

MEMO

TO: PAUL
FROM: CHRIS C.

RE: TALKING POINTS FOR DISCUSSION OF TOM FARER'S WAR CLOUDS ON THE HORN OF AFRICA

1. General Remarks

PET used the first edition of this book extensively both as background and as inspiration for writing my report on my December, 1977 trip to Ethiopia and the Horn.

The revised edition published through the Carnegie Endowment is more than an update of this important book. Like its predecessor, it offers provocative policy recommendations and dares to make some predictions.

2. Old and New Predictions

As you all know, the first edition concluded that the region was ripe for a major conflict between Somalia and Ethiopia, that super-power involvement was inevitable, and that detente between the U.S. and the Soviet Union would suffer.

Professor Farer's predictions were almost perfect. He did not foresee the dramatic Soviet shift of support from Somalia to Ethiopia, nor did he foresee the scope of Soviet commitment to the war. But it would be unfair to expect that kind of accuracy - Professor Farer saw the basic outline of events in advance, a remarkable achievement.

Now Professor Farer tells us that Ethiopia is a major African military power representing an untested potential to operate outside its own borders, perhaps even in southern Africa.

Mr. Farer now predicts that the Ethiopian government is well established after a convulsive baptism, that it will remain as the dominant power on the Horn, that secession no longer threatens Ethiopia as it once did.

I concur with these assessments and I would add that our policy toward this important African state ignores these realities. More about policy later.

3. Filling Out the First Prediction

Professor Farer devotes considerable space in this new edition to an account of the Soviet shift. After having read his interpretation of those still unclear events, I must conclude that Mr. Farer is as good an historian as he is a clairvoyant.

He offers us a thorough cost-benefit analysis which goes a long way to dispelling some accumulated myths of Soviet behavior in the Horn.

He tells us that the Soviet shift was a prudent, low risk initiative, not the reckless component of a grand master strategy. As the Soviets perceived the risks of alliance with the Somali aggressors, and as the United States continued to draw away from Ethiopia, the dimensions of an effective flanking move became apparent to the Soviets. They correctly assessed Ethiopian military capabilities and they rightly perceived Ethiopia as a more dependent, isolated power in the Horn than the Somalis with their Arab connections.

4. the Policy Recommendations

Mr. Farer joins a large number of his colleagues in the academic community who regret the widespread restraints on the use of American power.

Indeed, I have read an essay along those lines in Foreign Policy, also a product of the Carnegie Endowment.

But Mr. Farer's urgings are not for the use of American power to support the status quo, but to contribute to the liberation forces in southern Africa, to end our support for Mobutu's regime in Zaire.

I must say that I am somewhat uncomfortable with these recommendations. I certainly would not support the sending of American troops to Zimbabwe to impose the preconditions for democratic government, as he suggests.

Yet, the United States cannot simply withdraw from the Third World, or ignore our rivalry there with the Soviet Union. There is a level of "activism" appropriate to our interests and our moral standards.

Whether that level resides in Mr. Farer's recommendation for a new U.S. diplomatic initiative in the Horn is questionable.

He proposes that we should "massively" rearm Somalia with defensive arms and assist through the Sudan the Eritrean liberation groups. This approach, he argues, would strengthen the just aspirations of secession shared by the Somalis and the Eritreans now forcibly included within the Ethiopian Empire.

With these two hostile forces reinvigorated, the Dergue would be compelled to negotiate some sort of federal solution for the entire Horn, a solution which would allow sufficient autonomy for the secessionist groups as to satisfy their aspirations and bring peace and an end to the horrible suffering Mr. Farer has described with such feeling.

While I share his objectives of peace and end to the suffering, I must question whether the level of intervention Professor Farer recommends is appropriate. I do not subscribe generally to the theory that American power can decide the outcome of complex regional conflicts in the Third World. Certainly we have a role, and in some cases, an influential one, but I am most uneasy with formulations such as Mr. Farer has outlined here. My objections are two-fold - first I am convinced that such undertakings are prone to fail. Second, I object to the paternalism and imperial mentality which inspires such plans.

I do not oppose the sale of American arms to Third World nations. They have legitimate defense needs and should not be denied access to appropriate weaponry. But to massively rearm Somalia seems to me like an invitation to conflict and a possible rerun of recent events with the U.S., not the Soviets, connected to an aggressive African state.

5. PET Policy Recommendations

My approach to the Horn and its conflicts is based on the conviction that we need not repeat past mistakes. We very unnecessarily distanced ourselves from the struggling Ethiopian government at a time when their need for outside support was at its zenith. We are pursuing that general direction now with our aid policies. I do not think that a determined courtship of Ethiopia would generate great success, but it is clearly an error to sever our remaining ties.