviet position in the army and internal security apparatus.

~~SECRET/NO FOREIGN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM~~

NND 969044
By *BT/NSW* Date *6/23/84*

~~SECRET//NO FOREIGN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM~~

Moscow's position in Somalia appears secure, at least for the near future. But a significant expansion of its presence or influence seems unlikely, given both the apparent Soviet wish to avoid a client-state relationship and the nationalistic nature of the Somali leadership.

INR/Africa and American Republics
Director : GHSummi *APR 1984*
Analyst : ABergstrom *in file*
Extension : 22297
Released by: I. M. Tobin
IMT

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

~~SECRET//NO FOREIGN DISSEM/CONTROLLED DISSEM~~